

USING READER RESPONSE AND FIGURATIVE LANGUAGE TO ANALYZE WILLIAM HENLEY'S POEM 'INVICTUS'

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ABSTRACT

This research focuses on examining the types of figurative language used in selected poem by William Henley through reader response in order to get understanding to the overall meaning and the purpose behind the poem. Qualitative descriptive method applied in this research and the data will present in descriptive ways. Perrine's theory is applied as a theoretical framework to analyze the figurative language. Meanwhile, Rosenblatt's theory about reader response is used to analyze the data. The data of this research are from two sources, namely primary and secondary data. Primary data are taken from William Henley's poem entitled 'Invictus'. Secondary data are taken from other related literature such as journals, articles, book, and others supporting data. The result of analysis shows that the poem contained five distinct types of figurative language, such as: metaphor, symbolism, hyperbole, personification, and simile. In terms of reader response, the researcher found that both aesthetic and efferent approaches were demonstrated by the readers. These findings show how this analytical framework can be effectively applied to enhance the understanding of literary works.

Keywords: figurative language, reader response, literature, poem, Invictus

INTRODUCTION

William Ernest Henley is an English poet and writer, born on August 23, 1849, in Gloucester, England. Henley has a great influence on the literary world. Henley is a prolific and well-known author. He wrote articles, literary critics, and other things in addition to poetry. One of Henley's famous works is his poem entitled 'Invictus.' Henley creates a mood of immense and toughness through this work. This poem is frequently understood as an expression of his robust and unyielding character in the face of misfortune and sorrow. Perhaps his personal experiences, such as his battle with a life-

threatening disease and the amputation of his limb, influenced the theme of 'Invictus' (John, 2023). The poem 'Invictus' is one of his most famous compositions, and it is still regarded as a classic in inspiring poetry. His life and activities serve as an inspiration to many others who experience difficulties in their lives (Aura Health Team, 2022).

In human communication today, language plays an important role. Language can be defined as a sound symbol for an arbitrary language that enables humans to interact with other people, express their thoughts and ideas, and it is a system of communication. (Harimurti, 2015; Wardhaugh & Fuller, 2015). Beside language, communication can take in various forms, including literary works such as novels, song lyrics, and poetry. These forms of communication sometimes implied a meaning by using figurative language. The study of meaning in a linguistic context known as semantics is how languages express and organize meaning (Swarniti, 2021). There are two types of language in semantics; they are literal language and figurative language.

Figurative language involves words and expressions that differ in meaning from their literal interpretation, which greatly influences human beliefs and perceptions (Amalia, Fitriasia, and Silviyanti 2021). As cited in Merriam-Webster Dictionary, figurative language refers to words or phrases that are meaningful but not true (2024). Another definition of figurative language stated by Harya (2016) said that figurative language can be used in any type of communication, including ordinary conversation, newspaper articles, advertisements, novels, and poems. If we look at the definition of figurative language according to Perrine (1997), as cited by Baktian (2023), figurative language is an approach to communicating that differentiates from the normal. Perrine explains that figurative language is divided into 12 types: simile, metaphor, personification, apostrophe, synecdoche, metonymy, symbol, allegory, paradox, hyperbole, understatement, and irony. Nowadays, many people are increasingly interested in the use of figurative language in literary works.

This research also discusses the reader responses approach. Reader response theory was proposed by Louise Rosenblatt (1993), an American professor and researcher. Rosenblatt (1982), cited in Inan & Boldan (2018), describes reading as a transaction and a two-way process with the involvement of the text and the reader at a specific time under certain conditions. Reader response criticism thus offers the reader greater power over the meaning of the text than other critical literary theories. The poem will be analyzed

through reader responses to know what is personal experience, opinions, and feelings in the writer's interpretations. It helps to know the meaning of a literary work emerges from the interaction between the reader's experiences.

According to Edgar Roberts (1997), as cited in Hasanah (2018), poetry is defined as a literary work that describes various forms, styles, and patterns that are spoken and written and based on various objects. In addition, poetry must also be able to provide persuasion to readers like speakers who must master ethos, pathos, and logos (Noermanzah et al., 2019). In other words, poetry can be defined as a literary work that emphasizes aesthetic functions by using the right choice and arrangement of words to achieve the emotional state desired by the poet.

