

YOUNG WOMEN AS ECO-WARRIORS IN TWO CHILDREN'S SHORT STORIES: AN ECOFEMINISM STUDY

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Received on 7 January 2024 / Approved on 29 April 2024

Abstract

A lot of efforts go into raising the awareness of environmental issues since a very young age, including through children's literature. The significance of this effort lies on the fact that children's literature has always been a channel of representation and a simplified depiction of how society operates for young kids. This study examines two different fictional short stories with a shared theme originated from Bali, Indonesia and the United States entitled *Luh Ayu Manik Mas: Pahlawan Lingkungan* and "Greta and the Giants," respectively. In some previous studies, scholars point out the caring nature of women within the relationship between women and nature, but it is bravery that becomes the most highlighted quality in these two stories, hence, "warriors". The objectives of this research are 1) to describe the character development of the young girls in both short stories and 2) to explain the impact and interaction brought by the main characters towards their surroundings as instigators of change for the environment. In order to achieve these aims, two questions are formulated as follows: 1) How are the main characters developed in both short stories? and 2) How are the young girls portrayed as agent of change for the environment? This study is qualitative in nature which adopts content analysis as the method. The approach that is employed for this study is ecofeminism. Two results are obtained through this study, 1) both main characters undergo similar stages of development, which are: obliviousness, curiosity, willingness to change, and finally instigating a change. 2) Both young girls initiate the move of improving themselves and the environment around them by taking real actions and invite the people around them to do the same.

Keywords: children's short stories; ecofeminism; Greta and the Giants; Luh Ayu Manik Mas

Abstrak

Banyak upaya dilakukan untuk meningkatkan kesadaran terhadap isu lingkungan kepada anak-anak usia dini, termasuk melalui cerita anak. Pentingnya upaya ini dapat dilihat dari bagaimana cerita anak merupakan media representasi dan gambaran sederhana cara kerja masyarakat bagi anak-anak. Penelitian ini menganalisis dua karya fiksi dengan tema yang sama yaitu "*Luh Ayu Manik Mas: Pahlawan Lingkungan*" dari Bali dan "*Greta and the Giants*" dari Amerika Serikat. Dalam beberapa penelitian sebelumnya, para ahli menunjukkan sifat kepedulian perempuan dalam hubungan antara perempuan dan alam, namun keberanianlah yang menjadi kualitas yang paling disorot dalam kedua cerita ini, oleh karena itu dipilih lah kata "pejuang." Tujuan dari penelitian ini adalah 1) mendeskripsikan perkembangan karakter tokoh utama di kedua cerita dan 2) menjelaskan interaksi dan dampak tokoh utama kepada lingkungannya sebagai pemicu perubahan lingkungan. Untuk mencapai tujuan tersebut, dirumuskan dua pertanyaan sebagai berikut: 1) Bagaimana perkembangan tokoh utama dalam kedua cerpen tersebut? dan 2) Bagaimana remaja perempuan digambarkan sebagai agen perubahan lingkungan? Penelitian ini bersifat kualitatif dan pendekatan yang digunakan dalam penelitian ini adalah ekofeminisme. Melalui penelitian ini diperoleh dua hasil, 1) kedua tokoh utama tersebut mengalami tahapan perkembangan yang serupa, yaitu: ketidaksadaran, rasa ingin tahu, kemauan untuk berubah, dan akhirnya menjadi penggiat perubahan. 2) Kedua remaja putri ini memulai langkah perbaikan diri dan lingkungan sekitar dengan melakukan tindakan nyata dan mengajak orang-orang disekitarnya untuk melakukan hal yang sama.

Kata Kunci: cerita pendek anak; ekofeminisme; Greta and the Giants, Luh Ayu Manik Mas

