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External Conflicts Found in Kenneth Grahame's "The Wind in the Willows" Novel

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Abstract

Literature provides distinctive perspectives on human's behaviour, prompting us in creative thinking and igniting fresh ideas as well as discussions. Novel, as one of the literature forms, needs creative ideas to create one. Conflict has a crucial part in novel, which to move the plot forward. This study aims to discover the conflicts that happens in the novel faced by the main characters and how the characters resolve it. Kenneth Grahame's novel *The Wind in the Willows* is used as the data of this study. The types of conflict theory proposed by Kenney (1996) is employed to analyse the data. The techniques used to collect the data were observation method and note-taking. The observation method means the researcher had read the novel accurately whereas the note-taking method used to mark and point out the types of conflict occurred in the novel. As the result, the researcher discovered that there are two types of conflict occurs in the novel, internal and external conflict with the external conflict takes the dominant conflict that occurs more frequently. The external conflict mainly happens between the main characters and against the nature, whilst the internal conflict happens between the characters against their inner turmoil and feelings.

Keywords: novel; conflict; main character; The Wind in the Willows

Introduction

Literature is the art of pouring human's imagination freely into a written form. It also has the potential to raise awareness about important issues and motivates individuals to take action. According to Tue et al., (2023), literature depicts life and provides insights into the complexities of human existence. Putra et al., (2022) argued that the production of literature serves the purpose of entertaining and offering enjoyment to the audiences, and also influencing them by evoking both excitement and providing genuine education. In addition, Olivia et al., (2024) stated

that literature in today's world encompasses various genres, including poetry, drama scripts, music, movies, and novels. Therefore, it could be said that literature follows the state of the generations, developing and evolving over time.

Literature has many forms, but the most famous ones nowadays in particular are movies and novels. Rexroth (2024) stated that nowadays popular literature is created to be read for literate individuals or adapted for television and film. Novel is a fictional narrative that is mainly lengthy and intricate, focusing on human experiences through a series of interconnected events. Wellek and Warren (1948), provide a definition of a novel as a form of literature that narrates a story. The primary purpose of the story is to entertain the readers. Despite the significance of life events and challenges within the story, fiction is essential to possess a captivating plot, a carefully constructed structure, and a distinct purpose. Helmita and Farma (2023), stated that a novel is an extended piece of prose that portrays a sequence of events from a person's life, depicting the characters and surroundings of the individuals involved. Typically, a novel narrates a story of characters and their actions in daily life, emphasizing the unusual aspects of the narrative (Wijayanti & Laba, 2020). Novels are designed to offer the readers an escape through captivating events and engaging characters within the narrative (Alfarisi et al., 2022).

Not only occurs in real life, conflicts are also included in any literary works. The term 'conflict' in literature relates to the various motivations of the characters According to Forster (1956), novel has seven universal aspects, which he categorized as: story, characters, plot, fantasy, prophecy, pattern, and rhythm. A novel has a plot which is unfolded through the dialogues, actions, and thoughts of the characters (Padmi & Jayantini, 2022). One of the elements of plot is conflict. Conflict is the essence of the story. With the absent of conflicts, the readers would lose interest in the novel. Although a novel is a work of fiction, it or entities participating. still has the power to provide benefits and impact the reader. The emergence of conflict in literary works mirrors the conflicts that exist in real life. Both are rooted in life problems, such as personal struggles within social norms and interpersonal conflicts between fictional characters (Gusneti et al., 2023)

In narratives, conflict is a key component that introduces obstacles and uncertainty regarding the outcome. The characters must overcome challenges to reach their objectives. A narrative often involves multiple conflicts. Based on the theory that proposed by William Kenney (1966), conflict is divided into two types, namely internal conflicts and external conflicts. Internal conflict occurs between the characters and their inner turmoil within their mind and heart. The outside world cannot see the source of this conflict. External conflict occurs between many elements of outside forces, for example against the other characters, the society they are in, and the nature itself. After a conflict is resolved and the readers discovered which character or force prevails, it provides a feeling of conclusion.

