

A Study on the Character Building and Messages of “Lady Windermere’s Fan” Drama by Oscar Wilde

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ABSTRACT: This paper figures out the characters and the messages or moral values of a play namely Lady Windermere’s Fan. The drama was designed based on Heathcote’s (1984) understanding of drama in education in order to cultivate creative pedagogy and ‘character’ building. The data was gained by reading the drama script based on existing documents. The result showed that every character has various characters and each of them is related to others. The main character has fundamentally strengthened the plot and has important effects to other characters. The moral values that can be seen from this play are that all humankind is far from the word “perfect” even if they are consider themselves as good, kind, and wise people. They still tend to have shortage.

Keywords: *Drama; Characters; Messages*

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INTRODUCTION

Drama comes from Greek, meaning action, play, or deed. This meaning carries forward to our modern usage as it bears the connotation of a story to be acted out. Dramas revolve around conflict or contrasts of character. All three of the plays that you have the option of researching, though from separate time periods, are well-known dramas rich with symbolism and often social commentary by the playwright. (**Elaine Patton**, Elaine.M.Patton@lonestar.edu).

According to Abrams (1988), drama is designed for performance in the theater in which actors take the roles of characters, perform indicated action, and utter the written dialogue. In other hand, Reaske (1966) stated that drama is a literature work which describes human life and their activities by means of presenting various actions and dialogue between characters. Based on the definition above, it can be concluded that drama is a genre of literature which the purpose is to be performed in front of audiences. It explores human conflict representation through dialogue and performance.

Analyzing the language of drama texts stylistically can be somehow challenging, due to the fact, dialogues need certain tools and techniques to be used. Therefore, the fundamental purpose of conducting this work is to show how to analyze plays stylistically. This paper focuses on one play, namely, Lady Windermere’s Fan.

The drama of Lady Windermere’s Fan by Oscar Wilde is one of well-known dramas in the end of nineteenth century. It was written in 1891 and published for the first time in London on February 20th, 1892. It portrays the marriage life of Lady Windermere and Lord Windermere. They are a happy and young couple married with a six month old child. This drama focuses on the gossip, social statues, and gender politics based on the reflection of Victorian era. There are some reasons for the writers choosing this drama to be analyzed. One of which is the writer,

Oscar Wilde, who is a famous novelist, playwright, and poet. Although he is an Irish, but he is well-known and popular in England because of his masterpiece. Second, this drama is a satire comedy which reflects upon the Victorian society, mostly marriage. The story has played on roller coaster emotions, intrigue, jealousy, angry and sacrifice. Then, from the title, we can assume that it has multiple meaning such as the words “fan” in Lady Windermere’s fan. It can be interpreted as equipment that is use to move the air like what Lady Windermere has been given by her husband and also it can be a person who admires and fall in love with Lady Windermere that is Lord Darlington.

Thus, in this paper, the writers will focus on analyzing the character building of each character and its explicit or implicit message found in Lady Windermere’s Fan

METHOD

This research was conducted using a qualitative descriptive method. Creswell (in Raco, 2010) defines the qualitative method as an approach to search or explore and understand a central phenomenon, while the data are taken through interviews, field observations, or existing documents. The researcher is the critical instrument in collecting data. In this research, the data collection techniques were based on existing documents.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

