

MILES'S CHARACTER IN *LOOKING FOR ALASKA*: A PSYCHOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE

Yani Heryani

Departement of English Education, University of Kuningan
Email: yaniheryani083@gmail.com

APA Citation: Heryani, Y. (2016). Miles's character in *Looking For Alaska*: A psychological perspective. *Indonesian EFL Journal*, 2(2), 136-144

Received: 19-05-2016

Accepted: 22-06-2016

Published: 01-07-2016

Abstract: The aim of this research was to analyze the character of Miles Halter and the influences of the other characters towards Miles's character in *Looking for Alaska* novel. The primary data source was transcribed from *Looking for Alaska* Novel directed by John Green (2005). Here, the researcher applied a descriptive qualitative research design based on theories of Roberts and Freud. To know how Miles's character presented in the novel, the researcher used several ways such as from what Miles does and says and from what the other characters says about Miles. As result, the reseracher found that Miles's characters were nice, independent, diligent, hard worker, naughty, curious, smart, and unique. Besides, the reseracher also found the influences from the other characters such as habitual in reading, smoking, drinking, and pranking.

Keywords: *Young adult literature, Novel and Character*

INTRODUCTION

Novel is a part of literary work that belongs to fiction. Novel is usually known as narrative fiction that is identic with the length of the story and a complex plot portrayed by a number of characters. Novel describes what never happens or what usually happens. A novel is a book of long narrative in literary fiction.

Novel is belonging to modern literature. It consists of roman, popular novels, and short stories. Novel presents the story which is portrayed by the characters. The characters and the events in the novel are imaginary. Most of novel involves many characters and tells a complex story to attract reader' interest. Hoffman (1988) states that novel is a study of manners which is portrayed to the reader through the characters, the incidents, and the intrigue in the story. Hoffman adds that novel can be from the imagination of the writer or from the actual history. It depends on the purpose or what the writer wants to show in the story.

In with this, Raymond (1988, p. 48) notes that "to create a fictional world that seems real to the reader, novelist uses five main element such as plot, character, conflict, setting, and theme." Character, as a part of intrinsic elements, is one of important aspects in a novel. Character presents and conveys the meaning and values from the writer to the reader. A role of character in a story is totally absolute since the story cannot be called as a story without any character in it. The presence of character is also important because it engages reader's interest to the story so that they can enjoy and understand the story. Roberts and Jacob (1993) view the character as a verbal representation of human being. Through action, speech description, and commentary, author potrays character that can make reader interest, laugh, love or even hate the character. So, character is the important aspect in a novel. Based on the explanation above, this research analyzed the character of Miles in *Looking for*

Alaska and the influences of the other character towards Miles' character.

This research was emphasized on the psychology of the main character in the novel. So, the researcher used the theory from Barry (1824) about psychoanalysis. Barry argues that psychoanalysis is a form of therapy which aims to cure mental disorder by investigating the interaction of conscious and unconscious elements in the minds. Furthermore, Barry (1824) divides the model of psyche into three parts; *id*, *ego*, and *superego*. The first is *id*. The *id* is the component of personality that consists of all the inherited (i.e. biological) components of personality, including the sex (life) instinct (which contains the libido), and the aggressive (death) instinct. The *id* is the unconscious part of our psyche which responds directly and immediately to the instincts. The second is *ego*. The *ego* deals with reality which tries to meet the desires of the *id* in a way that is socially acceptable in the world. This may mean that human's desire is not always in the right way. The *ego* recognizes that other people have needs and wants too, and as a human being we shouldn't selfish to get what we want or need. Freud (1923) as cited in McLeod (2008) argues that ego is the part of the *id* which has been modified by the direct influence of the external world. The last is *superego*. The *superego* incorporates the values and morals of society which are learnt from one's parents and others. It develops around the age of 3–5 during the phallic stage of psychosexual development. Freud (1923) as cited in McLeod (2008) argues that the *superego*'s function is to control the *id*'s impulses, especially those which society forbids, such as sex and aggression. It also has the function of persuading the *ego* to turn to moralistic goals rather than simply realistic ones and to strive for perfection.

On the other hand, to know how character is disclosed in literature, the researcher used the theory from Roberts (1983). Roberts (1983) says that there are four specific ways in which the researcher gets information about the character. These are from what the characters say, what the characters do, what the other characters say, and from what the author says about the character.

