



**BOOK REVIEW OF *THE CURIOUS CASE OF BENJAMIN BUTTON***

**BY: F SCOTT FITZGERALD**

**A FINAL PROJECT**

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Submitted by:

Leonard Hamonangan Harianja

A2B009084

**FACULTY OF HUMANITIES**

**DIPONEGORO UNIVERSITY**

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## **PRONOUNCEMENT**

The writer clarifies squarely that this project is composed by him without copying from other research in any university, in S-1, S-2, S-3 degree and diploma. Furthermore, the writer ascertains that he does not take the material from other publications or someone's work except for the references mentioned in bibliography. All content of this project belonged the writer's responsibility.

Semarang,

2015

Leonard Harianja

# **APPROVAL**

Approved by  
Advisor,

**Dra. Arida Widyastuti, M.Hum**  
**NIP. 19630607 198903 2 001**

## **VALIDATION**

**Approved by**  
Strata 1 Final Project Examination Committee  
Faculty of Humanities Diponegoro University  
On

**Examiner 1,**

**Examiner 2,**

**Dra. Lubna A Sungkar, M.Hum**

**Dra. Astri A. Allien, M.Hum**

**Examiner 3,**

**Examiner 4,**

**Sukarni Suryaningsih, S.S, S.Hum**

**Dra. Wiwiek Sundari, M>Hum**

## MOTTO AND DEDICATION

"Nothing happens until something moves"

**US Army Transportation Center**

"use friendliness but do not use your friends."

**Frank Crane**

"Yesterday's the past, tomorrow's the future, but today is a gift. That's why it's called the present."

**Bil Keane**

*This final project is dedicated to my beloved mother*

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8. All the people who help him complete the final project whose names cannot be mentioned.

The writer realizes that this final project is still far from perfect, therefore the writer will be glad to receive any constructive criticism and recommendation to make this final project better.

Finally, the writer expects that this final project will be useful to the reader who wishes to learn something about love and family.

Semarang, ..... 2015

Leonard Harianja

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## **ABSTRACT**

Love is an unpredictable feeling that can make everybody happy or sad. Love is a word that everyone can share for someone or many people to make good relationship and how to cheer someone up to get a better feeling. The stronger love is come from family, it is because they are great people who always support each other wherever, whenever, or whatever the condition because they love and protect from anything bad may happen.

This is the reason why the writer chose this novel because it is talk about love and family. The writer wants to describe this novel because it is very imaginative. The story is talk about Benjamin's life that he was born old. The story is very complicated to understand when a reader read the novel only once. This novel has two differences that can be analyzed it is from the strength and the weakness. The strength of this novel that can be analyzed are the theme, characters, and the moral value and it is also has the weakness that is someone cannot gets this novel on the bookstore but someone can have it by downloaded this novel or order from the e-book. Even though this novel is very imaginative it has some moral value that can be learned that are love and family.



# **BOOK REVIEW OF *THE CURIOUS CASE OF BENJAMIN BUTTON* WRITTEN BY F. SCOTT FITZGERALD**

## **1. Introduction**

In this chapter the writer will describe the preview of the novel *The Curious Case of Benjamin Button* by F. Scott Fitzgerald. The writer will divide this chapter into three parts, they are: background of the writing, purpose of the writing, and the author's biography. The first sub-chapter contains the writer's reason in determining the book for this final project. The second is the purposes of the writing to describe the strength and the weakness of the novel. The last one contains the biography of the novel's author, F. Scott Fitzgerald.

### **1.1 Background of the Writing**

A novel entitled *The Curious Case of Benjamin Button* is a good novel, very imaginative and contains a personal life. The author was thinking about how to make a very attractive story. The story of the book is about Benjamin's life who was born old and gets some discrimination from his life. Benjamin Button is not an ordinary man, he is a different man. When he grows up he gets younger and younger. He cannot find the true love that he can feel. He wants to have a better life that he has never felt before. He wants his parents, family, and friends can accept his condition.

