

CHILDREN'S RIGHTS IN DOME SHI'S ANIMATED TURNING RED

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Abstrak

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk: (1) mengidentifikasi jenis-jenis hak anak yang digambarkan dalam animasi Turning Red, (2) menganalisis hak-hak anak yang digambarkan dalam animasi Turning Red, dan (3) menjelaskan alasan sutradara dalam mengangkat tema hak-hak anak dalam animasi Turning Red. Objek penelitian yang dikaji adalah "hak-hak anak". Sosiologi Sastra dan Konvensi PBB tentang Hak Anak digunakan dalam penelitian ini untuk mengungkap hak-hak anak dalam film animasi Turning Red. Temuannya adalah film animasi Turning Red mengilustrasikan sembilan hak anak berdasarkan Konvensi PBB tentang Hak Anak, seperti hak untuk hidup, pendidikan, kesehatan, perlakuan yang adil, keterlibatan dalam pengambilan keputusan, identitas, perlindungan dari eksploitasi, istirahat dan bermain, dan kebebasan berekspresi. Ilustrasi hak-hak anak terlihat melalui karakter, latar, dan peristiwa dalam film, dengan karakter yang menunjukkan kasih sayang, dukungan, dan solidaritas, latar yang menekankan pada pendidikan dan lingkungan yang aman, dan peristiwa yang menyoroti tantangan anak-anak dalam mewujudkan hak-hak mereka. Sutradara Domee Shi mengangkat tema hak-hak anak untuk menjembatani pemahaman antara orang tua dan anak, serta menggunakan film ini sebagai alat untuk mendorong empati dan kesadaran akan pentingnya mengakui dan menghormati hak-hak anak selama perjalanan mereka dalam pencarian jati diri.

Kata Kunci: hak anak, anak, Turning Red.

Abstract

This research aims to: (1) identify the types of children's rights portrayed in the animated Turning Red, (2) analyze children's rights illustrated in the animated Turning Red, and (3) explain the director's reason for addressed the theme of children's rights in the animated Turning Red. The research object studied is "children's rights". Sociology of

Literature and UN Convention on the Rights of the Child were used in this study to reveal the children's rights in the animated *Turning Red*. The findings are that the animated film *Turning Red* illustrates nine children's rights based on the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, such as the rights to life, education, health, fair treatment, involvement in decision-making, identity, protection from exploitation, rest and play, and freedom of expression. Illustrations of children's rights are seen through characters, settings, and events in the film, with characters showing love, support, and solidarity, settings emphasizing education and a safe environment, and events highlighting children's challenges in realizing their rights. Director Domee Shi takes on the theme of children's rights to bridge understanding between parents and children, and use the film as a tool to encourage empathy and awareness of the importance of recognizing and respecting children's rights throughout their journey of self-discovery.

Keywords: children's rights, children, *Turning Red*.

1. INTRODUCTION

Children's rights, such as life, development, happiness, education, and protection, play an important role in shaping a child's character. Parents are responsible for ensuring the fulfillment of these rights, reflecting a balance of attitudes and behaviors that influence children's development. Constitution No. 35/2014 affirms the state's responsibility to guarantee children's rights as an integral part of human rights, emphasizing the urgency of fulfilling children's rights to form a superior and empowered generation.

The theme of "Children's Rights" takes center stage in literary works, mirroring social issues such as violence, inequality, and discrimination. These works not only convey messages of awareness of children's rights but also serve as tools to trigger critical thinking and promote social change. The animated film *Turning Red* by Domee Shi explores the theme of children's rights through the narrative of the character Meilin Lee. Domee Shi, an accomplished filmmaker, was previously known for the short film "Bao". *Turning Red* tells the story of Meilin's journey in the face of social pressure and family expectations, providing an in-depth exploration of growth, freedom, and the struggle to be oneself.

