

**THE POTRAYAL OF SKEETER AS SEEN IN *THE HELP* MOVIE BY  
TATE TAYLOR**

A GRADUATING PAPER

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for Gaining the Bachelor

Degree in English Literature



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## A FINAL PROJECT STATEMENT

I certify that this graduating paper is definitely my own work. I am completely responsible for the content of this graduating paper. Other writers' opinions or findings included in this graduating paper are quoted or cited in accordance with ethical standards.

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Kami menyatakan bahwa skripsi tersebut sudah dapat diajukan pada sidang Munaqasyah untuk memenuhi salah satu syarat memperoleh gelar Sarjana Sastra Inggris.

Atas perhatiannya, kami ucapkan terima kasih.

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# THE POTRAYAL OF SKEETER AS SEEN IN *THE HELP* MOVIE BY TATE TAYLOR

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## ABSTRACT

This research is aimed to find out how Skeeter is represented in *The Help* movie and also to find out the constructed meaning that is created by the director in represent Skeeter's character. *The Help* movie tells about discrimination by White American toward Black American. Besides, *The Help* tells about Skeeter's as a woman writer who wants to save Black American from the discrimination by using a unique way. She writes the book about Black Maid experience of working for White American. To conduct this research, the researcher uses Representation theory developed by Stuart Hall that focuses on constructed approach. The theory of representation uses two process of representation, those are concept and language. The qualitative method is used as the method of the research. Meanwhile, to collect the data the researcher uses documentation technique. After analyzing the data that have been collected, start from the character and characterization, then the scene and script that describe about Skeeter's representation. The researcher concludes that Skeeter in *The Help* Movie can be represented into three representations. Those are hero, traitor, and independent woman.

Keywords: *Representation, Constructed meaning, Hero, Traitor, Independent Woman.*

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## ABSTRACT

Penelitian ini, mempunyai tujuan untuk mengetahui bagaimana Skeeter digambarkan di film *The Help* dan mencari tau makna yang tersirat yang di buat oleh sutradara. Film *The Help* menceritakan tentang diskriminasi yang dilakukan oleh kulit putih Amerika terhadap kulit hitam Amerika. Selain itu, *The Help* juga menceritakan tentang penulis wanita bernama Skeeter yang berusaha menyelamatkan kulit hitam Amerika dari diskriminasi menggunakan cara yang unik. Skeeter menulis buku tentang pengalaman kulit hitam Amerika ketika bekerja untuk kulit putih Amerika. Penelitian ini menggunakan teori representasi dari Stuart Hall dan lebih focus pada pendekatan constructionist. Teori rpresentasi menggunakan dua proses dalam penelitian nya, yaitu konsep dan bahasa. Penelitian ini juga menggunakan metode qualitative sebagai pelengkap. Selain itu, peneliti juga menggunakan metode dokumentasi dalam mengumpulkan data. Setelah menganalisa data-data yang telah terkumpul, mulai dari karakter dan sifat-sifatnya, gambar dan dialog yang berhubungan dengan representasi Skeeter. Penulis menyimpulkan bahwa Skeeter di gambarkan menjadi tiga dalam film *The Help*. Skeeter sebagai pahlawan, penghianat, dan wanita mandiri.

Kata Kunci: *Representasi, Makna Tersembunyi, Pahlawan, Penghianat, Wanita Mandiri.*

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## **MOTTO**

**Do you believe in miracle?**

**I do**

**-Unknown-**

**Behind every successful man, there are always a  
prayers and tears from an angel called "MOTHER"**

**-Gutil-**



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## **DEDICATION**

I dedicate this graduating paper to:  
My beloved parents Muhadi and Sumarni  
My beloved brothers and sisters  
and  
My beloved Dinda



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Finally, I realize that this paper is far from being perfect. Therefore, any suggestions are gladly and warmly welcomed for improving this work.

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1 Background of Study

Movie is one of literary work that becomes popular recently. By watching a movie, people not only get amusement but they also can use movie as the way to understand human life. Movie also is one of literary work that offers people with many genres such as animation, horror, romance, comedy, action, arts, and so on. Therefore, people can choose which one they want to see.

