

BOOK REVIEW OF *DREAMS IN THE GOLDEN COUNTRY*
THE DIARY OF ZIPPORAH FELDMAN, A JEWISH IMMIGRANT GIRL
WRITTEN BY KATHRYN LASKY

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Abstrak

*Pada tahun 1900-an ada banyak imigran yang datang ke Amerika Serikat. Kebanyakan dari mereka datang untuk mencari penghidupan yang lebih layak karena pada saat itu Amerika Serikat dianggap sebagai “Golden Country” bagi para imigran. Dalam tugas akhir review buku ini, penulis memilih sebuah novel karya Kathryn Lasky yang berjudul *Dreams in the Golden Country* sebagai bahan ulasan. Penulis tertarik untuk menganalisis bagaimana usaha seorang remaja Yahudi dari Rusia, Zipporah Feldman, dalam meraih nilai-nilai kekeluargaan Amerika berdasar aspek *cohesion*, *flexibility*, dan *communication*. Lebih jauh lagi, penulis ingin memberikan ulasan tentang perjuangan keluarga Feldman untuk meraih *American Dreams* berdasar elemen *prosperity*, *pursuit of happiness*, dan *education*.*

*Tujuan dari review ini adalah untuk memberikan ulasan mengenai nilai-nilai kekeluargaan Amerika dan *American Dreams* dalam novel *Dreams in the Golden Country*, serta kelebihan dan kekurangannya. Dalam membuat ulasan review ini, penulis menggunakan metode penelitian kepustakaan. Penelitian kepustakaan yang digunakan adalah pengambilan sumber dari buku-buku terkait di perpustakaan dan berbagai sumber lainnya melalui internet.*

*Berdasarkan ulasan yang ada, penulis menemukan bahwa Zipporah Feldman dan keluarganya sangat menjunjung nilai-nilai keluarga. Di Amerika, sebagai satu keluarga mereka terus berjuang untuk saling menyayangi (*cohesion*), memahami (*flexibility*), dan menjaga (*communication*). Melalui nilai-nilai keluarga yang kental tersebut maka Zipporah dan keluarganya berhasil meraih *American Dreams* mereka dalam ekonomi (*prosperity*), meraih cita-cita (*pursuit of happiness*), dan pendidikan yang layak (*education*).*

Kata kunci: nilai-nilai keluarga, nilai *American Dreams*, *the Feldman*

1. Introduction

Family value and American dreams are two themes that discussed in many

either kids or adults American novels. Family value in a novel can give the reader deeper comprehension about the

meaning of what family is. Family is the first place for every human in learning about social life because a baby interacts with his family members at first he can communicate with people. A family structure consists of father that becomes a provider and takes control of responsibility and protection; mother that becomes a housewife and supports all of the children needs; and children that has jobs to figure out how to be an adult, act to be kids, play, and study. Thomas E. Grouling points out in his essay *American Values* that the main purpose of the American family is to bring about the happiness of each individual family member. Family members have to love and respect each other because those are the basic value in achieving a healthy family life.

In life each family member has his own dream to reach. American people have what they called as American dream. American dream is dream of a land where someone can make his or her life richer and fuller according to their own ability and achievement. American dream is not about motor cars, big houses, or tons of money, but a dream of social order dream in which each man and each woman shall be able to attain to the fullest stature of which they are innately capable, and be recognized by

others for what they are, regardless of the fortuitous circumstances of birth or position (Adams, 1931:214-215). American dream is about struggling to reach the dream and prosperity through hard work, courage, and determination.

Dreams in the Golden Country: The Diary of Zipporah Feldman, a Jewish Immigrant Girl written by Kathryn Lasky is a novel that tells about the theme of family value and American dream. Zipporah Feldman or Zippi is a Russian-Jewish girl who comes to New York USA in 1902 with her mother and two elder sisters to follow and catch up her father that comes earlier to USA. The writer chooses this book to give review of the story and the themes about family values and American dream. The writer also wants to give the strength and the weakness of the book.

