Analysis of Actantial Model in Suzanne Collins’ The Hunger Games

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Abstract

This study aims to analyze plot structure in Collins’ The Hunger Games. There are several questions that researcher wants to find, what the elements of plot are, how do the elements of plot compose the plot structure of the story, and what kind of plot is applied in the novel. This study is a qualitative analysis by applying A.J. Greimas approach. The data were collected by reading, identifying, interpreting and analyzed using the approach and theories which used in this study by using actants. The result of this study were the elements of plot consist of beginning, problem of the story, rising action, climax, falling action, and resolution. To find out the main plot structure, this study classifies the function of each character into six actants, they are sender, receiver, subject, object, helper and opponent. Finally, the researcher concluded what kind of plot and how the ending of the novel is. The plot of the novel is dramatic or cronological plot because the story through in chronological order. In addition, the novel is closed plot because the problem of the story is solved.

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INTRODUCTION

In the past few years, literary world has been swarmed with numerous science-fiction novels. One of them is the best-selling young adult series called The Hunger Games trilogy consisting of three books each titled The Hunger Games, Catching Fire, and Mockingjay, written by an American novelist Suzanne Collins, which is set in a dystopian future of North America.

By learning literature people do not only get pleasure but also experience and knowledge about life. Moreover, most of literary works portray reality of author or the environment around the author. Siswanto (2008) says that “things revealed by authors through their literary works are the product of their experiences and knowledge by their imagination” (p.79).

People might express their experience though many ways, including literary work. Literary work is the representation of our life. It is a work of art which contains many humanity aspect, especially feeling, such as faith, spirit, etc. Basically, literary work is very beneficial for life, because it can give awareness to the readers about the true life which is about social, psychology, history and many more. The material of literary work usually deal with human activity and experience. By literature, people can express their ideas, emotions, feeling, and attitudes.

According to Abrams (1999), science fiction represents an imagined reality that is radically different in its nature and functioning from the world of our ordinary experience. Likewise, The Hunger Games trilogy offers an alternate universe, was once known as North America, that has turned into some horrifying place where teenagers have to participate in the most gruesome annual event, Hunger Games, and kill each other ruthlessly. It is an imagined reality; it shows a radically different portrayal of the current North America.

The Hunger Games is a trilogy of young adult dystopian novels written by American novelist Suzanne Collins. The series is set in The Hunger Games universe, and follows young Katniss Everdeen. The novels in the trilogy are titled The Hunger Games (2008), Catching Fire (2009), and Mockingjay (2010). The Hunger Games trilogy takes place in an unspecified future time, in the dystopian, post-apocalyptic nation of Panem, located in North America. The country consists of a wealthy Capitol city, located in the Rocky Mountains, surrounded by twelve (originally thirteen) poorer districts ruled by the Capitol. The Capitol is lavishly rich and technologically advanced, but the districts are in varying states of poverty. The trilogy’s narrator and protagonist Katniss Everdeen, lives in District 12, the poorest region of Panem, located in Appalachia, where people regularly die of starvation. As punishment for a past rebellion against the Capitol (called the "Dark Days"), in which District 13 was supposedly destroyed, one boy and one girl from each of the twelve remaining districts, between the ages of 12 and 18, are selected by lottery to compete in an annual pageant called the Hunger Games. The games are a televised event in which the participants, called "tributes", are forced to fight to the death in a dangerous public arena. The winning tribute and his/her home district are then rewarded with food, supplies, and riches. The purposes of the Hunger Games are to provide entertainment for the Capitol and to remind the districts of the
Capitol's power and lack of remorse, forgetfulness, and forgiveness for the failed rebellion of the current competitors' ancestors.

A contemporary source of inspiration was Collins' recent fascination with reality television programs. She says they are like The Hunger Games because the games are not just entertainment but also a reminder to the districts of their rebellion. On a tired night, Collins says that while she was channel-surfing the television, she saw people competing for some prize and then saw footage of the Iraq War. She described how the two combined in an "unsettling way" to create her first ideas for the series.

To know the structure of this story, the analysis uses structural narrative, the theory of A.J. Greimas by searching and analyzing the actantial structure, and then correlating and forming the main structure of this story.