Despite the positive response, the film has also drawn criticism, especially regarding its representation of Asian stereotypes. This study aims to explore the representation of children's rights in Domee Shi's animated film "Turning Red". The research questions include the types of children's rights depicted, how children's rights are illustrated, and Domee Shi's reasons for bringing up the

theme of children's rights.

This research highlights the limitations of previous studies that have not specifically addressed children's rights in the animated film *Turning Red* context. In a review of ten previous studies, such as Diffani & Kholis (2023), Hanifah et al. (2023), Azhari & Ambalegin (2022), Ditriawan et al (2023), Amen (2023), Al'ula & Sihombing (2023), Floriani (2023), Anggraeni & Hellystia (2022), Safana (2022), and Prawira et al. (2023), the studies cover linguistic and literary aspects and involve Freudian theory, semiotics, and character education values.

The Sociology of Literature theory, as explained by Alan Swingewood (1972), provides insight into the complex interactions between literary works, individuals, and society. This theory relates literary works to the social structure of society, outlining Marxist approaches, genetic structuralism, and Gramsci's theory of hegemony. This research also refers to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), which provides guidance and protection of children's rights worldwide. The CRC covers the rights to life, education, health, fair treatment, involvement in decisions, identity, protection from exploitation and violence, rest and play, freedom of expression, and protection from discrimination. The Convention serves as an international legal and moral foundation, ensuring that children's rights are recognized and protected across the board.

2. METHOD

This research carries out literary research methods, as expressed by Rohim (2021). This literary study approach utilizes references from relevant books, journals, notes, and previous research results to explore the relationship between literary works and authors. The material object focuses on the animated film *Turning Red* by Domee Shi, a visual literary work released in 2022 and produced by Pixar Animation Studios. The formal object of this research focuses on children's rights.

In collecting data, the document analysis method was used, in accordance with Jacob and Furgerson's (1991) approach. The data collected involved texts from dialog subtitles and images from screen captures of scenes in the animation. Primary data was obtained directly from the animated film *Turning Red*, while secondary data was sourced from journals and books relevant to the object of research.

The data analysis process applied the qualitative analysis method, following the principles proposed by Lexy J. Moleong (2006). Data analysis techniques include data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. The initial stage, data reduction, was conducted to identify and categorize patterns, themes, or significant elements in the complexity of the data. Data display aims to present organized data to facilitate analysis, while conclusion drawing involves developing an in-depth understanding of the data, answering research questions, identifying important findings, and revealing

the meaning of the data. Thus, this research methodology provides a solid foundation for understanding the animated film "Turning Red" from a child rights perspective using a qualitative approach.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Results

3.1.1 The types of children's rights portrayed in animated film Turning Red

By analyzing the animation Turning Red, nine types of children's rights were found based on the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, including The Right to Life, Growth and Development, The Right to Education, The Right to Health, The Right to Be Treated Fairly, The Right to Involve in Decisions Affecting Children, The Right to Identity and Nationality, The Right to Protection from Exploitation and Abuse, The Right to Rest and Play, and The Right to Freedom of Opinion.

(1) The Right to Life, Growth, and Development

(i) The right to life

The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child affirms a child's fundamental right to life, as outlined in Article 6. In the animated film Turning Red, the right to life is reflected when Meilin Lee states the number one rule in her family, which is to respect parents who provide life, shelter, and adequate food, as explained in her monologue at duration 00:00:48. This dialog reinforces the important message of a child's right to a decent life.

(ii) The right to growth

The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child emphasizes the right of children to growth, as reflected in Article 27 which recognizes their right to a decent standard of living, including adequate nutrition, clothing, and health care. The animated film Turning Red depicts the right of growth through feeding nutritious food to Meilin Lee. In the duration of 00:09:27 and 00:16: 15, it is seen that Meilin Lee is always given food that is cooked with by her mother or father, containing enough nutrients, such as protein from eggs and meat. This fact indicates the full support of her family for her growth and health.

