

**The Journey of the Villain: A Character Analysis of the Once-Ler from Dr.
Seuss' *The Lorax***

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ABSTRACT

Heroism has become a much-discussed topic in literary studies. However, the villain, who shares the same important role as the hero, does not generally receive as much recognition within these studies. For this reason, this research was conducted to analyze the villain of the story to contribute more into the discussion. The character that was analyzed is the Once-ler from *The Lorax* (1971) by Dr. Seuss. The Once-ler is the main antagonist of *The Lorax* (1971) that possesses interesting journey to look into. He goes through a journey that changes his characterization in a certain point of his journey. The Hero's Journey theory (Vogler, 1992/1999) and Character Arc theory (Weiland, 2016), thus, were adopted to analyze both the journey and the changes in character that the Once-ler experiences. The result shows that the Once-ler's journey is a Shadow's journey, and that he experienced both Positive and Negative Change Arc that made him a Redeemed Villain, which is different from most of the villains. This research also discussed the similarities between the hero and the villain that leads to a conclusion that heroes and villains can be differentiated by how they finish their journey; if they succeed, they are the heroes, and if they failed, they are the villains.

Keywords: *Character Arc, Hero's Journey, The Lorax, The Once-ler, Villain's Journey*

INTRODUCTION

Tales of heroes have been with us ever since the beginning of storytelling. Since the invention of written word, story of heroism have been able to be tracked and recorded. It can be seen, for example, that Harry Potter from *Harry Potter* (1997), Luke Skywalker from *Star Wars* (1977), and Iron Man from Marvel Comics (1963) follow the same journey (or development). In every hero's story, the hero or the protagonist faces a number of challenges and follows a certain path that leads to their eventual triumph or reward. This may then raise the question: does the villain also have the path that leads them to some end of his journey?

One of the most significant theories about narratives of the character journey (or development) is presented by Joseph Campbell (1949) in his groundbreaking book, "The Hero with a Thousand Faces". Campbell (1949) stated that the standard path of the mythological adventure of the hero or the Hero's Journey is a magnification of the formula represented in the rites of passage: Departure – Initiation – Return. Then, in 1992, Christopher Vogler published his book, "The Writer's Journey", which also discussed the Hero's Journey. The Hero's Journey is more than just a description of the hidden patterns of mythology (Vogler, 1992/1999). The Hero's Journey mainly concerns itself with the journey a character experiences in order to change. Therefore, the Hero's Journey is a method that can fit studies related to character development. The use of the Hero's Journey theory is mainly focused on the main protagonist or

the character that is heroic and/or the character that have a solid portrayal. However, this research will not focus on analyzing the heroic main character; rather, it will focus on analyzing the character that has ambiguous portrayal, whether it is heroic or villainous.

The Hero's Journey theory will be adopted together with the Character Arc theory in this research. Character Arc (Weiland, 2016) is a theory that discusses the change of a character in a story. It could be any change, such as personality change, physical change, emotional change, and behavioral change. However, most Character Arc analyses tend to study the change of characterization of a character. For example, Wisheart (2015) proposed a character development pattern in the form of an enneagram, a diagram consisting of nine different patterns for a character development. He claims that the enneagram follows the theory of a character arc, where a character does not remain stagnant. Further into his study, Wisheart (2015) analyzed the character arc of Maleficent from the movie *Maleficent* (2014) by using this enneagram as a method. The result shows that Maleficent undergoes a Growth Arc, where she does not necessarily change, but improves her values, such as her ethic, morality, and empathy. This could be seen in the start of the story, where she was portrayed as a very apathetic person, especially towards her own children, then becomes significantly more compassionate and cares deeply for them.

