

# THE PLOT AND MORAL VALUES IN THE FILM "THE FABELMANS" BY STEVEN SPIELBERG AND TONY KUSHNER

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**Abstrak.** Tujuan dari penelitian ini adalah untuk 1) menganalisis alur cerita film "The Fabelmans", 2) mengetahui nilai-nilai moral yang terkandung dalam film "The Fabelmans". Menurut teori Nurgiyantoro. Metode penelitian yang digunakan adalah deskriptif kualitatif dengan teknik analisis isi. Sumber data penelitian adalah adegan dan dialog film "The Fabelmans" karya Steven Spielberg dan Tony Kushner yang berdurasi 123 menit dan sumber pustaka yang mendukung. Teknik pengumpulan data dan analisis data menggunakan teori Pandey dan Mishra. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan 1) Alur cerita film "The Fabelmans" menggunakan tipe alur cerita lurus/maju/kronologis, terdapat 57 temuan scene. Menceritakan tentang masa kecil Steven Spielberg hingga remaja dan bagaimana Spielberg pertama kali menyukai film serta perjalanan hidupnya memilih profesi untuk jalan hidupnya, menjadi seperti ayahnya yang insinyur komputer atau menjadi seorang Filmmaker / pembuat film seperti yang ia inginkan. Film ini layak untuk ditonton. 2) Terdapat 6 temuan nilai moral, yaitu: ketekunan, kepedulian, ikatan keluarga, kejujuran, pemaaf, dan religius.

**Kata Kunci:** Plot; Nilai Moral; Film "The Fabelmans"

**Abstract.** The purpose of this study is to 1) analyze the storyline of the film "The Fabelmans", 2) find out the moral values contained in the film "The Fabelmans". According to Nurgiyantoro's theory. The research method used is descriptive qualitative with content analysis techniques. The source of research data is the scenes and dialogues of the film "The Fabelmans" by Steven Spielberg and Tony Kushner which lasts 123 minutes and supporting library sources. Data collection techniques and data analysis using Pandey and Mishra theory. The results showed 1) The storyline of the film "The Fabelmans" uses a straight / forward / chronological storyline type, there are 57 scene findings. Talking about Steven Spielberg's childhood to adolescence and how Spielberg first loved movies and his life journey choosing a profession for a way of life, becoming like his father who was computer engineer or becoming a Filmmaker / film maker as he wished. This movie is worth watching. 2) There are 6 findings of moral values, namely: perseverance, care, family bonding, honesty, forgiveness and religion.

**Keyword:** Plot; Moral Value; Film "The Fabelmans"

## INTRODUCTION

Watching movies is an alternative entertainment that is often chosen when someone feels tired, bored and stressed with daily routines. By watching movies, people can forget for a moment all their fatigue and routine. People used to watch movies in theaters but now because of the advancement of the times and technology is developing rapidly, now people can watch movies anywhere, because nowadays almost everyone already has a mobile phone. With mobile phones people can surf looking for websites or platforms to watch movies for free or paid, so people can easily watch movies anywhere and anytime. By watching movies people can feel happy, happy and even sad and moved because they are carried away from the storyline of the film being watched. There is a storyline that tells action characters full of fight scenes, romance, travel and life struggles that can play and touch the feelings of the audience.

The interplay between plot and moral values in literature offers a rich field of exploration, revealing how narratives do more than entertain—they also instruct,

challenge, and reflect societal norms. Plots are often designed to mirror moral dilemmas and ethical questions, providing a framework through which authors can explore and communicate complex value systems. This research aims to delve into the mechanisms by which plot structures influence and convey moral values, drawing on examples from various literary traditions and genres.

In literary theory, plot is frequently defined as the sequence of events that make up a narrative, structured in such a way as to engage the reader's interest and convey meaning. According to E. M. Forster, "The king died and then the queen died" is merely a story, but "The king died, and then the queen died of grief" constitutes a plot because it suggests a cause-and-effect relationship and elicits emotional and moral engagement from the reader (Forster, 1927). This example illustrates how plots can encapsulate moral lessons, such as the consequences of love and loss, and provide a framework for ethical reflection.

