

## THE INTRINSIC ELEMENTS AND MOTIVES FOR TEEN SUICIDE DEPICTED IN THE NOVEL ENTITLED THIRTEEN REASONS WHY BY JAY ASHER 2007

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### ABSTRACT

Literature is one of the tools used by humans to depict social phenomenon. Since centuries ago, there are a lot of literary works have brought up suicide into the topics. Today, this topic is still becoming a thing in popular novels. One of the most popular is *Thirteen Reasons Why* by Jay Asher. Data are collected by using the novel. Data were analyzed by detailing intrinsic elements, motives for teen suicide, and the theoretical implications for English Language Teaching. The findings of this research explained some interesting things about this novel. First, it is about how Jay Asher presents each element in this novel not only visually, but also how the elements are perceived by the characters. Jay uniquely presents two narrations from Hannah & Clay back and forth throughout the novel, which makes this novel very interesting. Second, there are 7 from 10 items on IMSA found in Hannah's statements that scientifically support her actions to end her life. Third, this novel could be used as a tool for teachers to teach about empathy, mental health, and suicide prevention in High Schools.

**Keywords:** *Novel, Elements, Motives, Suicide, Teaching Literature*

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### INTRODUCTION

One way to explore a taboo yet important issue is through literature. The freedom gotten by the writers to explore topics, phenomena and thoughts enable the reader to get pieces of information that might not be gotten in real life discussion. One of the topics is about suicide. *Thirteen Reasons Why* is one of best seller book that gains its success for the depiction of suicide among teens.

This novel has even been adapted by Netflix into a drama series with the same title. Both the novel and series have gained success. The novel has taken the first place in *The New York Times Bestseller* List on July 2011 and won several awards such as '*Best Books*' from Association of Booksellers for Children, '*Best Books for Young Adults*' and '*Quick Picks for Reluctant Young Adult Readers*' by American Library Association, Heartland Award for 'Excellence in Young Adult Literature' and many more. (Asher, *Thirteen Reasons Why*, 2007)

In the novel, the representation of youth suicide is illustrated by Jay Asher. His point in the novel is not about the dramatization within a suicide. It is about explaining how someone's actions can "contribute" to raise suicidal thoughts while in the other hand someone's actions can also take a role to prevent suicide. (Asher, *Thirteen Reasons Why*, 2007) Unfortunately, some people are worried that young readers would be mistaken about the message he is trying to send. (Asher, *Meet the Writer - Jay Asher*, 2009)

Formulated from the reasons above, the researcher decided to find and analyze the development of the intrinsic elements, motives for teen suicide depicted in the novel and the method on how this novel should be taught at school. The problems are formulated as follows: 1) How are the intrinsic elements developed in *Thirteen Reasons Why* novel by Jay Asher? 2) How are the motives for teen suicide depicted in the *Thirteen Reasons Why* novel by Jay Asher? 3) How can this novel be taught theoretically to the students?

The findings of this study are expected to present pieces of information how the popular Young Adult Novel are developed, additional knowledge about teens' problems and suicide prevention, and developing the method on how the controversial novel should be taught to the students.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

One of the ways to figure out the elements in a novel is by examining those that built it. Yet, there is no fixed list of terms of literary elements, since each expert has their theories. According to the Britannica Encyclopedia, there are six elements in a novel. Character, plot, scene or location, narrative method and point of view, scope or dimension, myth, symbol, and significance are the six elements in a novel. (Britannica, 2012)

Jessica Morrell stated that fiction has three main elements including plotting, character, and place, or setting. (Morrell, 2006). On the other hand, Kathleen Kuiper stated the very least elements that build a novel are plot, character, scene (setting), narrative method and point of view, scope (dimension) and myth, symbol, and significance. (Kuiper, 2012).

