

BFG; A NOVEL WRITTEN BY ROAL DAHL HOW TO DEAL WITH THE CHARACTERIZATION IN TEACHING PROSE

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Abstract

Using simple and interesting strategies in teaching Prose is a must for a lecturer. There are many new methods or strategies to be applied in our classroom when we teach our students the characterization theories, one of them is STEAL Strategy. It is the characterization theories that have been summed up into a mnemonic device in form of the acronym (**S**peech, **T**hought, **E**ffect on Others, **A**ction, **L**ooks) to help our students to easily memorize something. This writing is trying to prove the effectiveness of the strategy when it is applied to a novel entitled BFG written by Roald Dahl. The results show that this strategy helped the writer in making inferences, finding specific textual evidence to support the assertion about the chosen character, and also developing arguments. Therefore, the writer would like to suggest the English Study Program lecturers who teach Prose or Extensive Reading to apply this method in his or her classroom.

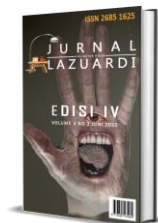
Key words: *BFG, characterization, prose*

Background

As stated in English Study Program, The Faculty of Teacher Training and Educational Science, Nusa Cendana University's curriculum, there is 3 major domain of subjects to be taught, they are Linguistics, English Teaching and also Literature. Literature is divided into three subjects; Poetry, Prose, and Drama. In this writing, the chosen subject to be discussed is Prose.

As the ordinary form of written language (Wardiana, 2015), Prose consists of fiction and non-fiction work. Fiction is the form of any narrative or informative writing that deals with information or events that are not factual, but rather, imaginary (for example Fairytale, Mythology, legend, novel, novelette, short story, fable, parable, and allegory). While non-fiction, deals exclusively with factual (or, at least, assumed factual) events, descriptions, observations, et cetera. (for example, autobiographies, biographies, histories, magazines, and journal).

One of the prominent objects in Prose is Novel. Based on the prior observation and interview, lecturers who teach Prose usually discuss the elements of Novel before moving forward to the application in which students will try to analyze a chosen English novel based on the theories being discussed. One of the 8 intrinsic elements of the novel that students love to be discussed is characters. For some point, analyzing characters in a novel becomes the most favorite object for English study program students when it comes to writing a thesis. But in reality, analyzing characters is not an easy job because even though it looks simple but some students were still failed to demonstrate their skill in making inferences, gathering evidence, and developing arguments regarding the characters.



Based on the description above, in this writing, the writer would like to offer a simple strategy to analyze characters in a Novel. The strategy is called STEAL. It is a mnemonic device which is a very old method used by people to memorize information, this method will make the information stays in our brain longer and can be easily recalled somewhere in the future. In analyzing characters in a novel, students need a guide to organize their ideas.

Problem Statements

The problems that need to be answered in this writing is "How to use A mnemonic device: STEAL in analyzing characters in Novel?"

Review of Literature

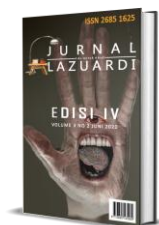
BFG Novel, A Novel written by Roald Dahl

The BFG was written by an author named Roald Dahl in 1982. The story is about Sophie, a young orphaned girl, who is being kidnapped by a giant called BFG and traveled to the giant's world. The journey starts one night when she gets up from her bed in the dormitory of the orphanage where she lives to close her curtains and sees a giant coming down the street. She watches as the giant sticks something that looks like a trumpet through the bedroom window of some neighbor children and blows. When the giant turns he sees Sophie and snatches her from her room. The giant takes Sophie to Giant Country where he lives in a cave.

Characters vs Characterization

In literature, the term character refers to a person or sometimes a personified animal or object. Hall (1983: 47) says that character is an imagined person in a story, whom we know from the words we read on the page. Characters in this Novel are Sophie, The BFG giant, The Queen, Marry, Mr. Tibbs, The Heads of the Army and Air Force, The Fleshlumeater, The Bloodbuttlr, and other giants in giants world, and also Mr. And Ms. Goochey.

While, characterization refers to the way an author helps the reader to know a character (Tomlinson and Carol Lynch, 2002: 25). The most obvious way an author can do this is to describe the character's physical appearance and personality. Portraying the character's emotional and moral traits or revealing her relationship with other characters is more subtle and effective techniques. In the most convincing characterizations, we see the character through a combination of her actions and dialogue, the responses of other characters to her, and the narrator's descriptions. In other words, characterization is how the characters are revealed, it deals with his/her speech, appearance, private thoughts, other character's impression about him/her, and also his action.



