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INCREASING CHILDREN'S ECOLOGICAL AWARENESS THROUGH CHILDREN'S LITERATURE

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Abstrak

Penelitian ini mencoba untuk menawarkan metode alternatif dalam memperkenalkan dan juga membuka perspektif anak-anak pada masalah lingkungan yang sekarang harus dihadapi diseluruh dunia. Penelitian ini menggunakan sastra anak-anak yang temanya sejalan dengan upaya para ahli ekokritik dalam memecahkan masalah lingkungan yang rumit. Penulis melihat peluang besar untuk menyentuh hati anak-anak dan juga membangun kesadaran mereka tentang isu-isu dengan lingkungan hidup dengan menggunakan teks-teks sastra anak.

Kata kunci: Sastra anak, kesadaran ekologis anak-anak, lingkungan, ekokritisisme, ekokritik.

Abstract

This study attempts to offer an alternative method in introducing and also opening children's perspectives on recent environmental problems that people have to deal with. This study uses children's literature which theme is inline with the effort of ecocritics to solve the environmental complex problems. The researchers see a great opportunity of touching the children's heart and also building their awareness about the damage of the environmental problems by using the children's literature texts.

Keyword: children's literature, children's ecological awareness, environment, ecocriticism, ecocritics.

1. INTRODUCTION

Some people used to believe that literature is merely an imaginative work which has no correlation to human life. Some of them even think that

literature is not as valuable as biography or other kinds of scientific texts. These ways of thinking could jeopardize the existence of literary texts. In fact, there is a connection between literature and human life. Hake (2001) gives his comments:

Its subject is nothing less than human life, human experience. Every poem, play or story deals with some aspect of human life and experience. It has sometimes been said that literature is like a mirror that reflects life for us.

Thus, based on the above quotation, it is clear that literature can offer so many things to anyone who can appreciate the beauty of it.

Moreover, as stated by Hake (2001) "literature is concrete and appeals to our senses, literature can help *wake up* our senses. It can help us to *really look* at and *see* the things around us." Therefore, by reading literary texts people can enrich their emotional experiences and even it can change their life.

In the spirit of promoting literature as a medium to create betterment to people's life, then this study will expose the strength of literature, especially children's literature, which can open people's perspectives and also enrich their feelings related to the discussion of environmental issues. Moreover, this study also offers an alternative method for people, especially educators, in increasing children's ecological awareness which is through the use of children's literature. This study sees the importance of involving children to discuss the environmental issues since nowadays there are many evidences that the condition of the world is in crisis.

According to Stephen's childhood is the stage when children can get their basic education about the universe, how to live in it and also how to get along and interact with other people. In this stage they also can learn about the things which they can believe in, everything that they can think of and also how to think about a certain thing (1992: 8). Mansur (2005: 88) adds that children have a unique growth and development pattern in their early age. This period is called by Stonehouse (2008) as a golden age. At this time their brainpower can be used optimally to absorb as much information and such information could provide a good impact in the future. Thus, adults, especially educators can introduce the children to the real problems that nowadays people have to face, which is environmental problems. By opening

their eyes about these issues, hopefully they can have new perspectives in seeing these issues and they can have a positive attitude toward the nature.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2. 1. Environmental problems

There are many evidences which show that various environmental problems arise and affect this entire world. The development of industry is one of the causes of the environmental problems. Many green areas, which have important roles to make the world stable, start to shift to the industrial areas. Thus, the existence of the green areas is threatened by humans' greediness. Their greediness can be seen in their negative actions, such as mining operations, large-scale agricultural plantations, illegal logging and also opening of land illegally. In fact, recently humans have to face many disasters because of their own negative actions, such as flood and drought which now become more common.

In one of Indonesia's regions, Riau for example, for many years the citizen of Riau has to deal with the bad effect of deforestation. As written in *Kompas* (2014: 13), started from December 2012 up to March 2013, there were about six million people suffered from the negative impact of peat land clearing on the state of the Riau's forest.

Based on the data of Indonesian environmental organization named Walhi (*Wahana Lingkungan Hidup*), in the year of 2013, ecological disasters such as flood and landslide were increasing significantly in number. In 2012 the ecological disaster happened as much as 475 times, while in 2013 it had developed into 1372 times (*Kedaulatan Rakyat*, 2014: 11).