The elements in the literature are divided into two categories. Those are the intrinsic elements and extrinsic elements. The intrinsic elements of the novel are the elements that directly participates in building a story. The Intrinsic elements itself have five parts that build a novel or a story namely character, setting, plot, theme or statement, and subject matter. (Simaibang, 2017) . Based on those theories, the researcher concluded that there is still no fixed list of the main and intrinsic elements in literature, especially novels. Since this study is trying to examine the elements, the researcher is using the latest theory by Simaibang where the intrinsic elements in a novel consist of character, setting, plot, theme or statement, and subject matter.

The focus in this research is also about motives for teen suicide depicted in the novel. In Psychological Perspective, American Psychological Association described motive as "a reason offered as an explanation for or cause of an individual's behavior." (American Psychological Association, 2018). Richard Peter stated that at least, there are three limitations in the definition of Motives as follows:

"(1) It is used in contexts where conduct is being assessed and not simply explained, where there is a breakdown in conventional expectations. (2) It is

used to refer to a reason of a directed sort and implies a directed disposition in the individual whose conduct is being assessed, (3) It must state the reason why a person acts, a reason that is operative in the situation to be explained. The motive may coincide with his reason but it must be the: reason why he acts.” (Peters R. S., 2015)

From all those statements we can conclude that motive is a hidden purpose or reason underlying sort of those that drives someone to do something, which is should be found by further investigation or assessment.

The researcher used the first scientifically verified scale for evaluating suicide motivations to examine the motives for suicide in the novel. Alexis M May produced The Inventory of Motivations for Suicide Attempts (IMSA) in 2016, which is the most reliable and first scientifically verified tool for evaluating a person's motivations for suicide. The IMSA includes 10 five-item scales plus four additional items. The scales are based around feelings of:

1. Hopelessness, the belief that things can't get any better or that one's condition can't improve
2. Psychache, such an extremely emotional or psychological pain
3. Escape, the desire to escape from one's thoughts, feelings, or actions
4. Burdensomeness, the feeling that one is a burden to those around him or her
5. Low Belongingness, the feeling that his/herself is not accepted by his or her community
6. Fearlessness, the absence of fear which had prevented a suicide attempt at an earlier time
7. Problem-solving, the belief that suicide or suicide alone will solve his or her's problems
8. Impulsivity, the capability in acting in an unplanned way, often without reasoned thinking
9. Interpersonal Influence, the direct social pressures promoting suicide
10. Help-Seeking, the desire for help or care, from others

Literature has been incorporated in psychology to teach psychological principles and theories while also developing critical thinking abilities and gaining a better knowledge of human diversity and specialized demographics such as elderly folks. Many instructors believe that modern fiction represents society and that it is utilized to pique students' interest and build critical thinking skills. (Gibson, 2017)

After figuring out the elements and motives for teen suicide, the researcher were also analyzing how this novel should be taught to the students. In teaching novels, there are several approaches commonly used. They are New Criticism, Structuralism, Stylistics, Reader Response, Language-Based and Critical Literacy. (Van, 2009)

According to Van (2009), Hayhoe (1988, 15) point out that the reader-response approach is precisely the role of the reader in the act of reading. Moreover, before this, this role has not been sufficiently and properly addressed. Reader-Response addresses this problem by making the learners become an active participant(s) in the reading process.

Jeffrey Berman in *Surviving Literary Suicide* has recommended teachers to bring the topic of suicide when it appears in literature. The teachers should be honest with students about their implications. (University at Albany, 1999).

Not only him, later in 2019, Christina Dobbs - Boston University Assistant Professor- and Pamela Mason - Harvard Graduate School of Education Senior Lecturer- encourage educators to embrace the sensitive issues in the literature in their lesson plans. "*If you avoid teaching texts that can lead to difficult conversations or upset the status quo, they say, you may miss powerful learning opportunities.*" (Anderson J. , 2019) .

So, from those statements the researcher concludes that to discuss controversial book into the classroom is not about to focus on suicide but also the cause and the implications in real life, which can be an interesting discussion among students and teacher.

