

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background of the Research

The environmental crisis is still one of the issues that are taking place around us, and global warming is getting worse, which is making the climate in many regions of the world unstable. According to CNBC International (2023), Southeast Asia is one of the regions that is most vulnerable to the effects of climate change, which causes heat waves to occur more frequently and makes the region's air pollution even worse. Temperatures in Laos, Vietnam, and Thailand were among the highest ever recorded for the region of Southeast Asia. In addition, the excessive heat caused new asphalt to melt on the road in Surat, India, which was 200 meters long and connected the Chandra Shekhar Azad Bridge to the Adajan Patiya area (Viva).

This issue arises as a result of humans failing to safeguard the environment by engaging in illegal logging and setting fire to large areas of forest; this, in combination with the greenhouse effect, contributes to the increase of global warming. Because of greedy humans, the habitats of many different species of wildlife have been destroyed. Based on Greenmatters (2022), The current flooding in Venice is caused by rising sea levels due to global warming, which will become a greater threat as the Arctic ice cap melts.

To reach the goal of living in harmony with nature, people have to put in a lot of work to understand the complicated link between humans and nature. People should be aware of how they use natural materials and how they treat the natural world. Instead of just taking advantage of or using nature, it's better to get into the

habit of only taking what you need without ruining it. This will help keep nature around for future generations. Engaging people to have environmental awareness can be done from an early age, which is children because they are still learning, watching, and acting out the right way to act and think.

So, literature can be used as one of the ways to teach children about important things, such as children's literature. Children's literature is a literary work intended for children that contains written works and accompanying illustrations intending to entertain or teach children. In the second half of the 18th century, children's literature began to emerge clearly as a distinct and independent literary form, having only reached the embryonic stages earlier. However, it has expanded so much over the twentieth century that it may be defended for the respect that other recognized branches of literature deserve, but perhaps not with the same enthusiasm (Fadiman). Children's books keep a sense of national identity alive, but they also keep a sense of humanity alive. Based on these things, children's books help kids understand their world and learn a lot. So, children's books can be a way to teach young people about protecting the earth.

Many children's books have environmental themes, such as *The Lorax* by Dr. Seuss (1971), *The Great Kapok Tree* by Lynne Cherry (1990), *Dear Greenpeace* by Simon James (1991), *City Green* by DyAnne DiSalvo (1994), *The Vanishing Rainforest* by Richard Platt (2003), *The Curious Garden* by Peter brown (2009), *Tidy* by Emily Gravett (2016), *The Lonely Polar Bear* by Khoa Le (2018), *We Are Water Protectors* by Carole Lindstrom (2020), and *Adventures with Finn and Skip: Forest* (2022). After reading these books, the researcher chose three of the ten children's books, which were *The Lorax* by Dr. Seuss (1971), *The Curious Garden*

by Peter brown (2009), and *Adventures with Finn and Skip: Forest* by Brendan Kearney (2022). These three books have more than one environmental issue described by the author, while the other books mostly only tell one environmental issue.

The Lorax written by Dr. Seuss (1971), *The Curious Garden* written by Peter Brown (2009), and *Adventures with Finn and Skip: Forest* written by Brendan Kearney (2022) show how important the role of trees is in our daily lives because it provides oxygen, reduces carbon dioxide, prevents flooding, makes the air cool, and has many other benefits. Through these books, it is hoped to increase children's awareness of the environment. Children are expected to change their view of their environment and that we as fellow living beings must treat nature well. Through these books, they can learn how to love animals and plants. Adults can also help them to love their environment by teaching them to throw garbage in its place, not harming plants, how to grow plants, how to love animals, and others. The other reason the researcher chose these works is because the books share the same problem of the importance of trees in the lives of humans and animals. These works tell how we can preserve nature by not cutting down trees carelessly.

This research will also show the destruction of nature that occurs in the real world as a real example of the problems that occur in these works. The researcher uses Western countries such as the United States and the United Kingdom as an example of areas facing natural destruction. The reason for this is that the researcher chose children's books written by American and British authors, thus the researcher wants to discover if there is a link between the writers' environments and the issues in their writings.

