An Analysis of Main Character in the Book "Bawang Merah and Bawang Putih"

Ni Luh Komang Puspa Dewi[1], I Gusti Ayu Mahatma Agung[2]

[1]Universitas Mahasaraswati Denpasar
pusdee776@gmail.com
[2] Universitas Mahasaraswati Denpasar
ayu.mahatma@unmas.ac.id

Abstract

Folk tales can be used as a medium to teach moral values to children. Folk tale is told from generation to generation through oral tradition. Since it is conveyed orally, several versions of the folk tale are sometimes found in society. This study aims to find out the differences in plot and characterization in the two versions of the folk tale *"Bawang Merah dan Bawang Putih"*. The descriptive qualitative method was applied in this study. The researchers analyzed the characters and plots in two folk tale books entitled *"Bawang Merah dan Bawang Putih"* and *"Bawang dan Kesuna"*. The data of characterization were classified and analyzed using the theory proposed by Mays (2019). Based on the analysis, the results showed that there were three differences in the characterization, namely differences in family relations, differences in parental behavior, and differences in personality. Furthermore, there were also differences found in the plot, namely unfortunate events, unexpected gifts, evil ideas, and sad endings.

Keywords: Folk Tales, Main Character, School-Age Children

1. INTRODUCTION

Education is a learning process that helps mold each person's creativity, character, and moral ideals. Humanity needs education very much. Every educated person can broaden their knowledge and establish a solid basis for building their independence and responsibility (Nanda et al., 2021). Every ethnic group in Indonesia has a considerable number of folklore that contain local wisdom and values that can be listened to for character education. Many benefits can be obtained by using folklore as a means of educating the nation's character. Apart from being a successor to the values and spirit of local wisdom, the use of folklore for character education is also to preserve the existence of folklore itself. The same applies to children's games, whose use for the formation of national character also means the preservation of children's games themselves (Suarka, 2011). Folklore is an oral tradition passed down orally (Hastuti, 2019). The three categories of folklore are myths, legends, and fairy tales. Folklore typically follows

patterns. For instance, a variety of expressive patterns are used in folklore. Using expressions to reveal information through language is one example. First and foremost, folklores can be used as educational resources. Secondly, it can be used as a form of social protest.

Understanding a literary work implies being familiar with its key components. Character is one of the key components of literary works because it allows readers to comprehend the acts, ideas, and dialogues that characters explore (Paruntu, 2016). One literary component that is essential to comprehend a literary work's overall story is its character. Characters are the people, animals, or imagined beings that a writer creates to appear in a story and serve the writer's objectives (Hasby & Sudirman, 2019). The main character is the favored character in a story. A protagonist is a character who the readers admire. In contrast, an antagonist is a character who causes conflicts in a story (Bulu, 2018).

The character presentation demonstrates the author's ability to create characters in a story. The author mostly employs characterization to make it easier for the reader to understand the characters in the story. It signifies that characterization is the act of characterizing a character by describing them to the readers. It is conducted so that the readers can comprehend the characters in the novel more easily (Hanna, 2016). Folklore is not only interesting for elementary school children but is also full of values and culture. Folklore, as part of oral literature, has the function of forcing the enactment of social norms and social control, as well as a tool for children's education (Emzir & Rohman, 2015).

One genre of literary works is children's stories, which are devoted to children as the target readers. Children's stories are usually written in a different form from adult stories so that they can be well received and understood. This children's story is also an imaginative depiction of a child's life in the form of a child's language structure (Arlyanti et al., 2018). However, numerous pieces of evidence demonstrate that the phenomenon in our lives deviates from expectations, including the use of electronic gadgets and social media platforms like Facebook, Instagram, and games. Internet usage is out of control and children have unrestricted access to it (Sipahutar et al., 2021). As a result, children nowadays are less interested in traditional folktales. Therefore, it is necessary to introduce folktales as a cultural heritage and educational tool to children.

