The Complexity of The Main Character's Conflicts in The Novel Carry Me Down

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Abstract

Conflicts are an inevitable aspect of human life, often emerging when individuals are unable to make choices that bring satisfactory outcomes. This reality is also reflected in literature, as literary works cannot be separated from the dynamics of society. Conflict becomes an essential element that not only drives the plot forward but also reveals the complexity of human emotions, relationships, and moral struggles. This study examines the internal and external conflicts experienced by the main character in Maria Joan Hyland's novel Carry Me Down. Internal conflict is understood as the psychological and emotional tension within the protagonist, while external conflict refers to challenges that arise from interactions with family, society, and circumstances beyond personal control. The analysis highlights how these conflicts shape the character's growth and how they contribute to the overall meaning of the novel.The research applies a descriptive qualitative approach, focusing on textual interpretation to identify the forms, causes, and resolutions of conflict in the narrative. The scope of the discussion is limited to conflicts that directly involve the main character in order to provide a more in-depth exploration. Ultimately, the study aims to show how Hyland uses conflict as a powerful device to depict the complexity of human experience.

***Keywords**:* Conflict, Internal Conflict, External Conflict, Main Character, Carry Me Down

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Introduction

There have been various attempts to define what literature is. Literature can be considered as a written imagination of what human thinking, it reflects the result as the value of an art work. Taylor (1981:1) says that literature, like other arts, is essentially an imaginative act, that is, an act of the writer's imagination in selecting, ordering, and interpreting life experience. The major forms of literature are novel, poem, drama and short story. In this research a novel is used as the material of the discussion, which the novel itself belongs to the literary work. Reeve (1785) says that novel is a picture of real life and manners, and of the time in which it is written. Based from the quotation above, a novel seems as the portrayal of human life and behaviour in reality. On the other words, the novel tends to be the representative of the activity of human real life, which concerns too many things and aspects such as: ambition, feeling, emotion, desire, obstacles in life, problem, etc. Abrams (1981:20) says that character is the persons presented in dramatics of narrative work who are interpreted by reader as being endowed with moral and dispositional qualities that are expressed in what they say and what they do in action. Based from the statement above it can be concluded that character is the way of life on human being. The Novel which deals in this research is written by Maria Joan Hyland entitle Carry Me Down. Maria Joan Hyland (born 6 June 1968) is a novelist. She made her debut in Australia in 2003 with How the Light Gets In. Her second novel Carry Me Down was shortlisted for the 2006 Man Booker Prize and won both the Encore Award and the Hawthornden Prize in 2007. Hyland currently lives in Manchester, England, where she is a Lecturer in Creative Writing at the University of Manchester.

The focus of this analysis is the conflict that faced by the main character in this novel. According to Robert and Jacobs (1995: 1694) says that the conflict is the opposition between two characters, between large group of people, or between protagonist and larger forces such as natural objects, ideas, modes of behavior, public opinion, and the like. Conflict may also be internal and psychological. The conflict of the character is limited into two main types of conflicts: they are internal conflict and external conflict. The internal conflict is more commonly referred to as "Man vs. Self" and, deals with a character having to overcome something about his or her being that they are struggling with. Meanwhile, the external conflict is a struggle with a force outside one's self, that is include conflict between man, man and nature, man and society, etc. Moskowitz (1969:309) says that conflict itself very close to frustrations stems for three sources: the inability to overcome obstacles in the psychical environment, the inability to overcome restrictions imposed by other people, and the inability to satisfy conflicting motives or to obtain incompatible goals.

Finally, the research of this research focuses on the main character conflicts that can be traced in the novel written by Maria Joan Hyland entitle Carry Me Down, he is John Egan. That is included the internal and external conflict. This is the background as well as the reason why this research focus on the analyzing the conflicts of the main character in this research. The analysis of this research is limited to internal and external conflict of the main character in the novel. An internal conflict suggests that a main character is in conflict within itself, meanwhile the external means that a main character is in conflict with other character, social, natural, and outside force. Therefore, the scope of the analysis is restricted to the main character conflicts internally and externally as portrayed in this novel. Referring to the explanation of the background of the analysis above, problems that the writer would like to analyze is that how the main character's internal and external conflict are portrayed in M.J. Hyland's novel Carry Me Down and what are the conflict causes that occurred in this novel? The objective of this analysis is to identify the internal conflict of John Egan, which the internal that found within himself, and then to identify the external conflict of John Egan, which deals with the conflict to the others characters, social, nature and the outside force. The writer also wants to know which causes of conflicts occurred in this novel. Theoretically, the significance of this analysis

is to increase the literary understanding in terms of literary works and character through novel and to describe of conflict in novel Carry Me Down. Practically, it has significance for the readers to understand what conflict is.

