

*Proceedings of The 7th Annual International Conference (AIC) Syiah Kuala University and The 6th International Conference on Multidisciplinary Research (ICMR) in conjunction with the International Conference on Electrical Engineering and Informatics (ICELTICs) 2017, October 18-20, 2017, Banda Aceh, Indonesia*

# The Main Character in Khaled Hosseini's Novel *The Kite Runner*: An Interdisciplinary Analysis of Literary Work from Psychological Standpoint

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## Abstract

As one important element in novel, character takes a large space in the storyline. Therefore, in this paper, the main focus is to analyze the main character of *The Kite Runner* novel by referring the character types to literature and psychological concept. *The Kite Runner* is a novel written by Khaled Hosseini in 2003. In 2005, this novel successfully became the chart-topping book and was voted in 2006 as the reading group book of the year. In examining the main character of Amir from literary concept, we will analyze the character personality through: the main character's background, the main character's act, the main character's say, the main character's thought and how other characters react to the main character. With regard to the main character analysis from psychological point of view, we use fundamental dimension of personality of how the character gets energy, attention, decision making and lifestyle. The result of this analysis shows that many positive sides of the character that can be adapted by the reader. Specifically speaking, from the literary conception, the main character falls into round/dynamic type of character. On the other hand, in psychology conception, the main character shows many changes from time to time. In childhood age the main character adheres the INFJ type, during adolescent age the main character changes his personality into ENFJ, and at adulthood age, he transforms into ESTP personality.

**Keywords:** Main character, novel, literature, psychology.

## Introduction

This paper focuses on "The Kite Runner" novel from Khaled Hosseini which tells about friendship, loyalty, cruelty, longing for acceptance, redemption, and survival. It is a semiautobiographical anti-war social novel from Khaled Hosseini. The main character in this novel was based on the author's experiences. In his novel, Hosseini offers cultural richness, accounts of ethnic conflicts, and even its evocation of annual children's kite contests from his own experience.

The protagonist or the main character is the central figure in the novel. In this novel, the main character is Amir who was raised in Kabul-Afghanistan. He was always haunted by the guilt of betraying his childhood friend Hassan, the son of his father's Hazara servant.

## **Literature Review**

A novel contains character as one fundamental element of fiction. A character is a participant in the story, and is usually a person, but may be any persona, identity, or entity whose existence originates from a fictional work or performance. The "fictional characters", as Eco (2009) named it, exists in an imaginative and incomplete world but reflects the real depiction of everyday human conditions.

Characters may be of several generic types. The first type is the point-of-view character from whom the story is viewed. Second is the protagonist character, the main character of a story. The third character is the antagonist character. This is the character that stands in opposition to the protagonist. Fourth is the supporting character that plays minor role and fifth the minor character that appears as a cameo in the story (Woloch, 2009). On the other hand, the analysis of character can also be reviewed from literary conception or from psychology's character personality. In this paper, the character is the people portrayed in the novel, while character personality is defined individual's personality, behavior, or appearance.

### ***Type of Character in Novel***

Literary speaking, flat, minor, round, and major characters are the typology that can be drawn from the story. It can also be revealed by the way character responds to conflict in the dialogues (Wiehardt, 2009; DiBattista, 2011). The round characters recognize, or adjust to circumstances. Round characters for example, they have complex personalities and they touch life at many points. The round character—usually the main figure in a story—profits from experience and undergoes a change which may be shown in action, the realization of new strength, the affirmation of previous decisions, the acceptance of a new condition, or the discovery of unrecognized truths. Round (or dynamic) characters generally fall into one of the following two categories: the protagonist as the central character in a story and the antagonist that is always in conflict with the protagonist.

In Flat Characters, however, the characters do not grow, they are static. Flat characters typically pinpoint the development of round characters and are usually minor. Flat characters generally fall into one of two categories: the stock and the stereotype character. The Stock Character is a flat one in a standard role, whereas The Stereotype is a character who is so ordinary that seems to have been cast in a fixed frame.

Koesnoesobroto (1988, p. 97) introduced different type of character in the novel. On the basis of its importance to the novel, he argued there are major and minor characters. The major or main character is the most important character in the story. On the other hand, minor character is less important than those of the main character.

### ***Type of Character Personality***

Personality type aims to classify people into distinctive categories. Personality types are equally similar to "personality styles". Types refer to categories that are distinct and disjointed. This is essential to know because it helps to differentiate a personality type approach from a personality trait approach, which normally takes a continuous approach.

