

Bringing The Secret Life Of Bees in Literature Class to Strengthen The Students' Humanity

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ABSTRACT

This research is emphasized on the improving students' character especially in their humanity character. In fact, there are many students do not realize that humanity decreases every day. Furthermore, they do not get some humanity aspects in their class because the lecturer only focuses on the teaching result. Here, the researcher tries to bring the humanity aspects in literature class exactly at Literary Criticism subject through Sue Monk Kidd's *The Secret Life of Bees*. The students are English department students in the third semester of Nahdlatul Ulama University of Sidoarjo. The researcher leads the students to use genetic structuralism theory in analyzing the novel. In this case, the researcher leads the students to see the literary work from two points of views namely intrinsic and extrinsic and connect directly the phenomena from that period of the literary works are created to the intrinsic element of the literary work itself. After the students find some information about the content of the novel and relate it to social phenomena that occurred in South Carolina in 1964. As the result, they find some racism action faced by Afro-Americans that are categorized in inhumanity attitude, they are; prejudice, segregation, discrimination, extermination, and expulsion. All of the attitudes show that the humanity is needed to teach to students in order to decrease racism and inequality in our life.

Keywords: secret life of bees, humanity, racism.

ABSTRAK

Penelitian ini ditekankan pada peningkatan karakter siswa terutama dalam karakter kemanusiaan mereka. Padahal, ada banyak siswa yang tidak menyadari bahwa kemanusiaan berkurang setiap hari. Selain itu, mereka tidak mendapatkan beberapa aspek kemanusiaan di kelas mereka karena dosen hanya fokus pada hasil pengajaran. Di sini, peneliti mencoba untuk membawa aspek kemanusiaan di kelas sastra persis pada subjek Kritik Sastra melalui *The Secret Life of Bees* karya Sue Monk Kidd. Mahasiswa adalah mahasiswa jurusan Bahasa Inggris di semester tiga Universitas Nahdlatul Ulama Sidoarjo. Peneliti mengarahkan siswa untuk menggunakan teori strukturalisme genetik dalam menganalisis novel. Dalam hal ini, peneliti mengarahkan siswa untuk melihat karya sastra dari dua sudut pandang yaitu intrinsik dan ekstrinsik dan menghubungkan langsung fenomena dari periode karya sastra yang diciptakan ke elemen intrinsik dari karya sastra itu sendiri. Setelah siswa menemukan beberapa informasi tentang isi novel dan mengaitkannya dengan fenomena sosial yang terjadi di Carolina Selatan pada tahun 1964. Hasilnya, mereka menemukan beberapa tindakan rasisme yang dihadapi oleh orang Afro-Amerika yang dikategorikan dalam sikap tidak berperikemanusiaan, yaitu; prasangka, segregasi, diskriminasi, pemusnahan, dan pengusiran. Semua sikap menunjukkan bahwa kemanusiaan diperlukan untuk mengajar siswa agar mengurangi rasisme dan ketidaksetaraan dalam hidup kita..

Kata Kunci: rahasia kehidupan lebah, kemanusiaan, rasisme

1. Introduction

In this era, there are many facts that show the decreasing of humanity not only in Indonesia but also in many countries in the world. These facts invite some teachers and lecturers to teach the humanity

character for their students in order to prevent the inhumanity attitudes between the students. According to Merriam-Webster online dictionary (2018) the humanity is the quality or state being human. Actually, there are some ways to teach humanity for the students. Here, the researcher as the lecturer of a literary criticism class tries to teach humanity character by inserting some humanity values through a literary work.

There are many literary works whose idea called for equality between whites and blacks and the exception of racism are written by blacks from 1700s up to this period. As explained by Horton (1991: 303) racism is a belief in inherited race differences, or a support of segregation and discrimination of the races which is often accompanied by strong prejudice and intense hostilities. Here, most of the literary works are admitted of having great contribution to the Black Americans struggle to establish the new future which are free from enslavement, oppression, injustice, inequality, discrimination, exploitation, and racism (Karenga, 1993: 416). This phenomenon proves that literary works can be the mirror of our social life. According to Fowter (1987: 135-136) explained that although literature is presented in an imaginative way, but it usually imitates, reflects, or at least describes the condition of the real society in which it is produced. That explanation shows that literature and society have a close relation. No wonder if many social phenomena can be reflected in literary works.