Moral values in literature are often subtly woven into the fabric of the plot, influencing characters' decisions and the narrative's resolution. As M. H. Abrams notes, "The moral values espoused in a literary work are often conveyed through the plot, character actions, and the narrative outcome" (Abrams, 1999). This aspect of storytelling is crucial, as it enables readers to explore different ethical perspectives and moral dilemmas vicariously through the characters. For example, in Fyodor Dostoevsky's "Crime and Punishment," the plot revolves around the protagonist's struggle with guilt and redemption, reflecting broader questions about morality, justice, and the human conscience (Dostoevsky, 1866).

The cultural and historical context in which a narrative is produced and consumed significantly influences the moral values it conveys. As argued by literary critic Terry Eagleton, "literary works are not timeless, universal entities, but are shaped by the historical and cultural contexts in which they are written and read" (Eagleton, 1976). This contextual perspective is vital for understanding how plot and moral values interact. For instance, the portrayal of heroism and villainy in medieval literature often reflects the societal values of the time, such as chivalry and honor, which may differ significantly from modern interpretations of these concepts.

By analyzing the relationship between plot and moral values, researchers can uncover how narratives serve as mirrors and molders of ethical beliefs and societal norms. This research aims to explore these dynamics across a range of literary traditions, from classical epics to contemporary novels, offering insights into how storytelling functions as a medium for moral education and cultural critique. Through this lens, literature emerges not just as a form of artistic expression but also as a powerful tool for ethical reflection and cultural understanding.

There are many autobiographical films that we can choose from. From many famous and world-renowned figures. But on this occasion, the writer sees that there is a new autobiographical film from a world-renowned director, which will air at the end of 2022, namely "The Fabelmans". The film tells the autobiography of world-renowned director Steven Spielberg. If you want to succeed, of course, we can imitate what successful people have done. What things do they do so that they can be successful? What mistakes they make, then how do they rise from those mistakes, then correct them and finally manage to get out of the problem and achieve success. The author sees Steven Spielberg as a very worthy example to be exemplified because his films are always

successful in the market and are indeed good according to the author. This film is also very new and no one has reviewed this film so that it will be an original scientific work.

**METHOD**

The method used in this study uses a descriptive qualitative type method. "Descriptive qualitative research means that the data collected is in the form of words, pictures and not numbers" (Moleong, 2010: 11). The type of data used as a reference in this study is scenes and dialogues taken from the film *The Fabelmans* by Steven Spielberg and Tony Kushner and the data sources are primary data and secondary data. Data analysis techniques are carried out using analysis steps on these research systems consisting of: watching the film; see the plot and channeling and record the moral values seen in every scene of the film; Enter the findings in the second step into the research instrument table; Discuss, examine existing data by relating to existing theories and making conclusions.

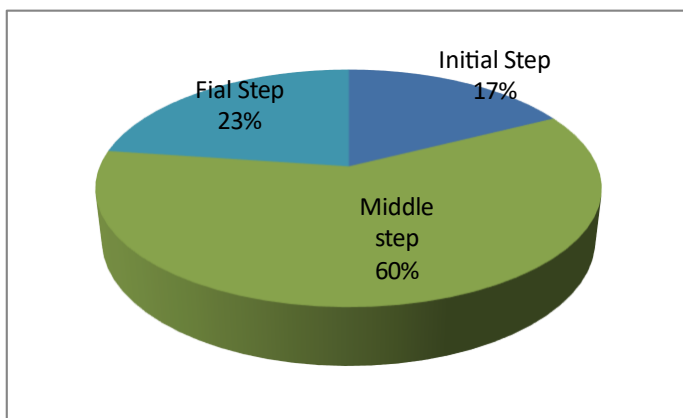
**RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONResult**

The results of the analysis on the film "*The Fabelmans* by Steven Spielberg and Tony Kushner in terms of storyline and moral values are as follows.

**Table 1** Analysis of Plot Result

No	The Plot	findings	Percentage
1	Initial Stage (introduction, characters and setting)	10	17,54%
2	Middle Stage (The beginning of the conflict until the climax)	34	59,65%
3	Final Stage (Anti-climax and completion)	13	22,81%
Total		57	100%

Based on Table 1. On top of the storyline analysis data, there were 57 findings divided into 3 (three): The initial stage found 10 findings (17.54%), the middle stage found 34 findings (59.65%) and the final stage found 13 findings (22.81%). Percentage results are done by working this percentage table, namely the findings. Each storyline finding is divided by the total number of findings and then multiplied by 100%, so that each storyline finding gets its own percentage result.