Jungian psychological types are probably the most widely used and amongst the best-known character typology in everyday life (Hogan & Briggs, 1997). Jung's typology emerges from Carl Jung's deep, holistic philosophy and psychological reading about the person. Jung's typology is not, regrettably, always included in mainstream personality courses, because it was not empirically-driven. Jung viewed

the ultimate psychological task as the process based on the strengths and limitations of psychological type (Feist, 1985).

### **Research Method**

This research is aimed at analyzing the main character in a novel, as one form of literary work, not only from the literature perspective but also from psychological standpoint. To achieve this objective, we used content analysis techniques with the following steps. Firstly, we will divide the novel into three parts of life stages of the main character and the unfolded events near these stages, namely; childhood age, adolescent age, and adulthood age.

Childhood age started when Amir was twelve years old and lived in Afghanistan until Hassan and Ali leave Amir's house after Amir's thirteenth birthdays. It can be found in chapter one to chapter nine. The adolescent age begins when Amir was eighteen years old and decided to flee from Afghanistan to California six years later, he then got married with Soraya, and felt something empty without a child. This can be traced back in chapter ten to chapter thirteen. The last is the adulthood age. This stage begun when Amir asked by Rahim Khan to go back to Afghanistan ten years later in which Amir managed to liberate his guilty of betraying Hassan. This stage can be found in chapter fourteen until chapter twenty five. Secondly, we try to find the narration, dialogue, action, thought, and other character's action or word that imply the main character personality.

In addition to this, there are many concepts that examined the way to analyze the character. Generally, Boynton and Mack (1985) explained the simple style in analyzing the character. He says that to reveal the character's typology we need to know in the novel how they speak, what they say, how they act, and what the other characters say about them. This concept is useful in analyzing the main character from literary concept of the novel and from psychological approach of character personality. The more specific method in revealing the main character in novel is explained in more detail in the table below:

**Table 1.** Methods in revealing character (Boynton & Mack 1985).

<b>No</b>	<b>Method</b>	<b>Indicator</b>
1	What character does	Character action, how character act
2	What character says	Character word, how she/he say the word
3	What character thinks	Character though, how the way of thinking.
4	How other react to a character	The way the other characters react to him, and what they say about him
5	How character react to his surrounding	Character reaction toward his environment
6	Direct description or explanation	Direct description or explanation by the author.

According to Myers and Briggs's personality type indicator (Myers, 1962), a character's approach to problem solving, relationships, and crises can be mapped using the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator. We used the fundamental dimensions of personality identified by Myers-Briggs to analyze the main characters with four personality types: energy, attention, decision making and lifestyle (McCaulley, 1981).

**Table 2.** Fundamental dimensions of personality.

No	Fundamental Dimensions of Personality	Type of Personality	of Indicator
1	Energy	Extraversion (E)	Gets energy from people, activities, and objects. Likes to interact.
2	Attention	Introversion (I)	Gets energy from ideas, emotions, and impressions. Likes to concentrate
		Sensing (S)	Focuses on facts. Practical and proceeds step-by-step.
3	Decision- Making	Intuition (N)	Focuses on possibilities. Theoretical and proceeds in leaps.
		Thinking (T)	Makes decisions according to a logical system based on consistent principles. Believes in justice.
4	Lifestyle	Feeling (F)	Makes decisions according to a value system based on a desire for harmony. Believes in compassion.
		Judging (J)	Proceeds towards goals in an organized way. Likes to make plans and come to decisions.
		Perceiving (P)	Adapts to life in a spontaneous way. Likes to gather information and keep options open.

Then, it is possible to have an exclusive four letter code to indicate each of the 16 Jungian personality types, such as INTJ. The following division will help us in dividing character into some type of personality based on Jungian personality types. They are call as high-level description of the sixteen personality types:

- ISTJ: Introversion-Sensing-Thinking-Judgment
- ISTP: Introversion-Sensing-Thinking-Perception
- ISFJ: Introversion-Sensing-Feeling-Judgment
- ISFP: Introversion-Sensing-Feeling-Perception
- INFJ: Introversion-Intuition-Feeling-Judgment
- INFP: Introversion-Intuition-Feeling-Perception
- INTJ: Introversion-Intuition-Thinking-Judgment
- INTP: Introversion-Intuition-Thinking-Perception
- ESTP: Extroversion-Sensing-Thinking-Perception
- ESTJ: Extroversion-Sensing-Thinking-Judgment
- ESFP: Extroversion-Sensing-Feeling-Perception
- ESFJ: Extroversion-Sensing-Feeling-Judgment
- ENFP: Extroversion-Intuition-Feeling-Perception
- ENFJ: Extroversion-Intuition-Feeling-Judgment
- ENTP: Extroversion-Intuition-Thinking-Perception
- ENTJ: Extroversion-Intuition-Thinking-Judgment

### Results and Discussion

In the novel, the author shows the main character's life from childhood age, adolescent age until the adulthood age. From these three periods of story, the novel describes different kind of character type, both in character in novel and type of personality. The following part will briefly explain the character analysis from literary perspective and from psychological type point of view into three periods of time.

