

COMPARING PERSPECTIVES THEMES ON LIFE, LOVE, AND DEATH IN "THE FAULT IN OUR STARS" AND "SURAT KECIL UNTUK TUHAN"

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ABSTRACT

This study compares attitudes towards life, love, and death between John Green's novel "The Fault in Our Stars" and Agnes Davonar's novel "Surat Kecil untuk Tuhan". The comparison shows that both novels have different attitudes towards life, love, and death. Depiction of death in both novels affects the character's understanding of life and love. Western civilization in "The Fault in Our Stars" manifests individualism and freedom of the self, while Eastern civilization in "Surat Kecil untuk Tuhan" manifests spirituality and society. This study finds that the portrayal of death and love in the two novels is very different, and these are based on the cultural environment and experience-based of the characters.

Keywords: Life, Love, Death, Cultural Context, Comparative Analysis.

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INTRODUCTION

Life, love, and death are all common themes that have been sublimely incorporated into the threads of human existence and shape our experiences, feelings and perceptions over time and in different cultures. In literature, as a portrayal of humanity, these themes are often studied in rich and penetrating ways, like in these two novels, 'The Fault in Our Stars' by John Green and 'Surat Kecil untuk Tuhan' by Agnes Davonar, pose strong analyses of these issues only from different cultural perspectives.

As readers who were deeply influenced by the problems of life, love, and death in Agnes Davonar's 'Surat Kecil untuk Tuhan', the researchers interested to compare the novels which is not similar in terms of language but have the same themes. Having developed an emotional stake in the film adaptation of John Green's 'The Fault in Our Stars', the researchers felt sought to read the original book and compare it with 'Surat Kecil untuk Tuhan'.

'The Fault in Our Stars' is the story of two American teenagers, Hazel and Augustus, who grapple to accept death and love. The novel has the richness of life, love, and death and questions the purpose of life, the power of love, and the non-reversibility of death. In contrast, 'Surat Kecil

untuk Tuhan' is the tale of Keke, a young Indonesian girl, and how she bravely and confidently faces her own mortality. The novel employs a distinct attitude towards life and love and death with respect to the cultural, social and religious aspects of Indonesia.

It is the aims of this paper to contrast the views of life, love, and death in these two novels. By contrasting similarity and differences in portraying human life preceding death, this study aims to examine the reasons behind similarities and differences of human feelings, beliefs, and values facing the greatest challenge of life by comparative thematic analysis.

Research Questions:

1. How do the novels portray the theme of death, and what impact does it have on the character's perspectives on life and love?
2. How does the cultural context of the novels shape the character's understanding of life, love, and death?

RESEARCH METHOD

2.1 Research Design

The researchers applied a Qualitative Research where this method focuses on understanding the meaning of the story specifically on the theme. The researchers also used a Comparative Case Study where this method involves comparing and contrasting the two novels to identify perspectives on the theme.

2.2 Data Collection Methods

- Close-reading: Carefully read and annotate the novels to identify themes, motifs, and characters development.
- Note-taking: focus observations while reading the novels.

2.3 Data Analysis

The data analysis involves two main approaches: thematic analysis is used to identify and compare themes relating to life, love, and death in both novels, allowing for an in-depth exploration of the author's perspectives on these universal human experiences. The second approach is comparative analysis which is used to compare the depiction of themes between the two novels including characters development, and the cultural context in both novels, highlighting similarities and differences that reveal the unique cultural and literary context of each work.

FINDING AND DISCUSSION

Comparative literature is a branch of literary science that compares and analyzes two or more literary texts from different languages and cultures. This comparison aims to understand the literary practices of different cultures, languages, and times in comparative analysis, thus producing complex and entertaining literary properties that cross national, linguistic, and cultural boundaries ([CLRN team](#), 2025). The researchers choose the modern definition of comparative that known universally as to comparing two or more things. Such as this paper, to compare two novels that are popular in their own countries which they are John Green's 'The Fault in Our Stars' from United States and Agnes Davonar's 'Surat Kecil untuk Tuhan' from Indonesia.

Previously, the researchers have sorted out some important sentences contained in each novel. The following are:

'The Fault in Our Stars' by John Green

1. *"Some infinities are bigger than other infinities."* - Augustus Waters (Green, 2012, p. 258)
This quote shows that there are differences in experiences and perspectives on life and love. Augustus Waters tries to explain to Hazel that the love they have is different and has immense meaning more than anything else.
2. *"I am in love with you, and I know that love is just a shout into the void, and that oblivion is inevitable, and that we're all doomed, and that it doesn't matter."* - Augustus Waters (Green, 2012, p. 260)
This quote shows that love can be something very powerful and very meaningful, even in the midst of the realization of death and uncertainty. Here Augustus Waters expresses his love for Hazel by showing that love can be a source of strength and meaning.
3. *"You can die but once, and I have died once, and it was terrible. So I will live forever, or die trying."* - Augustus Waters (Green, 2012, p. 218)
This quote shows that Augustus Waters has experienced death symbolically and wants to live forever. This shows that he wants to live a meaningful life and does not want to give up on death which he knows is waiting for him sooner or later.
4. *"The universe is a pretty big place. If it's just us, seems like an awful waste of space."* - Augustus Waters (Green, 2012, p. 157)
This quote shows that Augustus Waters questions the meaning of life and whether in this vast universe there is only himself even though the world is full of creatures. This shows that he wants to find meaning and purpose in life.
5. *"I loved him so much. I loved Augustus Waters. I loved him for his crooked smile, his silly nicknames, and his wide curious eyes."* - Hazel Grace Lancaster (Green, 2012, p. 260)
This quote shows that Hazel loves Augustus very much and appreciates his uniqueness and goodness. This shows that love can be a source of strength and meaning in life.

