

**BENJAMIN MEE'S PERSONALITY**  
**AS SEEN IN *WE BOUGHT A ZOO* MOVIE**

**A GRADUATING PAPER**

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for Gaining  
the Bachelor Degree in English Literature



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**BENJAMIN MEE’S PERSONALITY**  
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**ABSTRACT**

*We Bought a Zoo* is an inspirational movie which is adapted from biographical book of Benjamin Mee. This movie tells about the life of a widower or single-parent named Benjamin Mee who struggles to face his bitter experience and hard condition in his new life. He desires to find fulfillment and happiness for his children. Finally, Benjamin can overcome all his obstacles and makes his dream true by transforming his whole abilities and aptitudes. This research is purposed to understand the characterization of Benjamin that is described in the movie. The method of this research is qualitative research. The writer watches *We Bought a Zoo* movie as the main data, and the applies the theory to selected data. This research applies film theory and Personality trait theory by Costa and McCrae as main theory. Personality trait theory provides specific traits of personality that consist of big five dimensions: Neuroticism, Extraversion, Openness to Experience, Agreeableness, and Conscientiousness. After analyzing all the data that have been found, the most intense personality dimension found in the characterization of Benjamin is Conscientiousness. The writer concludes that Benjamin is a successful character. Since he has conscientious personality, it makes him strong and trustworthy. Therefore, Benjamin is able to achieve his goal with using his conscientious personality.

**Keywords:** *We Bought a zoo, character, characterization, personality trait, successful, conscientious.*

**BENJAMIN MEE'S PERSONALITY**  
**AS SEEN IN *WE BOUGHT A ZOO* MOVIE**

By: Najmi Muhammad Fadli

**ABSTRAK**

*We Bought a Zoo* adalah sebuah film inspiratif yang diadaptasi dari buku biografi Benjamin Mee. Film ini mengisahkan tentang kehidupan seorang duda yang bernama Benjamin Mee yang berjuang untuk menghadapi pengalaman pahit dan kondisi sulitnya. Dia memiliki keinginan untuk mendapatkan pemenuhan dan kebahagiaan untuk anak-anaknya. Benjamin dapat mengatasi semua rintangan yang menghadangnya dan pada akhirnya impiannya terwujud dengan menyalurkan seluruh kemampuan dan bakat nya. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk memahami karakterisasi Benjamin sebagaimana di jelaskan di film. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode kualitatif. Penulis menonton *We Bought a Zoo* berulang kali, kemudian mengaplikasikan teori dengan data yang sudah dipilih sesuai dengan topik. Penelitian ini menggunakan teori film dan teori sifat kepribadian dari Costa dan McCrea sebagai teori utama. Teori sifat kepribadian menyediakan sifat kepribadian secara spesifik yang terdiri dari lima dimensi utama: Kegelisahan, Ekstroversi, Keterbukaan untuk Pengalaman, Keramahan, dan Kesadaran diri. Setelah menganalisis semua data yang sudah ditemukan, dimensi Kesadaran Diri merupakan dimensi terkuat yang ditemukan dalam karakterisasi Benjamin. Penulis menyimpulkan bahwa Benjamin adalah karakter yang berhasil (*successful*). Karena dia memiliki kepribadian bersungguh-sungguh (*conscientious*) membuat dia kuat dan dapat dipercaya. Oleh karena itu Benjamin dapat mencapai tujuan nya dengan memiliki kepribadian Kesadaran diri.

**Kata Kunci:** *We Bought a Zoo*, karakter, karakterisasi, sifat kepribadian, berhasil (*successful*), bersungguh-sungguh (*conscientious*).

## **MOTTO**

**“Bahagia nya orang tua jika anak mereka berprestasi dalam ilmu, karir, ibadah, dan berakhlak mulia”.**

**-J. Suyuthi Pulungan**

**“Probably, you fear the risk of failure that could have happened to you, but your hard work will never be meaningless. If you decide to pursue your dream, you have to pursue it sincerely”.**