Conflict can be resolved at any stage in a story, especially when there are multiple conflicts. If a story concludes without resolving the primary or major conflict(s), it might prompt the readers to reflect and contemplate the conflict on a more personal level, might not be fulfilling, but clear conflict resolution might also disappoint the readers in the story.

Every conflict has a way to conclude it. In literary works, conflict serves as a stimulant that shapes the primary actions taken by the main character. Frequently during the climax in the story, characters encounter internal and external conflicts which they must conquer in order to enact changes in their lives. Deetz and Stevenson (1986) presented five essential approaches for addressing conflicts, namely avoidance, pacification, competition, compromise, and creative integration. Avoidance is the approach that involves effectively managing the conflict by deflecting the main issue through defence, keeping a distance, and creating selfprotection when facing the conflict. In certain situations, avoidance might be seen as a negative approach but it can still be viewed as beneficial. The second approach is pacification. It involves preventing discussion to the conflict. But instead of avoiding the conflict, pacification aims to weaken the conflict by reducing or accentuating it. The third approach, competition, involves acknowledging the context of the conflict. Communication blockage should not be tolerated. In competition approach, the parties in a conflict seek to fulfil their own desires. This approach can lead both growth and destruction. The fourth one, compromise, is an approach that also acknowledges the context of the conflict. Compromise leads to increased satisfaction for all parties involved compared to the feeling of loss, but rarely results in complete satisfaction for anyone. The last approach, creative integration involves seeking options outside the perceived conflict context in order to break it. This approach demands significant effort but provides the best for maintaining a healthy, long-term relationship.

The researcher chose this topic because conflict occurs almost every time in human's daily life. Many people do not know how to solve conflicts peacefully and embrace their overflowing anger instead, resulting in unwanted accident. Hopefully, this study would help and lead the readers to lend additional knowledge in how to resolve conflicts that occurs in daily life. This study had one research question which would be revealed later: [1] What are the types of the external conflict that occurs in the novel *The Wind in the Willows?*

Method

The research was designed as qualitative research. Qualitative research involves delving into real-world issues to gain deeper insight, rather than gathering numerical data or implementing treatments as in as in quantitative research. It aims to produce hypotheses for further exploration and understanding of quantitative data. The focus is on providing explanations and reasons instead of focusing in quantities or numeral amounts. It has the potential to be designed as independent research, utilizing qualitative data only or as a component of research that integrates both qualitative and quantitative data (Moser & Kosrtjens, 2017). The data for this study is centred on the analysis of the external conflicts that were found in the novel.

The children novel *The Wind in the Willows* by Kenneth Grahame is used in this study as the main data. The script of the novel was taken from the republished hardcopy. Kenneth Grahame is the writer of *The Wind in the Willows* and was first published in 1908. The novel was republished by Signet Classic in 2006, and it has 219 pages. Despite its failure on its initial release back then, the novel has gained popularity and even became a classic of British literature. Additionally, the novel has more than one main character, which intrigued the researcher to unfold the main characters conflicts and the conflict management approaches that they used against the conflicts deeper and decided to choose this novel as the data.

The method used to collect the data in this study are observation method and note-taking. The researcher had read and taken notes accurately to accumulate and collect the data. The procedures of data collecting are as follows:

- 1. Reading the novel thoroughly and accurately
- 2. Taking note and classifying the conflicts that currently occurs in the novel
- 3. Browsing and reading articles about identical topic and analysing them.

Once the data were collected, the data then analysed by grouping and classifying. The Theory of Literature proposed by Wellek and Waren (1948) was used as a guidance to analyse the data. The first procedure was collecting the data from the novel itself. Second procedure was grouping and classifying the data to their respective conflict types based on the theory the types of conflict by Kenney (1966) and how the characters resolve the conflicts based on the five approaches for addressing conflicts theory by Deetz and Stevenson (1986).

Results and Discussions

In a story, conflict is a literary device used to generate tension and involves characters facing obstacles, striving to achieve their goals, or resolving their problems. In external conflicts, characters are compelled to adapt, evolve, or undergo changes in response to the conflict, which can expose their strengths and weaknesses.

The findings could suggest the main characters' conflicts and the conflict management approaches that they used to avoid heightening the conflicts. Based on the data analysis result, the external conflicts found in the novel were 8 occurrences.

