

## ECO FEMINIST LITERARY ANALYSIS OF CHILDREN'S LITERATURE

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### ABSTRACT

*Reading children's literature is a good choice for young readers because they have to get involve into reading process to build their habit and if this activity is done continuously, it will be a character. Reading will broaden young reader's mind to accept all information from reading texts and one example is from reading children's literature. There are many kinds of children's literature written in L1 as well as L2 languages because EFL can help young learners adapt to use English in their daily activity. The choice to read English children's literature will help them learn not just the vocabulary but also the values from the story, such as self-confident, honesty, friendship, bravery, and many more. Those values are some of philosophical values which are the important elements in building students' character. As a descriptive study in which the purpose is to find out certain phenomena, we chose Randall Van Nostrand's Helen and The Golden Bee as the object of the study. There are two problems focusing on Helen as the main character in growing her self- confident and helping others though she also experienced some conflicts, internally and externally. This study applied Ecofeminism approach in order to get the findings which show how Helen struggles through her conflicts to build her self-confident and made friends with other creatures, as part of the nature in the environment in which she created on her adventure.*

**Keywords:** reading, young learners, children's literature, character building, Ecofeminism

### 1. INTRODUCTION

Good values are needed to support students' character and it can be applied in real life. The more the readers are exposed to good lesson the better they will have their character. Reading without getting any good values means reading for nothing. Reading texts are created with some purposes and one of them is to teach students about philosophy. The philosophy is very hard to learn for young learners and reading is a good activity to help students learn about it.

This research is conducted in order to help young learners learn about philosophy by applying ecofeminism. The ecofeminism will help students appreciate and honor the environment so that they will keep the environment well as they grow. A short story is chosen as the object of the study because the subject in this study is the young learners therefore a short story entitled Helen and the Golden Bee by Randall Van Nostrand is selected as the object of the study. Based on those reasons, there are two problems formulated in this study namely:

- a. What did Helen do to help other little kids from being threatened by Marcia?
- b. How does Helen do to get self-confidence?

In order to answer those questions, the researchers read and found relevant literature such as theories to support the analysis. Some previous studies also needed in this study to find the gap between the previous and this study. Those previous studies are conducted by Muhammad Arfan Mu'ammam, Sujinah and Ali Nuke Affandy entitled *Children's Good Character Development with Traditional Literature for Conveying Moral Values* published in 2020. They investigated that children can build their good character from kinds of traditional literature such as myth stories, legend stories, animal stories, fairy tales, shadow puppets and folk songs. Their study is published in International Journal of Innovation, Creativity and Change, Volume 11, Issue 5, 2020. (www.ijicc.net). The other one is about representation of ecofeminism found in children's literature. It was found by Sujinah, Muhammad Arfan Muammam and Ali Nuke Affandy in their article entitled Representation of Ecofeminism in Collection of Children's Stories by Children's Writers published in 2019. They found that women and nature have similar symbolic representation because both of them are being oppressed by masculine characters. (ICEMSS 2018, DOI 10.4108/eai.7-12-2018.2281815).

According to M.O. Grenby in his book entitled *Children's Literature* he wrote that naturally given the place that children have occupied the society, is probably the majority of children's fiction which has been set within the family (2008:117). The short story written by Randall Van Nostrand entitled *Helen and the Golden Bee* is one of examples of the kinds. Though some scholars argue about the texts in which the stories are written but they say that many would favor a narrower definition, admitting only those texts which have been deliberately designed to depict family life and which focus on family relationships (2008:118).

Adventure Stories inspired children to show their heroic actions which empower them to be powerful. In children's adventure stories generally there are some conflicts between children and their care takers such as parents or family which describe the need of protection and supervision. Children have their own way to help them grow by learning from the environment and surrounding. Children and nature are closely related because nature accompanied them to build their imagination. How do children interact with nature and their friends illustrate their journey in the adventure in which they are imagined. Children without having imagination will likely have different character compares to those who are imaginative. It does not mean that children who do not have imagination are powerless and are not creative. But it proves that something is missing in their growth period.

