



Critiquing Jay Asher's *Thirteen Reasons Why*

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Abstract:

The research describes the challenges encountered by the main character, Hannah. A qualitative methodology is utilized for the investigation. The strategy of attack consists of using a detailed approach. The book, *Thirteen Reasons Why*, gets released in the United States by Razorbill in 2007, which serves as the source for this psychoanalysis. While gathering and analyzing the data for this study, several passages from the book *Thirteen Reasons Why* are referred to. For this investigation, the psychoanalytic approach is chosen as the appropriate technique of inquiry to follow.

In light of the findings that emerges from the examination of the data, one may derive following conclusions:

- Hannah first struggles with her demons, which manifest themselves as feelings of disappointment, despair, confusion, anxiety, dread, distrust, panic, trauma, and boredom. These feelings also marks Hannah's external struggles. These emotion turn out to be the root cause of all of problems.
- The second is Hannah's struggles due to her contact with the other characters in the novel, such as conflict, betrayal, disagreement, and incarceration.

The inquiry results indicate that this book needs to be made available to students participating in the English Education Study Program as an additional literary resource. The book *Thirteen*



Reasons Why may serve as a resource for readers interested in self-reflection and contemplation.

Keywords: Psychoanalysis, demons, internal / external struggle, self-reflection

The novel *Thirteen Reasons Why* by Jay Asher stands apart from other novels in a significant way. Hence, it is utilized as the primary source for the investigation. Most novels may be categorized under various subgenres such as romance, action, or comedic. In that case, this book is rather distinct from the others. Not only does this book provide its readers with pleasure, but it also has the potential to alter one's viewpoint about the negative effects of bullying on a person's life. The novel offers a fresh perspective on the everyday challenges that anybody can experience. *Thirteen Reasons Why* has a distinct mood from other novels because of its many problems. Although it appears straightforward, there is a significant amount of contention.

Research on the novel *Thirteen Reasons Why* is carried out by the author for many reasons, the most important of which are as follows: first, the novel became the best-selling young adult fiction novel in the New York Times, and it also received multiple prizes. It is undeniable evidence that many readers have grown to like this literature. Second, the story focuses mostly on narrating the problem of conflict in the main character's life throughout most of the book. Third, the work has been adapted into a film with the same name that is available on Netflix. Fourth, numerous ethical principles may be gleaned from this book, including the need to treat one another with respect and make an effort to comprehend the perspectives of others, mainly because one deadly item might affect another.

The presence of tension in a story might entice readers to finish reading the book from beginning to end. Because disagreements might pique the interest of the readers, "because..." Therefore, many readers are interested in reading the novel to discover how the conflict is resolved and how the story concludes. It is also one of the reason to work on this particular book.

In light of the information presented above, it should come as no surprise that the novel *Thirteen Reasons Why* takes the lead in narrating the story of the problem of conflict in the life of the main character. Furthermore, this book contains moral values that may be learned



by the student, particularly in the English Education Study Program; thus, it is advised that this book be used as one of the supporting materials for literature. Also, this book has moral values that the student can study.

For this research's aim, which is to understand more about the conflicts the main character encounters, the author uses Psychoanalytic approach. The author have decided to conduct this research because it is necessary to convey the difficulties the main character encounters during the novel. This strategy is used rather than experimental research because no treatment is involved.

Demons of the Main Character:

Anxiety:

Anxiety is a feeling or outward sign of worry, anxiety, or unease over an uncertain circumstance. For instance, Hannah felt anxious when Justin asked for her phone number from her. This assertion is supported by the passage below:

It is not that I did not want to give it out before. I was just cautious. New town. New school. And this time, I would control how people saw me. After all, how often do we get a second chance? (Asher, 2007: 19)

As mentioned above, the quote exemplifies Hannah's anxiety over the situation. Hannah was a first-year student at the institution, while Justin was a senior there. When Hannah found out that Justin had asked for her phone number, she became anxious because she had recently relocated to the region and was a brand-new student at the school. Hannah thought she always needed extreme caution when dealing with new people. Because of this, Hannah is hesitant about providing Justin with her phone number.

