



Stella Grant and Will Newman's Character Development throughout A Movie Entitled *Five Feet Apart*

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Abstract

This study focused on analyzing how the main characters from *Five Feet Apart* movie developed their character as the story progressed by using the theory of character proposed by Kenney (1966). The aim of this research was to identify how the main characters develop their character through their actions and dialogues by applying the qualitative method through several steps, such as selecting a movie and collecting data, watching the movie thoroughly, and the last step was note-taking and determining the type of the main character found in the movie by using character theory, specifically the type of character by Kenney (1966). The presentation of the analysis was supported by providing conversations from the movie to make the description clearer and coherent. It was found in this study that the main characters experienced a change from flat/simple characters to round/complex characters as the story progressed which can obviously be seen from the characters' actions and dialogues.

Keywords: *main character, character development, movie*

Abstrak

Penelitian ini berfokus pada menganalisis bagaimana karakter utama dari film *Five Feet Apart* yang mengembangkan karakter mereka seiring berjalannya cerita dengan menggunakan teori karakter yang dikemukakan oleh Kenney (1966). Tujuan dari penelitian ini adalah untuk mengidentifikasi bagaimana karakter utama mengembangkan karakter mereka melalui tindakan dan dialog mereka dengan menerapkan metode kualitatif melalui beberapa tahapan, seperti memilih film dan mengumpulkan data, menonton film secara menyeluruh, dan langkah terakhir adalah mencatat dan menentukan tipe karakter utama di dalam film tersebut dengan menggunakan teori karakter yang secara spesifik menggunakan teori tipe karakter oleh Kenney (1966). Penyajian dari analisis data didukung dengan mencantumkan percakapan dari dalam film tersebut agar membuat deskripsi analisis menjadi jelas dan koheren. Dalam penelitian ini ditemukan bahwa karakter utama mengalami perubahan dari karakter datar/ sederhana menjadi karakter bulat/kompleks seiring berjalannya cerita yang terlihat dari tindakan dan dialog para karakter.

Kata kunci: *karakter utama, pengembangan karakter, film*

Introduction

Literature has many forms and as time progresses, there has been an enormous evolution in literary works which is shaped by numerous beliefs, behaviors, attitudes, and

languages expressed in the society (Rexroth, 2019). A movie is one of many well-known literary works and it is considered as a form of art to tell a story in the motion picture produced by using camera and background. Furthermore, a movie can also be a source of prevalent entertainment and an influential method for cultivating individuals (Triswela, 2015; Widyaningsih & Hastuti, 2018). Just like any other literary works, there are a lot of important elements in a movie and one of them is a character.

Character is one of the intrinsic elements in any kind of literary works (Megale & Sunardi, 2017; Wulandari, Santoso, & Ocktarani, 2017) and it is a person represented in a dramatic or narrative work that has qualities within themselves in determining actions, which will tailor the story (Norton, Rushton, & Abrams, 1941). A character analysis/approach can also be applied to review or analyze the existence of a character in a movie. The significance of this approach is to understand how a character is developed as the story progresses through their actions (Kleemans, Eden, Daalmans, van Ommen, & Weijers, 2017). This includes learning the types of the character, whether the character is a simple or a complex character. A character can be categorized into two types, namely flat/simple character and round/complex character. Flat/simple character does not change as the story progresses, while round/complex character develops and changes throughout the story (Kenney, 1966). Although flat characters do not change throughout a story, they could highlight the development of round characters and that is really important as round characters hold a major role for the story (Muliadi, 2015).

There were 5 studies that analyzed characters from literary works conducted by Muliadi (2015), Megale & Sunardi (2017), Wulandari et al. (2017), Hasanah et al (2018), and Rahmadani (2018). These studies found that the characters experienced changes in personality which indicated that throughout the story, the characters developed their personality. At first, the characters from previous literatures have default personalities and attitude and when the story continues, they developed their character due to any kind of experiences that influenced them to change. Thus, they can be considered as round or complex characters. With reference to the previous findings, this study is projected to link the actions of the characters by expanding the type of character theory proposed by Kenney to discover the character development of Stella Grant and Will Newman.

