

## MORAL VALUES FOUND IN THE NOVEL ENTITLED “LITTLE FIRES EVERYWHERE” BY CELESTE NG

**Dian Novita**

*dnnovita92@gmail.com*

Graduated Program of PGRI University of Palembang

### Abstract

This study investigates moral values in the *Little Fires Everywhere* novel by Celeste Ng. The researcher investigates moral values through novels because today the moral crisis also occurs in the world of education. Researchers want to find out whether they can learn moral values through the novel or not. Based on the investigation, researchers used novels to find moral values. The classification of moral values has concerned with motherhood, bravery, love, togetherness, honesty, independent, discipline, wise, and diligent. The researcher concludes that the findings suggest that some moral values can be learned in the novel entitled *Little Fires Everywhere* by Celeste Ng.

**Keywords:** *Literature, Moral Values, Novel*

### INTRODUCTION

The multidimensional crisis in Indonesia is currently very worrying, especially the moral crisis. The moral crisis also occurs in the world of education. Recent cases exposed in the media such as sexual abuse and teacher violence against students, student bullying against other students, drug use, free sex, or abortion among students are some blurred portraits of the face of our education world. As an English education teacher, we can provide moral education through literary work.

Herawati (2010:199) said literature is a cultural result of a society that is often considered to contain the reality of life that is a factual reality (already and is happening) and imaginary reality (predicting future reality). Literature is part of an art that is written by the authors. A Human being needs something to express their thoughts, feelings, cultures, experiences, creativity in literary works, and message that they want to deliver to others. These why most people choose literature as their media to express their feeling. Literature allows people to enjoy the vision and imagination of the author.

Literary works were created with various reasons including to be enjoyed, understood, and used as entertainers or as learning material for the community. Beauty in literature can be enjoyed by the reader happily. Several elements build these literary works so that they are interesting and beautiful to enjoy, those are extrinsic elements and intrinsic elements. Extrinsic elements are

building elements of literature from the outside while intrinsic elements are building elements from within.

Most teenagers and even adults also like various literary works including novels, poems, short stories, lyrics through a song, and other literary works. As we know that in adolescence, everything they read, especially something they like, will more or less affect their mindset, habits, level of confidence, attitudes, and ways of seeing things. This is where moral education is needed.

Moral education must be more applied in the world of education because moral problems are not only deteriorating but are also a concern of all circles. Moreover, with the globalization that enters without being able to prevent it, it will also bring good influence and influence of workers to the life and culture of the nation and state. Having a good influence because our country will not be left behind from other developing countries, our country can compete with other countries. But on the other hand, there are bad influences that we must be aware of, such as the lifestyle of a society that is becoming increasingly free, even becoming too free and consumptive.

In this study, the researcher has focused on the novel because the novel was the result of literary work that was most liked by most teenagers and adults. Simaibang (2017:105) said that piece of prose fiction of a reasonable length and no distinction between fiction and fact was not always clear was called a novel.

This novel brings the American culture that was very thick with free association and a mindset that was very different from eastern culture. Behind the interesting story, there were many cultures and moral messages that had to be understood by the reader. If the reader was not able to understand it well, eating moral deviations have occurred which have feared to be experienced by readers, especially students.

Ng (2017) has received various international awards for her success as the author of the novel, *Little Fires Everywhere*, which she claimed through her website. These awards include: a) Instant New York Times Bestseller, b) Amazon's Best Novel Of 2017, c) Winner Of The Goodreads Readers 'Choice Award 2017, and d) Fiction Named a Best Book Of The Year By Npr, Amazon, Barnes & Noble, Entertainment Weekly, Guardian, BuzzFeed, Esquire, Washington Post, and Many More. According to these various international awards, it made the writer more convinced that the novel was indeed very worth reading.

The reason for the researcher has examined moral values were because the researcher wanted to describe values that were a guide for a person or group in regulating their behaviour, especially moral values. The existence of the researcher themselves who has worked in the world of

education, research on moral values could be taught to students by reading literature and looking for moral values contained in it.

A novel is one of literary works can be influenced people by the written. Authors can influence them by sequences words, visions, and imaginations. It's not only very interesting but also it can be dangerous. Readers mind can be influenced not only by good moral, but also the bad things too. Because of the reasons, the researcher has found out moral values. The researcher hoped the novel not only could be enjoyed by readers but also gave moral values through the intrinsic and extrinsic elements. Moral values in the literary works were not be described or told clearly in the literary works. Moral values were not directly conveyed but through immoral things. Besides, moral values were also implied.

