



## **The New Criticism Analysis of Edmund Pevensie's Characterization Portraying the Issue of Self-centeredness in the Novel Entitled *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe***

***(Analisis Kritik Sastra Baru terhadap Penokohan Edmund Pevensie yang  
Menggambarkan Persoalan Self-Centeredness dalam Novel Berjudul *The Lion,  
the Witch, and the Wardrobe*)***

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### *ABSTRACT*

Among various children's literary works, the famous novel "Narnia" by C. S. Lewis has an interesting storyline caused by good characterization. One of the characters; Edmund Pevensie suggests the issue of self-centeredness in the first book of the series titled "The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe". His desire for position and authority has led him to be self-centered. This paper aims to analyze Edmund's self-centered characteristics and character types. It utilized a descriptive qualitative method and the New Criticism approach to examine the element of character in the book. The researcher found that three characteristics of Edmund are portrayed as self-centeredness: jealousy, hatred, and arrogance. Moreover, it is also believed that Edmund is considered a round and dynamic type of character which is marked by his transformation at the end of the story. It includes the characteristics of regretful, obedient, and helpful.

Kata Kunci: *characters, Edmund Pevensie, self-centeredness.*

### *ABSTRAK*

*Di antara berbagai karya sastra anak, novel terkenal "Narnia" karya C.S. Lewis memiliki alur cerita yang menarik karena penokohan yang baik. Salah satu karakternya, Edmund Pevensie menunjukkan masalah egoisme dalam karya pertama dari seri ini yang berjudul "The Lion, The Witch, and The Wardrobe." Keinginannya untuk mendapatkan posisi dan otoritas telah membuatnya menjadi egois. Artikel ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis karakteristik egois dan tipe karakter Edmund. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode kualitatif deskriptif dan pendekatan New Criticism untuk meneliti unsur karakter dalam karya tersebut. Peneliti menemukan bahwa ada tiga karakteristik Edmund yang digambarkan sebagai sosok egois: kecemburuan, kebencian, dan kesombongan. Selain itu, Edmund juga dianggap sebagai karakter yang bulat dan dinamis yang ditandai dengan perubahannya di akhir cerita. Hal ini mencakup karakteristik penyesalan, patuh, dan suka menolong.*

Kata Kunci: *karakter, Edmund Pevensie, keegoisan.*

## PENDAHULUAN

In the twentieth century, when many children's fiction came, C.S. Lewis wrote seven series of fantasy books known as *The Chronicles of Narnia*. The novel completely depicts the main features of children's literature which are fantasy, optimism: action, human-nature relationships, voices of non-humans, and helping children to become global citizens (Gokila & Sivansankari, 2022). "*The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe*"—the first published book of the series, successfully received prestigious honors for outstanding children's literature on certain awards. It became one of the best-selling works with over 100 million copies all around the world and has been translated into 47 languages. Additionally, this novel is interesting to read because of some implicit issues that the writer put into the elements contained in the text.

According to Ardayati and Rahayu (2017), intrinsic elements are crucial in framing the storyline. In every good novel, there must be intrinsic elements such as characters, plot, background, point of view, and characterization. In "*The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe*," the characters contribute interestingly to the storyline. It has four main characters which makes it unique compared to other children's work. Character is defined as the person who represents particular moral, intellectual, and emotional qualities in a narrative or dramatic work (Abrams & Harpham, 2009). There are generally two types of characters known as the major and minor characters. Major characters are the ones who frequently appear in the story and play a big role in changing the storyline. In contrast, minor characters rarely appear and do not make a big change in the story (Mulyawan, 2015).

Some characters are mentioned in the novel. However, the most dominant characters are Aslan the Lion, the White Witch, Peter Pevensie, Susan Pevensie, Edmund Pevensie, and Lucy Pevensie. As stated by Charima (2020), every character has characterizations that can be seen from the words, actions, and interactions between characters. The Pevensie has different characterizations from others, especially Edmund. He is known to be full of jealousy, hatred, and arrogance character since the beginning of the story. These characteristics interestingly lead him to the issue of self-centeredness.."

Self-centeredness is rare to be found in children's literary work. It refers to a state of mind that indicates an individual's tendency to seek pleasure for themselves without considering others' opinions. It is associated with negative emotions such as jealousy, anger, and frustration which can affect the well-being of a person (Miller et al., 1996). Nowadays, not many children's literary works describe self-centeredness in any element of their work. C.S. Lewis used Edmund's character to portray self-centeredness which makes him a complex yet unique

character. He also has an interesting change in his characterization influenced by a conflict in the story. Therefore, this research aims to show Edmund's self-centered characteristics and how the character develops in the storyline.