1.2. Identification of the Problem

One form of media that defines the relationship between humans and the environment is children's literature with an environmental theme. Thus, this research aims to raise environmental awareness among children through children's books. The researcher argues that the children's books *The Lorax* written by Dr. Seuss (1971), *The Curious Garden* written by Peter Brown (2009), and *Adventures with Finn and Skip: Forest* by Brendan Kearney (2022), show the same problem but a different type of relationship between man and nature, and how the authors make people aware of their environment. *The Lorax*, *The Curious Garden*, and *Adventures with Finn and Skip: Forest* tells the story of how important trees are when the air is polluted due to the loss of trees. There is the influence of nature on human life, and there is also the impact of human activities on nature. At this intersection, the researcher would like to emphasize the way each book conveys its lessons to the reader, who in this case is a child.

1.3. Review of Previous Studies

A variety of environmental challenges are surfacing right now. Human intervention and bad behavior undermine environmental sustainability. However, environmental issues have risen to the top of the agenda. As a result, several talks and studies have been done to uncover the human-nature interaction. As a result of the concerns, the researcher discovered some related research that has evaluated literary works that deal with comparable topics in human-nature interaction.

A Study about environmental damage in Children's books was conducted by Niğmet ÇETİNER entitled Landscape of the Anthropocene in *The Lorax* by Dr.

Seuss. The researcher aims to describe how the story revolves around anthropogenic devastation. The theory she uses to analyze Dr. Seuss's *The Lorax* is the Anthropocene theory. He also considered *The Lorax* as a projection of the real victimized nonhuman environment with its disturbed biosphere in the face of anthropocentric greed to make maximum profit out of exploiting nature. The research result of this article is that the researcher finds the atmosphere in the story reflects an effective narrative that points out the anthropogenic devastation that goes hand in hand with industrialization, capitalism, and urbanization, which can be observed worldwide. He also finds the imprints of Anthropocene in this literary work; the researcher finds that *The Lorax* displays a microcosm of habitat destruction leading to mass migration of species disturbed by human interference. He said that Once-ler's anthropocentric mindset and his actions as the owner of the factory left a permanent impact on the nonhuman environment and the animals. This research discusses environmental damage that occurs in literary works and the real world. This research does not discuss how to engage children to have environmental awareness. This research is more concerned with economic factors that cause environmental damage.

Another research that discusses the ecological crisis that occurs in children's media was conducted by Kylie Caraway and Brett R. Caraway in their article entitled *Representing Ecological Crises in Children's Media: An Analysis of The Lorax and Wall-E*. This article examines the representation of ecological crises in children's media. The researchers analyze these films in terms of anthropomorphic representations; displacement of collective aspects of ecological crisis to the level of interpersonal conflict; green-washing; and narratives of pastoralism and

replenishment. They examine these representations as indicators of an underlying crisis in capitalism and a struggle to come to terms with ecological destabilization. The researchers found that *The Lorax* and *Wall-E* are essentially the same story, which is unrestrained economic activity resulting in the ruination of the natural world, resolved through a technologically mediated replenishment and renewal of natural resources. They also found that both films offer a prognostic frame of return to a pastoral landscape, albeit one in which the worst impacts of economic activity are inexplicably absent. They believe that children's media can be used in beneficial ways to depict the relationship between human activity and nature.

The next study related to the topic of environmental awareness was carried out by Suciati Agustin and Eva Najma in their article entitled William Faulkner's Environmental Awareness in His *Go Down, Moses*. This article examines the author's environmental awareness that he expresses through the main character in this novel, Isaac McCaslin (Ike). The researchers analyze the data using qualitative methods and the results are presented with descriptive methods. They used ecocritical theories such as Greg Garrad's Pastoral and Leopold's Land Ethic, combined with M.H. Abrams' expressive approach. They use ecocriticism to look at the elements of nature depicted in literary works and then identify how the interaction between humans and nature is represented by the author. The researchers found that there are three forms of nature representation in the novel. First, classical pastoral (nature as a place for relaxation and reflection); second, romantic pastoral (rural life in an implicit or explicit contrast to urban life); and third, American pastoral (nature as a cultivated resource for farmland and

plantations). However, they only discuss the author's environmental awareness expressed through the story's main character.