Boredom:

A sensation of discontent or a mood that does not enjoy anything is called boredom. Most of the time, you feel bored from doing something too frequently, which causes you to lose interest in it. The experience of feeling bored can come on at any moment, in any place, and under all conditions. When it comes to jobs, school, society, and even day-to-day activities,



feeling bored is something everyone experiences regularly. To cite an example from the following quotation:

I explored alleys and hidden roads I never knew existed. I discovered neighborhoods entirely new to me. And finally . . . I discovered I was sick of this town and everything in it. (Asher, 2007: 118)

The above sentence demonstrates that Hannah experienced the emotion of being bored. Hannah had had enough of living in that town, especially with people who continually lied to her and put her down in front of others. According to the plot's events, Hannah's life is complicated by several factors; one is Justin, who is shown as spreading the word that he and Hannah engaged in sexual activity beyond a simple kiss. This has a devastating effect on Hannah's reputation.

Confusion:

When something is challenging to understand, it is challenging to think clearly, and it is challenging to decide what to do. Confusion, in its simplest definition, is a state that is hard to understand. This is true whether one is puzzled due to something that happened, something that was chosen, or a combination of both. You may discover a quotation that illustrates a feeling of perplexity in the one that follows:

And then . . . well . . . certain thoughts begin creeping around. Will I ever get control of my life? Will I always be shoved back and pushed around by those I trust? (Asher, 2007: 145)

Hannah's ambivalence about trusting other people is clear in the earlier passage. Every time someone offered Hannah a helping hand, they just let go, which allowed Hannah to fall even worse. Hannah was confused by the situation. Hannah persisted in telling herself to stop being pessimistic. As a result, she finally learned to trust the people around her. Hannah, once again, put her faith in other people's actions.

Disappointment:

Disappointment is the negative emotion you experience when your wishes or expectations are not fulfilled. For instance, Hannah thought Courtney would befriend her, but Courtney merely



used Hannah as a driver so they could go to the same party. Hannah felt let down. The quotations that follow support this claim:

I whirled around to face her. "Why not, Courtney? Why did you invite me here? Please do not tell me I was just a chauffeur. I mean, I thought we were becoming friends." (Asher, 2007: 116)

The lines mentioned above indicate that Hannah had a sense of disappointment. Hannah felt that her expectations and the reality she encountered were at odds. She had believed that she and Courtney were developing a friendship. However, she soon learned she was nothing more than a driver for Courtney, whose sole job was getting her to an appointment. When they got to the party, Courtney left Hannah behind and walked to a group of boys, warning Hannah not to go without her by saying, "You are my ride, remember?" Hannah felt bad that Courtney was using her since she was alone and the only one at the party she could talk to. Hannah left Courtney in the party as retaliation for using her as a tool.

Fear:

Fear may be characterized as an unpleasant emotional response or experience brought on by dread about the possible outcomes of a certain situation. A quotation from the article is as follows:

But I denied it. It was way too creepy to admit to myself on the very first night of my parents' vacation. I was only freaking myself out, I said. Just getting used to being alone. Still, I was not dumb enough to change in front of the window. So I sat down on my bed. Click. (Asher, 2007: 80)

The quote, as mentioned earlier, demonstrates that Hannah experienced terror. According to the tale, Tyler Down, a yearbook photographer, was a Peeping Tom. He photographed Hannah while stalking her outside her bedroom window. While Hannah's parents were out of town, she left home alone and learned about this.

Panic:

Panic is a sudden intense fear that compels a person to act rashly and without thinking. The initial experience of panic can leave persons or groups asleep and convince them to keep quiet rather than take action. The citation that comes after this one shows this point:



I knew which side of the list I was on— according to Alex. Furthermore, my so-called opposite was sitting across from me. At our haven, no less. Mine . . . hers . . . and Alex's. "Who cares?" I told her. "It does not mean anything."

"Hannah," she said, "I do not care that he picked you over me. I knew exactly where that conversation was headed, and I was not going to let her take us there. (Asher, 2007: 65)

Hannah experienced the sensation of panic portrayed in the preceding text when Jessica accused her of being to blame for the breakdown of her connection with Alex and Jessica. Hannah was terrified since she knew what Jessica thought of her, and she did not want to bring it up again in their conversation. Hannah made Jessica think she had nothing to do with her and Alex's relationship. Hannah finally informed Jessica that Alex had not chosen her instead of her, but Hannah's justification did not persuade Jessica.