To discuss this particular topic, New Criticism offers the concept of analyzing literary work by focusing on the work itself as an organic form (Guerin, 2005). Other than that, New Criticism can be defined as a way of examining intrinsic elements of text such as characterization, point of view, plot, setting, and so on (Tyson, 2006). There have been some researchers who conducted research by using the New Criticism method and focused on the same topic of characterization. The first one is a thesis entitled *Analysis of Characters and Characterization in the Compilation of Malay Poetry "Mirror"* written by Saraswati (2018), which describes the kind of characters and characterization. The second one is an article by Herdianti (2020) that discusses the main character's characterization which is entitled *Marie-Laure's Struggle as Blind Teenager in Anthony Doerr's All the Light We Cannot See*. Both of these researchers discuss the characterization, while some others applied the New Criticism method to analyze another element of the work.

A previous study that used the New Criticism approach is an article entitled *New Criticism and Metonymy as A Device to Determine Gothic Genre in Edgar Allan Poe's The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym of Nantucket* by Ardianto (2016). However, it aimed to examine the genre reflected in the chosen work. Additionally, there is research that analyzes the plot and theme with the help of the New Criticism method. It is an article by Fanani, Zaidun, & Amiq (2022) with the title *Social Struggle in Atiq Rahimi's the Patience Stone*. These literature reviews show New Criticism from different points.

From the past studies above, no research used "Narnia" as the object of analysis. However, it is found that some researchers use "Narnia" as an object of their study in the article entitled *Kindness in Lewis's The Chronicles of Narnia: The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe* by Aruperes, Rorintulus, & Andries (2023). It applies an objective approach in determining the kindness in Aslan the Lion's character. Another journal article by Suryadi & Dariyana (2022) with the title *Children Empowerment in C.S. Lewis' novel "The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe."* It examines the basic human values in the character of Lucy Pevensie with the use of trustworthiness, triangulation, and the New Criticism technique. In this research, the author uses the New Criticism method to analyze the self-centeredness issue in Edmund's characters based on the book "The Lion, the Witch, the Wardrobe."

## METODOLOGI PENELITIAN

This article uses a descriptive qualitative method and the New Criticism approach in analyzing the characterization through the description and personality of the character. Several steps will be seen through the research of Edmund's characterization of self-centeredness in the novel "The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe." The first step is reading the novel for an amount of time. The second one is collecting data from the novel by a deep close reading technique which can be in the form of quotations or dialogues about Edmund Pevensie's personality that suggest the issue of self-centeredness. Lastly, it comes to the main part of the study which is analyzing the novel that will lead to the findings of the work.

This research applies the New Criticism theory to examine the novel. It refers to the theory of John Crowe Ransom in 1941 that was inspired by the way of thinking of T.S. Eliot and I.A. Richard (Abrams & Harpham, 2009). One of the aspects of thinking is by I.A. Richard who, according to Ransom, wanted to focus on analyzing the meaning of a work based on the language itself, not the outside elements of the text. As for Eliot, it is mentioned that he succeeds in describing the emotions of the character by connecting the words in his essay entitled "Hamlet and His Problem" (Ardianto, 2016). The principles of the New Criticism are verbal as it viewed literature as a unique form of language. It involves a detailed analysis of the language such as its metaphors, word choices, symbols, and other figurative elements (Tyson, 2006).

In this article, the focus is merely on Edmund's characters. Among numerous kinds of typology, there are two of them that can classify Edmund's characters. The first typology differentiates characters by their individuation. It is distinguished into two types which are flat and round characters. Flat characters are frequently found to have limited traits that cause them to lack complexity. On the other side, the round characters appear to have multifaceted personalities. Other typology is related to the concept of psychological realism which sees the characters in terms of their development throughout the plot. It is divided into two kinds which are known as static and dynamic characters. Static characters rarely participate in any individual evolution while dynamic characters tend to have profound development through the plot (Ribó, 2019). Thus, the New Criticism theory will attempt to explain Edmund Pevensie's self-centered characteristics while also describing his type of characters based on the mentioned typologies.

