

INTRINSIC ELEMENTS IN DIGITAL SHORT STORIES ‘THE OVAL POTRAIT’ BY EDGAR ALAN POE

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Abstract

Literary works are created from human feelings; the emotions are written through words and give aesthetic value to the audience. A short story is a short form of narrative literature that works similarly to a novel but is not longer than a novel and the plot of the story is simpler and it can be finished in one sitting. A short story is not simply built by ‘words’, there are components or elements that build the story until the end. Recognizing and identifying the structure of a short story is important; it is one of the ways to show appreciation for the literature and help people understand the implied meaning in it. In this article, the findings are conducted through intrinsic elements analysis of the selected short story entitled “The Oval Portrait” by Edgar Alan Poe. The story is analyzed in digital form and it is taken from a website on the internet. The descriptive qualitative method is used in the article to help interpret the elements found in the story. The results show that there are four significant intrinsic elements in the short story: plot, character, setting and narrative perspective.

Keywords: digital *short story*; *intrinsic elements*; *the oval portrait*

1. Introduction

Human expressions unveil a lot of stories. Emotional expression is a connector between literature and people (Li, 2022). Literary work is a part of literature which is formed by an idea or feeling (Mutiarani, 2017). Through writing a person can express his/her idea or emotion with creativity into a work called literary work.

Literary work is a medium for a writer to expose his idea or emotion that can contain message or aesthetic value to be given to the readers or listeners. Literature has three main genres: poetry, prose, and drama. In this article the writers’ focus is on prose.

Grammatically, prose is a structured work, the art of building words and phrases into sentences and paragraph leading to a story (Koisawalia, in Rahmawati, 2020). In writing prose, there are rules or boundaries for the writer to attend to. The language features used in prose usually come from everyday speeches and only with this natural pattern the expression or idea can be well understood. Prose is divided into two types, fiction and non-fiction (MacDonald, 2002). In this article the writers examine the fiction short story.

The purpose of this article is to examine the intrinsic elements used by Edgar Alan Poe in one of his famous works of prose “*The Oval Portrait*” and bring an understanding to the readers of the interior parts that built the story.

2. Literature Review

Fiction prose has several elements and according to Nuraini (2022) it consists of theme, setting, character, conflict, plot, and point of view; but the important parts based on Klarer (2004) are plot, character, narrative perspective, and setting. These elements build the body of the story and they are all connected to one another.

According to Klarer (2004), the term “setting” denotes the location, historical period, and social surroundings in which the action of a text develops. On the other thought, setting is the component that describes the environment or surrounding where the story takes place and also directs the theme, character and action of a story (Belevska, 2017). Character is a person who moves the story with his/her roles.

Concerning point of view, Klarer (2004) states that point of view, or narrative perspective, characterizes the way in which a text presents persons, events, and settings. The subtleties of narrative perspectives develop parallel to the emergence of the story and can be reduced to three basic positions: the action of a text is either mediated through an exterior, unspecified narrator (omniscient point of view), through a person involved in the action (first-person narration), or presented without additional commentary (figural narrative situation).

According to Diasamidze (2014), point of view (P.O.V) is a basic part that describes the story. This means that point of view holds the key of visualization of the story through a person side; it could be a narrator, main character, or non-main character.

Then comes plot, the logical interaction of the various thematic elements of a text which lead to a change of the original situation as presented at the outset of the narrative. Plot has ideal sequences: exposition – complication – climax – resolution. According to Nur (2017), plot is the hierarchy of actions in narrative work, they are arranged in such a way to create the artistic effects. Plot is a concept of events that develop from the introduction of the story, and usually gathers the series of events related to the central conflict (the key of story).

A short story is a narrative story, shorter than a novel usually dealing with a few characters and aiming at unity of effect and often concentrating on the creation of mood rather than plot. Another idea of short story comes from Korompot, et al., (2022), stating that a short story is shorter than a novel and longer than a fable, but the main focus of the short story could be larger or smaller issues creating strong reactions to the readers.