Talking about children and the environment is a part of ecofeminism. The term ecofeminism is pioneered by a French feminist named Francoise d'Eaubonne in 1974 which is a combined term that is called ecological feminism that is a branch of feminism. The ecofeminism examines the connections between women and nature. This term notifies the commitment to the environment and an awareness of the associations made between women and nature. According to Kathryn Miles that ecofeminism is as a branch of feminism that uses the basic philosophy of feminism is about the equality between genders, a revaluing of non-patriarchal or non-linear structures, and a view of the world that respects organic processes, holistic connections and the merits of intuition and collaboration. (<https://www.britannica.com/topic/ecofeminism>)

The background of ecofeminism is driven by the modernization and industrialization which creates pollution. It turns out to be ecological crisis as the increasing waste polluted environment where humans live. The feminism is a women's movement in which one of the purpose is to protect nature. Along with the modernization, the number of male family members left their family to work in industry is increasing as a result of this is the traditional division role. Women, who stay at home as wife and raise kids experience social division of labor. It makes women suffer greater in ecological crisis.

One way to learn something is by doing an activity that is called reading. People ask why reading is important for their children. The answer is because there is no more important activity for preparing your child to succeed as a reader than reading aloud together. Fill your story times with a variety of books. Be consistent, be patient, and watch the magic work. It's no secret that activities at home are an important supplement to the classroom, but there's more to it than that. There are things that parents can give children at home that the classrooms cannot give. (taken from <https://www.readingrockets.org/article/reading-your-child>)

Reading is a good activity for kids especially if it starts at early age. Based on research conducted by *healthline*, there are 5 benefits of reading namely (adopted from <https://www.healthline.com/health/benefits-of-reading-books>):

1. Reading strengthens your brain
2. Increases your ability to empathize
3. Builds your vocabulary
4. Helps prevent age-related cognitive decline
5. Reduce stress

## 2. RESEARCH METHOD

The data in this study is qualitative data because they are in the form of sentences or paragraph and are not numerical data. The other one is how the researchers analyze the data as they are not numerical data (<https://www.scribbr.com/category/methodology/>) Therefore the researchers apply feminism approach to analyze the data in this study. This study belongs to descriptive study which aims at describing a phenomenon or situation accurately and systematically. Descriptive research is chosen because it is aimed at identifying characteristics, frequencies, trends and categories (<https://www.scribbr.com/methodology/descriptive-research/#:~:text=Descriptive%20research%20aims%20to%20accurately,investigate%20one%20or%20more%20variables>).

This study shows how ecofeminism can help children develop their character. Ecofeminism is also called ecological feminism as a branch of feminism that examines between women and nature. The ecofeminism is found by a French feminist named Francoise d'Eaubonne in 1974. The philosophy of ecofeminism specifically emphasizes the ways both nature and women are treated by patriarchal (or male-centered) society. (<https://www.britannica.com/topic/ecofeminism>) The ecofeminism as written by Kathryn Miles in <https://www.britannica.com/topic/ecofeminism> is used to analyze the story entitled *Helen and The Golden Bee* written by Randall Van Nostrand. Therefore the unit of analysis in this study is the expressions used by the characters found in the story entitled *Helen and The Golden Bee* written by Randall Van Nostrand.

The data collection method used in this study are:

1. Find the electronic English short story from the internet by googling
2. Downloading the short story entitled Helen and The Golden Bee by Randall Van Nostrand
3. Saving the short story in the folder.

The next step after collecting data is data analysis. The analysis is done using the following steps:

1. Re read the short story entitled Helen and The Golden Bee.
2. Identify the expressions used by the characters in the form of dialogues.
3. Classify the dialogues based on Ecofeminism (coined by Francoise d'Eaubonne) as written by Kathryn Miles in <https://www.britannica.com/topic/ecofeminism>
4. Interpret the data to get the findings.

### 3. DISCUSSION

In order to get the findings for those two problem statements the researchers do the analysis orderly as follows:

#### **Helen as the brave girl**

In the journey, Helen made friends with Delphine the magnificent and the golden bee called Buser. They were in the journey and met some characters and went into some places. The journey was begun from the gate which is located between the two oak trees in her backyard and ended in the schoolyard.

Helen has the character as Helen the adventurer whose journey helped her realize her dream as the dragon knight who fights for dragons who come in different shapes. She can defeat her own feeling as nobody becomes somebody through her adventure. At first, she likes covering herself with her invisible gray coat but in the end, she was no longer needed to hide herself because she can prove to herself that she is Helen who is brave and kind-hearted person.

