

CONVERTED VILLAIN: A STUDY ON GRU'S CHANGING CHARACTER TRAITS IN *DESPICABLE ME*

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ABSTRACT

This article concerns with Gru's character development in *Despicable Me*. In this movie, Gru, the father of three daughters is described as a villain. However, later on Gru becomes a good man. In this article, I am interested in analyzing the reasons or factors why Gru's character traits change and how his changing character traits effect him and others. In my analysis I examine the process of Gru's changing character traits by using the theories of characterization and conflict. Beside those theories I also use the theory of personality to get a better understanding of the effect of his character development. The findings show that his three daughters' love plays a role in changing his character. As a result, Gru becomes a good man and he is well accepted by others. Through Gru's experiences, I conclude that it is very important that people should show their understanding to others and be mindful to others feeling. In this way, they can have a more meaningful life.

Keywords: Animated cartoon, Character development, and Personality change.

A cartoon is a drawing with a message. Based in this definition, then an animated cartoon movie consists of many picture of cartoons that play in a sequence with bring message or story. Thus, we will see the picture which starts in action like moving or jumping so that we can understand the story or message of their action. Animation has a creative and imaginative tendency. It is capable of carrying animals and objects to life as in fairy tales and children's stories. Nevertheless, animation has long been a genre enjoyed by all ages. As such, there are many sub-genres in animation movies, for example; anime, adult-animation, animated children, animated musical, and animated family. The popularity of animation cartoons is also reinforced by its international appeal. They rely on visual humor and can easily be exposed into all languages. Because of the popularity of animation movies, many production house in Hollywood to produce movies as such.

A number of famous production studios in Hollywood, such as Paramount Picture Corporation, Universal Studio, and Warner Bross Entertainment Inc., produce many good cartoonmovies. Paramount Picture Corporation, for example, produces movies like *Shrek* (2011), *Madagascar* (2005), and *Kung Fu Panda* (2008). Universal studio has movies such as *Despicable Me* (2010), *Jurassic Park* (2013), and *Fast & Furious 6* (2013). Warner Bross. Entertainment Inc. also produces famous movies like *The Polar Express* (2004), *Harry Potter* (1997 – 20012), and *The Lord of The Rings* (2001 – 2003). Those movies are so successful that their producers get many profits from their famous movies. For example, *Pirates of the Caribbean* (2003 – 2011) generates about US\$1 billion for Universal studios. *Harry Potter* themovie series, released between 2001 and 2011, gives WarnerBross. Entertainment Inc. US\$7,7 billion US from its global box office (<http://www.cbc.ca/news/arts/j-k-rowling-to-pen-harry-potter-spinoff-film-series-1.1701754>, accessed on January 23, 2015)

Among many cartoon movies, one movie that attracts my attention is *Despicable Me*. This movie talks about Gru who is an arrogant, ignorant person, and mysterious criminal. He does not care about anything. He just cares for his evil plans, such as stealing the moon. He also does not care about the children whom he has adopted, namely, Margo, Edith, and Agnes. He just takes advantages of these children. He uses the children to take the machine from his enemy so that he can steal the moon.

However, later on, Gru's character traits and attitudes change. He turns out to be a nice person, something that never happened before. His new character traits and attitudes are very different from the previous ones, namely, cruel and arrogant. His life seems to transform into a better one. At the end of the movie, Gru decides to give his life for these three children. Apparently, he has a new purpose in life. I find that Gru's changing character traits and attitudes, as shown in this movie, reflects some social issues, and they are interesting to analyze.

Although, this is cartoon movie, this movie also explores social issues. Firstly, Gru does not like to have neighbors. He is always in the house and does not like to go outside. Also, his dog always eats neighbors flower and takes a pee in the neighbor's yard. So, we can see that they are arrogant and naughty. But after they have these children, the attitude has changed. He becomes an open minded person, he likes to talk with anybody and his dog does not eat and take a peek in the neighbor's yard. I think we need to be humble to other people. It is because we cannot live alone. We still need neighbors to help us when we are in urgent situation. Social aspect can also influence our characters, thoughts, and attitudes. We can also learn about social aspect in life through other people.