The Hunger Games is very complicated. There are some characters which are not described clearly in term of position. Some of them are appeared in the middle even almost the ending of the story. So, it will make the readers confused about the characters' position.

Whereas this study has a study problem to discuss that is what the elements of the plot in The Hunger Games, how the elements of plot compose the plot structure of the story and what kind of plot in The Hunger Games novel by employing structuralism theory by A.J. Greimas.

Scholars such as Farhatinnisa (2009) entitled A Character Analysis On Fan Wu’s Novel “February Flowers” Based on Greimas Structural Theory. The study is aimed to analyze the drastic change of the main character personality in February Flowers novel. In conclusion, this study found that the changing of the main character personality is affected by her friend's bad behavior and the main character's desire of adulthood through the Greimas' theory. Then Petterson (2011) wrote a study entitled The Hunger Games by Suzanne Collin: Entertainment or Social Criticism?. This study focuses on The Hunger Games as critic for the government and

entertainment industry of US. Katniss Everdeen's struggle for freedom also can be seen as the representation of American history. Riyawati (2011) entitled The Actantial and Functional Structure Analysis of Three Short Stories in the Book of Karma and Other Stories by Rishi Reddi. She uses the descriptive qualitative method and structural narratology theory by A.J. Greimas to describing, understanding and examining the actantial and functional structure in these short stories. This study is aimed to find structural narrative Reddi's short stories. The result of the study shows that the several parts from the story of The Validity of Love and Devadasi have similarity of narrative structure, but the story of Bangles does not have similar narrative structure with the other stories. Though Johansson (2012) wrote a study entitled Media Violence and Power in Suzanne Collins’s Hunger Games Trilogy. Comparing violence in The Hunger Games and American TV programs, Johansson analyzed that media has changed society to tolerate violence as common issue. He also analyzed the lack of compassion, humanity, and ideal future which is related to society today. However, those studies from different scholars did not answer the question about the topic in this study. Thus, the objectives of this study are centralized into findings that answered the writer's questions about elements of the plot in The Hunger Games, how the elements of plot compose the plot structure of the story and what kind of plot in The Hunger Games.

METHODS

Considering data and the aims of the study, the writer chose the qualitative type of study to conduct this study, which means that the data were analyzed qualitatively and descriptively.

The object of the study is a novel entitled The Hunger Games by Suzanne Collins which is published by Scholastic Press, New York in 2008. The data which were quotations taken from the novel, and other sources such as books, articles,
journals, encyclopedia, internet, and others, which are related to the study problems in this study.

This study is a qualitative analysis by applying A.J. Greimas approach. The data were collected by reading, identifying, interpreting and analyzing using the approach and theories which used in this study by using actants. The result of this study were the elements of plot consist of beginning, problem of the story, rising action, climax, falling action, and resolution. To find out the main plot structure, this study classifies the function of each character into six actants, they are sender, receiver, subject, object, helper and opponent. Finally, the researcher concluded what kind of plot and how the ending of the novel is.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The Elements of Plot Structure

There are some elements of plot structure, they are beginning (exposition), problem in the story, rising action, climax, falling action and resolution.

Beginning (exposition)

Beginning (exposition) is the introduction of the story to the audiences. This is the beginning of the story, where characters and setting are established. The beginning of the novel told about Katniss lives in a place called District 12, nicknamed the Seam, that is home primarily to poor coal miners. Her father was a coalminer, but he died in an explosion five years ago, when she was only eleven.

District 12 is enclosed by a sometimes electrified fence that is supposed to keep out the predators from the woods. Trespassing in the woods is illegal, but that does not stop Katniss. She hunts there for food with her bow, a weapon which she is nearly an expert. District 12 is located in the country of Panem and ruled by people in the far away Capitol.

Our part of District 12, nicknamed the Seam, is usually crawling with coal miners heading out to the morning shift at this hour. Men and women with hunched shoulders, swollen knuckles, many who have long since stopped trying to scrub the coal dust out of their broken nails, the lines of their sunken faces. But today the black cinder streets are empty. Shutters on the squat gray houses are closed. The reaping isn’t until two. May as well sleep in. If you can.

