FIND YOUR HAPPY PLACE: A STUDY ON CHARACTERIZATION AND THE MEANING OF HAPPINESS IN TROLLS (2016)[‡]

Angela Nerissa Tayongka [1]

[1] Universitas Ma Chung

ABSTRACT

This study aims to identify the characterization of the two main characters in Trolls and how the film portrays the meaning of happiness through its scenes. The process of analyzing characterization is done using direct and indirect characterization along with non-verbal channels of expressions. To analyze the meaning of happiness, the PERMA model and the theory of acculturation are employed. This is a descriptive qualitative study with the writer herself as the instrument. Based on the analysis, Poppy is optimistic, brave, fair, sincere, warm-hearted, cheerful, trustworthy, and confident. Branch is normative, boring, overly-cautious, and detached. These two characters have different perspective on life, but by the end of the film, they succeed in uniting their mind. Based on the characterization analysis, meaning of happiness can be drawn in two distinct classifications, personal and social happiness. Personal happiness is achieved by fulfilling the five elements of PERMA while social happiness refers to the relationship between trolls and bergens. For them, happiness can be achieved without cutting throat, by being frank, by increasing tolerance, and by helping each other.

Key Terms: main character, characterization, happiness, Trolls

INTRODUCTION

Films has bloomed its important role in the recent years. It has become prominent part of literature, breaking down the old concept that literature is just limited to prose, poetry, and drama. As Pruit (2015) stated, film is a beautiful marriage between plays and technology. Film is also considered to be part of literature since it conveys a story to its audiences as what other forms of literature does (Oppold, 2013). That is why, day by day, year by year, more and more people are talking about films or think that studies on films are worth to do.

Talking about films, someone cannot go far from its genres. Well-known genres from period to period are including action, comedy, thriller, romance, and horror. Each genre has its own audiences and sometimes the audience of certain genre is not able to make it to other genre. For example, someone who is addicted to romance films may not make it to horror

films and the other way around. But among those varied genres, one film genre that robs the interest of large number of audiences, and that is neutral for any gender and age, is no other that what is called as animated film. Animated film is the kind of film that employs one's drawing or paintings or even illustrations which are then photographed and gathered using the technique of stop-frame cinematography. Years ago, animated film was considered to be very expensive if seen from the side of funding because the illustrator needs to draw each frame. But as technologies become greater, the process of animated film making turns out to be easier. Illustrators are able to use applications or softwares such as CorelDRAW Home and Student Suite, Serif DrawPlus, Adobe Photoshop Elements to help them creating one. There is no more need to draw each distinct frame which is very time-consuming.

Animated film has had the audiences' heart for centuries. It becomes people's choice for its charming, captivating, and compelling characters, stories, and its morals. Leading animated film companies in world are Walt Disney, Pixar, Studio Ghibli, Cartoon Network, and the one whose work is discussed below is DreamWorks Animation Studio. DreamWorks Animation Studio's thirty-third animated films is entitled *Trolls*. This film is created based on the trolls dolls by Thomas Dam and carries a story focusing mainly on delivering the message of happiness. It depicts how trolls (as the happiest creatures on earth) thrive to show the bergens (the most miserable creatures on earth) that happiness is inside all of them. As normal human beings, people also search for happiness in life. People search for 'things' like money, friends, position in companies, etc. But if it is gathered into bigger and broader one, the pursue of those 'things' leads to one same thing, that is happiness. Therefore, this study is needed to be done considering the closeness between what occurs in the film and what people actually search for in life. *Trolls* has become visible proof of how things inside a film is a reflection of humans' real life, wrapped in a more delicate and sweeter package.

This study intends to achieve two objectives which are: 1) To identify the characterization of the two main characters in *Trolls* film. 2) To identify the way *Trolls* film portrays the meaning of happiness.

Literature Review

Direct and Indirect Characterization

One of the important elements found in every literary works is character. Character deals with "the persons represented in dramatic or narrative work, who are interpreted by the readers as being endowed with particular moral, intellectual, and emotional qualities" (Abrams, 1999, p.32). Related to the character, it is always necessary to talk about the way a writer presents the character itself. This method is commonly known as the characterization. There are two main ways to do the characterization in a literary work, direct and indirect. Direct characterization is done by stating explicitly the traits of the character, while indirect characterization is the other way around. According to Turner (2008), there are eight aspects that can be used for analyzing character through indirect characterization as follows.