'Surat Kecil untuk Tuhan' by Agnes Davonar

1. *"Aku percaya bahwa Tuhan selalu ada di sampingku, memberikan kekuatan dan harapan."* - Keke (Davonar, 2012, p. 150)
Translate: "I believe that God is always beside me, giving me strength and hope."
This quote shows that Keke has a strong faith in God and believes that God will always be with her in every situation, including in the face of death that is ahead of her.
2. *"Kematian bukanlah akhir dari segalanya, melainkan awal dari kehidupan yang sebenarnya."* - Keke (Davonar, 2012, p. 200)
Translate: "Death is not the end of everything, but the beginning of the real life."
This quote shows that Keke believes that death is not the end of life, but rather her transition to a better and eternal life.
3. *"Aku tidak takut mati, karena aku percaya bahwa Tuhan akan selalu menyertai aku."* - Keke (Davonar, 2012, p. 120)
Translate: "I am not afraid of death, because I believe that God will always be with me."
This quote shows that Keke is not afraid to face death because she believes that God will always be with her and give her strength and protection.

4. *"Hidup ini singkat, tapi aku percaya bahwa setiap detik yang aku jalani adalah kesempatan untuk membuat perbedaan."* - Keke (Davonar, 2012, p. 100)

Translation: "Life is short, but I believe that every second I live is an opportunity to make a difference."

This quote shows that Keke believes that life is short and precious, and she wants to use every opportunity to make a positive difference.

5. *"Cinta adalah kekuatan yang paling besar di dunia ini, dan aku percaya bahwa cinta akan selalu ada di hatiku."* - Keke (Davonar, 2012, p. 250)

Translate: "Love is the most powerful force in this world, and I believe that love will always be in my heart."

This quote shows that Keke believes that life is short and precious, and she wants to use every opportunity to make a positive difference.

From the excerpts above, we can see that there are significant differences that refer to the themes and meanings of each novel. The following summary can be shared by the researcher:

Portrayal of Death and Its Impact

In "The Fault in Our Stars", death is portrayed as a bitter and painful experience. As Augustus Waters says, *"You can die but once, and I have died once, and it was terrible. So, I will live forever, or die trying."* (Green, 2012, p. 218). This shows that death can be an opportunity to appreciate life.

In "Surat Kecil untuk Tuhan", death is portrayed as a spiritual experience that brings hope and trust in God. As the protagonist says, *"Aku percaya bahwa Tuhan selalu ada di sampingku, memberikan kekuatan dan harapan."* ("I believe that God is always beside me") (Davonar, 2012, p. 150). This shows that death can be an opportunity to strengthen faith. This value reflects the eastern culture inherent in many Indonesians who emphasize spirituality.

Impact on Character Perspectives

The depiction of death in both novels affects the character's perspectives on life and love. In "The Fault in Our Stars", Hazel and Augustus learn to appreciate the life and love they have. As Hazel says, *"I loved him so much. I loved Augustus Waters. I loved him for his crooked smile, his silly nicknames, and his wide curious eyes."* (Green, 2012, p. 260).

Thus, this analysis shows that the depiction of death and love in both novels has significant differences, which are influenced by the cultural context and experiences of the characters. Cultural context plays an important role in shaping the character's understanding of life, love, and death in both novels.

Western Culture in "The Fault in Our Stars"

John Green's "The Fault in Our Stars" reflects Western cultural ideals of freedom and individualism. The novel's characters, for instance, Hazel and Augustus, illustrate that they are free to choose what they want and determine their own life purpose. They illustrate that love and relationships are something that can give them strength and life purpose.

Eastern Culture in "Surat Kecil untuk Tuhan"

The novel "Surat Kecil untuk Tuhan" by Agnes Davonar portrays the essence of the Eastern culture that considers spirituality and society. The protagonist of the novel illustrates that death

is a means to reaffirm faith and belief in God. The novel also illustrates that life and death can be provided with a higher and spiritual framework.

Both novels influence cultural background on the characters' understanding of life, love and death. In "The Fault in Our Stars," through the characters, it is discovered that love and relationships can be a source of meaning and strength in one's life. While in "Surat Kecil untuk Tuhan", the protagonist shows that death can be an opportunity to strengthen faith and trust in God.

CONCLUSION

A comparative analysis of the novels "The Fault in Our Stars" by John Green and "Surat Kecil untuk Tuhan" by Agnes Davonar shows that the two novels depict diverse opinions regarding life, love, and death. Death in the two novels affects the understanding of life and love by characters.

Death in "The Fault in Our Stars" is a bitter and unpleasant experience, but also something that one should relish the life that they had. Death in "Surat Kecil untuk Tuhan" is an experience that is religious and full of hope and faith in God.

The cultural background plays an important role in determining character's understanding of life, love, and death. Western culture in "The Fault in Our Stars" revolves around individualism and personal freedom, while Eastern culture in "Surat Kecil untuk Tuhan" revolves around spirituality and community.

Thus, this analysis shows that the depiction of death and love in both novels has significant differences, which are influenced by the cultural context and experiences of the characters.

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