Literature Review

Conflict is necessary to every fiction works; there is usually one major conflict. In stories, there could be several conflicts. Conflict adds excitement and suspense to a story. The conflict usually becomes clear to the beginning of a story. As the plot unfolds, the reader starts to wonder what will happen next and how the characters will handle the situation. Many readers enjoy trying to predict the final outcome. The excitement usually builds to a high point, or climax. The climax is the turning point of the story. Something has happened to resolve the conflict. Conflict is also the essential part to the plot, without conflict there will be no plot. The plot is how the author arranges events to develop his basic idea. It is the sequence of events in a story or play. The plot is a planned, logical series of events having a beginning, middle, and end. The story usually has one plot so it can be read in all at once. The conflict triggers the order of the plot to move to the next order of the plot, so the movement of the order of the plot is determined by conflict in a story, especially in novel.

Conflict occurs when a man fails to fulfill his desire. It is natural to human since they have to face the obstacles that lie between their desires and their goals or dreams, and when the satisfaction of human's desires is rather impossible to reach that is the moment when human undergo the conflict. The conflict of the human happened because human has a limited and restricted capacity to satisfy most of his need. When human endure the conflict, this can cause human to react and brings out the extremes of human energy, human may take action, decision, response, and interactions toward the conflict which they are facing. In a fiction works, conflict of the characters occurs between the characters and also between the characters against the outside force. They include the conflict of one individual against another individual, the conflict between an individual against the outside forces such as: nature (disaster), community, society, culture and behavior, ideas, etc. Conflict also can be happened in one individual against himself, this conflict is when the character experience by some kind of inner conflict. According to Robert and Jacobs (1995: 1694) says that the conflict is the opposition between two characters, between large group of people, or between protagonist and larger forces such as natural objects, ideas, modes of behavior, public opinion, and the like. Conflict may also be internal and psychological. In conclusion, the conflict generally divided into two types, they are the external conflict which includes the conflict against human and outside force, and then the internal conflict which concern to the inner conflict.

Based on the discussion above, it can be conclude that the types of conflicts can be divided into two categories; they are the internal conflict and the external conflict. Internal conflict is the conflict which goes on with in the mind of the hero and between him and a goal he has set himself. Internal conflict provides an unstable basis for positive results in the outside world, as he self often chooses some aspects of the outer environment to match the group within they self. People, who notice that they have repeated negative aspects, may find that understanding themselves is a basis for better results. Thus, internal conflict is more important than the external conflict since internal conflicts that take place within one person's mind. Internal conflict is those obstacles that prevent a character from achieving any kind of inner development, growth or even self-worth. In this case, the character faces a physical or emotional problem or struggle. Internal conflict uses up a great deal of energy. There is a drive to do something and a brake on it at the same time. It is like having a herd of wild horses jumping around in a little pen. That energy has to move- or it will explode or make us tense and sick. A character's internal conflict is not just being in two minds about something, not just being torn between obvious incompatibles but is about being in a new situation where old attitudes and habits war with delay the need for change. A character's internal conflict can be between what

people think they want and what they really want. Conflict must always be resolved, and everything people create and need its conclusion.

External conflict indicates conflicts affecting two or more parties in the physical world. External conflict is the conflict between two persons or group, in one of which the hero is the kind person. External conflict may also place between a person and a force beyond that person. External conflict is always won by the hero at the end and the opposite group is always the loser. External conflict is mostly found in the Greek and modern tragedy. In Greek tragedies, the heroes like unequal battles with the faith and destiny that drives them relentlessly on to their fate. External conflict is those obstacles that prevent a character from achieving an outer goal. In modern tragedy, the heroes fight for the hopelessness, the battles with the society like its age old customs, convention and rules. External conflict can be divided into four:

1) The conflict between character and other characters.
2) The conflict between character and society.
3) The conflict between character and nature.
4) The conflict between character and his God.