Physical description is the physical appearance of the character. It includes the height, skin, hair, eye color, skinny or fat, wear glasses or not, the way the character walks, etc. *Action or incident* is the incidents that happen to the character and the actions they take in

order to overcome the incident. *Thought* is dealing with what is inside the character's mind and it can only be analyzed if there is explanation from the writer of the literary work. *Dialogue* is the conversation between characters. The analysis will be done based on the diction and the choice of syntax that the character uses. *Reaction of others* is the way other characters react to the character we are analyzing. *Attitude* is the feeling of the character when it confronts something. *Name analysis* deals with why the writer of the literary work chooses certain names. There is no guarantee that all the names chosen reflect the personality of the character, but many writers do this in the process of giving names. *Physical or Emotional Settings* is about how the place and time of the story can affect the development of a character in the story.

Besides direct and indirect characterization, someone can also use the help of non-verbal channel of expressions (Valdes in *Culture Bound*, 2001, p.70) to assist analysis on characterization. There are four components, they are: posture and movement, facial expression, gaze and eye management, and gestures. These four elements are employed in the characters which enable audiences to analyze the character through what is not spoken.

The Idea of Happiness

Happiness is not something that is stick and that has definite measurement. Each person has their own thinking and criteria to judge whether they are happy or not. Even though the standard of happiness possessed by each person is different, there are some ways available that help everyone to reach it. Seligman (b.1942), the father of Positive Psychology, establishes what is called as the Well-Being Theory. The Well-Being Theory concerns about five elements, mnemonically written as PERMA, that can help people to create a life full of happiness. In his book *Flourish* (2011), the elements are as follows. *Positive Emotion (Feeling Good)* is the extent to which someone needs to always think positively in life in order to be happy. One should be able to distinguish pleasure and enjoyment. Besides, one also needs to differentiate past, present, and future. *Engagement (Finding Flow)* is the element which explains that one key to true happiness is to be fully engaged or immersed in the activities someone does. *Relationships (Authentic Connections)* explains that to reach happiness in life, one should communicate well with others and build good relationship. *Meaning (Purposeful Existence)* is the element that urges someone to realize that there is always greater purpose in life, a more important destiny. *Accomplishments (A Sense of Achievement)* the last element, encourages someone to set realistic goals in life so by the time the goals are achieved, one will find happiness.

Theory of Acculturation

Whether one is aware or not, there is not even single person in the world who can live all by himself or herself. All human beings living in this earth are naturally social creature. That is why in living this world, one needs to help others and so do others need one's help. Due to this nature of human beings as well, time by time groups of people start to emerge in parts of the world. Moreover, one group and another begin to build relationship and sometimes changes between them occur to exchange values and cultures. A change on culture other psychological aspects due to the meeting between groups is generally known as the process of acculturation. Berry (1990) believes there are four kinds of acculturation.

Assimilation is the process by which two groups resemble, then one group will 'win' and dominate the culture. The minority will then become indistinguishable from the majority. *Separation* is the process by which someone or some groups start to isolate themselves from their previous group with reasonable objective and justification. *Integration* is the process of blending between two groups because the level of tolerance between both groups increases. Together they search for higher goals in life. *Marginalization* is the process of banning certain facilities from certain members of the group in purpose of expelling or drawing some members out of the group.

RESEARCH METHOD

Studied Materials

The studied material of this analysis is a film by DreamWorks Animation, entitled *Trolls*. It is an animated film directed by Mike Mitchell, produced by Gina Shay, and distributed by 20th Century Fox. The duration is 92 minutes and it was first released on 4 November 2016.

Study Design

The design used for conducting this research is descriptive qualitative. The writer deals with no number and only focuses on the characterization and the meaning of happiness in the film. The result of the analysis is in the form of description, sentences, opinions, or statements.