In this paper, I am curious to know the reasons or factors why the character traits of the main character change. Besides that, I am also interested in how his changing character traits effect him and others. In this study I want to find out the factors or reasons that make Gru's character traits change. I also want to figure out that his changes have effects on himself and others.

In analyzing *Despicable Me*, I use literary theories and theory of personality. Characterization theory is required in this study to identify and analyzed Gru's character habit and its progress and changes. While conflict is needed since this thesis is related with many conflicts, such as the conflict between Gru storming Vector plane, his rival, and to get the children back. These literary theories are very helpful to me in analyzing my thesis. Besides the literary theories, I also use popular personality theory to analyze my thesis in Gru characters after changes.

One literary theory that I use is the theory of characterization. Characterization is the method that the author uses for describing and introducing characters. It is literary element and may be employed in dramatic works of art or everyday conversation. According to Bloom, characterization itself means the method an author uses to present the readers with his or her character. In general there are two methods used by the author to present the people in his / her story, which are explicit characterization or implicit one. In the first method, the author reveals the character through external details such as how she/he looks, thinks, feels, dresses, and moves. On the other hand, implicit characterization is discovered through the assistance of subtle hints, a bit of conversation, an unexplained movement, and so on (Bloom 9-10). It means that unlike the first method which presents the characters clearly and directly, the last method gives more difficulty to the readers because they have to pay attention to the depth of the characters personality. In other words, character may be presented by means of descriptions, through their actions, speech, or thoughts.

Another literary theory that I use is conflict. Conflict is defined as a struggle between two forces, but these forces can be either internal (feelings) or external (physical). Internal conflicts exist when a character struggles with an ethical or emotional challenge. Then, external conflict can also be the conflict that occurs when a human encounters a physical challenge, like when a family is lost in a snowstorm. The internal conflict explain also about a character experiences will usually represent a question about moral behavior within societies and among humankind.

Besides the literary theories above, I also use the theory of personality. This theory assumes behavior is determined by relatively stable traits which are fundamental units of one's personality. Traits predispose one to act in a certain way regardless of the situation. This means that traits should remain consistent across situations and over time, but may vary between individuals.

Actually, personality can be changed overtime but many people do not believe it. According Carol S. Dweck in his article that there are two theories about personality can be changed. First theory called Fixed / Entity, believing that their qualities, such as their intelligence, are simply fixed traits. Second theory is Malleable / Incremental theory which believe that their most basic qualities can be developed through their efforts and education.

I use those theories above for analyzing Gru's changing character traits and attitudes. The theory of characterization is useful for analyzing what Gru thinks and does. The theory of conflict can be used in analyzing Gru's encounters with others. I use the theory of personality for getting a better understanding of Gru's character traits and attitudes, as well as their changes.

GRU'S CHARACTER TRAITS BEFORE THE CHANGES

Gru is characterized as a bad person in this world. He is described as a super villain and mysterious criminal. He likes to steal many great things in another country. He is tall, bald with blue eyes, long nose and broad, powerful physique, and dresses in a light grey sweater underneath a black collared coat along with a striped grey scarf, black trousers, and shoes. From this appearance we can see that he is very strong and athletic. Besides being described as a strong and athletic man, he is also described as super villain.

Next, he is also described as a sneaky and somewhat cold-hearted man, who is determined to become the greatest villain in the world. First, he shows his dislike of children being easily irritated by Agnes, Edith, and Margo. He is also selfish. It is shown in the beginning of the story, he only adopts the girls so that he can get the shrink ray which he intends to use to shrink the moon, so that he can steal it. It means that he adopts those girls for covering up his plan. Besides being described as super villain and sneaky, Gru is also described as being cruel. His cruelty and even sadistic attitude can be seen from the way he used Freeze Ray. Gru seems to enjoy using this weapon, he uses the Freeze Ray to people just for the sake of it. His cruelty can also be seen through his attitude toward his minions. He treats his minions like slaves. He also says that he has no intention to give his minions a right.

In the beginning of the movie that Gru is quite sadistic to other people. For example, in scene he freezes the people so that he can get the food first without waiting in a long time. His cruelty can also be seen in the beginning of the movie when he makes a balloon animal for a boy who drops his ice cream. Actually, he wants to make the boy cry because he does not intend to make the balloon to enjoy. When he gives the balloon to the boy, he pops the balloon so the boy cries.

