



## **STRIVING FOR SURVIVAL AND SUCCESS IN THE PLAY *THE FLICK* (2013) BY ANNIE BAKER**

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### **Abstract**

This thesis is the analysis of a play written by Annie Baker entitled *The Flick* (2013). It explores the issue of striving for survival and success reflected by the main character. This issue refers to the way the main character deals with all the difficulties and tries to reach a dream in his life. It is also intended to find out the contribution of fictional devices such as character, plot (conflict), and stage direction in revealing the issue of striving for survival and success. This analysis is related to the concept of life instinct which developed by Sigmund Freud and also supported by the text-based and context-based interpretation. The result of this analysis shows about the way the main character persistence in surviving and achieving goals in his life through the efforts of socialization and self-interest exploration made by the character.

**Key words:** striving, survival, success, socialization, self-interest exploration.

### **A. INTRODUCTION**

A play entitled *The Flick* (2013) by Annie Baker reflects the issue of striving for survival and success. In this analysis, the issue of striving for survival and success refers to the way the main character is dealing with all the difficulties he faces and thinking about how to be a successful person in his new life. It is represented by the protagonist, Avery, a twenty-years-old African-American young man who is an employee in a theater named *The Flick*. All the difficulties started when his mother left him and his father for her ex-boyfriend in high school. It made his father did not care about him anymore because of his hatefulness to Avery's mother, in short, he lived in a broken family for years. Then, at school, his friends started to leave him too. Since that time, he experiences a mental illness because of the trauma that he got from his closest people's departure. He took himself away from society. He does not trust anybody anymore. He stopped going to school and stayed at home for a long time. He tried to kill himself several times. Then, there is a turning point in Avery's life, when he realizes that he has to start a new life in order to live a better life. He then

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decides to go to therapist to get well from his mental illness. He also begins to learn to forgive and start to find a purpose for his life. He also learns to find a way to talk with others and to look for something he is interested in. He does those things not only to survive but also to continue his further life. Then, he also starts to think about how to be an independent person with successfulness. In this analysis, the issue of striving for survival and success can be seen through the efforts of resocialization and self-interest exploration made by the character.

The act of striving for survival and success done by the protagonist can be seen through the way he socializes with his community. This related to the way the protagonist finds his self- confidence to starts speaking with others again. He begins interact with people around him He learns from his failure in the past about how to socialize with others. He builds positive emotions toward people around him, like he does not want to think negatively about other people. Then, he also looks for a job and tries to make a good time with other employee at his workplace. He attempts to adapt with his new life in order not to make any mistakes like he did in his past. He also learns to reveal what he feels to others and learns not to bury his feeling like he did before.

The second way of the act of striving for survival and success can be seen through the way the protagonist begins to explore his self-interest. He is willing to improve his skill and abilities by learning new things and by looking for a job that related with his interest. He tries to focus on something that he is interested in. He tries to build a good self-confident in his life. He does not feel hesitate to ask others about a thing that he wants to know. The protagonist is able to take an opportunity in order to reach his dream. He does not only do what takes his interest as a hobby but also takes the chance to make it as an important and big step to achieve success.

## **B. RESEARCH METHOD**

The analysis of this novel is done through text and context-based interpretation. Text based interpretation is done by analysing character, plot (conflict), and stage direction. These fictional devices give the contribution in revealing the issue in play. Character and plot are used to reveal the act of striving for survival and success by analysing the character's reaction towards the conflict. Then, the stage direction deals with the circumstances which experienced by the protagonist.

The analysis of this study deals with the concept of life instinct by Sigmund Freud. This is an instinct which are relied upon for survival, pleasure, and reproduction. It is an instinct which needs for sustaining the life. This instinct can be seen as simply the desire to develop, grow, and thrive. The concept of life instinct also encompasses all emotions and actions that makes people preserve their lives as well as they create new lives.

## **C. RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

This chapter discusses about the issue of striving for survival and success in Annie Baker's play *The Flick* (2013). This issue in this analysis refers to the way the main character deals with all the difficulties and tries to achieve a dream

in his life. It is represented by the protagonist, Avery, a twenty-years-old African-American young man who is an employee in a theater named The Flick. This analysis also uses some fictional devices such as character, plot (conflict) and stage direction to reveal the meaning of the play. In this analysis, striving for survival and success which is done by the main character can be seen through the efforts of socialization and self-interest exploration made by the character.