Although the present study and previous studies analyzed a similar topic, the difference can be noted from the genre of the data source. The previous studies used history and fantasy-themed novels and movies, while the present study used a romance-themed movie. This data source was chosen because it shows that a strong bond makes people want to live their life to the fullest. Moreover, the movie can be thoroughly analyzed to give a wide perspective and new knowledge to the researchers. This study focuses the main characters, Stella Grant and Will Newman from a movie entitled *Five Feet Apart*. They were chosen as the subject of this study because of how they are willing to survive even though they have a rare disease, namely *cystic fibrosis*. Their strong bond increases their will to live. Therefore, the character in this movie was worth analyzing because by learning the idea behind the type of character, we will know how do they develop as the story progresses. Therefore, this study is expected to be a helpful reference in the future for other researchers.

Method

This study applied a descriptive qualitative method. Several steps were done in this study. The first step was selecting a movie and collecting data, followed by watching the movie thoroughly, and the last step was note-taking and determining the type of the main character found in the movie by using character theory, specifically the type of character by Kenney (1966).

In this study, the main characters' actions and dialogues were thoroughly observed as the movie progressed. The data were analyzed by applying the qualitative method to identify how the main characters develop their character through their actions and dialogues. The final step was analyzing the main characters' actions and dialogue and link it with the theory of type of character by Kenney. The presentation of the analysis was supported by providing conversations from the movie to make the description clearer and coherent.

Result and Discussion

Table 1. Types of Main Character

No	Types of Main Character	Total	rejected
1	Simple/Flat	6	32%
2	Complex/Round	14	68%
Total		20	100%

In *Five Feet Apart*, Stella belongs to the complex character because, during the beginning of the movie, Stella is a cheerful girl who has high determination to recover from her illnesses compared to other patients, but she also has great fear and guilt in her life. At the end of the story suddenly she did not want to accept any donations because she thinks that her life would be useless without Will. Her character is smart, careful, caring, optimistic, and extrovert. But after she met Will, Stella undergoes changes like pessimism, emotion, and sensitivity, which means that she was affected by negative emotions. On the other hand, as the main character, Will also belongs to a complex character. In contrary to Stella, Will was an ignorant person, and also pessimistic about his successful treatment during the beginning of the movie. After he met Stella, he regains his courage and more cautious about his treatment, which is a good sign because he was affected by positive emotions. His character changed and developed into an optimist, and caring.

Datum 1



Figure 1 Stella Convinced Will

Stella : **“You really can't practice just a little bit of discipline even to save your own life?”**

Will : “Stella, nothing is going to save our lives. We're breathing borrowed air. Enjoy it.”

(door closed)

(door open)

Stella : “Fine. But I'm not posing for hours on end. And your regimen, we're doing it my way. Okay, the first thing you're gonna do is get a med cart in your room. Deal?”

Will : “Deal. Shake on it?”

Stella : “Funny.”

Based on the conversation between Stella and Will above, Stella's character belongs to the flat/simple character as her personality is caring since the beginning of the movie. When she said **“you really can't practice just a little bit of discipline even to save your own life?”** it showed that she was worried about Will. Her nature of being a caring person did not fade even if Will was being ignorant of his treatment. They might have different personalities, but Stella felt that they also have something in common and they were going on the same path, to fully recover from their rare disease. She also said **“fine. But I'm not posing for hours on end. And your regimen, we're doing it my way. Okay, the first thing you're gonna do is get a med cart in your room. Deal?”** to make sure and remind Will that his treatment is very important and he must start to take good care of himself.

At this point, her character had not yet developed because she just meets Will not for long, but it showed that her caring nature is within herself. She supported Will even though he was pessimistic about his life and keep thinking about dying. This attitude of her will later helped Will to develop his character. Therefore, it can be concluded that through her utterances above, she belongs to the flat/simple character during this conversation based on the theory of character proposed by Kenney (1966) because it was still her default character and she had not yet changed during the beginning of the movie.

Datum 2



Figure 2 Stella Checks Her To-do List

Will : “What's that?”

Stella : “My to-do list.”

Will : “To-do list? That's pretty old-fashioned for someone that builds apps.”

