

Class Conflict and Economic Power in Veronica Roth's *Divergent*: A Marxist Analysis of Factional Divisions

¹Ani Agustin, ²Famala Eka Sanhadi Rahayu, and ^{3*}Wilma Prafitri

English Department, Faculty of Cultural Sciences, Mulawarman University

*Corresponding Author e-mail: wilma.prafitri@fib.unmul.ac.id

Received: August 2024; Revised: October 2024; Published: November 2024

Abstract

This research is an analysis of the novel *Divergent* by Veronica Roth. Overall, *Divergent* tells about the situation of Chicago in the future, which has five factions that support their lives in the city. In this novel there is a conflict between the upper class (Erudite, Dauntless) and the lower class (Abnegation) which is presented by the character Beatrice as the main character who is also a character in the Abnegation faction. The purpose of writing this research is to analyze the existing class differences depicted as factions and the factors used by these factions in taking over power. To achieve this goal, this research uses Marxism theory but only focuses on economic power, class conflict, and factors of conflict. This analysis uses a qualitative descriptive method. The results of this analysis use a Marxism perspective which shows that factional divisions are caused by Economic and Political factors.

Keywords: Class Conflict; Economics; Factions; Marxism, Power

How to Cite: Agustin, A., Rahayu, F. E. S., & Prafitri, W. Class Conflict and Economic Power in Veronica Roth's *Divergent*: A Marxist Analysis of Factional Divisions. *International Journal of Linguistics and Indigenous Culture*, 3(3), 274-282. <https://doi.org/10.36312/ijlic.v3i3.2217>



<https://doi.org/10.36312/ijlic.v3i3.2217>

Copyright© 2024, Agustin, et al
This is an open-access article under the CC-BY-SA License.



INTRODUCTION

Literature is a reflection of people's lives, according to Abrams, "Mimetic criticism views the literary work as a reflection, or representation of the world and human life" (Abrams, 1999). It means that every author of literary work wants to describe the reality that is happening or has happened in the society, so it can be concluded that literature records the situation of human life in society. Finally, many authors make literary works that relate to society and social life based on their experiences and also from what they have seen. The social life described in literary works usually deals with Economics, and also Politics. These are the aspects that finally bring up the Social Class.

The class means group differences in society. There are several different classes that are divided in society, one of them is in Marxist theory. There is something called capitalism which divides class known as the rich is bourgeoisie and the poor is proletariat. This topic still arises in literary works because there are still widespread

class differences in people's lives, causing conflicts between classes. The diversity of factors that trigger conflict is a bridge for authors to package interesting stories by using the topic.

Divergent Novel by Veronica Roth is one of the literary works that raise the issue of class conflict and class difference. This novel tells about the condition of people in Chicago in the future, and they are divided into five factions, such as Erudite, Dauntless, Candor, Abnegation, and Amity. There is a conflict between factions, Erudite is a faction of intelligent people and have a power that has a conflict with the Abnegation of people who are in the government but do not have a power.

The researchers find the issue about class conflict and class differences which are described as factions and the factors that triggers. With the uniqueness of the novel had and also factors that cause class conflict, the researchers are interested in analyzing class conflicts that occur between factions and the factors that triggered the class conflict occur by using Marxist theory. Marx's foundational work on class antagonism is crucial. His theory posits that society is stratified into classes according to their relation to production (bourgeoisie and proletariat), with class struggle serving as the primary impetus of historical development. Marxist literary criticism examines how ideology reinforces or challenges prevailing power structures. In *Divergent*, the conflict between the ruling class, represented by Erudite's quest for knowledge, power and the lower or oppressed classes, exemplified by Abnegation's selflessness, is evident through this perspective (Eagleton, 2002). Based on the background of issues, the researchers formulated two research questions such as :

1. How do the class conflicts occurred between factions in *Divergent* ?
2. What factors triggered the class conflict in *Divergent* ?