## **METHOD**

The study has been a descriptive inquiry where *Little Fires Everywhere* by Celeste Ng has been used as the data source. The writer has collected the data in terms of moral values. There are several steps that will be used by a writer in the data analysis:

1. Reading the novel in order to understand the moral values found in the novel.
2. Making the synopsis of the novel *Little Fires Everywhere* by Celeste Ng.
3. Specifying moral values
4. Detailing values from books

The classification of moral values has concerned with motherhood, bravery, love, togetherness, honesty, independent, disciplined, diligent, and wise. This deliberation was conducted to answer research problems and to deal with intrinsic elements which were associated with the moral values.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

### **The Concept of Novel**

A novel is one of important literary work because authors can develop a theme through his depiction into a sequence of words. Little (1970:68) states novel is narrative text with long-form prose that has characters and fictional events. A novel can portray the world living phenomena adapted from the author's description, imaginations, experiences, dialogues, and many thus explore basic human in depth.

We can very easily distinguish between novels and other literary works because novels have a special power in building stories. That is the capacity to create a subject and his world to be very complex, detailed, and interesting with very straightforward and easy to understand language so that we can feel the author's imagination. So, tight language is not necessary. However, it is more difficult because the novel contains greater elements of organization and is written to a large sequence of events (Stanton, 1965:44).

Nurgiantoro (2010:10) argues that the novel is an essay in the form of long prose which contains a series of stories of someone's life and the environment by highlighting the character and nature of the perpetrator, and the work of fiction is built by building elements, namely intrinsic and extrinsic elements. The novel consists of two elements, namely intrinsic and extrinsic elements that are very influential in building the literature itself (Simaibang, 2017:105). The novel is a type of literary work written in a narrative that contains certain conflict in the life stories of the characters in the story. A novel has a theme which is developed by the author through the author's description, imaginations, experiences, characterizations, dialogues as ways to express the theme and moral values.

Every novel has a particular message which wanted to be presented by the authors. They transform their thinking and ideas through the sequence of event in the story. The pictures of the society have been painted on wide canvasses (Little, 1970: 105). Social background is very influential because it is the most important thing in building social belief.

Readers not only got the pleasure of enjoying the story but also by reading a novel they have realized the messages which were implied by the novel. The readers could imagine the situation in the story although there was no picture which helped them to understand the context while they tied the sequence of the story. This made us understood human feelings and curiosity in addition to the suffering of others. Besides, similar values and culture could be learned through the book-length story. Readers could improve their comprehension such as morality because the author of the novel has built the development of the characters which were very complicated and having various problems.

### **The Concept of Moral Values**

The moral word is derived from the Latin word *mos*, the plural is *mores*, which means the procedures or customs. Behaviour means the behaviour in conformity with the moral code of the

social group. Suseno (1987: 19) argues that the moral word always refers to the merits of humans as humans.

Moral values cannot be separated from other types of values. Every value can obtain moral weight if included in moral behaviour. For example, honesty is a moral value, but honesty is empty if it is not applied to other values, for example, economic value. Moral values even though they seem to depend on other values, but seem to be new values even as the highest values.

Moral has an understanding that does not only refer to the good and bad of humans but as humans who are responsible for their profession. Moral value is things that are good on moral grounds (Franeka, 1973:83). Furthermore, Moral value (moral goodness and badness) must be distinguished, not only from moral obligation, rightness, and wrongness but also from non-moral value. Widjaja (1985:154) states that moral is good and bad teaching about actions and behaviour (morals).

Daroeso (1986:22) formulates a more comprehensive understanding of moral formulas as follows:

- a. Moral as a set of ideas about living behaviour, with certain basic colours held by a group of people in a particular environment.
- b. Morals are teachings about the behaviour of a good life based on a particular view of life or religion.
- c. Moral as the behaviour of human life, which is based on awareness, that it is bound by the necessity to achieve good, in accordance with the values and norms that apply in its environment.

In another hand, Bertens (2002:5) states there are four characteristics of moral values, namely:

- a. Relating to personal responsibility.
- b. Concerning to inner self.
- c. Making an obligation.
- d. Having a formal quality.