Some previous researchers doing similar studies are listed below:

1. Nur, D.R. (2017). *An Analysis of Intrinsic Elements on James Joyce Short Story*, the author found five basic intrinsic elements through the analysis: plot, theme, character, setting and symbol.
2. Belevska (2017). *The Analysis of Intrinsic Elements in Hans Christian Andersen’s “Ib and Little Christine”*, the author found six intrinsic elements through the analysis: theme, plot, characterization, style, tone, setting.
3. Nuraini, Isnainiyah, Setiani (2022), *Intrinsic Elements in A Collection of Short Stories by Oscar Wilde and the Implications of Learning English in Senior High*

School, the writer found five intrinsic elements through the analysis: characterization, plot, setting, theme, and message.

All of the above-mentioned previous researches are used as references in developing the analysis of the current study.

3. Research Method

In this article, descriptive qualitative research method is applied in order to analyze intrinsic elements on selected short story entitled “The Oval Portrait” by Edgar Allan Poe. According to Nassaji (2015), descriptive qualitative method is purposely to describe social phenomena. In order to understand how the short story is constructed, the writers use descriptive qualitative method to describe the interior parts forming the story. The primary data are taken from the short story by Edgar Allen Poe and the secondary data are from respective sources such as magazines, books and journals. The data collection procedures begin with reading the story, collecting the data in line with the topic of discussions and the analysis is to explain all the data already collected deeply.

4. Discussion

The data are in a digital form taken from *poestories.com*. The writers have to read it repeatedly and then identify the intrinsic elements: plot, character, setting, and narrative perspective.

1. Plot:

Based on Klarer (2004) plot is divided into 4 stages: exposition, complication, climax, and resolution. *The Oval Portrait* uses linear plot structure; the pattern of plot is straight. The patterns of the plot in this short story are:

a. Exposition

The chateau into which my valet had ventured to make forcible entrance, rather than permit me, in my desperately wounded condition, to pass a night in the open air, was one of those piles of commingled gloom and grandeur which have so long frowned among the Apennines, not less in fact than in the fancy of Mrs. Radcliffe (Poe, 1903).

From this paragraph, the writers find the exposition element which describes the introduction of the characters, place, time and mood. This exposition is a part of intrinsic element.

She was a maiden of rarest beauty, and not more lovely than full of glee. And evil was the hour when she saw, and loved, and wedded the painter. He is passionate, studious, austere, and having already a bride in his Art (Poe, 1903).

This paragraph tells the exposition of internal part. It is an introduction to a young lady in the painting and the narrator says that he loves art more than he loves his wife.

b. Complication:

“In these paintings my incipient delirium, perhaps, had caused me to take deep interest; so that I bade Pedro to close the heavy shutters of

the room -- since it was already night -- to light the tongues of a tall candelabrum which stood by the head of my bed -- and to throw open far and wide the fringed curtains of black velvet which enveloped the bed itself” (Poe, 1903).

This paragraph explains the rising action of the story. The narrator begins to be curious to finish the painting soon.

It was thus a terrible thing for this lady to hear the painter speak of his desire to portray even his young bride. But she was humble and obedient, and sat meekly for many weeks in the dark, high turret-chamber where the light dripped upon the pale canvas only from overhead. (Poe, 1903)

Again the above paragraph is about the rising action, leading to complication. The young lady actually does not like her husband’s desire, because the addiction of his husband has put rivalry between her and his husband’s painting. But because of her devoted love to her husband, she does not show any hesitation of her husband’s request and sits in the dark chamber for weeks while her husband is making a painting of her.

c. Climax:

“The position of the candelabrum displeased me, and outreaching my hand with difficulty, rather than disturb my slumbering valet, I placed it so as to throw its rays more fully upon the book.”

“...I thus saw in vivid light a picture all unnoticed before. It was the portrait of a young girl just ripening into womanhood. I glanced at the painting hurriedly, and then closed my eyes. Why I did this was not at first apparent even to my own perception.”

“The portrait, I have already said, was that of a young girl. It was a mere head and shoulders, done in what is technically termed a vignette manner; much in the style of the favourite heads of Sully. The arms, the bosom, and even the ends of the radiant hair melted imperceptibly into the vague yet deep shadow which formed the background of the whole” (Poe, 1903).

This is the climax of the story. The narrator unexpectedly finds another painting of the young girl. This painting is a portrait of young girl just ripening into womanhood. The narrator is so amazed by the painting and cannot stop staring at it; the portrait is painted in vignette style.