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INTRODUCTION

In the future, younger generation will inherit the planet that we are currently living in which means that what we do and learn today substantially matter. It is evident that our planet has been suffering and greatly impacted by decades of exploitation and deforestation done by humans. In order to prevent further damage, spreading the awareness of environmental issues has been counted as an effort that everyone from various age groups, genders, and backgrounds can contribute to. The medium also varies, starting from profitable campaigns, advertisement, including children's literature. This paper highlights specifically children's literature as a medium to spread the awareness of environmental issues. Although one might argue that there are also other media through which children can learn about environmental issues, such as movies, cartoons, or bed-time stories told by their guardians as supported by Dewi, she has argued that "the easiest way to teach children about hygiene, water consumption, recycling and other environmental lessons is through story-telling." (2017, p. 33). However, children's literature stands out from the rest as Livo (2003) has suggested that "exposure to literature should provide enjoyment and help youngsters realize its importance as a mirror of human experiences, reflecting human motives, conflicts, and values. Young story listeners should be able to identify with characters in human situations as a means of relating to others." (p. 4), shedding lights into the fact that children's literature may serve the purpose as a channel of representation and a simplified depiction of how society operates for young kids. Acknowledging the role that children's literature possess then solidifies its validity as a great medium for educating younger generations, in this case young readers, about environmental issues (Lindenpütz, 2002).

The children literary works chosen as the object of this study are not arbitrary as they carry a similar theme and characteristic of the main characters, both of them are young women who are fighting all odds to act as instigators of change for their respective story line. Despite sharing one common theme, these two stories actually come from two opposite side of the globe, the United States and Indonesia which allows a new insight that the concern for the sustainability of the planet emerges evenly. Therefore, the particular and rather rare themes are suitably observed through the lens of Ecofeminism. Ecofeminism, also called ecological feminism, was formulated in the 1980s and gained its prominence in the early 1990s as a branch of feminism. The emergence of ecofeminism has been a direct response to the environmental crisis, seeking to conceptualize a new utopian horizon that examines the issue through the lenses of patriarchy, androcentrism, care, sexism, and gender (Puleo, 2017). Chen Ling (2014) has further explained that, "Thus, as a radical green political slogan, ecofeminism aims to reveal the internal link between the natural domination and gender domination, pays attention to its social cause and social criticism so as to realize the dual liberation of nature and women. This view insists on ecological criticism from the perspective of gender, trying to reconstruct the relationship between women and nature, and demonstrating the basic characteristics of ecological feminism to be female principle and ecological principle." (p. 67).

The stories observed are "Greta and the Giants" by Zoë Tucker and "Luh Ayu Manik Mas: Pahlawan Lingkungan" by I Putu Supartika, originated from the United States and Indonesia, respectively. The first story, "Greta and the Giants," tells the journey of a little girl named Greta who lives in a beautiful forest that is now threatened by deforestation done by the giants. Meanwhile, the second story is a part of a trilingual comic series of a Balinese local superhero named "Luh Ayu Manik Mas: Pahlawan Lingkungan" which tells the journey of Luh Ayu Manik fighting different kinds of villains. This specific episode captures her fight against an angry, fire-spitting plastic giant. This paper carries two objectives, it aims at 1) describing the character development of the young girls in both short stories and 2) explaining the impact and interaction brought by the main characters towards their surroundings as instigators of change for the environment.

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Research about ecofeminism has been done by some researchers and this paper has included some writings that have similar subjects or at least topic of interest and issue. In the paper entitled *Women's Life in Indonesian Contemporary Short Stories: A Study of Ecofeminism Transformative* (2020), Aji Septiaji, Zuriyati, and Aceng Rahmat have examined the experiences of women in Indonesian society. The authors explore several aspects of women's existence, including instances of natural exploitation, discrimination, and the perpetuation of gender stereotypes. The researchers discovered that all occurrences experienced by women may be attributed to life challenges, and the female characters depicted in the narratives not only exemplify the societal expectations placed upon women, but also reflect their ethical values. Similar to this, in (2019), Sujinah, Muhammad Arfan Muammar, and Ali Nuke Affandy wrote a paper with the same focus entitled *Representation of Ecofeminism in Collections of Children's Stories by Children's Writers*. The findings of their study suggest that women exhibit a greater inclination towards environmental concerns, assuming a greater responsibility in the preservation and maintenance of the natural environment and its ecological balance.

In terms of research sources, Hanifah P. Utami, Aquarini Priyatna, and Tisna Prabasmoro have used local comic *Luh Ayu Manik Mas* as their main source. In their paper, *Luh Ayu Manik Mas Sebagai Representasi Superhero Perempuan Bali Dalam Komik* (2021), they discussed how *Luh Ayu Manik Mas* has represented the Balinese women through her character as a superhero. Not only that the comic represents Balinese women, it has also helped to spread awareness about Balinese culture as the comic depicts their life on daily basis. As for "Greta and the Giants", the researchers did not find any research that used this short story as the main source. Instead, a book entitled *Pedagogy in the Anthropocene: Re-Wilding Education for a New Earth* (2022) which was written by Paulsen and Hawke stated that "Greta and the Giants" is a good example of a planetarianist literatures which redefines hope as a form of collective action.