**-B.J. Habibie**

**“If you do not take risks, you can't create a future”**

**-Monkey D. Luffy**

**“If you have something that you want to achieve, be stubborn!!!”**

**-Najmi Muhammad Fadli**

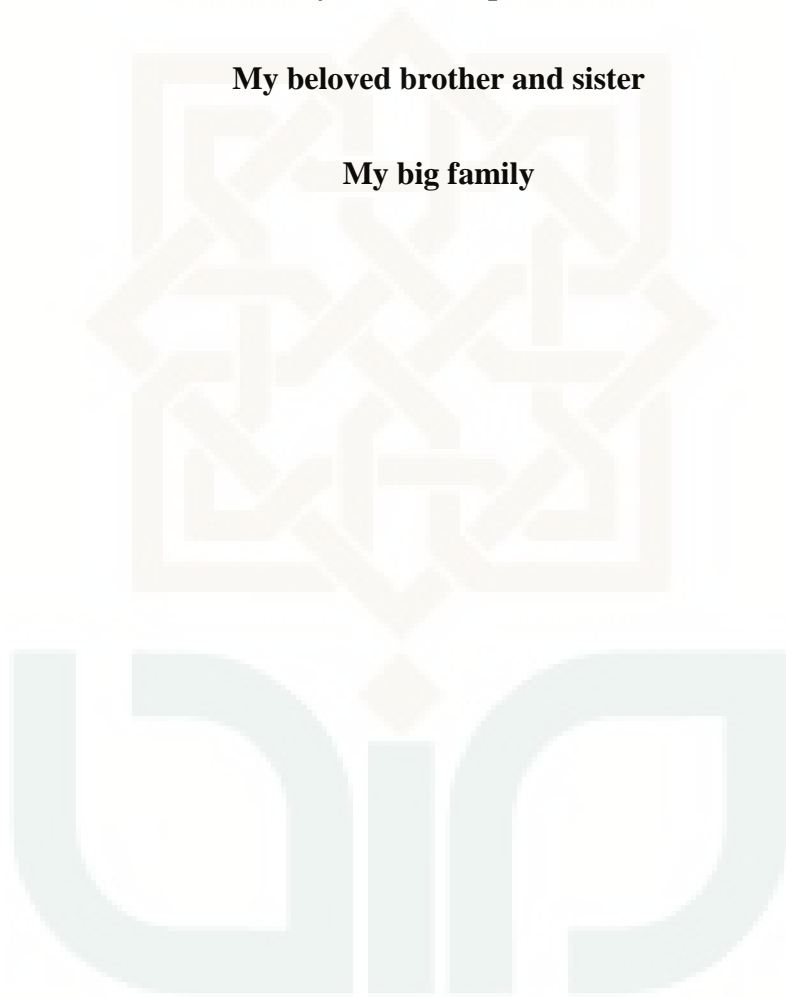
## **DEDICATION**

This work is dedicated to;

**My honorable parents**

**My beloved brother and sister**

**My big family**





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**In the Name of Allah, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful**

*Assalamu'alaikum Wr. Wb.*

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## **CHAPTER I**

### **INTRODUCTION**

#### **1.1. Background of Study**

Literature is considered as the depiction of human imagination. Sometimes, the authors build or imagine their story by using their life experience. This experience of their daily life may emerge as ideas to create a story. As Taylor states, literature is essentially an imaginative act; that is, an act of the writer's imagination in selecting, ordering, and interpreting life experience (as cited in Ananda, 2011:1). So basically, literature is presented through the experiences of life. The experiences of life provide the inspiration and is poured in words to be a literary work.

In the development of literary works, literary works have been developed into new forms. Literary works not only can be presented by written form, but also it can be done by capturing images from the real world with cameras or by creating images using animation techniques or visual effects that would become a story. The new form of literary works here is movie. The movie is modern actualization of literary works. According to Turner movie has become seventh art and it also can be seen as analogous literature (2003: 1-2). The term of analogous means that movie can be considered to literature. Furthermore, there are three terms which are often used by people in mentioning movie. Those are movie, film, and cinema. The three terms are similar. It is as Barsam and Monahan state that the three terms are essentially interchangeable (2010: 3).

The writer chooses movie as the object of this research because of some



reasons. First, movie is considered to be an important art form and a source of popular entertainment that people mostly like. Turner states that movie has become popular art recently because it has a pleasure in the familiar, in recognizing, and relishing their repetition and restatement (1999: 100). Second, movie gives the image that can make the audience are not getting bored and faster to understand about the real life, the emotional spot and popularity than the other media. As Metz said that film or movie can give the spectators feeling great because the spectators are witnessing an almost real spectacle than novel does, a play or a figurative painting (as cited in Faqih, 2015: 2). Third, since the movie is adapted from real life and it can reflect about the social life story so the audience can also learn about the social life issues.

In this research, the writer chooses *We Bought a Zoo* movie, because it is based on fact. Besides, there is a successful person inside the main character. He can build his success even though he starts everything from beginning.

*We Bought a Zoo* is movie adapted from nonfictional book with the same title and name by Benjamin Mee. It is written and directed by Cameron Crowe. This movie is set in Los Angeles. Most of the story is taken place in the zoo named, *Rosemoor Animal Park*. The duration of the movie is 124 minutes. This movie highlights a story about the life of a widower or single-parent father of Dylan and Rosie named Benjamin Mee. He is careless, inconsiderate, lack of experience in everything. The story is begun with Benjamin's life problems in facing the death of his wife bring him into deep grieving and he has to deal with an insubordinate teenage son who is expelled from school. Benjamin decides to have a new life, new

house, and everything new in his life and his family.