There were several papers about literature from previous studies which were related to this topic. The first one is the article written by Arlyanti et al. (2018). The data of the study were analyzed by qualitative research through the technique of distributing a characteristic questionnaire. Based on the results, it can be concluded that the characteristics of the fourth graders of SD Negeri Sambong Permai gave rise to two aspects of the most dominant characteristics of all students in the class. These aspects

include the aspect of knowledge development, namely students' activities, students' interests, students' experiences related to knowledge, especially in terms of reading, and so on. The aspect of social development includes people who are often invited to play, study together, activities at home after school, activities outside school hours, and so on. Meanwhile, the type of story chosen by the researcher was a story that has been adapted to the characteristics of the students and was selected from the best manuscripts of the Children's Story Reading Competition (LMCA) in 2011 and 2014. The stories are entitled "Honesty and Discipline" and "How Great He Is". The selection of the story has certainly been adjusted to the characteristics found previously in the fourth-grade students of SD Negeri Sambong Permai.

The second article was written by Parmini (2015). The study was analyzed by using the hermeneutic method. The Balinese stories treated for third-grade elementary school students in Ubud can be stated to support the implementation of Hindu religious teachings, especially the *Trikaya Parisuda* element. *Trikaya Parisuda* teaches about thinking, saying, and doing the right thing. Balinese folk tales can serve as a reflection of daily life in an effort to develop moral character and increase emotional intelligence. In addition to the benefits of character building for students, telling folk tales to students also makes Bali more known to students. These stories are not only known by the teachers who teach them but also by the students. Books containing Balinese stories are beneficial. In short, the use of Balinese stories for student character education makes Balinese folklore more sustainable.

The third article was written by Ardhyantama (2017). The study was analyzed by literature research or literature study. Folklore is a literary work that is close to children. Taken from stories that are widely circulated in the community, folklore is easily enjoyed by children. Characters and scenes in folklore can be used as examples and mediators for teachers and parents to teach good character to children. Not only can good characters be used as examples for children, folklore usually contains disgraceful acts that parents can use to remind children of the consequences of these actions. Thus, character formation from an early age can be easily done through folklore.

The fourth article was written by Jannah & Kurnia (2019). The study was analyzed using qualitative research methodology. This study centers on four main issues, specifically the self-deception and hypocrisy in the Boss Baby film, the underlying factors that contribute to the manifestation of hypocrisy in the Boss Baby film, and the revelations surrounding the main character's self-deception and hypocrisy. The researchers uncovered a total of eleven data points during their investigation. These included five instances of self-deception, as well as four distinct types of hypocrisy. Additionally, the

researchers identified a factor of hypocrisy related to carnal desires and obtained a new information regarding self-deception. The findings of the study indicate that the protagonist's true desire was to have a family rather than attaining a high-ranking position.

The fifth article was written by Fitriani (2019). Qualitative research was employed to analyze the study. The Id, ego, and superego are among the concepts from Sigmund Freud's theory that form the basis of the psychological aspect theory. The identity of the main character was his unfavourable perception of an unfair life brought on by the negative reactions of others around him. It was a pleasure principle that functioned via first-order thinking. The ego of the main character was to murder those who are wrong. It was a reality principle that utilized secondary process thinking to satiate every id want. The superego of the main character was preserving the lives of virtuous people. It was a moral principle that was idealistically represented in society's and parents' norms.

Based on these five conclusions, this study has differences in terms of research problems and data sources. In addition, the researchers want to introduce Indonesian folk tales, especially children's folk tales. Nowadays, school-age children and parents lack interest in reading local folktales, such as *Bawang Merah and Bawang Putih*. Hopefully, this research may spark interest in reading and attract people to read local folktales. It alludes to how children's characters are created since the tale features both good and terrible characters. The present study distinguishes itself from prior research by utilizing locally-sourced data derived from Indonesian narratives, with a particular focus on Bali. This study aims to facilitate the preservation of local stories among younger generations, thereby preventing their loss over time.