2. Purposes of the Writing

1. To give explanation about family value in *Dreams in the Golden Country: The Diary of Zipporah Feldman, a Jewish Immigrant Girl* novel.
2. To give explanation about the value of American dream in *Dreams in the Golden Country: The Diary of Zipporah Feldman, a Jewish Immigrant Girl* novel.

3. To give explanation about the strength and weakness from the book dealing with the themes of family values and American dream.

3. Review

3.1 Theme of the Book

3.1.1 Family Value

A strong family creates a safe, positive and supportive place for all members to thrive. The adults in a strong family are good role models that lead by example. They reach out to friends and community and teach their children the importance of doing the same and that becomes part of who the children are. Some important elements of a strong family system are family cohesion, family flexibility and family communication. Cohesion is defined as the feeling of being loved, of belonging to the group and being nurtured by it; flexibility means that there must be a structure in a family or it will become chaotic and will not be a peaceful setting for a family; and communication will avoid the members from misunderstanding. (Essortment, 2008:1)

These three elements are elements of family values that appear in Feldman family. Cohesion element in Feldman family is about the relationship among

the members. They are love to each other. Yasha and Sarah Feldman are really taking care of their daughters. Although they are living in many limitations in economy but actually the family always spends their time together. In the novel, it is told that Feldman family always celebrate Jews holiday like *Shabbos* and *Hanukkah* together. The girls get shopping and Mama will cook some food. Another part that tells about cohesion is how the Feldman daughters love to each other. Miriam, Tovah, and Zippi sometimes sleep out on the roof all the time in the hot weather. They love to lie flat on their back and see skies and stars. They share stories and support to each other about their dreams. Cohesion is about the feeling of belonging and the Feldman family is belonging to each other.

Flexibility element is about the structure of the family. Yasha Feldman, the father acts as a “bread winner”. He works in a sweat shop and produce money for the family. Miriam, the eldest children, and Tovah, the second, also work in a sweat shop and help the family earn for more money. Zippi is too young to work so she goes to school and studies English better. In the novel it is told that Mama, who does not have job, starts to complain about everything. There is

chaotic among the Feldmans when Mama always angry and complain about living in the United States. The strength of the family is tested and the parents start to fight each other. There is chaotic in the house and the girls try hard to find ways to solve this problem.

Flexibility has correlations with communication, the third element. To solve the problem of flexibility the Feldmans then communicate to each other, something that lately they never do. In one part of the story it is told that Papa tells the girls that Mama maybe bored with her daily activity with doing nothing then Zippi finds an idea that they have to do something so Mama can distract her attention from complaining into something she likes. From that communication among them then they find something Mama likes most, sewing. They rent a sewing machine and give a surprise for Mama. Mama is very happy and starts sewing. She gets orders from a woman up town to sew the woman a uniform for her worker. The business runs well and their condition becomes better.

3.1.2 American Dreams

American dreams is a belief that America gives their people conviction in reaching whatever they dream of. There are five aspects of the American Dream:

self-determined success, equality, prosperity, pursuit of happiness, and education. Self-determined success is determination of one's own fate or course of action without compulsion; free will, discretion-the power of making free choices unconstrained by external agencies. Equality is social equality requires the lack of legally enforced social class or caste boundaries and lack of unjustified discrimination motivated by an inalienable part of a person's identity. Prosperity means a successful, flourishing, thriving condition, or prosperous circumstances; for example in financial respects and good fortune. Pursuit of happiness is one of the most famous phrases in the United State Declaration of Independence, which was primarily written by Thomas Jefferson. Education is one of the most aspects that people want to have in America. They come to America, hoping for the better education. (Fossum and Roth, 1981:35-37)

This book brings some those aspects of American dream. The first is about prosperity. Feldman family comes from Russia to the United States with limited money. They live in a small apartment, limited economic life, and they have to work hard to fulfill the family needs. The Feldmans' American dream is about reaching a better life,

financial respects and good fortune. Papa, Mama, Miriam, and Tovah work really hard to earn money so they can survive. The struggle of this family in reaching prosperity is so hard. Papa works in the sweat-shop, leaving his dream becoming a violin player behind, almost every day to earn money. Miriam and Tovah as well, they work in the sweat-shop to help the parents bring more money for the family. Later, Mama also becomes a tailor and she gets order from a woman up town. Renting a sewing machine, Mama receives orders in sewing cloth. Luckily, Feldmans' family starts to get better financial after Zippi successes in achieving her dreams becoming a theater actress.

