

ANALYSIS OF THE INTRINSIC ELEMENTS ON FILM *TRAIN TO BUSAN* (2016)

I Gusti Agung Putri Wirastuti¹, Ni Made Adhyastris Utami², Ni Made Deni Sriningsih³

Universitas Mahasaraswati Denpasar^{1,2,3}-Indonesia

putri.wirastuti@unmas.ac.id¹, adhyasdiandra@gmail.com², madedeni660@gmail.com³

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to analyze the intrinsic elements of the South Korean film *Train to Busan*, which was directed by Yeon Sang-Ho. The film *Train to Busan* (2016) is a film that captures the essence of human nature, especially compassion and fear when faced with unexpected and dangerous situations, making it an interesting subject for literary analysis. It tells a story of a father named Seok-woo, who takes his daughter to Busan by train during a sudden zombie outbreak. As the conflict rises, Seok-woo's character gradually develops into a compassionate, brave and selfless figure. This study uses a qualitative descriptive method to examine the intrinsic elements of the film through observation and interpretation of the themes, characters, characterization, plot, settings, point of view, and the moral value of the film. The analysis reveals that *Train to Busan* not only presents horror action and survival plot, but it also contains the reflections of social, moral, and emotional struggles in modern society. The result of this study is expected to enrich literary appreciation by showing that a horror survival film can convey deep messages of compassion, sacrifice, and moral strength.

Keywords: analysis; intrinsic elements; film

INTRODUCTION

Literature is a creative form of art that are highly meaningful in both content and form, representing human expressions created through rich and meaningful language to achieve both beauty and depth. In the modern era, literature is not limited to written works, but also includes visual storytelling media such as films (Fla Unika). Through the combination of intrinsic elements such as theme, character, characterization, plot, setting, point of view, and moral value, films can be analyzed as literary texts that reveal complex human emotions and values.

One of the most outstanding examples of the complex human values and

emotions is the film *Train to Busan* (2016).

This film presents a story of horror survival situation during a sudden zombie outbreak, capturing human nature, especially compassion, sacrifice, and moral transformation that lies beneath the action and horror scenes. Directed by the South Korean director Yeon Sang-ho, *Train to Busan* film contains the moral and emotional journey of Seok-woo, a father who changes gradually from a self-centered businessman into a caring and selfless father figure. Through its carefully constructed plot, well character transformation, and interesting settings, this film delivers a strong message about moral

values when faced with dangerous and survival situation.

Analyzing the Intrinsic elements from this film allows the reader to understand how the plot, settings, character transformation, and other aspects work together to create a sense of deeper meaning than just a horror zombie film. Nurgiyantoro (2013) states that the intrinsic elements such as theme, character, characterization, plot, setting, point of view, and moral value are the foundation to build a great structure and emotional depth in a story. This study analyzes the intrinsic elements by using a qualitative descriptive method, which focuses on describing and interpreting data in its natural context.

The objective of this study is to identify, classify, and interpret the intrinsic elements of *Train to Busan* such as theme, character, characterization, plot, setting, point of view, and the moral values of this film. Specifically, it aims to analyze how these elements are used to express the portrayals of human struggles, compassion, sacrifice, and moral strength within the film.

Based on this objective, the research problem focuses on exploring how the intrinsic elements work together to create the film's moral, especially how they affect the portrayal of human struggle, sacrifice, and moral transformation in the film. By

analyzing the intrinsic elements, the research aims to find out and understand the intrinsic elements of the film. The result of this study is expected to enrich literary appreciation by providing a deeper understanding of the intrinsic elements of the film.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study uses a qualitative descriptive method, which focuses on describing and interpreting data in a natural context without using statistics. According to Colorafi and Evans (2016), this method gives a clear and detailed description of a phenomenon based on observation and interpretation. In this study, the method is used to describe the intrinsic elements of the film *Train to Busan* in order to understand how they build the story and convey the deep messages depicted by this film.