The Once-ler is the narrator, the hidden main antagonist of *The Lorax*, a children's book written by

Dr. Seuss in 1971. *The Lorax* itself has been adapted two times, in 1972 television special and 2012 feature film. *The Lorax* portrays a world without the complexities of carbon trading, the pricing of ecosystem services, uncertainties over baseline states and the existence or not of pristine wilderness. For Seuss, wild nature is a paradise, industry is a malignant cancer and heroes take a stand (Marris, 2011). Dr. Seuss published *The Lorax* a year after the creation of the US Environmental Protection Agency and celebration of the first Earth Day. Marris (2011) also stated that thousands of children have learned about environmental destruction from the *The Lorax*, Dr. Seuss's tale of ecological ruin brought on by greed. According to MacDonald (1988) as cited by Lebduska (1994), although *The Lorax* did not sell as well as many of his other books, Dr. Seuss maintained that it was his "personal favorite".

The Once-ler is presented as a faceless, genderless character. The Once-ler was a greedy industrialist. Despite its villainous portrayal at the beginning of the story, as a character, the Once-ler has experienced some arguably interesting and variable changes. At the beginning of the story, the Once-ler introduced as a person that confesses to almost single-glovedly chopping all the Truffula Trees, turning a blind eye to the suffering of its critters, and ruining his own business. However, at the end of the story, we learn that the Once-ler feels really bad about everything, and wants to try to make things right. With that, the Once-ler gives the last Truffula seed to a boy and instructed him to use it to regrow

the forest. Therefore, it raises questions whether the Once-ler is a hero in disguise or a real villain. This research, then, aims to disclose and describe the character development of the Once-ler and make meaning of the development using the Hero's Journey.

As mentioned above, the aim of this research is to explore the development of the character the Once-ler from *The Lorax* by Dr. Seuss. Specifically, this research attempts to uncover the kinds of changes the Once-ler experiences and the events that have caused these changes. The research question is formulated as follows: How does the Once-ler develop throughout the story of *The Lorax*?

This research focuses primarily on the verbal texts contained in the monologues, dialogues, and narration presented in the story. Even though the story contains both verbal and visual texts, this research only focused on the verbal texts as the verbal texts contribute more to the progress of the story. Thus, the story's visuals are not the main concern of the research.

Numerous other character analyses that employed the Hero's Journey and Character Arc theory have been done using various genres of literature. Several of these analyses are Black (2003), Lewis (2013), and Priyansyah (2018). The characters being analyzed are Harry Potter from the Harry Potter series, Walter White from the television show *Breaking Bad*, and Kaneki Ken from the manga *Tokyo Ghoul*, respectively. Black (2003), Lewis (2013), and Priyansyah (2018) used the two theories to analyze their

respective characterizations. Black (2003) proves the point on how the hero's journey theory used in Harry Potter is a compelling story structure to follow. Lewis (2013), on the other hand, shows that Walter experiences the Fall character arc. Meanwhile, Priyansyah (2018) used the hero's journey and character arc theory by combining them with one another to determine how Kaneki Ken undergoes the events portrayed in the hero's journey, and experiences the Fall character arc, by having been through a tragic hero's journey. These studies indicate that the Hero's Journey and Character Arc theory have been used simultaneously as an analytical method. Yet, to the best of my knowledge, there is to date no study that draws on these theories using a comic series character as its source of data. This research is thus expected to fill the gap and provide more insight on the two theories.

METHODOLOGY

This study will use a narrative approach in a qualitative method which will be descriptive and explanatory, as it aims to describe and uncover the Once-ler's character development using the Hero's Journey theory. Creswell (2007) suggests that narrative approach is the best choice for this research; this is due to its nature that the study involves texts to be analyzed in order to understand the development of a particular character.

Data Collection

The data will be collected by doing close reading of Dr. Seuss' *The Lorax* and paying attention to chronological order of the journey of

the Once-ler. The results of the close reading, afterwards, will be divided into segments and referred to as a single "event".

Data Analysis

The collected data will be categorized into the phases of Hero's Journey theory using tables. The function of the tables is to make the process of analysis easier. Vogler's (1992/1999) Hero's Journey theory, then, will be utilized further into analysis.