The second aspect is about pursuit of happiness. Pursuit of happiness is about someone's wish to seek out whatever he or she wants. The aspect of pursuit of happiness in this book is shown by the effort of Zippi in pursuit her dreams to become "someone". In New York, Zippi finds that America is a land where people come and seek out many dreams—better economy, job, education, and so on. In the beginning Zippi writes in her diary that she is rather disappointed with what is happening during her stay in America. But as she matured, she finds that she fulfills her dreams in America. She

dreams of drama and really wants to become an actress. Her passion in the beginning is about to become like Marie Curie, a scientist. Zipporah learns English by reading articles about Curie and writes her letters in English. Later Zipporah finds that she loves drama more than other passion. She starts to watch drama in the theater. She also attends audition for a role in drama. Zipporah feels that drama is her life and becomes an actress is all what she wants. She tries hard to reach her dreams to become an actress and she does it.

The third aspect of American dream is about education. As the youngest children, Zipporah cannot go to work and she has to attend school. She is twelve but in the United States she has to join a class with other younger friends. Zippi is not really fluent in English so she has to study from the beginning grade. She feels so upset at first but after she finds her dreams becoming a scientist like Marie Curie she really enjoys school. She studies hard and learns English much more so she can write Curie a letter. She also starts to write the diary in English. Then her dream changes from becoming a scientist to a theater actress. Zipporah be more determined in learning English and other subjects. Education is one of her provisions in reaching a better future.

The other family members also understands that education is one of the way in reaching a better life, that is why Papa and Mama Feldman do not give any excuse for Zippi to work rather than study.

There is a thought that Zippi writes in her diary about America: she believes that there is something in the air in America that does “this” to people. “This” is about American dream, that every people in America always have dreams and purposes in life. They will do anything to make it happens.

3.2 The Strength and Weakness

There are some strength of *Dreams in the Golden Country: The Diary of Zipporah Feldman, a Jewish Immigrant Girl* novel:

1. This book gives the reader more comprehension about family values. Family value is values that can make a family become a strong family. The book gives a story about the struggle of Feldman family who emigrates from Russia to the United States of America. With three aspects of strong family—cohesion, flexibility, and communication—reader can learn more about family value.

2. This book gives the reader more comprehension about American dream.

From the story the reader can learn more about every chance that people have in reaching their dreams. The reader will know many kinds of American dream elements dealing with the story: prosperity that is about the struggle in reaching better financial condition; pursuit of happiness, which is about efforts in making dreams come true; and education, which is about chances in getting better education.

There are some weaknesses of *Dreams in the Golden Country: The Diary of Zipporah Feldman, a Jewish Immigrant Girl* novel:

1. The book is written with first person point of view. Zipporah becomes the main character and the story is written from her point of view so the theme of family value only told by Zipporah. The reader does not know the family value based on other characters’ mind.

2. There are five elements of American dream, which are self-determined success, equality, prosperity, pursuit of happiness, and education. Unfortunately, there are only three elements are explained in the book: prosperity, pursuit of happiness, and education.

4. Conclusion

Dreams in the Golden Country: The Diary of Zipporah Feldman, a Jewish Immigrant Girl written by Katheyn Lasky is a novel that tells about the struggle of a Russian-Jewish family, the Feldman, in the United States in 1902. They come to America because of the tagline of America as “The Golden Country”. In America they have to survive with work hard and learn English better. This novel mostly tells about the relationship among Feldman family members (Yasha Feldman—the father, Sarah Feldman—the mother, and three daughters—Miriam, Tovah, and Zipporah Feldman). Family value of this novel is shown by the relationship among them that they help, support, and love each other. There are three aspects of family value—cohesion, flexibility, and communication. They also struggle together and help each other in making their America dreams come true. American dream elements that are discussed are prosperity, pursuit of happiness, and education. With family value among them and a belief about American dream that each people can make their dreams come true as long as they are working hard, they can make their dreams become reality.

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