From the written drama, it is obtained that the characters played on the drama are (1) Lord Windermere plays a major role in the play. Society sees him as the perfect man and great husband. He is the center of the conflict because there are rumors being spread about him. The rumors are he is sleeping with Mrs. Erlynne. The whole play the reader is left wondering if they are true or not. (2) Lady Windermere is the wife of Lord Windermere and the mother of his child. She tends to forget her duties as a mother and starts to think of leaving her husband because of the rumorrs going around the town. She is the daughter of Mrs. Erlynne but never actually finds out about that herself. The play takes place during her twenty-first birthday party. (3) Lord Darlington is good friends with Lord and Lady Windermere. He is a charming bachelor in society. He has feelings for Lady Windermere. He goes along with the rumors to try to get Lady Windermere to leave with him. (4) Lord Augustus Lorton is a sweet, older man. He is in love with Mrs. Erlynne. He allows her to tell him what to do and he doesn't mind it one bit. He just wants to have a women by his side and spend the rest of his life with someone. (5) Mr. Dumby is a minor character. He is the typical Englishman of high society. (6) Mr. Cecil Graham is a supporting character. He is very eccentric. He is part of high society but he is not like the other men. He has a witty sense of humor. (7) Mr. Hopper Parker is an Australian businessman in high society. He is in love with the Duchess of Berwick's daughter Lady Agatha. He is an outsider in the London high society because he is Australian. (8) Duchess of Berwick is considered a noblewoman by high society. She is a talkative person and highly interested in scandal and drama. (9) Lady Agatha Carlisle is the Duchess of Berwick's daughter, who throughout the whole play only says two words: "Yes Mamma." She is in love with Mr. Hopper. (10) Lady Plymdale is the typical London woman of high society. She thinks highly of herself and behaves in an acceptable manner. (11) Lady Stutfield is a minor character who says a few lines. She is a typical representation of a woman of high society. (12) Lady Jedburgh is a minor character in high society who says a few witty lines. She is always in the background of scenes during the party talking incessantly. (13) Mrs. Cowper-Cowper flutters around during the play. She doesn't say much as a very minor character. She does what she needs to do to stay a part of high society. (14) Mrs. Erlynne Rosalie is a woman in her forties who left her husband years ago. The town knows her as a loose woman. They all judge her and have labeled her as a woman who sleeps with married men. The conflict in the movie is Lord Windermere is paying her off

but for what purpose? The reader doesn't find out until the very end that she is the mother of Lady Windermere. Lord Windermere pays her off so she doesn't come out and ruin Lady Windermere's reputation. She starts out the play as a conniving woman but towards the end redeems herself and helps out her daughter.

Besides character building, this study also focuses on analyzing the messages of Lady Windermere's fan play. The messages found in this play still can be related to nowadays society. They are gossiping and provocation, judging someone and human shortage. From the first plot, it begins with the rumor being spread among society that Lord Windermere, the husband of Lady Windermere is adulterer and he has an affair with the character named Mrs. Erlynne. Moreover, Lord Darlington, a best friend of Windermere's family tries to provoke Lady Windermere because he is in love with her and wants her to be his. The message we can learn from this is that we should be careful to our society especially if we are a stand first. People should not start and spread misleading news that can harm someone or even destroy their family relationship. For others, since we live in nowadays era, where issues can spread in a second especially through social media, we should not believe easily to any gossip and rumor spreading around us without knowing the truth.

Through the gossiping and provocation around her, it leads Lady Windermere to judge Mrs. Erlynne as a temptress and sinful woman because of her dark past life. Lady Windermere thinks that Mrs. Erlynne does not deserve to be her follow party member. From this case, we, as human being should not judge other for whatever he/she did in the past. The past is part of someone experiences in shaping their future life. Also, someone's past cannot be the only thing to measure someone's current life because people can change. They can turn to be good and conversely.

In addition, it also can be found that all humankind are far from the word "perfect" even if they are consider themselves as good, kind and wise people. They still tend to have shortage. Lady Windermere calls herself as a pure woman who never does bad deeds and sins. However, the action of her leaving her husband and son becomes a big issue that can lead her to the disgraceful life. From this we can conclude that even though he/she is called as a good person, but he/she still has weakness to do errors.

CONCLUSION

Drama is designed for performance in the theater in which actors take the roles of characters, perform indicated action, and utter the written dialogue. Analyzing the language of drama texts stylistically can be somehow challenging, due to the fact, dialogues need certain tools and techniques to be used. The drama of Lady Windermere's Fan by Oscar Wilde is one of well-known dramas in the end of nineteenth century. It portrays the marriage life of Lady Windermere and Lord Windermere. This drama focuses on the gossip, social statues, and gender politics based on the reflection of Victorian era. Various characters are played in here. Each character has different values. The messages found in this play still can be related to nowadays society.

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