

Book Review of *Fight Club* Written By Chuck Palahniuk

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1. INTRODUCTION

The writer intends to review *Fight Club* written by Chuck Palahniuk. The novel is one of the examples of literary nonfiction. Published in 1996 by W.W Norton, this novel became top selling novel according to *Baltimore Sun*. *Fight Club*, written by Chuck Palahniuk has been adapted into a movie, a prequel novel and a comic book sequel. According to *The Baltimore Sun* this novel is very controversial because of the anarchism and anti-consumerism behaviour done by the characters of the novel. *The Baltimore Sun* also writes “bravo to Norton for having the courage to publish it” (Hoffert 4). Furthermore violence also appeared in this novel as there are a lot of fight and other form of physical violence.

The main purpose of this writing is to review *Fight Club* by Chuck Palahniuk. The writer will discuss the strengths and weaknesses of this novel . The writer decided to choose *Fight Club* as final project because it is his favorite novel. *Fight Club* is a very interesting novel although it is hard to understand and disturbing because by showing the consumerism behaviour in this novel, Chuck Palahniuk tries to convey the message that the consumerism behaviour of society nowadays has become worse than ever.

2. SUMMARY OF *FIGHT CLUB*

The center story of *Fight Club* revolves around the life of an anonymous narrator, a typical American hard working man. Because of the stress caused by his job and tiresome business trips, he suffers insomnia. His doctor advises him to join a support group for people who suffers testicular cancer to know what real suffering is like. His routine visit to testical cancer support group helps him to reduce his insomnia until he meets Marla Singer. Just like the narrator, Marla Singer is not an actual cancer patient and she only visits the support group to have fun for herself. Because the narator and Marla dislike each other they agree to join different support group so they can't meet each other.

While in a nude beach, the narrator meets Tyler Durden. Tyler is a handsome, charismatic and mysterious man. After an explosion destroys his appartment, the narator asks Tyler if it is okay to live in his house. Tyler is okay with living together with the narator but he asks something in return. He wants the narrator to hit him as hard as he can. After moving together, the narrator and Tyler establish a "Fight Club" where a lot of mentally stressed people joins their club to fight for amusement.

As he Fight Club become known through the country, Tyler uses it to spread his anti-consumerism ideas. Tyler recruits some members from the fight club to join his "Project Mayhem". While initially the narrator is okay with the Fight Club activity, he become reluctant to work together after seeing the destructiveness of the Project Mayhem. After his friend from the cancer support group who also joins Project Mayhem dies from the project's activity, the narrator

finds out that he himself is Tyler Durden. When the narrator's insomnia becomes worse, it is when Tyler Durden was initially born as his second personality. Tyler's personality is only active when the narrator is sleeping. The Tyler personality is the one who created Fight Club and blew his own apartment.

The story proceeds with Tyler's plan to blow a building using homemade bomb. He also plans to die in the explosion as a martyr. The narrator waits until the bomb explodes and kills himself but the bomb malfunctioned. Still alive the narrator decides to shoot himself to "kill" Tyler. The book ends when the narrator wakes up in a mental hospital and being approached by a hospital employee who reveals themselves as Mayhem Project member and that they are waiting Tyler/the narrator's return.

3. REVIEW

In this book review, the writer will list down the strengths and weaknesses of *Fight Club* by Chuck Palahniuk.

3.1 The Strengths of the Novel

3.1.1 Theme

Fight Club by Chuck Palahniuk has a lot of interesting themes such as emasculation, violence, isolation, and consumerism behaviour but the writer thinks that one of the most interesting theme of *Fight Club* is the consumerism behaviour. According to Roger Swagler on *Encyclopedia of The Consumer Movement* :

“Consumerism” is the selfish and frivolous collecting of products, or economic materialism. In protest to this some people promote "anti-consumerism" and advocacy for simple living. (Swagler,1997:172)

The writer thinks that Chuck Palahniuk tries to convey the message that the consumerism behaviour of society nowadays has become worse than ever. The consumerism behaviour in *Fight Club* can be found in the narrator's life before he met Tyler Durden for the first time.

You buy furniture. You tell yourself, this is the last sofa I will ever need in my life. Buy the sofa, then for a couple years you're satisfied that no matter what goes wrong, at least you've got your sofa issue handled. Then the right set of dishes. Then the perfect bed. The drapes. The rug. Then you're trapped in your lovely nest, and the things you used to own, now they own you. (Palahniuk,1996:44)

From the quote above we can see how consumerism behaviour is one of the main theme of *Fight Club*, in which the narrator's tries to fill his “emptiness” by experiencing the consumerism behaviour. The consumerism behaviour shown in this novel is interesting because it can be seen as a form of critique towards our society. From his critique, Chuck Palahniuk implicitly tells his readers that consumerism behaviour is bad for our society.

3.1.2 Character

There are 3 main characters of *Fight Club* by Chuck Palahniuk, The Narrator, Tyler Durden and Marla Singer. The writer thinks that Tyler Durden is the most interesting character of *Fight Club*. Tyler Durden co-founded The Fight Club together with The Narrator. Tyler is a charismatic and vicious leader of The

Fight Club. He is also an anti-consumerist. The quotes below shows Tyler's anti consumerist behaviour when he talks to The Narrator :

...you're not how much money you've got in the bank. You're not your job. You're not your family, and you're not who you tell yourself.... You're not your name.... You're not your problems.... You're not your age.... You are not your hopes. (Palahniuk,1996:143)

As the story progresses it is revealed that Tyler Durden and The Narrator is the same person. Tyler is a persona the Narrator adapted. Tyler is the personification of everything the Narrator desires himself to be. The writer thinks that the Tyler Durden character is very interesting because everything about him is the opposite of The Narrator. As stated above Tyler is the personification of everything The Narrator desires himself to be. It is also interesting how their different ideals clashes, Tyler who wants to reform the consumerist society while The Narrator himself is a consumerist and they are actually one person.