Movie is made with an interesting way to deliver the meaning of the story which can make people easy to understand. Many creators make movie based on imagination that they create to satisfy people, they make a story based on what people like most and based on what the popular thing in society. But, some creators make movies which are adapted from real life in order to make the audiences learn about the social life issue. A Hollywood movie entitled *The Help* is chosen by the researcher as the subject of the research with some reasons. First, *The Help* tells the story about African-American maids who live around white American people. Second, *The Help* tells about the discrimination that becomes an interesting topic to talk about until today. Next, this movie only focuses on female characters rather than male. Then, this movie tells about two different sides of white people. It shows how American people react and treat their black maids. The last, this movie is adapted from Kathryn Stockett's bestselling novel about civil right.

*The Help* movie is published on 10 August 2011 directed by Tate Taylor

with hope becoming the best movie that can defeat the other movie that published on the same time. This movie is an adaptation of Kathryn Stockett's bestselling novel about civil right in the 1960s (www.moviefone.com, 2015). *The Help* tells a simple story but has deep meaning. By using the same setting of time as the novel, this movie shows the audience the condition of the society on that time. 1960s is a crucial time where African-American planned a resistance to get their equality in civil right. Their goals were to end racial segregation and discrimination against White-Americans. By the help of some White-American and their struggle, they can realize their ambition and get the equality ( <http://www.historybits.com>).

*The Help* movie shows the condition of African-American based on its true story. The movie tells story about the struggle of African-American people who live among white people as maids, they got various treatments from White-American as their boss. One of the treatments is their boss makes some rules in every part of the house in order to limit their action. African-American worked as maid for white American to complete their daily necessary. The discrimination of African-American is actually an interesting topic to be analyzed. Many researchers also use that topic as the main subject of their researches. However, in this research, the researcher gives more attention and focuses on the White-American character "Eugenia Skeeter Phelan" as the main subject of the research. In this movie, *Skeeter* is acted differently than the other White-American. She becomes the protagonist character that helps African-American rather than the antagonist that treat them discriminatively. She cares and wants to help African-American in order to get their better life in living with White American by using

her ability as a writer. Skeeter helps Black maid by making a book about their experience in working for White American family.

Skeeter's character is acted by a talented actress Emma Stone. She is described as a 23<sup>rd</sup> well-educated and beautiful white woman who just came back to her hometown after her graduation from Ole Miss University. She applies a job as a writer for cleaning advice column in Jackson Journal. She tries to gain some experiences before she is able to work in Harper and Row Publishing, a famous book publishing which is located in New York City.

Skeeter is a woman who has different perspective and ambition than the others white woman in her ages. She still single and does not focus on marriage goal even though all of her friends already have husband or even have babies. She has a dream to become a writer or a journalist. This ambition and dream make Skeeter gives much concern on how her friends' treats their black maids. Skeeter feels that it is not fair for the black maids to get some bad treatments from their bosses. It makes Skeeter has an idea to write a book about the point of view of the maids. Skeeter uses her privilege as a well-educated white American to help the maids. She tries to give a media for the maid to express their feeling when they work for the white family. In doing that mission, Skeeter should take big consequences. The 1960s is the era where any action that is aimed to make black and white are equal is banned. As stated in Jim Crow laws that:

Any person who shall be guilty of printing, publishing or circulating printed, typewritten, or written matter urging or presenting for public acceptance or general information, arguments or suggestions in favor of social equality or intermarriage between whites and negroes, shall be guilty of a misdemeanor and subject to fine or not exceeding five hundred (500.00) dollars or imprisonment not exceeding six (6) months or both.  
([https://www.nps.gov/malu/learn/education/jim\\_crow\\_laws/html](https://www.nps.gov/malu/learn/education/jim_crow_laws/html))

Here, Skeeter's courageous and action in helping each other even though they come from different race can be related with one of verse in Al-quran. It is last line of second verse in surah Al-Maidah which also tells that we as human being should help each other for a goodness. The verse can be seen as bellow:

وَتَعَاوَنُوا عَلَى الْبِرِّ وَالتَّقْوَىٰ وَلَا تَعَاوَنُوا عَلَى الْإِثْمِ وَالْعُدْوَانِ  
وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ إِنَّ اللَّهَ شَدِيدُ الْعِقَابِ ﴿٢﴾