The Hero's Journey theory is an analytical method that describes the main hero's character development throughout the story in a chronological manner. The Hero's Journey gives detailed clarification on the events between the introduction and the resolution of the character (Vogler, 1992/1999). For this reason, this research uses the Vogler's (1992/1999) Hero's Journey version to analyze the data.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The findings show that the character of the Once-ler is a Redeemed Villain and is portrayed as a Shadow, which develops through three stages in the Hero's Journey theory (Vogler, 1992/1999). However, there are repetitions and deletions of some of the phases of the Hero's Journey theory (Vogler, 1992/1999). As a Redeemed Villain and a Shadow, the Once-ler experiences both Positive and Negative Change Arc (Weiland, 2016) in his journey. The Positive and Negative Change Arc (Weiland, 2016) will be further elaborated along with the journey of the Once-ler.

The Once-ler's Journey

Based on the analysis, it is found that the Once-ler was portrayed as a Shadow, which will be described later in this research. The Once-ler also begins and ends the story with almost the same pattern as the Hero's Journey (Vogler, 1992/1999) theory, albeit with a few deletions and repetitions of the phases in a few instances.

1. Act I

In order to be able to better understand the journey the Once-ler undergoes, below is the summarized description of the phases of the Hero's Journey by Christopher Vogler (1992/1999), starting from Act I of the journey.

This act is where the character begins his journey from ordinary world to extraordinary world. Later on, the character finds the reason for the departure of the journey. The rite of events of Act I of Vogler's (1992/1999) Hero's Journey is as follows:

- a. Ordinary World**
- b. Call to Adventure**
- c. Refusal of the Call**
- d. Meeting the Mentor**
- e. Crossing the First Threshold**

However, instead of the five phases in Act I from the Vogler's (1992/1999) Hero's Journey theory, there is a phase that the Once-ler does not go through, which is the phase Refusal of the Call, but he experiences the phase Meeting the Mentor twice due to the

characteristics of the event being very similar. The rite of events of Act I of the Once-ler's journey is as follows:

- a. Ordinary World**
- b. Call to Adventure**
- c. Meeting the Mentor I**
- d. Meeting the Mentor II**
- e. Crossing the Threshold**

In Act I, the phase Ordinary World is the phase where the character mainly comes from. Then, the phase Call to Adventure is the phase that is necessary to get the story rolling as it is a signal to start the character's journey. Meanwhile, the phase Refusal of the Call is the phase where the character stand at a threshold of fear, and the character's reaction would be to hesitate or even refuse that signal of the journey, at least temporarily. The phase Meeting the Mentor is the phase where the character meets the mentor that will guide him through the journey or the phase where the character gains the supplies, knowledge, and confidence needed to overcome fear and commence the adventure. Finally, the phase Crossing the Threshold is an act of the will in which the character commits wholeheartedly to the adventure.

Even though Dr. Seuss does not show the Ordinary World where the Once-ler came from literally, the story indicates that the Once-ler was unemployed. That is to say, the unemployed time of his is his Ordinary World. Then, the Once-ler chops down one of the Truffula trees and knits a Thneed, a Fine-Something-That-All-People-Need.

That is his Call to the Adventure phase. However, as soon as the Once-ler finished knitting, he sees something popping out of a stomp of a Truffula tree he chopped down, it was the Lorax. That is the first encounter of the Once-ler and the Lorax, the character that is supposed to guide the Once-ler through the journey. Thus, that is the phase Meeting the Mentor I of the Once-ler's journey. The Lorax, then, asks the Once-ler what is going on. After describing it to the Lorax, he asks him to stop chopping down the trees, but the Once-ler says that there is no cause to alarm as it is only one tree. The Lorax also says that no one would buy the fool Thneed. This is the phase Meeting the Mentor II of the Once-ler's journey where the supposed mentor figure for the Once-ler opposes him for doing what he is doing. The next minute, the chap comes along and thinks that the Thneed is great and happily buys it. The Once-ler then laughs at the Lorax and tells that you can never tell what people will buy and proves that the Lorax is wrong and starts his business, which makes this the phase Crossing the Threshold as he finally wholeheartedly commits to start his journey.