This research is inspired by the other researches that have been conducted by some researchers regarding the character analysis in a novel. The first is the research from Ermalina (2015) whose purpose was to analyze the main characters in *The Lord of the Ring-the Return of the King* novel and to know the characterization of main characters in the novel. The second research was done by Riany (2007). This study analyzes the character of major female character in *Star Shine Down and the Rage of Angel* novel. The last research is conducted by Faisal (2010). This research was aimed at knowing the character and characterization of Bruce Nolan as main character by analyzing the evidence from the dialogues and his actions in the film.

METHOD

This research applied a qualitative descriptive method since it investigated and described the characters of Miles in *Looking for Alaskanovel*. In this research, the researcher analyzes and interprets all data through a set of certain processes of data collection and data analysis to describe the character of Miles Halter. The data in this research is not derived from questionnaire, from respondent or machines but it comes from Novel by John Green entitled *Looking for Alaska*. In data collection techniques, there were several steps done by the researcher. The first step was reading. According to Fanani (2012), reading is a physic and mental activity to reveal the meaning of

the written texts in which there is a process of knowing letters in that activity. In this step, the researcher did not read the text just once, but the researcher read the text more than once in order to understand the whole story and the implied meanings contained in every dialogue. The second was identifying and highlighting. Koff (2009) argues that identifying is the process to recognize and establish the particular person or things. This process aims to give a sign in the text and to differentiate whether it is required data or not. To differentiate the data, the researcher highlights the words, phrases or sentences in the text that support to the research. The third was collecting. Collecting here means that after required data which support to the character were highlighted, the researcher collected that data and put it in table. The last was classifying. Here, the researcher classified the data based on the certain character showed by every word, phrase, sentence, and dialogue in the novel based on the theory from Robert (1983).

Further, in analyzing the data, the researcher firstly analyzes all of data that has been collected. Analysis is the practice of looking closely at small parts to see how they affect the whole. This analysis focuses on how the main character is portrayed in this novel based on what the character says, what the character does, what the other characters say, and from what the author says. The next steps was determining. Determining here means that the researcher concludes the characters of Miles based on the theory and the description found in the novel.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

As Roberts (1983) stated that there are four specific ways in which the researcher gets information about the character. These are from what the character says, what the character does,

what the other characters say, and from what the author says about the character. These four ways were used by the researcher to explain the exact character of Miles as the major character in *Looking for Alaska* novel.

From what the character says

From what the character says, the researcher found seven character of Miles. Those are nice, independent, hard worker, naughty, curious, smart, and unique. First, Miles was a nice character. Ellerton (2014) argues that nice is pleasant or pleasing or agreeable in nature or appearance, socially or conventionally correct. From the conversation in the novel, Miles shows his cares to his parents. He promise that he would call them every Sunday because he knew that it was the first time for them to stay far away from Miles. This is shown in the following conversation.

*"God, We will miss you."
"Don't worry,
"Don't do anything stupid."
"Ok."
"No drugs, no cigarette, no
drinking. I love you .
"I love you too," I'll call every
Sunday."(3)*

Besides, Miles was also nice to his friends, Martin and Alaska. He often spent his money to buy cigarette for Martin and Alaska, although it was wrong but, as a friend, Miles was a nice friend.

Second, we could know that Miles was independent. According to Suyadi (2013), independent is attitudes and behaviors that are not easy to pad a dependent of others in completing tasks. Miles's independent character can be seen in the following conversation.

*"I can unpack, Mom"
"Let me at least make your
bed."
"No, really. I can do it. It's okay.
Because you simply cannot
draw these things out forever."
(p. 3)*

Yani Heryani

Miles's Character in Looking For Alaska: A Psychological Perspective

In the conversation above, we could know that he tried to do anything by himself. Miles refused the helps for his Mom, started from prepared bed, unpacked his clothes to the drawer, until decorated the new room and he did it by himself.

Third, Miles also has a hard worker character. Suyadi (2013) says that hard worker is the behaviors that show serious efforts to overcome various barriers to learning and assignments, and complete the task with the best of it. Miles showed his struggle from his effort to change his life. He said that he moved to Culver Creek was not because he did not have friends in the old school or was not because his Dad. But the reason why he moved to Culver Creek was because he as inspired by the last word of Francois Rabelais, "I go to seek a Great Perhaps."

