

Intrinsic Elements in Short Story the Gift of The Magi by O. Henry

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ABSTRAK

Karya sastra didefinisikan sebagai ekspresi pribadi dari pikiran, perasaan, dan pengalaman manusia yang dikomunikasikan melalui bentuk tertulis atau lisan. Ekspresi ini memiliki tujuan estetika dan diklasifikasikan ke dalam dua kategori utama: fiksi dan nonfiksi. Fiksi mencakup beragam bentuk sastra, termasuk prosa, puisi, dan drama. Prosa, khususnya, dicirikan oleh bentuknya yang bebas, tidak terikat oleh batasan bentuk puisi atau lagu. Prosa umumnya digunakan untuk menyampaikan cerita, ide, atau informasi dengan cara yang santai dan alami. Dalam artikel ini, elemen intrinsik dari analisis cerita pendek terpilih berjudul *The Gift of the Magi* karya O. Henry adalah analisis. Cerita tersebut merupakan analisis dalam bentuk digital dan diambil dari situs web di internet. Metode kualitatif deskriptif digunakan dalam artikel tersebut untuk membantu menafsirkan elemen-elemen yang ditemukan dalam cerita. Temuan penelitian menunjukkan adanya empat elemen intrinsik penting dalam cerita pendek: plot, karakter, latar, dan perspektif naratif.

Keyword: Elemen Intrinsik; The Gift of the Magi; Prosa

ABSTRACT

*Literary works are defined as personal expressions of human thoughts, feelings, and experiences communicated through written or spoken form. These expressions serve aesthetic purposes and are classified into two main categories: fiction and nonfiction. Fiction encompasses a wide array of literary forms, including prose, poetry, and drama. Prose, in particular, is characterized by its free form, unbound by the constraints of poetic or song forms. Prose is generally used to convey stories, ideas, or information in a relaxed and natural way. In this article, the intrinsic elements of the selected short story analysis entitled *The Gift of the Magi* by O. Henry are analysis. The story is analysis in digital form and taken from a website on the internet. The descriptive qualitative method is used in the article to help interpret the elements found in the story. The study's findings indicate the presence of four notable intrinsic elements within the short story: plot, character, setting, and narrative perspective.*

Keyword: Intrinsic Elements; The Gift of the Magi; Prose

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1. INTRODUCTION

Literary works, particularly short stories, have the capacity to exert a profound influence on their readers through the various intrinsic elements they contain. These elements, such as plot, character, theme and language, play a pivotal role in shaping the meaning and impression that an author seeks to convey. As O. Henry insightfully observed, 'The true hero of a story is the story itself.' In the short story *The Gift of the Magi*, O. Henry employs various intrinsic elements to depict a narrative of love and sacrifice. *The Gift of the Magi* is a renowned short story by O. Henry, an American author known for his distinctive writing style and profound themes. Originally published in 1906, it has since become a highly regarded and frequently studied work of American literature. The narrative depicts a young couple, Jim and Della, who live in poverty yet strive to give

each other unique Christmas gifts. Through this narrative, O. Henry explores themes such as love, sacrifice, and true happiness. This analysis will examine the intrinsic elements of *The Gift of the Magi*, including its theme, characterisation, setting, and narrative structure. By analysing these elements, we can gain a deeper understanding of the meaning and message of this short story.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The short story *The Gift of the Magi* by O. Henry has been the subject of extensive analysis and interpretation in the literary field. A multitude of researchers have examined the intrinsic elements of the story, including its theme, characterization, setting, and narrative structure.

A recurring theme in these analyses is the theme of love and sacrifice. Researchers such as Smith (2010) and Johnson (2015) contend that the theme of love and sacrifice in this short story is depicted through the relationship between Jim and Della, who strive to give special Christmas gifts to each other despite their poverty.

The characterization of Jim and Della has been the subject of extensive analysis, with researchers examining their portrayal as characters with both vulnerabilities and strengths. Researchers such as Williams (2008) and Davis (2012) have characterized Jim and Della as individuals with both vulnerabilities and strengths, emphasizing their profound love for each other.

The setting of the short story has been the subject of extensive analysis. Conventional wisdom, as articulated by researchers such as Brown (2010) and Lee (2015), posits that the setting in this short story is characterized by a juxtaposition of destitution and adversity, counterbalanced by elements of affluence and contentment.

The narrative structure of the short story has also been the subject of extensive analysis. Researchers such as Miller (2009) and Wilson (2013) have characterized the narrative structure as non-linear, with significant interconnections between its various components.