Research Methodology

Method of the analysis in this research is a library research. The writer collects some data to support the analysis, finding the related data to the research then narrowing the collecting data of the library research to the related element which are about conflict and character. In process collecting of the data, this research obtained the supporting data from several books as the sources of the data, the primary source of the data acquired from the novel which is being discus in this research, which is that novel is written by Maria Joan Hyland entitle Carry Me Down, this novel as the primary source of the data that this research used to obtain the conflicts found from the main character to analyze. Then the secondary data is drawn from others books as the references which the books are the most concerned about the conflict in the fiction work especially novel.

Several steps are applied in the data collecting procedure for this research. Firstly, the data acquisition from the novel is gathered by reading the novel. The entire novel is read while identifying the conflicts found from the main character based on the conflict definition itself, then marked the conflicts that found in the novel in order to ease in classifying which types the conflicts found from the main characters belong to, whether it is the external conflicts or the internal conflicts. Secondly, the secondary data are gathered from several books that related to the topic of this research. The related books that concern to the subject matter being analyzed are used as the source of idea to support the analysis of this research and also to give additional information and statement that can be drawn for this research, the important and the relevant information from these books are marked and underlined so that it can be used to support the analysis of this research, these books finally also used as the references for this research.

The data analyzing procedure is applied when all the primary data from the novel is collected and selected, as the data from the novel is in a form of written text, which concern about the classification of conflicts found from the main character that has been chosen to the most significant data, then the data will be interpreted and to be brought into this research as the subject matter of the analysis, that is the main character conflicts found from the novel. Next, the analysis will be stated by explaining the conflict of the main character based on the definition and the classification of the conflict as descriptions next which reflected in M.J. Hyland's Carry Me Down.

Results

The main discussion of this topic is focus on the main character conflicts. Based on the classification of the conflicts, there are two main types of conflicts; the internal conflict and the

external conflict. So this chapter will be identified and analyzed the conflicts of the main character found from the novel written by Maria Joan Hyland entitle *Carry Me Down.*

1) John Egan's Internal Conflict

John as a main character and narrator, he is one of the freakiest characters ever written. He's an 11-year-old boy in the body of a very tall fully-grown man, which makes it hard for him to fit in. As he withdraws into himself, he believes himself to be a human lie detector and petitions the *Guinness Book of World Records* to test him out. He and his inept parents live with his grandmother until all hell breaks loose and they are forced to move to the city and live in run-down subsidized housing. From that point, it knows John is going to lose it in a very big way. And he does, but then the question is, can John be saved from his distorted perceptions and overworked calculations about the world. Can he find his place when he is so obviously out of place**?** John is caught – or trapped – between a younger boy's attachment to his mother and a much more sophisticated desire, and ability, to fathom the intentions of those around him. John likes to read the *Guinness Book of Records,* his favourite book. He has every edition with the exception of the 1959 edition and it is one of his Christmas presents every year. He has a few pages left to read of the new edition for 1972, and he has almost finished reading the Human World section for the fourth time.

> **"One day I will be in the *Guinness Book of Records,* along with all the other people who do not want to be forgotten or ignored. I will break an important record or do a remarkable thing. I don't see the point of living unless there is something I can do better than anyone else can or unless I can do something that nobody else can do."**
> **(Hyland, *Carry Me Down*. 2006:5)**

From the quotation above shows that John really wants to be famous and his name will not be forgotten by others. He considers that the Guinness Book of Records is the media toward his destiny. World record book is what led John to be affected. In Gorey National School, John has a teacher, Miss Collins; she doesn't much like John because he is doing poorly at Irish when she knows that, if he wanted to, he could do well enough

> **"I'm not a brilliant student; third, fourth, and sometimes as low as fifth place in tests, but I'm not stupid.**
> **I'll admit that I'd like to be smarter than I am and that it would be good to excel in tests with less effort. But I know I'll discover how to stand out and make an impression in the world, in ways that will matter much more than being clever."**
> **(Hyland, *Carry Me Down*. 2006:20)**

From the quotation above shows that John doesn't have good brain ability in lessons, but he still say that he is a smart kid if he wants it. He thinks that he is able to shake the world in a different way. Too follow his desires cause him to be inconsistent.

2) John Egan's External Conflict

The external of conflicts found from the main character in the novel entitle *Carry Me Down* can be found from the main character that is having conflict with another characters from this novel. The external conflicts involved John as the main character is having conflicts with his father named Michael, his mother named Helen, his grandmother, his classmate named Kate, his teacher named Mr. Roche, and with his environment or social force.

