

The Transformation from Fear into Hope in *Rise of the Guardians*

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ABSTRACT

Fear and hope are common topics in children's animation film. Famous children's fantasy characters usually represent the children who overcome their fear and turn it to hope to help the children overcome their fear. *Rise of the Guardians* is one of the films that rises these topics. This paper aims to prove that Santa Claus, Tooth Fairy, Easter Bunny, Sandman, and Jack Frost in *Rise of the guardians* really experienced the fear of being forgotten. Then, the paper will show how the guardians as the representation try to overcome the fear by freezing, avoiding the source of fear, and facing the fear. And after that, how they try to transform that fear into hope by gaining a positive mind and finding a new goal. Symbolism theory combines with fear and hope theories are used to analyse these statements.

Keywords: Fear, transformation, hope, symbolism in literature, children's fantasy characters

INTRODUCTION

Animation defines as a display of static pictures which produce an effect of movement illusion in the audience's mind (Pikkov, 2010). Furniss (2012) states for the past years, the concept of making objects alive, or animation in another word, has amazed many people, and that makes animate motion used as a medium to explain the contents of subjects like religion, science, education, and entertainment. It is debatable that animation is the most important creative thing in the 21st century (Wells, 2002). Animation is rather a special genre compared to other film's genres. Through the movement of the picture, animation is used by the creator as a communication tool to share the line of thinking of the creator, represent the ideology, and represent the mass culture of the people at that time (Pikkov, 2010). According to Halas and Manvel (1995), as cited in Omar and Ishak (2011), animation has characteristics that mostly contain themes from fantasy and folklore and represents the artistic style that was trending at the time animation was created. These make animation engages wider audiences from around the world because they can relate to the context of the film more and have the art style that is suitable for everyone's taste to enjoy the film.

One of the famous children's animation films is DreamWorks's *Rise of the Guardians*. Just like the statement about animation contains values of the author or from the culture, mostly, the issues that the children's animation film brings up are not far from overcoming fear and looking for hope. These two topics are intertwined with each other because fear, according to LeuDox (1996), as cited in Jarymowicz and Bar-Tal (2006), take over human's rational thinking and logic, and hope appears to help humans unleash that negative feeling (Jarymowicz & Bar-Tal, 2006). Also, children are at the age when they feel scared easily and they always look for hope, wonder, and fun things in life. Usually, the film will use famous children's fantasy character like Santa Claus to help the children overcome the fear and tell them that hope does exist. *Rise of the Guardians* is also about overcoming fear and reaching for hope. The main characters, the guardians and Jack Frost are afraid of the aftermath that likely would happen when children do not believe in them. However, later on, they want to overcome the negative feeling and transform the fear into something pleasant which is hope. The guardians try to show the children that they are actually like them who also have fear. Instead of showing the transformation explicitly, they use symbols to point out their action on how they try to

overcome the fear and finally change the fear into hope, the feeling they are looking for. The guardians' behaviour to overcome the fear and to find hope is also match to what the fear and hope theories define.

Symbolism in Literature

Abrams (1981, p. 311) defines symbolism as "anything which signifies something else" (as cited in Okeke & Uche, 2014, p. 98). There are two types of symbols. The first one is conventional symbol which according to Abrams (1999), as cited in Sulaiman (2019) is a symbol made from an agreement to represent specific meaning, for example, red cross symbol. The second one is contextual symbol. Roberts and Jacobs (1991), as cited in Ghiotto and Wijanarka (2016) explain it as a symbol that can have a specific meaning only if it is within the context of the literary works. The symbol is only applicable in its literature works and has different meaning if it is in other literary works. In this analysis, the theory will be about the contextual symbol because the symbols are used to analyse the theme inside the film which is about fear and hope. Stanton (1965, p. 31), as cited in Ghiotto and Wijanarka (2016, p. 56) states, "Symbol may be anything from an egg to the story's setting: a single, object, a physical tape of object, a physical substance, a shape, a gesture, a color, a sound, a fragrance". For example, "dark street represents a poor state of life" (Okeke & Uche, 2014, p. 100). Thus, it can be said that object, color, setting, gesture, events are used as tools to disclose the meaning of a symbol.