Data Gathering

To gather the data, the writer employs two steps. First, the writer watched the film carefully. By doing this step, it includes paying attention to the dialogues, actions, songs, as well as thoughts. Second, the writer searched for reviews and related articles to support the process of analysis. The writer will then do coding and highlighting important facts before proceeding to analyze the data found.

Data Analysis and Interpretation

The writer has planned the steps taken in order to finish the analysis well. First, the writer re-watches the film for several times along with taking necessary notes. Second, the writer re-reads related articles to see the relation between the film and the articles. Then, the writer continues to analyze the characterization of the two main characters in *Trolls*. Finally, with giving consideration to the result of characterization analysis, the writer will go on with analyzing the meaning of happiness using the PERMA model and theory of acculturation.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Characterization of Poppy

Poppy is the queen of trolls whose role is extremely important in the film. Through direct characterization, the narrator has mentioned that Poppy is a confident being. The time her friends are caught by the bergens, Poppy herself is very sure that she can make it to Bergens Town and save all of her friends. Poppy's character is also understood deeper by analyzing through indirect characterization. Her pink color defines that she is an optimistic

being. Pink also indicates that she is loving, kind, generous, and friendly. Poppy's optimistic character is shown many times in the film. Among them is the scene where Poppy sticks on her own belief that Creek is alive. That time, none of her friends think that Creek is alive, but Poppy does. Another way to detect Poppy's characteristic is by paying closer attention to the way she reacts towards what happened to her or in her surrounding. Once, Poppy manages to hold the biggest, loudest, and the craziest party in the town. Her friends doubt that Branch will come and so do not recommend Poppy to invite him. But Poppy as a fair being, she keeps inviting all the trolls, including Branch. Poppy also proves that she is a persistent troll through the song she sings along the way to the Bergens Town. She repeatedly sings that she is not giving up and whatever happens to her she will definitely get back up again.

Poppy's trait is able to be seen too the time she communicates with her father, king Peppy. King Peppy has warned Poppy that going to the Bergens Town is quite dangerous. But Poppy insists on going on her own. Here, it can be inferred from the way she answers to her father that Poppy is brave and responsible. She is considered brave because she is not afraid of the obvious danger coming on her and she is considered responsible because she thinks she is the one behind all the problems and therefore should find a way to solve the problem. If Poppy does not throw the big party, there will not be Royal Chef, and her friends will not be caught. The aforementioned traits of Poppy is based on the Poppy herself. To analyze the character entirely, one also need to have an eye on how other reacts to the analyzed character. In the film, Poppy's friends see her as a sincere friend. The best moment to describe this feeling is when Bridget thanks Poppy for making her realize how it feels like to be purely happy. Bridget shows the audiences how Poppy is being a trustworthy friend.

Sometimes the name of the character is not just randomly chosen by the creator of the story, Poppy for example. Poppy is a Latin name which carries several good traits. In relation to Poppy in the film, the relevant traits are having inner desire of stable community, understanding, and introspective. When all of the trolls are caught and put in the big pot by the Royal Chef, Poppy for the first time turns into pessimistic being and she starts to introspect herself about what she has done. She perceives that what she did is wrong and she does not have idea of what to do and that makes her feel guilty.

Going further from direct and indirect characterization, based on the analysis using non-verbal channels of expression, Poppy is known to be caring and cheerful. Her cheerfulness can be clearly seen from her facial expression where she smiles most of the time. While her caring trait is easily detected through the times when she helps her friends who are in need of a helping hand no matter what happens to her herself.

Characterization of Branch

Branch, the other main character in the story, employs traits that mostly are contradictory to Poppy. The narrator does not mention explicitly any trait of Branch, but due to his gray body color it can be inferred that he is detached and does not desire much excitement. Gray symbolizes isolation from community and gray seeks for stability in life. As in Branch, these traits are shown in the relationship between he himself and the trolls. Branch keeps himself in his bunker and he never participates in parties. For him, hiding in his bunker has given him a stable and secure life, and there is no need to hold parties to obtain even

more excitement. Beside that, Branch is also an overly-cautious being. It is seen from the scene when Poppy comes to the bunker to ask for help. Branch directly pulls Poppy down to the bunker and forbids her to say even a word for he is too worried that the bergens are still around. Another trait shown through the action Branch make is well-prepared. Prior to doing everything, he will always have detailed preparation on everything. For Branch, everything has to be ready before hand.