As the first step of getting new life, he wants to buy a new house. He goes around the city but there are no house makes him interested. Until he finds a house which has a large yard and a broken-zoo. If he wants it, he should buy the house and the zoo. It makes him confused but when he sees his daughter feeds the peacocks and looks happy, he decides to buy that house and takes challenge for the preparation of reopening the zoo for the public.

Based on the paragraph above, the writer is interested in the character of Benjamin since he has unique character. It is unique since he dares to buy a house which has a large yard and a broken-zoo. Nevertheless, he has no experience with animals and poor of any knowledge in zoology. Yet, the plot of story is more interesting when he moves to the large house added by a broken-zoo and his new life journey is not as easy as he expects. Because of his carelessness with buying the large house without thinking carefully, it brings him to face hard problems such as his relationship with his son become more complicated, an overcritical inspector, a shortage of money, a divisive staff person, a decreased staff's confidence, an escaping a giant bear from its area named Buster, and the hard decision what have to do with Spar, an old tiger. It makes Benjamin and the leader of zookeeper argue each other.

*We Bought a Zoo* movie has a simple story but it has deep social message. This movie shows a man that struggle under difficulties. The life of Benjamin Mee as a father and an owner of the zoo who has complex problems of life but he can

overcome all his problems and brings happiness and fulfillment to all the people in his life. It makes the writer impressed and interested to analyze the personality of Benjamin. The writer is curious to find out how his personality that represented through this character. The character of Benjamin Mee who is a hard worker and wants to change his life by his hard work is appropriate with the Holy Koran Surah ar-Ra'd, verse 11:

إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يُغَيِّرُ مَا بِقَوْمٍ حَتَّى يُغَيِّرُوا مَا بِأَنْفُسِهِمْ . . . . . ﴿١١﴾

*...Indeed, Allah will not change the condition of a people until they change what is in themselves...* <https://quran.com/13:11>

That verse implies to order for people to make any change to improve their life. It is suitable with Benjamin's case, his will changes his life from bitter experiences and hard condition, he turns it into a happiness and fulfillment to all the people in his life.

Based on the paragraph above, the writer focuses on the characterization which is shown by Benjamin Mee in *We Bought a Zoo* movie. This research aims to understanding the characterization by using personality trait theory in the character of Benjamin. This research also uses the theory of film to support the process of analysis because the main data is the movie. Moreover, the writer attempts to explore the basic things into motivation to reach his dream through his characterization. Therefore, in this research the writer hopefully is able to show it by the analysis.

## **1.2. Research Question**

Based on the background of study above, this research has only one research question that is: how can the personality of Benjamin Mee be explained?

## **1.3. Objectives of Study**

According to the research question above, the main objectives in this research is to understand the personality of Benjamin Mee that is described in *We Bought a Zoon* movie. In this case, it will bring result about how is to being successful person which is reflected through Benjamin's personality.

## **1.4. Significances of Study**

This research expects to be able to give contributions and significances both theoretically and practically:

1. Theoretically, this research intends to reveal the most intense dimension of personality that appears in the character of Benjamin. Furthermore, this research aims to know the personality of Benjamin as seen in the result of the analysis. the readers will get the basic things into motivation through Benjamin's personality.
2. Practically, this research aims to: First, enrich the knowledge of the writer in doing research related to description of the character. Second, the writer expects that by reading this research people will understand in applying the personality trait theory by Costa and McCrae. Third, the writer expects that

this research can be an example for the next researcher who wants to do similar research.

### 1.5. Literature Review

The film of *We Bought a Zoo* that was released in 2011 has not been analyzed in any academic presentation or paper. This circumstance gives no choice for finding the other previous researches that have the same theory. Here, there are some researchers that apply personality trait theory.

The first previous research is *Analysis of Main Character on "Bruce Almighty" Movie Viewed From Personality Traits Theory by Costa and McCrae* by Faisal, from State Islamic University (UIN) Syarif Hidayatullah, in his paper, he analyses Bruce Almighty movie by Tom Shadyac. The finding in his research aims to understand the character and the characterization of Bruce that is explained in the movie. In his analysis, he uses personality traits theory by Costa and McCrea. The result of his analysis, he found that Bruce as main character has a dynamic and round character. He has much bad characterization than positive one in the film. From the beginning of story until the end of story. Therefore, the writer focused on Bruce bad characterization viewed from neuroticism of personality traits theory. This research also strengthens the most common type of the main character in the film that came in protagonist, round and dynamic one.