In his book of *Personal Humanity Theory*, Maslow said that a fundamental motive of man is to express his potentialities in his most effective and complete form, a need of for self-actualization (1954: 48-49). This quote is the reason why the writer chose F. Scott Fitzgerald's *The Curious Case of Benjamin Button* as the material of his final project. Fitzgerald can create a great novel which inspired the reader to understand his creation and he makes the story very complicated. The readers will understand what the meaning of the story when they read the story very carefully.

This novel is very complicated but sometimes it can make the writer confused about the meaning of the story when the writer does not read very carefully. Another thing that the writer

finds from the novel is an interesting theme, about love. This is the reason why the writer wants to analyze the story from the beginning until the end of the story.

## **1.2 Purpose of the Writing**

The following are the purposes of this project:

To know the strengths of the novel

To know the weakness of the novel

## **1.3 Biography of F. Scott Fitzgerald**

The following description is taken from <http://www.history.com/topics/f-scott-fitzgerald> and <http://library.sc.edu/spcoll/fitzgerald/biography.html>

Francis Scott Key Fitzgerald was a Jazz Age novelist and short story writer who is considered to be among the greatest twentieth-century American writers. Born on September 24, 1896, he was the only son of an aristocratic father and a provincial, working-class mother. He was the product of two divergent traditions: while his father's family included the author of *The Star-Spangled Banner* (after whom Fitzgerald was named), his mother's family was, in Fitzgerald's own words, "straight 1850 potato-famine Irish." As a result of this contrast, he was exceedingly ambivalent toward the notion of the American dream: for him, it was at once vulgar and dazzlingly promising.

He attended Newman School (1911-13), where his intensity and outsized enthusiasm made him unpopular with the other students. Later, at Princeton University, he came close to the brilliant success of which he dreamed. He became part of the influential Triangle Club, a dramatic organization whose members were taken from the cream of society. He also became a prominent figure in the literary life of the university and made lifelong friendships with Edmund Wilson and John Peale Bishop. Despite these social coups, Fitzgerald struggled academically, and he eventually flunked out of Princeton. In November 1917, he joined the army.

F. Scott Fitzgerald eagerly embraced his newly minted celebrity status and embarked on an extravagant lifestyle that earned him a reputation as a playboy and hindered his reputation as a serious literary writer. Began in 1920 and continuing throughout the rest of his career, Fitzgerald supported himself financially by writing great numbers of short stories for popular publications such as *The Saturday Evening Post* and *Esquire*. Some of his most notable stories include *The Diamond as Big as the Ritz*, *The Curious Case of Benjamin Button*, *The Camel's Back* and *The Last of the Belles*.

## **2. Summary of the Book**

The book is all about personal life conflict. It tells that there is a boy who was born with a 70-year-old man look. Benjamin's age is in reverse. He was born like a 70-year-old man and gets younger at the same rate that everyone else gets older. The parent are ashamed on their abnormal child and force him to act like a baby, even though Benjamin has the body and mind of a much older man.

When Benjamin appears fifty (that he is actually 20 years), he meets and falls in love with the beautiful young Hildegard Moncrief. In the story, the parents at the first time do not agree when Benjamin will marry Hildegard because their age difference is much around 20 years. On the other side, Hildegard never repudiates age difference because she adores Benjamin. She likes a man who is mature and independent and able to take responsibility.

From the other part of the story, as a business person Benjamin always works hard to fulfill his household needs. Benjamin's life change gets more obvious, when he grows up his body gets younger and younger that makes his wife so worried. In the mirror he sees that he now looks about thirty. This depresses him; he hopes that, once his physical age meets his actual age, this bizarre process might stop. It seems that is not the case. Hildegard is angry with her husband for allowing this to continue. She thinks he ought to stop this anti-aging right now because she cannot hold any changes from his husband. Her husband's change makes her so worried.

Hildegarde cannot hold anymore about the change of her husband. She is so worried about the enthusiasm of her husband because she thinks that she cannot stop him to get anything that he wants. She is trying to understand what her husband needs and she wants to give him the best thing that she can do.

