

Analyzing conflict in the short story “Christmas Every Day” by William Dean Howells

- Authors : Evania Angelica¹, Luh Putu Laksmi²,
I Nyoman Tri Ediwan³, Novita Mulyana⁴
- Affiliations : 1, 2, 3, 4Udayana University
- Correspondence : Evania Angelics / evaniaangelica@gmail.com
- Abstract : Conflict is an issue that will be experienced by many people and everyone doesn't want any single conflict to happen in their lives. Not only in our everyday lives, conflict can also be found in literary works as the characters in the works are humanlike. This study aims to discover the types of conflict in a short story called Christmas Every Day. This qualitative descriptive study utilized the library research method to collect data, which requires a process of reading books, journals, and other references to have a thorough understanding of the topic. In addition, note-taking technique was also utilized in the process of data collection. Afterward, the data was then evaluated using a conflict theory presented by Nurgiyantoro (2018). He proposed two types of conflict, internal conflict and external conflict. The findings of the study show some internal and external conflicts in the short story. One data was found to reflect internal conflict occurred and three data were classified as physical conflict undergone by the character in the short story. However, social conflict, which is a classification of external conflict, cannot be found in this short story.
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1. Introduction

Many people have to deal with conflict, and nobody wants ever to face any kind of conflict in their lives. On the other hand, conflict cannot be split up from the reality that it exists in human existence. According to Nurgiyantoro (2018), in literature, conflict refers to the existence and behavior of opposing forces in return and describes a dramatic situation in which two forces are balanced. It is a crucial component that generates tension, produces suspense, and moves the story ahead. Conflicts that arise in everyday life serve as an inspiration for many writers, who use these conflicts to create captivating narratives. Characters, communities, nature, or even internal conflicts within a character are just a few examples of the diverse things that can cause conflict. There are two reasons why examining conflicts in short stories is fascinating. To begin with, Conflict is a fundamental component of literary works that refers to the lines, characters, and arrangements which crucial to literary works. Second, conflict is an ongoing theme in literature, which adds interest to short stories by raising issues. Therefore, this study has two main problems. Those are the kinds of conflicts that arise in the short story and the settlement of the conflicts.

Nurgiyantoro (2018) makes a distinction between two types of conflicts, internal as well as external. Moreover, there are two classifications of external conflict, social and physical conflict. A character may experience internal conflict when they are faced with a problem or battle involving their own beliefs, desires, or decisions. Internal conflict refers to conflict that originates within a character's heart or soul. In reverse, an external conflict occurs when a character interacts with another party, like the natural world or human surroundings. It becomes further divided into two groups. The first one is social conflict arises when a character opposes or battles with another individual or group, frequently as a result of interpersonal conflicts. The second type of conflict is physical conflict, which occurs when a character gets into an actual confrontation or fight. These conflicts usually derive from interpersonal or social issues.

A short narrative by William Dean Howells titled "Christmas Every Day." The conflict appears as people in the area learn that Christmas is repeated every day, and the joy and novelty of the celebration begin to wear off. Everyone is first thrilled about the nonstop celebrations, but as the days pass, they notice the difficulties and boredom of celebrating Christmas every day. The effects of Christmas never-ending and how they impact the characters and the town are at the heart of the conflict. A little girl in this short story wishes it were Christmas every day, and her desire is granted. People are first pleased by Christmas's continuous celebrations, gifts, and happiness. But as time passes, the joy of the nonstop celebration begins to fade. Businesses suffer, people become weary of the routine, and the holiday's overall novelty is lost. A moral lesson on moderation and the significance of enjoying special events without going excessive is conveyed in the story. It implies that the uniqueness of Christmas and the anticipation that grows throughout the year are what give it its charm. Christmas loses its unique traits and loses some of its significance when it is celebrated every day.

One of the related studies regarding this topic is an undergraduate thesis entitled *Internal and External Conflict of the Main Character in Mark Twain's Novel The Adventure of Huckleberry Finn* which was written by Toding, N. (2018). This study aims to analyze the internal and external conflicts that *The Adventure of Huckleberry Finn's* main character experiences. Moreover, it also aims to explain how the conflicts were resolved. The data was collected through the novel itself as well as the supporting data from the internet. The researcher employed a descriptive qualitative method to this study due to the form of the data. The findings indicated that the internal and external conflicts experienced by the major characters were related to the id, ego, and super-ego. The id ego and superego are the most common sources of conflict. Arguments and fights are examples of external conflicts that each of the other characters must deal with.

Another thesis written by Mahdaniinner, V.T. (2023) entitled *Conflict of The Main Characters in the Novel All the Bright Places: A Study of Literature Psychology*. This study aims to figure out the causes of the argument that occurred between Violet Markey and Theodore Finch in Jennifer Niven's *All the Bright Places*. The data was a novel entitled *All the Bright Places* written by Jennifer Niven. The researcher collected the data by reading the novel, making notes about the data, and classifying the data. To analyze the data, a psychological approach was used along with a descriptive qualitative method. Two of the most significant characters are coping with internal and external problems, as evidenced by the results. In the analyzed novel, the internal conflict arises from the protagonist who has a willingness to end his life and his worries. On the other hand, external conflict is caused by some situations such as unfavorable conditions and differentiation of perspectives.

