

Exploring Characterization of Christopher Boone in Mark Haddon's *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time*

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Abstract:

This study focuses on analyzing the characterization of the main character, Christopher Boone, in Mark Haddon's novel *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time* using the New Criticism approach. The purpose of this study is to determine how the main character, Christopher, is portrayed in the novel through direct and indirect characterization. This study employs a qualitative descriptive method, with the primary data collected directly from the novel itself. This analysis focuses on textual evidence in the novel that reflects Christopher's traits, which are then categorized into direct and indirect characterization. Findings from this study indicate that direct characterization depicts Christopher as a brilliant mathematician, with logical reasoning, honesty, and discomfort with physical contact. Meanwhile, indirect characterization, demonstrated through his communication style, shows that he always avoids interaction with others, and his relationship with his parents also consistently shows that he understands his emotions. This research shows that Mark Haddon's novel builds a unique character for the main character, Christopher, through the text description in the novel, which allows readers to experience the world from his unique perspective. This study provides a theoretical contribution to literary studies by reinforcing the importance of characterization as an intrinsic element of fiction and practically provides insight into how characterization techniques can shape distinct characters.

Keywords: Mathematics; Physical Contact; Communication Style.

Abstrak:

Penelitian ini berfokus untuk menganalisis karakterisasi tokoh utama, yaitu Christopher Boone, dalam novel *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time* karya Mark Haddon dengan menggunakan pendekatan New Criticism. Tujuan dalam penelitian ini adalah untuk menentukan bagaimana tokoh utama, Christopher digambarkan dalam novel melalui karakterisasi langsung dan tidak langsung. dalam Penelitian ini menggunakan metode deskriptif kualitatif, dengan data utama yang diambil langsung dari novel itu sendiri. Analisis ini berfokus pada bukti teks dalam novel yang mencerminkan sifat-sifat Christopher, yang kemudian dikategorikan ke dalam karakterisasi langsung dan tidak langsung. Temuan dalam studi ini menunjukkan bahwa karakterisasi langsung menggambarkan Christopher sebagai sosok yang sangat cerdas dalam matematika, memiliki penalaran logis, kejujuran, dan ketidaknyamanan dengan kontak fisik. Sementara itu, karakterisasi tidak langsung, ditunjukkan melalui gaya komunikasinya, yang menunjukkan bahwa ia selalu menghindari interaksi dengan orang lain, dan hubungannya dengan orang tuanya yang juga selalu menunjukkan bahwa ia memahami emosinya. Penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa novel Mark Haddon membangun keunikan tersendiri untuk tokoh utama, Christopher melalui deskripsi teks dalam novel, dimana membiarkan pembaca mengalami dunia dari perspektif uniknya. Studi ini memberikan kontribusi teoretis bagi studi sastra dengan memperkuat bagaimana pentingnya karakterisasi sebagai unsur intrinsik fiksi, dan secara praktis dapat memberikan wawasan tentang bagaimana teknik karakterisasi dapat membentuk karakter yang jelas.

Kata Kunci: Matematika; kontak fisik; gaya komunikasi



INTRODUCTION

Characterization is a technique used by writers to build and develop the traits of each character. Characterization is described either directly through explicit description or indirectly through speech, actions, thoughts, appearance, and reactions of other characters (Mulyawan, 2025). One novel that demonstrates the power of characterization is Mark Haddon's *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time* (2003). The novel centers on the main character, Christopher Boone, a fifteen-year-old intelligence in logic and mathematics, but has difficulty understanding emotions and interacting socially. The story in this novel is told directly from Christopher's point of view, allowing readers to experience the world through the narrator's unique lens. The story begins when Christopher finds his neighbor's dog dead. Driven by intense curiosity and his love of dogs, Christopher decides to investigate who killed his neighbor's dog. Therefore, the researcher uses direct characterization to describe Christopher's intelligence and limitations in the novel, as well as indirect characterization through dialogue, thought patterns, and Christopher's reactions to his environment.

