

ELEMENTS OF SHAKESPEAREAN TRAGEDY IN COMIC SERIES “DEATH NOTE”

Lika Silvia Batubara

Department of Computer Engineering, Politeknik Unggulan Cipta Mandiri, Indonesia
lika@ucmcampus.ac.id

Abstract

Death Note is one of popular manga (comic) and anime series in Japan. This comic series was created by Tsugumi Ohba and Takeshi Obata. The main character, Light Yagami, is a high school student who discovers a black supernatural notebook. It simply titled “Death Note”. The death note grants user the ability to kill someone with the knowledge of the victim’s name and face by writing the victim's name while remembering his or her face. The series centers around Light Yagami’s attempt to create and rule a world “cleansed of evil” as a “God” using the death note. Death Note is full of symbolism from Roman overtones to literary masterpieces (Macbeth, Hamlet and Othello). Same with Macbeth, Light Yagami’s tragic flaw is also caused by his obsession with power. The power of the death note awakens great ambitions and leads him to murder and insanity protect what he has claimed. He should face a horrible death that is fitting to the way he lives. This is the basic premise of William Shakespeare’s tragedy and it is also the heart of Death Note. Furthermore, the main aim of this paper was to acknowledge to the readers the elements of Shakespearean tragedy in the anime Death Note.

Keywords: Shakespearean tragedy in Death Note, Shakespeare’s tragic hero, tragedy in Death Note

INTRODUCTION

Death Note is the greatest psychological thriller comic and comic that has been created by Tsugumi Ohba and Takeshi Obata. It has been filmed in two live action Japanese movies released in 2006. Besides, it also has been printed in a form of novel in two different titles; Death Note another Note: BB Murder Cases and L Change the World. Death Note plays out like Shakespearean tragedy where the protagonist’s hubris proves to be his undoing.

The story of the comic focuses on a high school student, Light Yagami, who is both intellectually brilliant and unchallenged in his school life. In his boredom, he finds a strange black notebook simply titled “Death Note”. The notebook is a perfect murder weapon belonging to a bored Shinigami (Death God) named Ryuk who dropped it to earth seeking some amusement. The owner of any name written inside it dies in 40 seconds without fail in the condition you should remembering the name’s face. The power of the notebook awakens his great ambition to create a new world “without evil” as the God. This ambition leads him to his fatal flaw. The entire story of it has some elements of Shakespearean tragedy especially in his tragic hero.

According to Aristotle that the hero’s downfall is his own fault as a result of his own free choice, but misfortune is not wholly deserved. Usually, Death Note is the