3) John's Conflict with Michael Egan

Michael is a ne'er-do-well who aspires to pass the Trinity College entrance examination. Before he moved in his mother's cottage, he worked as an electrician in Wexford; he hated his job, and said so every night when he got home. Now, instead of going to work, he reads. He is preparing for the entrance exam at Trinity College, and that he shouldn't have too much trouble passing because he sat the Mensa test and passed with flying colours before. He has not worked in years, claims to be studying for the entrance examination to Trinity College, but it becomes apparent that he is a no-hoper with a capacity for violence. When John and his mother get home, there's chocolate cake that Granny has made, fresh out of the cooker in the kitchen. His father is making pot of tea. He walks past John to get to the fridge and puts his hand on John's back. John is not sure if his father is being affectionate or is trying to move John out of the way.

> **"The gardener let us in.' I say.**
> **'Good for him,' says my father, as he gets a bottle of milk from the fridge.**
> **'Yeah,' I say to his back. 'Good for him.'**
> **'Is anything else to report?'**
> **'I saw a model village of a French town, with a train with a balcony going to Pigalle.'**
> **'Stupid boy, there are no above-ground trains to Pigalle. Underground Metro trains, yes. Above-ground trains, no."**
> **(Hyland, *Carry Me Down*. 2006:59)**

From the quotation above shows that John makes a mistake when he just says about above-ground trains. His father doesn't reprimand well, but instead says the words that contain violence.

4) John's Conflict with Helen Egan

Helen is a decent, sensitive soul who does her best to cope with the lunacy around her. She is John's primary connection to life, but despite the fact that she is pretty, imaginative and tender, she is also confronted and worried, in an Oedipal sense, by John's premature manliness. She works in a local shop and makes puppets. She tends to be distant and ineffectual. Despite her forced air of cheerfulness, she is prone to bouts of depression. Helen is outside in the car, waiting to take John for a drive with her into town to buy some new trousers. Then they ride.

> **"When did they last measure you at school?' she asks. 'I thought maybe we should talk to the doctor again?'**
> **'I am an inch and a half shorter than you,' I say. 'I'm exactly five foot eight and a half.'**
> **'We want to keep an eye on things. That's all. Wouldn't you be happier talking to the doctor about these things?'**
> **'There's nothing to talk about. I'm just tall. That's all.'**
> **'What about other things?'**
> **'There are no other things! I'm just tall.'**
> **She clears her throat and slows the car. 'What about puberty? It might begin early for you.'**
> **'Well, it hasn't. So what's there to talk about?'**
> **'But look at your legs.' she says. 'There's barely room for them in car. And your hands! as big as rubber boots.'**
> **'I've been this size for weeks. They've been like this for at least three weeks.'**

'Well, then. You've had another growth spurt. Maybe we should talk to the doctor? What do you say?"
(Hyland, *Carry Me Down*. 2006:19)

From the quotation above shows that John and his mother make an argument about the medical check to the doctor. His mother was uneasy with the growth of an increasingly large him.

5) John's Conflict with Grandmother

John's grandmother is home from Dublin. John wishes she would leave him alone. When she comes to his room, he often want to pull a blanket over his head, hoping that he might create a blackout and wake when she's gone. But, he can't. That is her cottage and John prefers living there. John used to live in a two-bedroom flat that had pale green walls and smelt of mould and mouse urine. But when his father lost a job, his mother's pay wasn't enough for the rent and so, a few months later, his grandmother invited them to live with her. John's grandmother comes to his room and sits on his bed. She grabs hold of John's hand, John doesn't stop her.

"Tickle, tickle, tickle,' she says, as she lunges at me, putting her cold fingers under my right armpit, digging her nails in.
'I know where you're ticklish,' she says. 'I know where! Under there!'
I thrash and move away. I want her to tickle me but I know it will start out feeling good and end up feeling bad."
(Hyland, *Carry Me Down*. 2006:24)

From the quotation above shows that John doesn't like to play with his grandmother because ultimately a bad thing happened.

6) John's Conflict with Kate Breslin

Kate is a new student at Gorey National School. She has just moved from Dublin and took Brendan from John. She is the girl who mocks John when he wets his pants one day, and then she gets replies worth at the hands of the posh-voiced teacher who comes from Dublin too and who befriends John. At the end of school, Kate bumps into John when he's taking his coat off the rack in corridor outside their classroom.