Sadness:

Sadness is a state of being or doing that results from losing or failing to obtain something. When someone is depressed, they may become more subdued or unenthusiastic. Sadness is the antithesis of joy or pleasure and is akin to sadness or sorrow. Sadness comes naturally to everyone. Like in the quote that follows:

But I could not take it anymore. You see, Zach is not the only one with a slow boil. I shouted after him, "Why?" In the hallway, there were still a few people changing classes. All of them jumped. Nevertheless, only one of them stopped. Moreover, he stood facing me, cramming my note in his back pocket. I screamed that word over and over again. Tears, finally spilling over, ran down my face. "Why? Why, Zach? (Asher, 2007: 168-169)

According to the previous statements, Hannah felt sad because she needed and wanted an explanation as to why Zach removed her letter of encouragement and because she wanted to know why Zach took it in the first place. On the other hand, Zach chose to leave without offering Hannah an explanation or even a response to her question. In addition, he did not apologize for his actions.



Suspicion:

The feeling of uneasiness caused by worry about something and the experience of being warily suspicious around other people are both aspects of the emotion known as suspicion. Usually, distrust of another person is prompted by a series of actions that they have displayed in the past as is shown in the following quotation:

You opened the passenger door, sat down, and buckled up. "Thanks for the lift," you said. A lift? Already having doubts about why you invited me; that was not the hello I wanted to hear. (Asher, 2007: 101)

The above comment serves as an example of the suspicion harbored about Hannah. Hannah later found out that Courtney wanted to hang out with her and talk to her at a party so that Hannah would let her drive her to the event and Courtney's reputation would increase. The story goes that Courtney was fascinated with the group of lads and left Hannah at the party to fend for herself. Courtney cautioned Hannah not to leave her side in any case. Hannah was alone and had no one else with whom to converse. She started to feel that Courtney had taken advantage of her, and she realized that all she was for Courtney was a driver.

Trauma:

A traumatic occurrence can cause an emotional shock or sorrow; both referred to as trauma. When people think about traumatic events or find themselves in similar situations, they typically have traumatic experiences that reoccur. When someone recalls a traumatic experience, it is not uncommon for them to feel shocked, shout, cry, or experience fear:

Deep behind my left eyebrow, my head is still pounding. Every swallow tastes sour, and the closer I get to school, the closer I collapse. I want to collapse. I want to fall on the sidewalk and drag myself into the ivy. Because just beyond the ivy, the sidewalk curves, following the outside of the school parking lot. (Asher, 2007: 3)

The traumatic experience that Hannah went through when she recalled her past experiences at school is depicted in the above statement. The picture of the individuals who deceived Hannah could still be vividly seen. Hannah was traumatized due to the difficulties she had to endure, and if she recalled the school, she would have collapsed.



Henna's External Conflicts:

Conflict of Hannah with Jessica:

They were conflicted when Hannah and Jessica ran into one other at Monet's Garden Cafe. After revealing the list Alex had compiled, Jessica explained that she was upset with Hannah after discovering that Alex had placed her in the "Not" column while placing Hannah in the "Hot" column. Jessica did not trust Hannah when she explained that the list was only a prank and that the allegations about her were not genuine, even though she provided evidence to support her claims. It may be found in the citation that is shown below:

"She stood beside her chair and swung, staring down at me the whole time." Above my eyebrow is a little scar in the shape of a fingernail caused by my plucking off Jessica's fingernail. You have probably all seen it. So, tell me, Jessica, which of these two options did you intend to go with? Or would you want to scratch me? Because I got the impression that it was a combination of the two. It seems as though you could not truly make up your mind.

