

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background of the Research

Bullying has been a very common issue occurs at school. It is considered as a series of verbal, emotional or physical actions to hurt someone that are carried out repeatedly and are influenced by certain stratifications (Tarshis 139). As actions that affect other people, bullying contributes greatly in shaping the identity of the victim. Victims make adaptations marked by changes in behavior and social interactions with other people around them. Low self-esteem is the worst impact of bullying because it lasts for a long time (Baier 15).

The victims of bullying show certain behaviors when interacting with their surroundings. They sometimes show different attitudes. On the one hand, a person can act closed and tends to be silent. But on the other hand, that person can behave in the opposite way. This is influenced by the treatment of other people to a person so as to create a different atmosphere depending on the surroundings. It is also related to comfort and how an individual reads his character and personality towards other people, especially in different environments.

Literary work as an imaginary world created by the author has characters that interact with other characters. Character is an intrinsic element of a literary work. It means that character becomes one of the important parts in building a work. As one of the intrinsic elements, character has its own role in building the meaning of a work.

Characters in literary works often show two or more different personalities as a form of interaction with their environment. In showing the character's personality in literary works, the writer often shows a contrast between two things that show two or more characterizations of the same character. This is called a paradox. According to Tyson, paradox is related to contradictory conditions that represent other conditions (138). In certain characters, paradox is identified in the personality development.

Paradox in a character's personality often arises as a result of coping mechanisms against societal treatment, including bullying. Paradox in this case is the presence of multiple contradictory personalities when a character is dealing with society. A character has their own personality but then creates another personality to avoid rejection from society, which is manifested in the form of bullying. Simply put, the paradox here comes as a method to avoid the bullying that a character faces.

Children are individuals who are easily affected by bullying, especially in the school environment. Children show changes in the behavior of those with whom they interact. Children's literature as a medium for introducing morals and life values to children has illustrated cases of bullying and how children react to it. Children's literature writers in their works show how children deal with the environment and affect changes in their personality.

One of the children's literature writers is Raquel Jaramillo Palacio or better known as R. J. Palacio. She is well-known as an American author and graphic designer who has illustrated many children's books. She was born on July 13, 1963 in New York. Her bibliography includes 10 books, namely *Ride, Baby*,

Ride (1998), *Dream, Baby, Dream!* (1998), *Last Summer: A Little Book for Dads* (2004), *Wonder* (2012), *The Extraordinary* (2012), *Auggie & Me: Three Wonder Stories* (2014), *365 Days of Wonder: Mr. Browne's Book of Precepts* (2014), *We're All Wonders* (2017), *White Bird* (2019), and *Pony* (2021). Her masterpiece is *Wonder* (2021) which illustrates the life of a disabled child in his environment and how he deals with it.

Wonder (2021) is a middle grade novel written by R. J. Palacio which has made a major contribution to readers around the world and inspired the founding of the Choose Kind movement. The book itself was inspired by the author's personal experience during her trip with her sons meeting a girl with craniofacial abnormalities (Biolchini). This novel tells the story of a boy named Auggie who gets unpleasant actions because of his illness. *Wonder* is considered as a successful novel of R. J. Palacio. It won many awards, including a recipient of the Christopher Award (2013) and the 2014 Dorothy Canfield Fisher Children's Book Award (2014), Bluesteem and Caudill Awards (2014), the winner of the Maine Student Book Award (2014), the 2015 Mark Twain Award (2015), Hawaii's 2015 Nene Award (2015), the 2015 Young Hoosler Book Award (2015), and the Junior Young Reader's Choice Award (2015). Moreover, it has been on The New York Times Best Seller list and the Texas Blubonnet Award master list.

Wonder by R. J. Palacio focuses on the life of a child, named Auggie, a young boy with an anomaly on his face, as he learns to open up, step outside of his comfort zone, and deal with the challenges and disparities in real life, as well as the world around him. Auggie is described as someone who has low self-esteem and tends to try to avoid various problems. Despite that, he is also

described as someone who is fun and kind to his friends. As a victim of bullying, the behavior and way of interacting shown by Auggie as the main character of the *Wonder* novel to the environment around him looks different. On the one hand, Auggie is known as someone who closes himself off, stays away from his friends, and tries to avoid problems at school. But on the other hand, he is known as a character who likes to socialize, has a good sense of humor, and has many friends while playing games at home because no one knows his appearance. The character shown by Auggie has a contradiction between his life at school where people can easily notice his appearance and in games when other people don't need to see his limitations.

