

A Study of Conflicts Found in the Short Story *A Visit of Charity* by Eudora Welty

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Abstract

This research studies conflicts in the short story *A Visit of Charity* by Eudora Welty. Based on the concept of conflict by Flora Richard Gustafson (2003). The types of conflicts are regarded as internal conflict; character versus self and character versus fate, and external conflict; character versus character, character versus nature and character versus society. The aim of this research is to study the types of conflicts found in the short story, *A Visit of Charity* by Eudora Welty. The objectives are to identify different types of conflicts in the short story, *A Visit of Charity*, to classify them into five types of conflicts and to find out which type of conflict is the most frequently used type and which is the least used one in the short story. Analyzing the types of conflicts in the literature can give considerable points about how the author creates the story in that the readers can see what message the author wants to give them through the background knowledge of conflict. This paper highlights the role of the use of conflict that can serve as a scaffold to improve reading and writing skills.

1. Introduction

In literature, conflict takes an important role, and helps the author to lay out the plot. It is one of the main elements of the plot. Conflict is a clash of actions, ideas, desires, or wills. Marcus (2000:366) defined that conflict is incompatibility of ideas, beliefs, behaviors, roles, needs, desires, values, and so on. Sanderson (1991:505) defined conflict as an opposition of interest between and among various individuals and social groups. Even though any conflict is not deliberately made in daily life, at least, self-argument occurs in mind. It is very natural that all people have conflicts with others or themselves in their life. So, conflict plays an important role to define everyday realities. The nature of the writer's conception and understanding of that experience is expressed by the complex structure of words that he or she creates. Thus, it is the best choice to study aspects of conflict in literature.

Conflicts can be found in literary works, such as plays, novels and stories, there can come different kinds of conflicts. When the readers read the stories, the activities of their brains increase significantly because stories help the readers remember the main idea and apply it to their life. In this research, the short story, *A Visit of Charity* of Eudora Welty was chosen to study the nature of conflict as the material for this research *A Visit of Charity* is very interesting as the main theme of

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the story is the conflict between the main characters and other characters. Such conflict can be seen very often in daily life, especially among young people.

2. Literature Review

This research studies conflicts in the short story, *A Visit of Charity* by Eudora Welty based on the assumption of conflict proposed by Flora Richard – Gustafson (2003). This part consists of a biography of the author, a synopsis of the short story, theoretical background and related research.

2.1 A Biography of Eudora Welty

Born in 1909 in Jackson, Mississippi, Eudora Welty began her working life as publicity agent for the State Office of the Works Progress Administration (WPA) in 1933. She attended Mississippi State College for women from 1925 to 1927 and received her B.A. degree in 1929 from the University of Wisconsin. She also attended Columbia University. "One Writer's Beginnings" (1984) is an autobiographical work that describes incidents in Welty's life that influenced her writing. She received the National Medal of Arts in 1986, an award from the National Endowment for the Arts in 1989. Known primarily as a short story writer and novelist, her first collection of stories, *A Curtain of Green*, was published in 1941. This was followed by *The Wide Net* (1943), *The Golden Apples* (1949), and *The Bride of Innisallen* (1955). The title story of *A Curtain of Green* won the O. Henry Memorial award.

Her novels include *Delta Wedding* (1946), *The Ponder Heart* (1954), *Losing Battles* (1970), and *The Optimist's Daughter* (1972), which won a Pulitzer Prize. (<http://www.sh.msdp.k12.in.us/staff/jtroyer/stories/visff-of-charity.pdf>).

2.2 A Synopsis of the Short Story

The short story *A Visit of Charity* is about a visit of a fourteen-year-old girl to a nursing home. It gives the fact that most young people are not interested in doing charity. In this story, a 14-year-old-girl, Marian has to visit the Old Ladies' Home to get points. And she is also in the style of an up-to-date girl that age. At first she meets a nurse who is cold and has close-cut hair. She is also like a man. It seems that she does not want to be at her job. She lacks emotions and awareness. Marian isn't interested in helping the elder. At the nursing home, she meets two old women, one who chatters on in an obsequious way and another, old Addie, who confined to bed, resents the little girl's visit as well as her own babbling roommate.