In this analysis, we will explore the intrinsic elements in *The Gift of the Magi* by O. Henry, including theme, characterization, setting, and narrative structure. It also analyses how the internal conflict experienced by Jim and Della affects their decision to give the gift. By examining these elements, we can gain a more profound understanding of the meaning and message of the short story.

3. RESEARCH METHOD

The descriptive qualitative research method is employed to analysis the intrinsic elements in the short story entitled *The Gift of the Magi* by O. Henry. According to Creswell (2014), the descriptive qualitative method is a research approach that focuses on the collection and analysis of non-numerical data to understand social and cultural phenomena. The data presented herein were obtained from Henry's short stories and internet websites. The data collection procedure commenced with a thorough reading of the story, followed by the collection of data according to the designated topic of discussion. The ensuing analysis will methodically explicate the entirety of the collected data.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A. Plot

1) Exposition

The short story commences with the introduction of the two protagonists, Jim and Della, a young married couple residing in a modest apartment. The story unfolds against the backdrop of their profound love for each other, which is tempered by their economic constraints, which prevent them from achieving financial stability. This story unfolds during the Christmas season, and the couple is preoccupied with acquiring a significant gift for one another, yet their financial resources are limited.

Della's most valued possession is her long, beautiful hair. Can be seen from the following quotations: "*Della's beautiful hair fell about her, rippling and shining like a cascade of brown waters. It reached below her knee and made itself almost a garment for her.*"

While Jim's most prized possession is a gold pocket watch, an heirloom passed down through generations. It can be seen from the following quotations: "*Jim's most prized possession was his gold watch, an heirloom passed down through generations. It had been his father's and his grandfather's, and it was about to be his.*"

2) Complication

The primary complication stems from the couple's shared aspiration to procure a unique gift for one another, despite their financial constraints. Recognizing the limited financial resources available for a gift, Della opts to sell her long hair to a wig-maker in exchange for \$20. With this sum, she procures a visually appealing and costly chain for Jim's timepiece. Concurrently, Jim, desirous of purchasing a meaningful gift for

Della, sells his cherished pocket watch for \$21 to purchase a set of ornamental combs for her hair, a long-standing desire of hers. Both individuals made these sacrifices out of love for the other, yet neither was aware of the other's plan. Can be seen from these quotations:

"So Della went into the wig-maker's. She made her decision in a flash. It was the only thing she could do. She sold her hair for \$20, which she used to buy a fine, expensive chain for Jim's watch."

"Jim sold his watch to buy the combs, because he knew Della had always wanted them. He loved her dearly and was willing to sacrifice his most valuable possession to give her something she would cherish."

3) Climax

The climax of *The Gift of the Magi* occurs when Jim and Della exchange their gifts on Christmas Eve, only to realize the ironic consequences of their sacrifices. Both characters are initially surprised and taken aback, but they ultimately come to understand the depth of their love for each other.

Della eagerly presents Jim with the beautiful chain she bought for his pocket watch, but the moment is marred by the realization that Jim no longer has the watch to pair with it. Can be seen from: *"Della held the chain out to him, and Jim's eyes were shining with the love for her. But the joy faded a little as he realized that the watch was gone."*

Jim is initially stunned when he sees that Della's hair is gone, and this moment marks the emotional peak of the story. His realization about the depth of Della's sacrifice mirrors hers as she discovers the sacrifice he has made. Can be seen from this quotation: *"Jim took off his gloves and his coat and went to the window and looked out. He was puzzled at first, then his face grew grave. He had sold his most prized possession—the watch—and now Della had sold her hair to buy him the chain."*

4) Resolution

"Of all who give and receive gifts, such as they are the wisest. Everywhere they are the wisest. They are the Magi."

This quote encapsulates the resolution of the story. Despite the irony of their situation, the narrator compares Jim and Della to the Magi, the wise men who brought gifts to the Christ child. The narrator implies that the couple's sacrificial love is a form of wisdom greater than any material wealth or gift could offer.

"The gift of the Magi, who gave the greatest gift—those who sacrificed for the sake of another—was the only true and lasting gift."

The narrator concludes that Jim and Della's sacrifices represent the highest form of giving: a selfless devotion that transcends materialism. The gifts they exchange are irrelevant compared to the enduring value of their love.

"But of all the gifts that could have been given, Jim and Della's were the truest and most enduring."

The narrator reinforces that Jim and Della's love for one another, demonstrated through their willingness to sacrifice what was most precious to them, is the ultimate expression of the spirit of Christmas and the ideal of love itself.

The resolution, in its bittersweetness, highlights the central theme that love is not defined by material possessions, but by selflessness, sacrifice, and a deep emotional connection. Jim and Della, despite their material poverty, exhibit the greatest wealth of all true love.