Fear

Experts (Gray, 1989; Ohman, 1993; Plutchik, 1980; Rahman, 1978) as cited in as cited in Jarymowicz and Bar-Tal (2006) state that fear is a primary negative emotion that appears when humans or animals face a danger situation in the society and respond to it accordingly. Emotion of fear, based on Lazarus (1991), as cited in Jarymowicz and Bar-Tal (2006) is stored in implicit and explicit memory. LeuDox (1996) as cited in Jarymowicz and Bar-Tal (2006) claims that implicit memory raises the feeling of fear immediately. The feeling of fear affects the way the brain works which leads humans to become uncertain. Then, it leads the brain to give subconscious responses or behaviors to make humans ready to handle threatening situation. The automatic behavior can be defensive behaviors or aggressive behaviors (Jarymowicz & Bar-Tal, 2006). For this analysis, the theory will focus on defensive behaviors. Defensive behaviors are separated into the passive coping behavior and active coping behavior. Passive behaviour, according to Marks (1987), as cited in Hamm (2019, pp. 5-6) is "defensive freezing or attentive immobility when a threat is detected. Heart rate decreased, potentiation of protective reflexes occurs, and remain motionless during the state of attentive immobility". For active behavior, according to Schauer & Elbert (2010), as cited in Hamm (2019) the response will turn into an active reaction or action when the level of threats is increasing, and some of the examples are avoid, flight, or fight from the source of fear. Nonetheless, study says that the best way to overcome fear is actually by facing the fear itself. "Trying out a new direction where instead of trying to avoid the danger, you try to face it. Learning to face, understand and tolerate these feelings in our own bodies is such a useful part of coping" (Mansell, 2007, pp. 45-49).

Hope

Hope is a positive feeling in which a good dream, a wonder, and fun things exist in humans' lives. Hope is a positive emotion that is triggered by the conscious cognitive section of mind. Hope is not an emotion that can be obtained easily by humans, especially if they are in the state of experiencing fear (Jarymowicz & Bar-Tal, 2006). Then, if humans decide to replace fear with hope, the mind must only think about the imagination (Bar-Tal, 2001). The mind must develop collective good orientation behavior such as believing that their fear can be conquered or believing that there is a hope for peace (Bar-Tal, 2001). Another way to turn the fear into hope is by applying the solution – focused method. The mind needs to visualise specific goals, and then, find the well-made and enhance the solution to reach the goals (Umer & Elliot, 2019).

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Goal is needed because it establishes an attitude within humans that helps humans to conquer the hardship in their everyday lives and lead their life to a better future (Ben-Ze'ev, 2000).

ANALYSIS

North or Santa Claus, Toothiana or Tooth Fairy, Bunnymund or Easter Bunny, Sandy or Sand Man, and Jack Frost (the guardians) experience the unpleasant feeling that they should not have felt, and that is fear of being forgotten during the time they do their job to give dream and wonder to the children and to protect the children from nightmare. Nevertheless, they refuse to be drawn into that endless negative feeling. They decide to have a transformation where they overcome their fear, and after that try to find the hope needed to replace the fear. They become the representation of children who feel scared and how children should overcome the fear and turn it into hope. In this analysis, the main three things to be analysed are the fears that the guardians have, the way they overcome the fear, and they turn the fear into hope.

Before I start with my analysis, I will first prove that the guardians actually do have fear of being forgotten through the symbolism in the film. The fear of being forgotten that the guardians experience is symbolized by the black horses. The "black" from the black horse is mostly related to negative events (Sutton & Altarriba, 2016). One of the things that can be classified as negative events is the guardians suffer from the feeling of fear. It can be seen when the black horses were born with a black color at midnight. Being born during the darkness suggests that the horses come from the darkness, and creatures that were born from darkness usually have negative traits, such as fear. That is why the color of the black horses is black because they are full of negative feelings. Furthermore, the black horses are formed from the good dream of the children that get touched by Pitch Black's power, the nightmare. Sand Man is the guardian whose power is from himself which basically says the sand connect to both Sandman's and the children. To put it together, the moment black horses attack the guardians, they can just infect the gold sand with the feeling of fear that they have, then the negative feeling infects the good dream the children have. The guardians finally see the effect of the source of fear. The children do not believe in them anymore. They sense that the feeling of fear of being forgotten is within themselves. Next, the horses themselves represent the fear as well. Horses are sensitive animals. It senses human feeling through expressions (Baba et al., 2019). Because horses are sensitive animals that can sense fear, the horses become the animals that gain energy by consuming fear. It can be seen from the following scenes. The first one is the horses turn into multiple horses, and the size is almost as tall as the adult humans. Second, the horses turn into a tornado that is twice bigger than Sand Man's tornado sand. Lastly, the horses turn into a tsunami that covers the city. All of these happen whenever the guardians are around the horses. The changing of the size, the number, and the transformation of the black horses prove that the fear of being forgotten the guardians has made them grow like that. This means that the guardians feel afraid that they will be forgotten.

