

Character Analysis

Characters are the essence of a story. They are who the story is about. They are who we, the readers, relate to, connect with, and learn from. Writers use characters, big and small, to tell the story in various ways. The following analysis is an evaluation and comparison of the female protagonists, Zoe in *Silver Kiss* by Annette Curtis Klause (1990), and Bella in *Twilight* by Stephanie Myer (2005).

Silver Kiss

Zoe is a single child and typical high school girl who is having to face a very difficult situation. Her mother is dying of cancer and is in the hospital. Her father is in a constant state of coming and going either to work or the hospital, slipping further and further from her as he sinks into the silence of his own grief over his wife's fate, and often leaving Zoe to fend for herself. Zoe feels very alone, as if her parents do not want her involved and think she can maintain her normal routine as if nothing were wrong. She feels that no one is acknowledging her feelings or her place in the family. Zoe is unable to see her mother very often much less talk to her about her feelings or what she herself is going through.

Zoe's feelings are mirrored in the events of the story. In the very beginning, her father comes home late and has a bowl of cereal for dinner unaware that Zoe has not eaten either. She tells him she wants to go for a walk, even though it is very late - after ten - and very dark out, he

seems distant and unconcerned for her (Klause 1990, 8-10). When she goes to visit her mother the next day, she gets only a few minutes, long enough for a short conversation before the nurse alerts her father to have her leave (Klause 1990, 28). Visits with her mother are emotionally hard on Zoe, especially when she sees how sick her mother is (Klause 1990, 42-45). She tries to talk with her best friend, Lorraine, but Lorraine is self-absorbed and does not seem to notice or be able to truly understand what Zoe needs.

After meeting Simon, a vampire boy about Zoe's physical age, Zoe starts to acknowledge her feelings. She skips school and goes to the hospital despite being told not to. In this visit, she is able to talk alone with her mother and expresses not only her feelings but also what she is going through (Klause 1990, 69-72). When her father returns to her mother's room, he and Zoe go downstairs, sit, and talk. Again, Zoe is able to express her feelings about her inability to visit her mother and about feeling left out and unable to take her mind off those things. However, Zoe and her father do not come to agreeable terms or reconcile the situation (Klause 1990, 73-74). Feeling alone, still, and worse after fighting with her father, Zoe gets into a fight with Lorraine as well. (Klause 1990, 76).

After only four brief encounters, Zoe and Simon get to a place where they talk to each other. Simon confesses everything about himself to her. They kiss, which is prompted by his un-human abilities. He bites her neck, but rather than being scary or life-threatening, it is sensual and intoxicating. After he leaves, Zoe gets a call to go to the hospital. While on her way, Simon comes along and goes with her. On the bus ride, they discuss death, how they both feel about death and dying. Zoe finally has a connection with someone who understands and shares her feelings (Klause 1990, 134-140). She is able to express her feelings openly.

At this point, Zoe's character begins to change. Zoe seems to have more acceptance of her mother's sickness, she makes up with Lorraine before she moves away, and she agrees to help Simon put an end to Christopher, Simon's brother. Christopher is responsible for the death of their mother, for turning Simon into a vampire, and for women found murdered recently in the city. Christopher is evil, mean, and cruel. He kills for the pure enjoyment of it and the fear he invokes in others. After Christopher is stopped, Simon also goes away. Zoe knows she is alone, but somehow through all the events, she is now reconciled to it (Klause 1990, 198).

Based on Lukens' definition, Zoe's character is round and dynamic (2007, 82). As a "round character," Zoe is known very well by her actions, speech, and thoughts. The reader can see her feelings, relate to them, and feel connected to the activities Zoe partakes in. As a "dynamic character," Zoe undergoes changes. Zoe comes to the end with a greater sense of self and understanding. She is more mature about her dealing with her mother's dying, she has in some small ways reconnected to her father, and she has grown in her maturity toward being alone. These changes that take place in Zoe follow what Lukens describes as "it is not then the passage of time that is important in character change, but the impact of events on the character – the unity of character and action – creating new traits to supplant or alter the old" (2007, 85).