## THE DEPICTION OF EDMUND PEVENSIE'S SELF-CENTEREDNESS

Self-centeredness can be defined as the pleasure someone seeks without considering other people around them. Edmund has been such a selfish person since the beginning of the story. His desire for position has put his siblings and the entire of Narnia land in trouble which led him to be a self-centered person. The characteristics of Edmund which are jealousy, hatred, and arrogance thoroughly display the issue of self-centeredness.

### 1. Jealousy

Edmund Pevensie generally suits the stereotypical middle child role that is often associated with negative characteristics. He has always been full of uncontrolled jealousy as it is a part of his characterization. Edmund's desire for a position that leads him to jealousy can be noticed when he first encounters the White Witch in the world of Narnia. The moment he betrayed his siblings for a Turkish delight was a big chance for the White Witch to even manipulate him. It triggered Edmund every time she mentioned his siblings which completely displayed his jealousy. The jealous side of Edmund can be seen through the conversation between him and the White Witch.

“...But you must have courtiers and nobles. I will make your brother a Duke and your sisters Duchesses.”

“There's nothing special about them,” said Edmund.” (C. S. Lewis, 1950)

As Edmund offered the throne if he only could bring his siblings there in return, it is concerning for him to think of the positions the White Witch will give to his siblings. Edmund only thinks about the way he can make it to be the only King of Narnia, instead of worrying about the problems he and his siblings might face after his interaction with the vilest creature there. Right after that moment, he saw his sister, Lucy, from another part of the wood. He felt uncomfortable knowing that he's on the different side from her.

In the novel, Edmund shows his spitefulness toward Lucy by continuously giving wicked responses to her. The quotation above shows how Edmund's nasty attitude towards Lucy:

“Up to that moment Edmund had been feeling sick, and sulky, and annoyed with Lucy for being right, but he hadn't made up his mind what to do.” (C. S. Lewis, 1950)

He hates every time Lucy is right especially when he himself finds out the truth behind the existence of Narnia. Edmund, filled up with jealousy, had the audacity to let Lucy down by mocking her claim. However, the plan he had well expected goes wrong since Peter madly shouts at him for being a beast to Lucy. This situation makes Edmund have nothing to do but hide away his anger.

## 2. Hatred

Ever since the first description of Edmund in the story, he has been known to be a bad-tempered person. He was overshadowed by his brother Peter who was viewed as the perfect firstborn child. He always wanted to be his own little man without being compared with his other siblings which led him to be full of hatred. The feeling of hatred makes him blind by consciously hating whatever his siblings do and think.

“Oh, come off it!” said Edmund, who was tired and pretending. not to be tired, which always made him bad-tempered.” (C. S. Lewis, 1950)

Moreover, the time when the Pevensies went to Narnia all together for the first time, they caught Edmund lying about never going to the land the other day. Peter was furious and kept calling him a beast for what he had done. On the other side, Edmund feels even angrier but does not have enough courage to express it to Peter.

“but Edmund was saying to himself, “I’ll pay you all out for this, you pack of stuck-up, self-satisfied prigs.” (C. S Lewis, 1950)

The quotation describes the tension between Edmund and Peter, resulting his silent hatred towards Peter. Peter has the authority in leading the family, but, Edmund believes that he could do better than him. It is assumed that Edmund perceived Peter as his rival. Ultimately, the hatred fuels due to the jealousy he feels against his siblings.

## 3. Arrogance

The interactions between Edmund and Lucy were quietly tells the arrogance of him. Since he cannot do the same with Peter and Susan, Edmund always shows his superiority by being an older brother to Lucy. He keeps being rude and mistreats her, especially about her thought of Narnia. Moreover, it is stated by Peter that he also acted arrogant to anyone particularly at their school.

“You’ve always liked being beastly to anyone smaller than yourself; we’ve seen that at school before now.” (C. S. Lewis, 1950)

From the beginning, Peter tries to guide Edmund and stop him from being immature. Edmund’s explosive pride has led him to be only thinking about himself and the way he can overdo his brother. The citation below shows Edmund’s arrogance manner:

“And he thought about Turkish Delight and about being a King (“And I wonder how Peter will like that?” he asked himself) and horrible ideas came into his head.” (C. S. Lewis, 1950)

Notably ever since he met the White Witch and is being promised for position and recognition, his arrogance plays a role into it. By that prove, it can be seen how the pleasure he seeks from himself can lead to the betrayal. Although the betrayal is not completely his fault since he was manipulated by the White Witch, Edmund’s arrogance is clear ever since the start of the story. It led him to an inevitable situation where he cannot escape.