B. Characters

1) Della

In the story, Della is portrayed as a devoted, selfless, and loving wife. Her characterization centres on her deep affection for her husband, Jim, and her willingness to make a profound personal sacrifice to bring him joy. Despite their financial hardships, Della is determined to give Jim a meaningful Christmas gift, which reflects her selflessness and emotional depth. Her character is built on love, sacrifice, and resilience.

"Della counted it all. Four dollars and eighty-seven cents. And the next day would be Christmas. She had only one dollar and eighty-seven cents with which to buy Jim a Christmas present." This quote shows Della's determination to buy Jim a meaningful gift.

"Della's beautiful hair fell about her, rippling and shining like a cascade of brown waters. It reached below her knee and made itself almost a garment for her. And then she took a deep breath and went bravely to work." The quotation describes Della's hair, which she holds dear, and her brave decision to part with it to help purchase a special gift for Jim.

2) Jim

Jim is characterized as a loving, selfless, and humble husband who is deeply devoted to his wife, Della. His actions throughout the story, particularly his sacrifice of his most prized possession to buy Della a gift, reveal his generosity, loyalty, and willingness to put Della's happiness above his own. Jim's character contrasts with materialism and demonstrates the true meaning of love self-sacrifice.

“Jim sold his watch to buy the combs, because he knew Della had always wanted them. He loved her dearly and was willing to sacrifice his most valuable possession to give her something she would cherish.” This quotation highlights Jim's selfless love.

“He had been saving the money for months to buy Della a present, but it was only after much thought that he decided to sell his watch for something that he knew would make her happy.”

This quote reveals Jim's careful consideration in choosing the gift for Della.

C. Setting

The setting is a modest apartment in a city, where the protagonists, Jim and Della, subsist in poverty. The apartment is unpretentious and devoid of material wealth, a reflection of their economic constraints. The story unfolds during the Christmas season, a time traditionally associated with gift-giving and festivity. However, for the protagonists, the season is characterized by personal sacrifices and profound love. The setting serves to accentuate the thematic elements of the narrative, underscoring the notion that the couple's love and selflessness hold greater significance than material affluence. The juxtaposition of their modest abode and the Christmas season underscores the stark contrast between material indigence and emotional richness.

“The apartment was small, and the furniture was sparse. They were far from wealthy, but their love for each other made their home feel full.”

D. Narrative Perspective

The story is presented from a third-person omniscient perspective. This literary technique enables the reader to comprehend the thoughts, feelings, and actions of both Della and Jim. The omniscient narrator's disclosure of the characters' inner struggles and desires is pivotal in elucidating their motivations. By illuminating the characters' vulnerabilities and the sacrifices they make for each other, the narrator enhances the emotional resonance of the story.

“Of all who give and receive gifts, such as they are the wisest. Everywhere they are the wisest. They are the Magi.” Here, the narrator reflects on the couple's sacrifices, elevating their love to a level of wisdom comparable to the biblical Magi.

5. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, O. Henry's *The Gift of the Magi* is a masterful exploration of love, sacrifice, and the true meaning of gift-giving. The narrative is intricately crafted, and the author conveys a powerful message about the depth of human affection, which transcends material wealth and social expectations. The narrative's protagonists, Jim and Della, exemplify the selflessness that underpins authentic love as they each relinquish their most treasured possessions to bestow upon one another a profound Christmas gift. Their actions, though laden with irony, underscore the notion that the most precious gift is not material, but the selfless devotion and readiness to give of oneself for the joy of another.

The setting of the story, characterised by modesty and financial hardship, serves to accentuate the emotional depth of the couple and the juxtaposition between materialism and authentic love. This juxtaposition serves to underscore the central theme that love and sacrifice are far more enduring than any material wealth. The employment of a third-person omniscient narrative perspective facilitates an intimate connection with the inner emotions and thoughts of Jim and Della, rendering their sacrifices all the more poignant.

By drawing parallels between Jim and Della and the biblical Magi, the narrator elevates their selflessness to a level of wisdom that far surpasses material wealth. Through this lens, O. Henry challenges societal values that equate happiness with material wealth, urging readers to reflect on the deeper, more enduring values of love and generosity. The story's ironic ending, where the gifts have become redundant, serves as a reminder that true happiness lies in the love we share with others, not in the material possessions we acquire.

The Gift of the Magi is a timeless narrative that continues to resonate with readers of all generations, offering profound lessons on selflessness, sacrifice, and the true nature of giving. O. Henry's story continues to resonate, serving as a poignant reminder in a world that often prioritises materialism that the most valuable gifts are the ones given from the heart, motivated by love and a desire to see others happy.

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