

Horton Hears A Who! By Dr. Seuss: An Investigation on Human Behaviors

Keziah Flora V. Ladlad^{1*}, Estella E. Estoy², Nina Lucy J. Antiola³, Lito L. Diones⁴

^{1.2.3}Student, Department of Language and Literature, Cebu Normal University, Cebu City, Philippines ⁴Professor, Department of Language and Literature, Cebu Normal University, Cebu City, Philippines

Abstract: Children's literature is a creative way of introducing the world to young minds, it is explaining phenomena and behaviors in a way that they understand. This genre of the art is not only a gateway to subconsciously prepare children to be a part of the society, but it also equips them with knowledge and ideas that may help them to become effective members of it. Works like Dr. Seuss's Horton Hears A Who! provides a creative representation of a community, and how people within that community move and interact with each other. This research aims to reveal the human behaviors that are embedded in the books characters and settings, and correlate that to events that happen in the real world to explain how Horton Hears A Who! and therefore, children's literature promotes the understanding of complex human behavior to children. Related literature and studies support the study's claim. The research will be following a qualitative research approach, specifically a discourse analysis method. The data gathered will then be analyzed in relation to Sigmund Freud's Psychoanalytic Theory, Martin Fishbein and Icek Ajzen's Theory of Reasoned Action, and the Mimetic Theory according to Erich Auerbach.

Keywords: characters, character motivation, human behavior, real world correlation, settings.

1. Introduction

Literature written specifically for an audience of children began to be published on a wide scale in the seventeenth century. Most of the early books for children were didactic rather than artistic, meant to teach letter sounds and words or to improve the child's moral and spiritual life [4]. However, suitable literature for today's children is influenced by the cultural and ethical values of its authors. Authors assume a degree of intelligence on the part of their audience that was not assumed in the past. In this respect, children's literature has changed dramatically since its earliest days [5]. A big part of children's literature is represented by fairytales, which have the final goal of transmitting the basic universal values, and raising children's awareness on many aspects of life (Nikolajeva). When children read fiction, narrative poetry, or biography, they often assume the role of one of the characters. Through that character's thoughts, words, and actions the child develops insight into his or her own character and values [5]. According to an article by William H. Coles, stories are about people, and to create great stories requires in-depth consideration of the characters' desires and motivations. In literary fiction, it is a

common misconception that good characters are determined by how well an interesting character is described, but as stated by Coles; "great characters are built layer by layer by actions and discovery, not just by describing features and traits, or by just describing feelings. Characters grow from every action made, every thought considered, every word of dialogue spoken" (Story in Literary Fiction). Students who study literature and read for pleasure have a higher vocabulary, better reading comprehension, and better communication skills, such as writing ability. When students analyze literature, they learn to identify cause and effect and are applying critical thinking skills. Without realizing it, they examine the characters psychologically or physiologically. They identify the characters' motivations for their actions and see through those actions to any ulterior motives [1]. The habit of reading, if inculcated at an early age, helps in brain development and enhances imagination [19].

Theodore Seuss Geisel, popularly known by his pen name, Dr. Seuss is credited with revolutionizing the world of children's literature [7]. His artistic vision emerged as the golden thread that linked every facet of his varied career, and his artwork became the platform from which he delivered numerous children's books, hundreds of advertisements, and countless editorials filled with wonderfully inventive animals, characters, and humor [8]. He created books that invited children to play with sounds, rhyme, and imagination. In books like The Lorax, Sneetches, and Butter Battle Book he presented complex societal issues in ways that children and adults could understand [7]. According to acclaimed novelist Richard Russo, if you're not writing stories that occur in a specific place, you're missing the opportunity to add depth and character to your writing. In Nina Munteanu's article, Importance of Setting in a Novel, she says: "setting grounds your writing in the reality of place and depicts the theme of your story through powerful metaphor. Without setting, characters are simply there, in a vacuum, with no reason to act and most importantly, no reason to care. Without a place there is no story. Setting helps with plot, determines and describes character and gives metaphoric links to the theme." Study.com further discusses setting as the place or the location where the story is set, the time or when it happens, and the social situation or cultural environment where the characters move in. It is important to examine all three parts

^{*}Corresponding author: kfvladlad@gmail.com

of the setting of any story to fully understand how a setting impacts a piece of literature.