"Is this why you want to leave, Miles?"
"Uh, no,"
"Well, why then?"
"Because of me?"
"No, it wasn't because of Dad. Hold on. So this guy, Francois Rabelais. He was the poet. And his last word were 'I go to seek a Great Perhaps.' That's why I'm going, so I don't have to wait until I died to start seeking the Great Perhaps." (p. 2)

He told that he moved to Culver Creek to find the Great Perhaps in his life. He thought that he wouldn't find the Great Perhaps in Florida and he could not wait until he is died to see the Great Perhaps in his life.

Fourth, Miles has a naughty character. According to psychologist Adrian Furnham (2016), naughty is disobey the convention, challenge the great and the good, frequently undermine. He did something although he knew that it was wrong. He forgot what his parents said. He drank and smoke regularly at school without

thinking that he would get any problems because of his bad behave.

*"Absolutely not," he answered. He walked over to his crumpled shorts lying on the floor and pulled out a pack of cigarettes. He lit two and handed one to me. **I smoked the whole goddamned thing.** (p. 40)*

Fifth, Miles also has curious character. Hunt (1963) argues that curious derives the desire to acquire knowledge and skill. Miles was curious because he always wanted to know about something. It could be seen from many situation. He always had question about everything, one of them was about his roommate (Chip Martin), Alaska, Jake (Alaska's boyfriend), Lara, Dr. Hyde and Dr. Starnes.

"What is that? A bird?" (p. 7)
"What happens...to us...when we die?"(p. 32)
"Did she say anything" (p. 73)
"How drunk was she?"(p. 73)
"Nothing. I just want to know what happened to her."(p. 83)

Even after Alaska dies, he didn't believe that it was really happened. He didn't believe that Alaska was died. He wanted to know why she died, whether it was a suicide or an accident. Miles tried to investigate to get the answer. This description was enough to conclude that he was a curious person.

Sixth, from what Miles said, it could be known that he was a smart person. It was known when he answered the question from Alaska and Kevin who wanted to test Miles relating to Miles's interest about people's last word. Alaska asked about Miles's interest about last word, instead confidently Miles asked Alaska to test him. Then, Alaska mentioned one person "JFK" and Miles immediately answered the last word "That's obvious." It showed that Miles was smart because he could remember

about people's last word and not all people could memorize it.

*"So do you really memorize last words?"
"Yeah," I said. And then hesitantly, I added,
"You want to quiz me?"
"JFK," she said.
"That's obvious," I answered.
"Oh, is it now?" she asked.
"No. Those were his last words. Someone said, 'Mr. President, you can't say Dallas doesn't love you,' and then he said, 'That's obvious,' and then he got shot."*

The last character presented by what Miles said was unique. According to psychologist Adrian Furnham (2016), unique is being the only existing one, unusual, or special in some way. Miles was a unique person. He has an unusual hobby that was memorizing the last word of famous people. The last words mean that the words were said before someone was die. For instance the last word from Francois Rebelais "I go to seek the Great Perhaps" or Simon Bolivar "How will I ever get out of this labyrinth!". The conversation below was the quotes from Miles. Miles said that he knew a lot of people's last word. For him, learning the last word was an indulgence. Strangely, he never knew how he like it. It showed that he was a unique character which means that he was different or unusual.

*"Urn, I know a lot of people's last word. It was an indulgence, learning last word. Other people had chocolate and I had dying declaration."
"example?"
"I like Henrik Ibsen's. He was a playwright. I knew a lot about Ibsen but I'd never read any of his plays. I didn't like reading plays. I liked reading biographies." (p. 5)*

From what the character does

From what Miles did, the researcher found eight characters of Miles including nice, care, independent, diligent, hard

worker, naughty, curious, and smart. The first character showed was a nice character. It can be seen from how Miles love his parents. Miles hugged his parrents because he was sad knowing that he would leave his parents although he moved to Culver Creek because of his desire.