It is not surprising to see that the ecological disaster has increased in number since based on the data of WWF organization (2013), Indonesia lost a massive 1,87 million ha of forest every year since 2000 and 2005 (Data retrieved from http://wwf.panda.org/who_we_are/wwf_offices/indonesia/environmental_problems_indonesia/).

Therefore, the environmental problems that continually grow worse represent the need of serious discussion on it. Many people start to discuss this problem seriously by holding seminars or conference. However, in most of policies that they have made, consciously or unconsciously, they forget to ask younger generations to support their programs in solving the environmental problems. The writer sees the importance of touching the

hearts of the younger generations and opening their eyes about the bad picture of the environmental problems since the future of this universe is in their hands.

2. 2. Children's Literature

There is no doubt that the future belongs to the younger generations. Thus, there is a serious need for people to introduce the important meaning of saving the environment for the sake of humans' per se as the medium. This kind of literature can touch their hearts, which then they can make a tremendous impact to create betterment. As stated by Hollindale (1998: 98), children's literature is full of an ideological power which is internalized by the author consciously or unconsciously.

Many experts believe that this type of literature firstly emerges in the spoken form. *A Brief History of Children Literature* (2013) noted that children's literature began to appear in 1400 in the form of fables. Trim (2004: xvi) adds that people found the first children's literature, in written form, in English in the fifteenth century. Although some experts can explain about the history of children's literature, however, the term of children's literature is still debatable.

As previously mentioned, many experts still discuss about the definition of the term children literature. This term cannot be simplified into a single definition. According to Nodelman (2002: 1), a work of literature which is written by adults can be categorized as children's literature as long as it is produced for audiences younger than the writer him/herself. Different from Nodelman, Lukens (1999: 9-10) argues that people do not really have to pay attention to the writer of a certain children's literature since any literature which offers pleasure and understanding can be classified as children's literature. Then, Hancock (2005: 5) offers his definition of children's literature. He defines it as a literary text that "appeals to the interests, needs, reading preferences of children, and that captures children as its major audience.

Although the term of this kind of literature is still debatable, however, no one can deny that children's literature can be seen as a powerful medium which people can use to teach children and to open their horizon about so many things. Lukens (1999: 10) give comments on this, "Literature at its best gives both pleasure and understanding. It explores the nature of

human beings, the conditions of humankind". Therefore, it is clear that children's literature, which "offers both pleasure and understanding", can give children a chance to use their imagination to explore more complex subjects that are related to humankind, such as environmental problems. Thus, children's literature can be seen as an effective way in developing children's awareness of the condition of their own surrounding.

2.1.1. The Intrinsic Elements of Children's Literature

Lukens (1999) proposes some intrinsic literary elements that can be found in children's literature. Those elements are character, plot, theme, setting, point of view, style, and tone. However, since this study will only focus more on the discussion of character (along with the characterization), theme, setting, and style thus, the below section will only discuss about those four intrinsic elements. The further explanation will be presented as follows.

a. Character

In literary text, a character is a portrayal of a real human being. Although this character is fictional, he/she has an important role in constructing a story. A literary text reader can learn so many things from the depiction of this character, which is commonly, can be seen through the depictions of his/her actions, conversations, and also descriptions.

Lukens (1999: 79) explains that children have an ability to recognize people's personality, even in their youngest age. Lukens also adds that children are very sensitive and can notice the differences between one person to the other. Therefore, children are believed to have an ability to understand various personalities of characters in literary texts. Thus, as mentioned by Sutherland (1997: 29), a writer has to be able to create a convincing characterization either in realistic or fantastic story.

Based on Lukens' theory (1999: 86-88), there are two types of character. They are flat and round characters. Flat character can easily be found by the reader since this type of character is not fully developed. As stated by (Hye Ree, 2012: 1), the existence of this character is essential to the action. On the contrary, round character is a character that is fully developed. He/she is described as an unpredictable and often surprising character.

