

Structural Analysis of “Peanut & Sparky”: A Short Story by Arnie Lightning as A Way in Understanding Literature

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Abstract

This study aims at analyzing the structure of Arnie Lightning’s short story Peanut & Sparky plays an essential part in a literary work which explores the plot, setting, characters, conflict and other elements of the story. Instead of that, by conducting this analysis, it could make the narration comprehensible for the readers and also to catch the meaning which the writer wants to convey. The short story Peanut & Sparky was published in April 2015 in America. This analysis captures the writer’s intention of fabricating the story through its premise, theme, character, moral value, setting. The study reveals that conducting structural analysis is supposed to be a good way in understanding literary works.

Keywords: structural, analysis, short story, literature

1. INTRODUCTION

The improvement of understanding literary works as one of creative skill should be mastered by students. All written materials like history books, philosophical works novels, poems, plays entertain readers’ feeling. Literature

could be classified into two different groups those writings that mainly presenting information, and the other place those mainly entertain (Jones,1968). Informative literature tells us the world is round. It deals with facts, explanations, real peoples’ lives and history. Its main purpose is to offer knowledge on the other hand imaginative literature aims to arouse thoughts and feeling. Literature has been regarded as profound human creation to express ideas, or thoughts. It also has been regarded as a great human treasure which gives the readers information, knowledge, experience and pleasure. Furthermore, by reading literary works, the readers may increase their understanding God, Human life, and people’s social interaction, lessons; frugality, husbandry, resignation, co-operation. Literature refers to the historical development of writings in prose or poetry which of the literacy techniques used in the communication of the pieces (Irshad & Ahmed, 2015: 26).

A brief narrative prose is regarded as a short story (Klarer, 1999). Short stories are that genre of literature which encourages the new writers to reproduce their own work as well with maximum chances of acclamation. One of American writers who fond of writing bed time stories is Anie. His mission is to create a positive and lasting change in the world through children books. Short stories are designed to entertain the readers. The problem highlighted in this study is the structural analysis of Peanut & Sparky’s short story written by Anie Lightning and it was published in America April 2015. It guides at how the structure supports the author to convey his message to the readers.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Encyclopedia Britanica Classic (2014) defines the short story as brief fictional prose narrative that is shorter than a novel and that usually deals with only a few characters. The short story is usually concerned with a single effect in only one or a few significant episodes or scenes. It is also defined as a short written story usually dealing with few characters: a short work of fiction or an invented prose narrative shorter than a novel usually dealing with a few characters and aiming at unity of effect and often concentrating on the creation mood than plot.

A short story is a short work or fiction. Fiction is considered as prose writing about imagined events and characters. Prose writing differs from poetry in that it does not depend on verses, meters or rhymes for its organization and presentation (American Literary Classic, 2004). Shaw (1983) elucidated it as the short story is an independent yet hybrid genre, which connects with other art forms at various points and keep eluding definition except as an interplay of tensions and anti thesis. Novels are another example of fictional prose and are much longer than short stories. Some short stories, however, can be quite long. If a short a long one, say fifty to one hundred pages, it is called a novella. American literature contains some of the world’s best examples of the short story. Readers around the world enjoy the finely crafted stories of American writers such as O.

Henry, Stephen Crane, Jack London, Mark Twain and Edgar Allan Poe. They are true masters at combining the five key elements that go into every great short story: character, setting, conflict, plot and theme.

These five key elements become the focus of analyzing the short story. *Character*, a character is a person, of sometimes even an animal, who takes part in the action of a short story or other literary work. *Setting* of short story is the time and place in which it happens. Authors often use descriptions of landscape, scenery, buildings, seasons or weather to provide a strong sense of setting. *Plot*-a plot is a series of events and character actions that relate to the central *conflict*. On the other side, the main character may struggle against another important character, against the forces of nature, against society, or even against something inside himself or herself (feelings, emotions, illness). *Theme*-Theme is the central idea or belief in a short story.

Irshad & Ahmed (2015: 27) classify part of short story, short stories are the most popular form of literary text. A short story comprises the basic elements namely theme and premise, back story or exposition, the spine of the story (plot, characters, climax), conflict or crisis, context and setting (time period). Premise is a statement or an idea that forms the basis for a reasonable line of argument. It plays the role of a container that hold the essence of the story’s real structure. The premise provides basis for the story in a single statement. Frey (2012) explains it as premise is what happens to the characters as a result of the actions of a story. It is the frame or roadmap which leads to the story.