What is STEAL?

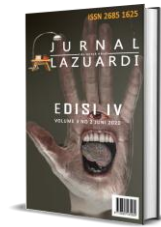
STEAL is an acronym that stands for **S**peech, **T**hought, **E**ffects on other, **A**ction, and **L**ooks. Here is the explanation:

- "S" stands for SPEECH. Writers help readers learn about a character by giving the character something to say and a unique way to say it. What (dialog) and how (tone) the character speaks to other characters bring out the personality of characters.
- "T" stands for THOUGHTS. It is what we learn about the character through reading his/her/its private thoughts. Learning the private thoughts of characters helps the students to learn the personality of characters.
- "E" stands for EFFECT ON OTHERS. It is what we learn about the character by reading how other characters feel or act around him/her/it. This method helps readers to also learn the personality of characters.
- "A" stands for ACTIONS. It is what does the character do and how does the character behaves, reacts to people or events. Writers create actions for characters to help readers learn the personality of the characters.
- "L" stands for LOOKS. It is simply about how the character looks like, how the character dresses, and so on. Writers' descriptions of characters' physical attributes also help readers to learn the personality of characters.

STEAL itself already covers the characterization theory mentioned in point 3.2 above, the difference is in the use of a mnemonic device used to make the students easier to remember the 5 different ways a writer use to create a character. By simplifying the whole theories of characterization into this acronym, students will be able to remember characterization theories better.

Methodology

1. Research Design: Qualitative Descriptive Method, Library research
2. Source of Data: the primary source of this research is an English Novel written by Roald Dahl entitled "The BFG": this is one of the most popular novels that is finally adapted to a movie, while the secondary sources are the journal, online articles and various kinds of documents related to this novel.
3. Data Collecting Techniques:
 - a) Reading the Novel repeatedly and intensively to understand the content of the novel
 - b) Reading the theory books, browsing, and collecting all related papers, journals, articles on the internet, to get more information that is relevant to the topic.
4. Data Analysis Techniques:
 - a) Reading the novel again, in this stage, the writer read and highlighted the lines that contain all necessary data to be analyzed
 - b) Classifying and analyzing the finding by using the STEAL strategy proposed before.
 - c) Drawing the conclusion based on the findings



Discussion

Based on the theory, there are several types of characters in literature, but the most popular divisions are the protagonist and antagonist. There are 10 giants in this story; they are The Fleshlumpeater, The Bloodbuttler, The Bonecruncher, The Childchewer, The Meatdripper, The Gizzardgulper, The Maidmasher, The Manhugger, The Butcherboy and the last is BFG. This writing will discuss BFG; the one and only protagonist giants in The BFG Novel. From the summary, we have learned that all the giants are antagonists except BFG, but by using STEAL theory, the writer will elaborate on his characters in detail.



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a. SPEECH

Based on the speech or dialog between characters, the writer draws a simple conclusion that BFG is:

a) A Sensitive and Caring Giant

BFG showed his sensitive side when he asked Sophie about her parents. He was really afraid that Sophie's parents would be worried since he took away Sophie to the giant country.

Data 01: Conversation between BFG and Sophie about her being taken to the giant world

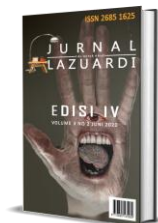
'I cannot help thinking,' said the BFG, 'about your poor mother and father. By now they must be zipping and skimping all over the house shouting "Hello hello where is Sophie gone?"'

'I don't have a mother and father,' Sophie said. 'They both died when I was a baby.'

'Oh, you poor little crumpled!' cried the BFG. 'Are you not missing them very badly?'

'Not really,' Sophie said, 'because I never knew them.'

'You is making me sad,' the BFG said, rubbing his eyes.



Rubbing his eyes after hearing Sophie's explanation about her parents who already died, shows that BFG's heart was touched, saddened by the story, and even cried jafter knowing that Sophie did not even know her parents.

Data 02: Conversation between BFG and Sophie

'All is my fault,' the BFG said. 'I am the one who kid snatched you.' Yet another enormous tear welled from his eye and splashed on to the floor.

'Now I come to think of it, I won't be here all that long,' Sophie said.

'I am afraid you will,' the BFG said.

'No, I won't,' Sophie said. 'Those brutes out there are bound to catch me sooner or later and have me for tea.'