Sue Monk Kidd was born and raised in the tiny town of Sylvester, Georgia, which is tucked among the pinelands and red fields of Southwest Georgia. Her writing has deeply been influenced by place, and she mined her experiences of growing up in Sylvester as she wrote *The Secret Life of Bees* which was written in 1997 and she worked on it for the next three and a half years. It was published by Viking in 2002, which became a genuine literary phenomenon.

Here, the reasons why researcher used this novel for her research is because this novel used in literary criticism class which was thought for the third semester students of English department in Nahdlatul Ulama University of Sidoarjo. The second reason is because Kidd's *The Secret Life of Bees* has a powerful story of the coming age, the race relations, ability of love to transform our lives. It is also because Sue Monk Kidd's *The Secret Life of Bees* gives feminine divine and the novel tells the story of fourteen years old Lily who runs away with her black housekeeper.

Another reason is *The Secret Life of Bees* by Sue Monk Kidd has unique characteristics especially in its theme that includes the civil rights and irrationally of racism in the American South during the 1960s, the power of female community and the importance of storytelling. In this novel there are many racism which show that inhuman attitude can appear everywhere toward everyone in this world. Kidd's *The Secret Life of Bees* teach us to be more humane because it has strong and willful characters and gives more understanding for the researcher about the relationship.

This research is conducted to reveal the forms of White's racism faced by Afro-Americans as reflected in Kidd's *The Secret Life of Bees* and to find out how White's racism faced by Afro-Americans in Kidd's *The Secret Life of Bees* as reflection of the real society of South Carolina in 1964.

The finding of the research is for the one who has a great attention on literary work and who are involved in social study. In addition, the result of this research is also expected to be an alternative example of literary criticism that it discussed about racism which is a form of inhuman attitude. On the other side, this result of this research gives more understanding to the students about the White's racism faced by Afro-Americans in Sue Monk Kidd's *The Secret Life of Bees*.

2. Research Method

analyze the novel by using Genetic Structuralism as the approach to reveal the forms of White's racism faced by Afro-Americans as reflected in Kidd's *The Secret Life of Bees* in order to teach the

students how to be more humane. This research applies the Genetic Structuralism emphasizing on Dialectical model and focuses on White's racism faced by Afro-Americans in South Carolina in 1964. But, the researcher believes that this novel can be analyzed by using other literary criticism such as Sociological and Expressive literary criticism.

The primary data of this research is all the data from the novel "The Secret Life of Bees" written by Sue Monk Kidd which published by Headline Book Publishing in 2005. The mind data might be present in the form of words, phrases, sentences, paragraphs, and dialogs throughout the novel which are related to inhumane attitudes which called by racism. The researcher also suggests the students to use the secondary data are like books, encyclopedias, articles from the internet and journal articles which are related to White's racism faced by Afro-Americans that is the reflection of the real condition of South Carolina in 1964. All of the secondary data above are only help the researcher analyze the primary data.

All the data are collected by the students and the lecturer. Then, researcher will analyze it. There are four steps in doing data analysis. The first step is organizing and separating the data by classifying the data as well as coding the data into forms of the racism. After that, the researcher relate the gained data with the real social phenomena of racial relation in South Carolina in 1964 that is revealed by the novel. The last step is drawing the conclusion to answer the stated problems.

3. Finding and Discussion

Based on the research objectives, this chapter is divided into two parts. In the first part, the researcher would like to present and analyze the data that collected by the students and the lecturer from Sue Monk Kidd's *The Secret Life of Bees*. It is about the forms of White's racism faced by Afro-Americans which may appear as racial prejudice, discrimination, segregation, expulsion, or extermination. The last part, the researcher compares the White's racism faced by Afro-Americans within the novel and the real condition of South Carolina in 1964.