*...and cooperate in righteousness and piety, but do not cooperate in sin and aggression. And fear Allah; indeed, Allah is severe in penalty.*

From that verse, Allah SWT commands all the human being to become a good person by helping each other. (<https://quran.com/al-midah/5>)

Seeing on how Skeeter is described differently than the other characters, the researcher is very interested to use the Skeeter as the subject of the research. Here, the researcher is aimed to find out and analyze how Skeeter is represented in *The Help* movie. In order to conduct this analysis, the researcher uses the theory of representation. The theory has two systems are used to find out the representation of something. First is system of concept that we carry on our head to represent something. Second is system of language or sign that we use to translate the conceptual system of a thing into a certain words, spoken sounds or visual images (Hall, 1997: 17-18).

By using this theory, the researcher will explore Skeeter's character on how she becomes very powerful and courageous on giving the maids a media to share their feeling as she helps. According to Hall, "representation is an essential part of the process by which meaning is produced and exchanged between members of culture. It means using language to say something meaningfully to other people." (1997:15) By using theory of representation, the researcher tries to find out how Skeeter is described as a good American that use her power to give black maids opportunity and make them look equal in the racism issue that happened during that time.

## 1.2 Research Question

Based on the background, the researcher formulates the following question as research question:

How is Skeeter represented in *The Help* movie?

## 1.3 Objective of study

Based on the problem statement, there is an objective that would be answered.

To explain how is Skeeter represent in *The Help* movie

## 1.4 Significance of the study

Theoretically, this research is aimed to increase the reference related to representation of main character based on the movie, main character will influence the plot of story based on their characterization and activity.

Practically this research is important for expecting the academic reader to be interested in analyzing the movie, and help the reader for understanding human right more specifically. This research explains about the discrimination of Black-American by White-American so the non academic readers can understand to study more about it.

## 1.5 Literature Review

After searching some researches from some researchers, the researcher finds third researches that use *The Help* as the object of the research. First research is a graduating paper entitled “The Reaction of African American in The 1960s Seen through The Main Characters in Kathryn Stockett’s *The Help*” by Rintan Kusumaningtyas from Sanata Dharma University in 2012. This research

uses *The Help* novel rather than the movie. Here, the research is aimed to find out the reactions toward unequal treatments which are gotten by African American people as the main characters of this novel. This research uses theory of character and characterization by some experts.

The second research is a journal entitled “Conflict Representation of Class Ideology on *The Help* movie” by Astri Nurafidah from Diponegoro University. In this research, the researcher tries to find out the resistances that are acted by the African American servants toward White people. The resistances are represented in visual and linguistics method. The researcher uses theory from Fiske to analyze the movie. There are three level based on Fiske they are reality level, representation, and ideology.

The third research is a graduating paper entitled “The Meaning of Eugenia “Skeeter” Phelan’s Action to Help African American maid as Seen in Kathryn Stockett’s *The Help*” by Iriandini Sandra Yulidar Putri from Sanata Darma University. In this graduating paper, the objectives of the study are to reveal the meaning of Eugenia “Skeeter” Phelan’s action to help black maids reveal their experiences of working for white families. This research has two problem statements, how Eugenia “Skeeter” Phelan personalities describe in the novel and what is the meaning of Eugenia “Skeeter” Phelan action to help black maids reveal their experiences of working for white families. This research uses four theories, theory of critical approach to literature; theory of character and characterization; theory of motivation; and theory of social structure.

According to those researches, this research has similarity in the subject of

the study which is used *The Help*. The difference of this research with the other prior researchers is in Skeeter's representation in the movie by using theory of representative. This research will analyze the representation of Skeeter by using her action toward Black American character in *The Help* movie.

## **1.6 Theoretical approach**

This research explains about the representation of Skeeter Eugenia Phelan as main character in the *Help Movie*. Therefore, the researcher uses representation theory to accomplish the research as the main theory. In addition, to make more detail about the explanation, the researcher uses movie theory as the secondary theory since the subject of the research is a movie.

