



Reality Denial in The Novel *A Monster Calls* (2011) By Patrick Ness

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Abstract

The purpose of this analysis is to expose the issue about reality denial which is done by the protagonist, twelve years old child from broken homes family. The fictional devices such as plot, setting, and character are used to reveal the reality denial. This analysis is related to the concept *defense mechanism* by Sigmund Freud that is supported by text and context-based interpretation. The result of this analysis shows the protagonist do the reality denial to refuses to admit that something bad exist or has happened in his family.

Key words: Child, Reality, Denial, Refuse, *Defense Mechanism*

A. INTRODUCTION

Problem is regarded as an unwelcome situation faced by people. People have a problem in their life, but the way people deal with that problem is different. There are some people choose to face the problems, and the others choose to avoid it. People who dare to face the problems are responsible and able to take a risk. They have knowledge to control themselves. They find a solution in various ways, by using their skills and knowledge. Unlike the first one, people who have no skill and knowledge tend to avoid problems. They do not want to take the risk and feel unable to face the problem. People who choose to refuse the facts that exist in themselves are called reality denial.

According to the Gale Encyclopedia of Mental Disorders (2003), denial is the refusal to acknowledge the existence or severity of unpleasant external realities or internal thoughts and feelings. Denial leads to the situation when a person is unable to face or against unpleasant reality. They make a defense to reject the fact. They oppose a situation in reality and prohibit actions that are different from what they think. The denial is done to dismiss the pain, grief, loss and something bad exists.

In the denial phase people tend to experience stress, and cannot control their emotion towards the problem. At the time people can't accept the truth with regards to something that happens in life. People who do denial will think

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and act as though the painful reality that they encountered never occurred. Denial can be seen from the behavior and attitude. In terms of behavior, they tend to blow up if other people talk about his/her circumstance. They tend to get angry if something doesn't live up to their desires. They like to vent their outrage on an item, creature, or event to people. They tend to demolish the item, torture animals, and battle with somebody. Unlike the behavior, in attitude they tend to have awful thoughts. They feel that the thought is constantly contradicted by others. They feel that nobody supports it. They believe that others abhor them. It makes sentiments of scorn and terrible preference towards others. These things happen when somebody dismisses the cruel reality in his life

The problem happens to adults and children, but the children and the adults are different when they come to face the problems. The adults are more patience to deal with problems otherwise, the children tend to bury and sometimes vents their problems. The problem will be worse when the children from broken homes family. They have strong pressure and burden in their life.

They becomes more stressed when faces family problems. They have not been able to accept the reality that will cause them to experience extraordinary fear such as nightmares. Because they have no place to ask help and have no way to overcome the problems. They tend to find their own way to solve the problems and do what they considered right. For instance, they act brutally in a bad situation. They tend to destroy things around. They like to fight to vent their anger. The children cannot control their emotions. They tend to say rude things to the people they don't like. They are emotional when the idea is disputed. They rebel against the people around them. They tend to hide his problem. They tend to have nightmares. All the things that they refuse reveal in their, behavior and attitude.

The issue about reality denial is very interesting to be discussed. It shows problems that are often found in children. The children who have severe problems and get pressure in their family. There are novels, short stories and poems reflect the issue which is related to the reality denial. One of them is written by Patrick Ness entitled *A Monster Calls* (2011). This novel shows the character who has complicated problems in his family. His parents divorced, his mother has cancer, and get bully in his school. All these things change him to become temperament, cruel and brutal to the people around him.

B. RESEARCH METHOD

The analysis of novel *A Monster Calls* (2011) by Patrick Ness is done through text and context-based interpretation. The fictional devices such as character, plot (conflict), and setting are used to analyze this novel. These devices related to each other and give contribution in revealing the meaning of the novel. Character and setting are used to show the denial reality by analyzing character's behavior and attitude towards the conflict. Then, the setting deals with the circumstances and atmosphere. In addition these elements are analyze base on the theory of

mechanism of defense by Sigmund Freud. It gives contribution in process of analysis by giving help in revealing the meaning.

C. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

1. Research Finding

This chapter analyzes fictional devices in order to reveal the issue *reality denial* in the novel *A Monster Calls* (2011) by Patrick Ness. The fictional devices are characters, setting, and plot (conflict). This analysis refers to the conditions in which the protagonist refuses to admit that something bad exist or has happened in his family. He has very severe problems in his family and at his school. Divorced parents, mother illness, and get bully at school.

These problems make him depressed and stressed out. He tends to avoid the problems, and refuses all the bitter truth in his life. He starts to be cruel, losses control of his emotions and has nightmares. The efforts that show he tries to deny the reality can be seen through his behavior and attitude.

1. Behavior

This topic focuses on discussing about the actions of the protagonist to deny his reality through his behavior. There are two points that show reality denial by the protagonist. He tends to be cruel. He keeps his problem and solves problem by his own.

The first one is he tends to be cruel. He is unable to control his emotion. He also loses temper easily. His cruelty is seen when he behaves towards his grandmother, and his friends. The cruelty through his grandmother can be seen from the following quotation:

“You and I need to have a talk, my boy,” she said, standing in the doorway and blocking his escape.

“I have a name, you know,” Conor said, pushing down on the bin. “And it’s not *my boy*.”

.... ‘He glowered back at her. “Were *you* going to do it?”

“Conor–”

“Just go,” Conor said. “We don’t need you here.”

“Conor,” she said more firmly, “we need to talk about what’s going to happen.”

“No, we don’t. She’s *always* sick after the treatments. She’ll be better tomorrow.” He glared at her. “And then *you* can go home.”(p.32)

The quotation above is protagonist's conversation with his grandmother. The setting refers to the tense situation. This tense situation is triggered by grandmother's desire to bring his mother to attend the medical treatments. It exposes the external conflict during the debate about his mother's illness. He releases the conflict by speaking harshly and destroying an object He doesn't have the same thought as his grandmother. He uses disrespectful words and acts harshly towards his grandmother to defend his opinion. He shows his cruelty in two ways, by his actions and words. The phrase "blocking his escape" shows the grandmother prevents the protagonist to leave. It means he tends to refuse and avoid discussion in any way. He chooses to run away from the problem. The words "pushing down on the bin" show he opposes his grandmother by destroying things around him. He never obeys his grandmother's order. He also shows his cruelty through words. The sentence "then you can go home" shows disrespectful of the protagonist towards his grandmother. The choice of words is not polite. Then, the sentence "We don't need you here" means he considers his grandmother as troublemaker. It also means he doesn't need any help from his grandmother. The sentence "And it's not my boy." shows that he immediately dismissed his grandmother's words. He never felt close to his grandmother.

All the rejection of his grandmother, such as using harsh words and destroying things, is his inability to accept the reality that his mother had a serious illness. He doesn't want to admit that his mother is sick. He fears his mother's loss and he fears his mother's abandonment. He opposed all that his grandmother said strongly. The reaction on the protagonist is called mechanism of defense. The defense mechanism works when he is depressed and attempts to deny all the painful things. The resulting reaction is denial. He rejects the painful events. He destroys things and says harshly. This shows the protagonist's displacement.

His cruelty is also seen in his behavior towards his friends who bullied him in the school. He fights back against his friends. It can be seen in the following quotation:

"Hey!" Conor called. Harry didn't turn round. Neither did Sully nor Anton, though they were still sniggering as Conor picked up his pace.

And if no one sees you, the monster said, picking up its pace, too, are you really there at all?

"HEY!" Conor called loudly.