The Way the Guardians Overcome Fear

Freezing after Seeing the Source of Fear

It is symbolised through Man of the moon and the day. The moon controls the conditions within the earth, like water, the weather, and the fertility of plants, animals, and humans (Cirlot, 1971). It is safe to say that the moon is the brain of the earth that controls everything. Man of the moon also shares the same characteristic. He is in charge of controlling things, like choosing the guardians to be the guardians. Because Man of the moon is the brain, then, the role of Man of the moon is used as a confirmation that the guardians become to freeze when they encounter Pitch Black, the source of fear indirectly. The appearance of Man of the moon becomes the cue when the guardians are in a freezing state or are already back to normal again. It can be seen

when Man of the moon has not appeared yet, and only a bright sky can be seen after Pitch Black's first appearance in North's place. The lack of appearance of Man of the moon in here tells the meaning that the part of the brain which controls every movement and mind in a conscious state is forced to recoil and the part of the unconscious brain takes over after the encounter with the source of fear. The guardians also show a lot of reflex reactions that could be found in freeze mood during this scene. Seeing Toothiana automatically pauses for a second between each word proves that even when the guardians hear the name Pitch Black, the brain recognizes it as a threat that causes fear to the point that the brain immediately orders the guardians to pause, or I would call it to freeze after saying the word pitch to handle the feeling of fear. The pause here is the freezing state shown by the guardians. Yet, after Man of the moon makes an appearance, they finally recover from the freezing state and become coordinate. It is shown in the scene the moment Man of the moon confirms the shadow is Pitch Black, Bunnymund and Toothiana finally agree that Pitch Black really returns. The guardians become serious and finally ask why they should do about it.

The next symbol is sunny weather. Sunny weather is the condition of the guardians when they are in a state of freezing. Based on the research, the weather really affects humans' moods. Spring season positively affects humans' mood because the temperature and the air have an impact to lighten the mood (Denissen et al., 2008). Sunny weather can be found in the spring or summer. It can be said that sunny weather influences the guardians to be in a good mood because Spring is a time when the sun shines brightly with a good temperature. The fear theory claims that humans' heartbeat will decrease once they spot a danger. It is the same as the guardians. To stop the source of fear, the guardians turn into freezing state to prepare themselves to fight the fear. As discussed above, the guardians' mood is really good during this sunny weather, which means the temperature and the air have helped to calm down the increasing heartbeat that is caused by fear. Having the guardians' heart rate decline shows that their body and mind are ready to think clearly on how to prepare themselves to defeat Pitch Black. It can be found in the scene when the guardians hold a welcome ceremony for Jack Frost. It is a sunny day when the sun is bright, the weather gets warmer, and the sky is as clear as a crystal when the welcome ceremony happens. Also, the welcome ceremony is a valid sign that Jack Frost is a part of the guardians and ready to help the guardians defeat fear. This shows how serious they are equipping themselves with a secret and powerful weapon to deal with fear. This preparation only for a short amount of time because the sunny weather only appears until evening before Pitch Black creates a ruckus. Then, the short of time of sunny day emphasises that sunny day is used by the guardians to represent the freezing conditions they have as a coping mechanism towards the feeling of fear in order to make the guardians able to overcome fear.

Avoiding the Source of Fear

Toothiana's collection of teeth and Bunnymund's Easter egg are used to prove that the guardians overcome their nightmare by avoiding it. First symbol is teeth. According to Cirlot (1971, p. 332), "Teeth constitute the battlements, the wall and the fortifications of the inner man". The teeth function as a shield to protect the guardians from the feeling of fear. Instead of facing Pitch Black and fighting him back with the power they still have, the guardians use the power to take an indirect action to overcome fear. Because by collecting the teeth after Pitch Black's ambush, the guardians can make the children realise that the guardians still exist. Then, children will keep believing in them. Once the children believe in the guardians, the guardians will get more power that can stop the fear. It can be seen from how North proposes the idea of collecting the teeth as a way of defeating the fear. Saying that collecting teeth will keep children believing in the guardians and convince them that they have the power to make that happen reveals an intention that he uses the teeth to make the other guardians believe that this is the way they do not have to experience the fear anymore. Additionally, how he does not propose an idea to gather their power to fight and defeat Pitch Black, the source of the fear shows that he

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has an intention of not letting the guardians go and fight Pitch Black directly. He persuades them to use their power to collect the teeth instead, and all of the guardians agree to that. None of the guardians also comes up with an idea to attack Pitch Black and follows North's plan only. The guardians just need to combine their power to collect the teeth, and the children can believe in them, and they can avoid the fear.