NoTypes of External ConflictOccurrence1Man, against Man52Man, against Society-3Man, against Nature3TOTAL

Table 1. Types of External Conflict Found in the Novel

The table shown above indicates the types and the number of occurrences of external conflicts faced by the main characters in the novel. The result shown that the external conflict occurs more frequently in the novel. Based on the table, it could be seen that the majority of the findings shows that Man against Man was the most type of external conflict source. It occurs about 5 times in the novel. This followed by Man against Nature which happened for about 3 times. Unfortunately, Man against Society had no occurrence in the novel.

Man, against Man

The most common type of external conflict is the Man against Man. It is often the first type of conflict the readers encounter when they begin reading a story. The Man against Man type of external conflict is the type of conflict that occurs between one character against another. This could occur when a character struggle against another. The struggle could be because of different ideas or beliefs, good against evil, or resources competition. Additionally, Lamb (2008) stated that this conflict could involve head-on confrontation, like a shootout or a theft, or it could be a more nuanced clash between the aspirations of two or more characters, such as in a romance or family saga. The following are the examples of Man against Man conflict taken from the novel:

Data 1:

"Now, you dear good old Ratty," said Toad imploringly, "don't begin talking in that stiff and sniffy sort of way, because you know you've got to come. I can't possibly manage without you, so please consider it settled, and don't argueit's the only thing I can't stand. You surely don't mean to stick to your dull fusty old river all your life, and just live in a hole in a bank and boat? I want to

show you the world! I'm going to make an animal of you, my boy!" "I don't care," said the Rat, doggedly. "I'm not coming, and that's flat. And I am going to stick to my old river, and live in a hole, and boat, as I've always done. And what's more, Mole's going to stick to me and do as I do, aren't you, Mole? (Grahame, 1908).

Data 2:

"Come on!" he said grimly to the Mole. "It's five or six miles to the nearest town, and we shall just have to walk it. The sooner we make the start the better." "But what about Toad?" asked the Mole anxiously, as they set off together. "We can't leave him here, sitting in the middle of the road by himself, in the distracted state he's in! It's not safe. Supposing another thing were to come along?" "O, bother Toad," said the Rat savagely; "I've done with him!" (Grahame, 1908).

Analysis:

The two data above show the quarrel between the two main characters. The presence of the external conflict can be clearly seen because of the characters' different ideas and beliefs clashes into another. Data 1 shows how the Rat rejected the Toad's invitation to embark on a long, uncertain journey, choosing to stick to his old, peaceful life in the riverside instead. Data 2 shows how the Mole anxiously watching the stunned Toad limping in the road at the sight of motor-car, his current obsession. The Mole then begged the Rat to do something, yet the Rat had had enough of the Toad, pushing his belief towards the Mole to leave him be in the street. The characters' different ideas and goals clashes against another, making the external conflict clearly be seen in the scene. This kind of situation can also be found in different study by Pradnyaningsih et al., (2022) entitled "The External Conflict Faced by Simon in Love, Simon Movie Script" where the ideas and goals clashes between one character and the other could be considered as Man against Man.

As it shown in data 1, the character Rat used the conflict management approach to resolve the ongoing conflict, which is the **Pacification** approach. Pacification is the approach which involves blocking the arguments of the other party to avoid the conflict to spreads more. The character Rat persistently refuted Toad's invitation, making no room for the Toad to interject. Same thing occurs in data 2, where the character Rat dismissed the Mole's concern about leaving the Toad alone in the street. The circumstances led to limitation in the arguments and ultimately leading to one party's decision-making ability being undermined.

Data 3:

He jumped up and seized the sculls, so suddenly, that the Rat, who was gazing out over the water and saying more poetry-things to himself, was taken by surprise and fell backwards off his seat with his legs in the air for the second

time, while the triumphant Mole took his place and grabbed the sculls with entire confidence. "Stop it, your silly ass!" cried the Rat, from the bottom of the boat. "You can't do it! You'll have us over!" (Grahame, 1908).

