

MARIE-LAURE'S STRUGGLE AS BLIND TEENAGER IN ANTHONY DOERR'S *ALL THE LIGHT WE CANNOT SEE*

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ABSTRACT

Herdianti, M. (2020). *Marie-Laure's Struggle as Blind Teenager in Anthony Doerr's All The Light We Cannot See*. UIN Sunan Ampel Surabaya.

Keywords: *characterization, struggle, invasion.*

This article aims to discuss Marie-Laure characterization and her struggle to fulfill her needs based on Maslow's hierarchy of needs theory in the novel All The Light We Cannot See novel . The study's focus is on Marie-Laure and her struggle for her life in a precarious situation when the German invade her hometown. Qualitative design is choosen as the method of study. New criticism (character and characterization) and the hierarchy of needs according to Abraham Maslow, are selected as the theory for analysis. The results: first, Marie's personality in the novel is intelligent, brave, and inquisitive. Second, Marie's struggle in the first level is to stay alive without her vision in a precarious situation, in the second level is to escape to find a safety place, in the third level is learn her new environment and get to know her new neighborhood, in the fourth level is Marie's interested in science make her life back. Marie's struggle in the last level is to pass all the problems and became a mollusk expert. The third results shows the support from her father (Daniel Le-Blanc), her great-uncle (Etienne), and Madam Manec (Etienne house keeper).

ABSTRAK

Herdianti, M. (2020). *Perjuangan Marie-Laure Sebagai Gadis Buta dalam Novel All The Light We Cannot See Karya Anthony Doerr*. UIN Sunan Ampel Surabaya.

Kata kunci: *karakterisasi, perjuangan, invasi.*

Artikel ini bertujuan untuk mendiskusikan karakterisasi Marie-Laure dalam novel All The Light We Cannot See dan perjuangannya dalam memenuhi kebutuhannya yang didasarkan pada teori hierarchy of needs milik Maslow. Fokus dari studi ini adalah Marie-Laure dan perjuangannya untuk tetap hidup dalam situasi genting ketika terjadi invasi Jerman di kota kelahirannya. Desain kualitatif dipilih sebagai metode penelitian. Pendekatan new criticism (karakter dan karakterisasi) dan teori hierarchy of needs menurut Abraham Maslow dipilih sebagai teori dalam menganalisis. Pada kesimpulan: pertama, kepribadian Marie dalam novel itu cerdas, berani, dan memiliki rasa ingin tahu. Kedua, perjuangan Marie di tingkat pertama adalah harus bertahan hidup tanpa penglihatan dalam situasi genting, di tingkat kedua adalah melarikan diri untuk menemukan tempat yang aman, di tingkat ketiga adalah mempelajari lingkungan barunya dan mengenal lingkungan barunya, di tingkat keempat adalah minatnya pada dunia sains membuat hidupnya kembali. Perjuangan Marie di level terakhir adalah untuk melewati semua masalah dan menjadi ahli moluska. Pada hasil penelitian ketiga menampilkan dukungan yang datang dari ayahnya (Daniel Le-Blanc), paman buyutnya (Etienne), dan Madam Manec (pembantu Etienne).

BACKGROUND

Human needs idea is widely used in terms of life. It plays an essential role as one of the aspects relating to human life. 'Need' is often referred as the inner desire to do something. Here 'need' leads to an organism's motivation strength that is influenced by circumstances due to certain deficiencies (Thompson. 1987, p.13). According to Doyal and Gough (1991, p.55) there are two basic needs in human life. The first is survival /physical health, assert that people must have good physical health to top off a series of assignment in common life that needs manual, mental, and emotional capability. Second, autonomy as a basic human need, is interpreted as human action to shape and determine their life direction. As basic human needs, physical health and autonomy relate to each other. To achieve a certain level of satisfaction, humans' physical health and autonomy should be optimized (Doyal & Gough. 1991, p.162). It confirms that the struggle is

necessary to meet the basic human needs.

All The Light We Cannot See novel becomes a gripping object to be examined by the researcher because it shows the struggle of a girl with blindness conditions to fulfill her basic human needs. This article focus on analyzing Marie-Laure's struggle as a blind teenager to fulfill her needs and achieved her actualization in life. This article begin with portrayed of Marie's characterization, then analyze Marie's struggle based on her characterization, and the last discussion will strengthened by analysis of people who always support Marie in her struggle.