As a children's author, Dr. Seuss is considered the "Modern Mother Goose". His children's books aren't just mere fairy tales, but as a true inspiration would, Dr. Seuss incorporated lessons of morality and human nature. His stories were written not only to entertain, but to educate [6]. For the majority of people around the world, our first serious encounter with literature comes from school. Being able to empathize with a group of characters written on a page is categorical and from a student's perspective a necessary skill. Additionally, the ability to sense themes and messages opens us up to another way of thinking. Literature becomes a vessel; this is Sophie Austin's statement in her article titled The Importance of Literature in Modern Society. However, literature also reiterates the need to understand modern day issues like human conflict. Literature is a reflection of humanity and a way for us to understand each other. By listening to the voice of another person we can begin to figure out how that individual thinks. Austin believes that literature is important because of its purpose and in a society, which is becoming increasingly detached from human interaction, novels create a conversation [17].

In the study, No Matter How Small... Property, Autonomy, and State in Horton Hears a Who! Jorge L. Contreras said that Dr. Seuss's Horton Hears a Who! has long been viewed as a parable of human equality and dignity. Published in 1954, the same year as the U.S. Supreme Court's landmark antidiscrimination decision in Brown v. Board of Education, Horton's famous refrain, "a person's a person, no matter how small," elegantly reflects the egalitarian principles espoused by the American civil rights movement. Horton the elephant has since become a popular symbol of tolerance, equality, and human dignity. Even more importantly, Horton's young readers have, for generations, taken from this lovable elephant a greater empathy for those who may be different than themselves (604). According to Anne Mcgillivray, Horton is a story for children, a fantasy, a fairy tale, a myth. The potency of its story and the power of its myth are undiluted by Seuss's undainty slang, noodling pictures, and irreverent rhyme. In his writing, Seuss brings children the gift of reading. In Horton, he has made a true fairy tale (571). "A person's a person" is the foundation of Horton's undertaking to the minuscule Whos, the message he carries from their world to his own, and the moral of the tale. 'Children's literature' sounds like an enticing field of study; because children's books have been largely beneath the notice of intellectual and cultural gurus, they are (apparently) blissfully free of the 'aughts': what we ought to think and say about them. More than that, to many readers, children's books are a matter of private delight, which means, perhaps, that they are real literature - if 'literature' consists of texts which engage, change, and provoke intense responses in readers [16].

2. Significance of the Study

This study is beneficial to students, teachers, and scholars who study literature and are looking to embark on a similar study; the findings of this research paper is helpful as evidence. This study also develops interest in looking further into children's books and discovers any subliminal messages that may be behind their light and carefree facades. This study seeks to communicate the heavier meaning within this Dr. Seuss classic by humanizing certain aspects of the story in order to create a bridge between the fictional world in which it is set and reality. Lastly, this study serves as a stepping stone for further studies on Dr. Seuss's *Horton Hears a Who!* and aid future researchers in the endeavor.

3. Scope and Limitation of the Study

The scope of the study is the human behavior found in *Horton Hears A Who!* by Dr. Seuss supported by Sigmund Freud's Psychoanalytic Theory, Martin Fishbein and Icek Ajzen's Theory of Reasoned Action, and Erich Auerbach's Mimetic Theory.

The study is limited to the character motivation, settings, and real-world correlation in the children's book.

This study investigates the human behaviors found in Dr. Seuss's *Horton Hears a Who!*, specifically looking into the setting, character motivations, and real world correlation of the story to determine what specific human behaviors each subproblem mirrors.

This study is supported by Sigmund Freud's Psychoanalytic Theory, Martin Fishbein and Icek Ajzen's Theory of Reasoned Action, and the Mimetic Theory according to Erich Auerbach.

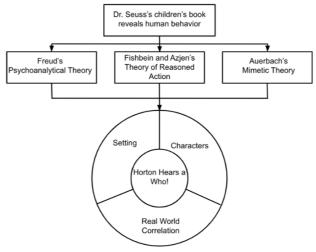


Fig. 1. Schematic presentation of the theoretical and conceptual framework of the study

Sigmund Freud's Psychoanalytic Theory of personality development, the first theory used in this study, explains human personality as a series of stages that is formed through inner conflicts. Freud theorized about how unconscious conflicts occur between components of the human mind. According to Freud, a large part of our thoughts, feelings, and desires are unconscious, and the knowledge and interpretation of the unconscious of the person play a very crucial role in psychoanalysis as it helps to get a true and deeper insight into an individual's mind [18]. In this paper, Freud's Psychoanalytic Theory is utilized to explain and highlight the behaviors and personalities of each individual character of the story and the society that they have created comprising these different character traits. These behaviors are identified through the analysis of the characters, the setting, and their relevance to the plot.