Our house is almost at the edge of the Seam. I only have to pass a few gates to reach the scruffy field called the Meadow. Separating the Meadow from the woods, in fact enclosing all of District 12, is a high chain-link fence topped with barbedwire loops. In theory, it’s supposed to be electrified twenty four hours a day as a deterrent to the predators that live in the woods—packs of wild dogs, lone cougars, bears that used to threaten our streets.

As soon as I’m in the trees, I retrieve a bow and sheath of arrows from a hollow log. Electrified or not, the fence has been successful at keeping the flesh-eaters out of District 12. Inside the woods they roam freely, and there are added concerns like venomous snakes, rabid animals, and no real paths to follow. But there’s also food if you know how to find it. My father knew and he taught me some before he was blown to bits in a mine explosion. There was nothing even to bury. I was eleven then. (Collins, 2008, pp. 4-5)

Problem of the Story

Problem of the story is the main problem that shows in the story and it will solve in the end of the story. The problem of the story in The Hunger Games is every year the Capitol of Panem hosts an event called the Hunger Games where two “tributes” – a boy and a girl – are drafted from each of the twelve districts to be brought to an
arena and fight to the death. Only one person can win. This is to remind the country not to rebel and for entertainment.

The rules of the Hunger Games are simple. In punishment for the uprising, each of the twelve districts must provide one girl and one boy, called tributes, to participate. The twenty four tributes will be imprisoned in a vast outdoor arena that could hold anything from a burning desert to a frozen wasteland. Over a period of several weeks, the competitors must fight to the death. The last tribute standing wins…(Collins, 2008, p. 18)

When it is reaping time for the Hunger Games. Prim, Katniss' sister, gets chosen to go fight in the Hunger Games which is a battle to the death of 24 tributes. Two from each district one male and one female. Katniss volunteers as tribute to go into the Hunger Games and fight to death.

“Prim!” The strangled cry comes out of my throat, and my muscles begin to move again. “Prim!” I don’t need to shove through the crowd. The other kids make way immediately allowing me a straight path to the stage. I reach her just as she is about to mount the steps. With one sweep of my arm, I push her behind me. “I volunteer!” I gasp. “I volunteer as tribute!” (Collins, 2008, p. 22)

**Rising Action**

Rising action which occurs when a series of events build up to the conflict. The main characters are established by the time the rising action of a plot occurs, and at the same time, events begin to get complicated. This part presents a central conflict within a character or between one or more characters. The conflict builds during the rising action. The rising action in this novel is when Katniss is put on a train to go to the Capitol of Panem, to fight in the Hunger Games. In the tributes headquarters they train for the games.

The Training Center has a tower designed exclusively for the tributes and their teams. This will be our home until the actual Games begin. Each district has an entire floor. (Collins, 2008, p. 72)

There will be three days in which all the tributes practice together. On the last afternoon, we’ll each get a chance to perform in private before the Gamemakers. (Collins, 2008, p. 87)

Once the Hunger Games start there are many death’s in the first day.

It’s late afternoon when I begin to hear the cannons. Each shot represents a dead tribute. The fighting must have finally stopped at the Cornucopia. They never collect the bloodbath bodies until the killers have dispersed. On the opening day, they don’t even fire the cannons until the initial fighting’s over because it’s too hard to keep track of the fatalities. I allow myself to pause, panting, as I count the shots. One…two….three…. on and on until they reach eleven. Eleven dead in all. Thirteen left to play. (Collins, 2008, pp. 150-151).

Katniss is without allies while Peeta, the male tribute from district 12 has many strong allies that eventually betray him. Katniss is on her own at first, but then she discovers that Peeta has teamed up with the Career Tributes—the strong kids from the rich districts in Panem who actually want to go to the Hunger Games. They eventually corner her in a tree, but she drops a tracker jacker nest on them. It is like a genetically mutated killer wasp and scores a bow and arrow in the process.

After this, Katniss teams up with Rue, a tiny girl from District 11 who reminds her of her sister Prim. The two are able to take out the Career Tributes’ food supply, which totally infuriates their leader, Cato. Also, Peeta doesn't appear to be teamed up with them anymore. Unfortunately, Rue is killed around this time by one of the Career Tributes. Katniss honors her body by covering it in flowers.

“”You know, they’re not the only ones who can form alliances,” I say. For a moment, no response. Then one of Rue’s eyes edges around the trunk. “You want me for an ally?”