The nurse can't decide to send Marian to which room. But, when she hears the sound like a sheep's bleating from a room she propelled Marian into that room. Marina stands tongue-tied when she sees the first old woman, who is with terrible, square smile stamped on her bony face.

The old woman plucks the white cap off Marian's head with a hand as a bird claw. Moreover, because of the situation of the room, Marian feels that she is being caught in a robber's cave. The little potted plant she brings is snatched by the first old woman.

Because of the two old ladies' quarrel and the way they threaten her, Marian tries to run away from them. She runs down the hall, without looking at the nurse. She pushes the heavy door open into the cold air and ran down the steps.

2.3 Theoretical Background

Theoretical background consists of definition of conflict, and types of conflict: internal conflict; character versus self and character versus fate, and external conflict; character versus character, character versus nature and character versus society.

Definition of Conflict

Conflict is a major literary element that creates challenge in story by adding uncertainty to if the goal would be achieved. It involves problems or obstacles that arise within a story. It is introduced in the beginning of the story, and sets the stage for future events. Conflict is the cause or reason behind the primary character's active response to their circumstances (<https://penandthepad.Com/definition-conflict-literature-6503127.html>).

Conflict can be classified into two categories: internal conflict and external conflict. Internal conflict is the experience of having opposing psychological beliefs, desires, impulses or feelings. Internal conflict arises when a character struggles with their opposing desires or beliefs. It happens within them, and it drives their development as a character. But in contrast, external conflict sets a character against something or someone beyond their control. External forces stand in the way of a character's motivations and create tension as the character tries to reach their goals (<http://www.masterclass.com/articles/what-is-conflict-in-literature>).

The following presents how the conflict is divided into its branches, according to Flora Richard Gustafson (2003).

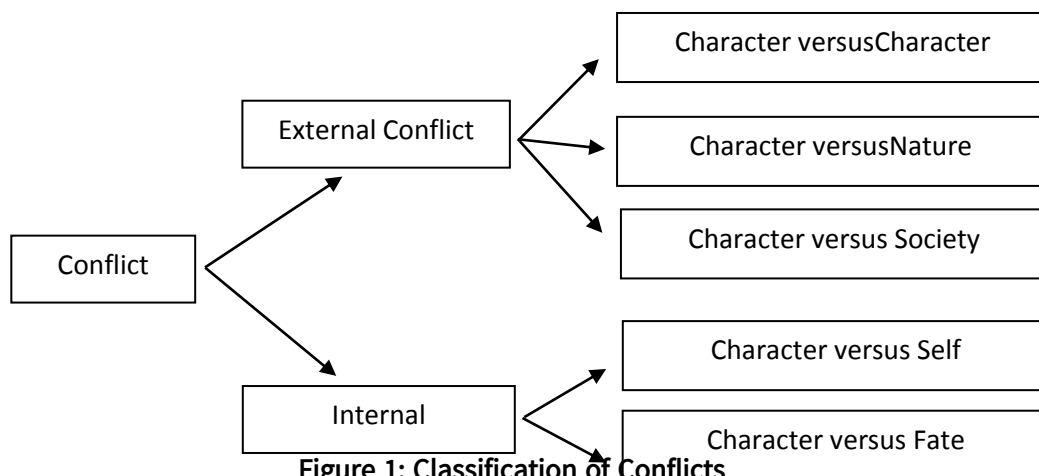


Figure 1: Classification of Conflicts

Internal Conflict

Internal conflict is the problems or difficulties the character facing inside and it can cause advantages and disadvantages on that character.

Based on the assumption of the conflict proposed by Flora Richard-Gustafson (2003), the internal conflict can be classified into two types; (A) Character versus Self and (B) Character versus Fate.

(A) Character versus Self

When the main character in a short story struggles against himself or herself, he or she experiences an internal conflict. The struggle takes place in the character's mind as he or she tries to decide the right choice to make between good and evil or emotions and logic. Alternatively, the conflict may come in the form of an addiction or personal flaw, like a phobia. It is very common for the internal conflict in a work to relate with one that's external.