The second previous research is *Defining Eddie: Personality Trait Analysis In Mitch Albom's The Five People You Meet In Heaven* by Siti Marfungah, from State Islamic University (UIN) Sunan Kalijaga. In her paper, she analyzed *The Five People You Meet in Heaven* novel by Mitch Albom. It discusses about the

characterization of Eddie that is explained in the novel. Her analysis uses personality trait by Costa and McCrae. The result of her analysis shows that the most intense personality dimension found in the characterization of Eddie is Agreeableness. On the other hand, Eddie has dimension of Neuroticism as seen in the facet of depression, angry hostility, and anxiety which is Eddie's imperfection as human being. This research concludes that Eddie is true to life character and has agreeable personality as reflected in the facets of altruism, tender-mindedness, trust, compliance, and modesty.

According to the previous researches above, this research is similar with the previous researches in focusing on character and the theory. It will be made as the main reference related to this research. However, the writer brings this research differently from the previous research. It is because the topic will be raised are different. This research focuses the personality of Benjamin Mee in *We Bought a Zoo* movie. In this case, it will bring result to knowing the basic things into motivation which is reflected through Benjamin's personality.

## **1.6. Theoretical Approach**

### **1.6.1 Psychology of Literature**

Psychology of literature has important role in understanding in a literary works. According to Endraswara (2008: 12), there are some advantages of the psychology of literature. First, psychology of literature is important to get deep understanding on the characterization. Second, this approach gives feedback toward the writer about development of characterization. Third, this kind of research is very

useful in analyzing the literary works that close to psychological problems (as cited in Minderop, 2011: 2). So, the writer applies the first role definition in this research because this research applies theory of personality trait to describe the personality of Benjamin Mee.

### **1.6.2 Personality Trait Theory**

This research focuses on Benjamin's character as the object of the analysis. In order to get deep understanding characterization of Benjamin Mee, the writer applies personality trait theory by Costa and McCrae as the proper theory. According to Feist and Feist (2009), "the term personality refers to the unique and relatively set of behaviors, feelings, thoughts, and motives that characterize an individual" (as cited on Feist and Rosenberg, 2010: 495). In other word, personality is something that distinguishes one individual to another in behaviors, thoughts, and feelings in the variety of situations.

There are many approaches in studying the personality. Those are psychoanalytic, humanistic, social-cognitive, trait and biological approach (Feist and Rosenberg, 2010: 515). The writer chooses the approach of trait in conducting this research. Feist and Rosenberg assume that "traits or dispositions are the major force behind personality" (2010: 515). Therefore, the trait has important role in identifying and understanding human's personality. In addition, trait is "dimensions of individual differences in tendencies to show consistent patterns of thoughts, feelings, and actions" (Costa and McCrae, 2003: 25). Thus, personality traits are

provided to predict how people are likely to behave in different situations (Nevid: 2009: 361).

This research applies Personality trait theory by Costa and McCrae, because it provides a comprehensive theoretical framework which aim to measure and decide one's personality. Personality trait theory tends to be practical in identifying the characterization of Benjamin Mee. This theory provides specific traits of personality which are organized hierarchically from narrow and specific to broad and general dispositions. This theory known as a Five Factor Theory of Personality since it is based on the research findings of Five Factor Model. Five Factor Theory of personality proposes the big five dimensions of personality trait as the basic tendencies of personality that consists of Neuroticism, Extraversion, Openness to Experience, Agreeableness, and Conscientiousness (Costa and McCrae, 2006: 186-193). Here, this section provides a table of the big five dimensions of personality by Costa and McCrae (1992: 49), as follows:

| Big Five Dimensions | Facet (and Correlated trait adjective)" |
|---------------------|---|
| <b>Neuroticism</b>  | Anxiety (tense)                         |
|                     | Angry Hostility (irritable)             |
|                     | Depression (not contented)              |
|                     | Self-consciousness (shy)                |
|                     | Impulsiveness (moody)                   |
|                     | Vulnerability (not self-confident)      |
| <b>Extraversion</b> | Gregariousness (sociable)               |



|                               |                                     |
|-------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
|                               | Assertiveness (forceful)            |
|                               | Activity (energetic)                |
|                               | Excitement Seeking (adventurous)    |
|                               | Positive Emotions (enthusiastic)    |
|                               | Warmth (outgoing)                   |
| <b>Openness to Experience</b> | Ideas (curious)                     |
|                               | Fantasy (imaginative)               |
|                               | Aesthetics (artistic)               |
|                               | Actions (wide interests)            |
|                               | Feelings (excitable)                |
|                               | Values (unconventional)             |
| <b>Agreeableness</b>          | Trust (forgiving)                   |
|                               | Straightforwardness (not demanding) |
|                               | Altruism (warm)                     |
|                               | Compliance (not stubborn)           |
|                               | Modesty (not show-off)              |
|                               | Tender-mindedness (sympathetic)     |
| <b>Conscientiousness</b>      | Competence (efficient)              |
|                               | Order (Organized)                   |
|                               | Dutifulness (not careless)          |
|                               | Achievement striving (thorough)     |
|                               | Self-discipline (not lazy)          |

|  |                              |
|--|------------------------------|
|  | Deliberation (not impulsive) |
|--|------------------------------|

“These traits from the Adjective Check List (listed in parentheses following each facet) correlated substantially with scores on that facet in a study of self-ratings” (as cited in John and Pervin, 1999: 110).