The Theme refers to the key points presented by the author in the form of abstract subject of the work. Theme holds the central idea or ideas may or may not be explicit or obvious. A text may contain multiple themes. The writer conveys his message or purpose of writing through theme. Theme in a piece of fiction is its controlling idea or its central insight. It is the author’s underlying meaning or main idea that he is trying to convey.

The Spine of Theory is the backbone of a literary work. It is considered the central feature and the main support in the structure of a short story. The spine of the story is interwoven with the plot, characters and climax of the story. These are interdependent terms and the most crucial parts of a story. The Plot is the plan or outline of the story with a beginning, a middle and an end. It is formally named as narrative. It reveals the string of events in the story. The plot is how the author arranges events to develop his or her basic idea. It is the sequence of events in a story or play. As Aristotle (1895) explained that the plot follows the web of causation in the form of exposition, rising action, falling action and denouement. These are considered the elements of a plot. To plot means to navigate through the dangerous terrain of story and when confronted by a dozen branching possibilities to choose the correct path. Plot is the writer’s choice of events and their design in time (McKee, 1997:43).

The Characters are the invented persons in a narrative work which are given specific qualities by the writer. They make their appearance through

dialogues, action, and description. The description of the character helps the reader to visualize accurately. Characters are the persons represented in a dramatic or narrative work who are interpreted by the readers as possessing particular moral, intellectual, and emotional qualities by inferences from what the persons say and their distinctive ways of saying it-the dialogue-and from what they do-the action. The characters with changing moods are called round characters while the flat characters are those who do not alter their attitude in the duration of the story. The function of Structure is to provide progressively building pressures that force characters into more and more difficult dilemmas where they make more and more difficult risk-taking choices and actions, gradually revealing their true natures, even down to the unconscious self. The function of Character is to bring to the story the qualities of characterization necessary to convincingly act out choices. Put simply, a character must be credible: young enough or old enough, strong or weak, wordly or naive, educated or ignorant, generous or selfish, witty or dull, in the right proportions. Each must bring to the story the combination of qualities that allows an audience to believe that the character could and would do what he does. Structure and character are interlocked. The event structure of a story is created out of the choices that characters make under pressure and actions they choose to take, while characters are the creatures who are revealed and changed by how they choose to act under pressure (McKee, 1997: 106-107).

The Story Climax refers to a collision between two opponent forces. The critics regard climax as the explicit encounter which firmly decides about successor. The climax in the story leads to a point of realization, a stage leading to the conclusion. It is known as the story culmination. A story Climax of absolute, irreversible change that answers all questions raised by the telling and satisfies all audience emotion is a Closed Ending. A Story Climax that leaves a question or two un answered and some emotion unfulfilled is an OPEN ENDING (McKee,1997: 48). Samsel & Wimberly (1998: 131) further mention that the climax of story is often thought as the narrative’s last major experience of dramatic conflict or action. The story’s outer conflicts are resolved with some sort of “closure” at the climax while, at the same time, some inner conflict is resolved.

The Conflict is the point of issue or problem in a story. It helps in providing pace to the story. The internal or external conflicts are four kinds: man versus elf, man versus society, man versus circumstances and man versus man. Conflict is essential to plot. Without conflict, there is no plot. It is the opposition of forces which ties one incident to another and makes the plot move. Conflict is not merely limited to open arguments, rather it is any form of opposition that faces the main character. Within a short story there may be only one central struggle, or there may be one dominant struggle with many minor ones.

The Setting includes the set of surroundings, environment, the place, circumstances, time period, time of the year of the day as well as the

temperature, weather conditions, social conditions of the characters, mannerism, customs, speech patterns, dialects and scenery, etc. in which the action of the story takes place. It could be the time and location in which a story takes place is called the setting. For some stories the setting is very important, while for others it is not. There are several aspects of a story’s setting to consider when examining how setting contributes to a story (some, or, all, may be present in a story) setting: The overall setting of a narrative or dramatic work is the general locale, historical time, and social circumstances in which its action occurs; the setting of a single episode or scene within the work is the particular physical location in which it takes place. Grey (1994) adds that the setting must be suffused with story adequately. The setting generates as context which helps the characters to act and develop. Setting is also considered as a story’s SETTING is four-dimensional: 1) Period is a story’s place in time, Duration is story’s length through time, Location is a story’s place in space, Level of Conflict: is the story’s position on the hierarchy of human struggles (McKee, 1997: 68-69).