For example, in the novel *Macbeth* by William Shakespeare, Macbeth is torn between right and wrong, ambition and loyalty. The following sentence shows the internal conflict whether or not he should kill Duncan.

e.g. If chance may have me King, why, chance may have me, without my stir.

(B) Character versus Fate

When a character battles fate, he or she faces an internal conflict with a problem that seems uncontrollable. It forces the character to act on his fate and occurs when the character finds himself in a helpless position. The character is made to follow an unknown path (<https://penlighten.com/understanding-types-of-conflicts-in-literature-with-examples>). Sometimes, the problem presents itself as usual as unbelievable coincidences.

An example of internal conflict, character versus fate, can be found in the story, *The lady or the Tiger?* written by Frank R. Stockton. The Princess's lover does not know whether he will be eaten by a bloodthirsty tiger or he will have to marry a girl that he does not love due to his lover.

e.g. And so I leave it with all of you: which came out the opened door—the lady or the tiger?

External Conflict

External conflict, refers to the conflict between a character and external forces. This type of conflict can be occurred between one character and another character or between a character and more abstract forces. In this way, it can show the main character's nature or opinions.

Focusing on Flora Richard- Gustafson's assumption of conflict, external conflict can be classified into three: Character versus Character, Character versus Nature and Character versus Society.

(A) Character versus Character

This type of conflict arises when two characters are against each other. They can occur due to moral, religious, racial, or social differences. It can also be a sword fight or a gun fight. These types of conflict are very common in traditional literature, fairy tales and myths.

An example of this kind of conflict can be found in the play *The Merchant of Venice* by William Shakespeare. The main characters Antonio and Shylock caused the conflicts due to their religion and business.

e.g. How like a fawning publican he look! I hate him for he is a Christian.

(B) Character versus Nature

A conflict experienced by a struggling with a force of nature is an external conflict as the nature causes the obstacle for the character. Forces of nature can include inclement weather, desolation in a land, a wild animal or a struggle to survive.

An example of a character versus nature can be found in the novel, *The Old Man and the Sea* by Ernest Hemingway. Santiago, the old fisherman, was in the sea catching the fish in order to change the villagers' view on him. As he was not young enough to stand the cold weather of the sea, he had to suffer the inclement weather of the sea badly in the middle of the sea.

e.g. He was shivering with the morning cold. But he knew he would shiver himself warm and that soon he would be rowing.

(C) Character versus Society

When a main character battles society, he has an external conflict with a group of people or an element of the community. Moreover, when the norms or rules of society prevent a character from reaching his or her goals, a plot has character versus society conflict. Character are forced to make moral choice or frustrated by social rules in meeting their own goals.

A good example is that, in the short story *To Kill a Mockingbird* by Harper Lee, Atticus Finch must contend with a racist society as he defends Tom Robinson, a black falsely accused of murder.

e.g. I do my best to love everybody I'm hard put, sometimes-baby, it's never an insult to be called what somebody thinks is a bad name.

2.4 Related Research

The related research, *"An analysis of the Main Characters' Conflict in Nathaniel Hawthorne's Novel 'The Scarlet Letter'"* was carried out at University of North Sumatra Utara Medan by Napitupulu (2009). In this study, the researcher also finds internal conflicts and external conflicts of Hester Prynne, Dimmesdales, Chilling Worth and Pearl in "The Scarlet Letter". Napitupulu's research studies main characters' conflict. In the research, he finds only main conflict in the novel "The Scarlet Letter".

3. Research Methodology

This chapter presents data collection, data analysis and data interpretation. The material used in the research was the short story *A Visit of Charity* by Eudora Welty. Based on the theoretical assumption proposed by Flora Richards-Gustafson, the data were analyzed. The method used in this research were qualitative and quantitative methods.