Another undergraduate thesis was written by Ruslan, M. F. (2019) entitled *Internal Conflict of the Main Character of Wilson's Fences*. The study aimed to investigate the types of internal conflicts the lead character in the drama "Fences" goes through, as well as the contributing factors that impact them. The data was a play made by August Wilson in 1985 entitled *Fences*. The data was collected by reading and classifying the data found. The researcher analyzed the data by employing the procedure of coding identifying, categorizing classifying, and interpreting the data. Nonetheless, the results revealed three different types of internal conflict that the playwright of *Fences* experienced. In addition, the main character has an internal conflict that is caused by four out of six factors: aggression, powerlessness, loss, and personality.

There is also a related article from Jurnal Humanism entitled *Conflict Analysis in Stromberg's Movie "Maleficent"* written by Saputra, I.K.S.A (2018). This study aimed to identify the type of conflict, where it came from, and Malaficent's strategy for resolving it for the film's main role. The data for this study came from the 2014 film, *Maleficent*, directed by Robert Stromberg. Since the data were visual, they were gathered and chosen using documentation. A qualitative method of the gathered data was used to achieve this analysis. The analysis findings indicate how the main character deals with internal and external conflicts. The problems of the main characters are different beliefs and goals that are incompatible. The main character employs creative integration, competitive strategy, and avoidance strategy to manage the problem.

The last related study is an international article from the Yadanabon University Research Journal. The article was written by Khin, Y.Y. and Win, S.S. (2021) entitled *A Study of Conflicts Found in the Short Story A Visit of Charity by Eudora Welty*. This study aimed to categorize the many kinds of conflict and to emphasize that using conflict might enhance writing and reading proficiency. The data was a short story entitled *A Visit of Charity* by Eudora Welty. To begin to obtain data, the researchers analyzed conflict expressions in the words of Eudora Welty's short novel *A Visit of Charity*. Employing Flora Richards-Gustafson's theory, they then divided the conflicts into two categories (2003). The findings indicated that the story contained the four types of conflict. Character versus self is the most common interpretation of internal conflict, while character versus fate doesn't get used at all. Character against character is the most frequently employed external conflict, with a percentage of 65.9%. Character against society is the second most used, at 18.3%, and character against nature is the least utilized, at 2.4%. Additionally, there is no character versus fate in this tale.

2. Methods

The object of this article was a short story entitled *Christmas Every Day* which was written by William Dean Howells. The technique used to collect the data is the library research method. Library research is a systematic way of collecting information from many sources within a

library context. This approach includes reading books, articles, specialized collections, and reference materials to build a thorough understanding of the topic of choice. The Christmas Everyday short story by William Dean Howells, first published in 1892, served as the study's source of data. Clauses, statements, sentences, paragraphs, discourses, and other words found in William Dean Howells' Christmas Everyday story provide the study's internal and external conflicts.

The descriptive method was used in this study. When analyzing data, the descriptive technique is used to observe, record, characterize, and make sense of phenomena. The conflicts in the story are the meaning of the phenomenon here. According to Fraenkel and Wallen (1993), descriptive methods are methods used to explain, analyze, and classify things through various techniques, surveys, interviews, questionnaires, observations, and texts.

According to Sudaryanto (1993), the informal form is a formulation using ordinary words even though the terminology is technical naturally. The results of the analysis are presented in informal forms in scientific writing. Informal presentations take the form of conversational explanations or descriptions. This article was presented in the informal form of presenting data since the data was fully described and elaborated in a written form.

3. Result and Discussion

1) Internal Conflict

The little girl who is the main character of this short story and who seeks Christmas every day is the core of the internal conflict. She asked the Fairy to give her an everyday Christmas. After everything people went through, she felt wrong and had an inner conflict within herself (her mind). She is afraid that everyone will be mad at her since everyone already knows that she is the one who wants Christmas every day. The conflict is described in the narrative below.

The little girl began to get frightened, keeping the secret all to herself, she wanted to tell her mother, but she didn't dare to, and she was ashamed to ask the Fairy to take back her gift, it seemed ungrateful and ill-bred.

The little girl seems very terrified of what happened at that time. Turns out, the impact produced by this never-ending holiday season is awful. The negative impact is felt by everyone since the "Christmas" is still going on until October. It can be seen from the paragraph below.

After a while, they had to make Christmas trees out of rags. But there were plenty of rags, because people got so poor, buying presents for one another, that they couldn't get any new clothes, and they just wore their old ones to tatters. They got so poor that everybody had to go to the poorhouse, except the confectioners, the storekeepers, and the book-sellers, and they all got so rich and proud that they would hardly wait upon a person when he came to buy. It was perfectly shameful!

Therefore, the little girl was feeling very guilty. Moreover, the girl asked the Fairy to take back her wish. Fortunately, the Fairy can make her wish come true. After all the things happened, she made a wish to the Fairy that the girl would keep her word. Furthermore, the Fairy needs to make sure that Christmas will never, ever happen again.

