

**THE READERS' RESPONSES TO O' HENRY'S  
SELECTED SHORT STORIES**

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## ABSTRAK

Skripsi ini membahas tentang respon pembaca terhadap cerita pendek karangan O' Henry yang berjudul *After Twenty Years*, *The Gift of Magi*, dan *The Last Leaf*. Tujuan penelitian ini adalah untuk mengetahui apakah mereka menyukai atau tidak menyukai cerita pendek tersebut. Hal ini dihubungkan dengan unsur intrinsik yang terdapat dalam cerita yang diberikan yaitu diksi, karakter, plot, latar dan tema, kemudian juga melihat temuan mereka terhadap pesan moral yang terdapat dalam cerita tersebut. Data diambil dari pendapat responden terhadap cerita-cerita pilihan tersebut. Responden diambil dari Mahasiswa Sastra Inggris Angkatan 2006 di Universitas Andalas yang sudah mendapatkan pengetahuan teori dan analisis sastra yang cukup. Kemudian analisis data dilakukan dengan menggunakan perpaduan antara metode kuantitatif dan kualitatif. Selanjutnya penelitian ini menggunakan teori resepsi "gaps" yang dikemukakan oleh Wolfgang Iser yang mana ditekankan pada pembaca implisit. Dari hasil penelitian ditemukan bahwa mayoritas respon dari responden terhadap cerita-cerita yang telah diberikan sangat positif. Ini dikarenakan mereka dapat menangkap pesan moral dari cerita-cerita tersebut dengan baik. Ini menggambarkan bahwa mereka mempunyai kemampuan sastra yang cukup baik. Dari hasil penelitian tersebut dapat disimpulkan bahwa responden mempunyai kemampuan untuk mengisi *gaps* atau ruang kosong yang dikemukakan Iser.

## CHAPTER I INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 The Background of the Research

Literary work has no meaning without reader. Thus, literary work has strong relationship with the readers for having important role in literary work development because readers are people who enjoy the literary work and they have role in giving the meaning and appraising the literary work. Therefore, the writer wants to analyze reader's point of view to literary works. To analyze this phenomenon the writer decides to choose reader response theory or reception theory. Based on Lois Tyson's argument "reader response criticism focuses on readers' responses to literary text" (169) this criticism is challenging because a piece of writing can possibly be interpreted in different ways. Thus, many different responses may be given by the readers.

The writer analyzes the responses of the reader to O' Henry's selected short stories. The reason of the writer to choose O' Henry's works because his short stories have been read by most English Department of Andalas University students in some classes like prose, short stories, and literary criticism. His stories are also well known for witty narration. Most of O' Henry's stories are set in the early years of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Many of them take place in New York City, and deal for the most part with ordinary people: clerks, policemen, and waitresses. He has good stories and usually writes about the life of ordinary people in New York City and has surprised ending.

([www.lsjunction.com/people/porter.htm](http://www.lsjunction.com/people/porter.htm)). Those points make his stories quite close to the readers since they talk about common people with their common problem.

The writer strongly believes that it can make the reader interested and enjoy their time as respondent. In English Department of Andalas University there are not yet students who analyze literary works by using reception theory in their final task. Therefore the writer entitles this research, "**The Readers' Responses to O' Henry's Selected Short Stories**". The writer hopes it can be the starting point for the students in this department to know and be interested to continue this research later.

## **1.2 The Identification of the Problem**

Iser argues that every text leaves 'gaps' for the readers to be filled with their own interpretations in order to create the meaning of the text. The writer assumes that Henry's three chosen short stories will invite various responses from the readers, even though the stories are about ordinary people with problems are commonly find in our lives. It is because Henry's stories usually have surprising ending. These responses will show whether the readers can fill in the 'gaps' or not.

## **1.3 The Scope of the Research**

This research is limited to find the readers' responses to selected short stories by O' Henry: *After Twenty Years*, *The Gift of the Magi*, and *The Last Leaf*, in order to see whether the readers can fill in the 'gaps' of the text. Thus, it focuses on:

1. The reading habit and reading interest of the respondents.

## CHAPTER IV

### CONCLUSION

Based on the analysis of the data through the research entitled *The Readers' Responses to O' Henry's Selected Short Stories*, it can be concluded that there are two kinds of respondents; these who like reading short stories and those who do not. The reader who likes to read a short story in a week, most of them just spend 1-2 hours of reading. Unfortunately, the readers who dislike to read a short story does not have time or have not enough time to read short story in a week. Although they spend a smaller amount of time in reading, but positively they understand and can interpret the selected short stories.

From O' Henry selected short stories in this research, the respondents have positive responses upon them. Most of them like each short story. From their answers, it can be concluded that they like the short stories because of the diction and moral messages. They state that short stories are interesting. In addition, they have similar background knowledge of interpret literary work.

Almost all intrinsic elements get positive responses by the readers because it can easily understood. It can be proved by the percentage of the readers who like reading these short stories bigger than the readers who dislikes. It means O' Henry's short stories is likeable or loveable because each intrinsic elements is understandable. Most of the readers consider the short stories are good because there are good moral message contained. It means the "gaps" or blank space that proposed by Iser can be filled in by the respondents. Relevant to reader response idea, it can be concluded that

O' Henry's works are successful because most of the readers can catch his ideas and love his works.

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