The dining hall had fallen silent now, as Conor and the monster moved faster

after Harry. Harry who had still not turned around.
Conor reached him and grabbed him by the shoulder, twisting him round. (p.105)

The quotation above shows that the protagonist is ignored by his friends. The setting refers to the anger situation. This setting leads to the internal conflict that he has strong desires to be recognized and valued by his friends. He uses violence to get himself recognized. His desires to be recognized are seen in two ways, by words and actions. The phrase “*HEY!*” *Conor called loudly*”, explains that he really wants to be heard. He repeats the words twice this confirmed that he never gets attentions. His friend doesn’t care about him in school. He doesn’t want to be marginalized. Then, he shows the ruthlessness toward his friends with his actions. The sentence “*Conor reached him and grabbed him by the shoulder, twisting him round*” means that he began to act violently towards his friends. He uses his physique to force his friends to care about him. He also doesn’t want to be ridiculed.

Another quotation that support about his brutality towards his friends, occurs on the following passage:

Their faces changed as they saw him.
Conor took another step towards them, feeling the monster towering behind him.
Anton and Sully turned and ran.
“What do you think you’re playing at, O’Malley?” Harry said as he pulled himself up from the floor, holding his forehead where he’d hit it as he fell. He took his hand away and a few people screamed as they saw blood. (p.106)

The quotation above shows that the setting refers to anger situation. This leads to the protagonist’s behavior that triggers a fight which causes external conflict. He releases the conflict with violence. The sentence “*feeling the monster towering behind him*” shows the unbearable anger of the protagonist. He seems to be enveloped by monster. Monster is symbols of ferocity, brutal and violence. It explains the explosive anger that occurred in the protagonist. The sentence “*Anton and Sully turned and ran*” shows the fear causes by the character makes his friends feel scared. He is not able to control his emotions. His cruel is shown through his actions. The sentence “*people screamed as they saw blood*” shows the brutality committed by the protagonist. The word “*blood*” indicates the

tense situation and the severe fear that occurs there. The brutality of the protagonist turned into terror and fright.

His resistance towards his friends is his desire that he doesn't want to be bullied. He felt excessive violence and had reached its peak. His fights are picture of his ended violence, and a denial of being bullied. His brutality proves that he isn't a weak person. It shows the displacement of the character by venting his anger on others.

Second, he keeps his problem and solves problem by his own. He tries to hide and close all the problems that he experienced. He keeps the problem a secret from school and his family. He hides his problem at his school and tries to solve it by his own. It can be seen through the following passage:

"He'll have to get his baldy mother to kiss it better for him!" Sully crowed.

Miss Kwan, their Head of Year, was storming over to them, her scariest frown burnt into her face like a scar.

"They were making fun of Conor's mother!"

"Is this true, Conor?" Miss Kwan asked, her face as serious as a sermon.

"No, Miss, it's not true," Conor said, swallowing the blood. "I just fell. They were helping me up."

Lily's face turned instantly into hurt surprise. Her mouth dropped open, but she made no sound. (p.18)

The quotation above shows that he is person who harbored problems; he lies to the teacher, and he doesn't want to share the problem. The setting refers serious situation. It exposes the internal conflict that he wants to seal his problem. It shows when Lily complains about the others who disturb the protagonist, but he tends to cover it up. He releases his conflict by telling lies and pretends to be fine.

The sentence "*He'll have to get his baldy mother to kiss it better for him!*" Sully crowed" shows he has difficult times during school because of his friends who disturb him. His friends makes funny about his mother illness. He got verbal insults about his mother's illness. The sentence "*No, Miss, it's not true*", shows his actions towards the problems he faces. He tends to solve his problem by hiding the problem from anyone. He thinks that the problem doesn't need to be told to anyone. The words "*I Just fell*" shows he proved that he doesn't want the problem to spread to anyone and doesn't want that be a big problem.

He also hides the problem from his friend. It appears on the following passage:

“I was trying to *help* you.”

“I don’t need your help,” Conor said. “I was doing fine on my own.”

“You were not!” Lily said. “You were bleeding.”

“It’s none of your *business*,” Conor snapped again and picked up his pace.