Iris Jackeline Russo wrote a thesis titled *The Impact of Children's Literature on the Environmental Awareness of a Population of Second-Grade Students*. The purpose of this study was to help second graders in a large metropolitan city in Southern California's Inland Empire increase their environmental sensitivity and awareness by infusing the existing English Language Arts curriculum with environmentally related activities. The researcher conducted the activity by reading stories from a variety of children's literature about the environment; then the researcher provided a KWL chart. A KWL chart is a graphic organizer that helps students gather information and measure and assess their learning. KWL charts were assessed using a 'teacher-made rubric' created by the teacher based on the guiding objectives for this project which are: awareness, knowledge, attitude, skills, and participation. The results show that the awareness and knowledge scales had the greatest change based on the before and after KWL charts. The significant growth was in their awareness of the environmental issues discussed through the children's literature and the curriculum stories. More specifically, the two most common areas that showed significant growth were the awareness of what causes loss of habitat and the idea that our actions have an impact on the environment. This study did not analyze children's literature but the author surveyed children to see how children's literature influences their environmental awareness.

A thesis written by Yolanda Defika entitled *Children's Responsibility toward Nature in Roald Dahl's Children's Novels*. This research talks about the issues of natural destruction and children's responsibility towards nature in two

children's novels by Roald Dahl entitled *Danny the Champion of the World* and *The Twits*. The researcher used a qualitative method by applying Ecocriticism by Greg Garrad. The results of this study show that there are issues of natural destruction; animal abuse and ignorant adults in protecting the environment. Through the issues of natural destruction that are depicted in these two novels, Dahl indirectly educates children to be responsible for the care and best use of animals, respect and be kind to other people, and help others both humans and animals that are in trouble. Dahl conveys the responsibility through these two novels to show that children have an important role in saving nature from destruction. This study only describes the destruction of nature that occurs in children's literature and mentions that the author indirectly teaches children to be responsible for the surrounding environment.

1.4. Research Questions

The primary objective of this study is to identify various forms of the human-nature relationship as depicted in literary works such as *The Lorax* written by Dr. Seuss (1971), *The Curious Garden* written by Peter Brown (2009), and *Adventures with Finn and Skip: Forest* by Brendan Kearney (2022). The study will be carried out to address the following two inquiries:

1. How do the works present the condition of the environment in *The Lorax* by Dr. Seuss, *The Curious Garden* by Peter Brown, and *Adventures with Finn and Skip: Forest* by Brendan Kearney?
2. How do the authors depict environmental awareness in *The Lorax* by Dr. Seuss, *The Curious Garden* by Peter Brown, and *Adventures with Finn and Skip: Forest* by Brendan Kearney?

1.5. Scope of the Research

This research aims to examine various types of human-nature relationships as depicted in three literary works: *The Lorax* by Dr. Seuss (1971), *The Curious Garden* by Peter Brown (2009), and *Adventures with Finn and Skip: Forest* by Brendan Kearney (2022). Therefore, the researcher limits this study to two discussions. Firstly, the researcher analyses the condition of the environment represented in the selected children's books. Secondly, the researcher analyses how the authors depict environmental awareness in the selected children's books. In conducting the analysis, the researcher applies two theories, namely mimetic theory provided by M. H. Abrams, and Land Ethic provided by Aldo Leopold.

1.6. Objectives of the Research

This research mainly investigates the issue of environmental damage in children's literature. The discussion is related to the way the authors portray nature in their works and how the authors depict environmental awareness in the selected children's books. In addition, the objective of this research, which is related to the above problem statements, is to analyze how the authors describe the destruction of nature in their works and how they depict environmental awareness in their works.