The data sources of this study are the scenes, dialogue, and actions found in the *Train to Busan* (2016), a South Korean action-horror film directed by Yeon Sang-ho. It tells a story of passengers trapped on a speeding train during a sudden zombie outbreak. This film serves as the primary data source because it provides the main material for the analysis of the intrinsic elements, such as theme, character, characterization, setting, plot, point of

view, and moral value. Every scene, dialogue, and character action in the film is carefully observed to identify how these elements work together to create meaning and convey moral messages. The scenes in the film serve as visual evidence that show how the story develops from the beginning to the end, including the conflicts, settings, and resolutions. The dialogue provides verbal information that reveals the characters' emotions, motivations, and relationships. Meanwhile, the actions of the characters reflect their moral choices and personal growth throughout the film. In addition to the primary source, additional data were also taken from supporting materials, including articles, journals, and other written sources related to *Train to Busan*. These secondary data sources are used to support the researcher's interpretation and to strengthen the analysis by providing theoretical perspectives or previous findings.

To collect the data, the film *Train to Busan* was watched, observed, and documented several times to gain a deep understanding of its story and intrinsic elements. Each viewing focused on different aspects, such as characters, setting, dialogue, and plot. The observation emphasized details like background, and character expressions that support the film's meaning. The documentation

included notes, and screenshots of key scenes and dialogues that showed the development and moral struggles of the characters in order to find the plot of the film. Special attention was given to Seok-woo's transformation, Su-an's innocence, and the sacrifices of supporting characters. The collected data were then organized and prepared for analysis of how the intrinsic elements reflect the film's moral values of compassion, selflessness, and human connection in times of chaos and survival.

The data were analyzed through three main steps, which are identifying, classifying, and interpreting. The scenes, dialogues, and actions from the film were first identified to find the intrinsic elements such as theme, character, characterization, plot, setting, point of view, and moral value. Second, the data were classified based on those elements. And lastly, they were interpreted to explain how the intrinsic elements work together to create the film's meaning and moral message about compassion, sacrifice, and human connection.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

According to Aminuddin (1987), theme is an idea that underlies a story and thus functions as a starting point for the author in presenting the work of fiction that he creates. A theme is a universal idea,

lesson, or message explored throughout a work of literature. One key characteristic of literary themes is their universality, which is to say that themes are ideas that not only apply to the specific characters and events of a book or play, but also express broader truths about human experience that readers can apply to their own lives. Theme is a central, unifying idea. It's the bigger issue that emerges as the characters pursue their goals. It has less to do with whether they'll win the race, or get the date, or find the treasure, and more to do with the deeper questions and conflicts about identity, philosophy, or morality that arise during their attempts.

Train to Busan's main theme is the struggle for survival amidst a zombie outbreak, deeply exploring selfishness versus sacrifice, as well as the conflict between individualism and collectivism in a crisis. The film also highlights the darkness of human nature, with some characters displaying selfish behavior for their own survival, while others demonstrate genuine sacrifice and care for others, especially family.

Characters are fictional people who experience events and perform actions within the sequence of events in a story (Sudjiman, 1992). They are essential elements in any narrative because they make the plot come alive and help readers

connect emotionally with the story. Writers use characters to perform the actions and speak dialogue, moving the story along a plot line. A story can have only one character (protagonist) and still be a complete story. This character's conflict may be an inner one (within him/herself), or a conflict with something natural, such as climbing a mountain. Most stories have multiple characters interacting, with one of them as the antagonist, causing a conflict for the protagonist. Characters are essential to storytelling as they embody specific traits and qualities that distinguish them from one another, influencing the plot through their actions and dialogue. In any story, characters are the lifeblood that make readers care, laugh, cry, or sometimes throw the book across the room.

Here are some of the main characters in *Train to Busan*. The first is Seo Seok-woo (played by Gong Yoo) is Soo-an's father, initially focused on his career and paying little attention to his daughter. However, during the train journey, he transforms into a father who is willing to sacrifice himself to protect his daughter from the zombies. The second is Soo-an (played by Kim Su-an) is Seo Seok-woo's 8-years-old daughter. She is Seo Seok-woo's main motivation for survival. Soo-an is a smart and sensitive girl who loves her father dearly. The third is Yoon