2. RESEARCH METHOD

In this study, the researchers used the descriptive qualitative method. According to Sugiyono (2014), the descriptive analysis method describes the data obtained as it is, without attempting to draw generalizations or conclusions that apply to the general audience. The researchers read the story in two different versions entitled "*Bawang Merah dan Bawang Putih*" and "*Bawang dan Kesuna*". The story of "*Bawang Merah dan Bawang Putih*" was obtained from the English First website and the story of "*Bawang dan Kesuna*" was obtained from the book written by Made Taro. The researchers highlighted the part of the story which shows different characterization and plot. The researchers classified and analyzed the data by using the theory proposed by Mays (2019).

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Based on the analysis, the researchers found differences in the characterization and plot in the two versions of the folk tale entitled *"Bawang Merah dan Bawang Putih"* and *"Bawang dan Kesuna"*. The data was classified and analyzed based on the theory proposed by Mays (2019). There are three differences found in the characterization, namely differences in family relations, differences in parental behavior, and differences in personality. Furthermore, there are four differences found in the plot, namely unfortunate events, unexpected gifts, evil ideas, and sad endings.

3.1 Characterization

One literary component that is essential to comprehend a literary work is its character. Characters are the people, animals, or imagined beings that an author creates to appear in a story and serve the author's objectives (Hasby & Sudirman, 2019).

Table 1. Differences in family relations

Bawang Merah dan Bawang Putih	Bawang dan Kesuna
"One day, as he came home from traveling, he brought a woman and her daughter along with him. He wanted to marry this woman. So, Bawang Putih now had a stepmother and a stepsister who is named Bawang Merah." (English First, 2020)	"Once upon a time, there were two sisters Bawang and Kesuna who lived with their parents in a village." (Taro, 2014)

Based on the data shown in table 1, we can see that the *Bawang Merah dan Bawang Putih* version shows that Bawang Merah and Bawang Putih are stepsisters because Bawang Putih's father married Bawang Merah's mother after coming home from traveling. However, in *Bawang dan Kesuna* version, we can see that Bawang and Kesuna are siblings because they originally lived together and they have the same parents. Therefore, it can be concluded that there is a difference in the family relations between the two versions.

Table 2. Differences in parental behavior

Bawang Merah dan Bawang Putih	Bawang dan Kesuna
"When her father went to trade, her stepmother and Bawang Merah would treat Bawang Putih like a servant. Bawang Putih did all the work that was ordered by her stepmother. She cleaned the house, cooked, washed clothes, and looked for firewood." (English First, 2020)	"To the contrary, Kesuna was a quiet, honest, and diligent girl. She did almost all the household chores. In spite of her diligence, her parents seemed to love Bawang more, for she was a great pretender and her parents believed whatever she said." (Taro, 2014)

Based on the data shown in table 2, in *Bawang Merah dan Bawang Putih* version, we can see that the behavior of Bawang Putih's stepmother will change when Bawang Merah's father is not at home. It is stated that Bawang Putih's stepmother only loves her child, while Bawang Putih is always told to do housework without her father's knowledge. While in the version of *Bawang dan Kesuna*, it can be seen that both parents love Bawang even though Kesuna is diligent in doing all the housework. It is because Bawang is good at lying, which makes her parents love Bawang very much.

Table 3. Difference in Personality

Bawang Merah dan Bawang Putih	Bawang dan Kesuna
"Every morning, her stepmother and Bawang Merah took turns shouting, "Hey Bawang Putih, wash my clothes!" Not yet finished washing clothes, Bawang Putih would then be called by her stepmother. "Bawang Putih, prepare breakfast now! We are hungry." "Ok... Okay, mom."" (English First, 2020)	"She pretended to be busy boiling water and feeding the firewood into the clay stove. That was not all. She even made up a story about what Kesuna had done during her mother's absence. She lied, telling her mother that Kesuna had done nothing at all. She claimed that it was she who had done all the jobs alone." (Taro, 2014)

Based on the data shown in table 3, in *Bawang Merah dan Bawang Putih* version, it can be seen that Bawang Putih is always ordered to do something, especially housework. Bawang Putih is very diligent in doing all the housework well, while Bawang Merah only ordered Bawang Putih and did not help or participate in doing the work. Whereas in the *Bawang dan Kesuna version,* it is explained that Bawang Merah lied and pretended that she was doing the work given by their parents. Bawang Merah was very good at lying, so she looked diligent while Bawang Putih looked lazy. In fact, it was Bawang Merah who did not intend to help the work that was being done by Bawang Putih.