Another event that proves his cruelty is when he hires the children like a slave to help him get the shrink ray. He sends the children to come in the Vector's house so that he can come in and get back the shrink ray. Gru likes to be a mysterious criminal. This happens because Gru's negative personality traits come primarily from his strained relationship with his mother.

THE FACTORS THAT INFLUENCE GRU'S CHANGES

One factor that influences Gru's changes is the three orphan girls. This can be seen from the scene in which Gru wants to get back the shrink ray from Vector but he fails to get it. Gru attempts to retake the shrink ray from Vector's lair thwarting its defensive systems, and Vector's pet shark. Then, He sees three girls, Margo, Edith, and Agnes, trying to sell Vector cookies, and Vector lets them in. Suddenly, Gru has an idea about the girls that he wants to use them as bait. Gru plans to use the girls to get back the shrink ray and contacts Dr. Nefario, tells him to make a bunch of Cookie Robots for Vector.

The following day, the girls convince Gru to drive them to dance class before going to Vector's home to deliver the large quantity of cookies that Vector orders. The girls say to go to Funny Land innocently that succeeds to make Gru succumb. Finally, they are at home with happy faces because they enjoy playing some games in Fun Land. In this scene, I think that this is the beginning of Gru's change. It is because in this scene, Gru feels happy and it leaves a memory about happiness and togetherness. This experience cannot be erased from their mind. They will remember that moment about the happiness in Funny Land.

The children are successful in influencing Gru and making him happy. This happens because he has never been much happier like this before. Since he was a child, his mother has ignored him. In this scene, Gru enjoys his time together with the children and play with them happily in Funny Land. First, he enjoys drawing his face like a cat with them. The second, it is because of Margo's speech that makes Gru feel greatly appreciated.

Another factor that influences Gru's changes is his conflict with Vector. Gru tries to get back the shrink ray, but he fails. In fact, Vector is successful in shooting the Gru's ship with shrink

ray so the ship becomes smaller. In this scene, Vector is the winner but Gru will hit back. Vector then blasts Gru's ship with the shrink ray as payback for the latter's freezing his head. This causes the ship to shrink, forcing Gru and the Minions riding the miniaturized ship to go home.

After forcing Gru to hand over the moon, Vector goes back on the deal and keeps the girls as his captives. This enrages Gru, who storms Vector's ship, the latter's proving useless. Vector flees in an escape pod with the girls inside. Gru chases after them, climbing the disguised Pyramid and hanging onto the exterior of the ship. He nearly falls to his death, but is rescued by Dr. Nefario in the ship that Vector shrank previously. Nefario reveals that the effects of the shrink ray are not permanent and the effect wears off at a rate proportional to its original mass, to put it simply, the bigger of the object, the faster it returns to normal after being shrunk by the Shrink Ray.

As Gru chases Vector, the effects of the shrink ray on the Moon inside the pod begin to wear off, it causes the Moon to grow and smash open the glass bubble holding the girls. Gru rescues them by securing Vector's ship using a rope with a grappling hook and tells them to jump, so he will catch them. Edith and Agnes jump, and while Margo still confuses how to jump. She feels afraid and confused because she does not know how to jump. Suddenly, Vector catches Margo, but in the same time, Moon wrecks Vector controls, causing his ship to accelerate into space and carry the moon back into orbit. Margo falls off the ship so Gru jumps off to catch her. The Minions join hands to form a lifeline so that they can save Gru and Margo's life. It implies that Gru loves the children and he wants them to live with him again. It is clear that the conflict with Vector is also the factor of Gru changes. His conflict with Vector opens his eyes that the three orphan girls he has adopted are more important than the moon.

From the explanation above, it is clear that the girls are the factor of Gru's changes. It can be seen through the happy moments of their experience. Besides that, Gru's conflict with Vector also contributes to Gru's realization that the three girls are more important than his ambition.

GRU'S CHARACTER TRAITS AFTER THE CHANGES

Gru discovers that the little girls who have come into his life are much more than simple pawns. They actually seem to care about Gru, and it turns out the scheming evildoer makes a pretty good father. When Gru realizes that his upcoming moon mission clashes with a ballet or recital performance by the girls, he must decide what is more important of being parents for them or cementing his nefarious reputation once and for all.