1. The forms of White's racism faced by Afro-Americans

The researcher found that there are many kinds of White's racism faced by Afro-Americans in Sue Monk Kidd's *The Secret Life of Bees*. And those kinds of White's racism appear in the forms of prejudice, discrimination, segregation, expulsion and extermination.

a. Prejudice

The first form of racism that will be analyzed by the researcher is prejudice. Prejudice is a negative attitude toward a group of people who have some characteristics in common that is not shared by all people (Encyclopedia Americana, 1998: 545a). There are many attitudes, thoughts, sense or feelings that shown when Rosaleen goes to the Sylvan with Lily and they meet three men in the Esso station who hate Afro-Americans. Then, one of those men underestimates Rosaleen by calling her 'Nigger' because she was an Afro-American. It is described in some dialogs and statements in the novel, for example:

He looked up and saw us, Rosaleen fanning and shuffling, swaying side to side. 'Well, look what we got coming here' he called out. 'Where're you going, Nigger?' (*The Secret Life of Bees*, p.38-39)

'Your colored woman ain't here,' he said, looking at me. (*The Secret Life of Bees*, p.191)

The same situation was also shown by Lily's statement that describes about the Whites' prejudice to the Afro-Americans because the Afro-Americans' physical appearance:

At my school they made fun of colored people's lips and noses. (The Secret Life of Bees, p. 145)

T. Ray did not think colored women were smart. (The Secret Life of Bees, p. 97)

Actually there are many dialogs and statements that describe about prejudice in this novel. But, here the researcher only shows some examples of it.

b. Discrimination

Discrimination is not the same as prejudice. Prejudice refers to one's judgment, attitude, or state of mind, while discrimination refers to one's action toward others (Thio, 1991: 172; Horton et.al., 1991: 305). Some people assume that discrimination is the effect of prejudice. We cannot deny it because when different races become a hot issue and it makes bad effects in our life. It happens when Rosaleen is assaulted by the White men. They disturb Rosaleen as shown in the following quotations:

When the policeman got there, he said we had to get into the back of his car. 'You're under arrest,' he told Rosaleen. 'Assault, theft, and disturbing the peace.' (The Secret Life of Bees, p. 40).

She didn't speak another word till Mr. Gaston opened the cell door about a half later. 'Come on' he said. Rosaleen looked hopeful for a moment. She actually started to lift herself up. He shook his head. 'You ain't going any-where. Just the girl.' (The Secret Life of Bees, p. 46)

c. Segregation

Segregation is the physical separation or isolation of races by law or custom (Encyclopedia Americana, 1978: 523). Segregation in Encyclopedia of Sociology (1992: 1729) was originated to some Americans who seriously considered the idea of separating Blacks and Whites. It is a matter of fact that the Whites cannot do worship together with the Afro-Americans. So, the Whites separate their church and it becomes the rule.

On Sunday I thought they would go to church, but no, they held a special service in the pink house, and the people came to them. It was a group called the daughters of Mary, which August had organized. (The Secret Life of Bees, p. 131).

Moreover, this condition also appears in other public facility such as theater, funeral home and cemetery. It is described in the quotations below:

Sylvan Memorial Hospital was a low brick building with one wing for Whites and one for Blacks. (The Secret Life of Bees, p. 57).

The one it was hard to get a fix on was June. She taught history and English at the colored high school, but what she really loved was music. (The Secret Life of Bees, p. 106).

