

Plot and Characters in *The Eyes Have It* by Ruskin Bond

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Abstrak – Cerita pendek sering kali mengandung narasi yang terfokus, biasanya berputar di sekitar satu peristiwa atau konflik, dan menggali interaksi antara karakter dalam konteks yang padat namun kuat. Keringkasan cerita pendek memungkinkan untuk dibaca dalam satu kali duduk, yang menguntungkan bagi pembaca dengan waktu terbatas. Tujuan dari penelitian ini adalah untuk memeriksa secara mendalam elemen-elemen intrinsik yang membentuk inti dari cerita tersebut. Elemen-elemen intrinsik adalah aspek-aspek dasar yang membentuk sebuah karya sastra, memberikan identitasnya sebagai karya sastra. Dalam konteks cerita pendek, elemen-elemen ini memainkan peran penting dalam membentuk narasi dan memengaruhi signifikansinya secara keseluruhan. Penelitian ini akan berfokus terutama pada alur cerita dan pengembangan karakter. Analisis yang mendalam tentang alur dan karakter sangat penting karena keduanya adalah komponen dasar yang mengatur narasi dan resonansi emosionalnya. Alur cerita sering berputar di sekitar konflik—baik internal maupun eksternal—yang dihadapi oleh karakter-karakternya. Dengan menganalisis bagaimana konflik-konflik tersebut muncul, berkembang, dan diselesaikan, pembaca dapat mengungkap tema-tema mendalam yang ingin disampaikan oleh penulis.

Kata Kunci: Cerita Pendek, Analisa, Intrinsik, Alur Cerita.

Abstract - Short stories often encapsulate a focused narrative, usually revolving around a singular event or conflict, and delve into the interactions among characters in a compact yet powerful context. Their brevity allows them to be read in one sitting, which is advantageous for readers with limited time. The intent behind this research is to deeply examine the intrinsic elements that constitute the heart of the story. Intrinsic elements are those foundational aspects that form a literary work, granting it its identity as a piece of literature. In the context of short stories, these elements play a crucial role in shaping the narrative and influencing its overall significance. This study will primarily focus on the plot and character development. An insightful analysis of the plot and characters is vital as they are fundamental components that govern the narrative and its emotional resonance. The plot often revolves around the conflicts—whether internal or external—that the characters encounter. By dissecting how conflicts arise, develop, and resolve, readers can uncover the underlying themes that the author aims to communicate.

Keywords: Short story, Analysis, Intrinsic, Plot

INTRODUCTION

A short story is a brief work of fiction that typically focuses on a single event, character, or theme. It is much shorter than a novel, usually ranging from a few hundred to a few thousand words. Despite its shorter length, a short story still has a clear plot, with a beginning, middle, and end. It often includes a conflict (a problem or challenge) that the main character tries to resolve. Many short stories surprise readers with unexpected plot twists, powerful endings, or thought-provoking conclusions. The brevity often makes these twists even more impactful. People read short stories because they are quick, accessible, and often thought-provoking. In this analysis, the focus will be on the short story *The Eyes Have It* by Ruskin Bond, particularly its plot and characters, as the narrative contains an unexpected conclusion and a significant plot twist. The author, Ruskin Bond, exemplifies situational irony effectively throughout the story, which imparts a critical lesson about the effect of first impressions on our understanding of the world and those around us.

In *The Eyes Have It*, the author, Ruskin Bond delivers an excellent example of situational irony. The story itself also has a very valuable lesson about the influence of initial assumptions on the ways we perceive the world and other persons. Ruskin Bond is a well-known Indian author of British descent, best recognized for his works in English literature. Born on May 19, 1934, in Kasauli, India, Bond is renowned for his simple, evocative storytelling that often draws upon the beauty of the Indian landscape, particularly the hills of Uttarakhand,



where he has spent much of his life. Over the years, Bond has written over 500 short stories, essays, and novels, and his works have been a significant part of Indian children's literature.

Literature means the work of authors, including prose and verse and especially of lasting quality and artistic merit and writings of relative excellence in lasting or universal appeal; artistically worthy writing; letters or belles-letters; the body of writing in a particular field or on a particular subject; historical or available documents; printed matter (Literary comparison Dictionary, 1984: 215). Another definition of literature from Longman (1992:856), literature is the production of literary work especially as an occupation. Also, literature is writing in prose or verse especially writing having excellence of form or style and expressing ideas of permanent or universal interest.