3.2 Plot

According to Perrine (in Hartiningsih, 2001), plot is the sequence of incidents or events of which a story is composed. Plot is a set of events that contain rising action, complication, climax, and falling action that happen in the novel.

Table 4. Unfortunate Event

Bawang Merah dan Bawang Putih	Bawang dan Kesuna
"One day, Bawang Putih went to the river to wash clothes. She was sleepy and hungry, her body was weak. While washing, Bawang Putih didn't realise that her stepmother's favorite shawl had washed away. When she put all the clothes into the basket, she was surprised to find her stepmother's scarf was not there." (English First, 2020)	"Broken-hearted, she left the house. She wandered about alone, not knowing which way to turn. She sat under a shady tree to have a rest. Suddenly a yellow c*erukcuk* bird was singing on a branch of the tree. She was in such despair that she wished the bird would put an end to all her suffering." (Taro, 2014)

Based on the data shown in table 4, in *Bawang Merah dan Bawang Putih* version, we can see that Bawang Putih had an unlucky day when she washed clothes in the river, and she lost her mother's favorite shawl. Bawang Putih was confused because she realized she had not seen where the shawl was drifting. While in the *Bawang dan Kesuna* version, it can be seen that Kesuna is feeling sad after what happened before. She is desperate and does not know what to do until she meets a *cerukcuk* bird and she hopes that the bird will be able to end her life. But fate said otherwise, unlucky for Kesuna because the *cerukcuk* bird could not end her life and could not get rid of all the suffering she was experiencing.

Table 5. Unexpected Gift

Bawang Merah dan Bawang Putih	Bawang dan Kesuna
""Bawang Putih, this is the red scarf you are looking for. Oh, I want to give you a gift. A pumpkin for you, because you helped me. Choose which one you like." On the table, there were both small and large pumpkins. Bawang Putih chose a small pumpkin, because she also had to carry a basket full of clothes home. "Cut the pumpkin and cook it! We are starving because of you!" Bawang Putih took the knife and split the pumpkin. What a surprise, the pumpkin was full of sparkling and expensive jewelry." (English First, 2020)	"The *cerukcuk* bird flew down and started to peck with its beak on Kesuna's head. She thought her head must be badly wounded. But instead, a golden floral arrangement was formed on her head." (Taro, 2014)

Based on the data shown in table 5, it can be seen in the *Bawang Merah and Bawang Putih* version that after Bawang Putih helped the grandmother to do the housework, the grandmother gave Bawang Putih a gift in the form of a pumpkin, and the grandmother asked Bawang Putih to choose one of the two pumpkins that the grandmother had. Bawang Putih chose a small pumpkin because it was easier for her to carry it. After arriving home, Bawang Putih cut the pumpkin and she was surprised because the contents inside the pumpkin were jewelry. Bawang Putih did not think that the pumpkin was an unexpected gift from the grandmother she helped. While in the *Bawang dan Kesuna* version, it can be seen that when Kesuna asked the yellow *cerukcuk* bird to peck her head in the hope that she would die because her crown was pecked by the yellow *cerukcuk* bird. However, Kesuna's hopes vanished when she saw an unexpected gift given by the yellow *cerukcuk* bird. Kesuna's head was attached to a golden flower arrangement after her head was pecked by the yellow bird.