(iii) The right to develop

The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child recognizes the right of children to develop, including the right to participate in decision-making that affects their lives, as stated in Article 12. The animated film Turning Red shows Meilin Lee experiencing a process of self-development when she discovers her identity as a red panda. Although initially conflicted, Meilin manages to

convince her mother through a dialogue at 01:25:13 duration, in which Meilin expresses her fear of rejection, and her mother responds with full support, encouraging her to be herself without limiting her growth. In this dialogue, Meilin and her mother describe the fulfillment of the children's right to develop, show the importance of parental support in the process of the children's identity.

(2) The Right to Education

The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child recognizes the right of the child to an adequate and quality education, as stated in Articles 28 and 29. Article 28 emphasizes the importance of free and Compulsory Primary Education, to make it generally accessible to all children. The animated film *Turning Red* depicts the fulfillment of Meilin Lee's educational rights through a scene in a math class at a duration of 00:02:44.

Furthermore, Article 29 addresses the right of the child to education aimed at developing children's full potential, preparing children for a productive life, and respecting the right to freedom of thought and expression. Meilin Lee in this film also attended a music class, showing support for the development of children's potential at a duration of 00:02:52.

Thus, the film shows that Meilin's education includes both academic and non-academic aspects, in accordance with the principles of the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

(3) The Right to Health

The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child affirms the right of the child to get optimal health standards, as stated in Article 27. In the animated film *Turning Red*, Meilin Lee's health rights are reflected through the supplies of medicines prepared by her mother. The scene at 00: 17: 56 shows Meilin's mother carefully preparing medicines and supplies to deal with the menstrual pain that Meilin may experience.

Thus, the film illustrates mothers' efforts to ensure the fulfillment of Meilin's right to health, in line with the principles of the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

(4) The Right to be Treated Fairly

The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child affirms the right of the child to be treated fairly, especially in Article 2, Article 3, and Article 16 which base the principle of equality and fairness in the treatment of children. Article 2 guarantees protection without discrimination, ensuring that every child is considered of equal value in the eyes of the law and society. Article 3 emphasizes the best interests of the child in each action, highlighting the need to take into account the needs and perspectives of children in decisions or actions that involve them. In the animated film *Turning Red*,

the right to be treated fairly is reflected through the positive attitude of Meilin Lee's friends. The scene at 00: 34: 29 shows their acceptance of Meilin's ability to become a red panda, portraying respect for the child's right to be respected as an individual with her uniqueness and rights.

Article 16 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child emphasizes the right to privacy of children, prohibiting interference that violates the law or defames their name and reputation. This creates the basis for protecting the privacy of children from actions that could harm them and confirms the need to respect the privacy rights of children, especially when it comes to their personal information and feelings. In the animated film *Turning Red*, the children's right to privacy does not seem to have been fully respected. The scenes of the mother's surveillance of Meilin Lee at school, occurring at 00:22:50 and 00:40:27, show the violation of Meilin's right to privacy by her mother, reflecting the non-fulfillment of children's right to privacy in the context of the film.

(5) The Right to be Involved in Decisions Affecting Children

The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child affirms the right of children to participate in decision-making that affects them, recognizing the importance of giving children an active role in their own lives. Article 12 creates the basis for the right of children to express their opinion on everything that affects them, and their views should be considered following their age and maturity. In the animated film *Turning Red*, Meilin Lee's decision to keep her red panda reflects the children's right to be recognized as an individual with a valuable voice. However, her mother's family rejected the decision, as seen in the transcript of the dialogue at 01:10:06 duration. Although Meilin tries to voice her desire to maintain her uniqueness, her family resists and creates tension between the child's decision and the family's expectations. This scene highlights a lack of understanding of children's right to make decisions that affect their lives.