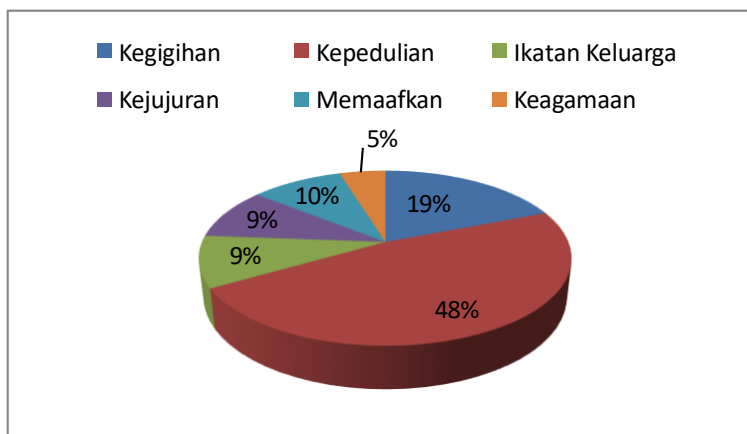


**Picture 1** The Plot Pie Diagram

**Table 2** Analysis of Moral Value Result

No	Moral Value	Findings	Percentage
1	Perseverance	4	19,05%
2	Emphaty	10	47,62%
3	Family Bounding	2	9,52%
4	Honesty	2	9,52%
5	Forgiveness	2	9,52%
6	Religion	1	4,76%
	Total	21	100%

Based on Table 2. On top of the moral value analysis data, there are 21 findings divided into 6 (six) parts, namely; persistence found 4 findings (19.05%), Concern found 10 findings (47.62%), Family ties found 2 findings (9.52%), Honesty found 2 findings (9.52%), Memafkan found 2 findings (9.52%) and Religion found 1 finding (4.76%). The percentage results are carried out by working this percentage table, namely the findings of each moral value divided by the total number of findings then multiplied by 100%, so that each finding of moral values gets its own percentage result.



**Picture 2** Pie Diagram of Moral Value

## Discussion

### 1. *The Plot of Film "The Fabelmans"*

"The Fabelmans" is adapted from Steven Spielberg's childhood and adolescence. The storyline of this film is a forward plot, there are no flashbacks or mixes." The Fabelmans" is a semiautobiography film because the story is told through a fictional character named Sam Fabelman. As explained above, "The Fabelmans" is a semiautobiography film for Spielberg's life story. So, not everything in this drama film is a representation of Spielberg's life as a whole. The film opens with a moment that shows how Sam first fell in love with movies, until finally he realized that making movies is his calling in life, not just a hobby. Not only does it explore Sam's love for film, "The Fabelmans" also explores family conflicts and Sam's high school life which is filled with

bullying because of Sam's Jewish status.

"The Fabelmans": In 1952, Sam Fabelmans was invited by his father and mother to see a movie in the cinema. The film "The Greatest Show on Earth" by Cecil B. DeMille turned out to make him stunned. Even at home, he still imagines the scene of a terrible train collision in the film.

And it was this miniature train that became his gift for the celebration of Hanukkah. One night, he tries to re-engineer a scene in the movie by crashing the miniature train. His parents were shocked.

But his mother, Mitzi, understood that Sam wanted to see the crash scene repeatedly, so she borrowed Burt's 8mm camera to film the scene. Sammy and his mother watched their film with emotion.

After that, Sam began making several films with his three younger siblings which resulted in entertainment for the family. Burt, Sam's father, gets an offer to work at the General Electric company which makes them have to move to Phoenix, Arizona.

A few years later, Sam has become a teenager. He continues to make films with scout friends, the results of which are often shown at school. Burt was amazed to see the scene of the shootout that looked real. It turns out that Sam punched holes in the film slides to get such a visual effect.

On weekends, they go camping in the forest. Sammy recorded all the activities his family did, including dances performed by Mitzi. Not long after, Mitzi's mother died. His heart was sad. Burt asks Sam to make a film of their camping event at that time so that Mitzi's heart is comforted.

One morning, they have a special guest, Mitzi's uncle Boris. He is a former circus worker who is now in the Hollywood film industry. He advises Sam about the importance that will always be a tug-of-war between the family and the film art he will pursue.

After Boris returned home, Sam began editing the family camping footage. He discovers the fact that Mitzi is always seen alone with Bennie, her father's best friend. Even they hugged each other and kissed. Sam's heart was torn to see him.