THEORY

1. Humanistic Psychology

In the present era, humanistic psychology is a movement that arises by displaying a human image either from psychoanalysis or behavioral side. Maslow argues that human needs are the natural innate of humans to want to fulfill their needs (Maslow, 1963, p.155). Maslow composed the level of

human needs in pyramid form with five levels of needs, there are:

a. **Physiological Needs**

Physiological needs involve the worst level of the hierarchy because it is associated with the need to sustain its life physically or biologically of human. It means this basic needs functioning for keeping a human life, like food, water, protection, and sleep (Maslow. 1968, p.27).

b. **Safety Needs**

The safety needs push to feel safe about danger, have no worries about lack of food, loss of shelter, loss of work, or loss of ownership (Maslow, 1968, p.49). Naturally, humans will need regularity and balance in life and strive to avoid unfamiliar or unexpected things (Goble cited in Maslow, 1970, p.73)

c. **The Belongingness and Love Needs**

People will know more thorough and focused at this level like never before, have no companion, or a sweetheart, or a live spouse, or children. People will drive for love relations with others in general. They will attempt with high intensity to reach this purpose (Maslow, 1943, p.381).

d. **The Self-Esteem Needs**

People will strive to gain confidence and recognition or even appreciation from others (Ewen, 2003, p. 221-222). Maslow cautions that this esteem needs to be based on the real capacities, achievements, and respect of others, then external fame and unwarranted praise (p.222).

e. **The Self Actualization Needs**

The fulfillment of this need represents the desire to achieve anything that can be achieved entirely using potential and individual talent. This tendency to need can be expressed as a desire to be more and more, to become everything someone can afford (Maslow, 1943, p.383).

2. New Criticism

Lois Tyson in his book entitled *Critical Theory Today* (2006, p.131), state that new criticism emphasizes the text as the only evidence that its language governed in literary works. Tyson says that the way to know the author's intent or interpretation, the reader should carefully examine the formal elements of text such as characterization, plot, setting, characterization, point of view, meter, rhyme, metaphors, symbols, images and so on (2006, p.137). According to the

explanation above, new criticism is applying to analyze the intrinsic elements of literary work. This theory will attempt to explain Marie-Laure's character as the main character in the novel *All The Light We Cannot See*. Thus, it will focus on her character and characterization.

METHODS

This article purpose to analyze the struggle of Marie-Laure to fulfill her needs beside her blind condition and German's invasion situation in the novel *All The Light We Cannot See*. To strengthen the analysis, the researcher portray Mari-Laure's characterization and depict the support from people around Marie.

The data of this article focuses on the literary work of *All The Light We Cannot See* by Anthony Doerr as an object. The supporting data is taken from books, journals, articles, and previous studies related to this research issue. The collecting data technique includes deep close reading, choose related quotations or dialogue about Marie-Laure personality and struggles. After the novel have been analyzed, then the researcher categorized the data based

on the statement of problems. The next chapter contains of discussion of the findings that have been founded by using data source and approaches that relate to the topic.

DISCUSSIONS

1. The depiction of Marie-Laure's characterization

1.1 Intelligent

Marie-Laure, in the novel, describes as an intelligent girl since she was a child beside her blindness in her six-year-old. Her desire to learn new things and easy to understand makes her become an intelligent girl. Marie's father, Daniel LeBlanc, threw him a miniature of apartment and neighborhood around their home. Marie is an intelligent girl even though she loses her vision can be seen from the following quotation:

“She leads her father on six-block detours that leave her angry and frustrated and farther from home than when they started. But in the winter of her eighth year, to Marie-Laure's surprise, she begins to get it right. She runs her fingers over the model in their kitchen, counting miniature benches, trees, lampposts, doorways.” (p.42)

Marie's ability to remember every detail part of the miniature proves her intellect. Marie learned a very elaborate miniature using the touch of her finger. This activity is not an easy task, and they need courage and persistence, but because Marie-Laure has these qualities. She carefully counts how many blocks between buildings with the other and memorized them thoroughly. For several days she studied in every detail, and finally Marie made it to the place where they lived adequately.

