

Analyzing the Theme as Intrinsic Elements in Short Story Entitled “Runaway” by Alice Munro

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ABSTRACT

Short story in literature is a brief work of fiction that usually focused on a single plot, theme, or character. Short story has intrinsic elements like novel, and they are: plot, theme, setting, point of view, character and characterization, and symbol. This research paper aimed to analyze the intrinsic elements specifically the theme in a short story “Runaway” by Alice Munro. In this study, the data source is collected from the short story by Alice Munro entitled “Runaway”. The researcher uses qualitative method and theory of literature by Wellek and Warren to analyze and describe the result of this research. In Alice Munro's "Runaway," Carla, a young woman trapped in an abusive marriage, considers leaving with the help of Sylvia, her neighbor, but she eventually has to deal with the difficulties of fleeing societal norms and her husband's authority. The story examines issues of female friendship, domestic entrapment, and the struggle for independence. The result of this research found three main themes; female friendship, marital struggle, and pursuit of freedom.

Keywords: *themes, intrinsic elements, short story, runaway, Alice Munro*

ABSTRAK

Cerpen dalam sastra merupakan karya fiksi singkat yang biasanya terfokus pada satu alur, tema, atau tokoh. Cerpen mempunyai unsur-unsur intrinsik seperti halnya novel, yaitu: alur, tema, latar, sudut pandang, tokoh dan penokohan, serta simbol. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis unsur intrinsik khusus tema dalam cerita pendek “Runaway” karya Alice Munro. Dalam penelitian ini sumber data dikumpulkan dari cerita pendek karya Alice Munro yang berjudul “Runaway”. Peneliti menggunakan metode kualitatif dan teori literatur Wellek dan Warren untuk menganalisis dan mendeskripsikan hasil penelitian ini. Dalam "Runaway" karya Alice Munro, Carla, seorang wanita muda yang terjebak dalam pernikahan yang penuh kekerasan, mempertimbangkan untuk pergi dengan bantuan Sylvia, tetangganya, tetapi dia akhirnya harus menghadapi kesulitan untuk melarikan diri dari norma-norma masyarakat dan otoritas suaminya. Ceritanya mengkaji isu-isu persahabatan perempuan, jebakan rumah tangga, dan perjuangan kemerdekaan. Hasil penelitian ini menemukan tiga tema utama; persahabatan wanita, perjuangan perkawinan, dan pencarian kebebasan.

Kata Kunci: tema, elemen intrinsik, cerita pendek, Runaway, Alice Munro

INTRODUCTION

Literature, as a creative form, has the significant ability to cross both space and time, providing an insight into the complex human experience. From the ancient stories that reflect through the halls of history to the modern narratives that reflect the complexities of the modern age. Literature serves as a mirror, capturing the essence of the human experience. As we go on a journey through the world of literature, our focus narrows to the distinct landscape of American literature. The

growth of American literature is a compelling story in and of itself, spanning periods and reflecting the cultural, social, and political processes that have formed the country. It reflects the country's struggle for identity, its search for justice, and its endless pursuit of the American Dream.

Within this expanding tradition of literature, the short story grows as an organized means of narrative expression, able to compress significant emotions and knowledge into a short frame. Short stories serve as important illustrations of the human experience, capturing brief occurrences that interact with universal truths. Working as brief narratives, they offer readers a concentrated yet significant exploration of the complexities of life.

A short story is a brief work of fiction that typically focuses on a single plot, theme, or character. Unlike novels, which are longer and more complex, short stories aim to convey a complete narrative within a limited word count. Short story has intrinsic elements like novel, and they are: plot, theme, setting, point of view, character and characterization, and symbol. This research focuses on the theme part of the intrinsic elements from the short story entitled "Runaway" by Alice Munro.

A short story entitled "Runaway" by Alice Munro is chosen for this study because it is one of the most famous works by Alice Munro. The Runaway book was well received in the market and won the Giller Prize in 1998 and 2004. Outside Canada, Munro's Runaway was the number-one bestseller in America immediately after it was launched. "Runaway" follows Carla, a young woman who lives in a remote Canadian village with her husband, Clark. They maintain a horse farm together, but their relationship is filled with tension and control issues, mostly due to Clark's manipulative and sometimes aggressive behavior. Carla befriends Sylvia Jamieson, an older, wealthy woman who lives close by. Sylvia offers Carla the opportunity to leave her unpleasant marriage by arranging for her to stay with her in-laws in Toronto. Carla initially accepts Sylvia's help, and the narrative follows her internal conflict as she prepares to leave Clark. However, as she prepares to board the bus to Toronto, Carla experiences an increase of doubt and anxiety, prompting her to return to her husband. Intrinsic element is the aims of this study, especially the theme in the short story by Alice Munro. The theme in the intrinsic element is chosen because it is a key idea to understand a story. This article is presented to give the reader a better insight into the intrinsic element of the short story, especially the theme.

METHOD

This research uses qualitative method to analyze the intrinsic elements specifically the theme from the short story entitled "Runaway" by Alice Munro. The steps taken to analyze the data are as follows: The data was gathered by reading and comprehending the short story entitled "Runaway" by Alice Munro. Furthermore, the collected data was used to identify and examine the intrinsic elements that make up the work. Applying the theory of literature by Wellek and Warren (1963), the researcher analyzes the intrinsic elements of the short story. Finally, the results obtained in this study were concluded.