Sang-hwa (played by Ma Dong-seok). He is a strong and tough baseball player. He carries himself and his pregnant wife to keep them safe during the train journey. Sang-hwa is an example of a character who demonstrates courage and sacrifice to protect his loved ones. The fourth is Seong Kyeong (played by Jung Yu-mi). She is Yoon Sang-hwa's pregnant wife. She reflects strength and resilience in the face of a zombie outbreak on the train. Fifth is Yong-suk (played by Kim Eui-sung). He reflects the evil nature of humanity, which is selfish and inconsiderate of others. Sixth is Min Yong-guk (played by Choi Woo-shik). He is a laid-back teenager and Jin-hee's friend. Yong-guk undergoes significant character development throughout the film, transforming from an ordinary person to someone brave and determined in a critical situation. Seventh is Kim Jin-hee (played by Ahn So-hee). He is Yong-guk's friend who reflects resilience and courage amidst the zombie chaos. Although she doesn't have a deep backstory, her presence provides an interesting dynamic among the group trapped on the train. Eighth is Jong-gil and In-gil (played by Myeong Shin-park and Ye Soo-jung). They are two grandmothers and inseparable siblings. Until the time comes for In-gil to enter a train car full of zombies and Jong-gil feels very sad and angry at the

people who locked the access door to the train car containing the zombies. And the last is Homeless man (played by Choi Gwi Hwa). He is a poor homeless person, who eavesdrops on Seo Seok-woo's phone call and wants to save himself.

According to Bennet and Royle (2004), characterization refers to the techniques and strategies an author uses to reveal and develop characters in a literary work, allowing readers to understand who the characters are, what motivates them, and how they interact within the narrative. Characterization includes everything from physical traits and personality traits to a character's perspectives and motivations. Authors use various tools, from descriptive language to dialogue, to help paint a vivid picture of their characters, carefully selecting everything from how they think and speak to how they act and interact with other characters.

Here are some of the main characterizations in *Train to Busan*. The first is Seo Seok-woo. He is the protagonist, but he always has trust issues with new people he meets and isn't immediately friendly. He starts as selfish, but later transforms into a selfless protector for his daughter. Second is Soo-an. She is a kind-hearted girl who always cares about those around her, and the main reason for Seok-woo's transformation (deuteragonist).

Third is Yoon Sang-hwa. He is a brave, responsible, and self-sacrificing person (tritagonist). Fourth is Seong-kyeong. She is a person who is kind, caring, and considerate of those around her. She represents hope and new life in the middle of chaos (tritagonist). Fifth is Yong-suk. He is evil, selfish, and indifferent to those around him (antagonist). Sixth is Min Yong-guk. A brave, kind, and powerful teenager (supporting/minor deuteragonist). Seventh is Kim Jin-hee, as Min Yong-guk's friend, she is tough, and courageous (supporting/minor deuteragonist). Eighth are Jong-gil and In-gil. They are two elderly sisters trying to survive together (peripheral). And the last is Homeless Man, he represents the marginalized people in Korean society, those often ignored or unseen (peripheral).

Plot refers to the sequence of events in a story that are interconnected through a causes-and-effect relationship (Sumardjo, and Saini, 1991). The plot of a story explains not just what happens, but how and why the major events of the story take place. Plot is a key element of novels, plays, most works of nonfiction, and many poems. Since ancient times, writers have worked to create theories that can help categorize different types of plot structures. The plot can be divided into 5 sections, which are the exposition, rising

action, climax, falling action, and resolution.

Exposition is the opening section of a story where the characters and setting are introduced to provide context for the narrative (Munti et al., 2023). In the film *Train to Busan*, the story begins in South Korea, when a truck driver hits a deer on the highway. The deer then comes back to life, signaling a mysterious outbreak. In Seoul, we are introduced to the main character, Seok-woo, an investment manager so busy with work that he neglects his daughter, Soo-an. Soo-an desperately wants to go to Busan to see her mother for her birthday. After initially refusing, Seok-woo finally agrees, and they board the KTX bullet train to Busan. During the journey, a woman infected with the zombie virus sneaks onto the train, setting the stage for all the events that follow.

Rising action is the part of a narrative in which the characters experience a series of events, usually marked by conflict that is revealed through interconnected events (Asmiaty et al., 2022). The problems begin to arise when an infected woman turns into a zombie on the train and attacks passengers. The virus spreads rapidly, turning many people into zombies in a short time. The surviving passengers panic and try to escape. Seok-woo and Soo-an team up with several other

passengers, such as Sang-hwa and his wife Seong-kyeong, as well as several high school students. They close and lock the train car doors to prevent the zombies from entering. Meanwhile, Seok-woo, who was initially selfish, begins to learn to cooperate and care for others in order to protect his child. The situation outside the train also worsens as the outbreak has spread throughout the city and no place is truly safe.