“Why not? You saved me with those
tracker jacker. You’re smart enough to still be alive. And I can’t seem to shake you anyway,” I say. She blinks at me, trying to decide. “You hungry?” I can see her swallow hard, her eyes flickering to the meat. “Come on then, I’ve had two kills today.” Rue tentatively steps out into the open. “I can fix your stings.” She digs in the pack she carries and pulls out a handful of leaves. I’m almost certain they’re the ones my mother uses. “Where’d you find those?” “Just around. We all carry them when we work in the orchards. They left a lot of nests there,” says Rue. “There are a lot here, too.” “That’s right. You’re District Eleven. Agriculture,” I say. (Collins, 2008, pp. 197-198)

The Capitol announces the male and female for each district can live not just one person. Peeta gets wounded protecting Katniss from a sword that another tribute tried to kill Katniss with. They end up together hiding from the other tributes. Katniss takes care of Peeta until his wound heels by know there was only a few tributes left.

Claudius Templesmith’s voice booms down from overhead, congratulating the six of us who remain. But he is not inviting us to a feast. He’s saying something very confusing. There’s been a rule change in the Games. A rule change! That in itself is mind bending since we don’t really have any rules to speak of except don’t step off your circle for sixty seconds and the unspoken rule about not eating one another. Under the new rule, both tributes from the same district will be declared winners if they are the last two alive. Claudius pauses, as if he knows we’re not getting it, and repeats the change again. The news sinks in. Two tributes can win this year. If they’re from the same district. Both can live. Both of us can live. Before I can stop myself, I call out Peeta’s name. (Collins, 2008, p. 240).

**Climax**

The climax occurs when the conflict is at its peak and when there seems to be no viable solution to the conflict. In the climax or the main point of the plot, there is a turning point of the story. This is meant to be the moment of highest interest and emotion, leaving the reader wondering what is going to happen next.

The climax of The Hunger Games is there are three tributes left, Katniss, Peeta, and Cato from district one. Mutt dogs come and chase Cato to where Katniss and Peeta are, so they can fight. The Mutt dogs can not kill him because of Cato’s body armor.

I can tell from his panting, the sweat pouring off his purplish face, that he’s been running hard a long time. Not toward us. From something. But what? My eyes scan the woods just in time to see the first creature leap onto the plain. As I’m turning away, I see another halfdozen join it. Then I am stumbling blindly after Cato with no thought of anything but to save myself. Mutations. No question about it. I’ve never seen these mutts, but they’re no natural-born animals. They resemble huge wolves, but what wolf lans and then balances easily on its hind legs? What wolf waves the rest of the pack forward with its front paw as though it had a wrist? These things I can see at a distance. Up close, I’m sure their more menacing attributes will be revealed. (Collins, 2008, pp. 324-325).

But Katniss sends a bow through Cato’s head and then he dies.

So I free the arrow, tying the tourniquet back as tightly as my frozen fingers can manage. I rub my hands together, trying to regain circulation. When I crawl to the lip of the horn and hang over the edge, I feel Peeta’s hands grip me for support. It takes a few minutes to find Cato in the dim light, in the blood. Then the raw hunk of meat that used to be my enemy makes a sound, and I know where his mouth is. And I think
the word he’s trying to say is ‘please’. Pity, not vengeance, sends my arrow flying into his skull. Peeta pulls me back up, bow in hand, quiver empty. “Did you get him?” he whispers. The cannon fires in answer (Collins, 2008, p. 334).

Katniss and Peeta think they have won but the Capitol announces the two person living from the same district is off and only one person can live.

Claudius Templesmith’s voice booms into the arena. “Greetings to the final contestant of the Seventy-fourth Hunger Games. The earlier revision has been revoked. Closer examination of the rule book has disclosed that only one winner may be allowed,” he says. “Good luck and may the odds be ever in your favor.” (Collins, 2008, p. 336).

**Falling Action**

Falling action, or the winding up of the story, occurs when events and complications begin to resolve. The result of the actions of the main characters are put forward. The falling action occurs after the climax when the reader is still unsure if the protagonist will be able to resolve the conflict.

The falling action of this story is Katniss gets some poisonous berries and they can commit suicide, then they will not have to kill one of them. There can not be a winner, so the Capitol says the rule is back on. They spit out the berries and they announce Katniss and Peeta are the winners.