Yet she smiled on and still on, uncomplainingly, because she saw that the painter (who had high renown) took a fervid and burning pleasure in his task, and wrought day and night to depict her who so loved him, yet who grew daily more dispirited and weaker. And when many weeks had passed, and but little remained to do, save one brush upon the mouth and one tint upon the eye, the spirit of the lady again flickered up as the flame within the socket of the lamp. (Poe, 1903)

Here is the peak of the conflict. The lady keeps smiling but actually she has been so tired after sitting for hours as a model of painting for her husband; unfortunately her husband does not notice that she is dying of such activities.

d. Resolution

“At length, satisfied with the true secret of its effect, I fell back within the bed. I had found the spell of the picture in an absolute life-likeness of expression, which, at first startling, finally confounded, subdued, and appalled me.”

“With deep and reverent awe, I replaced the candelabrum in its former position. The cause of my deep agitation being thus shut from view, I sought eagerly the volume which discussed the paintings and their histories”. (Poe, 1903)

In these paragraphs, the narrator gives description of the falling action in the story. The narrator gets his last portrait and plans to discuss the historical background of the painting.

And then the brush was given, and then the tint was placed; and, for one moment, the painter stood entranced before the work which he had wrought; but in the next, while he yet gazed, he grew tremulous and very pallid, and aghast, and crying with a loud voice, “This is indeed Life itself!” turned suddenly to regard his beloved: -- She was dead!”. (Poe, 1903)

This paragraph tells the falling action of the internal part. The lady that has slowly turned pale and weak now is dead as the painter finishes the portrait. He looks at his wife who is already dead, crying out loud and screaming “This is indeed life itself!”, but no regret is shown by the painter. This also draws that the painter’s madness has taken the life of his wife.

2. Character

The Oval Portrait has two stories in it. The characters are the narrator and the narrator’s valet, Pedro. The narrator is described as a wounded man here but there is no explanation why he gets wounded. He is also described as person who has great taste in art and literature. Pedro is described as a loyal person to the narrator. It can be seen when he carries the wounded narrator to a shelter for a night, then prepares the bed for the narrator to rest.

In another story, there are two characters; they are a couple of husband and wife. The husband is the painter of the portrait that the narrator finds in the chamber. The wife is the lady in the portrait on the wall. The painter is described as a mad artist . He loves the painting more than his wife. The lady is a described as a truly loving woman and she is also a beautiful woman but she suffers a lot at the side of her husband. Her love to his husband is great and she is ready to sacrifice anything to show her love to him.

3. Setting

The locations of *The Oval Portrait* are abandoned palace (chateau), small apartment, and a remote turret building. The time is night and the story develops until midnight. The narrator’s mood is desperately wounded and delirious. There is no exact description of time in the second story. The mood of the painter is not stable; while the lady is seen obedient all the time.

4. Narrative Perspective

The point of view of *The Oval Portrait* is first-person perspective played by the narrator or the wounded person. There are a lot of repetitions of the word “I. In the second story of *The Oval Portrait*, the point of view is presented by third-person perspective through by the painter and the lady. This can be seen from the behavior and actions of the characters mirrored in the story.

5. Conclusion

The intrinsic elements found in the short story entitled *The Oval Portrait* by Edgar Alan Poe are plot, character, setting, and narrative perspective. The short story contains two routes, classified as first routes and second route. Both the routes are not related in plots. *The Oval Portrait* fulfills the four important internal structures of a story according to Klarer (2004) plot, character, setting, and point of view. Both the routes are in the linear plot, consistent from the beginning to the ending, but the second route is not clearly described. Concerning the plot, both have exposition – complication – climax – resolution.

The settings in the first route are chateau, small apartment, a remote turret building. Timeline in the second route is night and midnight. There are also several characters found in both of the routes. In the first route the characters are the husband (Painter) and the wife (the lady in the oval portrait). In the second route, the characters that show up are the narrator (the wounded man) and Pedro (the narrator’s valet).

The last is point of view, point of view in the first route is in the first-person perspective by using the wounded man as the narrator and in the second route, Poe uses the third-person perspective to narrate the story, through the characters, the painter and the wife.

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