Conversations also help to unveil one's trait. In his dialogue with Poppy, Branch reveals his pessimistic character. When Poppy is wondering what Creek is doing at that time, Branch simply answers that Creek has already been digested. When Poppy once again states that Creek is alive the time Poppy and Branch meet all the kidnapped friends, Branch strongly disagrees. Stubbornness sticks closely to Branch either. Once he says he will not attend the party, he will not. Once he refuses to sing, he will not do it. For his friends, Branch is categorized as a normative and boring creature. Guy Diamond, Cooper, Biggie appear to be reluctant to hear what Branch says. Satin and Chenille also convey that Branch always ruins everything over and over again. The name 'Branch' also implies that he is the one who should brace himself to a broader new world. That is why at the end of the film, Branch finally makes it to become a better being, a troll who is ready to face the real world, going out from the only bunker, feeling free from the bergens and turning into a more mature troll.

Aside from what is spoken or explicitly mentioned in the film, Branch's character is revealed too through movements and facial expressions that he often make or do. Lengthening his hair has become a sign that he cares for others. He has done it at least twice in order to help Poppy from danger. Then, Branch turns out to be sarcastic in these following two occasions: stepping on the party invitation given by Poppy and throwing the guitar to the bonfire immediately when he hears Poppy sing. Facial expression of Branch can be easily detected. He commonly frowns, and it is very hard for him to smile. Most of the time, he grumbles on things as a visible proof that he is stubborn, boring, and normative.

Correlation between Poppy and Branch

Poppy and Branch appeared to be two most influential characters in the film. They complement each other to build up the film to a success. But Poppy and Branch each has different character. Poppy is optimistic, fair, brave, responsible, sincere, warm-hearted, trust-worthy, cheerful, and confident. Branch is the other way around. He is pessimistic, overly-cautious, normative, boring, sarcastic, detached, tough, and tenacious. But once in the film, they both go through changes of character because of the circumstances. Once Poppy becomes pessimistic because she thinks that she has put every trolls' life in danger. Vice versa, Branch then turn out to be optimistic when he sees that Poppy becomes pessimistic. These polar opposites of characters between Poppy and Branch cause them to fight or argue every time they meet. If Poppy thinks this way, Branch thinks that way. They almost never have the same idea to live life. They both stand still with their own principles, thinking that the best is of their own. Fortunately, because they two want to achieve happiness, time by time they increase their understanding on each other and finally turn out encouraging each other. When Branch tells Poppy his problem, Poppy stands by him. Also, when Poppy is pessimistic, Branch will come next to her and support her the best he can.

The two keep on influencing each other and grow to become better trolls by the end of the film. Branch is no longer a pessimistic troll because he has listened to what Poppy said and leaves his normative way of thinking. Poppy also develops to become a more mature troll who will think of the good and bad effects before she comes to decision making.

Happiness in Personal Context

Happiness can be discussed from the smallest class, personal happiness. Personal happiness deals with how each individual thrives to achieve happiness by doing some efforts. Before one person tries to bring happiness to the community he or she belongs to, the person himself or herself should be happy. In *Trolls*, personal happiness is shown through Poppy and Branch as the main characters. Based on the theory of PERMA (Seligman, 2011), here is how the film depicted the elements of happiness through its scenes.

Positive Emotion, the first element of PERMA, is directly shown by the strongest trait of Poppy that is optimistic. Throughout the film, Poppy is extremely optimistic. She always has hope in everything she does and in every problem she is facing. She always sees the good in everything. Even in the darkest time, Poppy still thinks positively and that makes her a happy creature who then encourages her friends to be happy as well.

Engagement, the second element of PERMA, is again shown by the character Poppy. In everything she does, Poppy always does it with her heart. She puts all her best efforts in doing anything and she gets herself fully immersed in everything she does. One example is when she sings and dances, she will always be engaged fully to the activity.