### **1.6.1 Theory of Representation**

This research uses theory of representation as a main theory. According to *Oxford Learner Pocket Dictionary* represent means, "to describe something in a particular way" (1995:351). Moreover, according to Hall, representation is an essential part of the process by which meaning is produced and exchanged between members of a culture (1997:15). Therefore, from those definitions we can conclude that representation is describing the meaning of something more detail so that can make people understand clearly.

Representation has two important concepts, those are mind and language. They connect each and need each other. A concept that we think in our brain makes us know the meaning of the thing. But, without language it means nothing because we need language to explain and share to everyone. As Hall said,

Representation connects meaning and language to culture. Representation means using language to say something meaningful about, or to represent, the world meaningfully to other people (1997:15).

Representation has three approaches in connecting meaning to culture. Those are the reflective, the intentional, and the constructionist approach. In relation with the research, the researcher uses the constructionist approach for completing the research. Constructionist approach is an understanding that our knowledge of the world is constructed by media representations. As Hall says in her book that to construct a meaning we need to use representational systems which are a concept and also a sign. Representational systems consist of the actual *sounds* we make with our vocal chords, the *images* we make on light-sensitive paper with cameras, the *marks* we make with paint on canvas, the digital *impulses* we transmit electronically (Hall, 1997:25)

#### 1.6.2 Theory of Film

As the secondary theory, movie theory will be used to complete this representation research. This research analyzes the representation of Skeeter Eugenia Phelan courage. According to Turner, “movie does not only depend on audience representation, but also on director who constructs any relation in the movie”. (Turner, 1999: 58) It means that the director is considered in constructing the story. To support the analysis, the concept of *mise en scene* is used to make the research more complete. The concept will emphasize in some aspect from the movie, such as the costume, design, the arrangement and movement figure, the spatial relation (obscured, dominant, and so on) and placement of the object. (Turner, 1999:69)

## 1.7 Method of research

### 1.7.1 Type of research

Based on this research, the researcher uses qualitative method to do the research. Qualitative research is concerned with developing explanations of social phenomena. Qualitative method research conducts two types of methods. It is by interview and observation (Hancock, 1998:2). The method allows the researcher to collect data from the book, websites, articles and the other data resources which can help the researcher to analyze the problem.

### 1.7.2 Data sources

In order to find out and explain the Skeeter's representation, the researcher uses the elements of *The Help* movie such as the physical appearance of Skeeter in the movie, the scene of Skeeter that related with the analysis, and also the dialogue of Skeeter toward other characters that can be found in the script as the main data. In the other hand, the supporting data such as books; articles; and journal which are relevant with this research also used to help the completion of this research.

### 1.7.3 Data Collection Technique

The researcher uses method of library research in collecting data.

1. Classify the data into some classification related to Skeeter in *The Help* movie. The researcher gives more attention to some classification to make the data more accurate. These are Skeeter's appearance, the dialogue of the character, Skeeter's behavior, Skeeter's appearance, and Skeeter treatment toward White and Black American.

2. Choosing some of screen shoots of Skeeter in the movie and also her dialogues in the script as the data to describe her representation;
3. Choosing some related data from some books or articles to support the analysis about Skeeter.

#### 1.7.4 Data Analysis Technique

By using theory of representation and supported by theory of movie, the researcher analyzes the data which already collected in the data collection technique. In this data analysis technique, the researcher processes the data to find out Skeeter's representation in *The Help* movie. The researcher divides the data analysis technique into some steps. They are:

1. Categorizing Data:

The researcher categorizes the data based on Skeeter's action or behavior toward other characters.

2. Exploring Data:

After classifying the data based on Skeeter's action toward other characters, the researcher using two systems of representation and theory of movie to analyze Skeeter's representation.