This paper will refer to the previous works done and propose a new perspective about women's place in the environment and how it constructs them as the eco-warriors.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The analysis of women's role in the two chosen children's short stories was conducted through the application of the descriptive qualitative method. This method, as described by Creswell (2014, 2018), begins with assumptions and employs interpretive and theoretical frameworks to gain a more comprehensive understanding and gather additional data on a particular topic. For the literary analysis, the researchers used content analysis techniques. This methodology is employed to determine the existence of specific terms, subjects, or ideas within the given qualitative data (i.e., text) and facilitates the organization of unstructured data for analysis. Furthermore, this methodology was commonly employed for the purpose of examining written content, including newspaper articles, magazine articles, advertising, folktales, and riddles (Harwood & Garry, 2003). Based on this comprehension, this methodology is considered ideal for aiding researchers in gathering essential data and attaining a full understanding of the notion of women as environmental activists within their individual contexts. This research presents three distinct steps. During the initial phase, the researchers gathered necessary information by repeatedly reading the two short stories, namely "Greta and the Giants" by Zoë Tucker and "Luh Ayu Manik Mas: Pahlawan Lingkungan" by I Putu Supartika. For the ease of analysis and reading comprehension, the following code references [GG] and [LA] are implemented throughout the analysis for "Greta and the Giants" and "Luh Ayu Manik Mas: Pahlawan Lingkungan," respectively. After that, the researchers conducted a comprehensive analysis of the collected data by applying relevant ecofeminism theories. The last phase entailed formulating conclusions related to the matter at hand.

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FINDING AND DISCUSSION

The discussion is divided into two major segments, in respect with the formulated research questions. The first segment of the analysis aims at uncovering the development of the main characters of the stories through analysis and elaboration of the character development phases discovered in both stories. Meanwhile, the second segment contains further analysis of how the portrayal of both main characters as “Eco-Warriors” are employed.

Similar Plot and Character Development

Reading a story means comprehending or interpreting words in order to follow the narrative or storyline. As the story goes on, readers will be introduced to narrative agents who function as instruments to the plot. Greta and Luh Ayu Manik are two examples of narrative instruments taken from both stories, but different from other instruments that lack personality, both of them are what Chatman (1993) has called the “characters” (p. 58); the agents that pique the readers’ interest for having distinguished qualities and independent existence. Though not always in a good direction, the traits of the characters might undergo the process of development throughout the course of the narrative, driven by motivation or conflict (p. 59). Similarly, the way in which a character is developed, whether positively or negatively, is influenced by the readers’ perspective. With that being said, upon observing the general structure and plot of both short stories, it is discovered that the main characters of both stories have undergone the following phases of character development: obliviousness, curiosity, willingness to change, and instigating a change. Although the length of each phase varies, every phase is present, and they share the same order. On character development, Tom Cochrane (2014) has explained that “A person may possess a personality feature, in contrast, just because she was born that way or has gradually been molded that way by environmental pressures” (p. 304). The latter part, especially, is aligned with the findings of the observation. However, the term “pressures” feels rather too strong. Thus, the term “influences” is considered to be more appropriate to shape the characters, hence the phases found within both stories. Concerning the former part, it is believed that the innate “personality feature” possessed by the main characters, which in this case is curiosity, is what allows these following phases to take place.

Obliviousness

Obliviousness is found to be the default initial state for both characters, Greta and Luh Ayu Manik. Both of them start as being clueless about the issue at hand. On top of serving as the starting point of the main characters, this ‘oblivious’ state is necessary in a way that it allows a sense of *relevancy* to be experienced by the readers which in this case are children, especially young women represented by Greta and Luh Ayu Manik. It allows young women reading the stories to gain hope, that they too as women, despite being young and unaware about environmental issues, can learn to do better and create a meaningful change. Evidence of this phase in the stories are displayed in the following paragraph.

Structurally, the ‘oblivious’ phase for Greta goes on for a significantly longer period which is believed to be the stylistic choice of the author to be able to set and present the setting of the story in an exhaustive manner. During this phase, it is described that everyone, including Greta, her friends, the animals of the forest, along with the Giants have been living side by side for nearly her whole life.