The second symbol is Easter egg. In Christianity, Easter egg symbolises a new life and is associated with the renewal of life in Spring (Alcock, 2007). Another symbol is Easter egg represents a power that could protect people from evil spirits in Ukraine culture (Boruszkowska, 2015). In the film, egg is also described as an object that will bring a new life. New life here means changing the dreaded Winter season into the warm Spring season. If the season turns into Spring, it means Bunnymund might be able to organise an egg hunter's event. Egg hunter's event makes it possible for the children to find as many eggs as they want, and by that the children see that the guardians really exist to protect them. It lessens the chance of Pitch Black from getting stronger, and the guardians can avoid the fear without having to meet the fear directly. It is shown in the scene where Bunnymund tells the guardians that they still have Easter as the only chance to stop Pitch Black. The transition of moving from North's place to the warrants signifies that the guardians want to go to a place where they can have a new life because the place they try to leave is in the Winter season where there is no life. The place they move in now is in the Spring season where beautiful eggs grow happily. Also, in this scene, there is a moment where the egg leads Sophie, the human baby who accidentally comes to the warrant, to meet the guardians. Just like what I stated above that eggs are important to make children believe in the guardian again to defeat Pitch Black. The appearance of Sophie is not a coincidence. Making Sophie see the guardians is an evidence that eggs become a tool to help children believe in the guardians and to help the guardians to gain power. To add more, North's place has been visited by Pitch Black while the warrant is still safe from Pitch Black's power, which means that the warrant where the eggs are growing are free from evil. The eggs help the guardians to maintain their power and to increase the power that they have right now to avoid the fear. Thus, the eggs give power to the guardians to protect themselves from evil, Pitch Black, who brings fear.

Facing Their Darkest Fear

The symbol that represents the guardians have to meet their darkest fear is the Winter season. Winter is the season when the temperature is at its lowest. Extreme situations like storms and extreme cold weather usually happen in winter (Redd, 2017). This is the season when humans face a situation where they cannot go anywhere and must deal with the cold until the season is finished. It is the same as the Winter in the film. The snow is the representation of the source of fear, Pitch Black himself. The moment Pitch Black makes an appearance is the same with how the snow creates a disturbance through the storm. Pitch Black usually creates a ruckus that makes the children forget about the guardians which leads the guardians start having fear. The winter creates a situation where the guardians reach their lowest point, and they have to overcome the fear. This can be found in the following scenes. It starts with Jack Frost who arrives at the South Pole alone. The South Pole's role is to help Pitch Black corners Jack Frost so that Jack Frost cannot run away and to make it easy for Pitch Black to threaten him if he does not follow his instruction. The situation created by South Pole where the guardians need to fight in order to survive refers to the point that the guardians must understand that the feeling of fear should not be avoided or denied. They need to face it and find a solution to overcome it. Another evidence is when Jack Frost gets thrown off to the cliff and is left alone with snow covering the cliff. This shows that Jack Frost cannot go anywhere and has no one to rescue him, which makes him have to face his fear that he is being left alone with no children to remember him. He just sits there and thinks he will always be forgotten forever. The fact that the winter forces Jack Frost to be in isolation shows that it helps the guardians to understand that they

should tolerate/embrace the feeling of fear since what they have been scared of has already happened. What they need to do is start to think about how to overcome the fear. It can be seen at the end of this scene that after experiencing struggles in the South Pole, Jack Frost knows that he needs to fix his broken tool so that he can fly again to help other guardians. The scene proves that winter makes the guardians finally accept that they have fear, their fear turns into reality, and they have to find the solution to overcome the fear.

Turning the Fear into Hope

Hope is defined as a situation where people can have a good dream, have wonder, and have fun with each other. According to the hope theory, the reason why hope is needed by the guardians is that it helps them to eliminate stress and fear and changes them to pleasant feelings such as happiness and success. The way the guardians turn fear into hope requires two points. The person who experiences fear needs to have a positive imagination about the future. Then, they will find a new goal because after they find the goal, they can have a sense of feeling where they have a purpose in life.