The moral values can be built well and seen by the characters and characterization in the story. A character is the nature of a person can be expressed by what he says and does, by clothing, home and furniture, and by his friends. Therefore to build characters in stories, poems, or dramas, authors can use some characterization methods. Characterization is the concept of creating characters for literary works especially narrative text. Characterization is a literary element and may be employed in dramatic works of art or everyday conversation because characters may be

presented using description, through their action, speech, thoughts, and interaction with other characters (Abrams, 1999:70). Murphy (1992:161) states characterization is a way used by an author in attempting to make characters in the story understandable and come alive for the readers.

Characters in fiction, drama, and film are based on good values and struggle against injustice, mistakes, and crime expressly give a lot of thought and help ripen the emotions of their readers. The moral authority will arise from someone who listens to a narrative or fairy tale and other stories. Dialogue on certain narratives or stories illustrates the very complex moral structure of one's life or individual, it can also be related to various factors in which he explains how moral development in life. The reader's response theory assumes that literature is very important in developing the morale of young people. Readers are expected to experience changes as experienced and expected by the author after reading the literature.

In relations with other people, both directly and indirectly, every human action is always valued by humans or other individuals. This assessment includes people who are right or wrong or good at behaving or behaving. So moral values are rules and understandings that determine things that are considered good or bad, and explain what humans and other human beings must and must do. From this understanding, life in society is always bound by something or rules of life that must be obeyed or enforced. In other words, humans in their lives are always limited by the existence of norms. To assess human actions, moral is the right benchmark. This benchmark is a basic moral principle, namely: a) the principle of good attitude, b) principle of justice, and c) principles of respecting yourself.

## **Moral Values**

### a) Motherhood

There are very interesting thing in this novel, it is the differences martial nature that found in Mia Warren and Elena Richardson.

The first is Mia Warren who is very understanding and with adolescence. She is a mother who reflects freedom and independence. Mia is a type of mother who is very friendly, wise, and very understanding for the growth of her child. It was seem from a sentence that comes from Mia's mind.

*To a parent, your child wasn't just a person: your child was a place, a kind of Narnia, a vast eternal place where the present you were living and the past you remembered and the future you longed for all existed at once. (Ng, 2017:122)*

*"Your mom was really nice to me last night." Lexie stirred the sereal in her bowl.*

*“My mom is always nice,” Pearl said, with a prickle of pride. (Ng, 2017:246)*

*Mia always comfort and warm Richardson’s sons and daughters. They feel that finally they find a safe place to tell everything, specially Izzy, She likes Mia’s motherhood nature.*

*The second one is Elena Richardson who is very passionate about applying the norms of Shaker Heights that are full of order in her life. She has an established life, organized and considered perfect by others. Then she is very protective and paranoid mother to her sons and daughters, specially to her son, Izzy Richardson because he was born prematurely. We can see from the sentences below that imagine us about the condition.*

*Mrs. Richardson, however, could not let Izzy be, and the feeling coalesced in all of them: Izzy pushing, her mother restraining, and after a time no one could remember how the dynamic had started, only that it had existed always. (Ng, 2017:112)*

Elena’s martial mature often make her children stress and hide their activities and taught. It is not good condition between a mother and her children. A mother must be able to be a friend and mom to her children.

b) Bravery

In this novel other moral values are found about the Brave of a mother in protecting her child. Mia Warren decided to leave her life, from her family, and from her old environment to a place where no one recognized her.

Mia Warren left the her parents’ house without saying anything. Besides that, she also lied to Mr. and Mrs. Ryan, she said that he had lost the baby he was carrying. Mia who is very brave in making big decisions in her life.

*Her parents were asleep; her mother had been taking sleeping pills at night to calm her nerves, and the crack beneath their bedroom door was dark.*

*She drove all night and reached the Upper West Side as the sun was rising.*

*She’d been thinking about what to say all the long drive from Pittsburgh, and in the end, she’d decided to lie. “There is no easy way to say this,” she wrote. “I lost the baby. I’m so ashamed and so sorry. You don’t owe me anything from our agreement, but I feel owe you. Here is money to pay you back for the medical appointments. I hope it’s enough —it’s all I can spare.” she placed her note on top of stack of bills —nine hundred dollars of her saved-up wages. Then she bundled them into the bag with the maternity dresses.*

*She drove all night, through New Jersey and Pennsylvania, miles of highway whipping by in the dark.*

*All week she drove this way, as if in a fever: driving until exhaustion forced her to stop, sleeping until she was rested enough to drive again, ignoring the clock, the light and dark of each day. (Ng, 2017:229-230)*

c) Love

In this novel the writer found other moral value, namely love. We can see how much a mother's love to her child. We can see at Mia's mind as a mother.