The quotations above show segregation in the novel. It happens because the minority groups believe that they are inferior and cannot struggle against the Whites' power.

d. Expulsion

According to Thio (1991: 177-178) Expulsion is a more drastic form of rejection. Societies have also used more drastic means of rejecting minorities, such as expulsion. In some cases, expulsion

forces a minor group to leave the country or areas, which are held by a dominant group. This condition happens when the Whites claim that the Afro-Americans cannot come and live in Mississippi as described in the following quotations:

I dropped a dime into the slot and took one of the papers, wondering if the story was inside somewhere. Rosaleen and I squatted on the ground in an alley and spread out the paper, opening every page. It was full of Malcolm X, Saigon, the Beatles, tennis at Wimbledon, and a motel in Jackson, Mississippi, that closed down rather than accepts Negro guest, but nothing about me and Rosaleen. (The Secret Life of Bees, p. 82).

The Whites society does expulsion because of the racial differences and Whites have a big prejudice that both Whites and Afro-Americans cannot live together.

e. Extermination

Extermination is the most drastic action against minorities by killing them systematically. Wholesale killing of a racial or ethnic group, called genocide, has been attempted in various countries (Bodard in Thio, 1991: 178).

There are many cases where the Whites kill Afro-Americans because of their race. It is described in The Secret Life of Bees through the dialogs that tell about the big events when the Afro-Americans are killed by the Whites for example when a man in Mississippi was killed for registering to vote, three Negro students chased with ax handles and a Negro man named Mr. Raines was killed by a shotgun from passing car in Georgia. As it is described in the quotations below:

An uneasy feeling settled in my stomach. Last night the television had said a man in Mississippi was killed for registering to vote, and I myself had overheard Mr. Bussey, one of the deacons, say to T. Ray, 'Don't you worry, they're gonna make 'em write their names in perfect cursive and refuse them a card if they forget so much as to dot and I or make o loop in their y.' (The Secret Life of Bees, p. 33).

If you stay here, those man are gonna kill you. I'm serious. They're gonna kill you, like those colored people in Mississippi got killed. Even T. Ray said so.' (The Secret Life of Bees, p. 59).

The novel describes that Afro-Americans are the victims of the Whites' violence. Many of the Whites kill some Afro-Americans to show their domination and because of that some of the Whites are called by nigger-hater or racist people. As the result, there are many conflicts that make many Afro-Americans were dead. In some cases the Whites exterminate the Afro-Americans systematically to destroy their race.

From the Explanation above, it is clear that the novel describes about the forms of the Whites' racism faced by Afro-Americans, which appear in prejudice, discrimination, segregation, expulsion, and extermination. All the forms of the Whites' racism faced by Afro-Americans were shown in the words, sentences, paragraph, and discourse in the novel.

2. The Real Condition of South Carolina 1964 as Revealed in the Novel

All the forms of Whites racism faced by Afro-Americans in the novel have setting in South Carolina 1964 United States. There are some events in the novel that reflect the real conditions at that time. It is described when in South Carolina there is news in television said that there is a Civil Rights Act that happens in United States. As the next narrates:

I had to get the news from the TV man. ‘Today, July second, 1964,’ he said. ‘The president of the United States signed the Civil Rights Act into law in the East Room of the White House...’ (The Secret Life of Bees, p. 25).

The quotation above reflects the Civil Rights Act, as it is approved initially by the House of Representatives, provided the strongest federal protection to date against racial discrimination (United States Information Agency). So, the Civil Rights Act in the novel is as the result of the forms of the Whites’ racism faced by Afro-Americans in United States. As it has been described in Encyclopedia Americana (1998: 28) that the Civil Rights Act begin in 1955 in Montgomery, Ala., when a Black woman, Rosa Parks, was arrested for refusing to give up her seat in the front of a city bus to a White man. This event happened on December 1, 1955 in Montgomery. Montgomery Negroes waged a yearlong boycott of city buses that ended victoriously when the U.S. Supreme Court declared segregation in buses unconstitutional. The Montgomery boycott produced the Montgomery Improvement Association, headed by an eloquent young minister named Martin Luther King, Jr. The association soon became the broader Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC), which waged the most spectacular protest of the early 1960’s, producing the federal civil rights legislation that reshaped Southern race relations. This fact also described also described in the text below:

I didn’t know whether to be excited for her or worried for her or worried. All people ever talked about after church where the Negroes and whether they’d get their civil rights. Who was winning-- the white people’s team or colored people’s team? Like it was a do-or-die contest. When that minister from Alabama, Reverend Martin Luther King, got arrested last month in Florida... (The Secret Life of Bees, p. 25-26).