To answer those research questions, the researchers would like to provide some theoretical framework related to this research.

1. Novel

Novel is the written literary works that reflect society. According to John Peck, "Alongside the fact that novels look at people in society, the other major characteristic of the genre is that novels tell a story. In fact, novels tend to tell the same few stories time and time again" (107). Novel is a story built by the author to tell a reality that exists or has occurred in society, such as personal experiences, or events that have occurred at that time.

2. Character and Characterization

According to Abrams in *A Glossary of Literary Terms*, characters are the person presented on a dramatic or narrative work, who are interpreted by the readers as being endowed with moral, dispositional, and emotional qualities that are expressed in they say – the dialogue – and what they do – in the action (23). From these statements, Character is the main and important thing in a literary work to build a story that is intended for readers to feel the atmosphere of the story. Furthermore, Kay and Gelshenen said that characterization can define as the way the author creates character

through physical descriptions, speech, thought, actions and observation from other characters (60). From the explanation, Characterization is the way authors describe the personality of the characters they build in a story. The second type, on the other hand, does not mention the trait but displays and exemplifies it in various ways, leaving to the reader the task of inferring the quality they imply (Kenan 60). According to Kenan some of these ways will be enumerated in the following discussion:

1. Action.

A trait may be implied both by one-time actions and by habitual actions, both of the actions can belong to one of the following categories: act of commission, act of omission (something which the character should, but does not do), and contemplated act (an unrealized plan or intention of the character) (61-62).

2. Speech.

A character's speech, whether in conversation or as a silent activity of the mind, can be indicative of a trait or traits both through its content and through its form (63).

3. External appearance

This happens when a non-visual quality is attributed- as in a synecdoche-to one part of the character's physique rather than to the character (66).

4. Environment

A character's physical surrounding (room, house, street, town) as well as his human environment (family, social class) are also often used as trait-connoting metonymies. As with external appearance, the relation of contiguity is frequently supplemented by that of causality (66).

3. Marxism Theory

According to Marxists, ideology is defined as "the idea for constructing economic systems and political systems, respectively." The function of ideology, according to their interpretation, is not to reveal these conditions; rather, it is to conceal the actual relations that exist between the classes and to conceal the actual power dynamics that exist within society (146). According to a statement made by Marxists, ideology is a notion that is used to conceal the actual conditions that exist within classes and the actual power relations that exist inside society. It is also possible to construct a just political and economic system through the application of ideology. The Marxist is here to abolish existing class distinctions, when ideology better serves the needs of the dominant class. This is what can be understood from the statement.

a. Economic Power

Tyson explained, "Economic power therefore always includes social and political power as well, which is why many Marxists today refer to socioeconomic class, (54). That statement proven, usually those who have power will tend to be easy to get involved in politics and they will be more powerful. While those who do not have power, will tend to be weaker and more oppressed by those who have power.

b. Class Conflict

One of the basic assumptions of Marxism is that the "forces of production," the way goods and services are produced, will, in a capitalist society, inevitably generate conflict between social classes created by the way economic resources are used and who profits from them (Dobbie 91). This principle also relates to the principle of economic power which is where this conflict occurs because its main source is the economy. Conflicts occur because the lower classes want to be free from control by the upper classes, while the upper classes try to maintain their position and their power. The upper classes tend to manipulate the system to appear logical in the lower classes, so that the lower classes are caught in the manipulations of the upper classes. And when the lower class realized this, then there was a rebellion between the lower classes against the upper class called the class conflict. The forms of class conflict include direct violence, such as wars, for access to and control of natural resources and labour; assassinations and revolution; indirect violence, such as death from poverty and starvation, economic coercion, such as the threat of unemployment, by way of political literature (Bullock,2000). Class conflict can be seen from direct forms of violence between classes, such as the upper class oppressing the lower class. It can also be a result of power struggles or competition for natural resources to increase profits. Apart from that, conflict classes can also be seen indirectly through threats, such as the threat of loss of property, economic struggles and starvation.