Shaw (1986: 71) defines a short story as a fictional prose narrative that is concise and focuses on a single incident or character. The short story aims to evoke a powerful emotional response or insight in a limited space, usually through a single theme or conflict, often with a twist or surprise ending. Birkets (1993: 67) defines a short story as a brief narrative form that focuses on one main character and one central theme. The form is self-contained, meaning it provides resolution or insight within a limited word count, making it different from longer works like novels which allow more complex development.

Intrinsic Element of novel

Every short story exhibits a unique structure, incorporating both intrinsic and extrinsic elements. Intrinsic elements include fundamental components such as theme, setting, plot, character, point of view, symbolism, and style of language. In contrast, extrinsic elements encompass aspects like moral values, psychological influences, and social or cultural contexts. However, this research will specifically focus on analyzing the intrinsic elements of theme, setting, plot, character, and conflict as the primary subjects of study. By narrowing the scope in this manner, the analysis aims to provide a detailed understanding of how these elements interact to shape the narrative and its overall message.

M. H. Abrams (1981) outlines the intrinsic elements as the building blocks that define a literary work, particularly in fiction. These elements include plot, characters, theme, setting, and style, which all interconnect to contribute to the story's overall message and emotional resonance. Abrams emphasizes the importance of how these elements function together to create a unified artistic effect. Meanwhile, according to Shaw (1986: 71), Intrinsic elements are the core components of a literary work that are integral to its structure and meaning. These elements include plot, characterization, setting, and theme, which together form the framework of a narrative. Shaw highlights that these elements are the internal components that define the narrative and shape its impact on the reader.

Plot

According to *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Current English* (1951: 915), the plot is a plan of play, poem, and novel. And plot is the sequence of incidents or events in which a story is composed. It may include what a character says or thinks, as well as what he does, but it leaves out description and analysis and concentrates ordinarily on major happening (Winarti, 2003: 5). Stanton (1965: 14) says that plot is a story consists of event sequence, but each incident only related by causative where one incident causes or caused another incident. Aristotle's *Poetics* is one of the earliest and most influential theories of plot. According to Aristotle, the plot is the most important element of a tragedy (or any narrative work), and it must follow a clear structure. His ideal plot structure consists of three main parts: (1) Beginning: The introduction to the setting, characters, and initial situation; (2) Middle: The rising action, climax, and turning point; and (3) End: The resolution or conclusion, where the conflict is resolved (Aristotle, *Poetics*, 350 BCE: 22).

Shaw (1986: 219) mentioned plot is a plan or scheme to accomplish a purpose. In literature, plot refers to the arrangement of events to achieve an intended reflection. A plot is a series of carefully devised and interrelated action that through a struggle of opposing forces (conflict) to a climax and a denouement and a plot is different from a story or strong line (the other of events as they occur). Plot is also the plan, design, scheme, or pattern of events in a play, poem, or work of fiction and further, the organization of incidents and characters in such a way as to induce curiosity and suspense (Cuddon, 1998: 976).

According to Todorov's Theory of Narrative (Equilibrium and Disequilibrium) about plot Todorov (1969:45) proposed that most stories follow a pattern of moving from one state of equilibrium (a stable situation) to a state of disequilibrium (disruption of that stability), and then back to a new equilibrium. This theory can be broken down into five stages:

1. **Equilibrium:** The story begins with a stable state.
2. **Disruption:** An event or conflict disrupts the equilibrium.
3. **Recognition of the disruption:** Characters become aware of the imbalance.
4. **Attempt to restore equilibrium:** Characters take action to resolve the conflict.
5. **New equilibrium:** The conflict is resolved, and a new stable state is reached.

Character

Character can be defined as persons presented in a dramatic or narrative work, who are interpreted by the reader as being endowed with moral, dispositional, and emotional qualities that are expressed in the dialog and action (Abrams, 1985: 22). According to Robert (1977: 54) in his book *Writing Themes about Literature*, character is an author's representation of human being, specifically of those inner qualities that determine how an individual reacts to various conditions or attempts to shape his or her environment. Choices and actions indicate character. Shaw (1986: 152) says the character is a study of personality, setting, or mood, which contains little action or plot and places emphasis on descriptive details about an individual. Also, the character is the aggregate of traits and pictures that form the nature of some person or animal. The character has several other specific meanings notably that of a person represented in a story, novel, play, etc. Jones has a simple definition of character; character is describing a clear picture of someone presented in a story (1968: 33).