This is the beginning of the Once-ler's journey. It portrays where the Once-ler is coming from, what he wants to do, and the first step he takes to begin his journey. In this act, we also get to see the mentor character in the Lorax. Vogler (1992/1999) stated that the mentor is usually a positive figure who aids to guide and/or train the character throughout his journey. As we know, even though the Once-ler and the Lorax want to do different things, the

Lorax wants to guide the Once-ler to do good, thus making the Lorax the mentor of the Once-ler. The Once-ler also shows no hesitation, as he has already opposed the supposed to be mentor character, the Lorax, to start his journey, indicating that the Once-ler is ready to do everything to achieve his goals.

2. Act II

In this act, the character will prepare oneself for the ordeal. Upon starting his journey, the character will meet allies and enemies that will either help or obstruct the character through the test that must be passed. Through this test, the character will then receive the power, resolution, and/or item required in order to be able to face the ordeal. The rite of events of Act II of Vogler's (1992/1999) Hero's Journey is as follows:

- a. **Tests, Allies, Enemies**
- b. **Approaching the Inmost Cave**
- c. **The Ordeal**
- d. **Reward**

However, instead of the four phases in Act II from the Vogler's (1992/1999) Hero's Journey theory, there are double repetitions of one of the four phases, which is the phase The Ordeal. The rite of events of Act II of the Once-ler's journey is as follows:

- a. **Tests, Allies, Enemies**
- b. **Approaching the Inmost Cave**
- c. **The Ordeal I**

d. The Ordeal II

e. The Ordeal III

f. Reward

In Act II, the phase Test, Allies, Enemies is the phase where the character meets with the allies and enemies and putting the character through a series of trials and challenges that are meant to prepare the character for greater ordeals ahead. Then, the phase Approach to the Inmost Cave is the phase where soon the character and his allies will encounter supreme wonder and terror. It is the time to make final preparations for the central ordeal of the adventure. The phase The Ordeal is the phase where the hero stands in the deepest chamber of the Inmost Cave, facing the greatest challenge and the most fearsome opponent. Finally, the phase Reward is the phase where the hero is seizing the sword of victory and lay to claim the reward.

In this Act, the Once-ler meets his “enemy”, the Lorax, who was planning to stop the Once-ler from doing what he is doing. We know that the Lorax also acts as a mentor for the Once-ler, and because of that the Lorax becomes the enemy of the Once-ler too because the Lorax always guides the Once-ler to do good things, the opposite of what the Once-ler wants to do. The Once-ler also asks all of his families and relatives to come to the Truffula forest to start his business. That is to say, this is the phase Test, Allies, Enemies. Then, the Once-ler invents the Super-Axe-Hacker in order to grow his business more and more quickly, and the Lorax does not show up any more for some time. This is

the phase Approaching the Inmost Cave as he is making his final preparations of the ordeals ahead. Eventually, the Lorax comes again. The Lorax warns the Once-ler that his business has threatened the survival of the Brown Bar-ba-loots because there is not enough Truffula fruits to go around, and the Brown Bar-ba-loots are all getting crummies because they have gas, and no food, in their tummies, because of the Once-ler’s business. But the Once-ler sent them away anyway, his business is more important for him. The Lorax then comes again, this time the Swomee-Swans cannot sing a note anymore, because of the smog in their throats. But, again, the Once-ler sent them away, his business is still more important. And once again, the Lorax comes, this times the Humming Fish, the Once-ler’s machinery glumping the pond where the Humming Fish hummed. Now, no more can they hum, for their gills are all gummed. So, this time, the Lorax sends them off. The Once-ler then gets terribly mad and yells at the Lorax because he is always yapping and yapping.