Lukens (1999: 80-82) explains further that there are several ways that

children can use when they want to learn more about the characters found in literary texts. Basically, the children can learn about the characters' personalities by paying a close attention to the actions of the characters, their speeches, appearances (including the size of their bodies, skin tones, and outfits) and also through the comments of the other characters and the authors of the literary texts.

b. Theme

Lukens (1999: 135) gives the definition of theme in his book entitled *A Critical Handbook of Children's Literature*. She states that a theme is the idea that unites the story together. She (1999: 136) also adds that theme is the unforgettable part of the story. Therefore, she (1999: 9) suggests that children have to be able to access various themes in literary texts. Thus, a good author will try to produce children's literary text which uses simple language and form.

c. Setting

Setting gives valuable information to the readers about the place where the story takes place and also when the story happens. Based on Lukens' theory (1999: 159), there are several functions of setting in children's literature. First, by the existence of setting, it can clarify the conflict within a certain story. In fact, it can help readers to have a deeper understanding on the character, conflict and also the theme of the story. Second, the setting can stand as an antagonist that can threaten the character. Therefore, the character has to be able to solve his/her problem which is caused by the existence of the setting. Third, the setting can light up the character as well as his/her characterization. Forth, the setting can arouse a certain mood which can influence the reader. Fifth, the setting can symbolize something which has a certain message beyond its' literal meaning.

d. Style

According to Lukens (1999: 195), style is a very personal element of literary work which can give a clue to the reader about the uniqueness of a certain author since every author possesses their own ability and skill in delivering his/her ideas. She (1999: 197-202) explains further that there are several devices of style which commonly can be found in Children's

literature, namely connotation, imagery, figurative language, and symbol.

2.3. Ecocriticism in Literature

The term ecocriticism was created by William Rueckert in 1978. He used this term for the first time when he wrote his essay entitled "Literature and Ecology: An Experiment in Ecocriticism." Later on many people used it to refer to a study which discusses about environment issues, or the "green" issues. Furthermore, this study itself became well known in the field of literature among the American scholars in the 1990s (Tosic, 2006: 43). She (2006: 44) explains further that the term ecocriticism is a semi-neologism:

Eco is short of *ecology*, which is concerned with the relationships between living organisms in their natural environment as well as their relationships with that environment. By analogy, ecocriticism is concerned with the relationships between literature and environment or how man's relationships with his physical environment are reflected in literature.

Thus, this type of study tries to discuss about literature and in the same time it also gives a chance for the reader of a certain literary text to be aware of the environmental issues arise in the text.

Glotfelty in "What Is Ecocriticism?" gives her comment: Simply defined, ecocriticism is the study of the relationship between literature and the physical environment. Just as feminist criticism examines language and literature from a gender-conscious perspective, and Marxist criticism brings an awareness of modes of production and economic class to its reading of texts, ecocriticism takes an earth-centered approach to literary studies.

Based on her explanation, in short by using ecocriticism, people will be able to study literature from an earth-centered perspective. It means that literature can cover all aspect, including environment and every single part of it.

Glotfelty (in "What Is Ecocriticism?") explains further that ecocriticism tries to discuss the relationship between "nature and culture", especially the one which is related to language and literature. As she puts it, "As a critical stance, it has one foot in literature and the other on land; as a theoretical

discourse, it negotiates between human and the nonhuman.” Basically, she wants to stress out that through literature people can give solution to solve the problems of global crisis. She argues that “Literary scholars specialize in questions of value, meaning, tradition, point of view, and language, and it is in these areas that we are making a substantial contribution to environmental thinking.”

The world becomes increasingly damaged because of human actions. It will not be easy to find the best solution of these phenomena. The best solution can only be reached if people start to think and have a deeper understanding on the environmental problem itself. Literature can transfer and in the same time deliver the environmental message through the power of language. The readers of literary work can be exposed to those environmental problems vividly.

According to Garrad (2004: 5), the ecocriticism theory is different from the other literary and cultural theory since it is closely related to the discussion of the study of ecology. He also adds that ecocritics do not debate about the ecological problems, but they are actively involved and developed their own “ecological literacy” as their effort to overcome those ecological problems.