Gru's change his character from uncaring into caring is shown when he makes a story bed to the girls. From a careless person, he changes to be the kind of caring person who gives kiss to the girls before sleep. All his life, he feels lost without any guidance and lost guidance is love. Before he finds the love of his life, he never believes that there is a good thing in his life. After he has the girls, he knows about a good thing in life.

After he changes his character traits so he has new characteristic, behavior, and habits, which are called character traits. Furthermore, I find several new personalities, which Gru has after his character changes in the process of character development, they are careful, caring and kindness.

At the end of the film, he feels hopeful with himself because he realizes the purpose of his life, which is becoming real father to the girls. He realizes that this ultimate act of love will give him a sense of most profound hope more than he has known all his life. He finally feels that his life is useful and hopeful for the girls.

THE EFFECT OF GRU'S CHANGING CHARACTER TRAITS ON HIM AND OTHERS

The effect in Gru himself is he already changes his character from bad to be happy. It can be seen when he gets back the children again. He feels very happy because the children back to his house again. He likes to live with the children because he wants to have fun with the girls again. He becomes a good guy, always helps other people, and being kind to others. Now, he likes to read bed time stories to the children, and gives kiss to them. Then, they listen carefully when Gru read bed time story for them. It is the proof that he cares to the children.

The Orphans Girls is Margo, Edith, and Agnes. Margo is the oldest of the three sisters. They have the impact of Gru's changes that they get a lot of caring from Gru because they live again with him. In the scene when they are in the bedroom that Gru gives a surprise that he writes a

new bed time story for them. It is a gift from him to the girls. Then, Margo realizes that Gru is a good person and suitable to be parent for them. Finally, they have a real father.

Marlena is felonious Gru's mother and guardian for him. She does not seem to do a particularly good job at looking after him. She ignores him when he shows her a picture of him in the moon, a macaroni prototype rocket, and an actual working rocket. She has a tendency to be rather nasty to him. She ignores him in his childhood. She is unimpressed by most of Gru's accomplishments, but eventually becomes proud of him when he shows her what a great parent he is. Now, she is more attention to Gru as a great son.

CONCLUSION

Finally I can conclude that changing character traits is not easy to doing. I see the changes of Gru that he had to experience various kinds of process. In the process of Gru's character development in the film, I find that the power of love from the girls that changes him. I think that love is the key to all sorts of problems in this world. However, for Gru, love that he gets from the girls has made him overcome all of the problems and changes him into a better person. Thus, love is the trigger that Gru needs to change him from sneaky and cruel into a life that is caring and happy.

In this paper, I have identified and analyzed Gru's character traits and its progress and changes. In this study on the character development of Gru, I find that there is a process of development into a better character. Therefore, in analyzing the character of Gru in the film after his development, my finding is that Gru has become a person who is good-hearted that makes him a better person. He also becomes a caring individual. As a good-hearted person he becomes gentle and kind. Moreover, the analysis of character traits after the process that Gru undergoes reveals that he has become a caring person that he can perform the ultimate act of happiness and love.

After analyzing the process of character development, I conclude that one's character changes. It can change to be better or worse. But to have developed character each person need the help from the environment or society. As humans are social people, they need others in their life. Everyone has weaknesses and strengths. Those that strong should help the weak since the condition could be reserved. Life is like a turning wheel that sometimes goes up and sometimes down. Nevertheless, outside factors only are not enough. Besides, there must be a strong will as the inner factor that can successfully bring one's character to be better. Knowing these factors is truly beneficial since this understanding might give insights that arouse the desire to be better.

Gru have changes to be a better person that before he is a super villain. He has decided to change his character to be better after knowing the girls. He became a kind person, caring, and careful to others. He will care to others and read a bed time story for the girls. He wants to be parents for the girls. He totally thinks to decide to be a good person. I conclude that one should have strong standpoint so that he or she can make a right decision in his or her life. If one has no strong standpoint, he or she will be easily influenced. In taking decision often a person faces conflicts. In facing conflict he or she should be determined to overcome these conflicts and also determine what is best for him or her so that he or she will be happy in his or her decision.

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