The poem 'Invictus' written by William Ernest Henley and published in 1875, talks about the meaning of life. This poem deals with the themes of individual strength and the indomitable nature of the human soul. This poem was inspired by the poet's personal experiences, who is being hospitalized for tuberculosis when he is young. The word 'Invictus' is Latin for "unconquerable" or "undefeated," and it serves as a fitting title for a poem that explores themes of resilience in the face of personal struggles. 'Invictus' consists of four stanzas, for each line consists of four lines. Through this poem, Henley conveys a powerful message of independence and the ability to navigate life's uncertainties and makes this poem a source of inspiration for those who want to uphold their dignity and face difficulties. Three research questions will guide the analysis of this research; they are: (1) What types of figurative language are employed in 'Invictus'? (2) How did the reader emotionally respond to the theme of adversity and triumph in the poem? (3) Additionally, why did the poet write this poem? How do readers' personal experiences shape their interpretations of the poem? The objectives of this research include identifying the various types of figurative language present in the poem, analyzing the emotional responses of the readers, and finding out the reason the poet wrote the poem entitled 'Invictus.'

In accordance with previous research about figurative language, the writer found several related pieces of previous literature that have similarities and differences with this research; they are: (1) The research conducted by Agustina and Mustikawati (2023) focused on examining the kinds of figurative language and finding the meaning behind the song lyrics in BTS' song. This research discusses the same topic as this research; the

difference is in the object of the analysis. (2) The research conducted by Yulianda and Sunra (2022) discussed the same topic of figurative language, but with a difference in the object of analysis. This research aims to identify the figurative language styles used in William Shakespeare's work. (3) The research, using the same theory of reader response theory conducted by Dzulhija (2019), aims to observe the reader's response to the plot twist in *Good Country People*. Even though this research applied reader responses, the theorist used in this research is different from the writer's research. (4) The research by Inan & Boldan (2018) also conducted research of reader response in a teaching short story using Rosenblatt's theory. This research has a difference in the kind of object analysis.

Therefore, this research aims to explore the use of figurative language in the poem and how it contributes to the reader's response to the text. This research applied Perrine theory, which classified figurative language into 12 types. Then, this research also aims to explore the reader's role in creating meaning and understanding the poem through the lens of reader response theory proposed by Louise Rosenblatt. Hence, in conducting this research, the writer compares two theories using figurative language by Perrine and reader response theory by Rosenblatt.

METHODOLOGY

This research applies the descriptive-qualitative method, in which the data presented will be in descriptive form and emphasizes the use of words rather than numerical data. This method is used in exploring the relationship between figurative language and reader response in analyzing the poem 'Invictus' by William Henley based on the figurative language theory. According to Clark & Creswell (2015), qualitative research is research that studies a problem solved by exploring a phenomenon, and it tends to be more narrative and rarely uses statistics like quantitative approaches. (Clark & Creswell, 2015; Pan, 2016).

Perrine's theory is applied in this research, which identifies 12 types of figurative language. The primary data source for this research is taken from William Henley's poem 'Invictus' itself, which shows various forms of figurative language in the form of words, phrases, and sentences. The data will be analyzed by developing the narration that explains the elaboration of data found in the poem, which has been classified into figurative language types based on Perrine's theory. In addition, reader-response theory

by Rosenblatt is also applied in this research. According to Rosenblatt (1993), as cited in Inan & Boldan (2018), she defines the two types of reading, which are: aesthetic and efferent reading. Rosenblatt also added that according to her, aesthetic readers will focus on how they live the work during reading, which will involve feelings, attitudes, thoughts, and impressions. Meanwhile, efferent reading tends to be described as how readers analyze and focus on the intellectual aspects of meaning. Hence the reader's role is crucial in this case.

The operation of this research includes in-depth analysis of the poem itself. The method in this research is carried out through three stages, which are collecting data, analyzing data, and presenting the results of the analysis. Data collection is done by reading the poem chosen as the object of research, as well as literature articles that support this research through library research. Data analysis is supported by using the theory by Perrine and Rosenblatt. Then, the data is presented in descriptive form.