The second theory, the Theory of Reasoned Action (often considered in tandem with the Theory of Planned Behavior), proposed by the psychologists' Martin Fishbein and Icek Ajzen, is a cognitive theory and mathematical model that helps psychologists understand human behavior in specific contexts, such as whether or not people will take up healthy habits. The Theory of Reasoned Action sheds light on the characters' motivations in this study and explains how these motivations cause the events that transpire in the story. This theory also explains how the actions and motivations of certain characters affect other characters and the atmosphere of the setting in which the story takes places, as well as, the world that these characters exist in.

The Mimetic theory is a concept developed by twentiethcentury French anthropologist René Girard who saw that human desire as not individual but collective, or social [15]. The last theory used in this research is the Mimetic Theory according to Erich Auerbach, who proposed the idea that art imitates nature. For Auerbach, literature is always bound by the writer's sense of reality, which, at its deepest level, depicts everyday life in all its seriousness [20]. Auerbach's Mimetic Theory is applied in this study to touch on the elements of the story that are influenced by real world events and real-life occurrences. The use of the Mimetic Theory further expounds on the behaviors found in the story

4. Methodology

This study uses a qualitative research method, specifically discourse analysis. The qualitative method is utilized to unravel the different phenomena and experiences of the people living in the society. There are different types of approaches that support qualitative research, but it is the Mimetic approach that is suitable to use as it inspects the Human behavior in this Literary work. The method that is utilized for this study entails critical investigation and a comprehensive review of the work that is studied. Since this is qualitative research, the data interpretation is not displayed in a statistical illustration. By using this method, Dr. Seuss Horton Hears a Who receives a detailed investigation to obtain the purpose of this study and to produce the data gathered which includes the main problem and the subproblems. Additionally, to give plausible and credible explanations for the data gathered. The primary data source is a book by Dr. Seuss titled Horton Hears a Who! published in January 1954.

This study follows three phases. Phase 1. Setting. This phase focuses on the analysis of the settings. The setting is examined through the use of Freud's Psychoanalytic approach to explain and highlight the setting where it took place. These settings shown in the novel are one of the factors that make a great impact on the story, the setting, and their relevance to the plot. Phase 2. Characters. This focuses on the analysis of the characters and their motivations. The characters are examined through the use of Theory of Reasoned Action. Phase 3. Real World Correlation. This phase focuses on the analysis of certain scenes in the plot in relation to real world events. The real-world correlation is examined through the use of Mimetic theory is a concept developed by twentieth-century French anthropologist René Girard who saw that human desire as not individual but collective, or social [15].

This study is in qualitative research design. It uses biographical analysis which examines the relationship between the literary piece and the author, it neither violates the rights of human beings nor harms animals. Moreover, this recognizes and acknowledges the studies about the author, his literary piece, the main problem, as well as the sub-problems in the related literature and studies reviewed by sufficiently giving credit to the works.

5. Result and Discussion

This study uses biographical analysis of the qualitative research method. The qualitative method involves a nonnumerical presentation of data analysis of the literary piece.

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Table 1 reveals the result of the analysis of the settings.

Setting analysis				
SETTINGS	SOCIAL ENVIRONMENT	HUMAN BEHAVIOR		
Jungle of Nool	Diverse	Individuality		
	Civil	Social		
	Close minded	Ignorance		
Who-ville	Communal Society	CamaraderieLoyaltyHomophily		
	United	UnderstandingCompassionHomophily		
	Advanced	Technologically Savvy		
	Organized	OrganizedGoal-oriented		

Throughout the story, different characters that inhabit the Jungle of Nool are introduced. Aside from being animal characters, these personas do not necessarily have a distinguished connection with each other. This goes to show that the jungle is inhabited by different species making it a socially diverse environment. This diversity points to human individuality which can be found in most social settings. The community in which these characters exist may be independent or self-sufficient, meaning to say that they move freely from one another. Although they are living in the same space and area together, they are completely socially detached from each other. The jungle animals are oblivious to anything outside of their home, it is all they know. So, when Horton introduces the speck of dust on a clover he claims to contain a town called "Whoville", they are completely averse to the idea. This shows that the society inside the jungle, albeit being diverse, are collectively closed-off to the idea of anything other than themselves existing. This behavior is a direct reference to the ignorance and prejudice toward dissimilar individuals that exists in human societies.