Gaining Positive Imagination through A Miracle

According to the hope theory, a positive feeling requires the conscious part of the brain to make humans start having a positive mindset about the future. Yet, once humans experience fear, it is difficult to let the conscious part win because fear will only make our brain automatically filled with negative feelings and take control over the brain. Basically, a positive imagination will be hard to obtain if they suffer from terrifying situations in life. That is why to make them able to gain that positive mindset, they need to see the possibility that it could happen by experiencing a miracle. According to the Cambridge Dictionary, a miracle is an extraordinary experience where people meet a lucky situation. Experiencing a situation where an impossible thing becomes possible can really open the guardians' eyes to see that their positive imagination is not just a daydream but possible to happen in the future. It can be seen when the children save the guardians from Pitch Black. In the beginning, the guardians only find a dead end when they distract Pitch Black who represents the fear that shuts down everything. The dead end represents the fear that does not want to let the guardians escape the situation. They could not think any positive imagination. There is no place for hope in this scene. Even so, at the moment when the guardians think they have no hope, the children magically turn the black horse into gold sand shows that from the hopeless situation. The change of color from black to gold suggests that a gloomy future can be changed into a bright future where the guardians can have a good dream and have fun with children. The action that is done by the children shows that the guardians need a miracle where it turns the situation to the guardians' benefit which turns the fear itself into a good dream. After experiencing a miracle that appears from the darkness, the positive mind can appear. Then, the guardians can develop new behavior to help them dismiss the feeling of fear and are able to find hope in it. It is shown when the guardians gain their confidence back to stop Pitch Black after they see the miracle. The way North immediately calls Yeti to fight against Pitch Black after his power is back and Bunnymund fights the nightmare before he regains his power back reinforces a fact that the guardians finally can have a positive imagination about the future, and they want to make it into reality.

Finding New Goal

As stated in fear theory, fear is affiliated with implicit memory and hope is dominated by fear easily which means as long as the source of the fear still exists, fear will always win over hope because the source of fear will awaken the memories of the fear that are stored in the brain, and then, the brain will automatically produce fear again. Finding new goals is the solution here since it helps the guardians to erase the source of fear forever because they are able to produce an attitude that actualises the hope and removes fear from the world. The way the guardians find their new goal is symbolised by Sandy's gold sand. Despite already overcoming their fear, the hope the guardians wanted to be real does not happen. Fear still survives, and only few children

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still believe in them. However, the gold sand creates a situation where the guardians can see children can have their good dreams back and be happy. The situation given actually is to point out that what the guardians wish for already happens because there is no fear and only full of wonder. The bright color of the gold shines through the darkness really helps the guardians to see clearly and move their head around seeing their surroundings. In other words, the gold sand makes the guardians realise that the key to hope can happen is that nightmares are gone from this world. Understanding their needs can help the guardians find their goal, which is to make the children unable to be scared of nightmares anymore. The gold sand really acts like a guidance that helps the guardians to find a purpose in life. To add more, the color of gold symbolises power (Ghiotto & Wijanarka, 2016). The gold sand or, in particular, Sandy, holds a big power because he is the only one that is very capable of killing the source of fear, Pitch Black. If the guardian wants to bring Sandy back, they need to make the gold sand bring back Sandy. By making the gold sand change into any form or shape, the number of children who believe in the guardians increases. The moment it increases rapidly, that is when the children successfully bring back Sandy alive. Sandy becomes the key for the guardians to know what step they should take from now on since he is the only strongest guardian who can defeat Pitch Black. It can be seen how Sandy with its gold sand makes Pitch Black scared. The way the gold sand is used to help Sandy force Pitch Black to go back to the underworld indicates that the guardians reach their goal which is to make the world is free from nightmares. How Pitch Black is dragged to the underworld by gold sand, and how he vanishes are to signify that Sandy is really powerful, and his power contributes to making the guardians succeed in establishing creative and critical actions just from finding goals to be able to change the future from full of fear into hope.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the famous children's fantasy characters: Santa Claus, Tooth Fairy, Sand Man, and Easter Bunny experience the unpleasant feeling that they should have not felt, which is the fear of being forgotten. The feeling of fear is shown through the symbolism of the black horses. However, the guardians do not want to dwell in that negative feeling. They want to turn the feeling of fear into something pleasant which is hope. Before the guardians are able to turn the fear into hope, the guardians need to overcome their fear first. The guardians overcome their fear through three ways. First, they freeze their body and mind when facing the fear. Next, they decide to avoid the cause of their fear because they do not want to experience the feeling of fear. The last way of how the guardians overcome the fear is by facing it. Facing the fear will make the guardians able to find the solution on how to deal with the fear as soon as possible. After the guardians succeed in dealing with fear, the guardians need to turn it into hope to make the negative feeling vanish. Turning the fear into hope also requires two steps. The first step the guardians need to have a positive mind. The moment the guardians have a positive mind, they can see their surrounding objectively that actually the chance of having a good future exists. Following the positive mind, the next step is to find a clear goal. A clear goal helps the guardians to find a purpose in life. That way the guardians finally try to find a way to make the hope they are hoping for comes true. The moment the guardians succeed the two steps, the hope the guardians wish for turns into reality and the fear will be totally gone from the world.

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