Research on this novel has also been extensive, including previous studies by Labiba et al. (2023), which discuss how Christopher, who wants to find out who killed his neighbor Mrs. Shears' dog, becomes a detective like Sherlock Holmes even though he has Asperger's syndrome. Meanwhile, Muller (2006) discusses how it represents Christopher in a way that challenges the boundaries between normality and disability. Although both studies are important, their main focus tends to connect the text with external contexts, such as focusing more on Christopher's mental health, namely, aspergers syndrome, and how disability is represented. From this, it can be identified that there is a research gap in previous studies. Previous studies have indeed made significant contributions, but no one has conducted specific research examining how Christopher Boone's character is constructed solely through textual strategies, namely intrinsic analysis, using the New Criticism approach, which focuses on the intrinsic elements of the text, without involving the author's biography, social context, or external history. Therefore, this research is needed to fill this Christopher Boone's characterization in depth, both direct and indirect.

Based on these issues, this study focuses on how Christopher Boone is characterized through direct and indirect characterization in Mark Haddon's novel *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time*. The significance of this study can be seen from two aspects, namely theoretical and practical. Theoretically, this study contributes to literary studies by



enriching the discussion of characterization, an intrinsic element of fiction, and by demonstrating the relevance of the New Criticism approach in analyzing the novel *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time*. However, in practice, this research can help researchers and readers understand how characterization creates unique characters such as Christopher Boone. Therefore, characterization here does not only focus on storytelling techniques. Through this analysis of Christopher Boone's characterization using the New Criticism approach, this research aims to fill gaps in previous research and provide a deeper understanding of how Mark Haddon created a unique protagonist and left a distinct impression on readers.

LITERATURE REVIEW

New Criticism

New Criticism is a critical theory developed by John Crowe Ransom, an important development in 20th-century literary analysis. This theory emphasizes a deep reading of the text, focusing on language, structure, and meaning, rather than the external context or the author's intentions. This study uses New Criticism as its theoretical basis (Ransom, John Crowe, 1941). The main principle of New Criticism is that literary works should be treated as organic wholes, in which each intrinsic element, such as characters, plot, theme, setting, and style, is connected and forms a coherent whole (Ransom John Crowe, 1941).

Characterization

In this research study, characterization theory is the main focus. It explains that characters in literary works are individuals with moral and emotional qualities that readers interpret. Meanwhile, Devices (2024) asserts that characterization can be presented in two ways, namely: Direct characterization: the author explicitly describes the nature, personality, or character of the character, and Indirect characterization: the character's nature is shown through speech, thoughts, actions, appearance, and other characters' responses to them. The study characterization has long been an important focus in literary criticism. Abrams. M. H (1993) defines a character as a person represented in a narrative or dramatic work who has moral, intellectual, or emotional qualities that the reader can interpret. Characterization, in this case, refers to the methods used by the author to construct and develop these qualities. A number of previous studies have examined Mark Haddon's novel *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time* from various perspectives. Much research has also been conducted on this novel, such as Labiba et al. (2023), who

examined it from a psychological perspective, focusing on how Christopher, who wants to find out who killed his neighbor Mrs. Shears' dog, becomes a detective like Sherlock Holmes even though he has Asperger's syndrome. Meanwhile, Muller (2006) analyzes *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time* through disability theory, emphasizing how the novel depicts Christopher in ways that challenge the boundaries between normality and disability.

The studies conducted show that Haddon's novel is rich in potential for academic discussion, with its main focus on connecting the text to external contexts, such as disability, psychology, and or narrative techniques. However, the characterization itself has never been studied. This could be a research gap that this study aims to fill. Using New Criticism as a theoretical approach, this study examines how Christopher Boone's character is shaped through direct and indirect characterization. This approach is also expected to provide a more balanced understanding of how characterization contributes to the novel's unity and meaning as a work of literature.

RESEARCH METHODS

Research Design

This study uses a qualitative descriptive method because it focuses on dialogue, words, meaning, and text analysis, rather than numerical data.. The object of this study is Mark Haddon's novel, *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time* (2003). The analysis focuses on the characterization of the main character, Christopher Boone, as described in the novel. This study employs New Criticism, emphasizing close reading and analysis of the novel's intrinsic elements. Therefore, this study does not require fieldwork, as the entire text of the novel serves as the main data source.

Research Instruments

The main instrument in this study is the researcher himself, supported by New Criticism theory and the characterization theory framework with the following steps: first, identifying texts in the novel related to direct characterization: and second, identifying texts in the novel identifying texts in the novel that are related to indirect characterization, The third step is to classify the text data in the novel into these characterization categories.