The Giants had always been there, for as long as Greta could remember, but now they were worse than ever. They were huge, lumbering oafs and they were always busy. [GG, p.5]

However, Greta, in terms of her character, quickly moves to the next phase, which is ‘curiosity’, after the animals of the forest, led by the Silver Wolf pleaded with her for help. The

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beginning of the issue is also hinted by the author as she was setting the story through “*One morning, things weren’t quite as they should be*” [GG, p.3].

In contrast, Luh Ayu Manik’s ‘oblivious’ phase only lasted for a significantly shorter period. It is also worth noting that while Greta’s characterization and plot is more dominated by the narration provided by the author, Luh Ayu Manik’s story is mainly composed by conversation between the characters. During this phase, an important conversation takes place between Luh Ayu Manik and her mother.

*“I’m looking for some plastic to wrap the offerings that I am taking to school,” she replied.
 “My child, just use a small woven basket as a container, don’t use a plastic bag,” her mother advised.*

“I’ll just use a plastic bag, Mom, so I can carry it easily,” Luh Ayu Manik replied. [LA, p.1]

The short conversation above is significant in showing the nurturing role of women, both young and adult, towards the environment and their surrounding while also showing the ‘oblivious’ state that Luh Ayu Manik was initially in despite her mother’s advice. In addition, this section also addresses the common reason that causes people stay and choose to be ‘oblivious’ about environmental issues in general which is ‘easiness’. It pokes at human’s sense of choosing what is ‘easy’ yet unsafe for the environment rather than taking an extra step in ensuring the sustainability of the earth.

Curiosity

The next phase is ‘curiosity’. It indicates the step through which the characters are showing signs of interest towards the issue. Looking at the bigger picture, this phase also marks an important beginning of a transitional phase undergone by the characters in order to become Eco-Warriors from their previously-oblivious-selves. Moreover, the presence of this phase also encourages young readers to be curious about their surroundings and it sends the positive message that curiosity can become something impactful despite the effort being initiated by only one person.

In the case of Greta, the ‘curiosity’ phase does not occur during a long period of time and it is only displayed through her own thought without the involvement of other characters. The phase took place exactly after the animals approached her to save their home. This plea for help, which is followed by Greta’s action of “*looking around*” and the author’s narration “*Greta had to help them - but how?*” [GG, p.9] serves as the proof of Greta’s unaware state as well as the only part of her ‘curiosity’ phase.

The complete opposite happened for Luh Ayu Manik. Greta went through her ‘curiosity’ phase on her own while Luh Ayu Manik had the assistance of others to figure out the issue, namely an advertisement she saw on the TV which serves as the initial trigger for her ‘curiosity’ as displayed in “*When she got home that day, she decided to watch TV. As she was looking for something good to watch, she saw a commercial that caught her eye and she stopped.*” [LA, p.2] as well as her teacher at school, Mr. Budiadnyana, who helped provide the necessary information and guidance for Luh Ayu Manik regarding the issue surrounding plastic usage. The striking contrast between the two characters can be seen as a realistic representation of how diverse the social environment that children actually grow up in; some are fortunate enough to have informed adults guiding them upon a wide variety of issues that they might have questions about while some others are not. Indeed, Luh Ayu Manik’s situation should pose as an encouragement for adults to offer better guidance for the younger generation as a solid step in ensuring the continuity of the environment in the future.

Willingness to change

‘Willingness to change’ comes as the third phase. This is the phase where the characters acknowledge the issues and agree that a change must be made in order to improve the situation. The

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presence of this phase serves as the continuation of the necessary transition the characters had to go through which allows them to become Eco-Warriors in the following and last phase. Furthermore, by allowing this phase to be present in the stories, the authors allow young readers to comprehend that the concrete change only happens when there is a will inside oneself and that acknowledging the issues alone would not be enough to tackle real-life issues.