(p.22)

The quotation above shows he insists on refusing help from his friend. He also refuses to discuss with his friends. It explains that the setting refers to the serious situation. It exposes the external conflict which became an internal conflicts, the protagonist thinks that he can solve the problem himself. He doesn’t want to share about the problem. The sentence “*I don’t need your help*” shows he thinks that is not a big problem for him. He has a way to solve his problems and refuses help. The sentence “*I was doing fine on my own*” explains he feels what he had done is the right thing and thinks that he does nothing wrong. The sentence “*It’s none of your business*,” shows that the protagonist believes that he is able to conquer the problem. It also shows how stubborn the protagonist managing the problems. The phrase “*You were not!*” Lily said. “*You were bleeding.*” shows the facts that he is unable to solve the problem. He just pretended to be able to solve the problem.

He tends to hide his nightmares. It can be seen through the following quotation:

He’d told no one about the nightmare. Not his mum, obviously, but no one else either, not his dad in their fortnightly (or so) phone call, *definitely* not his grandma, and no one at school. Absolutely not. What happened in the nightmare was something no one else ever needed to know (p.6)

The quotation above shows the setting leads to the threatening situation. This refers to the internal conflict it triggered by the problems that exist in his life. He tries to hides his nightmares. The sentence “*He’d told no one about the nightmare*” shows he doesn’t want to share his nightmares. It also means he believes in his own ability to solve the problem. The words “*not his dad in their fortnightly*” and “*definitely not his grandma*” show his’s distrust of his father and grandmother. That is because he has different thought with them which will lead to disappointment for him if he shares his problem. The words “*What happened in the nightmare*

was something no one else ever needed to know” shows that the way of resolving the problem is to save the problem himself.

In this analysis, the protagonist tries to hide the truth from his friend that he gets unfair treatment. He keeps it from someone else, such as his friends and lies to his teacher. He doesn't want to expose the fact that he gets bullied. He tries to suppress all the painful feelings. He tries to hide his nightmare about losing family.

In summary, the strong setting in this analysis are tense, anger and serious. The setting causes external and internal conflicts to the protagonist. He experiences conflict with his grandmother, his friends and his mind. The problems created by the conflict make him cruel, hides problem and solves the problem by his own. In this analysis the protagonist denies his reality can be seen through his behavior. He does it with his words. He likes to rebel and speak rudely. Besides, he also does denial with the action. He tends to be violent, destroy objects and avoid the problem. His behavior shows that the protagonist refuses the bad thing that happens on his life such as his mother illness, parents divorced and bullied. He opposes the opinion of his grandmother and father.

2. ATTITUDE

The reality denial of the protagonist is also seen through his attitude. It shows his thought to other. There are two points that show reality denial by the protagonist. He tends to believe in illogical things, He has awful thought towards his grandmother and father.

He tends to believe in illogical things. He believes to the monsters on his nightmares. He tries to find a way to cure his mother. The illogical things in finding the medicine for his mother can be seen from the quotation below:

“I want to know what’s going to happen with my mum,” Conor said. The monster paused. Do you not know already?
“You said you were a tree of healing,”
Conor said. “Well, I need you to heal!”
And so I shall, the monster said.
And with a gust of wind, it was gone (p.101)

The quotation above shows serious situation in his conversation with the monster in his nightmares. It reveals the internal conflicts of the protagonist about his desire to cure his mother. He releases his conflict by trusting the monster. He thinks that monster can cure his mother illness. The sentence “I want to know what’s going to happen with my mum,” shows he tries to find a solution for his

mother's illness. He wants to know everything about his mother. He stresses out about the illness that his mother has. The sentence "You said you were a tree of healing." shows that he requests the medicine from the monster in his dream, it also shows that he doesn't give up on what he wanted to find. It explains that he really trust the monster.

His believes in illogical things, such as believe to the monster in the nightmare is his way to refuses that his mother has severe illness. Trust to the monster is one of his denials towards his reality. It can be seen how the defense mechanism works on someone. If someone can't deal with the problem, they creates other distractions to get rid of the problem.

