

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

Children's literature refers to works written explicitly for and targeted to children. It includes various genres, including picture books, chapter books, fairy tales, fables, folktales, and young adult novels. The definition of 'children's literature' is based on purpose: it wants to be something special, because it is intended to connect it with readers—'children'—who openly and deliberately express its concerns. But are children's literature written by children or for children? And most importantly: what does it mean to write a book 'for' children? If the book is written 'for' children, is it still a children's book if (only) read by adults? What about 'adult' books that are also read by children—are they 'children's literature'? As the British critic John Rowe Townsend put it: Surely Robinson Crusoe was not written for children, and wouldn't the Alice books also appeal to adults? if Tom Sawyer is children's literature, what about Huckleberry Finn?; if Jungle Books is children's literature, what about Kim or Stalky? And if The Wind in the Willows is children's literature, what about The Golden Age? and so on (Hunt 15). Children's literature plays a crucial role in shaping children's understanding of the world, values, and moral development. In defining 'children's literature' the most fundamental meaning for any critic who uses the term: books that are good for children, and especially good in terms of emotional and moral values (Hunt 15).

According to Davis, children's literature is a type of literature devoted to children directed by adult members of society (Sarumpaet 2). There are various characters, themes, and formats in children's literature. Books like The Alphabet and Numbers can be classified as children's literature. In addition, there are also picture books that contain stories of fantasy, history, biography, and reality. In essence, children's literature is everything with the theme of children, which includes the root part of literature. Experts have so many definitions of literature, depending on the intended context. Pantic states that literature can be a tool to learn something about ethics, morals, and the human condition in its intimate and universal aspects. Apart from being a means of entertainment, literature is also a tool for teaching morals (Pantic 401).

Moral is relative, depending on the place and situation, but literary works offer moral values related to the noble qualities of humanity that apply universally. In the history of the world, teaching moral values through stories, poetry, or literature has been an ancient moral education system (Khan 6). Literary works certainly carry messages and values that can be picked up by readers who are exposed directly or indirectly. Novels are included in the literary works category, written literary works containing the Author's moral views, which can be challenging because they may not be explained explicitly in the narrative. The Author may indirectly present their values through dialogue, conflict, characterization, or another device they choose. Readers may discover throughout their reading that things they consider morally good may initially result in evil, and things they view as immoral may result in good or ideal conditions. Moral differences from one place to another are undoubtedly

different. A work has its morals and may not be accepted in other areas because of various languages and cultures. Quoted from Sirridge, inter-linguistic translation, good criticism aims to create linguistic isomorphs of different languages. Critical labels aim to be finitely isomorphs; they attempt to re-present one or more features of the work in critical language, preserving their order, connection, and effect. However, a finite isomorph, even if true concerning some feature or features, will be inadequate concerning others (Sirridge 396). As a result of cultural differences, moral considerations from each place are different from what they should be. For example, eastern culture emphasizes age and experience to be respected in society, while Western culture emphasizes wealth and power to be respected in society. This triggers contextual moral rejection because the morals are different, but it does not mean they are wrong. Unite them; ethics is needed. Ethics has a code to guide expected behavior, including ethical standards that must be adhered to in certain situations. Morality regulates humans to make good and avoid bad choices in human life, and supporting the choice of good decisions requires actions.

Ethics and morals are related things but have different meanings. Morals usually connote an element of subjective preference, whereas ethics tends to suggest aspects of universal justice and whether an action is responsible. According to Baqai, Ethics in the moral approach refers to the system of moral principles that govern human actions and behavior. It involves understanding and adhering to the principles of right and wrong and making morally justified decisions (Baqai 89). Ethics in this context is concerned with treating others with dignity and respect, recognizing and respecting the humanity of all individuals, and respecting values such as fairness, honesty, and

compassion. It is about how individuals should behave and interact with others morally and ethically. From the explanation above regarding ethics and morals, literary works such as novels, especially children's books, carry a moral content that teaches morals and ethics to children from a young age to support a moral generation. To discuss morals and ethics in literature, which contains moral lessons to develop morals in early readers and prepare a moral future for the next generation, the writer chooses a children's book, *Diary of a Wimpy Kid*, by Jeff Kinney.