What was it that you called me, exactly? Although it is irrelevant, here it is for the record. Because I was too preoccupied with raising my hand and ducking (but you got me!) for me to hear what you had to say, I missed it. That small scar you have seen above my eyebrow is the form of Jessica's fingernail... which I took out myself." However, this is not only a scrape on the surface. It is like getting punched in the gut and slapped in the face simultaneously. It is like someone stuck a dagger in my back because I would rather believe a falsehood that someone else put up than what I already knew to be real. (Asher, 2007: 67-68)

Unanticipated, Jessica got out of her chair and scratched Hannah's face, causing the latter to develop a scar just above her eyebrow. Hannah was taken aback by it, and she had not prepared herself for the possibility that their meeting may finish in such a manner. Hannah has concluded that Jessica has lied to her. Because of this, Hannah and Jessica started to dislike one another.



Her Conflict with Marcus:

When Hannah and Marcus first started dating, they went to Rosie's Diner, where they had their first argument. Hannah received a Valentine's card from her classmate Marcus, with whom she was paired. Hannah's involvement in Oh My Dollar Valentine was the impetus for this whole thing. Thus her name is now on Marcus' list. Moreover, for this reason, Marcus decided to call Hannah and ask her for a date. After she betrayed the confidence of her friends, Hannah was truly on the fence about going out on a date with Marcus. Nevertheless, she wanted everyone around her to know her better and not in the way that was rumoured about her. Therefore, Hannah will accompany him on his date.

"At that point, he put his hand on my knee," she said. After that, I was able to realize. I was unable to laugh any longer. I came dangerously close to stopping my breath. On the other hand, I kept my head pressed on your shoulder, Marcus. On my knee was your hand, which was there. From nowhere in particular. the same way I was snatched at the booze shop.

I asked in a hushed tone, "What are you doing?" You asked them, "Do you want me to move it?" I did not answer...

"Stop it," I said. Furthermore, I know you heard me because, when I was speaking, my mouth was only a few centimeters away from your ear as I looked back over the backrest. Stop doing that.

"Do not worry," you said. You instantly removed your hand from my thigh, suggesting you knew that your window of opportunity was closing quickly up to the top. Therefore, I drove both of my hands into your side, which resulted in your falling to the ground. (Asher, 2007: 141-143)

The argument between Hannah and Marcus is shown by the passage that is located above. Marcus arrived, having kept everyone waiting for a total of thirty minutes. He expressed his regret to her and thought Hannah was kidding about the date. Then, Marcus made her laugh so hard to cheer Hannah up that she could not stop. Hannah became irate when Marcus placed his hand on her knee and moved it up her thigh gradually, which provoked her anger.



Zach's issue:

The incident that sparked the conflict between Hannah and Zach was when Zach took her note of encouragement. According to the events of the narrative, Zach was the one who tried to reassure Hannah following the unfortunate event at Rosie's Diner with Marcus. Hannah was still in shock from the incident that had occurred before, and as a result, she tended to keep quiet. Hannah remained silent and only indicated that she understood Zach's apology for the event by nodding. Zach eventually departed after putting a few dollars on Hannah's table to pay for her drink and returning to his buddies. He knew Hannah was not answering, so he did this before leaving.

Hannah realized at that very moment that Zach was daring himself in front of his buddies to see if he could ask Hannah out. However, Hannah just remained mute during the entire ordeal. That indicates Zach was unsuccessful in winning the bet. Furthermore, Zach's other buddies were making fun of him behind his back. The following quote contains the information:

Zach, I have a question: When you were at Rosie's, did you feel I rejected you? Since you never asked me out, I suppose it would not be appropriate for me to decline your invitation formally, would it? Exactly what was it, then? Embarrassment? Let me guess. As your friends watched, you put the moves on me, and I scarcely replied to any of them. You instructed your buddies to watch while you put the moves on me. Or was it a test of courage? They dared you to ask me out, didn't they? (Asher, 2007: 162)

Hannah and Ryan:

Hannah's decision to write a poem generated tension between her and Ryan, who watched her work. The fact that Ryan and Hannah first connected at Poetry: To Love Life is largely credited for significantly developing their friendship. They become extremely close to one another and talk about their poetry notes. Ryan, he is currently serving as the editor of a school newspaper. However, Ryan has even suggested that the poetry written by Hannah be published. He claimed to have read it and that he enjoyed it. Hannah, however, declined it since the poetry she had written was about her inability to accept herself. Nevertheless, Ryan would continually take her notebook, reproduce her poems and publish them in the school newspaper. The following quotation lends credence to this argument:



Ryan, you were correct in everything you said. It went much, much farther than that into the psyche. Furthermore, if you were aware of that — if that is what you thought — then why did you steal my notepad in the first place? Why did you publish my poetry, which you described as having a "scary" tone, in the Lost-N-Found section of the newspaper? You need to explain why you let other people read it. (Asher, 2007: 189)

Discussion

Conflict is what creates tension in fictional literature which can be divided into Social, physical, and mental categories. The author highlighted Hannah Baker, the protagonist's emotional and social upheaval.