### 1.6.3 Film Theory

Since movie becomes the main data of this research, the writer applies film theory as supporting theory in this research. Film theory can help to reveal the representation of Benjamin’s emotion and traits. As Turner said “movie incorporates the separate technologies and discourses of the camera, lighting, editing, set design, and sound-all contributing to the meaning.” (1999:57). In addition, “movie is just like language that has elements as well as the word become the elements of sentences for delivering a particular meaning.” (Villarejo, 2007:24). It can be concluded movie is the incorporation of some elements that is made by technology as the representation of a meaning.

The implementation of film theory only focuses on the aspects that can be found in the elements of the movie such as: *Mise-en-scène* and composition. With applying semiotic in order to support the explanation. Those element of movie reveal their own meaning usage. For example, a close-up conveys an understanding about the actor’s emotions; a high key lighting which means to indicate light of morning or warm condition. The film theory is able to provide the explanation about what movie-maker wants to convey in the movie, since everything that is presented in the screen of the movie convey certain meaning. Thus, the writer realizes the

important of film theory, so in order to understand the characterization of Benjamin Mee, the analysis of movie elements needed.

## **1.7. Method of Research**

### **1.7.1 Type of Research**

This research is a qualitative research. It means that this research does not treat the data by using statistic and quantification to analyze the data (Djunaidi and Fauzan, 2012: 13). By applying the qualitative research, this research conducts the library research. It means that this research uses books and other writings to get some information to support the subject matter of the research (Ratna, 2013: 39). Through qualitative research, this research also delivers descriptive data such as expressions, words, and also the actions of subject that is analyzed (Djunaidi and Fauzan, 2012: 13). Thus, relating to this research by using qualitative research, the writer can get the information by describing the data through an utterances in the text, and also action that are shown by the character of Benjamin Mee in *We Bought a Zoo* movie.

### **1.7.2 Data Sources**

In getting the data of analysis, there are two data sources of the analysis. Those are: main data and supporting data. The main data in this research is the movie itself that is *We Bought a Zoo*. In this main data source, the data are selected from both the dialogues and pictures that relate to Benjamin's actions. Besides, the supporting data in this research is taken from some books, web, and article that have relation to the movie and the explanation personality traits theory.

### **1.7.3 Data Collecting Technique**

In collecting the data, the writer does some steps. First, when the writer watches the movie closely to get understanding the character of Benjamin Mee, the writer also reads the script to consider the cases which are proper to be analyzed with the theory. Second, the writer understands the intrinsic element of the movie deeply. Then, the writer focuses on statements or words and image which have the relation to the research and reads other supporting data. Furthermore, the writer collects all the data and analyzes the data based on the theory which is used in this research.

### **1.7.4 Data Analysis Technique**

After the writer gets and collects the data, the next step is to analyze the data that are collected. The data is analyzed descriptively by using some theories. It is personality traits as the main theory. This theory is used to identify the personality that appeared in the movie. This research also applies theory of film to identify all facts in the movie. This research takes several steps in analyzing the data of research:

1. The first step is organizing the data based on the big five dimensions of personality traits by Costa and McCrae; Neuroticism, Extraversion, Openness to Experience, Agreeableness, and Conscientiousness.
2. The second step is elaborating the data based on the big five dimensions of personality trait by Costa and McCrae.
3. The third step is making the chart of personality dimensions that

appears in the character of Benjamin Mee based on its intensity.

4. The last step is concluding the result of analysis and it will get the basic things which is reflected through Benjamin's personality.

### **1.8. Paper Organization**

This paper consists of four chapters. The first chapter presents the general information of this research. It offers the background of study, research question, objective of study, significance of study, literature review, theoretical approach, method of research, and paper organization. The second chapter is the intrinsic elements of *We Bought a Zoo* film. The third chapter is the discussion as the analysis of the data. The last chapter is the conclusion of the research.

## CHAPTER IV

### CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

#### 4.1. Conclusion

As already stated in the previous chapters, this research aims to know the personality of Benjamin Mee through the big five dimensions of personality by Costa and McCrae that consists of Neuroticism, Extraversion, Openness to Experience, Agreeableness, and Conscientiousness. This research finds those five dimensions on Benjamin's personality.