BFG blamed himself for kidnapping Sophie and bringing her to the giant country. He cried while blaming himself for the action he took before, he wanted to keep the secret of giant's existence to the world by kidnapping Sophie who witnessed his presence. Knowing that bringing Sophie to the land of the giants would only put Sophie's life in danger, he became so sad and worried.

b) Moody

After worrying, blaming himself, and crying over Sophie's story about her late parents, BFG had changing mood and got mad knowing that Sophie and the other children in the orphanage being left to starve most of the time by their caretaker, but after that, he came to tears again.

Data 03:

'How are you getting punished?'

'She locked us in the dark cellar for a day and a night without anything to eat or drink.'

'The rotten old rotrasper!' cried the BFG.

'It was horrid,' Sophie said. 'We used to dread it. There were rats down there. We could hear them creeping about.'

'The filthy old fizzwiggler!' shouted the BFG. 'That is the horriddest thing I am hearing for years! You are making me sadder than ever!' All at once, a huge tear that would have filled a bucket rolled down one of the BFG's cheeks and fell with a splash on the floor. It made quite a puddle.

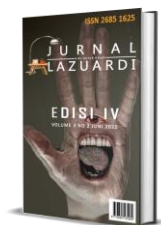
c) Struggling with language

Data 04:

'You do unless you are wanting to become so thin you will be disappearing into a thick ear.'

'Into thin air,' Sophie said. 'A thick ear is something quite different.'

Once again that sad winsome look came into the BFG's eyes. 'Words,' he said, 'is oh such a twitch-tickling problem to me all my life. So you must simply try to be patient and stop squabbling. As I am telling you before, I know exactly what words I am wanting to say, but somehow or other they are always getting stuff-skidded around.'



Different than Sophie, BFG has a unique way to speak. He misspelled most of the words and used incorrect grammar. He was struggling so hard with the language, but somehow it made him a very funny giant.

Data 05:

'I *know* it is bones,' the BFG said. 'But please understand that I cannot be helping it if I sometimes am saying things a little squiggly. I am trying my very best all the time.' The Big Friendly Giant looked suddenly so forlorn that Sophie got quite upset.

'I'm sorry,' she said. 'I didn't mean to be rude.'

'There never was any schools to teach me talking in Giant Country,' the BFG said sadly.

When Sophie tried to corrects his language, he asked for an apology that he actually knew the word he was trying to say but he often pronounced it incorrectly, he added that there is no school in the giant country to teach him how to speak correctly.

2. THOUGHTS

Based on the thoughts, we learn about the character through reading his/her/its private thoughts. In this story, the writer can not find any data related to BGF's private thoughts. The writer did not use this strategy to describe BFG personality.

3. EFFECT ON OTHERS

By reading how other characters feel or act around the character, the writer learns that BFG is:

a. Humiliation to the giants

Data 06:

'And you are an insult to the giant peoples!' shouted the Bloodbottler. 'You is not fit to be a giant! You are a squeaky little skidder! You are a babbling little pipsqueak! You are a ... cream puffnut!'

According to Bloodbottler, one of the nine means giants, BFG is nothing but a humiliation to the giants. He behaved differently than the others. Giants are supposed to be big, mean, nasty, cruel, eat human, but BFG is different than them. BFG never eats human being, kind, and has small sized comparing to the other giants.

b. Rude

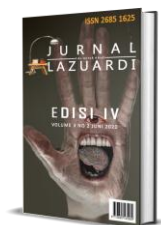
Data 07:

The BFG looked down from his lofty perch and said, this time to the Head of the Air Force, 'You is having belly poppers, are you not?'

'Is he being rude?' the Head of the Air Force said.

'He means helicopters,' Sophie told him.

According to The Head of The Army, BFG is rude because of his language. Again, this is not 100% true since at the beginning of the story BFG had already admitted to Sophie that his language was often misspelled and somehow misunderstood by most of the people. In this conversation, BFG asked for a helicopter to the Head of the Army, but he misspelled the word as "belly poppers" that somehow offended the Head of the Army who had a big belly.



c. Moody

Data 08:

Sophie watched with astonishment. What a strange and moody creature this is, she thought. One moment he is telling me my head is full of squashed flies and the next moment his heart is melting for me because Mrs. Clonkers locks us in the cellar.

According to Sophie, BFG has a changing mood. He looks like a child who can smile, laughs, cries, and mad in a second.