FINDING AND DISCUSSION

As previously mentioned, short story has intrinsic elements like novel, and they are: plot, theme, setting, point of view, character and characterization, and symbol. This research finding is focused on the theme part of the intrinsic elements. Theme refers to a fundamental concept or basic idea that runs throughout the story, connecting characters, events, and emotions into an organized and meaningful whole. It produces the story's overall message or knowledge, giving readers a piece of knowledge to understand and connect with the plot's events as they unfold. Themes could explore universal concepts like love, sorrow, resilience, or the passage of time. Essentially, the theme acts as the story's center point, filling it with depth, purpose, and meaning. This research delves into the themes that are found in the short story entitled "Runaway" by Alice Munro, uncovering the theme that are used by the author to enrich the story.

In short story "Runaway" by Alice Munro, there are 3 main themes:

1) Female Friendship

The first significant theme in the short story "Runaway" is female friendship. The author, Alice Munro experienced the difficulties and challenges of female friendship through the characters of Carla and Sylvia.

It reflected on the text, "Carla told her about Clark's temper, the way he could go from being sweet to being angry in a second" (page 14). In this text, Carla confides in Sylvia about her troubled marriage, showing her trust and the depth of their friendship.

The theme focuses on the portrayal of friendship, focusing on the connection and interaction between the two women. As the central theme of the story, Alice Munro portrays their relationship that goes beyond what can be seen. Portraying it as an intimate connection that serves as the main point of the narrative. The exploration of female friendship becomes interesting because the readers can see the complexities of female friendship in this story. She reveals many experiences and unspoken understandings, capturing the emotional complexities that define true friendship between women.

It shows in the text for example an unspoken understanding, "Sylvia looked at her with eyes that seemed to say she understood everything, and Carla felt a surge of emotion she could not name" (page 24). In this text, Sylvia understands Carla's situation without her needing to explain it in detail, reflecting their deep connection.

Another example for emotional complexities between Sylvia and Carla, "She listened to Sylvia's calm voice, feeling a sense of relief wash over her, as if she was not alone anymore" (page 27). In this text, Sylvia provides emotional support to Carla, which is especially significant when Carla feels isolated.

As the story progresses, the theme becomes a dynamic force. The story reveals the significant impact of choices on the dynamics between Carla and Sylvia. Alice Munro carefully portrays how personal decisions, desires, and societal expectations can hinder and reshape the female friendship.

2) Marital Struggles

The second significant theme is marital struggle in the short story. The author, Alice Munro describe the challenges and difficulties in the marriage between Carla and Clark. The story is not just about the connection between two people in marriage, Alice Munro added more complex dynamics on how societal norms and expectations can affect the relationship in marriage, especially between Carla and Clark.

It shows in the story, "She had begun to feel a little as if she was a prisoner here, as if she had made some crazy bargain to stay in this place." (page 10). In this text, Carla feels trapped in her marriage, constrained by societal expectations of a traditional wife.

Another example where societal expectation affect the marriage is shown in the text, "'You'd be nothing without me,' he said. 'Who would you be? What would you do?'" (page 16). Clark manipulates societal expectations to his advantage, making Carla feel guilty for wanting to leave.

The author, Alice Munro reveals the internal conflicts in the marriage between Carla and Clark, revealing the tension between personal desires and societal expectations. As the story goes on and Carla escapes, the story becomes a reflective journey. This theme adds complexities to the story, providing an exploration of the human relationship between Carla's and Clark's marriage.

3) Pursuit of Freedom

The third significant theme in the short story "Runaway" is the pursuit of freedom. The main theme of the short story "Runaway" is the exploration of the pursuit of freedom. Alice Munro provides the readers with a story that explores how characters seek freedom in various different ways. Whether it is through a physical escape, emotionally, or becoming independent. This theme of freedom gives the story complexities, on how the entire story can link each character's journey. Carla as the main character takes the main spotlight in this theme. The author portrays Carla's journey to break free from the marriage and societal expectations that hinder her. It reflected in the text, "She walked down the road, her heart pounding, each step taking her further away from Clark and the life she had known" (page 32). In this text, Carla makes a concrete attempt to leave, symbolizing her break from societal expectations. In this story, we can also see the author's main point in this theme, is portraying that freedom is a complex and vast concept, revealing how each character can use the concept differently. This story reveals the diversity and complexity of individual pursuits, showcasing the character's struggles to achieve their version of freedom.

The theme of this short story is affected by the era in which it is set, significantly influencing aspects such as female friendship, marital struggle, and the pursuit of freedom. During the mid-to-late 20th century, societal norms limited women to their own homes, influencing their relationships and limiting their chances. The feminist movement began to challenge traditional norms, offering a foundation for pursuing happy lives. Marital troubles reflect unhappy wives limited options, as

divorce was less acceptable and financially risky before the changes in legislation in 1968. The desire of personal freedom reflects the era's evolving views toward women's independence and self-development. Cultural shifts emphasized personal freedom and equality, as more women entered the workforce sector and higher education, challenging traditional gender norms.

CONCLUSION

The findings above show, the concept of female friendship is portrayed by the connection between Carla and Sylvia in the "Runaway" short story. The author, Alice Munro reveals the depth of their bond, revealing underlying understanding and emotional complexity that construct genuine female friendship. This story deeply examines the influence of personal decisions and societal expectations on friendship, making the readers carefully understand the changes on the character connections. Additionally, she also adds the issue of marital conflicts, revealing the difficulties between Carla and Clark. The author provides the readers with a story that explores how characters seek freedom in various different ways. This story is about a complex exploration of the interaction between human desires and societal expectations.

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