Stella : “Yeah, well, the app doesn't give me the satisfaction of doing that.”

Will : “What else is on that to-do list of yours?”

Stella : “My master list or my daily list?”

Will : “Yeah, of course you have two lists. The master list. That's the big stuff, right?”

Stella : “**Okay. Volunteer in an important political campaign. Done.**”

Will was having a small talk with Stella during this scene. When Stella was looking and writing down in her notebook, Will asked what she is holding. Stella then replied that is her to-do list. Will asked her about it and eventually questioned about big things she had ever done in her life. She then said “**Okay. Volunteer in an important political campaign. Done**” to Will while reading her to-do list. This scene implies that Stella is a smart person from the beginning of the movie because she was volunteering in an important political campaign, which means that she has knowledge about politics. She used her knowledge to volunteer for the political campaign instead of making money from it. Hence, she willingly shared her knowledge with others without taking any benefits from it. She knows that she is not strong enough due to her disease but it does not mean that she cannot use her knowledge for something good. Therefore, it can be concluded that Stella is always a smart person even prior to the movie because she has done a lot of useful activities by harnessing her knowledge which makes her belong to the flat/simple character during this scene and it matched with the theory from Kenney (1966). This personality trait of hers remained the same until the end of the movie. There were also some character development shown by her as the story progressed and after she met Will and fell in love with him, but it does not affect her intelligence until the end of the movie.

Datum 3



Figure 3 Small Argument Between Stella and Will

Stella : “Come with me.”

Will : “Stella, now's not the time to be rebellious. Is this about Poe?”

Stella : “**It is about Poe. It's about Abby, it's about you and me and all the things that we'll never get to do together. This whole time, I've been living for my treatments instead of doing my treatments so that I can live. I wanna live. It's just life, Will. It'll be over before we know it.**”

Will : “All right. Can we catch a cab at least?”

Stella : “I wanna walk and enjoy the night. Glove. We're good.”

Stella and Will had a small argument during this scene. She wanted to enjoy the lights and walk around during the snow. Will was trying to stop her and told her that it was not the best time to be rebellious and mentioned Poe's name during the conversation. She then replied by saying “**it is about Poe. It's about Abby, it's about you and me and all the things that we'll never get to do together. This whole time, I've been living for my treatments instead of doing my treatments so that I can live. I wanna live. It's just life, Will. It'll be over before we know it**” which indicated that she was being pessimistic for her life. She stated that all this time, she has to spend her life just for treatments that Stella herself was not sure if that will ever work to cure her disease. She wanted to live her life to the fullest and feel the literal meaning of being alive rather than wasting her time and life for the treatment. She was afraid that she will not live any longer and spend the rest of her life for treatments without enjoying the real definition of living her life. This trait of hers is contrary compared to Datum 1, in which she is shown to be a caring person and also determined to recover, but during this scene, she was shown to be apathetic and would like everything goes with the flow rather than fighting back. This showed how much Stella's character has changed throughout the story.

As the story progressed, she felt that she was wasting her life on treatments which made her frustrated. Character development can be seen through this conversation as Stella, who was a caring person at the beginning of the story becomes a pessimistic person. At the beginning of the movie, she supported Will to take his treatment so he could recover and be healthy again because she felt that sharing her

motivation, would help things to get better. But as the story progressed, she was also confused by her own advice and starting to doubt that she will ever recover and be fully cured of her disease. Therefore, this indicated that Stella experienced a change in her character which makes her belong to the round/complex character at this point.

Datum 4



Figure 4 Stella Talks About Abby To Will

Will : “What happened with Abby?”

Stella : “**She was cliff diving in California. She landed wrong, broke her neck and drowned. They said she didn't feel any pain, but how would they know if she felt pain? I was supposed to be there with her, but I got sick. Like I always do. I just keep imagining it over and over again. What she was feeling. Without knowing that, she just never stops dying.**”

Will : “Stella. Even if you were there, you still wouldn't know.”

Stella : “**But I wasn't there. She died alone.**”

Will : “Isn't that how we're gonna die? Drowning. Just without the water. Our own fluids doing the dirty work.”