4. ACTION

Based on what does the character do and how does the character behave, react to people or events, the writer concludes that BFG:

a. loves collecting and giving dreams to the children

Data 09:

'If you are wanting to know what I am doing in your village,' the BFG said, 'I am blowing a dream into the bedroom of those children.'

'Blowing a dream?' Sophie said. 'What do you mean?'

'I am a dream-blowing giant,' the BFG said. 'When all the other giants are galloping off every what way and which to swoop human beans, I am scuddling away to other places to blow dreams into the bedrooms of sleeping children. Nice dreams. Lovely golden dreams. Dreams that are giving the dreamers a happy time.'

BFG is a very kind-hearted giant who wants to share happiness with the children by collecting the dreams and giving them sweet, nice, and happy dreams.

b. BFG has superhuman hearing

Data 10:

'I was hearing your heart beating across the road,' the BFG said. 'Loud as a drum.'

'Go on,' Sophie said. 'Please.'

'I can hear plants and trees.'

'Do they talk?' Sophie asked.

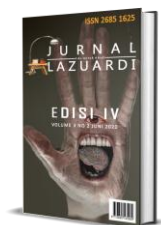
'They are not exactly talking,' the BFG said. 'But they are making noises. For instance, if I come along and I am picking a lovely flower, if I am twisting the stem of the flower till it breaks, then the plant is screaming. I can hear it screaming and screaming very clear.'

5. LOOKS

Most of the information related to BFG looks is based on Sophia's description. She is the major character that gets involved with BFG from the beginning of the story, both of them afterward are having a journey together in the giant country.

Data 11:

In the moonlight, Sophie caught a glimpse of an enormous long pale wrinkly face with the most enormous ears. The nose was as sharp as a knife, and above the nose, there were two bright flashing eyes, and the eyes were staring straight at Sophie. There was a fierce and devilish look about them.



Data 12:

..a Monster (or Giant) with an enormous long pale wrinkly face and dangerous eyes...

Data 13:

He had truly enormous ears. Each one was as big as the wheel of a truck and he seemed to be able to move them inwards and outwards from his head as he wished

Data 14:

The Giant took off his black cloak and hung it against the wall. Sophie saw that under the cloak he was wearing a sort of collarless shirt and a dirty old leather waistcoat that didn't seem to have any buttons. His trousers were faded green and were far too short in the legs. On his bare feet, he was wearing a pair of ridiculous sandals that for some reason had holes cut along each side, with a large hole at the end where his toes stuck out.

Data 15:

'Easily that,' said the BFG. 'You is seeing them in the distance but just wait till you get them close up. Those giants are all at least fifty feet tall with huge muscles and cockles alive alive-o. I am a titchy one. I am the runt. Twenty-four feet is puddlenuts in Giant Country.'

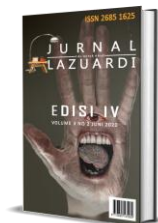
From the characters' physical attributes shown in the data above, BFG is described as a giant who has a pale wrinkled face, with gigantic ears and pointed nose (data 11 and 12). He uses cloak, wears a kind of collarless shirt, a dirty leather waistcoat and short faded green trousers. He is also wearing a pair of weird sandals (data 14). And comparing to the other giants who are at least fifty feet tall with big muscle and mean, BFG is the smallest one (data 15). To make it clear, the writer will insert the movie version of BFG appearance to compare it with the description above.



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Conclusion

BFG as one of the giants in the BFG Novel written by Roald Dahl is a protagonist character in this story, although he is a giant, he has several personalities that made him different from the other giants in giants country. By applying The STEAL strategy to analyze the character in a story, BFG is finally understood as a very sensitive giant who can easily cry because of people's sad stories, especially children. He is moody and yet considered to be a



humiliation to the giant's world. Some people think he is rude because of the unique mixed-up words that he used but a very kind-hearted giant who wants to give happiness to all the children by giving them nice dreams. He also has a different physical appearance from the other mean giants.

After analyzing the character of BFG by using the STEAL strategy, the writer concludes that this particular strategy helped her a lot in making inferences, finding specific textual evidence to support the assertion about the chosen character, and developing arguments. Hence, The STEAL strategy should be considered as an excellent close reading strategy to use with literature for several reasons: 1). Using a mnemonic device might help students to memorize better (**S**peech, **T**hought, **E**ffect on Others, **A**ction, **L**ooks), 2). giving and explaining the student about the chart (STEAL), are expected to help them to get some sort of guidance to find important information regarding the characters.

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