### **TYPES OF CHARACTER REPRESENTING EDMUND PEVENSIE**

Edmund recognized as a complex character in the story as he has gone through the most changes. Based on individuation typology, he perceived to be a round character as he endowed many different traits that led him to psychological conflicts. For instance, the jokes he tells about Lucy’s claims regarding the magical world of Narnia make him reluctantly regret it. However, he is also considered as a dynamic character based on the psychological-realist conception of typology as he undergoes a significant transform at the end of the story. There are three characteristic of Edmund which are regretful, obedient, and helpful as he evolves to be a good person.

#### **1. Regretful**

As Edmund depicts the self-centeredness characteristics, he begins to realize his mistakes when the conflict starts. The conflict here refers to the war created by the White Witch. He notices that his action has put his siblings and the entire of Narnia in danger. The White Witch here contributes to the change of Edmund’s attitude.



“Edmund simply sank down and lay on his face doing nothing at all and not even caring what was going to happen next provided they would let him lie still.” (C. S. Lewis, 1950)

After Edmund reunites with his siblings and meets the Lion Aslan for the first time, it is assumed that Aslan’s unstoppable power has made him become aware of his bad personality. Edmund and also everyone in Narnia all viewed Aslan as their greatest leader and the only true King of Narnia.

“But Edmund had got past thinking about himself after all he’d been through and after the talk he’d had that morning. He just went on looking at Aslan. It didn’t seem to matter what the Witch said.” (C. S. Lewis, 1950)

Edmund did not care about the White Witch’s statement anymore even though it is related to his intolerable actions as a traitor. It is conveyed through the quotation above that Edmund sees Aslan as he was some kind of hero. Edmund’s regret was the consequences of his greedy actions. He had apologized to his siblings to prove that he is regret for all the danger he caused.

## 2. Obedient

The conflict has influenced him to positive changes. In the past, Edmund seen as the most disobedient of the Pevensie siblings observed by his actions. Yet, as he sided with the White Witch and caused a war, Edmund tries to not mess up things anymore. He attempts to be more obedient than ever so that he will not put anyone in risk.

“He felt a choking feeling and wondered if he ought to say something; but a moment later he felt that he was not expected to do anything except to wait, and do what he was told.” (C. S. Lewis, 1950)

The moment when the White Witch claimed Edmund as a traitor, Aslan has always defended him ever since then. The White Witch tries to prevent the free Narnia happened by mentioning the deep magic. Edmund seems confused in the conversation as he was the one who should be involved in the ritual. Nevertheless, he chose to wait for Aslan’s decision instead of trying to speak for himself.



### 3. Helpful

Edmund has learned about the White Witch's strength because he was the one with her. As the war started without Aslan since he was in the castle helping creatures there, no one even Peter can beat the White Witch. Peter himself admitted that without the help of Edmund, there will not be victory for the Narnia troops. Edmund has proven that he can fix his fault with being helpful.

"It was all Edmund's doing, Aslan," Peter was saying. "We'd have been beaten if it hadn't been for him. The Witch was turning our troops into stone right and left. But nothing would stop him." (C. S. Lewis, 1950)

The quotation above describes how important Edmund was in solving the conflict he half created. He was the one who smashed the White Witch's wand so that the other could have a chance to kill her even though it put him in pain. In sum-up, Edmund became very helpful when he faced the war against the White Witch whom he knew better than anyone in Narnia's army. He tries to redemption his malicious actions in the past by also considering others not only himself. This whole transformation has led him to be classified as a round and dynamic types of character.

## CONCLUSION

The result of this research have found Edmund Pevensie's characteristics that established the self-centeredness issue are jealousy, hatred, and arrogance. His jealous characteristic occurred mostly in the interactions with his siblings which also fuels the hatred side of him. Additionally, Edmund's pride which regards himself as the big brother has led him to become arrogant. The other characters in the book such as the White Witch, and Aslan also contributed to the depiction of Edmund's self-centered characterization. Behind his self-centered characters, it can be seen that Edmund is just being immature due to his young age.

The complex and multifaceted traits of Edmund suggest a round type of character. His transformation from a bad to a good personality shows how dynamic his character is. It is found in the novel that some dialogues refer to the characteristics of Edmund that represent how he is regretful, obedient, and helpful. He showed his regret when the realization of his past mistakes hit him. In his development, it is revealed that he naturally became obedient to avoid more risk. He changed into a very helpful person through his actions in the war. Therefore, Edmund's

characterization from a self-centered to a person who cares for others has proven his round and dynamic type of character.

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