Bate (1991: 8) gives his perspective on ecocriticism. He argues that ecocritics analyzes literary texts which discuss about the connection of human’s activity, natural phenomena and nonhuman influences on human, for example the existence of the environmental problems. In other words, environmental problems cannot be separated from the discussion of human and non human activity since the condition of the nature depends on what people do to their surroundings.

3. RESEARCH METHOD

This study is a library research which is carried out by applying descriptive qualitative methods. Qualitative research method is a research method of which the result is not presented in numbers, for the study is not conducted through any statistical procedure as a quantitative research does. (Moleong, 2007:6).

The source of this research is a children novel entitled *Charlotte’s Web* written by E.B. White. This study analyzes words and or utterances written in that novel. Additional information related to ecocriticism and children

literature is gathered from some relevant books and internet to support the data. While the main reference to analyze the novel is Lukens' theory about children literature.

4. DISCUSSION

4.1. Children's Literature as a medium to increase Children's Ecological Awareness

People see childhood as the most crucial stage in humans' life. It is in line with Stephen's argument. He argues that childhood is the stage when children can get their basic education about the universe, how to live in it and also how to get along and interact with other people. In this stage they also can learn about the things which they can believe in, everything that they can think of and also how to think about a certain thing (1992: 8). Therefore, during their physical and psychological development children have to be introduced with the real problems that people have to struggle with. One of the examples of those problems is the environmental problems.

Empowering the children to understand the value of environment and challenge the current power structures in the industries, which gives a lot of negative effects to the environment (such as environmental degradation and over-dependence use of fossil fuels), involves first encouraging them to look deeply and critically at their own surroundings and then encouraging them to take action. Thus, it is important for the people to choose the right way in introducing the environmental issues to the children.

Many experts believe that children's literature is a cultural product that can be used as a medium to socialize a certain thing to its readers. It is in line with the opinion of Hollindale (1998: 98). He argues that children's literature is full of ideology. This ideology can be consciously internalized in the text by the author or unconsciously carried out by the text. Therefore, children's literature can be used as a medium to increase children's awareness about the importance of environment.

There are several things that people, especially the teachers, need to consider when they want to make use the power of children's literature as a medium to increase children's ecological awareness. First, they have to choose the correct and suitable texts. They have to choose certain texts, whether fictional or nonfictional, which are created specifically to air concerns relating to the environmental issues. Such texts enable the children

both to compare and contrast the treatment given to the environmental issues in differing texts and also to evaluate those texts in terms of their effectiveness in handling such issues.

Second, the teachers have to choose the most suitable and effective technique for their own classrooms since every classroom is unique. Therefore, teachers are forced to be creative. Creative teachers will be able to conduct interesting activities for their children. Thus, the children will not only spend their time reading the literary texts which contain the environmental issues and then comparing-contrasting each of the text, but also doing various activities related to it. For example, the teachers will ask the children to re-create their own stories based on the existing children's literary texts about the environmental issues, and then they have to evaluate critically their own works and others' works. They can produce prose, poems, plays, and even photography or videos about the issues. The example of the activity that can be conducted by the teachers in their own classrooms can be seen in the below section.

1st Activity

1. The teacher distributes the copy of children's literary text related to the environmental issues.
2. The teacher asks his/her students to read the text for a couple of minutes.
3. The teacher conducts a class discussion related to the intrinsic elements of children's literature (such as character, plot, theme, etc.). The examples of guiding questions are as follows:
 - a. How many characters are involved in the story?
 - b. Who are they?
 - c. Please describe their physical appearances and personalities!
 - d. What kind of environmental problem that the character has to face?
 - e. How he/she solves his/her problems?
4. The teacher connects the intrinsic elements of the text to the extrinsic elements, which is related to the problems of environment. The example of the discussion are:
 - a. The environmental problems that the people of the era (when the text is produced or the time when the story takes place) have to cope with.
 - b. The examples of environmental problems that the students can find in

their own surroundings.

- c. The possible solutions that the students can offer to solve the problems of environment.

2nd Activity

1. The teacher asks the students to re-create their own stories based on the previous children's literary text that they have read. They can reformulate it into prose, poem, the script of a play, drawings and even photograph or videos.
2. The teacher asks the students to evaluate critically their own works and others' works.