## RESEARCH METHOD

This research uses qualitative data to be studied and is part of qualitative research where the researcher is the main instrument to gather all the required data from several sources. This research is a content analysis research with theoretical approach where the objects of the research are studied theoretically to have a disciplined theory in the frame of literary creation and criticism. (Deshpande, 2018).

This research is concerning intrinsic elements and motives for teen suicide depicted in the novel entitled *Thirteen Reasons Why* by Jay Asher. Furthermore, the researcher will describe the theoretical implications of analyzing the novel toward the teaching of literary analysis.

To strengthen the validity of this study, the researcher will apply data triangulation. The researcher collected the data by triangulating the techniques from several sources namely: Novel *Thirteen Reasons Why*, Novel Authors' Jay Asher interviews, Book Readers, Suicidal People in Palembang, Readers with Suicidal Thoughts.

The collected the data from the novel entitled *Thirteen Reasons Why* and statements from the novel author's Jay Asher for answering all of the research questions. To enhance the strength of the data and analysis, the researcher did two peer discussions. 1) Discussions with three teenagers who had read the novel about the elements and how they perceived the novel, and 2) Discussions with twenty-seven suicidal people in Palembang in order to find out what is happening in suicidal person's thoughts and life in order to compare those with Hannah's.

Besides that, to strengthen the findings about theoretical implications in teaching the book, the researcher selected some reviews from the other readers who are stated themselves suicidal and how their experience in reading this book and the affect to their life in order to confirm if this book is seriously dangerous to those who are suicidal.

## FINDING AND DISCUSSION

### Finding

*The Intrinsic Elements developed in the Thirteen Reasons Why novel*

1) *Characters & Characterization*

There are more than 36 characters appearing in this novel. Yet 15 of them are the important ones. The protagonist is Clay Jensen while the antagonist is Hannah Baker. There are also 13 other supporting characters that are important to the story, they are:

1. Tony: The sidekick character that stood between Hannah and Clay. He was the one that Hannah trusted with the shoebox and the one who eased Clay's pain while listening to the tapes.
2. Justin Foley: Hannah's first kissed who later started a rumor that makes people think that Hannah was a slut. He was the one who was letting Bryce Walker raped his girlfriend.
3. Alex Standall: The one who made a list of Who's Hot & Who's Not in Freshmen Class that causing Hannah and Jessica stop being friends and Hannah became a joke to the whole school.
4. Jessica Davis: Hannah's first friend at school . She thought that Hannah was trying to take Alex from her so they were not becoming friends anymore
5. Tyler Down: Peeping Tom that stole Hannah's privacy. He even did not asking for apologize to Hannah and make her feel so unworthy.
6. Courtney Crimsen: The one she thought live with sincerity while in fact Hannah felt that she has been used by her.
7. Marcus Cooley: He played with Hannah and made her feel more unworthy by leaving her after he tried to grope her.
8. Zach Dempsey: He was a nice guy that was disappointed with Hannah. Later Hannah found out that he stole her notes of encouragement. Like the others, Zach leaved her without apologies nor explanation.
9. Ryan Shaver: He was Hannah friend in Poetry Group that stole Hannah's poem to be published anonymously in his Zine.
10. Bryce Walker: He loved to take advantages from people, especially women. He was the one who grabbed Hannah's ass in Blue Liquor for jokes and also the one who raped both Hannah and Jessica.
11. Jenny Kurtz: The 11<sup>th</sup> reason of Hannah's Suicide. The one who made Hannah felt guilty for involving her causing an accident.
12. Mr. Porter; Hannah's guidance counselor who failed for rescuing Hannah from committing suicide
13. Skye Miller: Clay's 8<sup>th</sup> Grade crush that showed some warning signs for suicide that Clay was finally trying to help.

## *2) Time and Society*

With two narrations delivered simultaneously, Jay Asher presented two sets of time according to Clay's reality and Hannah's story. Yet, the two sets of time are still in one society.