(6) The Right to Identity and Nationality

The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child affirms the right of the child to identity and nationality, emphasizing the importance of legal recognition and protection of the rights inherent in this aspect. Article 7 creates a framework for these matters, including a children's right to be registered immediately after birth, to have a name, to acquire nationality, and to know and be cared for by parents where possible. In the animated film *Turning Red*, Meilin Lee already has a name and is registered as a resident of Toronto, as expressed in her monologue at 00:01:29 and through an identity card scene at 00:01:53.



Figure 1. Meilin Lee showing her ID card

Although Meilin Lee's rights to identity are reflected in the film, the rights to nationality are not explicitly shown.

(7) The Right to Protection from Exploitation and Abuse

The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child emphasizes the right of the child to protection from exploitation and abuse, described in Article 19 which establishes norms and protections for children around the world. Article 19 recognizes the right of the child to be protected from any form of violence, cruelty, or abuse, including protection against acts that may harm the child's physical, mental, or emotional life. It also highlights the importance of prevention and early identification of child abuse cases. In the animated film *Turning Red*, this right is depicted through the character of Meilin Lee's mother in a scene in a convenience store that reflects her mother's concern for the bad influence of a male servant on her daughter. Although these concerns are not true, Meilin Lee's mother tried to protect her daughter, and the transcript of Meilin Lee's mother's speech ensuring that protection can be found at the duration of 00:14:02.

(8) The Right to Rest and Play

The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child recognizes the importance of rest and play in the lives of children, as outlined in Article 31. This article provides specific guidance and protection for the children's right to rest, play, and participate in recreational activities. This right is not only a physical need, but also essential for the emotional, social, and creative development of children. However, in the animated film *Turning Red*, the right to rest and play is still not considered. A scene shows Meilin Lee persuaded to sing karaoke with her friends, but her home responsibilities get in the way. The complete dialogue of the scene is contained at 00:04:44, describing Meilin's inability to enjoy time with her friends due to her obligations at home.

Meilin Lee's limitations in socializing with her friends are also present in scenes in the film. While talking about her favorite boy band, her mother criticizes one of her friends, Miriam, calling her a strange girl. The full dialogue transcript can be found at 00:10:33. In addition, Meilin's right to know

the opposite sex is also limited, as seen in the scene when she is caught drawing herself with a boy she likes. Her mother responded excessively, creating discomfort and depriving Meilin of the right to social relations with the opposite sex. The complete dialogue transcript of this scene is located at 00:12:41. With this evidence, it is evidenced that Meilin's mother violated her daughter's right to healthy rest, play, and socialization.

(9) The Right to Freedom of Opinion

The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child emphasizes the children's right to freedom of opinion, manifested in Article 12 as the basis for the participation of children in decisions affecting them. It creates the foundation for an inclusive society that respects children's voices. In the film *Turning Red*, Meilin Lee proves this claim through a monologue at the beginning of the film at 00:01:39, in which she declares her right to say whatever she wants and describes her independence from the age of 13. The transcript of this monologue became concrete evidence that Meilin had earned her right to freedom of opinion.

3.1.2 The illustration of children's rights in the animated *Turning Red*

The illustration of children's rights in the animated *Turning Red* is found in three ways, namely characters, settings, and events.

(1) Characters

In illustrating characters, there are two ways used: through adult characters consisting of parents and teachers, and children's characters.

(i) Character of Parents

The director depicts characters of parents who wholeheartedly give love and attention to their children through scenes in the film. In the first scene in a duration of 00:29:37, Meilin's mother, Ming Lee, says, "We'll wait it out together. And I'll be with you every step of the way", when Meilin suddenly turns into a red panda, showing her mother's support and presence in difficult situations. In another scene at 00:38:16, Meilin's father, Jin Lee, says, "Ming, maybe we should trust her", when Meilin asks for permission to attend a concert, showing his father's effort to support and trust Meilin's decision. With these words, both of Meilin's parents provide strong love and support to their child.

(ii) Character of Teacher

The director portrays the character of a teacher who cares about the safety and comfort of children in the school environment through a snippet from the scene at 00:23:08.