Based on the above explanation, it is clear that the teacher is the one who has to provide models for students to examine, analyze and imitate. By exposing the students to literary texts which discuss about environmental issues, unconsciously, it can increase their awareness about these issues and in the same time it can move their hearts to try to find a better solution for those environmental problems.

4.2 White's *Charlotte's Web* as the Example of Children's Literature that can be a medium to increase Children's Ecological Awareness

In this section, the researchers will try to give one examples of children's literary texts which discusses environmental issues. The title of the literary text is *Charlotte's Web*. The researchers will only elaborate two intrinsic elements in the novel along with some possible topics to be discussed in a classroom's setting. Those intrinsic elements are character, theme, setting and style. However, before discussing those intrinsic elements, the general knowledge about the novel will be discussed first.

4.2.1 *Charlotte's Web*

Charlotte's Web is written by Elwyn Brooks White. This children's literary text is a story of a young girl named Fern who loves to spend her time in her uncle's barn with her beloved pet named Wilbur. As stated by Hasni (2013: 4), this novel gives a bigger and clearer picture on how sensitive a child can be. It is told in the novel that this innocent Fern can be sensitive enough to feel and understand the problems that arise in her own environment. On the other hands, the adults' characters in the novel "are not

sensitive enough to understand what is going on in human's surroundings."

Thus, this novel talks about the relationship of human to nature (in this case is the relationship between human and animals). By reading and discussing this novel, younger generations can be well aware that animals have feelings too. It means to say that the animals are not passive objects and every action that the humans do will give effect to the other creatures. Therefore, humans should pay attention to the conditions of the other creatures and treat those creatures equally.

Basically people, especially teachers can use *Charlotte's Web* to raise children's ecological awareness. For younger children, there are several things that they can do which is by discussing the intrinsic elements found in this novel, such as characters (along with their characterization), theme, setting and style. In the below part, the researchers will discuss them further.

4.2.2. Characters and Their Characterization

In this section, the study will talk about the main character of *Charlotte's Web*, named Fern, along with her animal friends.

Fern is described as an innocent little girl who cares much about the other living things, including animal. She has been successful in saving a life of a runt. When his father, Mr. Arable, is going to kill the smallest and weakest baby pig in their barn, Fern tries hard to prevent him doing it. By comparing herself to the runty pig, Fern convinces her father that every creature has a right to live. Even if it was born in a weak condition, it doesn't give human a right to end its life.

"Fern," said Mr. Arable, "I know more about raising a little of pigs than you do. A weakling makes trouble. Now run along!"

"But it's unfair," cried Fern. "The pig couldn't help being born small, could it? If I had been very small at birth, would you have killed me?"

Mr. Arable smiled. "Certainly not," he said, looking down at his daughter with love. "But this is different. A little girl is one thing, a little runty pig is another."

"I see no difference," replied Fern, still hanging on to the ax. "This is the most terrible case of injustice I ever heard of."

A queer look came over John Arable's face. He seemed almost ready to cry himself. (White, 1952: 2-3)

Since then on, Mr. Arable gives Fern a responsibility to take care of the runty pig. She takes her responsibility very well by giving the pig good treatments. She gives her pet a very nice name, Wilbur. When the pig grows up, Fern has to take Wilbur to her uncle's barn. There are many animals in her uncle's barn. Since Fern is a warm-hearted girl, it is easy for her to make friend with the animals and it seems that the animals loves her too.

Fern came almost every day to visit him. She found an old milking stool that had been discarded, and she placed the stool in the sheepfold next to Wilbur's pen. Here she sat quietly during the long afternoons, thinking and listening and watching Wilbur. The sheep soon got to know her and trust her. So did the geese, who lived with the sheep. All the animals trusted her, she was so quiet and friendly. (White, 1952: 14-15)

Fern's attitudes towards animal can be a nice example for children to interact with their pets at home. They will learn how to build a good relationship with other living creatures. The teacher can ask the students whether they like Fern's characterization. Other questions can be; do they love animals too? How do they treat animals?

Fern's special attention toward Wilbur results in his growth. The runty pig turns to be healthy and radiant. He becomes magnificent and famous since he won the first prize in the County Fair.