Twilight

Bella is a 17 year old junior who lives with her mother in Chicago. She makes a decision to go live with her father in Forks, Washington, so that her mother will be free to go travel with her new husband. This self-sacrificial act for someone she cares for seems to be central to Bella's character. She does not like Forks, Washington (Myer 2005, 5). It is a constant cold,

cloudy, and rainy place. In addition, Bella is not close to her father and often refers to him by his first name, Charlie (Myer 2005, 6). At school, she meets Edward Cullen and his family (Myer 2005, 19). They are very pale people and keep very much to themselves. However, Bella finds that she is uncharacteristically and instantaneously popular, having instant friendships as well as three guys at school following her around. Edward is extremely hostile toward her on the first day which she does not understand (Myer 2005, 23-25). He is absent for several days, and when he returns he is more pleasant to her (Myer 2005, 43-48). This strange behavior, Edward's constant, quick changing moods is difficult to understand. Jacob, a family friend of her father, tells her Indian legends that Edward's family are vampires who have committed to not hunt humans (Myer 2005, 119-126).

Bella and Edward develop a relationship and he confesses to being a vampire. She is extremely trusting. There is much discussion as the two species try to learn about the other. Edward is aware that he has the potential to harm and even kill Bella; however, Bella never seems to feel afraid for her safety. Edward knows it is not a wise decision to be with Bella. Despite his better judgment, Edward is always nearby and coming to Bella's rescue from her own mishaps to freak accidents to life-threatening situations that he has put her in himself.

Once Edward's family has seemed to accept Bella as Edward's girlfriend, they are visited by three other vampires who are human hunters (Myer 2005, 372-380). One of the three, James, decides to hunt Bella, and starts a long, dangerous game of hide-and-seek. As a result, Bella, who more afraid for her father's safety, must flee from home with Edward's "sister and brother" Alice and Jasper, while Edward hunts the vampire whose hunting Bella.

Bella, being tricked by James, is lured away from her protectors under the intention of saving her mother from harm. Despite the fact that she knows she is setting herself up to be killed, Bella is still willing to run toward danger, alone, self-sacrificing for the ones she loves (Myer 2005, 426-432). Bella is nearly killed by James, but is saved by Edward and his family. In the end, Bella's self-sacrificial nature once again prompts her to offer to give up her life and to become a vampire for Edward (Myer 2005, 474,498).

Based on Lukens' definition of character types, Bella is more difficult to define. Lukens defines a flat character as one "essential to the action" but "not fully developed" (2007, 82). Myer tells the story through Bella's point of view, thus categorizing her as protagonist. Lukens depicts the protagonist as a round character (2007, 84). Myer provides a great deal of Bella's perceptions and actions, however Myer does not give depth in her speech and opinions that would reveal much about her character overall. Because of Bella's unrealistic views of the danger Edward and his kind represent along with her preoccupation with Edward, Bella could also be viewed as a flat character "stereotype," that of an irrational, infatuated, teen-age girl. What Myer does reveal of Bella is certainly relatable and even predictable, intimating Lukens' statement "In literature the skillful writer shows characters by means of actions and speeches so that, character, incident, and outcome seem interwoven – and, at the end, inevitable" (Lukens 2007, 79).

Whether defined as flat or round, Bella is clearly a "static character." Lukens' defines a static character as "one who does not change in the course of the story" (2007, 87). *Twilight* begins with Bella's self-sacrificing act – moving to live with her father in order to free her mother of parental responsibility and thus travel with her new husband. *Twilight* ends with Bella self-sacrificingly offering to become a vampire herself for Edward's sake. Despite the events,

the conflict does not “influence the character by making any impact on personality or outlook” (Lukens 2007, 87). Not only does Bella retain her self-sacrificial behavior, Bella does not change her self-perception. Bella does not see her self-worth or her physical appearance as valuable to herself or understand what others see in her to the betterment of her character.

Conclusion

Both, the characters of Zoe in Klause’s *Silver Kiss* and Bella in Myer’s *Twilight* are essential characters. Readers easily identify with them through their actions, their thoughts, and their words. Although Zoe is a dynamic character compared with Bella being a static character, but both characters “help the reader to see the action and to understand the idea behind it” (Lukens 2007, 87). Zoe and Bella are a perfect example of what Lukens describes “In one story the round central character may change, and in another the round central character may not” (Lukens 2007, 87). It is clear to see that Zoe is by far more developed as a character than Bella. Klause uses the dynamics of Zoe’s growth to propel *Silver Kiss*, whereas Myer relies heavily upon the plot’s action and the romance of Bella and Edward in *Twilight*. Zoe becomes better for her experiences making her character more meaningful. Bella, however, remains a likable, love-struck girl.

Bibliography

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