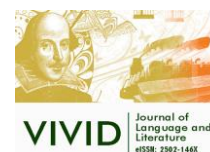




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Literature

# The Gold Can Stay: The Meaning Transformation of The Word 'Gold' In Robert Frost's *Nothing Gold Can Stay* And S.E Hinton's *The Outsiders*

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### A B S T R A C T

This thesis discusses the meaning transformation of the word 'gold' from 'Nothing Gold Can Stay' by Robert Frost to the phrase 'stay gold' in *The Outsiders* which give the big impact to the characters' life in the novel. This research was conducted by explaining the theme of the poem and the novel referring to *New Criticism* theory to uncover the meaning transformation of the word 'gold' in each work. From the result of this analysis, the author finds that the meaning of 'Nothing Gold Can Stay' is pessimistic and materialistic notions while the phrase 'stay gold' in *The Outsiders* which is taken from that poem shows opposite message. This phrase has spiritualistic and optimistic spirits. Then, the changing meaning of this phrase successfully drive the main character, Ponyboy Curtis, becomes better person.

## INTRODUCTION

Literature is a part of our cultural heritage that can enrich everyone's life in many ways. Literary works can be entertaining, beautiful, funny, tragic, informative or meaningful. They take us beyond the limited experience of our life to show us the lives of others and to give us experiences that we may not face in our own lives. It leads us intellectually and emotionally, and deepens our understanding about the life itself. Not to mention, a literary work has a certain message for its readers. One of them is about the cycle of life. Therefore, the readers have to read the literary work line by line in order to understand the certain message in it.

In the history of world literature, one of the famous authors that shows about the cycle of life is Robert Frost, an American poet who wrote his poems over a long span of America's history. Frost was honored during his lifetime as much as any other American poet has ever been. He received the Pulitzer Prize for poetry four times; he was given more than a score of honorary

degrees at such prestigious universities as Harvard and Princeton; he was praised by such diverse critics as Ezra Pound, Amy Lowell, and Randall Jarrell.

In this research, the researcher takes Robert Frost's *Nothing Gold Can Stay* that presents the awareness of passing time without bewailing it [1]. In his poem, Frost portrays the pessimism notion since he wants us to master the flux of life, accept the moment before it passes. Frost accepts the transitory as a fact.

Frost's poem 'Nothing Gold Can Stay' is surely famous and has been read by many people all over the world. One of the author which have been influenced by this poem is S.E Hinton. Hinton is an American author whose subjects are mostly about young adult life.

One of the famous works of S.E Hinton is *The Outsiders*. It is a novel about the clashes of the two gangs, the Greasers and the Socs in the small town of Tulsa, Oklahoma during the 1960s. Ponyboy Curtis, one of the greasers is the narrator of this story, and it is through his eyes that the events unfold. Ponyboy takes the reader through a two-week period that will shape the rest of his better life.

The main characters in *The Outsiders*, Ponyboy Curtis really loves reading literary works. When he and Johnny were hiding in the old church, they spent their time to read a book such as *Gone with the Wind* by Margaret Mitchell and this book can be coherent with them since some characters in the book could be identified as his friend in the real life. "I bet they were cool 'ol guys, after I had read the part about them riding into sure death because they were gallant. They remind me of Dally" (75) the influence of the book not only seen in the characters but also in the characterization. "... But I realized that these three appealed to me because they were like the heroes in the novels I read" (76) the same reflection of the book with his real life is one of the example how literary work can make connection with its readers. In the same case when they watch the sunset in the back of the church, Johnny shows his disillusionment because the pretty of color of sunset cannot stay forever, then Ponyboy suddenly remembers a poem by Robert Frost entitled 'Nothing Gold Can Stay'. But, this poem shows different thing because the poem makes the connection and influence the main characters in their life.

In the novel, the phrase "Nothing Gold Can Stay" get the modification in one of the character's hand. The phrase become "'stay gold'" which spoken by Johnny (another Greasers member) at the times he would die. The different way of giving meaning to Gold and its influences is the primary basis of this research. Given the distinction, the researcher finds that S.E Hinton quotes Robert Frost poem 'Nothing Gold Can Stay' intentionally to change the meaning of the phrase in order to show the big impact of the meaning transformations toward character's life.

## METHOD

This research consists of interpreting and comparing primary sources that is "Nothing Gold Can Stay" by Robert Frost and *The Outsiders* by S.E Hinton [2]. I will apply a comparative study in order to find out the different meaning of Gold in each works. To reach the meaning of Gold, I used *New Criticism* theory by seeing the intrinsic elements of both works. In the last, this research will be focused on the meaning transformations of the word 'gold' and the effect of the meaning transformation to the character's life. This research is basically an intrinsic

analysis, which means that the research is objectively based on the work itself without relating to other texts.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

'Nothing Gold Can Stay' is a poem by Robert Frost which describes the awareness of passing time without bewailing it. First of all, the poet begins by describing the beauty of nature. Nature is described with a symbol of green and its beauty is gold. According to the book entitled *A Dictionary of Symbols* by J.E Cirlot, green represents growth, sensation, hope, fertility while gold portrays superiority, masculinity and the state of glory [3]. In a word, Frost depicts the growth of something that is a source of great pride but the beauty and the honor of nature in the next line is quite different. Frost shows that the beauty of nature such as leaf cannot be held forever as stated, 'But only so an hour' (4). A dissertation written by Siti Arbaiyah [4] entitled *The Analysis of Figure of Speech and Moral Value in Robert Frost's Selected Poems* claims that "'Nothing Gold Can Stay'" portrays the beauty of nature which cannot stay in the long time. Surely, Frost depicts the feeling of doubtful about the beauty of nature which is hard to stay. In brief, it is clear enough to see the uncertainty from this poem.