The *Book Diary of a Wimpy Kid* is actually a book that, in contrast, explains light comedy and the funny experiences of a wimp-boy and is packed with illustrations on each page of the book. It is a book that tells how a wimp kid tries to face his middle school years full of challenges and intends to become famous so that he does not face many obstacles. According to the National Research Council (US), the middle school environment is the key to developing individual character in the future; they spend more time in the school environment and start to decide everything independently without the help of their parents; it can be said that they are beginning to be matured by their middle school environment, whether it is a good or bad experience, it will affect the future (Collins 322). This book is comedy book and does not provide direct moral lessons for readers. Thus, the writer will reveal moral lessons by analyzing every action and consequence of the protagonist to classify these actions as moral or immoral. The story *Diary of a Wimpy Kid*, a children's literary work by Jeff Kinney, tells the story of a boy named Greg Heffley, who records his experiences in a diary. Greg faces various situations and challenges in this book at school and home. He strives to gain popularity, avoid ridicule, and navigate the complex world of youth.

Greg sometimes makes decisions that are only wise or moral, such as lying, cheating, or avoiding his responsibilities. However, through his experiences, Greg also learns a lesson. He realizes the importance of friendship and honesty and accepts the consequences of his actions. Greg knew about integrity, valued relationships with his family and friends, and recognized that good behaviors are important in everyday life. From the story, Greg is often a crybaby and imperfect, and he is experiencing moral development and facing the consequences of his actions. Middle school life is the most challenging thing for teenagers because playing during elementary school immediately causes significant and sudden changes in children. However, this is the period when children develop the best character because, at that point, they accept the consequences of everything they do, and they have to make amends when they make mistakes. As a story written in children's novel form, *Diary of a Wimpy Kid* presents humor and a unique point of view in describing Greg Heffley's moral journey.

Jeff Kinney writes the Book *Diary of a Wimpy Kid* and is a well-known writer and cartoonist known for creating the *Diary of a Wimpy Kid* book series. He was born in 1971 in Fort Washington, Maryland, United States. Before gaining fame as a writer, Jeff Kinney was interested in art and comics from childhood. He often draws and writes short stories. At 11, he started making comic strips for his school newspaper. His interest in art and writing continued to grow with age. After graduating from the University of Maryland, Jeff Kinney worked in software development and designed online games. He had the idea to create a character named Greg Heffley, who became the protagonist in the *Diary of a Wimpy Kid* series.

Initially, Jeff Kinney published the comic strip online in 2004, where it became known as *Funbrain.com* (Gunderson 3).

The success of the *Diary of a Wimpy Kid* series was tremendous, and the books were top-rated among children and young people. The novel *Diary of a Wimpy Kid* has received numerous awards and recognition for its contribution to children's literature. This work has won awards such as bestseller series book in The New York Times for 664 weeks, Nickelodeon Kids' Choice Award in 2008 and nominated in 2009, and Dorothy Canfield Fisher Children's Book Award in 2009. This series has also inspired millions of young readers worldwide to engage in reading and express their creativity through art and writing. The appreciation and popularity of *Diary of a Wimpy Kid* reflect the universal appeal of an entertaining story, tackles issues around growth, friendship, and moral values in a thought-provoking way, and provides unforgettable humorous entertainment. The series combines written narrative with compelling comic illustrations, making it accessible and relatable to many young readers. The books *Diary of a Wimpy Kid* have also been translated into many languages worldwide. Jeff Kinney has received numerous awards for his contributions to children's literature. He is recognized as one of the most influential writers in the genre, and his work has inspired countless children to read and express their creativity through art and writing. Jeff Kinney is recognized as one of the most influential writers in the children's genre, and his award reflects recognition for the quality of his work, which is engaging, entertaining, and impactful in conveying important moral messages to children and young people. His presence and dedication

to creating stories to entertain and motivate young readers have made him an important figure in modern children's literature.

1.2 Identification of the Problem

Moral lessons in children's stories should stimulate the younger generation during childhood to create a moral future. As the writer and animator in the children's book *Diary of a Wimpy Kid*, Kinney is responsible for helping develop morals in children readers.

In the story *Diary of a Wimpy Kid*, Kinney presents the idea that ingenuity and doing what the protagonist wants is the way to gain popularity to maximize happiness. Thus, the protagonist only does things that benefit him without thinking about the social consequences of his middle-school life. The author wants to analyze and unfold the moral lessons written by Kinney in the story *Diary of a Wimpy Kid* using consequentialism ethics.