## 2.1 Socialization

The act of striving for survival and success done by the protagonist can be seen through the way he socializes with his community. This related to the way the protagonist finds his self- confidence to starts speaking with others again. He begins interact with people around him He learns from his failure in the past about how to socialize with others. He builds positive emotions toward people around him, like he does not want to think negatively about other people. Then, he also looks for a job and tries to make a good time with other employee at his workplace. He attempts to adapt with his new life in order not to make any mistakes like he did in his past. He also learns to reveal what he feels to others and learns not to bury his feeling like he did before.

The protagonist begins to speak with people around him after all the bad things that comes to him. He learns from his failure in his past about how he communicate with others. Furthermore, this act refers to the way he talks, feels and thinks from an ordinary a young boy with a bad life to a man who is always thinking about how to survive. This statement can be seen in the following quotation below where the protagonist ask his therapist for some advices to do conversation with others:

(Avery, alone in the theater, squatting on the back of one of the seats, talking to his therapist on his cell phone.)

“Avery:Yeah.

And that-

Yep. *(pause)*

Yeah. *(pause)*

Yeah.

Well.

How do you like *do* that? How do you like ask someone to be friends with-“(P.62)

The quotation above shows that the protagonist begins to learn how interact with other people again. This quotation is related to the concept of life instinct due to the social cooperation that he builds with others. He asks his therapist about how to start a new relationship with others, since he suffered a mental illness because of the depression in his past. He feels so nervous to socialize with people because of his decision in the past about take away himself from society. But he realizes that he must do it to survive and start a better new life. In the utterance *Avery, alone in the theater, squatting on the back of one of the seats, talking to his therapist on his cell phone* it can be seen from that stage direction, he feels so nervous and feels a little bit afraid when he is in the workplace. It shows even he is not in his best

condition and still fight for get well from his mental illness, he is still tries his best to socialize again.

The protagonist also does some efforts to make a good communication again with other people. He does several things which reflected his mind set to help him survive. The quotation which strengthens this statement can be found in the following quotation below:

“Avery: I uh..

This is probably a stupid idea.

But.

Uh.

I was thinking on Friday it might be fun to like... we could like just stay here after the last show and watch one or two of them.

*(short pause)*

Like I saw Goodfellas and Boogie Nights and a couple other-

*(nervously)*

It would just be awesome to see them on like the big screen. I’ve only watched Goodfellas on my computer which is pretty like blasphemous when you think about it.

*(short pause)*

It’s fine if like you’re busy or not interested or whatever.” (P.70)

The quotation above shows one of the efforts of the protagonist in trying to make a communication with others. He slowly does some approaches to other employee in his workplace. One of the example is he asking his co-workers to watch a movie in the theater, it can be seen in this utterance *I was thinking on Friday it might be fun to like... we could like just stay here after the last show and watch one or two of them* It is one of the efforts of Avery to close or to know about each other. The stage direction *nervously* refers to the awkward situation faced by the protagonist which it is not his things or he usually did before. It proves that he has made great efforts to overcome the difficulties by cooperating with others. Even though, it is one of the difficult things that he has to do but he tries his best.

The protagonist also looks for a job to live a better life. He does it by himself, he does not ask for help to anyone even to his family, especially to his father. He looks for a job in order to change his life. He does not want just to stay at his home anymore. He thinks he should do something if he wants to speaks and socialize with others again. One of the way that he is can does is looking for a job. He thinks that when he is at his workplace he can starts to practice to communicate with other people again. Those explanation can be seen in the following quotation below:

“Avery: I almost quit my second day working here.

Rose: Why?

Avery: I just like... I couldn’t get out of bed. The first day was just really awkward and I couldn’t

remember anything and I like... I had no idea how to hold the broom---

*She laughs.*

Avery: I'm serious. And then I woke up the next day and just like freaked out. I was like: I can't have a job. I'm way too depressed. And I didn't get out of bed and I like lay there under the covers staring up at the ceiling and four p.m. rolled around, I like watch the numbers on my alarm clock, and I was like, I should be at The Flick by now, but couldn't even bring myself to call in sick. And then it was like 4:05, and then it was 4:10, and I was like that's it, I just lost my first job, I give up." (P. 98-99)

The quotation above shows about the determination of the protagonist to get out of his sorrow life to a better life. He does an effort to get a new job and try to maintain it with all cost. The quotation above is related to the survival instinct due to his creativity to overcome the difficulties. He managed to act calmly in the tense condition that he faced. The way he reacts to the situation proves that he is a smart person. Furthermore, he has faith that he can get through bad situations with great courage. He shows that no matter how bad his condition and how his illness tries to stop him at the time, he does not tremble and tries to fight it. The utterance *And then I woke up the next day and just like freaked out. I was like: I can't have a job. I'm way too depressed. And I didn't get out of bed and I like lay there under the covers staring up at the ceiling and four p.m. rolled around* proves that the protagonist, Avery is still suffering the mental illness because of his depression. He is still feeling sad, withdrawn and suffering inside. In the quotation above proves that he does not want to be beaten by his depression or his illness anymore. He wants to prove to himself that he is not that weak and he can get a better life in the future.