"Ladeez and gentlemen," said the loud speaker, "we now present Mr. Homer L. Zuckerman's distinguished pig. The fame of this unique animal has spread to the far corners of the earth, attracting many valuable tourists to our great State ... (White, 1952: 157)

"This magnificent animal," continued the loud speaker, " is truly terrific. Look at him, ladies and gentlemen! Note the smoothness and whiteness of the coat, observe the spotless skin, the healthy pink glow of ears and snout." (White, 1952: 158)

It is wonderful that a very small, weak animal which was predicted to have many troubles in living becomes the center of admiration in the state. It proves that a decision to kill a runty animal (in order to save them from living troubles)is not merely right. The students will learn that taking care of a weak animal and give it an opportunity to live is a wise decision.

Of course, Wilbur's success cannot be separated from the effort of a beautiful spider, named Charlotte, who has miraculous web.

"You needn't feel too badly, Wilbur," she said. "Not many creatures can spin webs. Even men aren't as good at it as spiders, although they think they're pretty good, and they'll try anything. Did you ever hear of the Queensborough Bridge?"

Wilbur shook his head. "Is it a web?"

"Sort of," replied Charlotte. "But do you know how long it took men to build it? Eight whole years. My goodness, I would have starved to death waiting that long. I can make a web in a single evening."

"What do people catch in the Queensborough Bridge - bugs?" asked Wilbur.

"No," said Charlotte. "They don't catch anything. They just keep trotting back and forth across the bridge thinking there is something better on the other side. If they'd hang head-down at the top of the thing and wait quietly, maybe something good would come along. But no - with men it's rush, rush, rush, every minute. I'm glad I'm a sedentary spider." (White, 1952: 60)

Based on the above quotation, it is clearly seen that Charlotte is a smart and kind character. This quotation also stresses out that animal have capability to do something that humans cannot do.

4.2.3 Theme

The study will also show several themes that are possible to be discussed in classroom to build children's awareness about environmental issues. Firstly, in the below section, there is quotation that can be used as an evidence that the theme of *Charlotte's Web* is a friendship between human and animals.

"Yes, I would, come to think of it," replied Mrs. Arable. "But Fern, darling, I wish you would play outdoors today instead of going to Uncle Homer's barn. Find some of your playmates and do something nice outdoors. You're spending too much time in that barn - it isn't good for you to be alone so much."

"Alone?" said Fern. "Alone? My best friends are in the barn cellar. It is a very sociable place. Not at all lonely." (White, 1952: 106-107)

This is a conversation between Mrs. Arable and Fern. Mrs. Arable asks Fern to play outdoors with her (human) friends and stop visiting her uncle's barn since she thinks Fern does not have any friend in Mr. Zuckerman's barn. However, Fern insists that she is not all alone there because she has so many (animals) friends in that barn. Thus, this quote can be seen as strong evidence that one possible theme of the novel is a friendship between human and animals.

Another possible theme is a friendship between animals and animals. The evidence is:

“You have been my friend,” replied Charlotte. That in itself is a tremendous thing. I wove my webs for you because I liked you. After all, what's a life, anyway? We're born, we live a little while, we die. A spider's life can't help being something of a mess, with all this trapping and eating flies. By helping you, perhaps I was trying to lift up my life a trifle. Heaven knows anyone's life can stand a little of that.” (White, 1952: 162)

Charlotte speaks to Wilbur. She tries to convince Wilbur that she considers him as her friend. Thus, for her it is normal if she tries her best to help Wilbur as her friend.

By paying attention to the theme of the novel, children will notice that actually the bond of friendship is not only happens between the same creatures, for example animals with animals. In this novel children can see that human can be a best friend of animals and vice versa. This kind of awareness will enable children to value the nature more because they can see that animals can be nice creatures to be friend with.

4.2.4 Setting

The story mostly takes place in Mr. Zuckerman's barn. This quotation gives a description of the environment in the barn.

