

BOOK REVIEW OF *THE FAULT IN OUR STARS* WRITTEN BY JOHN GREEN

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The purpose of writing this final project is to know the strengths and weakness of *The Fault in Our Stars*. The writer uses intrinsic elements in analyzing the strengths and weakness and concludes that the strengths of this novel are the theme, characterization, setting of places and symbols, while the weakness of this novel is a male author who writes a female character as point of view. Although the book has a weakness in point of view, but like the other good strengths in the novel, overall, the book is highly recommended to read.

Keywords: theme, characterization, setting of places and symbols

- **Introduction**

The Fault in Our Stars written by John Green contains an unusual love story. This novel takes the love story concerning teenage suffering from cancer. Green tries to turn down the stereotype that battling cancer is an impressive, heroic and noble act. The novel shows the facts and realities of actual cancer patients. Instead of beauty that will be shown, but the grief and pain. The book shows a situation of two teenagers who fall in love but their relationship is a quite complicated by their medical condition called cancer. Hazel Graze, a sweet sixteen-year-old girl, suffering from thyroid cancer. The thyroid has spread to her lungs since she was a kid. She eventually meets the boy Augustus Waters in a support group for patient with cancer. Augustus Waters, a handsome boy who is safe from cancer and lost his leg has got Hazel's attention.

The writer is interested to review the novel *The Fault in Our Stars* because the background of the story affirms on the suffering as the important points. *The Fault in Our Stars* as The New York Times Bestselling Novel must have something important point that attracts the readers to read it. The writer loves *The Fault in Our Stars* because this novel has a lot of good things that could be taken. Although the story makes the readers little depressed, but it also gives the readers a look at peace, affection, joy, patience and kindness. The writer hopes that the novel could be something interesting to discuss in this paper.

- **Review of the Book**

There are several points that the writer found as the strengths of *The Fault in Our Stars* included analysis of theme, characters/characterization, symbols and setting of place that related with the previous point theme and symbol. All of that is a very important thing for the story to be a strength. The first strength is theme of story. Theme will show what kind of a novel the reader will read,

...tema adalah gagasan (makna) dasar umum yang menopang sebuah karya sastra sebagai struktur semantis dan bersifat abstrak yang secara berulang-ulang dimunculkan lewat motif-motif dan biasanya dilakukan secara implisit. (Nurgiyantoro, 2014:115).

It means, theme is a general basic idea (meaning) that sustains a literary work as a semantic structure and abstract repeatedly raised through motives and it is usually done implicitly. Although this novel tells about cancer, but there is an idea that is repeatedly raised implicitly by its characters, namely the impact of cancer itself.

The writer found that suffering could be the theme for the novel *The Fault in Our Stars*. Suffering is the impact of cancer. Besides Hazel's physical pain, she has an emotional pain her life, too. Hazel worries about making this suffering and pain on people when she

dies, such as Augustus, her friends and family. She compares herself to a grenade. Sometimes could explodes and injures everyone around her. It could be seen in the following line, when Hazel's parents asked her to making friends and going on dates:

I'm like. Like. I'm like a *grenade*, Mom. I'm a grenade and at some point I'm going to blow up and I would like to minimize the casualties, okay? (Green, 2012:99), and

I just want to stay away from people and reads books and think and be with you guys because there's nothing I can do about hurting you; you're too invested, so just please let me do that, okay? I'm not depressed. I don't need to get out more. And I can't be a regular teenager, because I'm a grenade. (Green, 2012:99)

It is clear that her suffering is not only pain of cancer, but the thought of people around her would know that she would die. Hazel cannot imagine that. She cannot do a lot of things with people she loved. She confined herself. Suffering increasingly rises when she finds her love named Augustus. Loving him means doing things together, closer to each other, and even kissing and love is supposed to make her happy, but exactly she is sad. It could be seen in the following line when Hazel decides to text Augustus:

Hi, so okay, I don't know if you'll understand this but I can't kiss you or anything. Not that you'd necessarily want to, but I can't. When I try to look at you like that, all I see is what I'm going to put you through. Maybe that doesn't make sense to you. Anyway, sorry. (Green, 2012:101)

Hazel feels that to be with Augustus is to hurt-inevitably. She thinks she is committing an act of violence against him. By the end of story, Hazel turned out to be the victim of the suffering that he feared, Augustus begin to weaken and eventually die from his cancer. In fact, he does not tell hazel that the disease will recur because it coincides with their departure for the Netherlands, but in the end he sighed in pain.

I knew why he hadn't said anything, of course: the same reason I hadn't wanted him to see me in the ICU. I couldn't be mad at him for even moment, and only know that I loved a grenade did I understand the foolishness of trying to save others from my own impending fragmentation: I couldn't unlove Augustus Waters. And I didn't want to. (Green, 2012:214)

Hazel consciously keeps the distance from people and everyone that could be her friends, Hazel does not want to make them hurt by her when she dies. But, she meets Augustus Waters. She falls in love with him. It is clear that his suffering is not only to survive the pain of cancer, but also to see the beloved people will die of cancer. So, we could see that this is a story with many kinds of suffering as a main theme.