On the other side, Marie's father decides to give Marie a novel written in Braille. In the ninth birthday of Marie, she gets a gift she loves.

"That morning Marie-Laure crawls beneath the counter of the key pound and lies on her stomach and sets all ten fingertips in a line on a page. The French feels old-fashioned, the dots printed much closer together than she is used to. But after a week, it becomes easy. She finds the ribbon she uses as a bookmark, opens the book, and the museum falls away."(p.47)

Losing sight is not at all, making Marie lost interest in a book. She loves reading. Especially books that is science-themed and adventurous. In just one week, Marie was able to read the set of Braille letters smoothly. Marie's ability to learn new things helped her in living with a blind condition.

1.2 Brave

Marie-Laure's characteristics in the novel show that she is a brave girl. When German begins invades Saint-Malo (where Marie lives with her great-uncle), Marie helps her great-uncle perform a hidden rebellion against German through radio broadcasts. Marie is tasked with picking up a secret code tucked inside a loaf in a bakery. Marie had enormous bravery to do a secret mission. As seen in the following quotation

"Shoes at the foot of the bed, beneath the model. Cane in the corner. Down to the first floor, where her knapsack hangs on its peg. Out. Twenty-two paces down the rue Vauborel. Then right for sixteen storm drains. Turn left on the rue Robert Surcouf. Nine more drains to the bakery." (p.251)

The quotation described when Marie goes to the bakery every morning. She walking with worried every morning to the bakery often thought that German soldiers would watch her from a distance. Marie's bravery has beaten her selfishness to remain silent at home and shelter. It shows that with her condition, that loss of sight does not preclude her courage anymore.

1.3 Inquisitive

Marie's character, portrayed by the author as an intelligent girl, makes her have a huge curiosity. Discovering new things about the world is a wonder for Marie.

“Are there snails out there, Madame?”
“Snails? In the ocean?” Again that laugh. “As many as raindrops. You’re interested in snails?”
“Yes yes yes. I have found tree snails and garden snails. But I have never found marine snails.”
“Well,” says Madame Manec. “You’ve turned up in the right place.” (p.101)

The quotation described when Marie stayed at her-great uncle named Etienne, her interest in

science, is never lost. Madam Manec (Etienne housekeeper) explains that their house is very close to the sea, and there are many snails. Marie was excited to hear Madam Manec's story about the sea and the animals around it. Marie's curiosity to see the ocean is getting bigger.

2. Marie-Laure’s struggle as blind teenager to fulfill her hierarchy of needs

Marie's characteristics portrayed in previous discussions, establish Marie as a girl who must struggle to stay alive. Marie's characteristics as intelligent, brave, and inquisitive girl, plays an important role in her struggle to fulfill her needs. Related to the discussion, the researcher connects the form of Marie-Laure struggle with the hierarchy of needs by Abraham Maslow.

2.1 Marie-Laure’s struggle to fulfill her physiological needs

Depiction of Marie-Laure's physiological needs in the novel is seen less to be fulfilled because she is lost of sight. She must struggle to

stay alive in a precarious situation when the German invasion occurred in Paris in order she lost of her vision. Besides, Marie's father was on a mission to rescue a precious diamond named *Sea of The Flames*. The diamond is a rare collection belonging to the museum. Marie's father had a duty to make sure the diamond is secure and bring it to a friend of museum directors. Marie's struggle to fulfill her physiological needs besides her blind condition as seen in the following quotation:

"He pulls her out the door and locks the key pound. Outside, waves of panic seem to be traveling the rows of trees like tremors from an earthquake. Her father says, "Where is the watchman?" Voices near the curb: soldiers. Marie-Laure's senses feel scrambled. Is that the rumble of airplanes? Is that the smell of smoke? Is someone speaking German?" (p. 67-68)

In the quotation above, describe the situation when the German army begin to enter Paris. At that time, Marie and her father was in the museum where her father

worked. Suddenly, some German soldiers entered the museum and examined several rooms. Instantly, the thrilling atmosphere surrounds the entire museum which has been closed to the public for the last few days. Marie could only feel the stressful situation through her hearing. Marie heard the sound of the airplane flying low, she also smelled a cigarette, and a foreign sound spoke in German. Marie was unable to go anywhere, it's possible if suddenly a German army found her. Marie can only hide while waiting for her father to come to pick up her.