3.1 Data Collection and Analysis

To collect the data, the present research identifies conflict expressions in the sentences in the short story *A Visit of Charity* by Eudora Welty and classified them into two types of conflicts according to the theoretical assumption proposed by Flora Richards-Gustafson (2003). The two types of conflict were internal conflict and external conflict. The first one can be classified into two categories: character versus self, and character versus fate. The second can be classified into three categories: character versus character, character versus nature, and character versus society. First, the classification of conflicts is shown in the following table.

Table 1 shows the sample classification of conflicts in the short story *A Visit of Charity*.

Table 1: Classification of Conflicts in the Short Story *A Visit of Charity*

Sr. No	Sent. No	Original Sentences	Internal Conflict		External Conflict		
			Character versus Self	Character versus Fate	Character versus Character	Character versus Nature	Character versus Society
1.	1	It was mid-morning a <i>very cold</i> , bright day.				^	
2.	4	She stopped for a moment beside one of the prickly dark shrubs with which the city had beautified the Home, and then <i>proceeded slowly toward the building</i> , which was of whitewashed brick and reflected the winter sunlight like a block of ice.	^				
3.	5	As she walked <i>vaguely</i> up the steps she shifted the small pot from hand to hand; then she had to set it down and remove her mittens before she could open the heavy door.	^				
4.	7	This was a woman in a white				^	

Sr. No	Sent. No	Original Sentences	Internal Conflict		External Conflict		
			Character versus Self	Character versus Fate	Character versus Character	Character versus Nature	Character versus Society
		uniform who looked <i>as if she were cold</i> ;she had close-cut hair which stood up on the very top of her head exactly like a sea wave.					
5.	8	Marian, the little girl, did not tell her that this visit would give her a minimum of <i>only three points</i> in her score.					Â
6.	11-12	"With any old ladies?No-but-that is, any of them will do, " <i>Marian stammered.</i>	Â				
7.	13	<i>With her free hand she pushed her hair behind her ears,</i> as she did when it was time to study Science.	Â				
8.	14	The nurse <i>shrugged</i> and rose.			Â		
77	157	The nurse, after another triple motion to consult her wrist watch, asked automatically the question put to visitors in al institutions :" <i>Won't you stay and have dinner with us?</i> "			Â		
78	158	<i>Marian never replied.</i>			Â		
79.	160	Under the prickly shrub she stopped and quickly, <i>without being seen, retrieved a red apple she had hidden there.</i>					Â
80.	162	<i>As though at an imperial command, the bus ground to a stop.</i>					Â
			11	0	54	2	15
		Total	11	71			
		Total in Percentage	13.4%	86.6%			

3.2 Data interpretation

1. It was mid-morning a *very cold*, bright day. (Sent No.1)

In this sentence, the author describes the weather of the morning in a disappointing tone by using the expression "a very cold". It is vividly shown that the main character, Marian, cannot like the weather as she has to go to the Old Ladies' Home. It can be said to be an external conflict; character versus nature can be found in the very first sentence.

2. Marian, the little girl, did not tell her that this visit would give her a minimum of *only three points* in her score. (Sent No. 8)

In this sentence, Marian does not tell the nurse that her visit to the Old Ladies' Home would give her a little benefit as she can get at least only three points she can be scored. This amount is not much and not good chance for her. As a camp fire girl, she needs more points. Therefore this is an external conflict; character versus society. That is between she and her job.

3. The nurse shrugged and rose. (Sent No. 14)

When the nurse hears Marian's manners and answers to her question, the nurses shrugged and rose. The manner of the nurse's shrugging shows that she dislikes Marian. Therefore, there is the external conflict; character versus character, between the nurse and Marian.

4. Marian felt as if she were walking on the waves, but *the nurse paid no attention to it*. (Sent No. 17)

The external conflict; character versus character is found in this sentence. The condition of the uneven floor of the Old Ladies' Home which is unfamiliar with Marian but the nurse used to the poor condition of that place. That causes the conflict between Marian and the nurse.

5. There was a smell in the hall like the interior of a dock. (Sent No. 18)

Marian is not familiar with the bad condition of the Old Ladies' Home. When she is walking through the hall, she smells the foul smell which is like the smell of the interior of a dock. This condition can be said the character is against the situation of the Home. The external conflict between character and nature can be found in this sentence.