### *Clay's Time*

In this novel, the main time shown is the day when Clay post Hannah's Shoebox of Audiotapes to Jenny in the morning before school. Then the story went back to yesterday, one hour after school when he received the box until the overnight Clay spent to listen to all those tapes. After that, the story went back to the actual day when Clay going late to school and greet Skye.

### *Hannah's Time*

In the second narration, the time set since the first time Hannah moves into the town, which was the summertime before school until the day Hannah recorded all

those tapes – when she was a junior student. The tapes summed up things that happened to her in the last 3 years

This novel depicted today's common society in a small town. The town with only one post office, one park and some other places that even could be reached by walking and cycling. Clay and Hannah were lived together in the usual high-school student's society with all those dramatic events and parties.

### 3) *Plot*

The story started in the scene where Clay Jensen got lost in his mind while mailing a shoebox to Jenny. The shoebox received by Clay just yesterday - after school. The story started with the word "Sir?" from the Clerk that brought Clay back to reality. After he just finished mailing the shoebox and started his way to school, the story of Clay's journey listening to the set of tapes began. The story went back to when Clay received the box and found a set of tapes inside it. The tapes are actually, the records of Hannah Baker's monolog. Hannah Baker is one of Clay's classmates who just ended her life weeks ago. And she left the set of tapes to 12 people that are responsible for 13 reasons why she ended her life.

### 4) *Theme*

"Everything affects everything..." "This message was strongly delivered by Jay throughout the novel. Not only about how things affected Hannah when someone did something to her but also how a little action can bring a big difference in anyone's life. In the end, it explained how small things can become a big thing after snowball effects. And anyone could contribute to keep the snowball rolling or to stop it. Even though everyone on the tapes keeps the snowball effects rolling while Hannah's alive, but her audiotapes can do the opposite, to change things that should be done while she was alive. He even changes from someone aware but not brave enough to show that he cares, to someone who can reach out to someone who seems suicidal after he listened to Hannah's tapes.

### 5) *Subject Matter*

The subject matter of the story is that "How Hannah's tapes change Clay's Perspective and Behavior about Suicidal Person". From the start, we met Clay in the day where he is in the transition process. He was still processing the changes created after he listened to Hannah's set of tapes. "I don't think the coffee's kicked in yet," Is the utterance from the Post office clerk after seeing Clay having a hard time in the morning before school. Then the story went back to "Yesterday" the day when Clay just received the tapes and the day when he steps by step going back to understand what he had done and what happened in Hannah's Baker life presented in 14 chapters of the novel. "Yesterday" is not only yesterday but also the time when Clay was still the Old Clay. And the novel end in the chapter entitled "The Next Day – After Mailing The Tapes" which is the same day when Clay sent the tape in the first untitled chapter, represents the new Clay. The new Clay is the one who is brave enough to call and reach his friend who indicated suicidal after he didn't talk to her last night.

According to what the researchers found in the novel, it is confirmed that the main character of this story is Clay Jensen. The fact that Hannah's appears quite often with strong subplots, sometimes confuses the reader about the main plot of this novel. Those who forget about Clay are most likely those who are impressed by the power of Hannah's emotions delivered in the novel. Even so, the position of

Clay as the first narrator responding to Hannah Tapes producing the illusion that Clay's voice was the readers.

#### *The Motives for Teen Suicide Depicted in the Novel*

Hannah Baker is a high school student who ended her life with pills two weeks ago. Before she died, she recorded 13 reasons why she took the decision to end her life. In science, to do that action, there should be motives. Those motives for suicide according to The Inventory of Motivations for Suicide Attempts (IMSA) are hopelessness, psychache, escape, burdensomeness, low belongingness, fearlessness, problem-solving, impulsivity, interpersonal influence, and help-seeking. Some of them are indicated lying underneath Hannah's thoughts and behaviors in *Thirteen Reasons Why* novel. They are:

1. Hopelessness: It appeared after a series of painful events were happened in her life and saw no hope for things would get better.
2. Psychache: Hannah could not handle the pain caused by a snowball of her problems that keeps rolling and become too big.
3. Escape: Since there were no way out for her from the problems, she really need an escape which, according to Hannah, were committing suicide.
4. Burdensomeness: Hannah with her reputations and her problems would just drag another person to her problems which would be bother them. So by ending her life, she thought that no one would be involved in her problems
5. Low Belongingness: Hannah thought there no one she could trust and no one seemed care about her and no one really did something that made her feel seen, heard and worth.
6. Interpersonal Influence: By decided to end her life and left the audiotapes to those who she thinks responsible for her death, were showing that she wanted those people to change. She wanted people knew the repercussions of what they do so they can be more careful to do things towards the other.
7. Help Seeking: All she wanted was a person who sees her. Who asked her to stop thinking about ending her life. To make sure that she was worth living

#### *The Theoretical Impilications for Teaching ELT*

Since *Thirteen Reasons Why* exposes high school society and issues related to peer-relationship and mental health, the researcher set lessons plan for how this novel should be taught at high-school by using Teaching Empathy (with Reader-Response Approach).

The Author, Jay Asher stated that “*because of that, today we still think of books for teens as children’s books and so when you write a book that includes sensitive topics, it just seems even more controversial. What’s troubling to me about that is these are issues adults know that teens deal with. Not writing about them makes them something we don’t, or can’t talk about.*” (Strum, 2017) . When it comes to discussing this book, it will also bring those other sensitive issues in the classroom. It is not only suicide but also bullying, depression, and even sexual harassment. That is the complexity. Suicide cannot stand alone. So, This book and the discussion about it at school should be the safe ways for students and teachers to explore the topic.

### **Discussions**

#### *1) The Intrinsic Elements*

The five intrinsic elements are: 1) Characters, 2) Settings, 3) Plot, 4) Theme, and 5) Subject Matter. Since the author delivers the story with multiple narrators, each element got much deeper depictions, not one, but at least two perspectives in each element – which was Hannah's and Clay's.

Each character depicted not only visually, but more likely on how the characterizations perceived by Hannah or Clay. For example, in portraying Hannah's Characters, Clay stated that Hannah is a beautiful girl. This statement was confirmed in Hannah's story while she was picked by the coolest guy in school and labeled as one of the hottest girls in freshmen year.

As well as Clay characterization, Clay described himself as a shy person then validated by several events he implies how shy he was. Moreover, Clay also being told as a shy and nice guy by the ex-classmate he met at Monet's as well as Hannah told that Clay was kind of a person that is too good to be true. So, the readers can picture each character in this novel as a human with a complex personality and certain artfully experiences set by the author, as Kuiper's (2012) definition of characters.

The settings developed in this novel are quite unique. Although Hannah's and Clay's stories in a parallel set of place and time. With multiple-narrative, there are many plots in this story, Yet the main plot is on Clay's narrative while all the stories told by Hannah are part of Clay's experiences. Hannah's narrative is on the recordings Clay was listening to. And the chapters of the novel started and ended in Clay's reality so the researcher concludes that the main plot of this novel is what happened to Clay before, when and after listening to Hannah's tape.

With many stories presented in the novel, it is quite clear that the main theme is "Everything affects everything". It is not only about how the events caused by the action of repercussions of someone's actions affected Hannah's decisions in continued or ended her life but also how Hannah's tapes changed Clay personally. Yet, the subject matter of this novel is "How Hannah's tapes change Clay's Perspective and Behavior about Suicidal Person" or in short, Clay's transformation before and after listening to Hannah's tape.

Ifrah Ali (2014) in the journal article entitled "*The Structural Analysis of 'Thirteen Reasons Why', A Novel by Jay Asher*" breaks down the structure of the novel with 12 elements that 4 of them are the same elements inquired in this research. The same elements both this research and Ifrah Ali explored are Characters, Setting, Plot, and Theme.