The second strength is characters and characterization. In common literary work, character is the one that experiences the story. It makes people that are involved in the story have their own personalities and characteristics. According to Orson Scott Card, "*Characters are fictitious people, human being that are made up like real people, whole and alive, believable and worth caring about.*" (1988: 4). Character is human being that are made up like real people. It means that character experiences many events like real people do. The main character is Hazel Grace Lancaster. She is the novel's narrator. She is sixteen-year-old protagonist. She has thyroid cancer since she was children. The thyroid has spread to her lungs. She keeps everyone at a distance. Hazel knows that her death would hurt them in the end. Hazel is smart, very thoughtful and considerate about her actions. She does not want the world to look her. She wants to walk alone and find peace alone. She wants to reduce losses caused by her existence to people around her. This point of view on life is different from Augustus's. She thinks that there are no people to remember that she ever existed so as her parents.

There will be no one left to remember Aristotle or Cleopatra, let alone you. Everything that we did and built and wrote and thought and discovered will be forgotten and all of this...will have been for naught. (Green, 2012:13)

Words above shows that Hazel is a wise and smart girl, but she had given up her life considering of her suffering. At least, her ideology was broken while she meets Augustus and how sad Hazel, knowing Augustus dies.

The second main character is Augustus Waters, he is a 16-year-old boy with cancer too. Augustus becomes Hazel's boyfriend. He is a boy with romantic gestures and falls in love with Hazel after he meets her at a support group for cancer in Indianapolis. Augustus is a confident, funny and handsome boy. He likes to be heroic and strong. He is also a boy in Indianapolis who used to be a basketball player and now he could not play basketball anymore because of his cancer. He is afraid about forgotten by the world forever, so he wanted to make something great for the world to remember his existence. It is dramatically different with Hazel's thought. "*I fear oblivion...I fear it like the proverbial blind man who's afraid of the dark.*" (Green, 2012:12).

The third strength that the writer found in this novel is symbol. Symbol is something that represents the theme for this novel. Meyer states "*A symbol is something that represents something else, an object, person, place, event or action can suggest more than its literal meaning*" (1990:581). The writer found that water could be a symbol in this novel. Water in *The Fault in Our Stars* represents suffering in two aspects. They are negative and positive aspects. Water, for negative aspect, represents the liquid that floods in Hazel's lungs as a consequence of her cancer. This water or liquid makes Hazel a big of suffering in the story. This situation forces her to use an oxygen helper and portable tank and bounds her capabilities to do any serious or hard activities. This type of suffering is negative. It is important that water is also Augustus's last name, Waters. Augustus Waters is Hazel's love in the story, and the recur of his cancer makes Hazel hold a strong of suffering. Hazel loves him

so much, which makes it a pain in positive aspect. It is a symbol she feels. She is suffering from water, but she loves Water, too.

The last strength is setting of place. Nurgiyantoro states, "*Latar tempat menyaran pada lokasi terjadinya peristiwa yang diceritakan dalam sebuah karya fiksi*" (1995:227), it means that the setting of place refers to the location where the events are recounted in the work of fiction. Indianapolis and Amsterdam are the places where the events are recounted in this novel. The reason why the writer chooses this aspect because the setting of place is related with the symbol of water in the previous paragraph. Water represents the liquid that flocks in Hazel's lungs as an effect of her cancer. Water also represents Augustus's last name, Waters. The location in the novel also related with water. It is important that the two locations in the novel, Amsterdam and Indianapolis are canal cities. Amsterdam especially threatened of being flooded by the waters around, as well as Hazel's body, and her lungs.

...I straightened my back to see the Netherlands. The land seemed sunk into the ocean, little rectangles of green surrounded on all sides by canals. We landed, in fact, parallel to a canal, like there were two runaways: one for us and one for waterfowl. (Green, 2012:153)

A novel also has a weakness behind its strength. The writer will write down a weakness about *The Fault in Our Stars* by John Green. John Green is a male author who writes a female character as point of view. "*Point of view is the position in which the narrator stands in relation to the story; the standpoint from which events are narrated.*" (Hicks and Hutching, 1989:113). Hazel Grace Lancaster is the main female character as well as the narrator of this novel. In fact, men and women have different perspective, nature, social experiences or each gender problems, so the writing of male and female authors will be different, too. The writer believes that male authors are unable to write accurately if they think to writes the female point of view, because they have not experienced life as women

since they were born, their lives should be different. The writer thinks that the role of Hazel would be better if the author is a female or John Green just write the original story and a female friend who made the characterization in the novel. The writer is sure it would be much nicer to read, especially for the female readers. Writing across gender should be harder, require more research and humility. Of course, John Green has done a lot of research and do his best in this case, but we hope that as more research is done on male authors who write from the female point of view.

- **Conclusion**

The Fault in Our Stars by John Green is a novel that shows a love story between two kids suffering from cancer. The novel has some strengths that make it a good reading. The writer uses intrinsic elements in analyzing the strengths and weakness. Strength points of this novel are the theme, character/characterization, symbol, and setting of places that related with the symbol. While the weakness of this novel is a male author who writes a female character as point of view. Although the book has a weakness in point of view, but like the other good strengths in the novel, overall, the book is highly recommended to read.

The writer believes the book provides some very powerful lessons if the readers can see through the pain of the story. There are some situations Hazel and Augustus cannot escape like their struggles with cancer. They have no power over the situation itself, but they do have the power to decide how they respond to it. As people waste their breath complaining about life, someone out there is struggling to live and breathing the last breath. So, the book teaches the readers that the human should appreciate their lives.

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