4. Findings and Discussion

This chapter describes findings and discussion from this study. According to Flora Richard Gustafson (2003), there are two main types of conflicts; internal conflict and external conflict. And they can be subdivided into five. However, the four types of conflict were found in the story *A visit of charity*. They were conflicts between character versus self, character versus character, character versus nature, and character versus society based on the theoretical assumptions proposed by Flora Richards-Gustafson. From the study of the types of conflict in the short story, the Frequency and percentage of the five types of conflict in *A Visit of Charity* were presented in the following table.

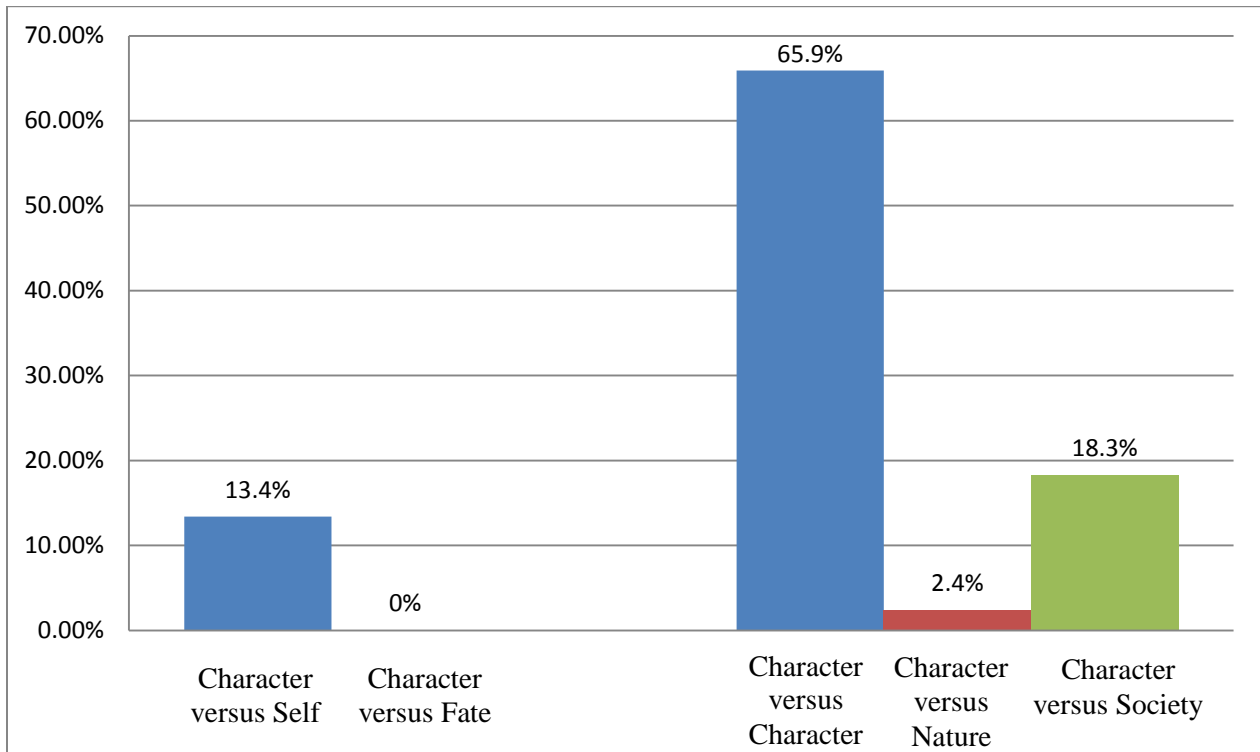


Figure 2: Classification of Conflicts in Percentage

According to figure (2), in the analysis of internal conflict, character versus self is used with 13.4 % and character versus fate is not used at all. In the use of external conflict, character versus character is the most frequently used as its percentage is 65.9% and the second used is character versus society 18.3% and the least used one is character versus nature (2.4%). In this story character versus fate is not found.

Table 2: Frequency and Percentage of Conflicts in *A Visit of Charity*.