By facing those trials, the Once-ler became arguably less “human” because he does not care anymore about anything except his business. This is the phase The Ordeal I, II, and III of the Once-ler’s journey as the Lorax is trying to oppose the Once-ler. In these phases, the Once-ler also experiences the Negative Change Arc (Weiland, 2016), specifically the Corruption Arc, which makes him turn more and more evil because of his acts as the Once-ler always denies every chance he gets (the warnings about the Brown Bar-ba-loots, Swomee-

Swans, and Humming Fishes) to become more “human” from the Lorax. Finally, all of his family and relatives are leaving him, because there are no more trees, and that means no more Thneeds and no more work to be done. Now that all that left was the Once-ler’s big empty factory, the Lorax, and him. But then, the Lorax lifts himself away, without saying anything. All the Lorax left there is a small piece of rocks, with the one word “UNLESS.” Whatever that meant, the Once-ler just cannot guess. Thus, this is the phase Reward. Unlike a reward that usually the hero-type characters get, the Once-ler gets the “reward” he deserves after all the things he did. In this phase, the Once-ler also experiences Negative Change Arc (Weiland, 2016), specifically Disillusionment Arc, where his new truth, his reality now, is not sunshine and roses; it is cold hard facts.

It can be stated that Act II is the most important act that portrays the Once-ler’s journey, as it is the act that portrays how the Once-ler faces conflicts, as well as how the Once-ler deals with the conflicts he faced. In order to deal with the conflicts, the Once-ler changes himself into someone who is less “human”, which arguably are negative traits. Upon the emergences of the negative traits, it can be seen that the Once-ler experiences the two of the Negative Change Arcs (Weiland, 2016), the Corruption Arc and the Disillusionment Arc. The main characteristic of the Corruption Arc is that the character has every opportunity to embrace the truth, but the character throws away that chance and consciously chooses

darkness. Meanwhile the Disillusionment Arc indicates that the character is moving from a positive outlook to a negative one. The phase the Ordeal is thus divided into three different phases: (1) When the Lorax come and warns the Once-ler about the Brown Bar-ba-loots, (2) When the Lorax come and warns about the Swomee-Swans, and (3) When the Lorax come and warns about the Humming Fish. Those are the three chances, given by the Lorax, the Once-ler has to change himself into a better person by doing the right thing, which is stop his business.

3. Act III

This act is about the character’s return to the ordinary world. After overcoming the ordeal and seizing the reward, the character will need to resolve oneself into returning to the ordinary world. Before returning, the character will face the final ordeal—this could be in a form of one of the enemies’ resurrection or a ritual required to return to the ordinary world. The rite of events of Act III of Vogler’s (1992/1999) Hero’s Journey is as follows:

- a. **The Road Back**
- b. **The Resurrection**
- c. **Return with the Elixir**

However, instead of the three phases in Act III from the Vogler’s (1992/1999) Hero’s Journey theory, in the story a repetition of The Road Back and deletions of the phases The Road Back and The Resurrection and Return with the Elixir occur. The phase The Resurrection and Return with the Elixir do not happen in the villain character’s journey, as most

of the villain does not have their resolution at the end of their journey. The rite of events of Act III of the Once-ler's journey is as follows:

a. The Road Back I

b. The Road Back II

In Act III, the phase The Road Back is the phase where the character is returning to the starting point or continuing on the journey to a totally new locale or ultimate destination. Then, phase The Resurrection is the climax (not the crisis), the last and most dangerous meeting with death. The hero has to undergo a final purging and purification before re-entering the Ordinary World. Finally, the phase Return with the Elixir is the phase where the character returning from the World where the journey take place, bringing something to share with others, or something with the power to heal the wounded land.

In this act, the Once-ler, who has been defeated by his own greed, now can only lament his "failed" life. Then, someday, an anonymous boy come to his house and asks him about his past life, because of the rumors he heard about the Lorax, and all of the trees, that now has long gone. The rumors said that if you are willing to pay fifteen cents and a nail and the shell of the great-great-great-grandfather snail, the Once-ler will tell you the whole story. After the anonymous boy pays the price, the Once-ler begins telling the whole story by Whisper-ma-phone, the tools that the Once-ler used to communicate, for the secrets he tells are for the anonymous boy's ears alone. After telling the whole story, the Once-ler tells the anonymous boy