In *Poetics*, Aristotle discusses the concept of character in drama and narrative, emphasizing that a character's actions should be consistent with their moral nature. According to Aristotle, a character must possess certain qualities: they should be good, appropriate to their role, true to life, and consistent in their actions. A well-constructed character also undergoes a reversal of fortune (*peripeteia*) or recognition (*anagnorisis*), which is central to the development of the plot. Aristotle states that the character should be neither too virtuous nor too wicked, but should embody "probability" and "necessity" in their decisions and actions. The character's journey often leads to a change in their understanding or self-awareness, contributing to the resolution of the story (Aristotle, *Poetics*, 350 BCE: 15-30).

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The research method utilized in this study is qualitative research. This approach asserts that knowledge is inherently relative, emphasizing the subjective nature of all knowledge (Numan, David, 1992:3). As explained by Prof. Dr. Nyoman Kutha Ratna, S.U., qualitative methods are seen as strategies for understanding reality, encompassing systematic steps to analyse causal sequences. He further elaborates that this form of research prioritizes the collection of natural data concerning its contextual existence. The primary source for this study is the short story *The Eyes Have It* by Ruskin Bond. This text serves as the main data source, enabling the researcher to draw upon statements and events within the story that are directly pertinent to the research objectives. L.R. Gay (1996:208) defines qualitative research by outlining its essential characteristics and underlying rationale. This type of research involves extensive data collection over an extended period, typically conducted in natural settings. Its primary aim is to understand behaviours within those contexts. According to Strauss and Corbin in Sudikin's book, "Metode Penelitian Kualitatif Prespektif Mikro" (2002:2), qualitative research yields insights that cannot easily be accessed through statistical methods or other quantitative approaches. It is particularly effective for examining various dimensions of human life, including personal histories, attitudes, organizational structures, social movements, and kinship relationships. This method facilitates a deeper understanding of the complexities inherent in human experiences.

Source of the Data

A short story entitled *The Eyes Have It* by Ruskin Bond in 1950. This is a short story that the writer analyzes for this Journal; the Publisher of this short story is Contemporary Indian English Stories.

Data Collection Procedure

The following outlines the steps the researcher plans to undertake to conduct this study:

- a. First, the researcher will read the short story and gain a clear understanding of its specific narrative.
- b. The researcher will establish a framework or methodology to guide the analysis of the plot and characters.
- c. Next, the researcher will gather and analyze the narrative elements that pertain to the plot and character.
- d. Based on the collected data, the researcher will conclude the relationships between the plot and the characters.

The data collection process will commence by identifying the necessary data. By adhering to this systematic approach, the researcher will organize and compile the data coherently, facilitating a thorough and detailed analysis of the plot and characters within the short story.

Data Analysis Procedure

The procedures for analyzing the data in this study are as follows:

1. The researcher will classify the collected data into relevant categories.
2. The researcher will analyze the intrinsic elements by connecting the theoretical framework to relevant quotations and examples from the short story.
3. Finally, the researcher will draw conclusions based on the analysis conducted

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Introduction of *The Eyes Have it*

Synopsis

a young man traveling by train from Dehradun to Mussoorie, who experiences a chance encounter with a blind girl. The story begins with the protagonist describing the scenery as the train moves through the hills. As he looks around, he notices a young woman sitting across from him. She is blind, and he becomes fascinated by her calm demeanour. They strike up a conversation, and the man, trying to seem confident, avoids revealing his poor eyesight. He describes the landscapes outside the train window, offering vivid details of the surrounding hills, the river, and the distant village.

During their conversation, the girl reveals that she is on her way to Mussoorie to visit her relatives. The man, curious about her blindness, asks her how she manages to navigate the world without sight. She responds, *"I have learned to live without seeing. I can feel things around me and understand them just fine."* She speaks with wisdom, and the young man is impressed by her calmness and maturity. He becomes increasingly self-conscious, trying to hide his eye condition.

He then asks her, *"Can you tell if a person is good-looking just by their voice?"* The girl replies, *"I can't say, but I can tell if someone is kind or not. That is more important."* The young man, still feeling awkward about his eyesight, reflects on how he has always been concerned about outward appearances. He tells her, *"I'm sure if I could see you, I would find you quite beautiful."*

As the journey continues, the young man, attempting to seem confident, avoids mentioning his poor vision and pretends to admire the scenery. The girl, sensing something odd about the way he talks about the world, says, *"It must be difficult to travel without being able to see, isn't it?"* The man responds nonchalantly, *"Not really. I'm used to it."* They chat for a while longer, exchanging pleasantries about their respective journeys.