The story of Auggie in the novel *Wonder* by R. J. Palacio shows how a person describes his personality to avoid problems. In addition, Palacio as a writer also emphasizes that the attitude of society or the environment is more disabled than people with disabilities themselves (Casalme 28). For this reason, a person gives rise to two different personalities that only occur in two different conditions that are opposite each other. In Auggie's case, a phenomenon called a paradox occurs. On the one hand, Auggie shuts himself from the people at his school because of his appearance. But on the other hand, he confidently opens up in the game because others could not notice his appearance. I assume that the main character, Auggie, shows his personality in contrast depending on the environment in which he interacts as depicted in the novel *Wonder* by R. J. Palacio.

In this research, I investigated the depiction of the main character's personality in two different environments and how he deals with it in R. J.

Palacio's *Wonder*. The main character, Auggie, deals with two different personalities depending on the environment. In the first environment, he does not have any confidence and is afraid of the others. But in another environment, the opposite happens. Therefore, I decided to do research entitled “**The Paradox of Personality in the Novel Wonder by R. J. Palacio: A New Critical Analysis**” by using New Criticism on the formal elements of R. J. Palacio's novel *Wonder*.

12. Identification of the Problems

The main character of R. J. Palacio's novel *Wonder* illustrates the life of a bully victim named Auggie and how he deals with the people around him. In dealing with bullying, Auggie represents two different personalities to interact with people depending on the environment in which he interacts. At school, Auggie was insecure and didn't want to interact with other people because of his appearance which made him bullied. But in other conditions, Auggie is very confident and able to communicate well when playing games because other people don't need to see his appearance. In this case, I wanted to show Auggie's personality description in his interaction in two different environments through formal elements from R. J. Palacio's novel *Wonder*. I also believed that paradox has a big contribution in the depiction of Auggie's personality.

13. Review of Related Literature

In order to give a wider overview related to this research, some previous research related to the same topic, object, and theory used to analyze the novel in this research have been reviewed. The previous researches consist of articles of journal and senior thesis. I only reviewed the research related the topic of character's personality, the novel of *Wonder* by R. J. Palacio, the main theory of

New Criticism and the concept of paradox in analyzing literary works. These research helped me in conducting an analysis relating the problem by using New Criticism as the theory.

Research related to the novel *Wonder* by R. J. Palacio has been conducted by various researchers and scholars in also various topics. Pradana and Rifqi investigated self-actualization characteristics as found in Auggie's personality in their article entitled "Auggie's Self Actualization Described in Novel *Wonder* Written by R. J. Palacio" (Undergraduate Journal for Academic Research in Humanities vol. 1 no. 1, 2022). This research used structural approach combined with psychological approach and the theory of Self-Actualization by Abraham Maslow. As the result, they found many self-actualization characteristics in Auggie's personality, however, the most dominant self-actualization characteristics are more efficient perception of reality, continued freshness of appreciation, and interpersonal relations. This research has perfectly illustrated the personalities of Auggies in the novel of *Wonder* by R. J. Palacio and given a good overview for me to do a similar analysis towards the personality of Auggie. However, they used additional theory, namely psychoanalysis, together with the structural approach. Moreover, they need to consider other structural elements to uncover the personality.

The next research regarding the novel of *Wonder* by R. J. Palacio is written by Cantika and Hestiana in their article entitled "Kelainan Fisik Tokoh Auggie dalam Novel *Wonder* Karya R. J. Palacio" (PENAOQ: Jurnal Sastra, Budaya dan Pariwisata 2021, vol. 2 no. 2). They discussed two topics, namely the depiction of Auggie's appearance and his interaction with other characters in the

novel *Wonder* by R. J. Palacio. They used two theories to conduct the analysis, namely character theory by Abrams and plot theory by Nurgiyantoro. As the result, they found that the depiction of Auggie's appearance is depending on the perspectives of other characters. They also uncovered that Auggie has struggled because of his disability and survived. Moreover, they illustrated the relationship and interaction between Auggie, his parents, and his bestfriends which are being supportive and positive regarding Auggie's appearance. This research has given a good explanation dealing with the depiction of Auggie's appearance and the reaction of people around him. This research helps me in conducting this research by giving an example of objective research by focusing on the intrinsic elements of the work. However, they did not give a wider explanation regarding the theory they used.