In parallel with the preceding phase, there's still a stark contrast between how Greta and Luh Ayu Manik experience the phase. Greta is shown to have been undergoing this phase by herself while Luh Ayu Manik's portion still involves other characters which is Mr. Budiadnyana. Greta's 'willingness to change' phase is not displayed throughout a wide portion of the story. In fact, it is only through one short narration from the author, "*Then Greta had an idea.*" [GG, p.10]. Through one simple line, the readers are served with the beginning of Greta's soon-to-be long battle. Meanwhile, the 'willingness to change' phase of Luh Ayu Manik consists of her response upon learning the information during her conversation with Mr. Budiadnyana which unfolded as follows,

Luh Ayu Manik realized she had used plastic for all of these things, and it would be easy to make a change. "From now on I'll use less plastic. And I'll tell my parents and friends about it too." [LA, p.8]

Instigating a change

The last phase of 'Instigating a change' takes the role of displaying the actual battles of both young women. As expected, this phase is significantly longer than the previous phases and this would be the case for both stories. In the context of these stories, this phase is where they actually went face-to-face with the "Giants". The contrast between the two stories lies in how they actually instigate the change and how they influence the other characters around them to take part in their initiation. Although this aspect will be explained further and more in-depth in the following segment, it is worth mentioning that both Greta and Luh Ayu Manik clearly have exhibited outstanding bravery in handling the issues that they were facing while at the same time being the first to initiate the change. Without the previous humble phases, an immediate jump toward this stage would have been intimidating for the young readers given the characters being young women. In addition, on account of this phase, it is once again shown to young readers that taking an actual courageous action is the inescapable part of maintaining the stability of this planet and that there will be hurdles waiting for them.

Greta's battle against the Giant immediately started in this phase, she was shown to go face the Giant the next day by herself and was able to turn the situation due to the power of the people. In Greta's case, she did not only display courage but also patience which contributed in influencing her surroundings, such as other humans and other inhabitants of the forests to join her as shown in the following part,

*The next morning, Greta went to the middle of the forest and waited for the Giant to come. She stood alone, holding a big sign. The sign said STOP!
 She waited...
 And waited...
 On the first day, the Giants didn't see her, and lumbered on by.
 And on the second and third too.
 But on the fourth day something strange happened.
 A little boy who had been watching Greta made a sign came and sat down next to her. He didn't say much, but Greta knew he felt like she did.
 Soon more people and animals saw what they were doing and joined in too. [GG, pp.10-15]*

It is evident that it is her bravery and patience that allows her message to be impactful enough and be heard by others. The little boy serves as a prime example of someone who is aware

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of the issues but lacking in courage to start some actions as he is also aware of how “ginormous” the enemy would be. Given the fact that the story is directly inspired by the young climate activist Greta Thunberg, the Giants in this story are clearly depicting the real-life huge corporations that are destroying the planet which in a realistic sense could be intimidating to be faced alone. However, as the story also depicts, nothing is impossible when we are together. It is only after the more and more people joined Greta that the Giants started to notice and actually stopped their stomps to hear what they had to say, eventually feeling ashamed of what they have done to the forest as shown in the following,

*The Giants shuffled...
 and fidgeted...
 and stomped their feet on the ground.
 They were embarrassed and a little bit sad. [GG, p.23]*

The fruits of Greta’s bravery, diligent effort, and patience took form of apology from the Giant and a promise to “*try harder*” [GG, p. 24] which they kept by doing various activities with the humans occupying the forest, such as learning new hobbies and doing other trivial things to stop themselves for destroying the forests even further.

While also being courageous in facing the Giant, Luh Ayu Manik’s phase of ‘instigating a change’ took a different route compared to Greta’s as the Giants in these two stories serve distinct representations. The Giant in Greta’s story is meant to be the villain of the story in contrast to the Giant in Luh Ayu Manik who actually appeared angrily to remind humans about their destructive behavior towards the planet. The Giant in Luh Ayu Manik’s story was formed from plastic waste clogging the village river and spitting fire everywhere in order to make their point. The rest of the village, including the men were frightened and ran away. It is in this moment that Luh Ayu Manik gathered up her courage to face the angry, fire-spitting Giant as shown below,

The terrible plastic giant spat fire at everything it saw. It scorched plants and the earth shook as it lurched toward the young men. Rushing forward, Luh Ayu Manik Mas pulled out a sword that could spray water and extinguish the fire. The young men were all afraid and could only watch. [LA, p. 18]

After going against the Giant, Luh Ayu Manik’s follow-up effort took place by inviting her friends to clean up the river together. This is all possible to her fearless action in front of the whole village the night before which helped showing the importance of taking care of the environment as shown in, “*The next day, on the day called Ngembak Geni, Luh Ayu Manik called all her friends together to clean up the river. They would never let the giant return again.*” [LA, p. 20], keeping her words she told Mr. Budi-adnyana.