"Six blocks, thirty-eight storm drains. She counts them all. Because of the sheets of wood veneer her father has tacked over its windows, their apartment is stuffy and hot. "This will just take a moment, Marie-Laure. Then I'll explain." Her father shoves things into what might be his canvas rucksack. Food, she thinks, trying to identify everything by its sound. Coffee. Cigarettes. Bread?" (p.68)

When Marie and her father managed to get out of the museum, Marie's father brought her to home and prepared some goodies. Marie,

who has no vision, only count each step and remember what street they are going through. Marie's intelligent made her know what street she pass as she had learned from her miniature. Of course this was very useful for Marie to find out where she was without much questioning her father.

2.2 Marie-Laure's struggle to fulfill her safety needs

In the novel *All The Light We Cannot See*, Marie-Laure must struggle to gain a sense of safety when the German invade her hometown in Paris. Marie, her father, and the Parisians attempted to flee when the German army began to enter the city. Despite her blind condition, Marie struggled to escape from Paris with her father.

"He buttons her into her winter overcoat, though it is the middle of June, and they bustle downstairs. On the rue des Patriarches, she hears a distant stamping, as though thousands of people are on the move. She walks beside her father with her cane telescoped in one fist, her other hand on his rucksack, everything disconnected from logic, as in nightmares." (p.68)

The quotes above tell when Marie, with her father and the people in Paris rushed to the station to leave the city. The German attack that happened so quickly made Marie and her father has no time to prepare. A thousand questions are going around in Marie's brain about what is going on. Marie followed her father's steps that increasingly fast and rushed. Of course, the current situation is not an easy thing for Marie. She had to struggle walking through a foreign place for her by relying solely on her father's navigation.

There is no light, no vision, and Marie does not know what is in front of her. She continued to struggle with her father's footsteps to calm down the safe place from the German army.

"By dusk they are west of Versailles. Marie-Laure's heels are bleeding and her stockings are torn and every hundred steps she stumbles. When she declares that she can walk no farther, her father carries her off the road, traveling uphill through mustard flowers until they reach a field a few hundred yards from a small farmhouse." (p.75)

After traveling a few miles from their hometown, Marie and her father decided to rest in a field near a farmhouse. The farm was felt safe from the German Army; Marie and her father decided to rest. Everything happened so quickly for Marie then she didn't have time to wear shoes. After walking so far away without shoes, Marie's heels are bleeding because of stumbling rocks. In that situation, Marie's just thinking the most important is to make sure her safety.

2.3 Marie-Laure's struggle to fulfill her belongingness and love needs

The expression of belongingness and love needs is variety, such as: have a good friendship, romance, or association. Marie-Laure's life wanted a new life in a new dwelling, namely in Saint-Malo (Marie's great-uncle's home). Marie's intelligent role as crucial when she learned to recognise her new neighborhood in Saint-Malo. Marie had to learn from scratch recognizing her new environment using miniature of Saint-Malo made by her father. Marie struggled to get

to know her new neighborhood as shown in the quotation below:

"Most mornings, after the beach, she makes the rounds with Madame Manec, going to the vegetable market, occasionally to the butcher's, then delivering food to whichever neighbors Madame Manec decides are most in need. They climb an echoing stairwell, rap on a door; an old woman invites them in, asks for news, insists all three of them drink a thimbleful of sherry." (p.179)

Marie toured while memorizing the street along with Madam Manec every morning. Marie felt that it was essential to get to know her new neighborhood. Marie did the same thing as she was in Paris. She will memorize every detail miniature of Saint-Malo, then she will practice it on the road. Marie's intelligent and brave characteristic makes her more easily to know her new environment. She also became acquainted with some of the neighbors she met. So, Marie slowly began to familiarize herself with her late residence.

Marie never parted with her father. Since she was a child her father always beside her. Marie's

father's departure to find the museum's director is the first time Marie had to be separated from her father. But a problem happened, after twenty days, Marie's father never returned, and there was not a letter from her. Marie felt her half-life had gone somewhere. As shown in the following quotation:

"She spends hours kneeling by herself on the sixth floor with the window open and the sea hurling arctic air into the room, her fingers on the model of Saint-Malo slowly going numb. South to the Gate of Dinan. West to the Plage du Môle. Back to the rue Vauborel. Every second Etienne's house grows colder; every second it feels as if her father slips farther away." (p.169)

The quotation indicates how Marie condition after her father's departure. Her father's affection will never Marie get from anyone. Her father taught and introduced all about the world to her. He always there every time Marie needs it. The support and passion given to Marie enabled her to continue living with a blind condition. Marie's life seemed to be numb, with no love, and no desire to learn about the world, as

Marie wanted so far. Marie felt that her life had no color, just as she had seen during this, only dark.