Climax is the highest point of tension or drama in a narratives' plot (Hutami et al., 2023). Often, climax is also when the main problem of the story is faced and solved by the main character or protagonist. In *Train to Busan*, climax starts when the tensions mount as the surviving passengers must transfer cars through a line of zombies to escape. Along the way, many casualties occur, including Sang-hwa, who sacrifices himself to protect his wife and Soo-an. When they reach a safe car, a new conflict arises between a selfish passenger (Yon-suk) and Seok-woo's group. Yon-suk provokes the other passengers to refuse to accept Seok-woo's group because of the fear of infection. As a result, many good people are trapped and die. The outbreak spirals out of control, and the train continues toward Busan, which is rumored to be a safe place.

Falling action is the period of time in a story that follows the climax and begins to clarify the narrative and wrap things up (Hutami et al., 2023). In *Train to Busan*, it happens after the fierce battle in the front carriage, Seok-woo is finally bitten by Yon-suk, who has transformed into a zombie. Despite his injuries, Seok-woo still manages to keep himself from passing out. He immediately rescues Soo-an and Seong-kyeong, bringing them to the safe end of the train. In an emotional scene, Seok-woo locks the doors to keep the two people he protects free from the zombie threat, while he begins to show signs of infection. He comforts crying Soo-an and reminds her to stay strong and keep living. After saying his final goodbyes, Seok-woo jumps out of the train to prevent himself from transforming and endangering others. As he falls, a beautiful memory of Seok-woo with Soo-an appears, depicting both regret and a father's sincere love.

Resolution is the part of the narrative where the story's main conflict is resolved and the story comes to an end (Indriani et al., 2019). In the film *Train to Busan*, it starts from when the train finally stops near the tunnel leading to Busan. Soo-an and Seong-kyeong slowly walk toward the military post. The soldiers on guard nearly shoot them, mistaking them for zombies, but Soo-an begins to sing the

birthday song she once composed for her father. The song proves they are still human. The soldiers save them, and the film ends with a touching message about sacrifice, love, and the value of humanity in the midst of disaster.

In literature, "setting" refers to the time and place where a story occurs (Darmayanti et al., 2024). It encompasses the physical environment (location, geography, climate), the historical and cultural context (social surroundings, period), and can also create the mood or atmosphere of the narrative. Setting is a fundamental literary element, alongside plot, character, theme, and style, and helps authors develop characters, enhance conflict, and convey themes.

The film is set entirely in South Korea and was released in 2016, and its main journey takes place along the KTX high-speed train line that connects Seoul (the capital of South Korea) to Busan, a major city located in the southeastern part of the country.

The film takes place over a full day, from one morning to the next. The story begins in Seoul, as Seok-woo prepares for work and Soo-an prepares to leave for Busan. Most of the events unfold from afternoon to evening on a moving train. The time shifts from a bright day to increasingly dark and tense as the outbreak spreads.

Dusk marks the climax of the conflict and Seok-woo's sacrifice. The story ends the next morning, when Soo-an and Seong-kyeong arrive in Busan, already under military escort. This shift in time depicts the characters' journey from fear to new hope.

The film *Train to Busan* features various changing settings throughout the train journey from Seoul to Busan, a distance of approximately 400 km. The main locations used as settings for the film include Seoul City, the place where the main character, Seok-woo, lives and where the story begins. This is where he works as an investment manager and decides to take Soo-an to Busan. The second is Seoul Station. The departure point for the KTX bullet train, where passengers gather and unknowingly bring along a woman infected with the virus. The third is the KTX bullet train. It serves as the main setting throughout the film. It's in this carriage that most of the suspenseful events take place, such as the spread of the zombie outbreak, the passengers' struggle for survival, and Seok-woo's sacrifice. Several stops, such as Daejeon Station and Daegu East Station, also serve as important locations as passengers try to disembark to find safety, only to realize that the outbreak has spread throughout the city. The fourth is the tunnel to Busan. It serves as the final setting for the film, where Soo-an and Seong-kyeong

make their way to a military outpost, still safe after experiencing various tragedies.

The atmosphere of *Train to Busan* changes drastically as the story progresses. At the beginning it is calm and realistic, depicting the daily routine of a big city. Once the outbreak begins to spread, the atmosphere changes to panic, tension, and suspense, as the passengers must survive the zombie outbreak in a confined space. Amidst the chaos, there are also touching and emotional moments, especially when Seok-woo begins to show his affection for Soo-an. Towards the end of the film, the atmosphere changes to a sad yet hopeful one, when Soo-an is saved, thanks to her father's sacrifice and finally arrives in Busan.