The Civil Rights Act of 1964 that is described in the novel is the true event and it can be seen from the long period of the Afro-Americans’ to get the racial equality. It is shown in the table of “The Long Road to Racial Equality in the United States” below:

Table 1. The Long Road to Racial Equality in the United States

Year	Event
1950	The U.S Supreme Court rules that the University of Texas must admit blacks to its law school
1954	The U.S Supreme Court in <i>Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas</i> rules unanimously that segregation in the public schools violates the Constitution. The Court also applies its ruling to higher education.
1955	The Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr., leads a black boycott of the Montgomery, Alabama bus system.
1957	President Dwight D. Eisenhower dispatches U.S. troops and federalizes the Arkansas National Guard to carry out federal court’s order to admit nine black students to Central High School.

	The Civil Rights Act of 1957 creates a Civil Rights Commission and sets up a Civil Rights Division in the Department of Justice.
1960	The Civil Rights Act of 1960 strengthens voting rights of minorities.
1961	President John F. Kennedy creates the President's Committee on Equal Employment Opportunity.
1964	President Lyndon B. Johnson signs Civil Rights Act of 1964, which prohibits discrimination for reason of colour, race, religion, or nation origin in places of public accommodation. Title VI bars discrimination in programs receiving federal aid and Title VII forbids discrimination in employment and on the basis of sex. The act also established the Equal Opportunity Commission.
1965	The voting Rights Act of 1965 authorizes the attorney general to appoint federal registrars to process vote applications in areas of high discrimination.
1968	The Civil Rights Act of 1968 becomes law and sets up a timetable so that by 1970 discrimination in selected housing would end.

(Timeline: The Long Hard Road to Educational Equality, Education Record (1988: 16-21))

The forms of the Whites' racism faced by the Afro-Americans which were described in the novel are prejudice, discrimination, segregation, expulsion and extermination. Actually, all those forms of racism really happen in South Carolina in 1964. As Conlin (1984: 813) said that African Americans in South Carolina in 1964 there were many difficulties to reach their Civil-rights. Although Lyndon B. Johnson, who pushed through the Civil Rights Act of 1964, effectively outlawing school segregation and the "white" and "colored" signs on public accommodations that had marked everyday life in South especially in South Carolina.

In 1964, South Carolina was filled by the Whites' racism especially in the form of prejudice. The Whites look at the Afro-Americans as the strange creation and they have many negative thoughts for the Afro-Americans. In the novel, the forms of prejudice are described in the chapter before.

The physical appearance of Afro-Americans also makes the Whites' prejudice to Afro-Americans. In addition the forms of discrimination, segregation, expulsion and extermination that described in the novel are reflect the real condition of South Carolina in 1964.

4. Conclusion and Suggestion

All of explanations above show that the researcher found the forms of the Whites' racism faced by the Afro-Americans depicted in Kidd's *The Secret Life of Bees* that reflect the real condition of South Carolina in 1964. The result of this research teaches us to understand about kind of racism

attitudes that include in inhuman attitudes. From this research we can learn how to respect each other and how to be more humane.

The race phenomena in the South Carolina in 1964 can be the researcher's motivation to suggest all the people especially the students to decrease the differentiation between each race that can result racism. So, as the same creation we have to look at others as we look at ourselves and think that they are the same as us. We are not going to look at the differences but think that differences are beautiful.

The researcher emphasizes that through this research she can appreciate the differences and it can teach us to be more humane also we can make it as the sword to get a peace in Indonesia. Because a heterogenic country, Indonesia still faces many problems and conflicts which are caused by the differences among races, religions and groups in Indonesia. Therefore, it is important for Indonesian to reduce the conflicts to reach a better future.

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