DISCUSSION

1. *The Dominant Figurative Language in 'Invictus' by William Henley*

Perrine (1977), as cited in Sandy et al. (2021), defines that figurative language is any way of saying something other than in the usual way. In other words, Perrine also defines figurative language as figures of speech used to give additional dimensions to words and can be used in all types of communication, including ordinary conversation, newspaper articles, advertisements, novels, and poetry (Yulidar, 2014; Harya, 2016).

According to Perrine's Theory, figurative language includes various literary devices such as metaphor, simile, and personification. These comparisons help create a deeper understanding of the characters, setting, and themes in a poem. This is important because figurative language is a powerful tool in poetry that allows writers to create vivid images and convey emotions more compellingly. The results of the analysis found in this research show that there are 5 figurative languages found in this poem, which are metaphor, symbolism, hyperbole, personification, and simile. From the analysis, it is found that the most figurative language used in the poem 'Invictus' by William Henley is metaphor, then symbolism, hyperbole, personification, and simile, which appear once.

Table 1
Types of Figurative Language in 'Invictus'

No.	Types of Figurative Language	Total	Examples
1.	Metaphor	9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Line 1 "<i>Out of the night that covers me</i>" Line 5 "<i>In the fell clutch of circumstance</i>" Line 7 "<i>Under the bludgeonings of chance</i>"
2.	Symbolism	7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Line 9 "<i>In the fell clutch of circumstance</i>" Line 10 "<i>Looms but the Horror of the Shade</i>"
3.	Hyperbole	4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Line 2 "<i>Black as the pit from pole to pole,</i>" Line 3 "<i>I thank whatever gods may be</i>"
4.	Personification	3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Line 7 "<i>Under the bludgeoning of chance</i>" Line 11 "<i>And yet the menace of the years</i>"
5.	Simile	1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Line 2 "<i>Black as the pit from pole to pole</i>"

a. Metaphor

A metaphor is a figurative language device or type of analogy that involves a comparison between two unrelated things or ideas in a brief form without a conjunction indicating the comparison (Perrine, 1977) in Sandy et al. In poetry, metaphors are often used to convey complex emotions or ideas about the objects discussed. In Henley's poem 'Invictus' it is found that metaphor is the most dominant figurative language used by Henley and an important element to strengthen the emotional impact of the poem. An example of the metaphors found can be seen in Line 1 of the poem, which reads "*Out of the night that covers me,*" drawing a comparison between darkness and something that covers the author. The comparison can be seen from the word "*night*" and "*covers.*" In this situation, the reader thinks that this metaphor describes the speaker's experience with darkness and solitude, as well as their ability to maintain dignity and overcome obstacles.

Then, line 5, which says, "*In the grip of circumstances.*" This line draws a comparison between two unrelated states between the grip of circumstance and the grip of grasp. This makes the "grip" pull the writer into a bad situation. This metaphor makes the reader feel the bad situation the writer is in. Then, Henley also uses a metaphor in the line "*Under the bludgeonings of chance*" in line 7, which metaphorically depicts that fate can bring a person down and shows how tough the challenges faced by the poet are. Overall, this metaphor is used not only to show physical suffering but also to show the emotional resilience of the poet. Henley draws on this figurative language to describe the uncertainty of his life, which can be seen in "*the bludgeonings*" and "*chance*," which give the impression of mental distress."

b. Symbolism

A symbol is defined as something that means more than what it is (Perrine, 1977:82) in (Sandy et al., 2021). In figurative language, it refers to the use of symbols such as objects, characters, or actions that represent abstract ideas or concepts. Symbolism serves as a tool that allows writers to convey deeper meaning and convey emotions by connecting the literal and the symbolic.