4. Class Conflict and Factor of Class Conflict

In addition, conflicts arise as a result of their connection to politics and economy, in which one party seeks to acquire power while others want to defend what is legitimately theirs. Furthermore, Vincent said that Marxist conflict arises between two classes because it is determined by ownership of different sorts of property, with one class being those who own property and the other class being people who do not own property (Neale,2016). According to this assertion, disagreements arise as a result of disparities in the wealth that is owned, which is also referred to as economic power. Differences in social conditions, such as economic and political disparities, are always the root cause of conflicts between different social classes. Where an economy that is more stable will have more power in several aspects of social life. On the other hand, those who do not have a stable economy will be weak and are not going to have any strength. in order to create a conflict in which those who are weak want to have the same rights as those who are powerful, while those who are powerful seek to take the rights of those who are weak.

METHOD

This part explains the method of the research. There are four parts which consisted of research design, data and source of data, data collection, and data analysis.

1. Research Design

The researcher would employ qualitative method to analyze this research. According to Flick, qualitative research is "Research interested in analyzing the

subjective meaning or the social production of issues, events, or practices by collecting non-standardized data and analyzing texts and images rather than numbers and statistics" (472). From the explanation, qualitative research is a way of analyzing objects, problems or events that occur using text as a data source. The text used as data is in the form of paragraphs and dialogue. According to Dobbie, "In a Marxist analysis, it can be effective to announce the ideology of the text and its relationship to Marxist views at the outset." (96). That means, Text is the right way to explain the ideology and approach about Marxist. Researcher used qualitative methods to analyze class conflict by using Marxism literary criticism approach in the form of novel.

2. Data and Source of Data

This research would use *Divergent* by Veronica Roth as the main source of data. The data collected comes from narration and dialogue of the characters relate to with class conflict and factor of conflict. The data from the narration and dialogue presented would take the form of text, sentences, and paragraphs. Furthermore, the data of the theory would be collected from previous research, journal, and books.

3. Data Collection

According to Gill et al, "There are variety of methods of data collection in qualitative research, including observations, textual or visual analysis (eg from books or videos) and interview (individual or group)" (291). In order to analyze this research, the researcher would use observation as the data collection technique. The researcher would use several methods. First, the researcher read the *Divergent* novel to its end. Second, the researcher would read more the *Divergent* novel in order to gain better comprehension of novel's purpose as well as to discover the Marxist elements in it. Third, the researcher would starts making notes of dialogue and narration that related with class conflict and factor of conflict and would be used for analysis. Fourth, the researcher would collect all the data in the form of the narration and dialogues that related to research question and theory. Fifth, the researcher would separate the data for analyzing in class conflict and to finding out its factors. The last step, the researcher would categorize the data that has been collected.

4. Data Analysis

There are several ways in analyzing Marxist theory First, the researcher read the data that has been collected and relates the data to the questions proposed in this research. The data that has been collected is data about class conflict and to find its factors. To analyze this data, the researcher would look at it from the main characters involved in class conflict. Then the researcher classifies the data to the Marxist theory, and interprets the meaning of the data so that the data is related to the Marxist theory. The final step, the researcher makes sure that the data and theory are really interrelated, explain very clearly the data displayed and easily understood, in order to answer research question proposed in this research.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The researcher tries to answer of the research question, the researcher found the answer of the research question about class conflict and the factors of class conflict in the novel *Divergent*. Based on the dialogue and narration from the main character. The analysis focus on explaining the classes in this novel, class conflict, and the factors of conflict that occur. Accordingly, the analysis is presented below.

Data 1:

a girl with long curly hair shouts "Hey!" next to my ear waving at distant friend. A jacket sleeve smacks me on the check. **Then erudite boy in blue sweater shoved me. I lose my balance and fall hard on the ground. "out of my stiff," he snaps, and continues down the hallway.** (Roth 6)

The data above shows the existence of direct class conflict as seen from violence based on speech and action, Erudite shows that they are in a upper class than the Abnegation faction. This can be seen from data 1, someone from Erudite committed an act of violence by pushing Beatrice who was part of the Abnegation faction and saying that Beatrice was a stiff person.