The dialogue “All right, all right, settle down, little goblins”, illustrates the teacher’s effort to make the class conducive again after an incident outside caused a commotion. In this scene, the teacher responds to the disturbance by calming the students and encouraging them to refocus on learning, reflecting the teacher’s concern for the safety and comfort of the students in the school environment.

(iii) Character of Children

The director portrays the children’s characters in the Turning Red animation very well with each other and accepts the differences between them.



Figure 2. Meilin Lee and her racially diverse friends

The footage shows that despite the differences in race and skin color, they remain united and do not mock or oppress each other.

(2) Settings



Figure 3. Meilin Lee’s school

The picture above is a picture of the school hallway where the character Meilin Lee goes to school. Through this setting, the director has shown that Meilin Lee gets a decent and quality educational place to study.



Figure 4. Meilin Lee's house

The next image shows Meilin Lee's family in a room in the house. Meilin is chatting with her mother while making food in the living room, and her father is in the kitchen preparing dinner. The scene shows that Meilin Lee has a decent place to live without fear of threats because her parents are by her side.

(3) Events

In the animated film *Turning Red*, the director also presents important events related to children's rights, such as:

(i) Self-protection

When Meilin Lee's mother suddenly came to school to watch her secretly, all her classmates found out about it because they were doing sports lessons outside the classroom. Meilin's friend Tyler then mocked and laughed at Meilin. Meilin who heard this felt angry and unacceptable, then she threw the ball to Tyler to retaliate against him. This indicates that Meilin is trying to protect herself from her friend's bullying, which is also an attempt to fulfill her rights. The mockery uttered by Tyler can be seen at duration 00.40.32.

Tyler: "Little momma's girl." (LAUGHS)

After hearing that, Meilin Lee then attacked Tyler at duration 00.40.44.

(ii) Discovering self-identity

Meilin's unique ability to transform into a red panda symbolizes her discovery of her identity. When Meilin is performing the ritual of removing the red panda, she suddenly realizes that she is still fine when there is a red panda inside her. Although initially perceived as complicated and disturbing, Meilin learned to accept and understand this uniqueness as part of herself. Eventually, Meilin decided to keep the red panda and found her identity. Meilin Lee's process of discovering her identity can be seen at duration 01.09.23.

(iii) The effort to hide the red panda

Meilin Lee experienced social pressure and attempted to keep her ability a secret. When Meilin Lee first acquired the ability to become a red panda, she tried to keep her friends in the dark about the change. Even though her friends felt there was a change in her, Mei still tried not to tell them the truth. This underscores the child's right to be treated fairly by friends and the social environment, even though there may be differences or abnormalities. This is evident in the dialog transcript at duration 00.20.51.

3.1.3 The director's reason for addressed the theme of children's rights in the animated Turning Red

Domee Shi, the director of Turning Red, drew inspiration from her personal life story to create the film, as revealed in the Republika news portal on 07/03/2022. In the news report, Shi stated, "My story when I was growing up became my inspiration in making the movie Turning Red". Additionally, through a blog on The Hollywood Reporter website, Shi explained that the film was her initiative to express the challenges and journey of her growth as a 13-year-old teenager. Reflecting on her perspective as a teenager under parental control, especially with her mother, Shi sought to portray the dynamics of that relationship, hoping that her film could make audiences, both children and parents, understand the difficulties from both perspectives. Domee Shi expressed her aspiration for the film to depict these challenges so that children could empathize, while parents could be reminded that adolescence is indeed a challenging time for children. Awareness of children's rights and the need for the fulfillment of these rights drove her to advocate this message in Turning Red, where she emphasized that children have rights that need to be recognized and fulfilled by parents and society.