Hildegarde never understands why her husband looks younger and younger and she thinks that her husband does not love her anymore. As Benjamin is increasingly consumed with his social life, he passes off his family hardware company to his son Roscoe, who by this time has graduated from Harvard. In 1914, he goes home with his diploma. Hildegarde is away to Italy because she thinks she cannot hold again with their marriage relationship. Benjamin is now a moody adolescent, and his son Roscoe is married and settled and wants no connection with his scandalous father. Benjamin decides to go to St. Midas, a prep school where many of his friends at Harvard had gone. He asks his father to drive him there and enroll him. Roscoe demands that his father stop this process. Roscoe hopes that someday his father can be a great father for him and become a great grandfather for his son.

### **3. Review of the Book**

*The Curious Case of Benjamin Button* is one of Fitzgerald's books which will be discussed in this project. This book represents the life goal of Benjamin Button who was born with abnormal condition. The book has a lot of strength that can be analyzed from theme, character, and the moral value, however the book also has some weaknesses. Therefore, the review which includes the strengths and the weaknesses of the book is needed, because it is useful for the readers to learn the content of the book.

#### **3.1 The Strengths of *The Curious Case of Benjamin Button***

This chapter describes the strength of this novel that is divided into three parts, they are: theme, character, and moral value of this novel.

##### **3.1.1 Theme**

This novel has some lessons that can be learned. The most interesting theme is about love.

## Love

No relationship is perfect, ever. There are always some ways you have to bend, to compromise, to give something up in order to gain something greater...The love we have for each other is bigger than these small differences. And that's the key. It's like a big pie chart, and the love in a relationship has to be the biggest piece. Love can make up for a lot (Dessen, 2002: 143).

According to the statement, Dessen wants to talk about how to love someone and take care of them. This is the reason why Hildegard accepts Benjamin to be her husband although their age is different.

Benjamin was born as an old man. The things get worse because his father cannot accept that Benjamin was born old and becomes more different with his look.

Even after the new addition to the Button family had had his hair cut short and then dyed to a sparse unnatural black, had had his face shaved so close that it glistened, and had been attired in small-boy clothes made to order by a flabbergasted tailor, it was impossible for Button to ignore the fact that his son was a excuse for a first family baby (Fitzgerald, 1860: 3).

At the first time, Mr. Button cannot accept his baby because he was born old and he gets really shocked when he knows the fact. Even though his child was born old, Mr. Button tries to accept him whatever his condition and gives some attentions and love for his special child. He tries everything and gives his baby anything to make him happy and he tries to take care of him too as a good father.

Love is the most interesting theme of the novel. It is shown when Hildegard accepts Benjamin to be her husband and she decides to marry him even though their age is different.

"I like men of your age," Hildegard told him. "Young boys are so idiotic. They tell me how much champagne they drink at college, and how much money they lose playing cards. Men of your age know how to appreciate women."

Benjamin felt himself on the verge of a proposal--with an

effort he choked back the impulse. "You're just the romantic age," she continued--"fifty. Twenty-five is too wordly-wise; thirty is apt to be pale from overwork; forty is the age of long stories that take a whole cigar to tell; sixty is--oh, sixty is too near seventy; but fifty is the mellow age. I love fifty."

Fifty seemed to Benjamin a glorious age. He longed passionately to be fifty.

"I've always said," went on Hildegarde, "that I'd rather marry a man of fifty and be taken care of than many a man of thirty and take care of him" (Fitzgerald, 1860: 24-25).

According to the statement, Hildegarde does not care about the different age. She thinks when she marries Benjamin she can get more attention from her husband. Another reason from the statement is she thinks that when she marries a fifty-year-old man she can get her husband's responsibility and it is better than when she chooses to marry a young man.

### **3.1.2 Character**

This novel has some interesting characters that can be found. There are three characters that will be described, they are: Benjamin Button, Roger Button, Hildegarde Moncrief.