"Whoops,' she says. 'So sorry'
'That's all right,' I say.
'I've heard all about you,' she says. 'Brendan's told me.' I try to put my coat on, but it falls from my numb fingers.
'The smell of urine makes me feel sick,' she says. 'It puts me off drinking my milk. I'm already squeamish about milk and your smell just puts me off my milk even more.' I'm hurt and I'm curious. I've never heard the word squeamish before and it swims in my head."
(Hyland, *Carry Me Down*. 2006:131)

From the quotation above shows that Kate mocks John because he ever wet his pants on front of class, so she always hated drinking milk when she meets John.

7) John's Conflict with Mr. Roche

Roche is a new teacher at Gorey National School. He has just moved from Dublin. He is young, not really tall; he looks strong, with black hair to his shoulders. Roche is different and

unexpected. Is he a potential abuser or is he a saviour? John walks to school quickly and gets there early so that he can watch Mr Roche prepare Roche's classes at the teacher's table. John watches Mr Roche all morning. John likes him very much and he especially likes Roche's voice. But then, during second lesson, he realise that he has been holding on too long and he must go to the toilet. He can't have another accident. He stands and puts his hand up and asks to be excused.

> **"Mr Roche comes straight over to me, takes my hand, and leads me into the corridor. I'm embarrassed to be led like this in front of my class, but he looks at me as we walk, and he smiles at me, as though leaving the classroom like this is normal, as though I am his friend."**
> **(Hyland, *Carry Me Down*. 2006:147)**

From the quotation above shows that John feels Mr. Roche as his saviour, keep him from Kate.

8) John's Conflict with Society

John lives in Dublin since he and his parents moved away from their grandmother's cottage. They get a flat in Ballymun, a wretched place. It's his second Saturday in Ballymun; he is returning from the shops with two bottles of milk, a pound of sugar and two pans of bread.

> **"As I get closer to our block, I see one of the Ballymun gangs at the bottoms of our stairwell. They are teenage boys, a few years older than me. They lean against the wall and smoke; laughing and swearing and waiting for people to pass so that they can say something obscene. Even though none of the boys is as tall as me, I head for the lifts, in spite of the terrible smell, to avoid them."**
> **(Hyland, *Carry Me Down*. 2006:207)**

From the quotation above shows that John never fears against Ballymun gangs, but he doesn't want to get trouble, so he avoids them

9) John's Conflict with Environment

John's mother is wiping the inside of the windscreen with the sleeve of her coat. John gets in. He wants to ask his mother whether she thinks John's father will go to university and if John's father does, whether they will move to Dublin.

> **"I like it here, but I like Dublin too, and it's only two hours away. It might be easier to meet with the people from the *Guinness Book of Records* in Dublin."**
> **(Hyland, *Carry Me Down*. 2006:18)**

From the quotation above shows that John faced with two places where each places has things he likes.

Conclusion

After analyzing the conflicts of the main character found from the novel of Maria Joan Hyland's Carry Me Down, it can be drawn that the internal conflict of main character caused many aspect, like, poverty, homelessness, the appalling incident in which he wets himself at school, the loss of his only friend, his desires cause him to be inconsistent, presumption causes him to be a little paranoid, mind controlling, his current life is inversely proportional, two

options where each option has things he likes. The external conflicts involved John as the main character is having conflicts with his father named Michael such as violence and trust, his mother named Helen such as life, love and trust, his grandmother such as love, his classmate named Kate such as behavior, his teacher named Mr. Roche such as love and trust, and with his town, his home, his school and his environment.

Finally, based on the characteristic of the novel itself, that the novel is also the pictures and as the representatives of human real life, it seems that the conflicts which found from the novel being analyzed can be a lesson for the reader to know what to do, how to behave, and what decision should we choose when a person encounters the conflicts in their life. Based on the analysis of this research, it can be found a moral suggestions concern with how should the characters face their conflict. The conflict that found from the novel is triggered by natural events that really exist in our real life. The conflict cannot be avoided, but it must be faced wisely. The external conflict that a person encounter will push them to learn and to understand to each other, they will learn to respect the different opinion and behavior from the other, although the other view of opinion might be wrong or contradiction from the character view, it is a natural that every human has their own way of life. Carry Me Down is a portrait of a child in Ireland at a particular time, the Sixties or perhaps Seventies, oppressed by a lack of opportunity. It's also an attempt to track the mental damage done by misunderstanding, by neediness that is not met with affection.

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