Research Procedure

The research procedure in the novel *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time* is as follows by determining or selecting the research object, namely the novel *The Curious*

Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time by Mark Haddon, collecting previous research to find gaps in the research, reviewing relevant theories related to issues in the novel, namely New Criticism and characterization, rereading the novel to identify evidence regarding the characterization of Christopher Boone, taking excerpts from the text that describe direct and indirect characterization, analyzing the data using a characterization framework, interpreting how direct and indirect characterization represent Christopher Boone's personality. Through this research, the researcher aims to present a systematic and objective analysis of Christopher Boone's characterization.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

After reading the novel, identifying its issues, and determining the theory, this section will list the points found in the novel one by one.

Direct Characterization

Mathematical Thinking

Christopher is directly portrayed in the novel as someone who loves to think in terms of logic and mathematics. At the beginning of the story, he introduces himself by saying, "MY NAME IS Christopher John Francis Boone. I know all the countries of the world and their capital cities and every prime number up to 7,507". (Haddon, p 3). This statement shows that Christopher relies heavily on his rational thinking, which is very logical and fits with his intellect. It also explains that he can name every prime number up to 7,507, which he uses to number the chapters of his book. For example, on the first page of the novel, he starts with the number 2, not 1. His intense interest in numbers, patterns, and logic plays an important role in Christopher's own worldview.

Emotional Traits

Christopher said,

"She was shouting, 'What in fuck's name have you done to my dog?'
I do not like people shouting at me. It makes me scared that they are going to hit me or touch me, and I do not know what is going to happen."
(Haddon, p. 5).

The above statement shows that although Christopher has difficulty expressing his feelings directly, he can feel his emotions intensely and experience them as frightening events. The narrative shows that Christopher is afraid of loud noises, whether they come from humans or objects, which confuses him and makes him wonder what will happen.

Indirect Characterization

Communication and Social Interaction

Through his narrative, Haddon indirectly shows Christopher's difficulty in communicating socially.

'I was holding the dog,' I replied.
'And why were you holding the dog?' he asked
'Why were you holding the dog?' he asked again.
'I like dogs,' I said (Haddon, p. 11).

This conversation clearly shows that Christopher is having difficulty interacting with others. This happens when the police arrive at the request of Mrs. Shears, his neighbor and the dog's owner, to interrogate Christopher because he was the first person to hold the dog when it died, as seen when the police officer asks about his neighbor's dead dog. Christopher is unable to understand the police officer's tone, emotions, or intentions, but he tries to answer literally and logically.

Family Relationship

Christopher's relationship with his father has its own way of expressing affection.

"I stepped outside. Father was standing in the corridor. He held up his right hand and spread his fingers out in a fan. I held up my left hand and spread my fingers out in a fan, and we made our fingers and thumbs touch each other. We do this because sometimes Father wants to hug me, but I do not like hugging people, so we do this instead, and it means that he loves me."
(Haddon, p. 31).

When Christopher was taken to the police station for further questioning about the dog murder case, his father came to pick him up and explained to the police that Christopher was innocent. When his father arrived, he really wanted to hug Christopher, but couldn't because Christopher didn't like being hugged. Therefore, his father replaced physical affection with a "finger touch" gesture.

CONCLUSION(S)

An analysis of Mark Haddon's novel, *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time*, using the New Criticism approach shows that Christopher Boone's characterization is cohesively constructed through both direct and indirect characterization. Direct characterization portrays Christopher as logical, intelligent, and honest, with extraordinary abilities in mathematics. The emotional nature of the novel shows that characterization not only functions as a narrative tool but also as a means to explore human perception and individuality. Meanwhile, indirect characterization reveals his

difficulties in social interaction. Through these two techniques, Mark Haddon successfully portrays Christopher as a character who is different from the others. In addition, with research focused on intrinsic text analysis, this study highlights how the harmony between narrative perspective and characterization can strengthen the unity of the novel. For future research, it is recommended to use New Criticism theory with a disability studies approach to further explore how Christopher Boone's characterization challenges his boundaries as an individual with Asperger syndrome.

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