The story's plot is moved along when Horton finds a speck of dust and discovers the town within it known as "Who-ville". The town is inhabited by Whos who are very communal in their society, everyone knows everyone, and they live in perfect harmony with one another. They are very keen on technology and the use of it, much more advanced than that of the jungle's. In pages 21 and 22 of the book, Horton is surprised to know that they have buildings, churches, and grocery stores. During the story's climax, when the Mother Kangaroo and the rest of the Jungle of Nool are trying to destroy the speck of dust on the clover, the Whos come together as one voice to make themselves heard.

Table 2 displays the result of the analysis of the Character.

CHARACTER	CHARACTER MOTIVATION	HUMAN BEHAVIOR
Horton	Pursuit for Equality	Altruism
Mayor of Who-ville	Commitment to the Whos	Tribalism
The Whos	Maintain their safety	Self-preservation
Mother Kangaroo	Lack of trust	Prejudice
Joey Kangaroo	Lack of experience	Innocence
The Wickersham Brothers	Motivated by own prejudice	Gullible
Vlad Vlad-i-koff	Superiority Complex	DiscriminatoryNarcissism
Jo-jo	Absence of Self-worth	Passive Idle

Horton was introduced in the book when he heard a small voice coming from a speck of dust. He discovers that there is a small town called Who-ville on it and places the speck of dust on a clover to protect it from the other jungle animals. Horton has no reason to do this, he gains nothing from protecting Whoville even when there was no imminent threat to them. Even when he got in danger with the rest of the animals in the jungle, he still protected it because he believed that even the tiny creatures have the right to live. Horton's altruism is embodied in the phrase that is the premise for the whole story, "a person's a person no matter how small."

As the head of the town, the Mayor of Who-ville shows his exceptional commitment to Who-ville and the Whos when he creates an alliance with Horton so they can be brought to safety. His tribalism shows through when he gathers all the Whos and encourages them to make noise when they are about to be destroyed. When he finds the small Who that didn't join the protest, he tells him how every small voice is important.

The Whos are introduced as these tiny creatures living in a town on a small speck of dust. Their lives come into danger when the inhabitants of the Jungle of Nool attempt to destroy them. This pushes the Whos to come together and make noise so they can be heard and make the animals believe that they really do exist. This act reflects how human actions can be motivated by self-preservation.

The main antagonist of the story is the Mother Kangaroo, she is characterized as having a "to see is to believe" attitude as she is the first person who rejects Horton's claim that there are small people living on the speck of dust he is protecting. This rejection comes from her lack of awareness of the existence of other creatures which can be related to humans' real-life prejudice that can come from ignorance.

The joey, or baby kangaroo becomes an integral part of the plot when he jumps in to stop the attempt to destroy the Whos when he hears their voices. But for the majority of the story, the joey only follows what his mother tells him because he does not know any better. His innocence drives him to blindly obey his mother's beliefs and not think for himself, but it is also the reason that he steps in once his mother is proven wrong. This behavior is typically seen in children, because of their lack of experience they are quick to believe whoever is more influential at the given moment.

The Wickersham Brothers are a band of monkeys who attack Horton after news spreads about him and the Whos. They are shown to be motivated by their own prejudices and ignorance of the truth. And since the Mother Kangaroo acts like the head of the jungle, the Wickersham Brothers follow her orders. That assumption paired with their quick acceptance once it was proven that Horton was telling the truth is telling of how us humans can be gullible.

The second antagonist, Vlad Vlad-i-koff, is an agent in destroying the clover where the speck of dust that is Who-ville was placed on. During his and Horton's wild chase when the Wickersham Brothers gave the eagle the clover, he declares that he doesn't mind flying through the night to keep the Whos away from Horton, which can be indicative of his view of being higher than everybody else.

Jo-jo is a Who, he is the smallest Who ever. When studied deeply, Jo-jo's introduction in the story shows how he doesn't see his self-worth or what exactly he can contribute to the protest, considering the fact that he is the smallest Who. This motivation might very well be the same impulse humans feel that drives their inaction.

Table 3 presents the result of the analysis of the Real-World Correlation.