Point of view (POV) in literature is the narrative perspective from which a narrative is presented, representing the guiding consciousness through which the characters and events are perceived (Indriani et al., 2019). It dictates the narrator's position, what information the reader has access to, and the overall tone and intimacy of the narrative. *Train to Busan* uses a third-person perspective, as the narrative is not told from the first-person viewpoint of any character. Instead, the story follows several characters as they experience and respond to the zombie outbreak. However, the narrative attention

is primarily centered on specific main characters, particularly Seok-woo and Su-an, which limits the audience's access to events and emotions to their experiences. Although multiple characters are shown, the film frequently returns to Seok-woo and Su-an, providing a more intimate and focused perspective. This indicates the use of a third-person limited point of view rather than an omniscient one. Through close-ups and emotionally driven scenes, the audience is guided to understand Seok-woo's thoughts, feelings, and especially his transformation from a busy and selfish father into a caring and self-sacrificing parent.

Overall, *Train to Busan* uses a third-person limited point of view to present the narrative in a clear and emotionally engaging way. This point of view allows the audience to closely experience the fear, tension, and emotional bonds of the main characters while still observing the broader chaos of the disaster. This makes the film not only captivating but also deeply meaningful about compassion, sacrifice, humanity, and moral strength.

Widyaningrum et al. (2021) define moral values as desirable traits that function as guidelines for distinguishing right action from the wrong one. Moral values in a story are messages about good and bad that the author conveys to the reader through the

narrative and characters. Moral values involve a set of moral principles that guide our thinking, behavior, and decision-making, especially when facing ethical or social dilemmas. Moral values are deeply embedded in cultural differences, social norms, or religions to shape attitudes about what is right and wrong, helping in making the right choices that determine one's status in society. The film *Train to Busan* teaches many moral values about humanity, love, and sacrifice in times of crisis. The main message is that true humanity appears when people care for others, not only for themselves. Even when the world falls apart, kindness and empathy still matter more than survival alone.

One of the strongest moral values in the film is about the importance of family and love. At the beginning, Seok-woo is a selfish and distant father who only focuses on his job. However, through the journey on the train, he learns to care deeply for his daughter, Soo-an, and for other people around him. His final act of sacrifice is giving up his life to save his daughter. This action shows that a parent's love is pure, unconditional, and powerful.

Another moral value is about cooperation and selflessness. Throughout the film, people survive not because they are the strongest, but because they help each other. Characters like Sang-hwa and

Seong-kyeong show how compassion and teamwork can save lives. In contrast, Yon-suk, the selfish businessman, represents greed and fear. His actions lead to more deaths, teaching viewers that selfishness and lack of empathy can destroy everyone, especially in the moments of survival.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

In conclusion, the analysis of the intrinsic elements of the film *Train to Busan* shows that this film not only presents horror, action scenes, and survival plot, but also reflects the positive and negative sides of true human nature in the middle of crisis. Through its intrinsic elements, such as theme, character, characterization, plot, settings, point of view, and moral value, the film portrays how people change and develop, show compassion, courage, and sacrifice in difficult situations. It shows that the character's development has a strong influence on how the story ends. The story of Seok-woo and his daughter represents a moral and emotional journey that teaches the importance of compassion, and selflessness. This study also shows that a horror survival film can be analyzed as a literary work because it is an artistic expression that contains deep messages. By using the qualitative descriptive method, this study gives a clear understanding of how the film builds emotional and moral

depth through its intrinsic elements. Hopefully, this study can push readers to appreciate films not only as entertainment, but also as meaningful work that reflects real human values.

The researcher in this study suggests that language education students deepen their understanding of intrinsic elements by analyzing *Train to Busan* and other films with diverse and valuable narratives. They should actively engage in critically examining themes, characters,

plots, and settings, while reflecting on the moral messages implied in the stories. This will improve their assessment and analysis skills. Furthermore, it is hoped that future researchers can deepen the scope of this study by dissecting and analyzing one film against another. Researchers can also examine how moral values in films, such as sacrifice, compassion, struggle, and loyalty, can be used to teach ethics and good life values.

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