#### **3.1.2.1 Benjamin Button**

Benjamin is a man who was born old and his age is backwards in the course of his life. When he was a child he got some discrimination. Many people around him do not like him as he likes them. Benjamin grows older and older with some different changes with his body. He meets Hildegarde who loves an old man as she thinks the old man can take care of everything and will be responsible for every things.

In the story, Benjamin's life changes very differently because he gets younger and younger. This condition cannot be stopped because from time to time his behavior changes too and it makes his wife so worried.

"Good Lord!" he said aloud. The process was continuing. There was no doubt of it--he looked now like a man of thirty. Instead of being delighted, he was uneasy--he was growing younger. He had hitherto hoped that once he reached a bodily age equivalent to his age in years, the grotesque phenomenon which had marked his birth would cease to function. He shuddered. His destiny seemed to him awful, incredible.

"Well," he remarked lightly, "everybody says I look younger than ever."

Hildegarde regarded him with scorn. She sniffed. "Do you think it's anything to boast about?"

"I'm not boasting," he asserted uncomfortably. She sniffed again. "The idea," she said, and after a moment: "I should think you'd have enough pride to stop it."

"How can I?" he demanded.

"I'm not going to argue with you," she retorted. "But there's a right way of doing things and a wrong way. If you've made up your mind to be different from everybody else, I don't suppose I can stop you, but I really don't think it's very considerate."

"But, Hildegarde, I can't help it."

"You can too. You're simply stubborn. You think you don't want to be like any one else. You always have been that way, and you always will be. But just think how it would be if every one else looked at things as you do--what would the world be like?" (Fitzgerald, 1860: 32-33).

Hildegarde thinks that her husband does not love her anymore because she thinks that her husband falls in love with another woman. She cannot accept the physical changes of her husband and hold their relationship.

### **3.1.2.2 Roger Button**

Roger Button is Benjamin's father. In the novel, Roger Button is a good father for Benjamin. But at the first time, Roger cannot accept Benjamin's condition. When Benjamin grows up, he cannot find the right clothes for his son. He tries everything for his son to get through some pressure from his friends and he tries to cheer up too.

"Good-morning," Mr. Button said, nervously, to the clerk in the Chesapeake Dry Goods Company. "I want to buy some clothes for my child."

"How old is your child, sir?"

"About six hours," answered Mr. Button, without due consideration.

"Babies' supply department in the rear."

"Why, I don't think—I'm not sure that's what I want.

It's—he's an unusually large-size child. Exceptionally—ah—large."

"They have the largest child's sizes."

"Where is the boys' department?" inquired Mr. Button, shifting his ground desperately. He felt that the clerk must surely scent his shameful secret.

"Right here."

"Well—" He hesitated. The notion of dressing his son in men's clothes was repugnant to him. If, say, he could only find a *very* large boy's suit, he might cut off that long and awful beard, dye the white hair brown, and thus manage to conceal the worst, and to retain something of his own self-respect—not to mention his position in Baltimore society.

But a frantic inspection of the boys' department revealed no suits to fit the new-born Button. He blamed the store, of course—in such cases it is the thing to blame the store.

"How old did you say that boy of yours was?" demanded the clerk curiously.

"He's—sixteen."

"Oh, I beg your pardon. I thought you said six *hours*. You'll find the youths' department in the next aisle." (Fitzgerald, 1860: 2-3).

### 3.1.2.3 Hildegarde Moncrief

Hildegarde Moncrief is Benjamin's wife. She married Benjamin because she likes the old man. She thinks that the old man can take responsibilities that may happen. Yet, her family does not agree about the age differences between Hildegarde and Benjamin.

"I like men of your age," Hildegarde told him. "Young boys are so idiotic. They tell me how much champagne they drink at college, and how much money they lose playing cards. Men of your age know how to appreciate women."