Data 2:

Beatrice: **"The Erudite have been attacking us with these reports for months, and this isn't the end."** (Roth 35)

This data shows the conflict class indirectly as seen from the speech and action that Erudite will always attack those in the Abnegation faction by releasing reports that lead opinion towards the Abnegation faction. Which shows that the Erudite are the upper class who have the power to express opinions freely without any objection.

Data 3:

"Abnegation has fulfilled our need for selfless leaders in government;
(Roth 43)

This data shows one of the factors of conflict, namely that the Abnegation faction will fulfill all the needs of other factions because they hold the government. Even though they work in the government, that doesn't mean they have power. This happens because their faction really upholds the interests of other people. This was the reason why they were the lower class, because they would give everything to other factions without taking any advantage. Meanwhile, other factions such as the Erudite faction, because their economy is fulfilled in terms of food and other needs which have been provided by Abnegation, makes them freer to do other things such as pursuing knowledge, studying hard, thus making them an intelligent faction. Because they are the intelligent faction, they become arrogant and thirsty for power, and they try to influence other factions that only people who are knowledgeable and educated can change the world and regulate life in the future, including advancing the factions. This is believed by the existing factions and allows Erudite to give any orders with lies so that the factions can progress further.

Data 4:

I thought I would only have trouble with the Candor asking too many questions," he says coldly. "Now I've got stiff, too?". (Roth 68)

This data shows that it is not only Erudite who always corners Abnegation, but also Dauntless, as seen from the dialogue (speech) directed to Beatrice. Dauntless is one of the upper classes because it provides security for Erudite. It can be seen that there is indeed a class conflict that occurs indirectly, because Dauntless would not be able to despise someone from the Abnegation faction if there was no conflict between their factions. It can be concluded that Dauntless is also part of Erudite. Even the Candor faction remains under Dauntless, because Candor only has the right to regulate the laws of the city which is still under the control of Erudite and Dauntless. This data shows that it is not only Erudite who always corners Abnegation, but also Dauntless, as seen from the dialogue directed to Beatrice. Dauntless is one of the top classes because it provides security for Erudite. It can be seen that there is indeed a class conflict that occurs indirectly, because Dauntless would not be able to despise someone from the Abnegation faction if there was no conflict between their factions. It can be concluded that Dauntless is also part of Erudite. Even the Candor faction remains under Dauntless, because Candor only has the right to regulate the laws of the city which is still under the control of Erudite and Dauntless.

Data 5:

Since then, Erudite has released two articles about Abnegation. The first article accuses Abnegation of withholding luxuries like cars and fresh fruit from the other factions in order to force their belief in self-denial on everyone else. The second one article discusses the failing of choosing government officials based on their faction, asking why only people who define themselves as selfless should be in government. (Roth 261-262)

This data explains the class of conflict directly in the form of a desire to seize power in the political field as seen from the action. The reason Erudite and Abnegation are enemies is because Erudite doesn't like Abnegation holding the government. This is because it is very difficult for the Erudite faction to increase its power in controlling other factions. Intelligence is not enough to become more powerful, even if the Erudite becomes the leader of the council, political power is also very important. Abnegation is blocking Erudite's move to take over the government, because the Abnegation faction knows that if the Erudite faction takes over the government it will be increasingly difficult for all factions to gain freedom. So Erudite did various things to make Abnegation to step down from government, one of which was by attacking the Abnegation faction with false reports. This data also shows that one of the conflict factors was triggered by political power.

Data 6:

Something big is happening, Beatrice. Something is wrong." His eyes are wide and glassy. "I don't know what it is, but people keep rushing around, talking quietly, and Jeanine gives speeches about how corrupt Abnegation is all the time, almost every day".