In the next stanza, the poet describes the cycle of things. It is the cycle of leaf in the tree and the cycle of the day. By giving this illustration, Frost wants to say that there is nothing in life stays forever. Just as the dawn, beautiful sunrise always gives way to daylight, but its beauty always be replaced by something else. Frost says that the beauty is only temporary. Anything also has its limit. In the same case with the line, 'So Eden sank to grief' (6) which refers to the fall of Adam and Eve from the Garden of Eden in the Bible. Adam disobeyed the order not to eat the fruit. When he did it, the result is he is banished from the Garden forever. It means while Garden of Eden began as a golden paradise, it soon became a source of pain and grief. Overall, Frost describes that there is no good things in life can stay amazing but instead turning within a short time to something less pleasing. Definitely, Frost affirms the feeling of acceptance in the life.

Nancy B. Myers, in her dissertation claims that, "this attitude of acceptance is one reason for the lyric strengths of Frost poem: his attitude allows him to love many aspects of external nature because he is not taken up with lamenting what he cannot change" [5]. Through his poem, Frost wants us to accept all that happen to our life without regretting it. The important thing is to master the changes of life, accept the moments before it pass. Obviously, there is pessimistic notion in this poem. Frost accepts the transitory as a fact because all things change. All things fade to nothing.

The last line of this poem which is similar with its title, 'Nothing gold can stay' (8) is the straighten statement in this poem. Frost uses the symbol of 'gold' to show that gold does not last forever. According to Literary Symbolism, Gold represents prestige, wisdom, wealth, knowledge, generosity and quality [3]. Through the symbol of 'gold', Frost wants to portray that nothing that is precious or great value in the materialistic way can stay forever. Needless to say, when Frost uses the symbol of 'gold', materialistic notion show up in this poem.

As shown above, the general meaning of the poem is the feeling of acceptance in the entire life since Frost portrays the beauty of nature which cannot be held forever. Furthermore, the

detailed meaning of the poem is pessimistic and materialistic notion. The pessimistic notion comes from the feeling of doubtful about the beauty of nature which is hard to stay and the use of symbol of 'gold' which represents prestige, wealth and quality bring the materialistic notion into the surface. However, the phrase 'stay gold' which is taken from that poem shows different thing. This phrase has spiritualistic and optimistic notion since after hearing this phrase, Ponyboy and his brothers realize that all the rough thing are over and he promises not to go to fight anymore.

*The Outsiders* cites Frost's 'Nothing Gold Can Stay' by using the word 'gold' in different way. While Frost brings pessimistic and materialistic in his poem, Hinton indeed suggest her characters to 'stay gold' and come up with spiritualistic and optimistic notion. In brief, the change of the meaning from a pessimistic to an optimistic and from materialistic to spiritualistic way make the main character in the novel, Ponyboy Curtis has successfully becomes someone new; from rough and bad boy into good and wise boy. His new mindset is shaped along the experience that he has gone through; his perspective in seeing life has grown wider; his life is made anew; no more fights in his life, there is just a boy with school and homework in order to get a better life. Additionally, the meaning transformation of the word 'gold' in 'Nothing Gold Can Stay' and the phrase 'stay gold' in *The Outsiders* not only show that a literary work is influenced by other literary works, but also reflect that reading a literary work has a big impact to its readers especially when the readers get the message from a literary work and critically change their mindset about how they see the world, how they see the life itself.

## CONCLUSIONS

This research is conducted to show the meaning transformation of the two texts; 'Nothing Gold Can Stay' by Robert Frost and the phrase 'stay gold' in *The Outsiders*. After analyzing these two texts, the researcher concludes that there is a certain purpose of S.E Hinton to use Robert Frost's 'Nothing Gold Can Stay' as her reference. She wants to change the meaning of a dark poem into a meaningful one in order to show the big impact of reading a literary work. Hinton has obviously taken the phrase 'stay gold' from Robert Frost's 'Nothing Gold Can Stay' by using the word 'gold' in different way. While Frost brings pessimistic and materialistic in his poem, Hinton indeed suggests her characters to 'stay gold' and come up with spiritualistic and optimistic notion. Then, the changing meaning of this phrase successfully make Ponyboy Curtis becomes someone new; from rough and bad boy into good and wise boy. His life's changing is shaped along the experience that he had gone through since the last word is saying by his buddy, Johnny, make him realize that fighting is pointless and dictating from society is not important anymore.

*The Outsiders* shows the life changing of a bad boy into a good boy. By looking at the experience that the main character had, we can learn that no matter how hard the treatment that we get from the society, we do not need to be a hard person to face it up. Hinton never fails to show the reader that there is still goodness we can find in this world.

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