that each day since that day; he just sits there, in the buildings that would have fallen apart each year, and worried and worried away with all of his heart. But now that the anonymous boy is there with the Once-ler, he now understands the word of the Lorax perfectly clear. "UNLESS," unless someone like you cares a whole awful lot, nothing is going to get better. It is not. So, the Once-ler gives the anonymous boy the last Truffula seed, the last one of all. The Once-ler asks the anonymous boy to plant a new Truffula, treat it with care, give it clean water, feed it fresh air, then grow a forest, and protect it from axes that hack, so that the Lorax and all of his friends may come back. These two events are the phase The Road Back I and II of the Once-ler's journey as the Once-ler continue his journey after everything that happened. In these phases, the Once-ler experiences the Positive Change Arc (Weiland, 2016) where he finally overcomes his inner demons and ends his arc having changed into a more positive character.

Act III serves as the conclusion of the Once-ler's journey. The conclusion, however, does not symbolize how the story is supposed to be. Without the phase The Resurrection and Return with the Elixir, the Once-ler did not come back to his "Ordinary World" where he started everything from the beginning, there is no way for the Once-ler to come back, nor the peaceful life in his ordinary world by using his newfound knowledge. In contrast, the Once-ler ends his journey by giving an anonymous boy the last of Truffula seed to grow a new forest, instead of growing the

forest himself, so that he could come back to his ordinary world and live peacefully using his newfound knowledge. The phase The Road Back has thus divided into two phases: (1) The anonymous boy come and ask the Once-ler about his past, which is the beginning of the story, and (2) After the Once-ler finished telling the anonymous boy his past, which is the ending of the story.

Repetitions and deletions exist as a method to cope with the story. Similarly, the repetitions and deletions that occur in these phases do not represent the creation of a new theory and/or analysis method, but the method in which the story develops. It is either because the segmented events represent more than one phase, or there are more than one segmented events representing a single phase. There are various methods to cope with this kind of development. For example, Bray (2017) and Priyansyah (2018) put more than one event into a single phase, the later also used repetitions, omissions, and combinations in order to cope with the development. However, combining events into a single phase may result in the lack of ability to highlight the segmented events' analysis in relation to the phases. Therefore, in this research, the repeated phases would have numbers representing the amount and the chronological order of the phases' occurrence, which most likely will make the analysis of the segmented events easier.

The Once-ler as a Shadow

When a character experiences both Negative Change Arc and also Positive Change Arc (Weiland,

2016), they can be called a Shadow. The archetype known as the Shadow, as Vogler (1992/1999) stated, represents the energy of the dark side, the unexpressed, unrealized, or rejected aspects of something. Often, it is the home of the suppressed monsters of our inner world. Shadows can be all the things we do not like about ourselves, all the dark secrets we cannot admit, even to ourselves. The qualities we have renounced and tried to root out still lurk within, operating in the Shadow world of the unconscious. The Shadow can also shelter positive qualities that are in hiding or that we have rejected for some reason.

The Once-ler is a total evil for what he does to all the living creatures at the Truffula forest and to the Lorax, but at the same time he is not. It can be seen when the Lorax sends the Bar-ba-loots away because there are no foods left for them.

“They loved living here. But I can't let them stay. They'll have to find food. And I hope that they may. Good luck, boys," he cried. And he sent them away.”
(p. 36)

The Once-ler indeed feels sad that the Bar-ba-loots have to go away, but at the same time he says that his business must grow no matter what, which is a total evil because he abandons the creatures living in that forest.

“I, the Once-ler, felt sad as I watched them all go. BUT ... business is business!

And business must grow regardless of crmmies in tummies, you know.” (p. 37)

The Once-ler means no harm at all to the forest, to the creatures living in the forest, and to the Lorax. However, in order to achieve his goals he is willing to set aside his humanity.