The protagonist also builds positive emotions toward people around him. He tries to think positively to others people in his surroundings. He tries to show other his respect and good impression toward someone or something in order to make a good relationship and communication with them. Those explanation can be seen in the following quotation below:

"Avery: Huh.

I guess he like..... he doesn't tell me a lot. He seems pretty private.

Rose: Yeah. He's weird.

Avery: No, I don't think he is weird. I mean I like him a lot. I think he just need times.

*(pause)*

Rose: yeah, maybe you're right." (P.85)

The quotation above shows that protagonist tries his best to response to others' opinion. The stage direction shows the positive feeling of the protagonist. He tries to see something not only from one perspective, but he considers something from

different point of view. He also tries not to judge people from their first impression or their behavior. He needs other people to help him increase the chances of living. He begins to think that there is some reasons why people doing something in their lives. The quotation above is related to the concept of life instinct due to the social cooperation to support their lives.

Another quotation that supports about building positive emotions due to have friends in his life can be found in the following quotation below:

“Avery: I think it’s a good letter.

Sam: You do?

Avery: I do. Something about it is really...

Sam: What?

Avery: I don’t know. It’s like something someone would write in a movie. I mean, like the hero of the movie. He’d like bring it to Washington and go like stop to kiss the love of his life and she’d say, like, you know, GO FOR IT, and then he’d run into the courtroom and read this letter in front of the judge.

Sam: And what would the judge say?

Avery: You know.

“On this day of all other days...”

“We have learned....”

“I am humbled to admit that even in my old I can...”

You know:

“This young man has taught us the true meaning of Christmas.”

Sam: Okay. Cool. Thanks” (P.141-142)

From the quotation above the protagonist does effort to build or create a positive emotion with his colleague. The character’s dialogue refers to the warm feeling of the main character. He tries to make people feels comfortable with each other him and he tries to feel the same way. He build such a positive emotion or good impression by saying kind or nice things to them. The quotation above is related to the concept of life instinct due to the love and affection sharing to support their lives. Moreover, he always give his best to support people around him to have a good relationship and he believes that if he can cooperate with others well, he could avoid all kinds of the bad things that happened in his life.

The protagonist also learns to reveal what he feels to others and learns not to bury his feeling like he did before. In the past, the protagonist always hide his feeling from others, he does not want to reveal or shows whether he happy, sad, suffering, or angry to others. He decide to bury his feeling and stay quite which are made him experiences mental illness. But after all the time, he starts to learn how revealing or showing the feeling toward people. This statement can be found in the following quotation below:

“Avery: You’ve never been caught?

Rose: No, it’s like a like a like an employee tradition? Roberto--- the guy who trained me—

he told me about it and the people who worked here before him told him about it and like nobody has ever been caught or like even been close to being caught.

*(Avery looks at Sam. Sam is confused.)*

Avery: Uh.. so what are you guys asking me?

Rose: I guess we're not asking you anything.

Avery: Because I don't really want to do it.

Rose: But u can't .... It's not up to you to decide!

Sam: You don't have to do anything! I'll deal with the tickets! You just get half the money.

Avery: I don't want to take Steve's money.

Rose: Okay, see, I don't think of it as Steve's money.

*(A long pause)*

Avery: I don't want the money, I'm not gonna like rat you guys out but, no, I'm sorry, I am sorry I just try to shows what I think..

Rose: No, it's fine. Don't worry. (P.34-35)

From the quotation above shows that the protagonist begins to speak and reveal what he feels toward something or someone. The stage direction shows about how the protagonist has his conviction about something. Unlike before, the protagonist seems to more quiet. The quotation above proves that he has good sense of survival instinct due to his tenacity. The utterance *I guess we're not asking you anything and I don't want the money, I'm not gonna like rat you guys out but, no, I'm sorry, I am sorry I just try to shows what I think* shows that the pressure in his past life triggers him to move forward by revealing his emotion towards anything around him. It shows that he has a good sense of survival instinct.

## 2.2 Self-interest Exploration

The second way of the act of striving for survival and success can be seen through the way the protagonist begins to explore his self-interest. He is willing to improve his skill and abilities by learning new things and by looking for a job that related with his interest. He tries to focus on something that he is interested in. He tries to build a good self-confident in his life. He does not feel hesitate to ask others about a thing that he wants to know. The protagonist is able to take an opportunity in order to reach his dream. He does not only do what takes his interest as a hobby but also takes the chance to make it as an important and big step to achieve success.