Backstory is defined as the history, past or background created for the characters that influence the present or future. It helps the readers to know where the characters are coming from. It helps in making clear to the reader that why the characters are acting the way they act. It is conducted just to create depth in the story the writer gives glimpses of the history. It reveals what has already happened before commencing the story. It is also known as exposition (McKee, 1997: 52).

Criticism of the Short Story

A short story is analyzed through the terms known as literary appreciation, interpretation and literary criticism. Literary appreciation is used to explain the worth of a literary piece of work. It evaluates whether the work holds some appealing quality for the reader or not. It helps in capturing reader’s interest. Literary interpretation refers to delve deep into a literary piece and bring out to consideration not only the superficial or literal aspects but also ponder over the underlying concepts. It also takes account of author’s suggestive meanings. Literary criticism incorporates observation, appraisal, clarification and elucidation. It critically observes the literary works. A certain theoretical framework is used in criticism to get valid and logical inferences.

The structure analysis is done through the literary elements. The literary elements include plot, theme, conflict, setting, character, climax, premise etc.

3. RESEARCH METHOD

Ethnographic methodology focuses on the one’s own experiences as a learner was adopted as framework to answer the research question to conduct structural analysis. Narrative research design focuses on studying a single person, gathering data through collection of stories, reporting individual experiences and discussing the meaning of those experiences for individual (Cresswell, 2008 :

51). The narrative inquiry was used because it allowed to reflect on the one’s own experiences and reconstruct personal stories in a more worthwhile way (Pinnegar & Dayness, 2007). The steps of structural analysis by conducting and getting the results about the following basic elements: The title, the theme and premise, the spring of the story, the backstory of exposition, the conflict, the context and setting.

The Author

Arnie Lightning is a published author and dreamer. He believes that everyone should dream big and not be afraid to take chances to make their dreams come true. Arnie enjoys writing, reading, doodling, and traveling. In his free time, he likes to play video games and run. His mission is to create a positive and lasting change in the world through children’s book. He promises to highly inspire, entertain the readers most importantly. He shares the magic of imagination. He firmly believes it is our responsibility to be a positive role model for children. He suggests people not to be afraid to dream big. The people that makes a difference in the world. Arni lives in Mississippi where he graduated from University of Southern Mississippi in Hattiesburg, MS.

4. FINDING AND DISCUSSION

The findings of this study deals with the title, theme and premise, the spine and the plot of the story, the setting, and moral values of the story.

4.1 The Title

The title of the story describes two about a friendship between a little boy and his pets.

4.2 Theme and Premise

Peanut and Sparky seemed in Arni Lightning’s collection of Cute Bedtime short stories for Kids. The theme is about a Friendship among a Little Boy with his two Pets”; they are Sparky and Peanut. Sparky is a dog while Peanut is a baby squirrel. It can be seen their friendship story from the 18th paragraph and 26 the paragraph:

The 18th paragraph:

“The neighbors look at me awkward when I take Peanut out for a walk with Sparky. I just smiled and wave. Peanut is just like one of the family. He and I share sandwiches. My parents think it is odd that I have a pet squirrel, but I could not imagine my life without him”.

The 26th paragraph:

“I love both of them equally. All three of us like to go on fun and exciting adventures. Soon we are going to take a trip to Wild West

and ride horses. I will be the sheriff. I will put bad gay in jail with the help of my deputies, Sparky and Peanut”. Seeing this paragraph, it indicates that they are good friends and love each other.

4.3 The Plot of Summary

The story Peanut and Sparky surrounds a truly friendship among a little boy and his two pets. Someday he went to the park with his mother. His mother always brought a handbag which was full of some animals food such as bread crumb or birdseed. She would feed for them when they came near her. They always spent a whole summer in the playground. Suddenly there was a baby squirrel who hides in the mother’s handbag, and they did not realize it. Then they went back to home. Arriving at home, his dog, Sparky was barking beside the mother’s handbag. Actually there was a baby squirrel inside the handbag. Then, he tried to catch the baby squirrel.