*To a parent, your child wasn't just a person: your child was a place, a kind of Narnia, a vast eternal place where the present you were living and the past you remembered and the future you longed for all existed at once. (Ng, 2017:122)*

*The night before, as they lay side by side in Pearl's little twin bed, Mia had reached out to rub her daughter's back... When Pearl had been young, they had often shared a bed: it was easier to find one matters that two, of course, but there had also been an intense comfort in being close together, like small animals sheltered deep in their den. (Ng, 2017:246-247)*

d) Togetherness

In this novel, it is also illustrated that togetherness of a family must be maintained even though they have to face difficult things. Not blaming each other even though it's in a difficult situation. In this novel, it is also illustrated that togetherness of a family must be maintained even though they have to face difficult things. Not blaming each other even though it's in a difficult situation. This was illustrated when Mia Warren was expelled from Shaker Heights by Mrs. Richardson because of she misunderstood about Pearl, assuming that Pearl was an immoral girl who seduced her child. At that time Mia Warren still defended her daughter and invited her daughter to go together without blaming or even accusing her daughter.

*"I think it's time you moved on," Mrs. Richardson said. With one hand she lifted Izzy's jacket from the chair and dusted it, as if it were soiled. "By tomorrow." She set a folded hundred-dollar bill on the counter. "This should more than make up for rent the month. We'll call it even"*

*"Why are you doing this?"*

*Mrs. Richardson headed for the door. "Ask your daughter," she said, and the door shut behind her. (Ng, 2017:303)*

*"Please. Mom. Please. Please don't make us go."*

*"I don't want to. But we have to." Mia held out her hand. Pearl, for a moment, imagined herself transforming into a tree. Rooting herself so deeply on that nothing could displace her.*

*"Pearl, my darling," her mother said. "I'm so sorry. It's time to go." She took Mia's hand, and Pearl, uprooted, come free and followed her mother back to the car. (Ng, 2017:306)*

e) Honesty

Honesty is one of the moral values contained in the novel *Little Fires Everywhere* by Celeste Ng. Mia Warren, who has hidden a big secret about her identity and Pearl for years. She never



intended to hide it forever from her only daughter. She had prepared herself to tell everything to her daughter even though it was something quite difficult for her and for her daughter to understand. But Mia's honesty and motherhood managed to make her daughter understand and still willing to accompany her mother to go anywhere.

... *"I'm not going until you tell me why."*

*"That's fair." Mia sighed... "I've been thinking about how to tell you for a long time ago. Longer than you can imagine."*

*Pearl had gone very still now, her eyes fixed on her mother, waiting patiently, aware she was about to learn something very important. Mia thought of Joseph Ryan, sitting across the table from her that night at dinner, waiting to learn her answer.*

*"Let me tell you first," she said, taking a deep breath, "about your Uncle Warren."*

*When Mia had finished, Pearl sat quietly, tracing the lines of quilting that spiralled across the bedspread. She had told Pearl the outline of everything, though they both knew all the details would be a long time in coming.*

*Mia had taken a deep breath. How did you explain to someone —how did you explain to a child, a child you loved —that someone they adored was not to be trusted? She tried. (Ng, 2017:307-309)*

f) Independent

Mia Warren's figure in the novel gives a lot of moral messages, besides her motherly nature, she is a very independent person. He utilized his various abilities in many ways to be able to do many part-time jobs before and after completing classes at his school. He did all that to pay for school and his daily needs, to achieve his goals.

*Each morning she got up at four thirty and went to work pouring coffee for businessmen about to catch their trains. The hot plates she carried from the kitchen seared the insides of her forearms with arc-shaped scars... she learned to appear with the coffee pot just as they were setting down their empty mugs, to watch her customers for the little fidgets and stretches that signalled they were in a hurry and ready for the check, or that they were relaxed and wanted to linger. Because of this, the businessmen and ad men liked to sit in her section, and they usually left an extra dollar —or sometimes a five —on the table.*

*When her sift was over, she changed in the little closet of an employee bathroom, rolling her work uniform and apron into a tight cylinder before tucking it in her knapsack, so they would not wrinkle.*

*From her father she had learned to change the oil in a car, to wire a socket, to chisel, to saw —which meant she wielded her tools expertly: she knew how far you could flex a piece of wire or a sheet of metal before it broke, how to make clean lines and soft bulges and curves, how to coax a copper pipe into angles and bends. (Ng, 2017:199-200)*

g) Discipline

In this novel the author finds the moral value possessed by residents of Shaker Heights, namely discipline in carrying out the rules that already exist and they have been trusted. This is the main principle of Mrs. Richardson and other residents. This is illustrated in a sentence written in the novel when describing the condition of Shaker Heights.