The last topic is related to the theory of New Criticism and the concept of paradox. An article written by Rismawati, Sutejo, and Suprayitno entitled "Paradoks dan Ironi dalam Kumpulan Cerpen Pilihan Kompas 2016 *Tanah Air* (Kajian *New Criticism*)" (Jurnal LEKSIS, 2021 vol. 1 no. 1) investigated the paradox and irony in five selected short stories in the Short Story Collection of Kompas 2016. They applied New Criticism and semiotics in doing this research. As the result, there are different paradox and irony found in the five short stories. In *Tanah Air*, the paradox is nasionalism and death, meanwhile there are three types of irony found in this short story, namely verbal irony, dramatic irony, and situational irony. In *Perempuan Pencemburu*, the paradox is freedom and imprisonment, meanwhile the irony is situational irony. In *Nelayan yang Malas Melepas Jala*, the paradox is love and affair, meanwhile the irony is situational

irony. In *Istana Tembok Bolong*, the paradox is selling match and seeing women's genitals, meanwhile the irony is situational irony. In *Anjing Bahagia yang Mati Bunuh Diri*, the paradox is goodness and corruption, meanwhile the irony is situational irony and verbal irony. This research has perfectly explained the concept of paradox and irony by using New Criticism. It helps me by giving a good example of applying New Criticism and how paradox works in finding the meaning of the text. However, this research did not give a clear position of the application of semantics in order to analyze and find the result. They need to consider the use of theory in their research.

Lastly, the research related to the application of the theory is done by Sherly Dwi Putri in her thesis entitled "Monstrosity and Humanity in *Frankenstein* by Mary Shelley: A Formalistic Reading" 2020 (An undergraduate thesis of Universitas Andalas). The research is uncovering the contradiction personalities called monstrosity and humanity as depicted in the novel written by Mary Shelley, *Frankenstein*. The main theory is New Criticism by Cleanth Brooks. Result of the analysis shows that the concept of good and evil can be claim to either human and monster. They illustrated that human can be evil and vice versa. This research investigated and described the contradiction of the concepts in a good way. It gives a very helpful understanding to me on how the research on New Criticism and uncovering organic unity are done. Also, it involves the whole text as a unity to uncover the meaning, not only paradox but also others. However, the contradiction in this research is only limited to the concept of good and evil. She needs to consider another contradiction that can be found in the novel.

The research that have been reviewed helped me in conducting, analyzing, and presenting the research. The research conducted by Maulana and Sulitayani have contributed in helping me to understand the topic related to the character's personalities in novel and how to uncover it. Their analysis gave me an overview related to problem that are solved in this research. The research by Pradana and Hestiana helped me in doing analysis using the same novel, namely *Wonder* by R. J. Palacio, as the object of the analysis. Their research is important by giving a guidance regarding the novelty of analysis using the novel as the object. Also, the research by Rismawati and Putri helped me relate to the application of the theory of New Criticism and the concept of paradox in literary works. They provided an overview of how to analyze the object by using the same theory, particularly using paradox as the organic unity of uncover the main character's personality.

14. Research Questions

This research is to answer the following questions:

1. What are the conflicts experienced by Auggie that affect his personality?
2. How does Auggie's humorous nature explain his paradoxical personality in the face of society's perception of his condition?

15. Scope of the Research

In this research, I focused on the formal elements in the novel *Wonder* by R. J. Palacio to analyze the description of the main character's personality in different environments. I used New Criticism as the main theory to analyze paradox formal elements. Specifically, I used the New Criticism theory proposed by Lois Tyson to analyze the paradox found in the novel *Wonder* by R. J. Palacio.

1.6. Objectives of the Research

In this research, the issue of personality representation can be shown through formal elements in fiction. By conducting research on New Criticism, I investigated the formal elements in the novel *Wonder* by R. J. Palacio focusing on its main character, Auggie, and how he faces his environment as a victim of bullying. There are objectives of this research. The first objective is to investigate the role of paradox in revealing the depiction of the main character's personality towards two different environments. Also, the second objective is to show how the paradox builds the main character's behaviors to prevent himself from bullying.