This scene clearly shows Stella's pain, guilt, and fear because she lost her older sister, Abby due to an accident and Stella could not do anything for her. When Abby was hospitalized, Abby could not be there for her because Stella was sick and on her treatment too. When Abby passed away, Stella could not see her for the last time to say goodbye and it haunts her. She wished that she could be there for her sister and keep blaming herself even though it was not her fault. This shows that even if Stella was shown as a brave character at the beginning of the movie, she also has fear within her, especially when she lost her loved one. She cannot bear the same feeling when she lost another person that she cared for. Will tried to console her, but she was still blaming herself by saying “**But I wasn't there. She died alone**” which implies she experienced trauma.

From this scene, it can be seen that Stella undergoes a change in her character from brave to fearful due to the past experience of losing someone close to her. Even when it seems that she coped well with that, deep inside she felt guilty and scared that

she will be going to lose someone again in the future. From this point, Stella can be categorized as a round/complex character because her character changed from brave to fearful because of the bitter experience she felt in the past.

Datum 5



Figure 5 Will Meets Poe For The First Time

- Poe : "I'm Poe"
Will : "I'm Will"
Poe : "B. cepacia. Damn, that's rough."
Will : "**Yeah. So, no lung transplant for me.**"
Poe : "When did you contract it?"
Will : "About eight months ago now. It colonized so quickly. I was on the transplant list one minute and then..."

It was shown in this scene that this was the first time Will and Poe met and introduced themselves. When Will was talking to Poe about his disease, he was a little bit sad and frustrated at the same time but his expression seemed relaxed. This happened because he was waiting so long for the lung transplant to save his own life which can be seen from his utterance "**Yeah. So, no lung transplant for me**" which means he was meant to get the lung transplant eight months before the story begins. But something unexpected happens and he did not get the transplant. It crushed his hope to live like normal people and he felt that his chance of living was getting small every single day. This conversation happened before Will met Stella and he felt pessimistic that he could live any longer.

During this scene, it can be seen from his utterance and expression that Will belongs to the flat/simple character as it is his default personality trait at the beginning of the movie. He seems hopeless but relaxed at the same time because he actually did not care if he will survive his illness or not. He tried to ignore the fact that he is sick and live his life the way it is because for Will, everyone will eventually die and there is nothing people can do to change that fact.

Datum 6



Figure 6 Will Talks With Barb

Barb : “Oh, hell, no! Will!”

Will : “**She was scared. I just wanted to do something nice.**”

Barb : “Come on!”

Will : “She's in more danger under the anaesthesia than she is with me.”

Barb : “Trevor Von. That's who you remind me of Trevor Von and Amy Presley. Oh, they were... They were in love. And I let them break the rules so they could be happy.”

Will : “And let me guess, they died?”

Barb : “Yes, Will, they did. On my watch. And I'd be damned if I let that happen again.”

Will was talking with Barb about Stella in the elevator. Barb did not seem happy that Will visited Stella's room to comfort her because it was her first surgery without Abby. Will then explained to Barb that Stella was scared and he wanted to do something for her which can be seen from his utterance “**She was scared. I just wanted to do something nice**” which indicated the change in Will's character. Compared to Datum 5, where Will was pessimistic about his life, he changed into a caring person after he met Stella because she makes him feel comfortable and enjoy spending time with her.

Will was also an ignorant person at first, but it soon changed after the story progressed. Therefore, he wanted to cheer Stella as an act of kindness and it clearly shows that he is changed. From the scene above, Will can be categorized as a round/complex character during this time according to Kenney (1966) because he developed his character from being pessimistic into a caring person after he met Stella. He also regained his courage and will to live his life because of Stella and wanted to be healthy again.