Based on the analysis, there is the degree of intensity over those personality dimensions in the characterization of Benjamin. The degree of intensity can be seen in the following list decreasingly from the most intense to the least intense: *Conscientiousness, Extraversion, Openness to Experience, Agreeableness, and Neuroticism.*

Furthermore, this part provides the chart of the intensity of personality dimensions in Benjamin's characterization in order to make it easier in viewing the result of the analysis, as follows:

### The Chart of The Intensity of Personality Dimension in Benjamin's Characterization

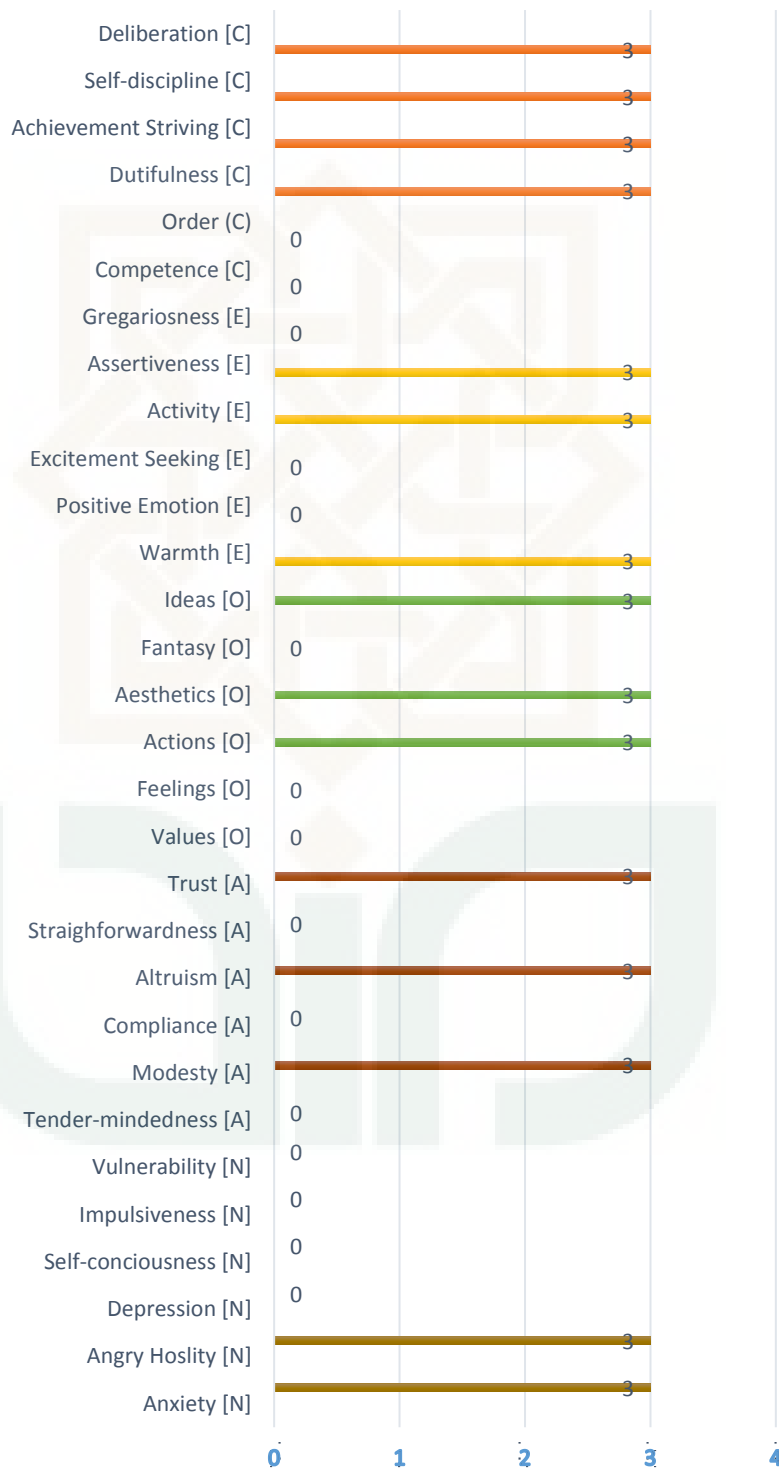


Chart information:

(C) = Conscientiousness

(E) = Extraversion

(O) = Openness to Experience

(A) = Agreeableness

(N) = Neuroticism

The chart categorizes the intensity into three levels from zero (0) to three (3). The level zero (0) means that this research did not find any personality facets in Benjamin's characterization. The level one (1) represents Benjamin's thought. The level two (2) represents Benjamin's feeling. The level three (3) represents Benjamin's action. Those levels increase from zero (0) to four (3) in line with its intensity from least intense to most intense. If the personality facet falls in the maximum level means that the previous levels have been fulfilled.