Finally he could catch it and gave it a name Peanut because he figured out the baby squirrel like a peanut butter. He decided to adopt or nurse Peanut. Someday the little boy and his mother went out after they went back to home, they were shocked, the home was messy. It was the pets’ acts. His mother was very angry and mad. His mother decided to make a little wooden on the top of tree for Peanut and Peanut was happy. He and his two pets (Sparky and Peanut) always spent whole time to go adventure, a little love both o his pets equally. He could not imagine if they were not with him. He always took out them to play together. It was a truly friendship.

4.4 The Characters

There are two kinds of characters in the story; main character and minor character.

Main Characters

The main characters in the story are Mother and the little Boy. Both of the characters possess affecting animals or animal lovers. Both of these characters are good manners. Mother is a nice and affection, it can be seen in the paragraph: “I fondly remember how Mama would take me to the park. She would sit on the bench while I played. Sometimes *she would feed sparrows and squirrels*. It seemed that she had a way with the animals. Mama was attentive to her son. She allows her son to nurse a baby squirrel.” I actually decided to show Peanut, one night after dinner and explained to Mama that he must have gotten into her purse when were at the playground. At the first, she was shocked and disbelief, but *she was happy that I found a new pet. She told me that this was going to be a big responsibility*. I would have to nurse him until he was healthy enough and big enough to eat bird seed, nuts, and bread with peanut butter. I knew that it was a big task. I needed to give him milkin and a small bottle and give him around-the clock –care.

Mother is also a distinct person. We can see when Peanut and Sparky disordered her home, she clearly decided to make Peanut a wooden house on the top of tree. It can be seen in the paragraph below:

When Mama and I got home we found the garbage all over the kitchen floor and peanuts cracked in Mama’s slippers. The broken wallnuts were kind of funny, but I do not think Mama liked it. When we went into the livingroom, Mama got really mad. She found her chairs all torn up to shreds. She stormed all through the house very angry. She put Sparky in the dog house and told me I had to put Peanut in a cage.

The Little Boy, He is very keen on his two pets and fanciful or to be dreamer. It can be seen from this paragraph below:

“I love both of them equally. All three of us like to go on fun and exciting adventures. Soon we are going to take a trip to the Wild West and ride horses. I will be the sheriff. I will put bad gay in jail with the help of my deputies, Sparky and Peanut”.

Minor Characters

The minor characters are Sparky and Peanut. Sparky is a dog which accompanies this little boy wherever they go out before Squirrel has come to their life and they become good friends. Peanut is a baby squirrel, he is very funny and rather naughty. They like to play to disordered mother’s house.

4.5 The Climax

The climatic point occurs in the story when Mother go mad seeing her house was disordered. It can be seen in the paragraph below:

“When Mama and I got home we found the garbage all over the kitchen floor and peanuts cracked in Mama’s slippers. The broken wallnuts were kind of funny, but I do not think Mama liked it. When we went into the living-room, Mama got really mad. She found her chairs all torn up to shreds. She stormed all through the house very angry. She put Sparky in the dog house and told me I had to put Peanut in a cage”.

4.6 The Conflict

The conflict happens when Mama got mad after seeing her house was disordered by Sparky and Peanut. It is the main conflict between mother and his pets. Sometimes mother also want to have time for her and his little boy. One night, his mother took him to go out for pizza and they had to leave Peanut and Sparky together in the house.

4.7 The Context and Setting

The story begins when I (the boy) and his mother went to the park. He was keen on remembering their plan by saying, "I fondly remember how Mama take me to the park". Then this story also narrates how the squirrel follow them, "After we got home Mama set her bag down. We had no clue the squirrel had been in there but we were about to find out soon". Next the narrator alludes the surroundings by saying "The neighbors look at me awkward when I take Peanut for a walk with Sparky". The situation could be imagined that the boy was happy to have a squirrel and a dog to be his best friends. It can be seen from the paragraph below:

"We got our handyman next door to build us a squirrel-sized birdhouse and Peanut was happy. He does not always stay in the birdhouse, just when Mama is mad. Now Peanut has his own house and he is very happy. I see him every day and we have adventures all the time".