### **Childhood Age**

In this section, the story begins with a memory of the 1965 winter when the main character firstly betrays his Hazara servant. Amir did not tell his name to his Hazara servant, until the end of chapter two. Only in chapter two that the main character name is mentioned. At that time, Amir was a twelve year old boy who lacks attention and affection from his single father, Baba. Baba often shows more kindness to Hassan, the son of Ali (their servant) that forced Amir to get Baba's attention in any way he can.

Amir and Hassan is good friend. They are fed from the same breast and grown together in the same home ground. But Amir often hates Hassan, because he is brave and smart. As a result, although Hassan is just the son of their servant, he is able to get Baba attention more than Amir has. Therefore, Amir often mock, scold and at one time betray him to win Baba's attention. But this becomes the ghost that always haunts him anywhere he goes in his life.

In our opinion, Amir is a protagonist character, because he is the main narrative and also the central figure of the story. Thus, according to the type of character in the novel, Amir was a round or dynamic character, which was conflicted with himself. With regard to personality type, Amir at this life stage, was an Introvert one (I), he gets the energy from his emotion. Hence, this is understandable because at that time Amir was a twelve years old boy, motherless and lack of affection. It makes Amir become an introvert child and spent more time in his inner space with reading and writing. He focused on his Intuition (N). He was a boy who focuses very much on possibilities. He listens to his inner voice since he concluded that Baba does not love him sincerely. So he forced himself to get his Baba attention. The accident in the alley proved that Amir decided to sacrifice Hassan because there is a possibility to win Baba's heart with the kite at Hassan's hand. Amir made a decision based on his Feeling (F). This can be seen at the kite competition, where Amir felt that Baba will show more affection to him if he is able to win the competition. Amir finally decided to join the kite contest and win the competition. Amir was also a Judging (J) type. This is merely because as a child grew up in higher social class, his life is already well-organized. Everything was arranged and planned and there were two servants ready to do what he wanted. It can be said that in the childhood age, Amir Personality type was an INFJ (Introvert-Intuition-Feeling-Judgment).

### **Adolescent Age**

Beginning this time, Afghanistan situation was in trouble. Amir was eighteen years old and escaped from Afghanistan, and then lived in America as a lower class citizen of Afghan minority. Nevertheless, Amir still holds on his tradition. Amir graduated from senior high school and decided to continue his study. He decided to major in English and ignore Baba's complaints and advises.

Every Sunday they join the flea market for selling the second-hand goods. Amir met Soraya Their then, the girl who makes him falling in love. In the meantime, Baba also suffering from cancer, but Baba still manages to complete his last duty to ask Soraya to become Amir's wife before he died. Amir lived with his wife and embraced a good career as a writer, but without a baby between them, Amir felt so empty.

We believe that in this stage of life the main character type is still a protagonist with a round or dynamic character. The main character also develops well during the time when his life changed from higher to lower class citizen. Amir was able to decide what he wanted, such as when he finally fell in love and married with Soraya. A woman that made his life becomes more colorful.

With regard to character personality type, the main character shows little change at this stage of life. Amir had to change his focus. The suitable type of character personality at this age was ENFJ (Extrovert-Intuition-Feeling-Judgment). Amir was an Extroversion character (E). He got the energy from the other person, from Baba, his only father who worked hard in America for him. From Soraya, Amir's motivator, he learnt to become a better person. Amir used his Intuition (N) to quickly ask Baba to propose Soraya as his wife. Baba was seriously ill and there was a big possibility that Baba will leave him immediately. Thus Amir listened to his inner voice by asking Soraya to marry him before Baba closed his eyes forever without seeing Amir's happy face in the wedding. In making a decision, Amir often used his Feeling (F). For example, when Amir decided to major in English, Baba disagreed, and hoped Amir to choose other major that can bring financial security in the future, like law or medicine department. But Amir stood firm that being a writer is more challenging for him. Amir is still a Judging (J) person, in which his lifestyle still well-organized, he made an orderly plan for his study, to graduate the senior high school; to continue the study to the college and working part-time, to get married, and to become the great writer. A dream comes true for Amir.