To conclude this first segment of analysis, it is necessary to reiterate that each and every phase that have been experienced by these young women have molded and shaped them to be the Instigators of Change that they are by the end of the story. These stories can be used as major guides for both young readers reading these books and adults guiding the young readers to comprehend the fact that making a change is not an easy matter but it is not impossible. On top of that, it requires a courageous mind and patience.

The Portrayal of Young Women as Eco-Warriors

As the previous part of the discussion has explained about the growth or transformation of Greta and Luh Ayu Manik in their respective ways, this segment will discuss further the product of that growth, and that is the term eco-warrior.

Seguin, as cited in Fielding (2008), has stated that being an eco-warrior or eco-activist means engaging in a purposeful behavior to preserve or improve the environment and actively

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spreading awareness of environmental issues (p. 319). This willingness to improve the environment and take the initiative does not come to light randomly. A study by Lubell in 2002 has proved that those who are more likely to express intentions to engage in environmental activism and act on those intentions are those who believe that the environment is unhealthy and that they can do something about it (p. 441). Both Greta and Luh Ayu Manik, then, can be acknowledged as eco-warriors or eco-activists, as the previous segment has explained; their concern for the environment starts with their obliviousness and then turns into curiosity about the state of their surroundings. After understanding the issue that they face, both Greta and Luh Ayu Manik proceed to stand up among everyone else to start the amendments, and as they are willing to change for the better, they also influence the people around them to do the same. The slight difference between both stories is that not only Luh Ayu Manik inspires people and lead the collective movement, but she also becomes a ‘warrior’ in a literal sense. Having the ability to change into her golden crown and golden clothes while chanting “*Saking kawisesan jagat, titiang nyuti rupa dados Luh Ayu Manik Mas,*” which translates “From the wisdom of the nature, I transformed into Luh Ayu Manik Mas.” [LA, p.17]

The concept of a warrior cannot be separated from its opposing force which is the villain or the antagonist. While warrior has the characteristics of heroic figure with admirable personalities, the villain functions as the main source of conflict and obstacles for the protagonist. In “Luh Ayu Manik Mas,” the villain is a giant that emerges from the polluted river.

As the sky grew darker, all the ogoh-ogoh went back to where they came from. The streets became quiet again. Luh Ayu Manik and Putu Nita were on their way home when they were startled to see the young men who had been sitting around the bale angklong earlier, running all over the place, screaming in fear and calling for help. “Help..., help,” Wayan shouted.

“There is an ogoh-ogoh that can walk. It came from the river. Its face is terrifying and its body is made entirely of plastic!” [LA, p.16]

The giant’s body was covered with rubbish, specifically those that were thrown away into the river by Luh Ayu Manik’s friends, Wayan and Made. The giant here can be regarded as the manifestation of the river, spitting fire as it expressed its rage at the human for foolishly ruining the river. It said, “*Argh..., you humans are all the same! You throw trash thoughtlessly into this sacred river. Look what you have brought upon yourselves! After today, you must look after this river so that is always clean and unpolluted. Now..., clean this place... quickly!*” [p.18].

Similarly, in “Greta and the Giants,” the villains are also depicted as giants. They are ruining the forest and interfering the animals. At first, they chopped down trees only motivated by the need to build their homes. However, greed gradually took hold, leading to a continuous depletion of forest resources to build bigger homes that later turned into towns and cities, complete with factories and other technological properties. They will not stop until “*there was hardly any forest left.*” The depiction of the Giants in the picture book resembles those typical human beings, albeit with exceptional physical size. Different from “Luh Ayu Manik Mas,” in which the giant is intended as a warning from the nature, the Giants here serve as the allusion to those in positions of authority who contribute to the destruction of the forest and remain apathetic towards its consequences. The Giants can also symbolize the challenges and obstacles faced by those who are working to combat climate change and protect the environment.

It is acknowledged that anthropocentrism has been a dominant perspective in many cultures throughout history and is deeply ingrained in human societies and worldviews. According to Mauch (2019), the sole purpose of humans and animals is to survive, and as a result of humans’ remarkable biological achievements, accompanied by the inherent qualities of selfishness and greed, humans are dangerously close to jeopardizing the basic foundations of their lives (p. 12). The stories “Greta and the Giants” and “Luh Ayu Manik Mas” are two of many examples of literature that give rise to

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how anthropocentrism is expressed. Not only that, the two stories also serve to challenge or critique anthropocentric views and encourage critical engagement to foster greater awareness of the relationship between humans and the natural world.