I spread out my fingers, and the dark berries glisten in the sun. I give Peeta’s hand one last squeeze as a signal, as a goodbye, and we begin counting. “One”. Maybe I’m wrong. “Two”. Maybe they don’t care if we both die. “Three!” It’s too late to change my mind. I lift my hand to my mouth, taking one last look at the world. The berries have just passed my lips when the trumpets begin to blare.

The frantic voice of Claudius Templemsmith shouts above them. “Stop! Stop! Ladies and gentlemen, I am pleased to present the victors of the Seventy-fourth Hunger Games, Katniss Everdeen and Peeta Mellark! I give you - the tributes of District Twelve!” (Collins, 2008, p. 338).

Katniss and Peeta are the champions of the 74th Hunger Games so they are know famous throughout Panem. After the Hunger Games, the Capitol hospitals repaired their wounds. They are interviewed and will go home to live in victors village in district 12. Although President Snow, the leader of Panem, does not like how they defied the Capitol by black mailing them. So Katniss had act like she was so in love with Peeta that she rather die than him. The districts did not make an uprising against the Capitol.

“Listen up. You’re in trouble. Word is the Capitol’s furious about you showing them up in the arena. The one thing they can’t stand is being laughed at and they’re the joke of Panem,” says Haymitch. I feel dread coursing through me now, but I laugh as though Haymitch is saying something completely delightful because nothing is covering my mouth. “So, what?”

“You only defense can be you were so madly in love you weren’t responsible for your actions.” Haymitch pulls back and adjusts my hairband. “Got it, sweetheart?” He could be talking about anything now. (Collins, 2008, p. 349)

When I left the arena, when the trumpets played, I was supposed to be safe. From then on. For the rest of my life. But if what Haymitch says is true, and he’s got no reason to lie, I’ve never been in such a dangerous place in my life.

It’s so much worse than being hunted in the arena. There, I could only die. End of story. But out here Prim, my mother, Gale, the people of District 12, everyone I care about back home could be punished if I can’t
pulll off the girl- drivencrazy-by-love scenario Haymitch has suggested. (Collins, 2008, p. 350).

Resolution
Resolution (also called denoument) is the conclusion of the plot. Typically, the conflict is resolved at this point. Resolution is the end of the story which may occur with either a happy or a tragic ending.

Resolution in this story is when Katniss and Peeta go back to district 12 actually to their new home in victors village. They settled down and got back to there regular life. When they got back off the train Prim and Katniss' mother were so happy to see them. The only difference was that Katniss was now rich, she was not used to since before the games she was very poor. It’s at this point that Katniss discovers that Peeta was truly in love with her and was not acting at all as she was. Something that might lead them to get punished by the capitol for pretending.

Haymitch startles me when he lays a hand on my back. Even now, in the middle of nowhere, he keeps his voice down. “Great job, you two. Just keep it up in the district until the cameras are gone. We should be okay.” I watch him head back to the train, avoiding Peeta’s eyes. “What’s he mean?” Peeta asks me. “It’s the Capitol. They didn’t like our stunt with the berries,” I blurt out. “What? What are you talking about?” he says. “It seemed too rebellious. So, Haymitch has been coaching me through the last few days. So I didn’t make it worse,” I say. “Coaching you? But not me,” says Peeta. “He knew you were smart enough to get it right,” I say.

“I didn’t know there was anything to get right,” says Peeta. “So, what you’re saying is, these last few days and then I guess. . . back in the arena. . . that was just some strategy you twoworked out.” 


The Elements of Plot Composing the Plot Structure of the Story
In the narrative, the structure is embodied in the form of plot formulas: such as conflict and resolution, struggle and reconciliation, and separation and union. These plot formulas are carried out by means of actants. This study uses Greimas’ structuralism. Greimas also used the Saussurean concept of binary opposition, so he evolved a set of six actants become three pairs of binary opposition, such as subject/object, sender/receiver, and helper/opponent.

The actantial model is device that can theoretically be used to analyze any real or thematized action, but particularly those depicted in literary text or images. In the actantial model, its study gives more attention to action than subject.