I meant no harm. I most truly did not. But I had to grow bigger. So bigger I got. I biggered my factory. I biggered my toads. I biggered my wagons. I biggered the loads of the Thneeds I shipped out. I was shipping them forth to the South! To the East! To the West! To the North! I went right on biggering ... selling more Thneeds. And I biggered my money, which everyone needs. (p. 39)

This shows that the Once-ler’s kindness is covered up with his big ambition. This also means that the Once-ler’s ambition, the Once-ler’s goals, cannot be compared to anything for him. There is no stopping him. No hesitation.

Moreover, Vogler (1992/1999) believed that Shadow needs not be totally evil or wicked. However, it is better if they are humanized by a touch of goodness, or by some admirable quality. The Disney animated cartoons are memorable for their villains, such as Captain Hook

in *Peter Pan* (1953), the demon in *Fantasia* (1940), the beautiful but wicked queen from *Snow White* (1937), the glamorous fairy Maleficent in *The Sleeping Beauty* (1959), and Cruelle D’Eville in *One Hundred and One Dalmatians* (1961) because they are being humanized at some point in their stories or journeys. For example, Maleficent takes care of Princess Aurora at some point of her journey. The Once-ler also shows this quality, as indicated in the following excerpt:

’But now,’ says the Once-let, ‘Now that you’re here, the word of the Lorax seems perfectly clear. UNLESS someone like you cares a whole awful lot, nothing is going to get better. It’s not. (p. 59)

After all the years of rethinking everything he did, the Once-ler finally understands the word that the Lorax left him at the end of the story. This implies that the Once-ler has changed from what he was before.

The Once-ler also wants the anonymous boy to help him change everything he does by giving the last Truffula seed and asks the anonymous boy to plant it, as Truffula trees are important to everyone.

’SO ... Catch!’ calls the Once-ler. He lets something fall. ‘It is a Truffula Seed. It’s the last one of all! You’re in charge of the last of the Truffula Seeds. And Truffula Trees

are what everyone needs. Plant a new Truffula. Treat it with care. Give it clean water. And feed it fresh air. Grow a forest. Protect it from axes that hack. Then the Lorax and all of his friends may come back.' (p. 62)

Furthermore, Vogler (1992/1999) believed that the Shadow in a story is usually projected onto characters called villains, antagonists, or enemies. For this reason, the Once-ler is thus the villain of the story in an archetype called Shadow.

The Once-ler as a Redeemed Villain

Based on the analysis, it is found that the Once-ler is a Redeemed Villain because of the way he was portrayed throughout the story. A Redeemed Villain, otherwise known as a villain that turned into the good side or Former Villain, is usually the end result of an antagonist exposed to a hero-type character. It is a trope found in media about villain-types character turning into hero-types characters by their own rights. As such, many villains that are not pure evil, and many morally ambiguous antagonists may eventually be redeemed from their past malicious actions.

Through the analysis, it is found that the Once-ler experiences both Positive and Negative Change Arcs (Weiland, 2016) in his journey, which makes him a Redeemed Villain. The characteristic of Positive Change Arc (Weiland, 2016) is that the character will start out with

varying levels of personal unfulfillment and denial. As the story progresses, the character will challenge his beliefs, until he finally overcomes his inner demons and end his arc having changed into a more positive character. Meanwhile, Negative Change Arc (Weiland, 2016) is a Positive Change Arc flipped on its head. Instead of a character that grows out of his faults into a better person, the Negative Change Arc presents a character that ends in a worse state than that in which he began the story.

Moreover, using the Hero's Journey (Vogler, 1992/1999) theory to analyze the journey of the Once-ler, it can be stated that the Once-ler is a Redeemed Villain in an archetype called Shadow. It implies that Vogler's Hero's Journey theory can be used to analyze non-hero-type characters as the Once-ler is a villain-type character. While Black (2003), Lewis (2013), and Priyansyah (2018) only focused on a character that is fixed a character that is the hero of the story, regardless the kind of change that the character experiences, the findings of this research, therefore, contribute to filling in the gap, as the Once-ler is not a hero-type character, and for this reason, the presents study points that the Hero's Journey theory is a flexible theory that can be used to analyze other characters apart from the hero.

Are Villains the same as Heroes?