Examining the short stories “Greta and the Giants” and “Luh Ayu Manik Mas” from an eco-feminist perspective reveals a thematic emphasis on the significance of women in the realm of environmental conservation. Additionally, it is important to note that the adoption of the ecofeminist perspective does not suggest an inherent and exclusive connection between women and their attachment to nature and the preservation of life compared to men. There exist men who dedicate their efforts towards preserving the environment and animal welfare, whereas there are women who show disinterest towards this awareness. Nevertheless, as stated by Puleo (2017), it is statistically evident that “women are the majority in the environmental movements and in the defense of animals” (p. 27). That statement is supported by Greta and Luh Ayu Manik. Greta, a youthful female residing within a woodland habitat, finds herself approached by the animals seeking her assistance in stopping the destructive activities of the Giants, who pose a threat to their shared home, the forest. The Giants were busy building factories and skyscrapers, ruining their environment to feed their greed, but no one ever told them to stop because everyone was afraid of them except Greta. Similarly, Luh Ayu Manik as the main character of her own story, also acts as the only person who speaks out about the need to protect the planet and rallies others to join her cause. In Luh Ayu Manik’s case, she was the only person capable of fighting the giant as she was a hero with exceptional power. Later on, Luh Ayu Manik also initiated environmental awareness and activism by inviting her friends to clean the polluted river.

Supporting Puleo’s perspective on the role of males in environmental awareness, it is evident that the male characters are depicted in contrasting manners throughout the two stories. “In Luh Ayu Manik Mas”, the male characters, Wayan and Made, are portrayed as individuals responsible for disposing of waste into the river and causing the river to overflow. Later on in the story, upon the giant’s emergence from the river, it appears that the male characters were depicted as the initial targets of the attack, showing their response of escaping and yelling in distress in need of help. In contrast, the portrayal of male characters in “Greta and the Giants” took a different approach. The initial instance occurred when Greta first made a sign to catch the attention of the Giants. However, her attempt did not result in the desired outcome. In the picture book, it can be seen that a boy discreetly observes Greta from a hidden location, waiting his time until the fourth day when he ultimately offers his assistance to her and it makes him the first person to support Greta.

In relation with children’s literature, Rose, as cited in Vakoch (2022) has asserted that eco-feminist children's literature has the potential to challenge dominant masculine structures based on colonialism and slavery. Eco-feminism in children's literature seeks to foster a peaceful interaction between humans and nature. The detrimental dualisms of child/adult and nature/human are analogous to the harmful divisions of women/men and nature/culture that ecofeminists have long criticized. The concept of domination based on these distinctions is founded on hegemonic masculinity, patriarchy, and paternalism. Hence, it is important to comprehend the eco-feminist viewpoint in children's literature because it has the power to influence young readers' attitudes toward gender equality and environmental awareness (Bayoumy, 2023; Vakoch, 2022).

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

Conclusion

This study indicates that environmental concerns have emerged as a prominent theme in many literary works, with a specific focus on two short stories. These stories share parallels in their portrayal of young women as advocates for the environment and the use of giants as symbolic representations of environmental destruction.

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The research findings suggest that both main characters undergo similar stages of development. However, it is important to acknowledge that they have different periods for each phase; one might have a certain phase longer than the other and vice versa. The various stages encountered by the main characters have significantly influenced and molded their identities. The first findings emphasize the notion that effecting a change is a challenging endeavor, yet not impossible. Through the ecofeminism lens, this study highlights the end product of their character development. The analysis shows that the development of the main characters served to establish them as the agents of change, namely as eco-warriors who actively advocate for environmental consciousness and symbolically rescue fellow individuals from the metaphorical ‘giants’ and further proves the importance of women in contributing to the environmental movements.

Suggestions

There are many children's short stories centered on environmental awareness from many nations, with different depictions of the relationship between women and the environment. This research was limited by the use of only two short stories from two distinct countries. In subsequent research, researchers might try incorporating more stories from various nations and broadening the examination of ecofeminism to include not just character development but also the struggles faced by women.

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