Relationship, the third element of PERMA, is explained best through the character Branch. Branch in the film is detached from the society, he lives by himself, and he doesn't think that he needs others. But when he is being so, he frowns all the time. These scenes show that being isolated from the society does not promote happiness in oneself.

Meaning, the fourth element of PERMA, is shown through the scene where Poppy and Branch finally realize that the world is not just limited to what their minds are about. Branch starts to realize that world is not all about protecting himself from the bergens. Poppy also realizes that world is not all cupcakes and rainbows.

Accomplishment, the fifth element of PERMA, teaches us to set goals to be happy. Poppy has a goal to save her friends who are being kidnapped by the Royal Chef and take all of them home safely. By paying attention to that goal, Poppy then starts to arrange plans to achieve that goal. By the time the goal is achieved, she achieves happiness as well.

Happiness in Social Context

Happiness in social context is how happiness is seen from the perspective of groups. In *Trolls*, there are two big groups, trolls and bergens. For trolls, happiness is having freedom from the bergens. Besides, happiness means being able to participate in parties and doing their hobbies (singing, dancing, hugging). While for the bergens, there is only one definition of happiness. Happiness for the bergens is eating the trolls. There is not even one other way to be happy unless they do so. Then, as what Berry's theory on acculturation (1990) taught us, the two big groups undergo a process called as assimilation. Both group gather, with trolls

as the habit leader and therefore trolls 'dominate' the bergens. The bergens who firstly cannot sing and dance and hug finally can do it well because the trolls teach them. The bergens also understand that happiness is no longer about eating the trolls. They appear to accept that what the trolls said is true and good for them. With this starting point, now the trolls and the bergens hold on the same principle, and they have the same idea of happiness.

There are new definitions of happiness emerged after the process of assimilation. First, happiness is something one can get without cutting throat. Cutting throat here means without harming other parties. Prince Gristle, in his date with Lady Glitter Sparkles finds out that he can be happy by eating pizza, not trolls. Second, happiness can be achieved by being frank to people in our surrounding. Bridget who firstly refused to acknowledge that she is in love with Prince Gristle at the end found happiness because she admitted it to Poppy and friends. Third, happiness is something one gets by increasing tolerance. The bergens at first do not care about the trolls. As long as they can eat the trolls they will be happy. But as time goes by, the bergens begins to think about the trolls, what will happen and how they feel if part of their family is being eaten. Fourth, happiness can be achieved together by helping each other. Poppy has a dream to save Creek. Bridget has a dream to show her love to Prince Gristle. It will be impossible to achieve both goals if they do not cooperate in the film.

CONCLUSION

This study is conducted because of seeing the close relationship between what is brought in the film and what real people are pursuing in real life. *Trolls* appeared as a film which main goal is to deliver the message of happiness. In line with the purpose of the film, this study is done in order to find out the characterization of the two main characters in the film and how the film portrays the meaning of happiness.

Based on the analysis done previously, the two main characters in the film, Poppy and Branch, are shown in contradictory traits. Poppy is eternally optimistic, brave, fair, sincere, warm-hearted, cheerful, trustworthy, and confident. While Branch is overly-cautious, boring, normative, and long-term thinker. Despite the different characteristics of Poppy and Branch at the beginning of the film, they finally can unite their perceptions of life at the end of the story. Both Poppy and Branch succeed in changing their narrow mindset and decide to work together to achieve the same goal in life, happiness.

By giving consideration to the characterization analysis, the film comes up to define the meaning of happiness in two distinct ways. First, happiness is explained as something personal. In personal happiness, happiness is defined to be something achieved when someone fulfill the five elements of PERMA. The film has its scenes fulfill it all and it shows how the elements really lead someone to happiness. Second, happiness is also depicted in social context. The groups involved in the film are trolls and bergens. They gather through the process of assimilation and come up with four new meanings of happiness. Those four new meanings of happiness are: happiness is something one can get without cutting throat, happiness can be achieved by being frank to people in our surrounding, happiness is something one gets by increasing tolerance, and happiness can be achieved together by helping each other in effort to achieve that happiness itself.

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