In describing the important character, Ali (2014) tend to describe only Clay and Hannah. Ali stated that Clay is an ideal narrator in the novel for his objectivities while reacts to Hannah's tapes. This is agreed by the researcher since Clay was had no idea what he'd be listening to so he did not have such a set of expectations to distract his mind while reacting to the tapes. In some parts, Clay also assumed things differently from Hannah's words.

In describing the setting, Ali focused on the setting that Hannah told in the story. While the researcher marked the setting from Clay's experiences. There are also differences between how Ali and the researcher see the settings. For example, Ali stated that Eisenhower Park as "*Hannah planned to get her first kiss from Justin in this park.*" while Justin is the one who asked Hannah to met at the Eisenhower Park unexpectedly. About the kiss, it is something that Hannah was dreamed about not to be planned. She even had no idea how and when she would get her first kiss



with Justin at the moment. As stated by Hannah “*So when did you decide to kiss me, Justin? Was it during your walk to the park? Or did it simply happen when I slid into your arms?*” (Johnson, Augustus, & Agiro, 2012, p. 28)

The differences also found where Ali stated that Hannah's first house was the place where the old man died in the accident lived in. While the researcher found that the old man was not dead in the accident. It's the other one in the accident, a senior in Hannah and Clay's School.

The main plot explained by Ali is also focused on Clay's reality. It is the process when and after him received the set of tapes. Even though there are 13 sides of stories in the set of tapes, the whole novel also telling the story about Clay process and transformation in personality.

The main theme found by Ali is “How one's actions impact others”. It also implies to “everything affects everything” explained by the researcher. While Ali focused on how things affected Hannah, the researcher also found what Hannah did also affected those people she sent the message.

## *2) Motives for Teen Suicide Depicted in the Novel*

Before ended her life, Hannah recorded the stories of how and why she ended up decided to take her own life. With all those events happened to her, some people even questioned if Hannah's reasons make sense. To understand if Hannah's reasons corroborated in science, the researcher tried to identify the motives by using a set of questions in Psychometric Properties of the Inventory of Motivations for Suicide Attempts (IMSA) created by Alexis May & David Klonsky version April 29, 2012.

Later the researcher found that 7 of 10 items in IMSA were shown by Hannah in her stories and narratives. They are hopelessness, psychache/unbearability, escape, burdensomeness, low belongingness, influencing others, and help-seeking.

Hannah's hopelessness can be seen by how for the first time she still has her hopes to graduated from school and move on to her new life. But after more bad things happened to her, her mind was changed. The thoughts of just end her life become all she thought. The hopes seem to fly away as Hannah thinks there's nothing she could do to save her life. Even more, she recorded her last tape live from her bag as she knew that her one last try with Mr. Porter will be one more reason to end her life.

The Pyschache or unbearability clearly stated by Hannah in the 13<sup>th</sup> tapes. Where she said that she couldn't handle that alone anymore. It is just too much and complex. The decision to take her own life did not come easily. It is just like a snowball that has to keep rolling for three years until it hit her in the size she cannot handle.

Hannah needed no one would hurt her. No one would disappoint her. She hated the life she lived in where everyone seemed left her behind even though she dropped hints or put so much hope. It always ended up the way she never expected. Those things are too much for her. She needs everything to stop. And when she was suggested to move on, she moves out of her life.

Hannah also felt that she was a burden to someone else. The main point is a burden to her parents that was having a tough time. Hannah also pushed Clay away

from her because she can't drag him into her bad reputation. By staying alive she thought she might add problems to those around her.

Several times in the novel, Hannah said that she had no one to lean on. She wanted to talk to Clay but she couldn't. Whenever she put her hopes on someone else, there are always things that pushing those people away. And even Hannah thought she was clear in showing the warning signs of suicide, she later found out that no one cares, no one tried to ask or even stop her.