*I stood and hugged her. My dad walked over, too, and we formed a sort of huddle. (p. 3)
I usually only called my parents on Sunday afternoon, so when my mom heard my voice, she instantly overreacted. (p. 36)
So during third period, I called my mom at work. I wanted her to say it was okay. (p. 36)*

Second, he also cares about his parents although he was far away, he always called them every Sunday. It made his parents happy because they always knew about Miles's condition. Besides, Miles always remembered what his parent said. He did what his parents suggested to him.

Third, Miles was known as an independent character. Miles was independent beacuse he could do anything by himself. He did not depend on other people. When he came to his new room in Culver Creek, he did everything by himself, started from placing the book in the bookshelves, unpacking the clothes and puting it into drawer, taping the map of the world to the wall until decorating the room. It was done by Miles without any helps from his parents. Besides, when he got problem at school, he could face it by himself.

*I managed to tape a map of the world to the wall and get most of my clothes into drawers before I noticed that the hot. (p. 11)
They took me a roundabout way to the fake beach, and then I knew what would happen - a good, old-fashioned dunking in the lake - and I*

Yani Heryani

Miles's Character in Looking For Alaska: A Psychological Perspective

calmed down. I could handle that. (p. 11)

Fourth, the researcher found diligent character from what Miles did. According to Krecjir (2003), diligent is practical obedience in action, which is the loving of our work so we are doing our best. Practical obedience means conscientiousness in one's work. Miles has conscientiousness in reading book.

I spent the night surfing the Web (no porn, I swear) and reading The Final Days, a book about Richard Nixon and Watergate. (p. 11)
I spent most of the next day lying in bed, immersed in the miserably uninteresting fictional world of Ethan Frome, (25)
I sat in the hall with my back against the wall and read my American history textbook. (p. 26)

The data above showed that Miles was a diligent person. He often spent his night to read a book, either material book or just the book for his additional knowledge. *The Final Days, biographies, the history of American war and religion* were several books that Miles read. Although he spent much time with his friend, but he still had time to read a book. On the other hand, he always came to the class 15 minutes before the class began and he always payed attention to the teacher during the class, especially for *World Religion* subject that was taught by Dr. Hyde.

The fifth character that could be identified was a hard worker character. Miles was hard worker since he studied hard in every subject. Many time he spent in his room, studying math and memorizing French vocab. He also focused on precalc and biology, two classes that might threthead his goal to get 3.4 GPA. He could sit for many hour in front of the computer to do the assignment

or finish the paper and prepare for the examination until he was ready to face it.

So, yeah, I spent a lot of my time at home studying math and memorizing French vocab. (p. 45).
I'd just gotten my precalc test back, and I was awash with admiration for Alaska, since her tutoring had paved my way to a B-plus. (p. 24)

Besides, he asked Alaska to guide and tutor him in precalc subject because Miles felt less in that subject and it might threthead his goal to get 3.4 GPA, so Miles studied hard in that subject by asking Alaska to help him.

Sixth, Miles was also known as naughty student. Miles showed his naughty when he was not obidient to what her parent said. Miles often involved in several problems at school. When he moved to Culver Creek, his parents said that he is not allowed to smoke or drink. But, in reality, Miles who had joined with Martin and Alaska did what his parents porbid. First, he tried to smoke. Second, he drank. The last, he got problems because he and his friend did the prank at school. Those bad behaviours showed that Miles was a naughty student. The conversation below showed when he tried to smoke. Besides, Miles also drank at campus and he often involved in pranking at school.

"Want a smoke?" I had never smoked a cigarette, but when in Rome...
"Is it safe here?"
"Not really," he said, then lit a cigarette and handed it to me. I inhaled. Coughed. Wheezed. Gaspd for breath. Coughed again. Considered vomiting. (p. 7)

Seventh, the curious character was also identified from what Miles did. When Alaska died, Miles did not believe it because Miles met Alaska the night before even they were kissing at that

night. Because Miles did not believe about what had happen, he and Martin went to police to reveal what really happened to Alaska.

The last character presented in the novel was smart. It could be known when Kevin challanged Miles relating to his interest in memorizing last word. But once more, Miles could answer the last word from President who was mentioned by Kevin. In addition, Miles got B-Plus for Precalc subject.