The protagonist, Avery is so into movies. One of the reason he looks a job in a movie theater is because his interest and love to movies. Movie is one of the reason why Avery realizes that he can do something something in his life. Then, the protagonist feels doing something that related to movies is his passion and he happy for it. The protagonist wants to reach success through his hobby. He wants to build a theater movie in his town. And then, he thinks that he must learns all of about the theater first. That is way he becomes an employee in a movie theater.

Even though he must start from the lower step to achieve his dream but he does not give up. He continues to explore his self-interest about movie in his workplace. This statement can be found in the following quotation below:

“Avery watches as Sam walks down the last row of seats with his broom, sweeping up popcorn kernels, etc., and pushing them into the dust pan. When Sam finishes the last row and moves to the second-to-last row, Avery awkwardly begins sweeping the last row on his side of the aisle. They continue this way, Sam always one row ahead of Avery, each on his own side of the aisle. Avery is trying to figure out the best way to sweep; it’s harder than it looks. In the third-to-last row, Avery encounters something we cannot see on the floor. Avery walks up the aisle. Throws the Subway wrapper in the large trash can, along with the contents of his dust pan, then walks back and goes back to sweeping. For some reasons it’s not working—the tiny pieces of lettuce that we can’t see are sticking to the ground. Sam is still watching him. “(P.10)

From the stage direction above shows that the protagonist is tries his best to learn about what his job is and what he should done there. It is related to the concept of life instinct because he tries to create a better life in a new place. The stage direction *Avery is trying to figure out the best way to sweep; it’s harder than it looks* refers to the hard efforts that protagonist does to get used with his new job. The quotation above also shows that the main character does not limit himself in learning new things to improve his abilities. Even though he wants a job that related to the movie but he is not feel scruple to do a job as an employee at the movie theater. From the quotation above also shows that he is willing to do his job and sets his mindset that the job is not difficult to do.

The protagonist also tries to learn and understanding what is he should do in his new life like he tries to ask other people in his workplace. The quotation that shows the protagonist is willing to do and learn his new job can be seen in the following quotation:

“Avery: what do you do about spilled soda?  
Sam: We do one big mop at the end of the night.  
(Avery nods. They go back to sweeping.  
After about twenty seconds)  
Avery: what if people are still here?  
(a pause)  
Sam: Like—



Avery: Have you ever had anyone like just sit here and refuse/ to—

Sam: Sometimes people stay until the end of the credits. But then they go.

*(Avery nods)*

Sam: And they'll get the message when you start sweeping.

*(Avery goes back sweeping.)*"(P. 10-11)

From the quotation above shows that the protagonist is really concerned in what he is doing right now. The plot refers to the protagonist that does various efforts to get to know to his new job. He improves the skills would be a good way in order to stay alive in a new place. He is not feeling hesitate to ask anybody or his colleague about what he has to do in his workplace. He tries to work as far as he can in order to explore how far he can do something in his life. It proves that he has a good sense of survival instinct in dealing with any situation. Skill and abilities are a picture of the qualities that someone has. It triggers him to believe that he can gain the power to save his life by having many abilities that he can use at any time.

The protagonist, Avery is able to take an opportunity in order to reach his dream to be successful person in his further life. He tries to figure out how he could use the things about running a movie theater. Moreover, he has a strong intention to learn something new to support his life. He also tries to make his colleague to teach him everything that he needs to know. That statement can be found in the following quotation:

“Rose: You wanna watch a movie?

Avery: yeah! Yeas. Definetely.

Hey. Uh. Would you ever show me how to use the projector?

Rose: it's just like old thirty-five-mill.

Avery: no..no.. I'm like... that's why I wanted to work here. This is one of the only theaters left in Worcester Country that has—yeah. I'm obsessed with film, and like old...

I actually refused to work at any of the theaters that just do digital.

Rose: but everything's gonna be digital. In like 6 months. Seriously. Steve is an idiot. If he doesn't go digital or sell this place in the next year it'll shut down.

Avery: Yeah.. I like... I guess I disagree. Or like, I think that's really immoral.

Rose: What is?

Avery: Projecting a movie made on film through a digital projector. “(P.67)

From the quotation above shows how much the protagonist interested in Movie Theater. It is strengthen that the reason why the protagonist Avery is applying for

a job in the movie theater is because the determination of him to explore and learn more far about movies. The protagonist's dialogue here refers to the excited feeling of him. He realized that the more skills he mastered, the more useful it would be to help him survive in a new place. The utterance *Yeah. I'm obsessed with film, and like old...I actually refused to work at any of the theaters that just do digital* emphasizes about he is actually has a strong determination in learning movie theater.