*Shaker Heights was like that. There were rules, many rules, about what you could and could not do, as Mia and Pearl began to learn as they settled into their new home. (Ng, 2017:9)*

*In Shaker Heights there was a plan for everything... the underlying philosophy being that everything could—and should—be planned out, and that by doing so you could avoid the unseemly, the unpleasant, and the disastrous. (Ng, 2017:10)*

h) Wise

In this novel the author also finds a moral message, namely about wisdom. This is illustrated in a dialogue between Mia Warren and Lexie. The conversation occurred when Lexie returned to Mia Warren's home with Pearl after returning from the hospital. Lexie still doubts the decision she has made to have an abortion.

*“But what if I chose wrong?” Lexie paused, closing her eyes, trying to feel that spark of life that she’d been so certain was cartwheeling inside her before. “Maybe I should have kept it. Maybe I should have told Brian. We could have made it work.”*

*“Would you have been ready to be a good mother?” Mia asked. “The kind of mother you’d have wanted to be? The kind of mother a child deserves?” They sat in silence for a few minutes, Mia’s hand warm on Lexie’s. Lexie felt an overwhelming urge to lean her head on Mia’s shoulder, and after a moment, she did. For the first time, she wondered what it would have been like to grow up as Pearl, to have Mia as her mother, to have this life as her life. The thought made her a bit dizzy.*

*“You’ll always be sad about this,” Mia said softly. “But it doesn’t mean you made the wrong choice. It’s just something that you have to carry.” She sat Lexie up gently and gave her a pat on the shoulder, then bent to pick up the empty mug.*

*“But do you think I made the wrong choice?” Lexie persisted. She felt sure Mia would know.*

*Mia paused, one hand on the doorknob. “I don’t know, Lexie,” she said. “I think you’re the only one who can know that.” The door closed softly behind her. (Ng, 2017:244-245)*

In this novel illustrates that a mother must be wise in dealing with something and respond to a teenager to be well received by them. Don't give boring sentences to teenagers because they won't receive them well, instead they will only be considered like the wind. But, choose the wise sentence that they can receive at their age.

i) Diligent

In addition to the nine moral values mentioned above, there are other moral values that are described by Mia Warren, who are diligent or hard-working. She utilized her various abilities in many ways to be able to do a lot of part-time work before and after finishing class at her school.

*Each morning she got up at four thirty and went to work pouring coffee for businessmen about to catch their trains. The hot plates she carried from the kitchen seared the insides of her forearms with arc-shaped scars... she learned to appear with the coffee pot just as they were setting down their empty mugs, to watch her customers for the little fidgets and stretches that signalled they were in a hurry and ready for the check, or that they were relaxed and wanted to linger. Because of this, the businessmen and ad men liked to sit in her section, and they usually left an extra dollar —or sometimes a five —on the table.*

*When her sift was over, she changed in the little closet of an employee bathroom, rolling her work uniform and apron into a tight cylinder before tucking it in her knapsack, so they would not wrinkle. From her father she had learned to change the oil in a car, to wire a socket, to chisel, to saw —which meant she wielded her tools expertly: she knew how far you could flex a piece of wire or a sheet of metal before it broke, how to make clean lines and soft bulges and curves, how to coax a copper pipe into angles and bends. (Ng, 2017:199-200)*

## CONCLUSIONS

In this study, the researchers concluded that:

- a. The novel is the work of someone who can come from the experience of someone or the author himself, or comes from the imagination of the writer to create a story where the literary works must have moral messages to be conveyed by the author.
- b. Moral messages can be obtained from various literary works including novels.
- c. In the novel *Little Fires Everywhere* by Celeste Ng has several moral messages obtained by researchers through its investigations namely motherhood, brave, love, togetherness, honesty, independent, discipline, wise, and diligent.

Researchers have investigated the novel *Little Fires Everywhere* by Celeste Ng and have produced the conclusions previously explained, so the researchers suggest further researchers to conduct an investigation using triangulation to support the results of the investigation. Besides, researchers also suggest that researchers further discuss the implications of novel teaching on the process of teaching English.

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