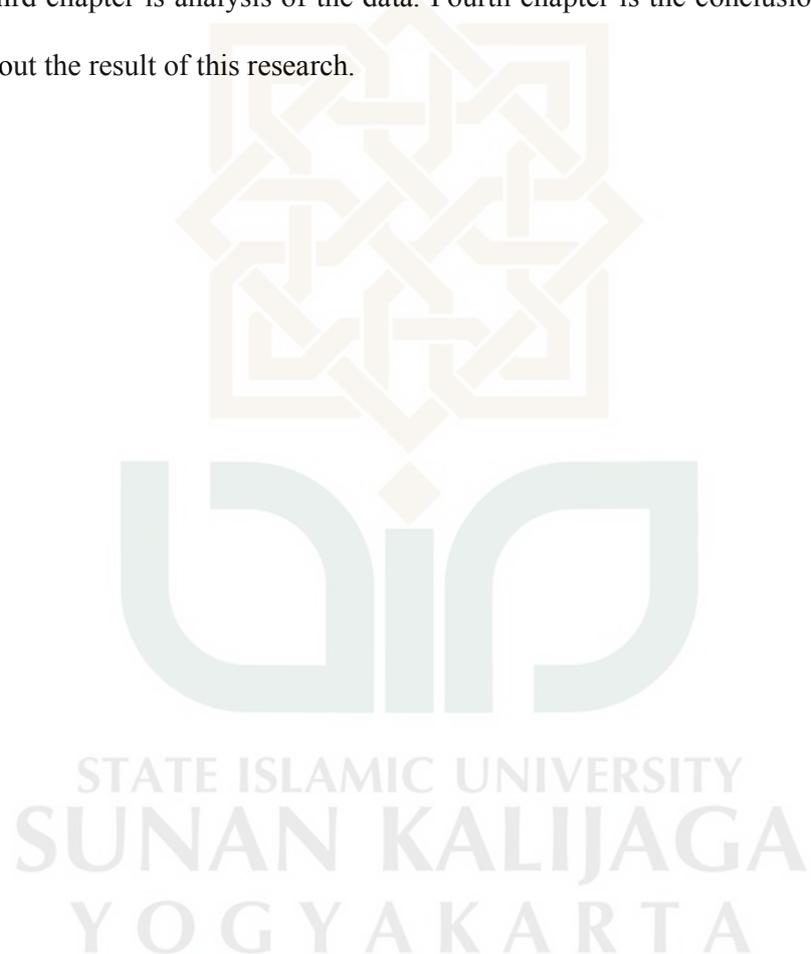
3. Drawing Conclusion:

Finally, after exploring and explaining the data about Skeeter's representation in *The Help* movie, the researcher find out the conclusion about how Skeeter is represented in the movie.

### 1.8 Paper Organization

This research is divided into four chapters. First chapter describes the

general information about the research including the background of study, problem statement, objective of study, significance of study, literature review, theoretical approach, method of research including type of research, data source, data collecting technique and data analysis technique, and last is paper organization. Second chapter explains the intrinsic elements of *The Help* movie. Third chapter is analysis of the data. Fourth chapter is the conclusion which tells about the result of this research.



## CHAPTER IV

### CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

#### 4.1 Conclusion

The objectives of the research is to find out the representation of Skeeter Eugenia Phelan. The researcher use representation theory by Stuart Hall in analyzing the data. From the analysis above, the researcher formulates the data to representation theory by conducting two process of representation. The first process is describing the director's concept of representation. And the second process is describing Skeeter Eugenia Phelan's construction by using the element of the movie, scene and the dialogue.

The researcher formulates representations of Skeeter into three representations. First, Skeeter's representation as a woman writer, Skeeter is describes as a courage White woman who tries to help Black American share their feeling about White American using book as the tool. She is represented as a hero for Black American maid because Skeeter wants to set Black American free from discrimination by using the book. She writes Black American experience when they work for White American family as the evidence to set them free.

Second, Skeeter is represented as a traitor among her community. Skeeter gets abandoned from her friend as the effect of making the book and against toward White American. Her community depicts Skeeter as deviate person. But in fact, the path that Skeeter choose is the right one. She wants to help Black American get equality from the discrimination. And it does not make Skeeter afraid because she believes that helping each other is a must for everyone without

making any different such as skin color.

The last is, representation of Skeeter as an independent woman. Every woman is special, they have a bright future await in front of them. They have a dream to catch. Just because they are women, they don't have to marry in early age.

#### **4.2 Suggestion**

The suggestion for the next researcher, when you make research about discrimination or having research using theory of representation by Stuart Hall, don't forget to use my research for your reference. Hopefully this research can help you to finish the research although this research is not a perfect one, but I am sure it can help you to find some clues for your research. And o not forget to say thanks when you borrow others research.

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### Motto:

Don't forget to say bismillah before you do everything.