2.4 Marie-Laure's struggle to fulfill her self-esteem needs

Marie's self-esteem depicts when she begins accepting the circumstances that her father would never return. Marie started to have a lively spirit and continued her life with the people around her. She must keep her inquisitive about science and all about the world.

"The ocean. The ocean! Right in front of her! So close all this time. It sucks and booms and splashes and rumbles; it shifts and dilates and falls over itself; the labyrinth of Saint-Malo has opened onto a portal of sound larger than anything she has ever experienced. Larger than the Jardin des Plantes, than the Seine, larger than the grandest galleries of the museum. She did not imagine it properly; she did not comprehend the scale." (p.172)

From the quotation, Madam Manec brought Marie for the first time visiting the beach. Marie's facial expressions change three hundred and sixty degrees from earlier. Marie felt the wind cast on her face and the

sea rumbling right in front of her. She had been very interested in visiting the beach. Marie can explore the breadth of the beach even though she can't see using her two eyes. Marie felt her life had returned. Her love for the beauty of the world is not inferior to the loss of her father.

"Marie-Laure is learning, is extraordinary; she burgeons shoots off stalks, wakes early, works late, concocts bisques without a drop of cream, loaves with less than a cup of flour. They clomp together through the narrow streets, Marie-Laure's hand on the back of Madame's apron, following the odors of her stews and cakes; in such moments, Madame seems like a great moving wall of rosebushes, thorny and fragrant and crackling with bees." (p.179)

Marie has found her life back. Her passion is excellent, as when she learned to memorize the way in Paris for the first time. Along with Madam Manec, Marie walking every morning while remembering every street around her great-uncle's house. Marie continued to struggle with what she wanted by continuing to learn. She realizes that there are still people who love her as her father's

affection. There is her great-uncle, Etienne and also Madam Manec who always beside her.

2.5 Marie-Laure's struggle to fulfill her self-actualization needs

Marie proves that she can continue her life after many problems occurred in her life. Starting from the loss of her vision ability, escaping during a German invasion, and Marie had to lose her very beloved father. Marie proves that she can live better with her limitations. Her versatility and the support of the people around her motivated Marie to achieve her dream in life. After the German invasion ended, Marie and Etienne returned to Marie's residence in Paris. After Marie and Etienne return to Paris, Marie begins to reorganize her life. Marie wants to reach out to all her dreams and start from scratch.

"Marie-Laure LeBlanc manages a small laboratory at the Museum of Natural History in Paris and has contributed in significant ways to the study and literature of mollusks: a monograph on the evolutionary rationale for the folds in West African

cancellate nutmeg shells; an often-cited paper on the sexual dimorphism of Caribbean volutes.” (p.370)

From the quotation above, it proves that Marie can achieve her self-actualization to become a scientist. Her love for the world of science creatures has made her a great woman. Her blindness was not at all a barrier to her. Even Marie can be more than normal people in general. All the problems that happened in Marie's life have been making her be a strong and unyielding woman. Although Marie had been discouraged when she lost her father, her love of science could restore her life's spirit.

In conclusion, Marie-Laure shows that she can continue her life after many obstacles occurred in her life. Starting from her blindness condition, escaping during a German invasion, and Marie had to lose her very beloved father. Marie's intelligent and brave made it easy to memorize the street with her blind condition. Marie proved her entire struggle and her inquisitive with the achievement of being a mollusk

expert. She can also be a mother and have a family. All flaws in her life are not a barrier for Marie in achieving all of her dreams.

3. The portrayal of support from people around Marie

3.1 Marie's father

Marie-Laure's father is a principal locksmith for the National Museum of Natural History. Marie's father always supports and gives Marie a spirit to stay alive despite her blind condition. One form of her father's support that much makes Marie a passion is when her father makes a replica from the neighborhood surrounding Marie's house.