Second, He has awful thought towards his grandmother. The awful thought towards his grandmother can be seen through from the quotation below:

"I forgot to tell you," she said, lightly,
"your grandma's coming by tomorrow."
Conor's shoulders sank. "Aw, *Mum*."
"I know," she said, "but you shouldn't
have to make your own breakfast every
morning." "*Every morning?*" Conor said.
"How long is she going to be here?"
"Conor—"
"We don't need her here—"
"You know how I get at this point in the
treatments, Conor—" "We've been okay
so far—"
"*Conor*," his mum snapped, so harshly it
seemed to surprise them both. There was
a long silence. And then she smiled
again, looking really, really tired. (p.14)

The quotation above shows the conversation the protagonist with his mother. He opposes the arrival of his mother. This shows the disappointment situation of the protagonist. It leads to the bad attitude of the protagonist towards his grandmother. It exposes the internal conflict because of the protagonist's distrust towards his grandmother. The sentence distrust is emphasized in "*We don't need her here—*" shows disbelief of the protagonist towards his grandmother. He assumes his grandmother not help them. He thinks that without his grandmother they wouldn't be troubled. The protagonist has bad thought about his grandmother. The sentence "*We've been okay so far*" shows that they are fine even without his grandmother. It also shows how he always thinks negatively towards his grandmother.

He also has awful thought towards his father, it can be seen through the following passage:

His father laughed, quietly. "Your sister's doing well. Almost walking."

"Half-sister," Conor said.

"I can't wait for you to meet her," his father said. "We'll have to arrange for a visit soon. Maybe even this Christmas. Would you like that?"

Conor met his father's eyes. "What about Mum?"

"I've talked it over with your grandma. She seemed to think it wasn't a bad idea, as long as we got you back in time for the new school term."

Conor ran a hand along the edge of the table. "So it'd just be a visit then?" (p.67)

The quotation above shows that the external conflict between the protagonist and his father, the protagonist feels disappointment towards his father decision. He wants his father only focus on his first family. The setting refers to disappointment situation. He sentence "Half-sister," means that the protagonist never recognizes he has a sister. He doesn't like his father. He doesn't like his father more concerned with others. The sentence,"what about mum?" shows the protagonist emphasizes that his father cares for his mother. He want his father don't talk about other things when talking to him. This also proves that he really doesn't want his father to leave them.

That awful thought appear because of his anxiety about losing his family. He has bad thought towards his grandmother. He is afraid to believe about his grandmother explanations about his mother illness. His defense mechanism appears when he tries to deny the words and act of his grandmother. He also has prejudice towards his father. He thinks that his father doesn't care about his family. Denial phase force him do not trust other people except himself.

In summary, the denial reality can be seen through the character's attitude. The strong setting in his attitude is disappointment. The setting causes the internal conflict to the protagonist. He releases the internal conflict by trusting the monster in his nightmares. He believes to the monster in his nightmares. He doesn't believe the doctor treatment. In the others hand, he releases the external conflict with prejudice to his grandmother and father. He assumes that his grandmother as a trouble maker. He thinks that his father does not care about him and his mother.

D. CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

The novel *A Monster Calls* (2011) written by Patrick Ness, reflects the issue about reality denial. The fictional devices such as character, setting, plot (conflict), contribute in revealing the meaning beyond the novel. Text-based and context-based interpretation also has the crucial role in discovering the issue reality denial. The analysis of this play deals with the concept of defense mechanism by Sigmund Freud. It refers to the conditions in which the character an twelve years old refuses to admit that something bad exist or has happened in his family. He refuses to believe all the bitter truths in his life. He denies his mother's illness. He does not admit his parents divorced, and does not admit he was bullied. The efforts made by character to deny the reality can be seen through his behavior and attitude.

In short, denial reality is a situation when a person is unable to face or against unpleasant reality. They tend to avoid from the problem. They don't want to take a risk. All the denial can be seen through the protagonist behavior, such as loses temper easily and cannot control the emotion. It also appears in his attitude, he has awful thought towards grandmother and father. He also has illogical things. He believes to the monster in his nightmare. The internal conflict and external conflict of the protagonist triggers his defense mechanism. Defense mechanism appears when he has heavy problems.

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