1.3 Review of Related Studies

In writing this research the writer needs to review and take a look at previous studies on *Diary of a Wimpy Kid* and other literary works within similar topics. First is research by Catur Sapto Pamungkas from Universitas Negeri Yogyakarta in 2018 entitled *Character in Children Realism of Jeff Kinney Diary of a Wimpy Kid: The Ugly Truth*. This research aims to demonstrate that Greg Hefley, Rowley Jefferson, and Dad are appropriate for the realism novel and that the book *Diary of a Wimpy Kid: The Ugly Truth* is in the children's realism genre. The researcher thus employs the theory of children's literature, particularly Lukens's notion of genre and character.

This study uses a content analysis method for its qualitative research design. This study's principal source is a novel. The data sheets were the secondary instrument, with the researcher as the primary one. Triangulation, reading and rereading the data, and giving thorough, in-depth descriptions were all used to increase the data's credibility. The results of this study demonstrate that every literary device used in the book exhibited a realistic textual quality. There are parallels between the characters in this book and actual persons. The plot revolves around encounters with everyday people. The world of this book is exactly like the real one. The main focus is the aging process. The researcher also found that characters like Dad, Rowley Jefferson, and Greg Hefley work well in realistic fiction. They are real, complex, devoid of stereotypes, and have believable character attributes. According to the study, Jeff Kinney's book *Of a Wimpy Diary Kid: The Ugly Truth* genuinely portrays what it's like to be a regular middle school student. If reality is adequately portrayed, children who read will better understand human problems and relationships. Another researched is a journal article by Desiree Della, Bachrudin Musthafa, Ruswan Dallyono from Universitas Putra Indonesia entitled *Sibling Rivalry in Jeff Kinney's Diary of a Wimpy Kid: Rodrick Rules* (2008). The study examined Jeff Kinney's portrayal of sibling strife in *Diary of a Wimpy Kid: Rodrick Rules*. This study aims to investigate the portrayal of sibling conflict in *Diary of a Wimpy Kid: Rodrick Rules*. The three Hefley brothers—Rodrick, Greg, and Manny—act as subjects for an investigation of the book's sibling rivalry aspects using Freud's psychoanalytic theory of psychoanalysis. Hurlock's sibling rivalry theory also supports this research. A qualitative method is used to interpret the data in this study. The study examined Jeff

Kinney's portrayal of sibling strife in *Diary of a Wimpy Kid: Rodrick Rules*. This study aims to investigate the portrayal of sibling conflict in *Diary of a Wimpy Kid: Rodrick Rules*. The three Heffley brothers—Rodrick, Greg, and Manny—act as subjects for investigating the book's sibling rivalry aspects using Freud's psychoanalytic theory of psychoanalysis. Hurlock's sibling rivalry theory also supports this research. A qualitative method is used to interpret the data in this study.

In 2014, Ilmia Hidayatul Insani Primastuty from Universitas Brawijaya wrote a thesis entitled *Defense Mechanisms Employed by Greg Heffley in Diary of a Wimpy Kid Film*. Her research focuses on revealing how Greg Heffley carries out these defense mechanisms, which are caused by the anxiety he feels when interacting with certain people around him. This study employs a psychological methodology to ascertain the protective mechanisms that Greg Heffley employs. The psychoanalytic theory is then applied. Sigmund Freud's discoveries about the human psyche and its development are explained by psychoanalysis. Psychoanalytic theory explains why people use defensive mechanisms to protect themselves from anxiety in a number of ways. The main character in this study lowers his anxiety by employing a variety of protective mechanisms. According to this study, the primary character, Greg Heffley, always displays anxiety because he constantly has issues with the people in his immediate vicinity: Rowley Jefferson, Patty Farrell, Rodrick Heffley, Manny Heffley, Quentin, Mrs. Irvine, and Fregley. When Greg Heffley was succeeding in getting into his preferred class, there were issues with them. This study employs a psychological methodology to ascertain the protective mechanisms that Greg Heffley employs. The psychoanalytic theory is then applied. Sigmund Freud's discoveries