Benjamin felt himself on the verge of a proposal--with an effort he choked back the impulse. "You're just the romantic age," she continued--"fifty. Twenty-five is too wordly-wise;



thirty is apt to be pale from overwork; forty is the age of long stories that take a whole cigar to tell; sixty is--oh, sixty is too near seventy; but fifty is the mellow age. I love fifty." (Fitzgerald, 1860: 24)

As a wife, Hildegard always tries to give some good things that she can do for his husband and her lovely children as a mother. She loves her husband because she does not want to be apart with her husband.

The conflicts happen when Hildegard does not understand the personal change condition of her husband. Hildegard thinks that her husband's changes happen because he has another woman that he loves. She does not understand why the changes happen to her husband, and when they have a child his behavior changes too. She thinks that she cannot hold their relationship because she cannot accept her husband's changes.

"Well," he remarked lightly, "everybody says I look younger than ever."

Hildegard regarded him with scorn. She sniffed. "Do you think it's anything to boast about?"

"I'm not boasting," he asserted uncomfortably. She sniffed again. "The idea," she said, and after a moment: "I should think you'd have enough pride to stop it."

"How can I?" he demanded.

"I'm not going to argue with you," she retorted. "But there's a right way of doing things and a wrong way. If you've made up your mind to be different from everybody else, I don't suppose I can stop you, but I really don't think it's very considerate."

"But, Hildegard, I can't help it."

"You can too. You're simply stubborn. You think you don't want to be like any one else. You always have been that way, and you always will be. But just think how it would be if every one else looked at things as you do--what would the world be like?" (Fitzgerald, 1860: 32-33)

### 3.1.5 Moral Value

Moral value emerging in *The Curious Case of Benjamin Button* is about love and family. Love is a gift from God that one can feel and share. Love can be shared to friends, family, or the other people and it can make good relationship for each other. Love can make someone happy and sad depends on the situation when they feel it, but love is something that never stops especially from the family.

Family is people who always take care and support whatever condition and situation are. Family always helps to find a great solution to solve everything for its member. People always accept their family members whatever the conditions and situation are because they love them.

### **3.1.6 Personal Opinion**

Family are great people who always support each other wherever, whenever, or whatever the condition because they love and protect from anything bad that may happen. Family will not make someone's feeling down with any conditions that will break the feeling or that will make anything worse. Family is everlasting because they always help each others, share some love, and give the best solution to face or to solve any problem.

Love is an unpredictable feeling that can make everybody happy or sad. Love is a word that everyone can share for someone or many people to make good relationship and how to cheer someone up to get a better feeling.

## **3.2 The weaknesses of the novel**

Besides the strength, there are weaknesses in *The Curious Case of Benjamin Button*. The weakness of *The Curious Case of Benjamin Button* is in the climax which has a complicated story and is boring. The story is so long that it is wasting time to read it. This is probably because the author wanted to tell about how to love and take care of someone.

The second weakness comes from the book. The book is hard to find because it is not sold in Indonesia especially in Semarang because it is not one of Fitzgerald's famous novels like

*The Great Gatsby*. Even though the book is hard to get, someone can get the soft file from the e-book and it should be downloaded first to have this novel.

#### **4. Conclusion**

*The Curious Case of Benjamin Button* was written by [F. Scott Fitzgerald](#). He is a famous American writer. He wrote many good novels, one of which is *The Great Gatsby*. *The Curious Case of Benjamin Button* is another novel that he wrote and was published in 1922 in *Collier's Magazine*. This novel has some strengths, they are: good themes, the characters, and moral value.

Besides the strengths, this novel has two weaknesses, the book and the story that is very long. The book is difficult to find in Semarang. Because of its long and complicated story, the book cannot be read in one time reading.

Above all, it is a good novel that has a moral value that can be learned because it talks about love and family. This novel inspires many people to understand about taking care of the family and love them no matter the conditions. This novel also talks about love, love is a strong feeling that many people can share to another person. Love is a special gift from God that everybody can share to friends, family, or another people to make a good relationship and to cheer someone up to get a better feeling.

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