Analysis:

The data above show the two main characters struggled against each other. The Mole, fascinated at how easy The Rat paddled while spewing poetry-things at the same time, was determined to took Rat's place in paddling, ever so certain and eager to try even the Rat was startled at his best friend's newfound confidence and eagerness, making him trampled over the boat. The Rat then hurriedly tried to stop the Mole and seized the sculls back to prevent any unwanted accident. But it was all too late as the Mole was went over the boat, struggling in the water.

The approach that the character used in the data above to deal with the conflict above is **Competition**. Competition approach is a distinct method to withstand with other party who are determined to achieve victory in the conflict. In the scene above, the characters were currently on a boat. Everything was doing fine until the Mole felt enraptured by how effortless the Rat rowing and decided to grab the paddle himself. Surprised, the Rat was trying his best to snatch the sculls back from the Mole, who currently had no idea how to paddle. But Mole being stubborn and passionate animal that he was, refused to let the Rat to take over again, leading to his own misfortune. In this case, the impact of the conflict leads the character into destruction, leading one party to lose and the other win.

Data 4:

Poor Mole found it difficult to get any words out between the upheavals of his chest that followed one upon another so quickly and held back speech and choked it as it came. "I know it's a-shabby, dingy little place," he sobbed forth at last, brokenly: "not like-your cozy quarters-or Toad's beautiful hall-or Badger's great house but it was my own little home- and I was fond of it- and I went away and forgot all about it- -and then I smelt it suddenly-on the road, when I called and you wouldn't listen, Rat-and everything came back to me with a rush- and I wanted it!-O dear, O dear! and when you wouldn't turn back, Ratty-and I had to leave it, though I was smelling it all the time I thought my heart would break. -We might have just gone and had one look at it, Ratty-only one look it was close by but you wouldn't turn back, Ratty, you wouldn't turn back! O dear, O dear!" (Grahame, 1908).

Analysis:

The data above show the different believes of both the Mole and the Rat clash against each other. Other than different perspectives on ideas and goals between characters, the external conflict Man against Man can also be seen in various believes displayed by the characters. In the data above, the Mole was pleading, almost begging to the Rat to let him stop by in his old home. How he wailed and lamented to the Rat to let him taste the feeling of being home again. But Rat was already ahead of himself, too lost in his determination to continue the journey refused to let his good friend to stop by his old home and believing that if they would not continue the journey, the snow would trap them. Similar case can be found in a study conducted by Suarniti (2018) entitled "Conflict of Beatrice Prior in Roth's Allegiant" where the characters had different believes against one another.

The character used the **Compromise** approach to overcome the conflict above. Both of the characters currently had an ongoing crisis. The Mole asked the Rat to let him at least step foot for the last time in his old home, but the Rat was already away. Eventually, later on in the story, the Rat felt bad for his own selfish will and let the Mole took them to visit his old home, tracking the road back again, making both parties involved feel satisfied.

Data 5:

"Well, what did I tell you?" said the Rat very crossly. "And, now, look here! See what you've been and done! Lost me my boat that I was so fond of, that's what you've done! And simply ruined that nice suit of clothes that I lent you! Really, Toad, of all the trying animals-I wonder you manage to keep any friends at all!" The Toad saw at once how wrongly and foolishly he had acted. He admitted his errors and wrong-headedness and made a full apology to Rat for losing his boat and spoiling his clothes. And he wound up by saying, with that frank self-surrender which always disarmed his friend's criticism and won them back to his side, "Ratty! I see that I have been a headstrong and a willful Toad! Henceforth, believe me, I will be humble and submissive, and will take no action without your kind advice and full approval!" (Grahame, 1908).

Analysis:

The data above shows the two main characters argue against each other. It can be seen that the good-natured Rat had had enough of the Toad's cocky and pompous behaviour. The Toad had been nothing but an infuriating animal for his friends, creating troubles here and there, and the Rat already fed up with this decided to scold and reprimand his foolish wrongdoings and address how if the Toad keep being like that, he might get him and his friends in trouble or even make him loose his friends.