By ending her life, Hannah might be don't want to make those people sorry for what they did to her. She just wanted to show the scars left by those people and make them understand how their actions affected her, her life, and her decision to end her life. Even more, Hannah just wanted only 13 people knew about it, 12 people that responsible for the reasons plus Tony as the one who had the back up unless the 12 of those people disobey the rule Hannah made.

For almost three years of dealing with her problems, Hannah still looked for help during that time. The things Hannah did like suggesting discussion about suicide, trying to be friends with everyone that for the first time didn't seem to be able to hurt her, and getting help from her student guidance counselor, indicated how Hannah was looking for help but did not get that.

### *3) Theoretical Implications for English Language Teaching*

According to *Permendikbud No.37 Tahun 2018* about "*Perubahan atas Peraturan Menteri Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan Nomor 24 tahun 2016 tentang Kompetensi Inti dan Kompetensi Dasar Pelajaran pada Kurikulum 2013 pada Pendidikan Dasar dan Pendidikan Menengah*", there are four main competence objectives of Kurikulum 2013: 1) Spiritual behavior, 2) Social behavior, 3) Knowledge, 4) Skills. Teaching English in high school should put the knowledge and skills as the top priorities in setting the outcome of teaching and learning process.

Putting *Thirteen Reasons Why* novel into the curriculum could be challenging, Yet the results could be worth it. As Pamela Mason and Cristina Dobbs (2019) encourage educators to put the challenging book into the curriculum, so students could get such powerful learning opportunities. Moreover, if the books bring issues that might be relatable to students' life, this kind of learning process not only helps the students learning literature but also how to encounter the issues in real life.

English teachers might be benefited from the existence of English literary works that bring up sensitive issues. It opens the chance to not only teaching the language but also teaching the context and issues inside it. Yet to bring this kind of works to be discussed in the classroom might be challenging. When it comes to the topics about suicide, the same circumstances might be applied.

Ben Wolfe quoted by Georgia Hanshew Swing in *Choosing Life: Adolescent Suicide in Literature* listed what teachers should be considered when about to teach about suicide. The first is to consider whether any of the students dealing with traumatic incidents like suicide. Second, to approach suicide deeply especially in the context of the reasons and how it might be prevented. Third, to not hold back the books from the troubled students, teachers should be open to discussing the issue raised by students and find out how it might affect them. Fourth, giving the students ways for finding out more or getting help to discuss it

further. And the fifth is to learn the suicide quite deeply, from the warning signs, myth, facts to the prevention. (Swing, 1990)

Those statements are also supported by educators at Harvard Graduate School of Education, Christina Dobbs, and Pamela Mason. They said that teaching the challenging book might be tricky but if the teachers can successfully put that content into the curriculum, the learning process would be so powerful. It is because children need a safe space for hard stories that they may also encounter in their real life. And books are such a great tool to open up about those topics.

In teaching those kinds of books there are some things to be considered. First, distinguishing between challenged and inappropriate books. Consider the awards and reviews about the books. Second, knowing why the teachers have to bring this topic into the classroom. Third, assuring the students that the classroom is a safe space to discuss it with respect and safety. Forth, introducing the book and explain the urgencies of teaching that. Fifth, preparing for blowback because there will always be anyone who would complain about it. And sixth teach the whole book by connecting the content to broader learning outcomes. (Anderson J. , 2019)

To be open up about suicide in the school is also recommended by the Suicide Prevention Resource Center of the US and even the global health organization like World Health Organizations. It recommends the school to organize information and training sessions as well as mental health promotion activities to help students cope with their stressful situations. The WHO also recommends the school to create a culture where it is a safe place to share and discuss suicide or mental health issues.

So, it means that teachers could put the challenged book into the curriculum. As Anderson also stated that *Thirteen Reasons Why* by Jay Asher is the one of examples of Challenging Books, as well as many awards, had been received so far. It is possible to teach this book to the students.

Moreover, the publisher also released Classroom Lesson Plans to be the reference in teaching the book. Even the Centre for Suicide Prevention of Canada developed a set of Lesson plans for teachers teaching about suicide by using the novel that is still be accessed on their website. Moreover, the WHO also recommends teaching this in school.