Sam eventually managed to finish the family movie and screened it at home. The whole family was moved to see her, especially Mitzi. But Sam responded with a cold attitude. After finishing filming the war-themed film, Sam received a standing ovation when the film was shown at the school.

Once again, Sam responded coldly to Mitzi's welcome. Feeling ignored, Mitzi gets angry with Sam and slaps him on the back. Mitzi tries to apologize and asks the reason for Sam's attitude.

Sam ends up showing footage that he didn't put in a family movie, namely pictures of Mitzi and Bennie's intimacy. Sam promises to keep it a secret from anyone about this.

Burt gets a new job at IBM with a large income. But made them have to move to California. Life is hard for them. Burt is busy with his work, while Mitzi is more silent.

Sam received bullying from his schoolmates who hated Jews. He was once beaten for telling the truth. Instead, he received sympathy from Monica, a devout Christian girl. They became close and later entered into a love affair. At a family dinner, Monica offers Sam to document the Senior Skip Day event. He accepted it because he

wanted to record with a 16mm camera, although he was underestimated by Burt who always thought film was just a hobby.

Together with Monica, Sam did many shooting tricks with Monica's help. Not a single moment was missed by him. All the students' activities on the beach were recorded with the camera they carried. After moving into a magnificent new home, Mitzi cannot hide her longing for Bennie and chooses to part ways with Burt to return to Arizona. The day of farewell arrived, Sam came with Monica. While dancing, Sam invites Monica to marry him and moves to Hollywood after graduating school. But Monica rejected him because she didn't want her life path changed. At the end of the party, the film was screened and received a positive response from the students, although there were some students who did not like it. Sam is approached by Logan who questions Sam's intention to present himself as if he is the perfect man in the film. Although they were upset, Logan and Sam finally came to an agreement because they benefited from each other. A few years later, Sam and Burt live in Hollywood where Sam goes to college while working. When he felt desperate because he could not find a job, Sam was about to quit college. But Burt gave a job call from the CBS studio.

## **2. Moral Values in the Film "The Fabelmans"**

The interpretation and description of moral values contained in the film "the Fabelmans from the results of watching and recording every scene and dialogue in the film found moral values are as follows: According to Nurgiyantoro (2015): Moral values are divided into 3 (three), namely: human relationship with himself, human relationship with humans, and man's relationship with his God. In this film for man's relationship with himself is recorded as consisting of: Perseverance. Meanwhile, human relationships with fellow humans in this film are recorded: Caring (emphaty), family ties (family bounding), honesty (honesty), and forgiveness (forgiveness). Then for man's relationship with his God is Hanukkah. Scenes or sentences that show the moral value of perseverance are: Train crash experiments that are repeated until they get a cool scene like the one in the movie.

Scenes or sentences that show the moral value of caring (Emphaty) are:

1. Burt gives Sam a gift of a nice and expensive train toy "Don't tell your dad if I lend you the camera".
2. Mitzi gave Sam the film he made yesterday.
3. "I'm here with you, I'm holding your hand, can mom feel it?"
4. Burt gives Sam the film editor machine. Mitzi has a nightmare and Burt gives her a hug.
5. "I want you to remember how much it hurts".
6. "You're going to make your movie and you're going to make your art." 7. "I won't tell anyone, I won't!"
8. "Mitzi doesn't deserve it, not from anyone, let alone from you!"
9. The scene or sentence that expresses the moral value of honesty is: "Talk to mom, tell me what happened?" (later Sam shows a film showing Mitzi and Bennie's affair) "Tell me the truth".
10. The scene or sentence that expresses the moral value of forgiveness is: "Well, I'm sorry mother". Scenes or sentences that express the moral value of family bonding (family bounding) are dinner

## CONCLUSION

The Plot of the film "The Fabelmans" uses a straight/forward/chronological storyline type, there are 57 scene findings. Talking about Steven Spielberg's childhood to adolescence and how Spielberg first loved movies and his life journey choosing a profession for a way of life, becoming like his father who was computer engineer or becoming a Filmmaker / film maker as he wished. This film is worth watching to be used as a lesson that someone must have difficulties, obstacles can come from close people, parents, friends and oneself, but how then can be passed and achieve what is aspired to. There are 6 findings of moral values, namely: perseverance, empathy, family bounding, honesty, forgiveness and religion.

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