Table 6. Evil Idea

Bawang Merah dan Bawang Putih	Bawang dan Kesuna
""Looks like I have an idea. Ha Ha Ha." The next day, the stepmother and Bawang Merah went to the river. They deliberately washed away the red scarf. Then secretly, they followed the veil as it was washed away. Sure enough, the red scarf was picked up by the old grandmother. The stepmother and Bawang Merah followed the old grandmother who went up the mountain. As they walk, Bawang Merah complained about how far it was." (English First, 2020)	"Finally, Bawang and her parents found out how Kesuna got that jewelry. Bawang wanted to meet the yellow *cerukcuk* herself. So her parents pretended to be angry with her. She was beaten with a broom, just as Kesuna was. Bawang pretended to cry and ran into the forest." (Taro, 2014)

Based on the data shown in table 6, in the *Bawang Merah dan Bawang Putih* version, after knowing what gifts Bawang Putih got from the grandmother, Bawang Merah and her mother wanted to get the same thing, even more than what Bawang Putih got. Then Bawang Merah and her mother came up with an evil idea by imitating what Bawang Putih did so that she got the prize. In Bawang dan Kesuna's version, while Bawang is thinking about evil things to get the same jewelry as Kesuna's, she goes to the forest to meet a yellow niche with the same condition when Kesuna went to the forest after the incident she was slandered by Bawang.

Table 7. Sad Ending

Bawang Merah dan Bawang Putih	Bawang dan Kesuna
""On the table, there are two pumpkins, one large and one small. Choose one pumpkin, as a gift from me." And of course, the stepmother and Bawang Merah chose the largest pumpkin. On the way, the stepmother splits the big pumpkin. "Mom, let's just open this pumpkin now, the old grandmother will not know." Yeah, let's open this. I'm also curious." However, they were in for quite a surprise. Because inside the pumpkin were venomous animals, such as snakes, scorpions, spiders and centipedes. They were both bitten by a snake. The stepmother and Bawang Merah died from the snakebite." (English First, 2020)	"After she met the yellow *cerukcuk* she asked the bird to peck her all over. The yellow *cerukcuk* flew down to where Bawang stood. She started to peck her head, ears, neck, wrists, fingers, and ankles. But instead of gold and diamond jewelry, the bird left wound wherever she pecked. Until finally the greedy Bawang died in that very place." (Taro, 2014)

Based on the data shown in table 7, in the *Bawang Merah dan Bawang Putih* version, after carrying out an evil plan, Bawang Merah and her mother got what they wanted. They got the same pumpkin as Bawang Putih. They were very happy and rushed home to open the pumpkin given by the grandmother. On the way, Bawang Merah and her mother opened the pumpkin in the hope that they would get a lot of jewelry, but their hopes were dashed. How surprised they were after opening the pumpkin because it contained poisonous animals, one of which was a snake. The snake pecked Bawang

Merah and her mother's feet, and finally, they both died because they were in the middle of the forest and no one helped. While in *Bawang dan Kesuna* version, after meeting with the yellow *cerukcuk* bird, Bawang asked the yellow *cerukcuk* to peck at the crown, ears, neck, hands, feet, fingers, and all over her body. She hoped that she would get jewelry like the one given to Kesuna. However, Bawang was not so lucky. It was not the jewelry she got, after being pecked by the yellow bird, Bawang's whole body was injured, making her die.

4. CONCLUSION

Based on the analysis of the main character in a folk tale book *Bawang Merah and Bawang Putih*, it can be concluded there are three differences in the characterization and four differences in the plot. The differences in the characterization are family relations, parental behavior, and personality. The differences in the plot are unfortunate events, unexpected gifts, evil ideas, and sad endings. Therefore, it can be concluded that there are differences in characterization and plot in the two versions of the folk tale *Bawang Merah dan Bawang Putih*.

The purpose of this study is to find out the differences in plot and characterization in the two versions of the folk tale *"Bawang Merah dan Bawang Putih"*. The researchers realized that there are many things related to characters in daily life, especially those related to characterization, which needs further research. It is suggested that future researchers can analyze more folk tales for school-age children so that children can get hidden messages that are good and educative from the stories.