It shows that the poet extensively uses symbols to convey messages and evoke certain emotions. In line 9, "*Beyond this place of wrath and tears*," this line shows symbolism, which can be interpreted as the struggles and hardships that the speaker is going through. "*Place of wrath and tears*" symbolizes the difficult and challenging circumstances that the speaker faces in her life. As a symbol of the speaker's perspective on life and the human experience, the word "beyond this" suggests a sense of transcendence or going beyond the current circumstances. It symbolizes the speaker's outlook on life, showing a perspective that goes beyond the current difficulties. "*This place*" refers to the current state or condition, symbolizing the challenges, sufferings, and hardships that the speaker faces. The phrase "*of wrath and tears*" symbolizes the intense emotional and physical struggle inherent in the human experience. It represents the pain, anger, and suffering that the speaker recognizes and is trying to move beyond.

Then, in line 10, "*Looms but the Horror of the Shade*," as a symbolic representation of the struggle and the upcoming mortality. The word "*shade*" can be

interpreted as a resting place, but it can also be interpreted as an uncertain future or upcoming challenges, while "*horror*" refers to the fear of death. The word "*looms*" suggests a threatening presence, while "*but*" emphasizes the next phrase. The phrase "*the horror*" refers to a specific fear, and "*of the shade*" refers to darkness, obscurity, or the unknown.

c. *Hyperbole*

According to Perrine, hyperbole is an exaggeration that is used to emphasize the truth (1977:102), as cited in Sandy et al. (2021). In his poem, Henley uses hyperbole to emphasize a stronger intensity of experience so as to add interest to the description while efficiently conveying strong emotions. Hyperbole is figurative language that uses exaggerated statements that are not meant to be taken literally.

In line 2, "*Black as the pit from pole to pole,*" the phrase "*from pole to pole*" is an example of hyperbole, as it exaggerates the extent of the darkness by suggesting that it covers the entire world, from the North Pole to the South Pole. This exaggeration is used to emphasize the breadth and totality of the darkness that envelops the speaker. Then in line 3, "*I thank whatever gods may be,*" although not explicitly exaggerated, adds an overall dramatic tone to the poem. It implies that the speaker's spirit is so strong and enduring that it would earn the praise of any god, regardless of their exact identity or existence.

d. *Personification*

Based on Perrine, personification consists in giving attributes of a human being to an animal, an object, or a concept (1977:64), as cited in Sandy et al. (2021). This means that personification is a figurative language technique in which human qualities or attributes are given to non-human entities, such as objects, animals, or abstract concepts. In 'Invictus' personification is used to show that the poet has given human attributes to non-human entities in the poem.

Personification can also be found in descriptions of nature or natural phenomena. An example can be seen in line 7, "*Under the bludgeoning of chance.*" In this line, the term "*bludgeonings of chance*" is personified as if a living being capable of delivering blows, emphasizing the endless and pressing nature of the challenges faced by the speaker. The use of "*bludgeonings of chance*" can also personify

circumstances as something (circumstances) that relentlessly and mercilessly strike (as if they can hurt) the speaker.

Then, in line 11, "*And yet the menace of the years.*" In this line, the word "*menace*" can be interpreted as personification. In this case, the use of "*menace of the years*" metaphorically represents the threatening and oppressive nature of the passage of time, emphasizing the speaker's resilience in the face of the adversities brought by time. Henley portrays time or the passage of years as something that actively poses a threat or challenge to the speaker.

e. Simile

According to Perrine, a simile is an expression comparing two different things by using the word or phrase, such as like, as, similar to, resembles, or seems (1977:61), as cited in Sandy et al. (2021). In other words, simile is a figurative language that directly compares two different objects by using the words "like" or "as." Similes are used to enhance descriptions and help readers understand the characteristics of one object by comparing it to another, generally more familiar, object. In 'Invictus' the researcher only found one simile, which is in line 2, "*Black as the pit from pole to pole.*".

The phrase "*Black as the Pit*" uses the word "*as*," which is a key indicator of simile. It compares darkness or blackness to the darkness found in a pit, implying that the darkness is as deep and pervasive as the depth of the pit. This simile emphasizes the deep and pervasive nature of the darkness or challenges that surround the speaker. This simile clearly depicts the depth and intensity of the struggle or difficulty the speaker is facing.