According to the chart, Benjamin's Conscientiousness is seen in his deliberation, self-discipline, achievement striving and dutifulness. Moreover, his dutifulness on his duty brings happiness and fulfillment to all the people in his life. Benjamin's extraversion is portrayed in his high activity, assertiveness and warmth. He has openness in ideas, aesthetics, and actions. Meanwhile, Benjamin's agreeableness is reflected in his trust, altruism, and compliance. Further, the last dimension that appears in Benjamin's characterization is considered as negative dimension. Those facet are angry hostility and anxiety. Nevertheless, these facets rarely appear in Benjamin's characterization. They appear only in a few situations.



In short, those two facets of Neuroticism represent Benjamin's imperfection as human being.

As the result of analysed, this research finds four facets of personality that belongs to the dimension of Conscientiousness. Those are *Deliberation*, *Self-Discipline*, *Achievement Striving*, and *Dutifulness*. Benjamin has high intensity in those facets of Conscientiousness. This emphasizes that the most intense personality dimension in Benjamin's personality is the dimension of Conscientiousness.

The dimension of conscientiousness is not only the most intense but those facets implicate to each other in the character of Benjamin Mee. Because of his *deliberation*, Benjamin thinks carefully before reopen the zoo. Hence, he makes plans to reach his goal. He is able to control his plans that he has made because he has *self-disciplined* in his character. Since he has *achievement striving* in his character, he works seriously, active, and work hard to renovate the zoo. Therefore, the zoo passes the inspection and he can reopen the zoo for the public in accordance with his plan he had made. When the grand opening of the zoo, the visitors congratulate to Benjamin and convey their gratitude for saving the animals. So Benjamin is *dutifulness* character. Benjamin tightly hold the sense of responsibility on his duty. Those four facets of conscientiousness are synergic in developing Benjamin's personality and it makes him to be someone who reaches his goals and achieves his success.

In conclusion, Benjamin Mee has the Conscientiousness personality. The personality leads him to be a successful person who can achieve his goal and have his new life with his children.

#### **4.2. Suggestion**

The writer finds that there are some topics which are interesting to be analyzed. For the next writer who is interested in this movie, they can analyze each character in *We Bought a Zoo* movie. The characters can be analyzed by the same theory that is personality trait by Costa and Mc Crae. Yet, it also can be analyzed by another literature theory such as psychoanalysis, ecranisation, and feminism. This movie also can be analyzed by linguistic theory such as implicature, and politeness strategy.

The concept of Personality Trait by Costa and McCrae also can be applied in many literature works. It can be applied in movies and also novels. This concept of personality trait by Costa and Mc Crae is an interesting theory which can us a new perspective of the character in any literature works.

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## APPENDIX

### The Summary of Movie

The story begins from Benjamin is rushing around in the morning, he is trying to get his two children, Dylan, fourteen years old, and Rosie, six years old, fed and ready for school. As they try to get a healthy breakfast while running late, Benjamin wonders aloud if anyone has even said good morning. They are ready to rush out the door when Benjamin realizes that he forgot their lunches. In the car on the way to school, Benjamin argues with Dylan about him not reading a book for school. Benjamin tells him that if he spent half as much time on schoolwork that he does on his art, he would succeed in school. Dylan says that no one will give a boy whose mother died six months ago an F. He tells his father “whatever” and Benjamin says that he doesn’t want to hear that word again in this century and for him to try another word.

After Benjamin drove his children to school, he meets his brother for lunch. But they cannot agree on the place. It reminds Benjamin when he first met with his deceased wife. They decide to do lunch another day, but Duncan asks him to attempt to start over. Benjamin tells him that he’ll try. Benjamin is in his editor’s office, he is presenting his new story. But the editor does not like it, he offers to let Benjamin have an online column so he will be safe in the ever-changing world of newspapers. Benjamin senses his sympathy and tells him that he is sick of sympathy and quits. As he leaves, he receives a call.

The call was from Dylan's school. Benjamin and Dylan sit in the principal's office. Dylan has stolen money, but the principal seems more worried about Dylan's art. He shows him a wall mural that Dylan has done, a gory image of a decapitation, which is much better than any of the other artwork. Benjamin stares at it, as the principal tells him that this is Dylan's fourth strike, and they are a three strike school, so Dylan is expelled. As Dylan complains that he is being expelled for his art, Benjamin tells him that it is because he stole, and that Dylan is breaking Benjamin's heart. Rosie is making peanut butter and jelly sandwiches as Benjamin watches. Benjamin asks her if he is doing anything right. Rosie thinks about it, then says that he is handsomer than the other dads because he has more hair, and so he has that going for him. Benjamin jokes that he will mark baldness off his list. Rosie makes a check mark in the air.