The story culminates in an unexpected twist when the man, about to leave the train, comments on how strange it is that he has not noticed anything about her eyes. The girl, smiling, replies, *"You've never seen me, have you?"* To his surprise, she adds, *"You were speaking to me as though you could see."* At that moment, the man is struck by the realization that the girl, whom he had assumed was blind, can see, and he is the one with poor eyesight.

The plot of *The Eyes Have It* by Ruskin Bond can be analyzed using Todorov's Theory of Narrative, which involves the movement from equilibrium to disequilibrium and then back to equilibrium. According to Todorov's Theory of Narrative (Equilibrium and Disequilibrium) about plot Todorov (1969:45) proposed that

most stories follow a pattern of moving from one state of equilibrium (a stable situation) to a state of disequilibrium (disruption of that stability), and then back to a new equilibrium. This theory can be broken down into five stages:

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5. New equilibrium: The conflict is resolved, and a new stable state is reached.

Equilibrium

The equilibrium, or the initial stable state, is represented by the beginning of the story when the protagonist is traveling by train to Mussoorie. At the start, everything seems ordinary and calm. The protagonist, a young man, sits in the train compartment and notices a girl sitting across from him. Their brief interaction starts as a polite conversation, where the protagonist is simply observing the world around him and engaging in light dialogue. He is at ease in this moment, and there is no apparent conflict or tension at the beginning of the story. The equilibrium is established through this seemingly normal, stable situation.

The equilibrium can be described as:

- The protagonist's journey begins calmly, without conflict.
- He observes the girl and the world outside the train, and their conversation appears to be casual and uneventful.
- The protagonist feels comfortable, as he does not yet reveal any inner conflict or discomfort regarding his vision.

The Disruption

The disruption, or conflict that disturbs the equilibrium, occurs when the protagonist begins to feel self-conscious about his poor eyesight while conversing with the blind girl. Initially, he is comfortable with the conversation, but as the girl talks about her blindness, the protagonist starts to feel uneasy about hiding his visual impairment.

The disruption can be identified when the protagonist becomes aware of the difference between himself and the girl. He begins to feel that he is deceiving her by pretending to be able to see, even though he has difficulty doing so. His internal conflict intensifies as he tries to maintain a facade of normalcy and not reveal his disability.

- The protagonist begins to feel self-conscious about his vision when the girl mentions being blind.
- He realizes that his eyesight is not as good as he is letting on and begins to feel increasingly uncomfortable.
- The conversation becomes strained as the protagonist tries to act as though he can see and struggles to keep up the pretense.

Recognition of the Disruption

The recognition of the disruption occurs when the protagonist realizes that the blind girl, whom he assumed to be unable to see, might not be blind at all. This moment of awareness and the recognition of the imbalance comes when the girl says something that suggests she may be able to see.

The key moment of recognition happens at the end of the story. As the protagonist prepares to leave the train, he remarks on how strange it is that he never really noticed her eyes. The girl then responds with the revelation: "You've never seen me, have you?" This is the moment when the protagonist becomes fully aware of the imbalance in his perception — he had assumed that the girl was blind, but she was able to see. The realization

hits him that he is the one who has poor eyesight, not the girl.

- The protagonist's recognition of the disruption occurs when the girl's comment about his failure to notice her eyes reveals the truth.
- The imbalance is recognized when he understands that he was the one pretending to be able to see, while the girl had been hiding her ability to see.
- The protagonist realizes the irony that he had been hiding his blindness while falsely assuming the girl was blind.

Attempt to Restore Equilibrium

The attempt to restore equilibrium occurs when the protagonist tries to maintain his composure and keep up the pretense that he is not blind, despite the internal conflict he feels. After realizing that the girl might be able to see, the protagonist's discomfort grows. However, instead of acknowledging his blindness, he continues to act as though everything is normal. He attempts to maintain control of the situation by not revealing the truth about his condition.

- The protagonist's action to restore equilibrium is evident when he tries to maintain a normal conversation with the girl. He even continues to describe the scenery outside the train as though he can see it, even though he cannot.
- He attempts to restore the balance by keeping up the illusion, saying, "There was something in the way of her trying to smile, but I didn't notice it." This line exemplifies his effort to pretend everything is fine while ignoring the mounting realization that he is hiding his disability.
- The protagonist's effort to resolve the internal conflict involves trying to act as if he can see while also concealing the fact that he is deceiving the girl, reflecting his internal struggle between revealing the truth or keeping up the facade.