2. The Emotional Response to the Theme in 'Invictus' by William Henley.

William Ernest Henley's poem, 'Invictus' is one of the most inspiring poems in English literature. It is highly moving and touches on themes of resilience, strength, and personal triumph in the midst of life's difficulties. Using Louise Rosenblatt's theory that distinguishes between efferent and aesthetic responses, I can explore how this poem affects the reader informatively and emotionally.

In the first stanza, Henley uses the metaphor "*out of the night that covers me*" to describe the adversity that surrounds him, creating an atmosphere of deep and sinister darkness. The phrase "*Black as the pit from pole to pole*" is a simile that compares the

darkness to a pit that is black from pole to pole, giving a strong visual image of suffering. The use of symbolism in "*night*" and "*pit*" suggests depression or despair. The reader feels the depressing darkness but also gratitude and pride when Henley mentions, "*I thank whatever gods may be, for my unconquerable soul,*" which gives hope and inner strength.

The second stanza shows incredible resilience, which can be seen in the phrase "*In the fell clutch of circumstance,*" which uses personification to describe the merciless clutching of circumstances. Then, "*bludgeonings of chance*" emphasizes the harshness of adversity. In this case, the reader feels inspired by this resilience and spirit that remain upright despite the suffering.

Then, the third stanza creates a dark and gloomy atmosphere with "*place of wrath and tears,*" hinting at emotional suffering. "*Looms but the Horror of the Shade*" describes the fear of an uncertain future, and the hyperbole of "the menace of the years" emphasizes the threat of time. The reader feels emotional weight but also calmness and courage when reading "*finds and shall find me unafraid,*" feeling encouraged to face the uncertainties of life.

The last stanza is the emotional climax of the poem, with the phrase "*It matters not how strait the gate, How charged with punishments the scroll*" showing Henley's self-control despite the adversity. "*I am the master of my fate, I am the captain of my soul*" provides great inspiration, asserting complete control over life and destiny. Readers feel a sense of power and empowerment, realizing their ability to determine the direction of their lives despite obstacles.

3. *The Reason Why William Henley Wrote 'Invictus'*

William Henley wrote the work 'Invictus' during a very challenging period in his life. When he was 12 years old, he was diagnosed with bone tuberculosis which led to his leg having to be amputated. He was also recovering from a severe bout of illness that left him with a weakened heart and lungs. During his hospital stay, his mother passed away, adding to the emotional difficulties he was experiencing. The poem reflects Henley's personal struggle with illness and his determination to overcome the physical and emotional pain associated with his condition, making it one of the most inspiring poems in English literature.

Despite facing these difficulties, Henley wrote 'Invictus' in a time of intense personal struggle. The themes of resilience and inner strength in this poem reflect Henley's experiences, shown through powerful imagery and language. Lines such as:

*"It matters not how strait the gate,
How charged with punishments the scroll,
I am the master of my fate,
I am the captain of my soul."*

From these lines, Henley implies a determination to face challenges and control his own destiny. Henley's experiences heavily influence the theme and tone of this poem, making it a strong work with a consistent rhyme structure. The poem's themes of resilience and inner strength resonate with multiple generations, making it frequently included in anthologies and referenced in various media, including movies and motivational speech.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the findings of this research reveal that the poem 'Invictus' by William Henley shows that Henley uses various literary devices to convey the themes present in the poem. The research found that the poem involves 5 different figurative languages in line with Perrine's theory, including metaphor, symbolism, hyperbole, personification, and simile. The dominant use of metaphor, symbolism, and hyperbole shows that the poet focuses on using vivid, imaginative, and exaggerated images to strongly express the subject and theme of the poem. Then, this research also reveals that two types of reader response theories were found in this research, which are in line with the theory by Rosenblatt, namely aesthetic response and efferent response. The aesthetic response focuses on the emotional experience and impact caused by each stanza in the poem. Lastly, efferent response focuses on the reader's style and approach when reading and interpreting the poem.

Overall, this research highlights the focus on figurative language analysis and its relation to reader response in order to gain a deeper understanding of a literary work. Future research could expand the research beyond figurative language and reader response by exploring the emotional impact and meaning created through language, as well as the structure and style of the poem.

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