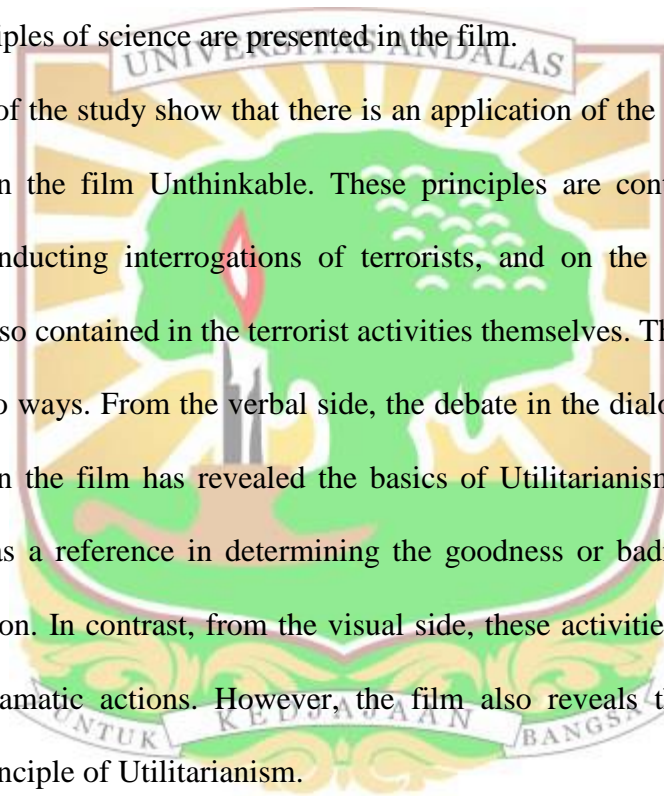
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The subsequent study from Sheryn Fathia Fajrin, Universitas Andalas in 2022 entitled *The Moral Contradiction of The Action of The Government in Aldous Huxley's Brave New World*. Her research aims in order to determine whether the government's use of technology to control the populace of the World State in Aldous Huxley's novel *Brave New World* can be morally justified, Sheryn examines why they do it in light of the utilitarian principles put forth by John Stuart Mill. In the novel, she also discusses and explains how technology's influence on society has led to numerous changes in people's lives. Because the government rules the people, the action cannot be categorized as moral because utilitarianism holds that happiness must be attained and pursued individual himself.

The following study by Holy Muhammad Mukmin Akbar from Universitas Brawijaya entitled *The Depiction of Utilitarianism Idea on The Movie Entitled "Unthinkable."* The research focus refers to exploring the moral dimension in literature through the lens of an ethical philosophy approach that places literature as a

product of society to reflect moral values. The thesis also uses mise en scene to explore visual forms of the application of Utilitarianism moral philosophy, where morality is considered an unacceptable value as a reference in defining truth. This happens because the basis of science, which comes from the principles of empiricism and rationalism, has placed morality as a value born from the basis of emotion, not common sense. Because of this basis, the theories that try to redesign morality values to suit the principles of science are presented in the film.

The results of the study show that there is an application of the moral principle of Utilitarianism in the film *Unthinkable*. These principles are contained in military activities in conducting interrogations of terrorists, and on the other hand, these principles are also contained in the terrorist activities themselves. These principles are presented in two ways. From the verbal side, the debate in the dialogue expressed by the characters in the film has revealed the basics of Utilitarianism morality, which actors believe as a reference in determining the goodness or badness of the moral value of an action. In contrast, from the visual side, these activities are described as unjustifiably dramatic actions. However, the film also reveals the importance of applying the principle of Utilitarianism.



1.4 Research Question

Based on the description above, the writer derived the research question as follows:

1. How is the moral reasoning of the protagonist revealed through his actions and the consequences in the story *Diary of a Wimpy Kid*?
2. What moral lessons can be learned through the story *Diary of a Wimpy Kid*?

1.5 Scope of the Research

This research focuses on the moral problems that come with the actions and consequences individually and socially, of life by the protagonist in the social life in *Diary of a Wimpy Kid*. The writer also seeks to analyze moral lessons throughout the novel based on consequentialism ethics.

1.6 Objectives of the Research

This thesis aims to analyze how Kinney describes the protagonist's actions in the book *Diary of a Wimpy Kid*. This thesis will examine the actions and consequences of the protagonist with the reason to do it based on consequentialism ethics to see whether they are morally justified.