After presenting the categories of internal and external conflict, the author intended to examine the results and how they meet the research questions given in the beginning of the book *Thirteen Reasons Why*. One research issue is concerned with internal conflicts, and the other is concerned with external conflicts. The internal and external issues that the main character had to deal with were attempted to be represented in this section of the chapter. A character's internal struggle occurs within their thinking. In contrast, an outside conflict occurs between characters or with the power of nature, according to Griffith (1986: 45).

The first query concerns the reader's understanding of the author's psychological struggles. This may be seen from the author's comment on the internal conflicts, whether it is stated explicitly or indirectly. The solution to this query will assist us in resolving the second problem. This book has nine distinct internal conflicts, all around relationships between people. The nine conflicts are disappointment, grief, perplexity, worry, fear, suspicion, panic, trauma, boredom, and terror. The nine different categories of disputes are each explained below. The main character of the novel had many hardships at the hands of her classmates and suffered severe treatment. She was ridiculed, intimidated, and slandered, contributing to her eventual suicide.

In the story, Hannah struggles a lot with how to deal with herself. Freud (1920: 7) said that psychology is part of a person's mind that develops from awareness and unconsciousness, constituting the derivation of the basic mental component. According to Freud, this mental component of a person is referred to as the unconscious. According to the author, it can be



challenging to express honesty, especially when it is associated with shortcomings, lack, or one's own mistakes. Hannah's psychological problems might be averted if she is honest. The story goes that Hannah, who had depression, showed self-control by choosing suicide because she was depressed. Nevertheless, every problem has a solution at its core, from which one must choose or decide how to handle the current problem.

The second research topic focuses on how the author depicts the extra-narrative tensions in *Thirteen Reasons Why*. Five different categories of external conflicts—quarrel, oppression, betrayal, argument, or disagreement—are presented in this book. All of these disputes are related to how individuals interact with one another.

In conclusion, this work should be interesting because it contains many valuable moral messages. Despite this, the conflict has to be seen favorably and wisely in light of valuable teachings, which starkly contrasts how the story is resolved. The students have the potential to learn from the conflicts, especially those who are enrolled in the English Education Study Program. These findings might thus teach the kids a valuable lesson about life.

According to the conclusions of the data analysis on the internal conflicts that Hannah encountered in the book, it is possible to say that Hannah experienced disappointment, sadness, uncertainty, anxiety, fear, distrust, panic, trauma, and boredom. Hannah frequently disagreed with other personalities, such as Jessica, Courtney, Marcus, Zach, Ryan, Jenny, and Mr. Porter. Contention, tyranny, debate, betrayal, and disagreement were the outward manifestations of these wars.

Sometimes, studying literature may be rather intriguing. One such literary work is this particular novel. One can learn a lot about people and the environment by studying such books. Studying a literary work will also be very beneficial since it will help us understand how the human mind and heart function. As everyday life is full of difficulties, which we frequently find ourselves unwilling to consider. The book may operate as a catalyst for self-reflection and introspection. This book may teach readers valuable life lessons, values, and ethical concepts.

The author hopes this study will benefit literature students and researchers who may use the book *Thirteen Reasons Why* as the subject of additional research related to other aspects, such



Vidhyayana - ISSN 2454-8596

An International Multidisciplinary Peer-Reviewed E-Journal

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as analyzing the elements, moral values, the language used, using a different approach, etc. As a result, there are still a lot of undiscovered possibilities for further explorations.



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Vidhyayana - ISSN 2454-8596

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Indexed in: Crossref, ROAD & Google Scholar

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