“The model is a miniature of the city she kneels within and contains scale replicas of the hundreds of houses and shops and hotels within its walls. There's the cathedral with its perforated spire, and the bulky old Château de Saint-Malo and row after row of seaside mansions studded with chimneys. A slender wooden jetty arcs out from a beach called the Plage du Môle; delicate, reticulated atrium vaults over the seafood market; minute benches, the smallest no larger than apple seeds, dot

the tiny public squares.”
(p.17)

Marie’s father made the model precisely one month after Marie became blind. Finally, Marie’s father invented the way by making a model made of small wooden beams that were arranged so neatly. This model is a miniature of the city in Marie's house, and her father made as close as possible to the original. Marie will always feel everything is fine when there is her father beside her. The situation around Marie was filled with people and a lot of crying, making Marie increasingly afraid and wondering what was going on. It is a bit of good luck that her father always calms, and Marie is grateful to have a father beside her.

3.2 Her great-uncle, Etienne

After the invasion of the German soldier in Paris (Marie and her father were living), Marie and her father were decided to go to the house of Marie's great-uncle named Etienne. Etienne's presence seemed to replace the position of Marie's father, when he gone without news. Etienne loves Marie very much and

takes care of her both at home and when Marie struggles to carry the broadcast code from the bakery. Etienne's support for Marie is very visible in the quote below:

*Jules. Verne. Twenty.
Thousand. Leagues. Part. One. Part.
Two.*

She throws herself at her great-uncle and hangs her arms around his neck.
“You said you never got to finish. I thought, rather than my reading it to you, maybe you could read it to me?”
“But how—?”
“Monsieur Hébrard, the bookseller.”
“When nothing is available? And they’re so expensive—”
“You have made a lot of friends in this town, Marie-Laure.”
(p.270)

The quotation explains the happiness of Marie got a gift a novel she once had from her father, but Marie has not finished it because of the incident she experienced in Paris. Her novel was left in her apartment in Paris, because of the panic situation she forgot to bring the novel. She got the novel from Etienne on her sixteenth birthday, Marie was very happy to have it back. Marie felt her birthday was as pleasant as before when there was

her father beside. But this time there was a great-uncle beside her who always looked after.

3.3 Madam Manec

Madam Manec was a loyal person to keep working at Etienne's house since a long time ago. She also profoundly loves Marie and always helps Marie when she troubles to do something. Not only helping Marie in the house, but also cares deeply about Marie's feelings. Especially when Marie was hit with anxiety about her father had arrived in Paris or not. Madam Manec tries to entertain Marie as seen in one of the quotations in the novel:

“Madame?”
They pass out of the city.
“Stairs here, mind
yourself, one down, two, there you
are, easy as cake ...”
The ocean. The ocean! Right
in front of her! So close all
this time. (p.172)

During her stay in Saint-Malo, Marie never left the house because her father did not allow her to come out. Marie wants to go and wipe off the sand of the beach in Saint-Malo. It was a little dream for Marie. Madam Manec is deeply aware of Marie's wishes, so she tries

to make Marie's desire happen by inviting Marie to go to the beach. The quotation above also proves that Madam Manec's presence in Marie's life was very influential for Marie.

CONCLUSION

Marie's characteristics as intelligent, brave, and inquisitive girl, establish Marie as a girl who must struggle to stay alive. Marie's characteristics plays an important role in her struggle to fulfill her needs. The result of this article shows Marie's struggle presented in five basic needs. First, Marie's physiological needs is her vision ability. Second, the safety needs are proven when Marie travels from Paris to Saint-Malo in the escape from the German army. Third, the belongingness and love needs depict when Marie had to learn her new environment and get to know her new neighborhood. Marie also had to fight back the spirit of her life when her father's affection disappeared because he was arrested by German. Fourth, self-esteem needs evidencing when Marie is sufficiency for a pass and continues her life without her

father's love. The last, the self-actualization needs was accomplished by Marie when she managed to fight past the German invasion in her city and she could become a mollusk expert and had a happy family. Marie's struggles to fulfill her needs were also influenced by support of the surrounding people, such as her father (Daniel Le-Blanc), her great-uncle (Etienne), and Madam Manec (Etienne's house keeper).

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