"Because Erudite developed the simulations, we have an ... understanding with the dauntless, Beatrice. (Roth 358)

This data also shows how Erudite tried various methods to get rid of Abnegation from the government as seen from the speech. As long as the government is still held by Abnegation, it is very difficult for Erudite to control the government and increase their power to rule in all existing fields. Therefore, Erudite gave a false report accusing and cornering Abnegation so that other factions believed that Abnegation was unfit to hold the government, and aimed to make Abnegation surrender and hand over the government to be held by Erudite. Even though Abnegation is under Erudite's command, Abnegation does not want to hand over government to Erudite. Because Abnegation knows, if Erudite holds the government, it will be very difficult for them to gain freedom, and they will be even more humiliated. This is also one of the conflict factors between Erudite and Abnegation which is included in political power. The work of Eagleton contributes to the framing of how Divergent presents social divisions as a reflection of contending class interests and the struggles of the ruling class to maintain control (Eagleton,2002).

CONCLUSION

After analyzing the conflict between classes depicted as factions in Veronica Roth's novel "*Divergent*" using a Marxist theory approach, the researcher concluded that:

The class differences in this novel are the differences between the upper class and the lower class. Class differences create class conflict which is depicted by factions in this novel. The upper class is represented by the ruling Erudite faction and is also assisted by other factions such as Dauntless. Meanwhile, the lower class is depicted in the Abnegation faction. Researchers found that a very clear class of conflict was the class of conflict between the Erudite faction and the Abnegation faction.

The conflict factors that trigger disputes are Economic factors which are also called Economic power, and also other factors, namely Political factors and power. So it can be concluded that the class conflict that occurs in the novel *Divergent* by Veronica Roth is a class conflict between the Erudite faction and the Abnegation faction which is caused by economic and political factors.

RECOMMENDATION

It would be beneficial to explore the cultural and societal implications of the faction system as a metaphor for contemporary social divisions. This could involve examining how media, politics, and social institutions contribute to the reinforcement of class boundaries, drawing parallels with the faction system in *Divergent*

Author Contributions

Ani Agustin: AA , Famala Eka Sanhadi Rahayu: FESR, Wilma Prafitri: WP "Conceptualization, AA ; methodology, WP; validation,FESR and WP; formal analysis,AA; resources, FESR and WP; data curation, AA; writing—original draft preparation, AA; writing—review and editing, WP; supervision,FESR and WP.All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript." Authorship must be limited to those who have contributed substantially to the work reported.

Funding

"This research received no external funding"

Acknowledgment

In addition, We would like to express my appreciation to Faculty of Cultural Science Mulawarman University, for supplying the essential resources and support throughout the entire process of doing the research. We would want to express my gratitude to each and every participant who has graciously contributed their time and experiences in order to make this research project a reality.

Conflict of interests

"The authors declare no conflict of interest."

REFERENCES

Abrams, M. H. (1999). *A glossary of literary terms*. Earl McPeek.

Bullock, A., Trombley, S., & Lawrie, A. (2000). *The New Fontana dictionary of modern thought*. HarperCollins.

Dobie, A. B. (2011). *Theory into practice: An introduction to literary criticism*. Cengage Learning.

Eagleton, T. (2002). *Marxism and Literary Criticism*. Routledge.

Flick, U. (2009). *An introduction to qualitative research* (4th ed.). Sage.

Gelshenen, K., & Gelshenen, R. (2008). *Discovering fiction: An introduction student's book with audio CD: A reader of American short stories*. Cambridge University Press.

Kenan, S. (2002). *Narrative fiction*. Routledge.

Neale, R. S. (2016). *Class and ideology in the nineteenth century*. Routledge.

Peck, J., & Coyle, M. (1993). *How to study literature: Literary terms and criticism*. The Macmillan Press Ltd.

Tyson, L. (2006). *Critical theory today: A user-friendly guide*. Routledge.