She fought for helping little kids who are threatened by a big mean girl. Helen is not afraid to fight for helping others who need her help though she was badly hurt but it took her courage to stand for the right thing until the end. Her nature is changed from a weak girl because of being verbally bullied to be a brave girl who helped others. Helen experiences an adventure which changes herself. Beaten up to bleeding, Helen stood still to fight for Marcia and in return she got an appreciation from the teacher, as written in the story:

*A big girl was picking on a little girl. "I told you, Marcia, I don't have any money," the little girl said. The big girl, Marcia, pushed her to the ground and laughed. The little girl tried to get up and the big girl pushed her back down. Marcia had wild dark hair and a mean mouth.*

*Helen swallowed and wiped her sweaty palms on her shorts. If she turned away the big mean girl wouldn't see her, but the little girl would be at her mercy. There was a crowd gathering around them. No one did anything to help. Marcia spit on the little girl and without thinking, Helen shouted, "Stop it." She stomped past the gate and through the crowd of kids shouting "Stop it," until she was in the middle of everything.*

*"Who's the fatty?"*

*Everyone looked at her. Helen didn't know what to do. She'd never confronted a dragon and now face-to-face with a real one felt unprepared and under-equipped. "Are you okay?" she said to the little girl who was wiping the spit off her face. The girl's lip was bleeding.*

*"Hey fatty!" the big girl said.*

*"You're mean," Helen said, and because good knights always tell the truth, shouted at the group of kids watching. "She's only mean because you let her."*

*The big girl grabbed Helen's hair and pulled so hard it felt like her scalp was going to rip off. Helen screamed and swung her arms, trying to get free. One of her swings connected with the big girl's face. Marcia let go and put her hand to her nose, it was bleeding. "You big, fat cow!" Helen caught a glint of gold buzzing towards them as the big girl shoved her hard. Helen fell back and the world went black.*

*"Are you okay?" the little girl asked. She was shaking Helen's shoulder.*

*Helen pushed herself up on her elbow and felt a lump on the back of her skull. There was a lot of yelling and shouting. A teacher was pulling a bunch of little kids off the big girl. "Thank you for helping us. No one's ever stood up to Marcia before.*

Helen finds herself confident

Helen has been in different emotions which helped her grow herself confident. The emotions are mixed emotions as if they were negative and positive poles inside her. Her feeling changed along with herself confident with the help of her new friends, they are Delphine the magnificent and Buser the golden bee. They were having an adventure as Delphine told to Helen that it was Helen's adventure.

*"Helen is perfect exactly as she is." Helen's eyes filled with tears. It was the nicest thing anyone had ever said about her. Delphine stood. "I think it's time we had an adventure, don't you?"*

*Helen got to her feet swiping at the tears that had insisted on running down her cheeks. "Yes, I'm ready."*

It is told in the story that Helen finds herself confident by struggling herself into different situations which was described as conflicts in which she experienced. They are internal conflict and external conflict. The internal conflict she had is when she is finally able to put off her invisible gray coat which she likes to wear it, to hide herself. This invisible gray coat is her inferior feeling towards herself, because it takes time for Helen to realize that she does not need her gray coat anymore. When she realized that she has courage and bravery to do something which people think she could not do it, she proved it that she can do it, like fighting for helping others who need help.

Helen has a round character because she changed herself from the beginning as a weak girl to the ending as the brave girl. She is not scare anymore to face others even when she is bullied by her friends because of her body and her weakness. She shows to her parents that she is changed. She looked at her father's eyes when her father asked her a question. She sat up straight and no one asked her not to mumble. This made her mother gave a surprise look to her father. Helen proof to herself that she has herself confident, she is brave and is not afraid to face the world anymore.

#### 4. CONCLUSIONS

Based on the analysis, the researchers can draw some conclusions as follows:

1. Children can learn many values such as self-confidence, bravery, honesty, and friendly to build their character from reading children's literature.
2. Helen, as the main character has a round character because she changes her character from nobody to be somebody, from being bullied become a brave girl who is dare to face her world. She is brave and is not scared to help other kids who need her help.
3. Helen has herself confident from her adventure, she becomes the dragon knight because she can defeat dragon who comes in different shapes. She experiences some conflicts, internal and external who made her find herself confident.
4. Learning values from reading is a good thing to do starts from early age.

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