I'd just gotten my precalc test back, and I was awash with admiration for Alaska, since her tutoring had paved my way to a B-plus. (p. 24)

Precalc was a difficult subject for Miles, so he asked Alaska to teach him about that subject. Because Miles was smart, he could understand and applied what Alaska taught and finally he got B-Plus for that difficult subject. Therefore, Miles was smart because he could immadiately understand what Alaska explained about that difficult subject.

From what the other characters say about Miles

From what the other characters say about Miles, the first character identified was nice. It was known from what Mr. Starnes said. When Miles arrived in Culver Creek, he met Mr. Halter for the first time. Mr. Halter gave the schedule to Miles. Mr. Starnes said that Miles seemed like a nice young man.

"Welcome to Culver Creek, Mr. Halter. You're given a large measure of freedom here. If you abuse it, you'll regret it. You seem like a nice young man. I'd hate to have to bid you farewell." (p. 10)

Second, Miles was categorized as an independent person. It could be known from what Martin said about Miles. In the beginning of the novel, Miles brought his trunk to his new room. He tried to

decorate the room by taping the world map on the wall and puting the clothes in the drawer. Then, when Martin come to the room, he said that "I see you have decorated this place. I like it."

Third, from what Martin said, Miles was a diligent character. Martin said that Miles was a nerd. It mean that Miles was categorized as a diligent student. Martin clearly knew how often Miles read a book, either material or just a biogarphies. So, he said that Miles was a nerd.

Martin : "We need booze." And we need to borrow Eagle's breathalyzer."

Miles : "Borrow it?"

Martin : "Yeah, he is never made you take one?"

Miles : "Urn, no. He think I'm a nerd.

Martin : "You are a nerd, Pudge."(p. 75)

The fourth character from what the other character said was smart. It could be known from Alaska's perspective. Alaska argued that Miles was smart. It was because Miles could mention the last word from people who is mentioned by Alaska such as From JFK. Miles mentioned their last word and it made Alaska amazed.

Miles as Unique person was also presented from what the other characters said. It was said by Martin when he introduced Miles to Alaska. He immadiately tells to Alaska that Miles can memorize people's last word. Martin immadiately says that Miles likes to memorize people's last word and it indicates that Miles has an unusual interest. If Martin argued that it was normal, he would not tell it immadiately to Alaska.

The influences of the other characters toward Miles's character

The second analysis was about what the influences of the other

Yani Heryani

Miles's Character in Looking For Alaska: A Psychological Perspective

characters toward Miles's character. Miles Halter is the main character in *Looking For Alaska* novel. As the main character, Miles gets the influences from the other characters. Freud (1923), divides the model of psyche into three types in which one of them is *ego*. Freud argues that ego is a part of id which has been modified by the direct influence of the external world. The external world can be from reality, tragedy, accident, and influences from the other characters around them. Here, the researcher only analyzed the influences of the other characters towards Miles's character. The other characters refer to people around Miles. They are Miles's Dad, Chip Martin, and Alaska.

First was the influence from Miles's Dad. As a person who is always with Miles during sixteen years, parents certainly had big influences for Miles's character. Based on the Novel, Miles's parents were nice and cares about Miles. It automatically gave good influences to Miles so that Miles became a nice person who cares and loves his parents. Besides, the habit of Miles's Dad who like reading book make Miles become a diligent student who also likes reading book. Therefore, it is unsurprising if Miles becomes a smart student.

Second was the influence from Martin. Chip Martin was one of several important characters in the story since he provided stability for Miles, and he was always around to help and come up with his ideas. When Miles moved to the Culver Creek, most of his time was spent with Chip Martin. So, Miles and Martin always do the same thing. It was because Miles always listened to Martin as if he had some sort of authority figure. Martin is a smoker and he definitely drinks too much. Certainly, it gives bad influences towards Miles. Martin had changed Miles from a nice person to be naughty person. Miles slowly unravels his innocence as he hangs out with Martin. He began to

smoke and drink regularly on campus. Miles who was not a smoker and almost never drinks before became a smoker and drinker since he met Martin. Martin made Miles become a naughty person, even he forgets about the messages stated by his parents who forbid Miles to smoke and drink.