2) External Conflict

An external conflict arises between the character and their environment. The environment could be any external aspect that opposes or encounters the character's interests, morals, or goals. It could be another character, a group of characters, nature, society, or something else entirely. The external conflict is classified into two types as well. There are social conflict and physical conflict. Social conflict is one of external conflicts in which some characters don't share the same interests or moral standards. However, the researcher did not find any social conflict in this short story.

2.1 Physical Conflict

Physical conflict is another kind of external conflict that can arise between a character and something outside of them. Frequently, it refers to a clash between two balanced forces and suggests the presence and performance of a mutual action. This study analyses the physical conflict regarding the short story. The short story contains three types of physical conflict according to the researcher. They are loss of specialness, interfere with daily life, and influence on living things.

a) Loss of specialness

The physical conflict in this short story can be seen when the characters in the story experience a loss of the specialness and excitement that comes with celebrating Christmas when it occurs every day. The repetitiveness of the holiday leads to a sense of monotony and a diminishing appreciation for its unique qualities. The conflict is written in the paragraph below.

Now, the next day, it was the same thing over again, but everybody was getting crosser, and at the end of a week's time so many people had lost their tempers that you could pick up lost tempers anywhere, they perfectly strewed the ground. Even when people tried to recover their tempers they usually got somebody else's, and it made the most dreadful mix.

The paragraph tells that everyone wants to get rid of this Christmas celebration. They get bored since it has been happening every single day for almost a year. It gets worse when people shout at one another just because they lose their temper and are tired of this celebration thing.

b) Interferes with daily life

The unending celebration disrupts the normal routines and activities of individuals. In normal, people will do their usual activities as it is. However, the everyday Christmas made them couldn't do the activities as they needed to celebrate Christmas. Furthermore, the Christmases made the country couldn't celebrate its national holiday. This could be seen as a conflict between the desire for the joyous aspects of Christmas and the need for a balanced and normal daily life. The conflict is described in the paragraph below.

And how it was on the Fourth of July! On the Fourth of July, the first boy in the United States woke up and found out that his firecrackers and toy pistol, and two-dollar collection of fireworks were nothing but sugar and candy painted up to look like fireworks. Before ten o'clock every boy in the United States discovered that his July Fourth things had turned into Christmas things and was so mad. The Fourth of July orations all turned into Christmas carols, and when anybody tried to read the Declaration of Independence, instead of saying, "When in the course of human events it becomes necessary," he was sure to sing, "God rest you, merry gentlemen." It was perfectly awful.

People at that time couldn't do things as they wanted. In contrast, they need to celebrate Christmas every day. Even the Fourth of July was celebrated as a Christmas Carol and everyone got mad at it.

c) Influence on Living Things

After the Christmas celebration ends, there is a massive celebration to celebrate the end of "Christmas". All the candy, raisins, and nuts they had consumed during the Christmas season were gathered and disposed of in the river. This caused the fish in the river sick. The situation is described in the paragraph below.

Well, with no Christmas ever again, there was the greatest rejoicing all over the country. People met together everywhere and kissed and cried for joy. Carts went around and gathered up all the candy and raisins and nuts, and dumped them into the river, and it made the fish perfectly sick. And the whole United States, as far out as Alaska, was one blaze of bonfires, where the children were burning up their presents of all kinds. They had the greatest time!

Even though they felt happy regarding the end of Christmas time, they shouldn't throw up all the food into the river. In the river, there live many kinds of sea creatures and all the food thrown up, can pollute the sea.

4. Conclusion and Recommendation

In the short story "Christmas Every Day" by William Dean Howells, conflict is crucial because it moves the plot along and offers a moral lesson. The main conflict of this short story is when the little girl makes a wish to the Fairy to make Christmas happen every day. As the continuous celebration progresses, the negative consequences and boredom begin to influence the characters and the town, causing tension within the little girl.

The little girl's anxiety, guilt, and inner struggle represent the internal conflict. She feels afraid and embarrassed to admit her mistake after realizing the terrible impact of her wish on those around her. The story emphasizes the value of moderation as well as the distinctive characteristics that make special events such as Christmas important. The internal conflict of the little girl matches the story's broader theme, encouraging readers to enjoy rare moments without overindulging. External conflict is also depicted in the form of physical conflict. The never-ending celebration affects everyday life, causing a loss of uniqueness and messing with daily routines. The protagonists are frustrated and angry because of the repeated nature of Christmas, resulting in conflicts between their desire for cheerful celebrations and the need for a balanced daily existence. Thus, to stop the Christmas that happens every day, the little girl makes a wish to the Fairy. She wishes that Christmas wouldn't have happened anymore.

Further research must be done to continue with another theory of this short story. A conflict theory proposed by Nurgiyantoro was the most straightforward theory that could be found. Thus, by employing a newer theory, the analysis is expected to have a different perspective regarding the short story used. Besides the conflict, this short story has another aspect to be analyzed in the future. There are a lot of aspects that can be analyzed in this short story. By doing the analysis, the researcher hopes that the reader of this short story can have a deep understanding of the whole content of this short story.

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