REFERENCES

Ardhyantama, V. (2017). Pendidikan Karakter melalui Cerita Rakyat pada Siswa Sekolah Dasar. *Indonesian Journal of Primary Education*, *1*(2), 95–104. https://ejournal.upi.edu/index.php/IJPE/article/view/10819/6820

Arlyanti, I., Kosasih, K., & Apriliya, S. (2018). Pemilihan Bahan Ajar Cerita Anak berdasarkan Karakteristik Siswa SD. *PEDADIDAKTIKA: Jurnal Ilmiah Pendidikan Guru Sekolah Dasar*, *5*(1), 221–231. https://ejournal.upi.edu/index.php/pedadidaktika/article/view/7315/6013

Bulu, M. (2018). Conflict Analysis of the Main Characters in Short Stories by Edgar Allan Poe. *PIONEER: Journal of Language and Literature*, *10*(1), 1–12. https://doi.org/10.36841/pioneer.v10i1.183

Emzir, E. & Rohman, S. (2015). *Teori dan Pengajaran Sastra*. Jakarta: Raja Grafindo Persada.

English First. (2020). *Bawang Merah Bawang Putih*. Retrieved from: https://www.ef.co.id/englishfirst/kids/blog/bawang-merah-bawang-putih-cerita-dongeng-pendek-bahasa-inggris/#

Fitriani, Y. (2019). Analysis of Psychological Aspects of The Main Character in Movie "Joker" Based on Sigmund Freud Theory. *Humanitatis*, *6*(1), 109–118. https://doi.org/10.30812/humanitatis.v6i1.559

Hanna, I. D. (2016). An Analysis of The Main Characters' Conflicts in Jane Austen Novel Entitled "Sense and Sensibility." *Wacana Didaktika*, *4*(2), 156–170. https://doi.org/10.31102/wacanadidaktika.4.2.156-170

Hasby, M. A., & Sudirman, S. (2019). An Analysis of The Main Characters' Conflicts in Oscar Wilde's Novel "The Importance of Being Earnest." *Jurnal Ilmu Sosial Dan Pendidikan*, *3*(3), 288–299. http://dx.doi.org/10.36312/jisip.v3i3.954

Hastuti, H. (2019). Citra Tetuntel Tuntel Dan Tegodek Godek Dalam Cerita Rakyat Dari Lombok Nusa Tenggara Barat Karya G. Parman Dan Slamet Riyadi Ali. *Humanitatis: Journal of Language and Literature*, *5*(2), 140–147. https://doi.org/10.30812/humanitatis.v5i2.461

Jannah, K., & Kurnia, D. M. (2019). The Analysis of Main Character's Self-Deception and Hypocrisy in the Film Boss Baby. *PIONEER: Journal of Language and Literature*, *11*(1), 32. https://doi.org/10.36841/pioneer.v11i1.433

Mays, K. J. (2019). *The Norton Introduction to Literature*. New York: W. W. Norton & Company.

Nanda, D. D., Simbolon, B., Damanik, F. A., & Sembiring, Y. B. (2021). Moral Value and Character Building Education in Folklore From Central Java "Timun Mas." *Journal of Languages and Language Teaching*, *9*(1), 85–91. https://doi.org/10.33394/jollt.v9i1.3319

Parmini, N. P. (2015). Eksistensi Cerita Rakyat dalam Pendidikan Karakter Siswa SD di Ubud. *Jurnal Kajian Bali*, *5*(2), 441–460. https://ojs.unud.ac.id/index.php/kajianbali/article/view/16784/11057

Paruntu, K. E. N. (2016). Analisis Karakter Utama dalam Novel If I Stay Karya Gyle Forman. *Jurnal Elektronik Fakultas Sastra Universitas Sam Ratulangi*, *2*(2), 1–15. https://ejournal.unsrat.ac.id/index.php/jefs/article/view/12325

Sipahutar, R. A., Siantury, R., & Sembiring, Y. (2021). The Value and Character Building Education in Folklore From Bataknese "Sigale-Gale." *JOLLT Journal of Languages and Language Teaching*, *9*(1), 111–116. https://doi.org/10.33394/jollt.v9i1.3228

Suarka, I. N. (2011). *Nilai Karakter Bangsa dalam Permainan Tradisional Anak-Anak Bali*. Denpasar: Udayana University Press.

Sugiyono, S. (2014). *Metode Penelitian Pendidikan Pendekatan Kuantitatif, Kualitatif dan R&D*. Bandung: Alfabeta.

Taro, M. (2014). *Bawang dan Kesuna*. Jakarta: Balai Pustaka.