When we examine the similarities between Hero's Journey and Villain's Journey, we can see that there isn't actually a villain, just a hero and a failed hero, because at the end most of the villains failed to

achieve their goals. There is just a clash of two heroes. This is evident in the character of the Once-ler, who can be said to have the hero-like qualities. After he builds his business so big, he serves the business to his families and relatives; he asked them to come to the Truffula forest and join him. The Once-ler is viewed as the villain because he “accidentally” destroys the forest while growing his business. On the other hand, he is the hero of his family because he served his family as he gave a wonderful chance for the whole Once-ler Family to get rich, mighty rich.

I rushed 'cross the room, and in no time at all, built a radio-phone. I put in a quick call. I called all my brothers and uncles and aunts and I said, "Listen here! Here's a wonderful chance for the whole Once-ler Family to get mighty rich! Get over here fast! Take the road to North Nitch. Turn left at Weehawken. Sharp right at South Stitch." (p.29)

However, at the end he failed in achieving his goals, so thus he becomes a failed hero.

Another example of the villain who is also seen as the hero is Arthur Fleck or Joker from *Joker* (2019). Fleck is a man from the lower-class who loses his grip on sanity, but the world “out there” is a powder keg of lawlessness, inequality, corruption, cuts and all-round despair. The society treats him bad, but when he treats them back with what he got,

they label him as a villain. He did all of the chaos only to defend himself in that crazy world. Fleck then become the symbol, the icon, idolized by struggling lower-class people. He becomes the symbol of resistance against the system. We can see that in that world of *Joker* (2019), some sees him as the villain, and the other sees him as the hero.

After all, it is just about the perspective; it is all about what we choose to see. We can see all the villains as the heroes or all the heroes as the villains. Now, imagine if we are someone from the Once-ler Family or lower-class people from the world of *Joker* (2019), we must see the Once-ler and the Joker as the hero, not as the villain, because they serve and represent us in some way. In this heroism era, the line between the villain and the hero is constantly being blurred, characters flip sides, and morality is never certain.

CONCLUSION

As a character, the Once-ler's development is quite fascinating to look into because of his ups and downs through his journey. His characterization managed to make the Once-ler one of the most interesting characters in Dr. Seuss universe. Through the Hero's Journey analysis, it can be seen that the Once-ler undergoes a journey of a Redeemed Villain in an archetype called Shadow. The archetype known as the Shadow represents the energy of the dark side, the unexpressed, unrealized, or rejected aspects of something (Vogler, 1999). It is also found that the Hero's Journey theory is indeed flexible as it can also fit a villain character such as the Once-ler.

As a Redeemed Villain, the Once-ler experienced both Positive and Negative Change Arc as he turned into a kind of good character at the end of the story. The characteristic of Positive Change Arc (Weiland, 2016) is that the character will start out with varying levels of personal unfulfillment and denial. As the story progresses, the character will challenge his beliefs, until he finally overcomes his inner demons and end his arc having changed into a more positive character. Meanwhile, Negative Change Arc (Weiland, 2016) is a Positive Change Arc flipped on its head. Instead of a character that grows out of his faults into a better person, the Negative Change Arc presents a character that ends in a worse state than that in which he began the story. The Once-ler experienced the Negative Change Arc, specifically the Corruption Arc and the Disillusionment Arc, in the Act II of his journey, and he experienced the Positive Change Arc at the end of the story, which is the Act III of his journey.

Further into the discussion, it is argued that the hero and the villain share similar journey. The villain will often follow a similar path of the hero but with a few minor changes. However, the Once-ler has a special case of a Villain's Journey as he managed to have the phase The Road Back at the end of his journey while most other villains do not. I also observed that many other stories portray the villain following the Hero's Journey stages in reverse. Thus, I called that kind of Villain's Journey the Inverse Hero's Journey. This study revealed that Heroes and Villains can be quite similar in their journeys, hence leading to a

conclusion that heroes and villains can be differentiated by how they finish their journey; if they succeed, they are the heroes, and if they failed, they are the villains.

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