The last from Alaska. Alaska was also the character who was important in this story. The whole story revolved mostly around her and her mystery. Her character also gave many influences to Miles's character since Alaska was the person who made Miles attracted. Alaska had a big role in making Miles into a naughty person since she had enchantment to make Miles follow what Alaska did. First, she was the first person who introduces Miles to *vodka* and *ambrosia*. Alaska made Miles enjoyed drinking. When they were together, Martin, Alaska, Takumi, and Miles, they almost never passed without cigarette and drinks. Alaska made drinks as a new habit for Miles. Second, Alaska is a very flirtatious person, and she's constantly flirting with Miles, even though she has a boyfriend. She made Miles thought that sex was interesting. Last, Alaska was a prank person. She often creates prank in Culver Creek. When Miles joined with Alaska and Martin, they always involved Miles in their Mission, included prank. She succeeded creating *the soul of the prank* in Miles's character. Even after Alaska was died, Miles and Martin did the greatest prank in Culver Creek by presenting the striptease dancer in Speaker's Day and they dedicated it for Alaska.

CONCLUSION

Looking for Alaska is a novel created by John Green. It is categorized as young adult novel where the protagonist character is teens. This novel is very interesting since it tells about teenager who has ambition in finding the Great

Perhaps. Miles Halter is the main character in this novel. He decides to move to Culver Creek to find the Great Perhaps. In Culver Creek, he meets Chip Martin and Alaska. After meeting Martin and Alaska, Miles becomes a different person. Martin and Alaska give the influences on Miles's character.

To know how Miles's character is presented in this novel, the researcher used several ways such as from what Miles's character does and says, and from what the other characters say about Miles. The result of this research showed that Miles's characters are nice, independent, diligent, hard worker, curious, intellectual, naughty, unique, unsociable, friendly, and smart. Here, Miles gets the influences from Parents, Martin, Alaska, and Dr. Hyde.

Therefore, this analysis has answered both research questions about what are Miles's character presented in *Looking for Alaska* novel and what the influences of the other characters towards Miles's character.

REFERENCES

- Barry, P. (1824). *An introduction to literary and cultural theory*. Manchester: Manchester University Press.
- Dian. (2014). *Karakter pintar, cerdas dan jenius*. Retrieved from <http://dianeducationcenter.blogspot.co.id/2014/09/karakter-pintar-cerdas-dan-jenius.html>
- Ellerton, K. (2014). *Nice vs. kind – What is the difference between niceness & kindness?*. Retrieved from <http://meditationmag.com/meditation-psychology/nice-vs-kind/>
- Ermalina. (2015). *The main female character in "The star shine down and range of angels."* Pasir Pengaraian: University of Pasir Pengaraian.
- Faisal. (2010). *Analysis of main character in Bruce Almighty movie*. Jakarta: State Islamic University.
- Fanani, B. E. (2012). *Teknik baca cepat trik efektif membaca 2 detik 1 halaman*. Yogyakarta: Araska.
- Furnham, A. (2016). *Are naughty children and adults fun or problematic?*. Retrieved from <https://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/sideways-view/201602/the-psychology-naughtiness>
- McLeod, S. A. (2008). *Id, ego and superego*. Retrieved from www.simplypsychology.org/psyche.html
- Freud, S. (1923). *The ego and the id*. SE, 19, 1-66.
- Green, J. (2005). *Looking for Alaska*. Jakarta: PT Gramedia Pustaka Utama.
- Hoffman, H. (1999). *Latin fiction*. Chicago: A. C. McClure & Co.
- Hunt, J. McV. (1963). Motivation inherent in information processing and action. In *Motivation and social interaction: Cognitive determinants*. New York: Ronald.
- Klarer, M. (1998). *An introduction to literature studies*. London: Routledge.
- Koff, H. R. (2009). *A definition of identification : A review of the Literature*. ProQuest llc.
- Krejir, R. J. (2003). *Into the word ministries*. Retrieved from <http://www.intotheword.com/>
- Raymond, B. R. G. (1988). *Introduction to the short story*. Rochelle Park: Hayden Book Co.
- Roberts, E. V., & Jacobs, E.H. (1993). *Literature: An introduction to reading and writing*. New York: Prentice Hall, Inc.
- Robert, E. V. (1983). *Writing theme about literature*. New York: Prentice –Hall, Inc.
- Suyadi. 2013. Strategi pembelajaran pendidikan karakter. Bandung: Remaja Rosdakarya.