In 2012, James S Chisholm and Brandie Trent published a journal article entitled "*Everything . . . Affects Everything*": Promoting Critical Perspectives toward Bullying with *Thirteen Reasons Why*" by gathering 10<sup>th</sup>-grade students responds toward the bullying depicted in *Thirteen Reasons Why*. They finally found that by using the novel to address the topic of bullying can help students to examine the issue critically and unpack the causes and effects of such behavior both inside and outside of school. (Chisholm & Trent, 2012)

So it is fascinating to teach the content and context of *Thirteen Reasons Why* using the reader-response approach in purpose to help students connecting their knowledge from the book to things they might be faced in real life. Furthermore, this novel contains numerous high-school-students'-life issues that could be discussed specifically.

## CONCLUSIONS

The conclusions are stated as follows:

- 1) The intrinsic elements developed in the novel *Thirteen Reasons Why* are as

complex as the issues brought up within. With dual-narratives, the readers can get two perspectives and gain more information about the details of each element. There are a lot of characters, settings, even plots appear in this novel. The shifts between perspectives and stories are also challenging because the stories go back and forth quickly. The combination of the complexity in the structure and emotions delivered in the story successfully makes this book becomes interesting and unique.

- 2) Motives for suicide found in the novel *Thirteen Reasons Why* are hopelessness, psychache, escape, burdensomeness, low belongingness, interpersonal influence, and help-seeking. Those are seven items from ten motives listed in the Inventory of Motivations for Teen Suicide.
- 3) By using the reader-response theory, the novel *Thirteen Reasons Why* could be taught properly in school not only to teach English but also empathy, suicide preventions, and some sensitive issues related to that.

## APPENDIX

### LESSON PLAN

School : SMA Negeri 1 Palembang  
Class/Semester : XI  
Theme : Elements in Literature: Theme  
Sub-Theme : Theme in *Thirteen Reasons Why*  
Meeting : 1 (Online Integration)  
Time Allocation: 2x45  
Subjects : English  
Date : Monday, 21 July 2020

#### **Objectives:**

1. To understand the theme (s) found in *Thirteen Reasons Why* Novel
2. To understand the theories of suicide
3. To encourage student's empathy to the characters through reading the novel
4. To empower students to be aware of suicidal signs and to be able to prevent it.
5. To be able to determine the comparison and relation of that fiction to student's real life.

#### **Pre-Learning Activities:**

1. Reading Warning Signs of Suicide
  - a. SAVE: Warning Signs of Suicide <https://save.org/about-suicide/warning-signs-risk-factors-protective-factors/>
  - b. AFSP: Risk Factors and Warning Signs of Suicide <https://afsp.org/risk-factors-and-warning-signs#what-leads-to-suicide->
2. Reading the novel *Thirteen Reasons Why*
3. Summarizing the theme(s) and some quotations related to the theme(s)

#### **Initial Activities: Teacher-led Discussion**

- Why do people end their life by suicide?
- The Complexity of Suicide
- Asking Students' opinions about Hannah's reasons

#### **Core Activities:**

- Have some of students present their summaries and discuss in large group
- Have students to make a script of 3 minutes monolog containing:
  - The theme(s) they found in the novel
  - What they feel while and after reading the novel
  - How relatable the theme to their lives
  - How to apply things they learned from the novel

#### **Post-Activities: Tasks**

- Have students make a 3 to 5 minutes videos with the script they've made

- Have students to upload it on Youtube

**Materials:**

- *Thirteen Reasons Why* Novel
- Links about Theories of Suicide
- Students' Youtube Accounts

**Assessment:**

Students Behaviors : Observe students' performance during discussion

Students Knowledge : Assessing students' scripts

Students Skills : Assessing students' scripts, videos, and feedback from the videos

Approved by  
Palembang, 30 June 2020

School Principal,

Teacher,

Nadiem

Hani A.R

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