3.1.3 Point of View

Chuck Palahniuk chooses to use first-person point of view when he writes *Fight Club*. The reader of *Fight Club* will see the story from the point of view of The Narrator. The Narrator who is the main character of the story is the one who tells the story. It can be seen from the quote below :

When we invented Fight Club, Tyler and I, neither of us had been in a fight before. If you've never been in a fight, you wonder about getting hurt, about what you are capable of doing against another man. I was the first guy Tyler ever felt safe enough to ask, and we were both drunk in a bar where no one would care so Tyler said, " I want you to do me a favor. I want you to hit me as hard as you can"

I didn't want to, but Tyler explained it all, about not wanting to die without any scars, about being tired of watching only professionals fight and about wanting to know more about himself (Palahniuk,1996:52)

The usage of first-person point of view in this novel allows it to tell its plot twist when it is revealed that the narrator and Tyler Durden is a same person. This is possible because as stated on the quote above the information conveyed is restricted to what that one character says he or she observes. The writer thinks that the usage of first-person point of view as one of the strength of this novel because it allows the reader to be the part of the novel story by reading it.

3.1.4 Ending

The story of *Fight Club* ends when The Narrators conflict against Tyler Durden reaches it's climax.

I'm not killing myself, I yell. I'm killing Tyler. I am Joe's Hard Drive. I remember everything. "It's not love or anything," Marla shouts, "but I think I like you,too." One minute. Marla likes Tyler.

"No, I like you," Marla shouts. "I know the difference." And nothing. Nothing explodes. The barrel of the gun tucked in my surviving cheek, I say, Tyler, you mixed the vitro with paraffin, didn't you. Paraffin never works. I have to do this. The police helicopters. And I pull the trigger. (Palahniuk,1996:153)

On the climatic scene above, The Narrator chooses to "kill" Tyler Durden by shooting himself. The writer thinks that this action of suicide allows The Narrator to reset his reality back. Although the one who pulled the trigger is The Narrator, it is also Tyler's finger which pulled the trigger. By removing the Tyler Durden persona from himself it is like The Narrator can start to focus on his own issues which he cannot solve when Tyler Durden is still around him. The last

chapter of the novel tells how The Narrator wakes up in heaven although in reality it is a mental institution.

Because every once in a while, somebody brings me my lunch tray and my meds and he has a black eye or his forehead is swollen with stitches, and he says: "We miss you Mr. Durden." Or somebody with a broken nose pushes a mop past me and whispers, "Everything's going according to the plan.

Whispers

"We're going to break up civilization so we can make something better out of the world."

Whispers

"We look forward to getting you back." (Palahniuk, 1996:155)

From the final paragraph of the *Fight Club* above we can conclude that the Narrator will never be able to escape from his creation as Tyler Durden. The ending is a cliffhanger so the reader has to interpret how the story ends and whether the Project Mayhem will continue or not. The writer thinks that the cliffhanger ending is a proper way to end the story of *Fight Club* because it will allow the reader to interpret the ending as he wishes.

3.2 The Weaknesses of the Novel

Apart from the strengths which mentioned above, *Fight Club* also has its weakness. The weaknesses of *Fight Club* are its confusing plot and strong language. The plot of *Fight Club* is confusing because the plot of the story is not linear and the story includes some plot twists which makes understanding the story of the novel a little bit hard compared to other novel with linear plot. The story of *Fight Club* becomes confusing when the story reveals that Tyler Durden

and the Narrator are actually one person while before the revelation, they were shown interacting with each other as if they were two different person.

The second weakness of *Fight Club* is the usage of strong language. From the first chapter until the last chapter we can find a lot of strong language usage in this novel. The strong language in this novel might be disturbing for some reader and can be a bad influence for underaged readers. The example of the novel's strong language can be found in the quote below :

Ok. You fuck me, then snub me. You love me, you hate me. You show me a sensitive side, then you turn into a total asshole. Is this a pretty accurate description of our relationship. (Palahniuk,1996:186)

Meet a member of the opposite sex. Stop the excessive shopping and masturbation. Quit your job. Start a fight. Prove you're alive. If you don't claim your humanity you will become a statistic. You have been warned. (Palahniuk,1996:132)

Fuck off with your sofa units and strine green stripe patterns, I say never be complete, I say stop being perfect, I say let... lets evolve, let the chips fall where they may. (Palahniuk,1996:94)

4. CONCLUSION

Fight Club is a thriller novel by Chuck Palahniuk which was written in 1996. The story of *Fight Club* is centered on a nameless narrator, an insomniac hard-worker who attends support group for terminal disease such as testicular cancer support group to ease up his insomnia. In one of the support group that he goes to he met Marla Singer who also fakes her disease so she can attend the same support group as The Narrator for recreational purpose.

One day The Narrator meets Tyler Durden and they co-founded the Fight Club which quickly become famous. The Narrator and Tyler soon have to face each other because Tyler recruits his Fight Club member to join his Project Mayhem, Tyler's project to destroy the city's symbol of consumerism behaviour.

As a literary work, *Fight Club* novel by Chuck Palahniuk ofcourse has some strengths and weaknesses. The strengths of *Fight Club* are it's unique character (Tyler Durden), it's usage of first-person point of view, unique theme, and it's open ending. However *Fight Club* also has weaknesses. It's plot is confusing and hard to follow because of the non linear plot and the plot twist shown in the story. The strong language style which used through the novel might be disturbing for the readers and gives a bad example for underaged readers.

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