4.8 Moral Values

By analyzing this short story, it can be inferred that human beings have to love animals by feeding them as his mother does or playing together with them like the little boy has done. It can be seen in the first paragraph, "I fondly remember how Mama would take me to the park. She would sit on the bench while I played. Sometimes *she would feed sparrows and squirrels*. It seemed that *she had a way with the animals*."

Based on the sentences above, it indicates that as human beings have to love not only to other people but also to the animals as God's creation in this world. It also can be seen in the 26th paragraph:

The 26th paragraph:

"I love both of them equally. All three of us like to go on fun and exciting adventures. Soon we are going to take a trip to Wild West and ride horses. I will be the sheriff. I will put bad gay in jail with the help of my deputies, Sparky and Peanut". Seeing this paragraph, it indicates that they are good friends and love each other.

Based on the sentence above, it can be said that as human being we should have not to treat differently between other creatures; human being and animal or plants. All of them are God's creatures. It teaches us or our children to be good to God's creatures. it could be used to balance this universe.

It was found that by analyzing bedtime short stories, the students or the readers could understand the literary works through analyzing its elements or conducting structural analysis and they also could get any moral values by reading and analyzing any literary works. In line with this study, Nurhayati and Ima (2014) reveals that learning ethics or mortal values could be done through imaginative literature, it is considered that imaginative literature to be a learning

source of moral values or ethics; Irshad & Ahmed (2015) implies that analyzing the structure of Bernard Malamud’s short story *Take Pity* structure plays an essential part in literary work which juxtaposes the plot and other elements of the story in order to make the narration comprehensible for the readers and also clutch the meaning which the writer conveys.

A reader could gain a moral value from reaching a novel. Ariyanti (2016) studies a moral value from a novel. She found that only one major element of moral value which is “to not hurt others, e.g. do not murder, abuse, steal from, cheat, or lie to others” that does not exist in the novel. However, even though that element of moral value does not appear in the content of the novel, the facts that oppose with it seems to be found in eleven novel subtitles. Without leaving aside that fact, it is clear that five moral value categories exist in the story of the novel.

Indeed, a moral value can be found not only studying a work of literature, but is also from the stories of Al-Qur’an. Ismatulloh (2012), in his study, found that the educational values embodied in the story of Yusuf in Al-Qur’an and its relevance in the present life of them: firstly, an attitude of openness and communication is established between the child and the father is between Yusuf and Ya'qub, secondly, the wisdom of the head of the family; the third, King fair / Upholding justice, this can be seen in paragraph 43 letter to Joseph, who hinted that the head of state or the king of Egypt at that time to be fair and not arbitrary; Fourth, demand for office / professional.

5. CONCLUSION

This study has revealed a two folded concept that firstly how to analyze literary works using all the details about the skeleton of Spark and Peanut. By trying to delve deep into the story through its structuring pattern or elements, the readers could get the meaning of the story. The structural analysis of this short story presents that any literary works could be understood well through reading and analyzing the elements of short story such as plot, theme, conflict, setting, character, climax, premise. Secondly, by having reading bedtime stories, it makes the children become imaginer, they could imagine and get high moral values from any literary works. In this case the children could appreciate how to nurse animal, treat them as their friends, the value of togetherness.

Indeed, in addition to learn about literary works as a phenomenon, the result of this study sheds a light on how the elements of short story are used to analyze the short stories and juxtaposes the plot and other elements in order to understand the meaning which the writer wants to convey, how to make the narration comprehensible for the readers. Even though, this bedtime story is special for children but it teaches us how to maintain a good and truly friendship among human being and animals, it also shows us how to be responsible to take a decision by nursing a baby squirrel. Although, he is a little boy, his mother has taught him how to take a risk and became a good boy by facing all the risks that Sparky and Peanut have done. Accordingly, it is suggested that to have better understanding with literatures by analyzing more and more literary works, it is

better to teach to the students than they have to practice how to analyze and apply the elements of short stories. Moreover, the researchers who are conducting a literature research should encourage conducting more and deeper analysis to the social phenomena. Since this study only focuses on structural analysis on Cute Bedtime short stories for Kids with a relatively small number of stories, further researcher is suggested to conduct a study with bigger number of stories selected from various stories to get more comprehensible structural pattern or elements used and created by the writers.

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