Actant Scheme 1 (Reaping the Tributes)
In the beginning of the novel, we are introduced to the protagonist, Katniss Everdeen. Though she’s only a teenager, she’s a tough hunter who puts food on her family’s table. Her father is dead and she lives with her mother and sister Prim in District 12 in the country of Panem. Every year the Capitol of Panem hosts an event called the Hunger Games where two “tributes”, a boy and a girl are drafted from each of the twelve districts to be brought to an arena and fight to the death. Only one person can win. This is to remind the country not to rebel – and for entertainment, of course.

This year when it is the day of reaping for the Hunger Games, unfortunately, Prim,
Katniss' sister, gets chosen to go fight in the Hunger Games as the tribute from district 12. So, Katniss volunteers immediately in Prim's place as tribute to go into the Hunger Games and fight to death in a battle of 24 tributes. Then the male tribute is selected. It's Peeta Mellark, the baker's son. After the reaping, the tribute selection process, Katniss and Peeta are whisked away to the Capitol to prepare for the Games and primped for live TV. They meet their support team, which is primarily comprised of Haymitch (a former Hunger Games winner and also a drunk), Effie (their wrangler), and Cinna and Portia (their stylists).

During the opening ceremonies, Cinna and Portia dress Katniss and Peeta in flames and they draw much attention to themselves. During training, Katniss reveals her archery skills to the Gamemakers and scores an amazing 11 out of 12. Peeta gets a lower score and asks to be coached separately. Peeta also announces in an interview that he has a mega crush on Katniss.

**Actant Scheme 2 (The Games)**

This actant scheme shows the second part of this novel. It is centered on the games which take place in a completely different setting from the districts. The capitol is where the wealthy and ruling power reside. As the Hunger Games take place, we are shown the dark side of humanity and how far we are willing to go to survive. It also reveals how kindness, love and manipulation significantly affect our lives. So, in the actant scheme shows how Katniss survive in the games. Haymitch as the mentor gives some advices and directions to survive in the games. In addition, Katniss teams up with Rue, a tiny girl from District 11. She helps Katniss to take out the Career Tributes' food supply. Peeta Mellark also helps her in the games. She also gets troubles from career tributes and tracker jacker.

**Actant Scheme 3 (The Victor)**

After Rue's death, the announcer, wanting to bring back the romance story between Peeta and Katniss, changes the rules of the game: two people from a single district can now win. Katniss goes hunting for Peeta and eventually finds him. He is wounded and camouflaged in the muddy bank of a stream. She nurses him back to health and realizes that by playing up the romance angle, they can get gifts from sponsors.

Eventually, Katniss and Peeta must face off with Cato, the only other surviving tribute, but before that they are all pursued by wild dogs which are actually genetically mutated killing machines. Finally, Katniss shoots Cato and he falls into the pack. Then, an announcer comes back on and says the rules have changed back, only one winner allowed.

Katniss and Peeta can't kill each other, so they make a show of taking poisonous berries in an act of double suicide. Fortunately, the announcer comes back on before they can kill themselves, and says that they win. They defeated the Hunger Games. Katniss and Peeta keep up the star-crossed lovers routine for the post-games reunion and interview, knowing that this is the only way to keep from being punished by the Capitol for the rebellious trick with the poisonous berries.

**Kinds of Plot in the Novel**

After analyzing those data, the researcher found that the plot of the story is dramatic (chronological) plot because the events drive through chronologically. The events are related to the future that shows in problem in the story. Also, the events go in chronological order. It shows from the plot diagram that the story started from beginning to problem in the story, rising action, climax, falling action and resolution. It drives chronologically. Thus, the plot of the novel is dramatic or chronological plot.

**CONCLUSION**

According to the interpretation and description of the analysis, the researcher concludes that the elements of plot consist of...
beginning, problem of the story, rising action, climax, falling action, and resolution. In composing the plot structure of the story, the researcher divides the story into three stories. The first is the reaping day of tributes for the hunger games, the second story is the games, and the last story is the victor of the hunger games.

In analyzing every story that has been divided, the researcher uses actant by Greimas structuralism. The last step is finding the kind of plot in the novel. The plot of the novel is dramatic plot because the story through in chronological order. In addition, the novel is closed plot because the problem of the story is solved. So, those are the researcher conclusion in analyzing plot in Collins’ The Hunger Games using Greimas Structuralism.

REFERENCES