Based on the conversations between the characters above, the approach **Compromise** is used to address the ongoing conflict. The Rat's lectures made the Toad regret of how he had made his friends distressed and worried about him. He noticed how he had always brushed his friends' claims and warnings and let his stubborn and arrogant self-take hold of himself. It dawned on him that how his careless actions would lead not only himself, but his friends into chaos. The Toad's realization and promises to behave led to this conflict's closure, making both parties feel satisfied.

Man, against Nature

Man, against Nature is the type of external conflict that happens because of the natural forces or environment. According to Kenney (1966), the content of a story could involve a conflict within an individual, such as fulfilling desire against duty, a conflict between fellow individuals, between individual against society, between individual against nature, and so forth. The development could focus on surviving in the wilderness and dealing against natural calamities such as snowstorm, typhoon, and so forth. Ross (1993) stated that the hero is pitted against a life-threatening situation in Man against Nature conflict, such as hurricanes, earthquakes, tornadoes, fires, floods, droughts, or ferocious animals. The data bellow shows the examples of Man against Nature found in the novel:

Data 6:

The Mole had been working very hard all the morning, spring-cleaning his little home. First with brooms, then with dusters; then on ladders and steps and chairs, with a brush and a pail of whitewash; till he had dust in his throat and eyes, and splashes of whitewash all over his black fur, and an aching back and weary arms (Grahame, 1908).

Data 7:

"This is fine!" he said to himself. "This is better than whitewashing!" The sunshine struck hot on his fur, soft breezes caressed his heated brow, and after the seclusion of the cellarage he had lived in so long the carol of happy birds fell on his dulled hearing almost like a shout (Grahame, 1908).

Data 8:

"Look ahead, Rat!" cried the Mole suddenly. It was too late. The boat struck the bank full tilt. The dreamer, the joyous oarsman, lay on his back at the bottom of the boat, his heels in the air. "-about in boats-or with boats," the Rat went on composedly, picking himself up with a pleasant laugh (Grahame, 1908).

Analysis:

The data above show the external conflict between the characters and the nature. In data 6, the dusts that molded from the nature take the toll on Mole. The Mole, described as a hardworking and eager individual in the story, was cleaning his humble abode diligently. As he cleaned his entire home, the natural environment formed in dusts in his house hindered his determined self, making it quite hard for him to keep going as they targeted his throat and vision. Data 7 shows how the Mole struggles against nature. The sun above him was burning fires on the Mole, he who was still cleaning his little home with resilient. The sun, as the part of nature, never stopped illuminating down on his furry body unforgivingly and mercilessly, again, making it rather difficult to finish his tasks in hand. Data 8 presented how both the Mole and the Rat got hit against the nature. Both of them were currently on their journey on the boat, swaying freely alongside the gentle river. Until Mole suddenly cried out in warning rather too late. Just like the other part of the nature, the characters could not control it. Poor both of them found themselves with tilted boat from the abrupt collision against the bank.

From those three data above, the characters that involved in the conflicts used **Avoidance** approach. Just like in the real life, the characters involved in the story could not control the nature (unless in any particular genre). The only way the characters can overcome the conflict against nature is using this approach. The characters are forced to face against the unforgiving nature (the dusts and debris in data 6, the searing hot sun in data 7, and the heavy riverbank stream in data 8) to prevent the conflicts to intensify.

Conclusion

This study found 8 data of the external conflicts in the novel. *The Wind in the Willows* has surprisingly a plentiful number of conflicts in it both internal and external, knowing it is a children novel. The internal conflicts occur within the main characters and their mind and inner feelings. The journey of the four main characters in this novel often make them see each other's differently, resulting their inner thoughts about themselves or the others. Their individual characteristics and nature might get in their way and internal conflict might occurs. For example, the Toad in the story later is described as arrogant and prideful, leading him towards his own doom and trouble, and the Mole is described as hardworking and earnest in the story, who was eager to explore with his other friends, yet in the midway he suddenly felt homesick and lamented to himself. The external conflict, on the other hand, happens within the four main characters. Despite the main characters being friends, conflicts could still happen. Disagreements in ideas and different goals often lead them into external conflicts.

Additionally, the story takes place in nature-based settings, making the characters often get hit by the nature's wrath. The reason of the dominance of the external conflict in this novel is because of it has more than one main character, resulting in many disagreements and different mindsets between one another.

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