Datum 7

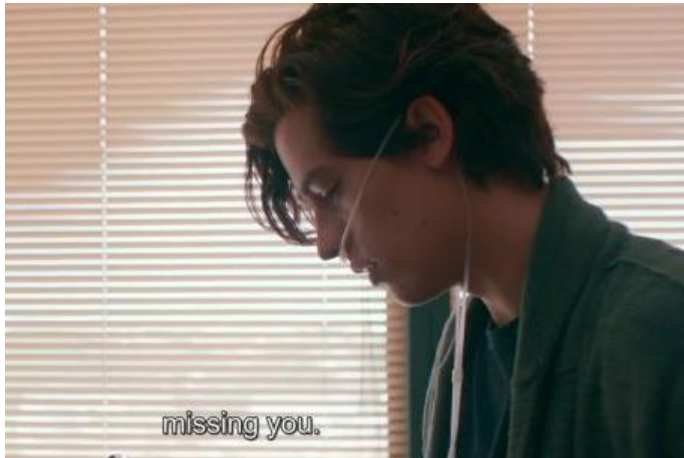


Figure 7 Will Conveys His Feelings to Stella

Will : "I'm free!"

Stella : "Oh... Oh, my gosh! Happy Birthday! I'm so sorry. I forgot."

Will : "No, it's fine. What are you doing? Are you busy? Let's take a walk."

Stella : "I can't right now. I'm sorry. Studying. Maybe later?"

Will : **"My friends are actually coming later. That's all right. We'll figure something out. I was just, uh, missing you."**

Stella : "Talk to you later."

Will : "All right. Bye."

Will was having a phone call with Stella during this scene and he wanted to take Stella out for a walk because he had not met her for a while in which Stella replied that she could not because she was studying. In this conversation, the drastic change of Will's character can be seen when he said **"My friends are actually coming later. That's all right. We'll figure something out. I was just, uh, missing you."** to Stella. Compared to Datum 5, his personality during this scene gets softer and it is because he is starting to have feelings for Stella. Because of her, he gets his determination back to live his life to the fullest. He might not say *"I love you"* blatantly to Stella at that moment, but the way he tells Stella that he missed her indicates that he is not the pessimistic person he used to be. Therefore, it can be concluded that he undergoes a change in his character from a pessimistic person into a romantic person after he met Stella and it makes Will belong to a round/complex character at this point of the movie in accordance with the theory of Kenney (1966).

Datum 8



Figure 8 Will Assures Stella To Take The Lungs

Erin : “Stella, we've been waiting for these lungs for years. What are you talking about? If you don't use the lungs, they're wasted, sweetie.”

Stella : “I love him. The new lungs won't mean anything without him.”

Nurse : “Lay down!”

Will : “Stop! Stop! Please! Stop.”

Stella : “Will!”

Will : “**Please. Take the lungs. For me.**”

Stella : “Okay”

This scene happened after Will saved Stella from drowning. When Stella woke up, she screamed Will's name and she stated that the lungs would not mean anything if Will is not there for her. She kept screaming and everyone in the hospital was shocked. But then, Will came and comforted her. He suggested that Stella should take the lungs for Will's sake that can be seen from his utterance **“Please, take the lungs. For me”**. After seeing Will, Stella cried and she agreed to take the lungs transplant.

A major change in Will's character can be seen in this scene as he was an ignorant and pessimistic person at first, but after he fell in love with Stella, everything has changed. He became a much better person and started caring for others. Therefore, he can be categorized as a round/complex character during this emotional scene under Kenney's theory due to his attitude towards Stella and it shows that he was worried and did not want anything bad to happen to Stella because he loves her.

Conclusion

This study focused on analyzing how the main characters from *Five Feet Apart* movie developed their character as the story progressed by using the theory of character proposed by Kenney (1966). After analyzing how the main characters from *Five Feet Apart* movie developed their character as the story progressed, it can be

concluded that both Stella and Will experienced development and changes in their character, from a flat/simple character to round/complex character.

Stella's character was smart, careful, caring, optimistic, and extrovert. But after she met Will, Stella undergoes change like pessimistic, emotional, and sensitive. In contrary to Stella, Will was an ignorant person, and also pessimistic about his successful treatment. But after he met Stella, he regains his courage and more cautious on his treatment. His character changed and developed into optimist, and caring. From the result above, it can be concluded that Stella and Will belong to flat/simple character at the beginning of the movie and slowly become round/complex character as the story progress. The present study is in no way conclusive on its own. Further studies on *Five Feet Apart* as well as on other movie, along with the character development. Studies on character development should also be extensively researched among students and in society to enrich the kinds of literature on character development to improve the novelty of the topic.

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