Sr. No	Type of conflict			Frequency		Percentage
1.	Internal Conflict	1	Character versus Self	11	11	13.4%
		2	Character versus Fate	0		0%
2.	External Conflict	1	Character versus Character	54	71	65.9%
		2	Character versus Nature	2		2.4%
		3	Character versus Society	15		18.3%
Total				82		100%

Table 1 shows the sample classification of conflicts in the short story. Complete data are described in appendix.

Table 2 shows the frequency and percentage of five types of conflict used in *A Visit of Charity*. The total frequency of conflicts found in the short story was 82. As shown in Table 2, the conflict between character versus character was the most frequently used type and it was found 54 times (65.9%). The use of the external conflict; character versus character makes the story livelier and support the readers to understand the concepts of conflict in literature. The readers can visualize how the character quarreled and how Marian faced the problems through the descriptive writing with the help of the conflicts. The second most frequently used type was the external conflict; character versus society which was found 15 times (18.3%). It was followed by the internal conflict character versus self, which was observed 11 times (13.4%) of the conflict in the story. Through the knowledge of the conflicts, the readers understand the structure of conflict. The author can create serious obstacles for her characters to reach her goals or to send a message to the readers with the help of using conflicts. The fourth frequently used was character versus nature which appeared two times (2.4%). It was the least frequency used type of conflict. The conflict; character versus fate was not found in this story. This makes the story less colorful because the readers cannot grasp to the storyline in order to achieve the story's goal. Due to a large generation gap between Marian and the old ladies, she cannot take sympathy on or be patient to the elders.

5. Conclusion

The research is an attempt to study the concepts of conflict in the short story *A Visit of Charity* by Eudora Welty. Based on the theoretical concepts proposed by Flora Richards-Gustafson (2003), there are the two main types of conflicts; the internal conflict and external conflict. The internal conflict is classified into two; character versus self and character versus fate. The external conflict is classified into three conflicts; character versus character, character versus nature and character versus society. In this research, it is found that character versus character type of conflict is the most frequently used type in the story. The second most frequently used type are the society conflicts; character versus character and character versus nature but character versus fate is not found. From the result of this study, it may be summarized that conflicts play an important role in the short story because through which the readers figure out the essence of the main theme of the story and the goal of the author illustrated by himself. If the readers can well code with the use of conflict, they will get a proper comprehension of the intended message from the author. The most frequent conflict that is likely to happen more often in real life is used to portray the unpleasant situation of the Old Ladies' Home and the great gap between the young and the old, and that between a visitor and a permanent staff of the Old Ladies' Home. The author highlights the main point that he intends to show. The present research can serve as a scaffold to help the readers to study the nature of concepts of conflicts, if the research is done to study many other stories.

In the story, *A Visit of Charity* the external conflicts occurred more often than the internal conflict. As internal conflict is something that the readers have to think thoroughly about the situation or mind of the character, it is more complex than the internal conflict. It gives more work for the readers to think. And also, the readers have to be the character themselves in a meanwhile trying to know what is happening in the character's inner mind. But in contrast, if the external conflict is portrayed obviously by the author, the readers will not have to make a critical thinking. So, it makes the story less attractive or plain. The result of this study shows that there are 86.6% of the external conflict and 13.4% of the internal conflict. In the story *A Visit of Charity*, the external conflict is mostly used, leading to make the story lessen seriousness and it is due to the outward manners of the characters. Therefore, the readers can easily understand and do not need to seriously guess the handing inner feeling. By studying the five types of assumption of conflict in the short story. *A Visit of Charity* by Eudora Welty, the research findings suggest that the readers should have the knowledge of conflict to appreciate the story deeply because the conflicts lead the readers to the resolution of the characters or the circumstances which carry the intention message of the story. Without having this knowledge, the readers cannot clearly think and understand what the author intends. So, many further studies should be done in various materials such as novel, poems, news articles and plays, etc by having knowledge on conflict. Moreover, a deeper observation should be paid on the concepts of conflict for further studies.

In conclusion, the research can share students a path to well appreciate and understand the essence of conflict in daily life through the concepts of conflict.

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