Table 3

Real world correlation SCENES REAL WORLD EVENT HUMAN BEHAVIOR			
SCENES	REAL WORLD EVENT	HUMAN BEHAVIOR	
Protest of the Whos	Indigenous people protesting in Peru	United	
Vlad dropping the clover	Holocaust	Greedracism	
Horton helping the Whos	Share Shed of Carroll County High School	CompassionKindnessGenerosity	
Mayor of Whoville creating alliance with Horton	President of Ukraine asking USA for help amid war with Russia	Humility	
Mother Kangaroo influencing the jungle	Donald Trump's Presidency	Abuse of Power	
Jo-jo's voice	William Kamkwamba and his Windmill	Small but TerribleResourceful	

The Whos' protest can be directly related to the outcry happening in Peru led by its indigenous people. In the book, the Whos' come together to make their existence known to the bigger folk who are trying to destroy them. In the same manner the indigenous people of Peru are coming together to prove their existence and claim their right to live in front of the government that is supposed to protect them. This situation in Peru is symbolic of how people can be united to fight a common evil. The Whos made themselves known by making noise, banging on drums, and shouting. Similarly, the indigenous people of Peru and campesinos protest loudly: Kachkaykuraqmi! (We continue to exist!)

One of the most prominent events of the second world war was the Holocaust, this was the genocide of over six million European Jews in Germany led by the Nazi dictator Adolf Hitler. In the story, when Vlad Vlad-i-koff drops the single clover on the clover field, he doesn't realize how many lives he would affect, but the action was intentional, meaning Vlad was motivated by something other than his ignorance and rejection of the truth. Vlad knows Horton's claims of there being little people on the speck of dust and yet he still dropped it. Vlad unhesitatingly doing the act reflects the same motivations that Hitler and the Nazi's had to kill those people in the concentration camps.

Horton has nothing to gain from helping the Whos, he doesn't do it for praise from the other inhabitants of the Jungle of Nool or so that the Whos see him as a God. He does it simply because he wants to help. Horton's willingness to protect the Whos despite the consequences can be related to real world events like the share shed in Carroll County High School started by senior Sam Gray. Gray said he just liked helping people when asked about why he started the project. The shed was meant for struggling students to have access to basic necessities like hygiene products and food. Although the project was first born out of the Legacy Project that students at Carroll County High School have to complete in their senior year, Gray's willingness to help did not stop there. Like Horton, Gray has nothing to gain from the project, he simply wants to help. The main premise of Horton Hears A Who! reflects real world stories like these of compassion and generosity.

The Mayor of Who-ville is a powerful position, he is the head of a town, after all. But when the safety of his town is compromised by factors that are beyond his control, he doesn't hesitate to create an alliance and ask Horton for help to get them to safety. This part of the story is similar to how the president of Ukraine humbled down and asked the United States of America for help during their war with Russia. The Mayor of Who-ville and Zelenskyy, the President of Ukraine are two people in high positions who weren't afraid to admit their weaknesses and ask for help from other, stronger, external forces to ensure that their people do not get hurt. This sense of humility really speaks of the honor and dignity of these persons and their willingness to lay out to other people for the wellbeing of their constituents.

Donald Trump is arguably the most controversial president of the United States of America. The reason we particularly saw this as a correlation to that of the Mother Kangaroo influencing the jungle to turn against Horton is due to the amount of negativity that surrounds Trump and his supporters. The Mother Kangaroo used her position and her power to make the jungle believe against Horton and his claim of the Whos existence, they attempted to destroy the clover and hurt Horton in the process. The actions brought about by Trump's influence and that of the Mother Kangaroo's is indicative of how officials also use their positions to further their own personal agendas that does not necessarily have anything to do with their responsibilities.

Jo-jo, the small Who whose voice was the reason the Whos' voices were heard during their protest, is first characterized as being idle and passive about this whole situation because he doesn't see the need for his small voice. William Kamkwamba is a Malawian inventor who gained popularity in 2001 when he built a wind turbine using scrap to bring electricity into his home. He was a teenager from a small town in a country in East Africa who had nothing but a book and a dream. He built a windmill from discarded pieces of metal to power his house and his community. Kamkwamba's story can be related to Jo-jo as opposites. Jo-jo did not feel confident that his voice would matter during the protest because he was small, and Kamkwamba did not let his scarcity hinder him. Jo-jo and Kamkwamba are two examples of being small, literally and figuratively. Kamkwamba was motivated by their need for electricity, and he used his intelligence to fulfill that, Jo-jo had to be encouraged to use an instrument he already had, these are both examples of being resourceful.

6. Conclusion

Based on the results of this study, it is found out that there are human behaviors in Dr. Seuss' Horton Hears A Who!

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