ЛІТЕРАТУРА ЗАРУБІЖНИХ КРАЇН

Aristova N.A.
candidate of pedagogical sciences, associate professor,
National University of Life and Environmental Sciences of Ukraine

A NEW APPROACH TO CLASSIFICATION OF CHARACTERS IN FICTION

Contemporary literature of the English-speaking countries contains some of the best examples of novels, novellas and short stories written by prominent American, British and Australian writers among which there are Cormac McCarthy, Jim Crace, J.D. Salinger, Toni Morrison, Sandra Cisneros etc. What makes them such remarkable writers? The answer to this question is very simple it is their ability to develop believable and captivating characters that come alive for their readers.

In novels, novellas and short stories writers usually use different characters that perform different roles in the narrative process and these characters aren't equal. In order to classify them researchers suggest several criteria according to which characters can fall into four groups:

a) character's importance [2];

b) personality development of a character [6];

c) character's role in the story [6];

d) depth of the character's personality [3; 4].

According to the first criterion, characters are divided into the protagonist, other major characters, minor characters and extras.

The most important character in a story is the protagonist. Although there can be two or more major characters only one of them is the protagonist. "Even if a novel has several leading characters, all of them of seemingly equal importance it is usually possible to single out one of them as being at the novel's core [2]".

Other major characters may include some other leading characters as well as the antagonist. They are "vital to the development and resolution of the conflict. In other words, the plot and resolution of conflict revolves around these characters [7]".

Minor characters are the opposite of major characters and that's why writers do not usually spend much time describing them. Most writers

believe that minor characters "serve to complement the major characters and help move the plot events forward [7]".

Extras aren't really considered characters. Writers usually use them in order to bring some realism to the story.

According to personality development criterion, there are eight types of characters in a story: round, flat, dynamic, static, stock, love interest, confidantes and foils [6]. Let's look at them in more detail.

Round characters are also often called major and dynamic characters. But to tell the truth there is a slight difference between round and dynamic characters. These are characters that "develop throughout the story, making their qualities difficult to identify completely, right up to the end [6]". Round characters usually have many complex personality traits that help writers develop them more fully.

Flat characters do not usually have a complex personality but some of their traits that are described make them recognizable and as a result stereotypical. They do not develop throughout the story. They just play "a supporting role to the main character [6]".

Dynamic characters are major characters that can represent both the protagonist and antagonist. They are so-called developing characters "whose personality changes through the course of the story [6]". Due to this change characters' personality changes completely and irreversibly and that is the main difference between dynamic and round characters. Although round characters develop throughout the story, their personalities do not change.

Static characters do not develop and remain the same throughout a story. They are minor characters whose personalities are consistent and unchangeable throughout the whole story [6].

Stock characters are usually represented by flat ones whose personality traits are recognizable, stereotypical and whose traits are often described to be mocked by readers.

In some stories we can find love interest characters. Writers depict them as "the romantic focus of another character [6]".

Although we are discussing characters and not real people there is often a need in someone whom main characters can believe, trust and unbosom their feelings and secrets. This way, readers get to know everything about thoughts and secrets of main characters. Such a character is called a confidante [6].

One more type of character we can single out using the personality development criterion is a foil. Foils usually serve as a contrast to the

protagonist's personality. This type of character is used when the writer wants to enhance protagonist's virtues through the obvious contrast [6].

Next classification that should be mentioned is represented by four types of characters (character's role in the story): protagonists, antagonists, underdogs and sidekicks [6].

The protagonist (he or she) is the main character in any literary work. It is usually a good person who has a definite goal and who wants to achieve it [6].

The antagonist is the character who usually opposes the protagonist's goals, is the cause of the conflict and whom the protagonist confronts. The antagonist is not always a bad person with negative traits but he/she is the kind of character that readers love to hate [6].

The underdog is a character that is cheated, abused or mistreated by other characters in a book but doesn't want to give up. Underdogs usually believe in their own abilities that can affect their destiny [6].

The sidekick is usually represented by flat or static character. It is a "relatively recent linguistic term [5]" that derived from the term "side kicker", both terms mean "a close companion" or "associate". The sidekick's personality is often weaker than protagonist's personality and his/her main role is to support the protagonist or antagonist. Nevertheless, in a book the sidekick can perform a number of different functions and highlight protagonist's behavior or best qualities.

One more classification we have to discuss in this article is based on depth of the character's personality criterion according to which all characters are divided into one, two and three-dimensional.

The term "one-dimensional" means "relating to a single dimension or having no depth or scope [4]". It is used with characters who lack depth and whose only side of the personality comes through. That's why readers see one-dimensional characters only from one view.

Writers use one-dimensional characters to create a life-like setting: taxi-drivers, waiters, shop-assistants etc.

Two-dimensional characters, in their turn, are "integral to the plot's progression and usually interact with the protagonist [3]".

Although two-dimensional characters neatly fit into a story they do not have their own history. They are included in a story to assist the protagonist to undergo some changes throughout the story and they never change themselves.

Three-dimensional characters have very complex and changing personalities. They are full of emotions and worries and play important

roles in a novel. They are not always ideal but they look real and recognizable. They are able to undergo some changes and become better.

Regardless various classifications writers are very concerned to develop good characters to make them have the fullness and believability of human life. That's why in order to make characters believable writers usually describe not only how they look, sound and what they wear, but also emotions and desires they experience, their hobbies, secrets, past actions and future plans [1].

The provided overview allows us to elicit several criteria according to which different characters can be classified and to present a new approach to classification of characters in fiction.

The undertaken study is not at the end of all aspects of investigation of different approaches to classifications of characters in fiction. Challenging directions of further scientific research can be as follows: the investigation of the main elements of novels, novellas and shorts stories with the reference to contemporary literature of the English-speaking countries.

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