The protagonist want to reach his goals by exploring self- interest in Movie Theater. This is related to the concept of life instinct that seeks for pleasure. He tries to do something that makes him happy. Furthermore, he enjoy his life by doing anything delightful for him. This statement can be seen in the following quotation below:

Sam: So what are u gonna do with the projector?

Avery: I think starts some kind of underground basement cinema movement.

Sam laughs.

Avery: I'm sort of serious.

Sam: Oh. Okay. Cool.

Avery: Maybe when I go back to Clark in the fall I'll from a thirty five-milimeter film society. I don't know. Own my own theater someday.

Sam: Awesome. (P.171)

From the quotation above shows the seriousness of the protagonist about achieving his goals. He has strong determination about reaching his dream. The quotation above is related to the survival instinct due to his strong determination. He shows that he has the courage and ready to face the hardships. The utterance *I think starts some kind of underground basement cinema movement* shows his future plans which related with what he is doing at the time and he us very excited about it. Also the utterance *Maybe when I go back to Clark in the fall I'll from a thirty five-milimeter film society. I don't know. Own my own theater someday* shows the protagonist will continue his study after dropping from school before in order to teach himself and become an educated person in his life. Moreover, it strengthens his will to be a better person day by day.

The protagonist, Avery is a film geek. The movies become his dream and he want to have his own theater. His dream is everything that related to movies and that is way Avery has strong determination to learn and explore it. It can be seen in the following quotation below:

“Avery: Avatar was a video game.

Sam: Excuse me?

Avery: Avatar was basically like a video game.

Sam: It was not a video game. A video game is interactive. A video game is

defined by the fact that you' re... that you'  
re .. (moving on)  
It was 3-D. that was fucking awesome. Did  
you see it in 3-D?  
Avery: Uh-huh.  
Sam: It's just like different and that like  
scares you. People always freak out when  
like you know when like art forms move  
forward.  
Avery: That's not the art form moving  
forward. That's the art form moving  
backwards. 3-D was around in like the  
'50s." (P. 46-47)

The quotation above shows that the protagonist has a huge interest to movies. He knows everything all about the movies. The stage direction refers to how excited the protagonist to talk and learns about his hobby. He tries to explore about his ability in knowing about movies. This is related to the concept of life instinct due to the way he develops his skill. The utterance *That's not the art form moving forward. That's the art form moving backwards. 3-D was around in like the '50s* shows that the protagonist has learn a lot about movies from time to time, he does not only watch the movies but he also explores about what the movie is.

#### **D. CONCLUSION**

A play entitled *The Flick* (2013) by Annie Baker shows the issue of striving for survival and success. Striving for survival and success in this analysis refers to the way the main character deals with all the difficulties in his life and tries to reach a dream in his life. It is revealed through text-based and context-based interpretation by focusing on fictional devices such as character, plot (conflict), and stage direction. This analysis deals with the concept of life instinct by Sigmund Freud. It is represented by the protagonist, Avery, a twenty-years-old African-American young man who is experiences a mental illness and he decides to fight for his life and give a lot of striving for survival and success. It can be seen through the efforts of socialization and self-interest exploration made by the character.

The act of striving for survival and success done by the protagonist can be seen through the ways he socializes with others. This is related to the way the protagonist speaks, think, or feel about someone or something again. He learns from his failure in the past about how to socialize with others. He builds positive emotions toward people around him, like he does not want to think negatively with other people. He builds new relationships and makes good communication with other people around him. Then, he also looks for a job and tries to make a good time with other employee at his workplace. He attempts to adapt with his new life in order not to make any mistakes like he did in his past. He also learns to reveal what he feels to others and learns not to bury his feeling like he did before.

The second way of the efforts of striving for survival and success can be seen through the way the protagonist begins to explore his self-interest. He is

willing to improve his skill and abilities by learning new things around him. He tries to focus on something that he is interested in. The protagonist does not only do what takes his interest as a hobby but also takes the chance to make it as an important and big step to achieve success.

The whole play shows that striving for survival and success is a process of persistence in surviving and achieving goals. The protagonist managed to overcome any problems that he faced due to the strong determination that he has. He bravely to keep moving forward even in a difficult situation. He has the willingness and strong commitment in order to survive. He also motivates himself to keep fighting and not give up on the situation, especially when his struggling to achieve his dream to be a successful person in his new life.

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