New Equilibrium

The new equilibrium is reached at the end of the story, following the protagonist's recognition of the disruption (his realization that he is the one with poor eyesight). The conflict is resolved through the ironic twist that occurs when the girl, who the protagonist thought was blind, reveals that she was not blind at all.

The protagonist, who had been struggling with the discomfort of concealing his blindness, finally faces the truth. The new equilibrium is established with the realization that both characters had been pretending in different ways: the girl had been hiding her ability to see, while the protagonist had been pretending to have normal eyesight.

- The new equilibrium is reached when the protagonist and the reader realize that the protagonist's assumptions about the girl were wrong and that his blindness is what he had been trying to conceal.
- The final twist — the girl's comment, "You've never seen me, have you?" — reveals that she had been aware of the protagonist's condition all along, further resolving the conflict between the two characters.
- The stable state is restored, but it is a new one. The protagonist has learned that he is not the only one hiding something, and both he and the girl now share an unspoken understanding of their respective conditions. The story concludes with a sense of irony and a shift in perspective, but the characters reach a new state of understanding.

Characters

Aristotle's *Poetics* (4th century BCE) outlines his theory of character in narrative, emphasizing that a character's actions should be consistent with their nature and that characters undergo a change or revelation throughout the story. According to Aristotle, a character's development is central to the plot, and the most effective characters are those whose actions lead to a meaningful transformation, often revealed through dramatic or tragic irony. Aristotle further asserts that a character must be morally good, appropriate to their role, true to life, and consistent in their actions (Aristotle, *Poetics*, 350 BCE: 18-22).

In the case of *The Eyes Have It*, the protagonist's character can be seen as tragic or dramatic irony, where the internal conflict of the protagonist (his struggle with his blindness) leads to a revelation and shift in understanding. The girl, whom he assumes to be blind, is also revealed to have been concealing the truth about her sight. The interaction between the two characters, in which they both try to hide their conditions, reflects Aristotle's idea of character development through action and conflict.

Here's how Aristotle's theory can be applied to *The Eyes Have It*:

1. **Character Development through Conflict:** The protagonist's internal conflict about his blindness (which he tries to hide from the girl) creates dramatic irony. His inability to acknowledge his blindness, paired with the girl's subtle hints that she is not blind, reveals both characters' complex inner lives. This internal struggle ultimately drives the plot forward.
2. **Revelation and Change:** The climax of the story — when the girl reveals that she can see, and the protagonist realizes that his blindness is what he has been hiding — shows how the characters are shaped by their circumstances. The protagonist's self-awareness grows through this recognition, and the girl also reveals a deeper layer of her character, which is not immediately visible.
3. **Consistency of Character:** Aristotle's idea of "ethos" (moral character) in a story is seen in how both characters act in line with their secrets. The protagonist consistently tries to maintain the illusion of sight, and the girl remains quiet about her ability to see, showing how each character remains true to their internal world until the truth is revealed.

Thus, *The Eyes Have It* fits well with Aristotle's Character Theory as the story involves characters with hidden qualities that are revealed through their actions, culminating in a shift in their perception of one another. The interaction and the twist at the end serve as a form of character revelation, central to the story's plot.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, *The Eyes Have It* by Ruskin Bond uses a simple but powerful plot to explore themes of perception, deception, and self-awareness. By applying Todorov's Theory of Narrative and Aristotle's Theory of Character, we can better understand the story's structure and character development. Todorov's theory helps break down the story into five stages: equilibrium, where everything seems calm; disruption, when the protagonist becomes uncomfortable about his blindness; recognition of the disruption when he realizes the girl might not be blind; attempt to restore equilibrium, where he tries to maintain the illusion that he can see; and new equilibrium, where both characters acknowledge their hidden truths.

Aristotle's theory helps explain how the characters develop. The protagonist's internal conflict and struggle to hide his blindness create dramatic irony, which adds tension to the story. When the truth is revealed — that the protagonist and the girl were both hiding their conditions. They both experience a moment of self-realization. This shift marks their personal growth. Ultimately, *The Eyes Have It* teaches us about the complexity of human interactions, showing how our perceptions of others (and ourselves) can be misleading. The story uses these theories to highlight the importance of truth, self-awareness, and the small but significant changes that occur when characters confront their hidden realities. The story's careful balance between dramatic irony and character revelation illustrates how external actions can reflect internal transformations. Bond's use of these theoretical frameworks enriches the narrative, making *The Eyes Have It* a powerful reflection on self-perception, identity, and the complexities of human interaction.

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