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3.2 Discussion

Based on research results, the animated film Turning Red reflects children's rights, including the right to life, growth and development, education, health, fair treatment, participation in decisions, identity, protection from exploitation, rest and play, and freedom of opinion. John Locke emphasized the right to life as an essential right, connected to the child's right to live and thrive through adequate nutrition and shelter provided by parents. Amartya Sen's Capability Theory supports the child's right to education, health, and freedom of opinion, evident in the character Meilin Lee in the film. Freedom of expression is crucial, though not directly shown in Meilin Lee, while the right of children to make decisions is a focus, but not fully recognized in Meilin's journey. The storyline effectively captures the fulfillment of children's rights, such as active participation in education and mother care during the first period, as well as fair treatment from her friends.

The film uses characters, settings, and events to illustrate children's rights. Characters, including parents, teachers, and children, depict love, support, and solidarity, while settings such as Meilin's school and home emphasize the importance of providing quality education and a safe living environment. Events in the film, like Meilin's self-defense and her struggle for privacy, highlight the challenges children face in realizing their rights. Director Domee Shi created this work based on her personal experiences, reflecting the challenges and growth she faced at the age of 13. Her goal is to bridge understanding between parents and children, showcasing the film as a means to underline the importance of recognizing and respecting children's rights. The narrative serves as an exploration touching on these rights, fostering empathy, and deepening awareness of the rights that children deserve throughout their journey of self-discovery and development. In *Turning Red*, the limited discussion of rights to nationality is due to Domee Shi's intention to convey the film's message universally worldwide, hoping viewers from various backgrounds can feel and understand its meaning. This effort ensures that the message reaches a broader and deeper global audience.

The animated film *Turning Red* seeks to raise awareness in society about the insufficient fulfillment of children's rights, especially in Canada. Many adults, especially parents, are still unaware of children's rights. According to the Canadian Children's Rights Report for 2018, the younger generation realizes that the lack of knowledge or awareness among adults about the UNCRC (United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child) leads to issues related to children and teenagers in Canada. Factors contributing to this lack of awareness can be seen in a 2012 report reflecting adults' misunderstanding in protecting children from violence, the ongoing racism against the Chinese-Canadian and Black communities, and the high potential for poor mental health among the young generation in Canada, especially indigenous youth. Domee Shi, the director of *Turning Red*, responds to similar concerns regarding children's rights, particularly in Canada.

These results and discussions add to the information from the study conducted by Safana (2022) which focused more on the relationship between parents and children, and how parents educate their children in this movie. From this study, it was found that there is still much to know about children's rights in the animated film *Turning Red*. The child characters in this animated film seem more active and diverse in fighting for their rights, such as the right to education, self-expression, and protection. This adds something new to previous studies that have mostly talked about parents. While the relationship between children and parents is still important, this study shows that parents also need to understand how children have a stronger role.

4. CONCLUSION

Based on the research on Children's Rights in the animation *Turning Red* by Domee Shi, it can be

concluded that the film effectively depicts nine types of children's rights according to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. Meilin Lee, the protagonist, undergoes a journey of self-discovery and faces various challenges, including these rights. Illustrations of children's rights are evident through characters, settings, and events in the film, showcasing love, support, and solidarity. Settings like Meilin's school and home emphasize the importance of quality education and a safe environment. Events, such as Meilin's self-defense and struggle for privacy, vividly portray the challenges children face in realizing their rights. Director Domee Shi's personal connection with the theme, drawn from her adolescence, is reflected in the film. Shi aims to bridge understanding between parents and children, emphasizing the importance of recognizing and respecting children's rights. Thus, the film effectively explores these rights, fostering empathy and awareness of the rights deserving of children.

Suggestions from the research include encouraging the incorporation of lessons on children's rights into the curriculum, enhancing children's participation in the creative process of animated film production, and stimulating further research with similar topics. Pedagogical implications involve using the film as a learning tool and a means to develop critical analysis skills for students in Middle and High Schools in International Schools, particularly in subjects like civic education or moral education. The film can assist students in understanding children's rights issues easily and stimulate critical thinking about these matters.

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