

ABSTRACT

Nurrahmi, Alfawzia. *The Influence of Traumatic Past Events on Gilbert Grape's Personality in Peter Hedges' What's Eating Gilbert Grape.* Submitted As Partial Fulfillment of the Requirement for the Sarjana Degree of English Department, Faculty of Letters, Airlangga University

The word "*personality*" is often used to compare one person from another. There might be more than one or two persons who have identical physical appearance, but it would be impossible for them to have identical personality at the same time. This essence part of human beings often determines a person's chance of success in life, as in found in the famous sentence: "*It's not about what happens to you, but what you do with what happens to you*". A person's happiness also depends on his or her paradigm in seeing life. Nothing is perfect in this life, but life would be such a blessing for those who have high spirit, hope, and motivation to reach their goals. On the opposite, life would be a nightmare or a curse for those who always see it in negative perspective. This happens to Gilbert Grape, the main character in Peter Hedges' *What's Eating Gilbert Grape*. Gilbert is a perfect description of a young man who feels disappointed and unhappy with his life. Everything around him does not seem to be enjoyable: his quirky family that everybody knows, his boring and go-nowhere job at the corner store, and his weird relationship with an already married woman. Even though the burdens are unbearable, Gilbert keeps staying there and lives his monotonous life day after day. He does not know what to do with his life. Above all, he does not know what he really wants. The future seems to be a blurred vision for him.

This study aims to reveal Gilbert's complicated personality and what lies beyond it. It is based on the theoretical background asserting that there must be some reasonable explanation behind someone's personality, which may root from what happened to him or her in the past. Therefore, this study uses psychological approach especially by using the personality theory supported by psychoanalysis theory proposed by Sigmund Freud, one of the major psychologists in the twentieth century. The analysis puts stress on the *anxiety* of the character and the *self-defense mechanisms* he develops in order to develop his ego. This study uses qualitative approach by identifying factual phenomenon in the form of description of various problems faced by a fictional character. The analysis finds that the negative side of Gilbert's personality is not only caused by his compounding problems at the present moment, but also influenced by his childhood experience. He was humiliated by his elementary school teacher when he peed during class. When he went back to his house, he found his father already dead of committing suicide. Both of the past events have brought Gilbert in such a traumatic condition and resulted in his depressed mood, which is signified by his anger and sarcasm. Hopefully, this study could bear understanding of how the traumatic past contributes to shape human's personality and raised our awareness and empathy towards such problem.