### **Adulthood Age**

In this last stage of his life, Amir was asked to go back to Peshawar-Pakistan by Rahim. Rahim knew all of Amir pains and secrets, and he wanted to help Amir to get rid of his old daunting sins. "There is a way to be good again" he says. Amir returned to Peshawar and met Rahim Khan. Rahim revealed much about Baba's secret. He then realized that Hassan was his illegitimate half-brother, because his Baba slept with Ali's wife. Now, there was Hassan's son named Shoran who lives alone in Kabul. Amir certainly intended to bring Shoran with him as the redemption for both his and his Baba's sins.

The main character that used to be calm and polite turned into someone with anger after he knew that his life during the time was full with lies, betrayals and dirty secrets. He then admitted that he was the one who must responsible for it. But after experiencing difficulties in Kabul-Afghanistan, the redemption has gradually healed and freed him from his guilty feelings.

In the scope of psychology, Amir's character indicates an ESTP (Extrovert-Sensing-Thinking-Perception) type of personality. Living as a risk-taker who lived extremely loyal to their peers but not usually respectful of laws and rules. Amir was an Extraversion (E) as he received the energy from the external voices, from Rahim Khan, from the late Baba and from the little Sohrab. He became Sensing (S) person, who focused on fact and relied on observation. Amir focused on his clear vision to save Sohrab, his illegitimate half-niece. Amir found Sohrab as redemption for his Baba and his own sins. In making a decision, Amir became the person who relied heavily on his logical system. He planned to reach Kabul as fast as possible because his Thinking (T) led him to ignore the temptation to stay, the temptation from the splendor life in America. But Amir also became a Perception (P) gentleman, when he broke every barrier to get Sohrab with him. Amir decided to go against the uncertain situation of Kabul, and took all the risks with him. Amir showed his sacrifice that leads him to get the freedom and redemption for his guilty.

### **Implications and Conclusions**

In this paper, we have tried to analyze the main character in Khaleed Hosseini's novel "The Kite Runner" both from literary and psychological conception. The findings revealed that the main character has undergone the personality type transformation as the result of the conflicts he experienced in different stages of his life.

Accordingly, the first and foremost practical contribution of this paper is that it provides much needed explanation on how the main character in a novel is not fixed, since it develops over the time as the story moves from one stage of life and from one country to another. This information is important given that most analysis on the main character simply rely on a one-sided analysis of revealing the main character from literary patterns of main or supporting or static and dynamic, minor or major, antagonist or protagonist, and flat or round.

In this sense, we believe that this paper is especially unique in the midst of the regular literary approach of character analysis. This may result in the wake of more and more interdisciplinary approach and works in this category of looking at the main character in a literary works. While this type of approach could create a critical source of revealing the main character, rather than giving prominence to mundane analysis as stated above.

The second important implication of this paper derives from our finding on the distinctiveness of the knowledge production contained in the analysis. The finding specifically point to a unique set of 16 combination of personality or character type in a novel. Although analyzing the main character with personality type taken from psychological conception requires an extra cautious method, the findings have established a relatively more fascinating outlook of the close-reading analysis of a novel.

In literature, the main character was a protagonist character that is the central figure in the story. He faced more complexities and problems than other supporting characters. Along the story, the main character involved in many conflicts and experiences many changes in his life. That goes dynamically along the story.

From the psychological aspect, the main character shows a transformed personality of the main character- This is acceptable because the story flows from childhood until adulthood age. At the childhood age, the main character shows INFJ personality that identified with quietly energetic, original, and sensitive person. At the age of eighteen the main character flees from his state to America, to escape from his past sins that haunt him. In America his personality changed, he was more extrovert. At this age, the main character type is ENFJ. At the adulthood age, the main character experienced many changes during the time. He still received the energy from the surrounding, but now he is more adaptable, risk-takers, and focused on immediate results. He shows ESTP personality. He realized that his life is a circle of lies, betrayals and murky secrets. This fact has made him mad, and decided to break his habits and took the risk to go to Kabul in troubling situation to redeem his sins and his Baba's sins.

Finally, it can be concluded that in the scope of literature, the main character shows round or dynamic type, although in psychology point of view, the main character shows the changing personality in every stage of his life from childhood to adulthood. This fact proves that the journey of life will always able to change the entire personality of human beings.

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