The barn was pleasantly warm in winter when the animals spent most of their time indoors, and it was pleasantly cool in summer when the big doors stood wide open to the breeze. The barn had stalls on the main floor for the work horses, tie-ups on the main floor for the cows, a sheepfold down below for the sheep, a pigpen down below for Wilbur, and it was full of all sorts of things that you find in barns: ladders, grindstones, pitch

forks, monkey wrenches, scythes, lawn mowers, snow shovels, ax handles, milk pails, water buckets, empty grain sacks, and rusty rat traps. It was the kind of barn that swallows like to build their nests in. It was the kind of barn that children like to play in. And the whole thing was owned by Fern's uncle, Mr. Homer L. Zuckerman. Wilbur's new home was in the lower part of the barn, directly underneath the cows. Mr. Zuckerman knew that a manure pile is a good place to keep a young pig. Pigs need warmth, and it was warm and comfortable down there in the barn cellar on the south side. (White, 1952: 13)

When the children grew tired of swinging they went down toward the pasture and picked wild raspberries and ate them. Their tongues turned from purple to red. Fern bit into a raspberry that had a bad-tasting bug inside it, and got discouraged. Avery found an empty candy box and put his frog in it. The frog seemed tired after his morning in the swing. The children walked slowly up toward the barn. They, too, were tired and hardly had energy enough to walk. "Let's build a tree house," suggested Avery. "I want to live in a tree, with my frog." "I'm going to visit Wilbur," Fern announced. (White, 1952:70)

There is a swing in Mr. Zuckerman's barn. It seems that the barn not only becomes a perfect place for animal to live in but also a good place for children to play in. Thus, this barn is a place where children have an opportunity to interact with animals, and from the interaction this story is built.

After taking notice of the setting, the teacher can guide the students to discuss about the environment of their homes. Do they have some opportunities to interact with animals and plants, especially in their own garden or backyard?

4.2.5 Style

In writing the novel, White often uses some figurative languages. Below is the example.

Early summer days are a jubilee time for birds. In the fields, around the house, in the barn, in the woods, in the swamp - everywhere love and songs and nests and eggs. From the edge of the woods, the white-throated sparrow (which must come all the way from Boston) calls, "Oh, Peabody, Peabody,

Peabody!" On an apple bough, the phoebe teeters and wags its tail and says, "Phoebe, phoe-bee! " The song sparrow, who knows how brief and lovely life is, says, "Sweet, sweet, sweet interlude; sweet, sweet, sweet interlude." If you enter the barn, the swallows swoop down from their nests and scold. "Cheeky, cheeky!" they say. (White, 1952: 43)

The above quotation shows that summer time begins when eggs cracked and the voice of the birds can be heard everywhere. On the other side, the voice of crickets reports that the summer will be over soon.

"Summer is over and gone," repeated the crickets. "How many nights till frost?" sang the crickets. "Good-bye, summer, good-bye, good-bye!"

The sheep heard the crickets, and they felt so uneasy they broke a hole in the pasture fence and wandered up into the field across the road. The gander discovered the hole and led his family through, and they walked to the orchard and ate the apples that were lying on the ground. A little maple tree in the swamp heard the cricket song and turned bright red with anxiety. (White, 1952: 113)

From both quotations children can learn how nature communicates by giving signs in changing weather or season. Later on, after they learn from the novel that actually all of the creatures who live in this universe have an ability to communicate, the teachers can ask the children to try to listen to the sounds of the creatures which live in their own environment and they also can learn how to digest all of the information which comes from the voice of the nature. By doing those things, hopefully those children are not only having a close relationship with the nature, but also they are able to find solutions when they know that the nature is in trouble.

5. CONCLUSION

This study promotes literature as a medium to give betterment to people's life by exposing the strength of children's literature which discusses about the environmental issues. Nowadays there are many evidences that the condition of the world is in crisis and the environmental problems continually grow worse. Therefore, this study offers an alternative method in introducing the real problems that people have to face to the

children through the use of children's literature. This type of literature can open children's perspectives and also enrich their feelings related to the discussion of environmental issues. The target of this study is children since as the new generation they hold the future in their hands.

The alternative method that is offered by this study will help people, especially educators in developing various activities which can give betterment not only for the sake of promoting children's literature but also helping people in general to find a good solution for this sick world. It can help the educators in increasing their students' ecological awareness and hopefully, those children can offer solutions from their own perspectives.

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