That night Benjamin goes into Dylan's room while he sleeps and sees that his notebook is full of troubling images, both scary and sad. He goes to his bathroom and looks at old bottles of medicine, presumably from his wife's illness, that he can't bear to throw away and a picture of the two of them. Rosie comes in to tell him that she can not sleep again because of the neighbors. She tells him that their "happy is too loud". He takes her to her room where they can see the neighbors having a party with people laughing and smiling. Benjamin watches as Rosie falls asleep.

The next day, Benjamin and Rosie go house hunting with their real estate agent who is on his first day. After seeing house after house, Rosie shows them the listing for an 18-acre home in the country. They are headed out to it, and the

agent tries to tell them that the house is complicated. Both Benjamin and Rosie are captivated by it as they drive up, and Benjamin tells Rosie that she does not need to take pictures of it because they are going to live there. The real estate agent keeps alluding that the property is difficult, and after hearing a roar, he is forced to tell them that it is a zoo.

Although reluctant at first, Mee decides to buy the zoo when he sees Rosie happily playing with the peacocks. Dylan hates the idea of moving away from his friends and retreats into his artwork which has grown more macabre since the death of his mother. Benjamin's brother, Duncan, tries to dissuade him from the purchase, but Benjamin buys it anyway. The zoo staff, led by the 28-year-old head keeper, Kelly Foster, help to start renovating the zoo with the intent to reopen it to the public. When Kelly confronts Benjamin about why he bought a zoo, knowing nothing about running one, Benjamin simply responds "Why not?".

Walt Ferris arrives for a surprise inspection and makes a list of repairs that would cost around \$100,000, which Benjamin does not have. Rhonda Blair, the zoo's accountant, gossips that Benjamin will probably sell the zoo. The workers' morale sinks, fearing the property will be sold to a buyer that will close it down.

When Lily tells Dylan that she heard his family might be leaving, he is overjoyed, which hurts her feelings. Benjamin discovers that his wife bequeathed him an investment account, with instructions to use the money wisely while listening to his heart. Duncan advises him to walk away and start over with the money, but Benjamin decides to use the money to repair the zoo. While this lifts

the zoo workers' morale, Dylan is unhappy about having to stay; he confronts his father, and a heated argument ensues. They reconcile the next morning and Dylan admits he misses Lily. Benjamin gives his son advice using his favorite principle, that you only need 20 seconds of courage to achieve great things. Benjamin realizes that instead of trying to start over by forgetting his wife, he should accept that she will always be a part of him.

The morning of the inspection, Benjamin gives entire staffs a enthusiasm talk. Walter Ferris arrives in his truck, wearing a tie with a safari type vest this time. He is clearly nitpicking, but the inspection is going well. Finally, Ferris is ready to sign off (or not sign off) when Rosie pipes up with “Hey mister, everyone says you’re a dick. I don’t know what that means, but I don’t think it’s true.” Ferris glares at everyone and then circles something. He tells him he doesn’t think it will work... but they’ve been approved. Everyone cheers and Ferris leaves, declining Benjamin’s invitation to join them on opening day because he doesn’t fraternize.

Duncan is sitting with Benjamin at the Jaguar Restaurant and tells him that he likes the animals but he loves the humans. Benjamin worries what will happen if no one shows up. Duncan tells him not to worry; that if you are doing something for the right reason nothing can stop it. The next day it is pouring rain and the forecast says it will be rainy all week, and that it is set to be the rainiest summer in 100 years.



When Benjamin awakens on July 7th, opening day, the sun is shining. The entire staff are wearing uniforms with Dylan's picture as the logo. Benjamin makes a speech in front of entire staff. MacCready cuts the ribbon and they declare it a zoo. They stand there waiting. Someone asks what time it is, it is 10:02. Dylan says something is wrong. Benjamin says maybe this is how it is supposed to be. But Dylan insists something is wrong, taking off down the road. Sure enough, a tree has fallen in the storm and is blocking the road. They step onto it and are shocked to see that there are cars and people standing next to the cars for as far as they can see. Benjamin tells them they are open and the staff helps everyone over. Because a lot of people coming, they run out of tickets, forcing Benjamin and Kelly to look for more.

Benjamin is taking pictures with Rosie and Dylan, joking and laughing and being a happy family. Kelly and Lily are watching from a bench. Lily asks Kelly if she has to pick, people or animals, which would she pick? Kelly just smiles at the Mee family and Lily laughs and says she has to pick people, too.

Benjamin takes his children to the restaurant where he met their mother, explaining that it was the point where their existence became a possibility. He takes them through that day's encounter, where Benjamin worked up the nerve to talk to his future wife with "20 seconds of insane courage", and walks up to the table she was at. He visualizes her sitting there, and asks her why such an amazing woman would talk to someone like him. She responds, "Why not?"

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