The Power of Narratives: Instilling Moral Lesson in Gen Z through Classic Short Stories

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Abstract: This study explores the enduring power of classic short stories to instill moral values in Generation Z (Gen Z) through stories. A comprehensive database of classic narratives is compiled, each accompanied by its moral lesson and accessible sources for further exploration. Spanning various themes such as duty, humility, greed, sacrifice, friendship, and compassion, these stories offer timeless insights into human nature and ethical dilemmas. Despite their age, these narratives remain remarkably relevant, transcending generational boundaries and resonating with contemporary audiences. By engaging with classic short stories through online platforms and digital adaptations, Gen Z can immerse themselves in rich narratives that prompt critical thinking, empathy, and moral reflection. Through this exploration, the study underscores the enduring significance of classic short stories as vehicles for ethical education, cultural heritage preservation, and personal growth across generations.

Keywords: Gen Z; Moral Lesson, Classic Short Stories

INTRODUCTION

In today's digital age, storytelling has transcended traditional mediums and found new avenues of expression in the digital realm. Digital storytelling, characterized by its fusion of multimedia elements such as text, images, audio, and video, has emerged as a powerful tool for conveying narratives and engaging audiences, particularly among Generation Z (Gen Z). Unfortunately, online narratives often prioritize themes of love and lust over moral values, leaving a void in the ethical education of Generation Z (Gen Z). The prevalence of superficial content lacking in substantive moral lessons poses a significant challenge to the development of ethical reasoning and character formation among young audiences. Recognizing this deficiency, there is a growing need to reintroduce classic stories rich in moral values into the digital sphere. This study aims to explore the potential of classic short stories as an alternative medium for delivering moral education and ethical guidance to Gen Z.

According to Hernanda et al (2021) strengthening Gen Z characters is critical to boosting the country's welfare and supporting its success in the face of increasingly competitive global rivalry. So, the mental revolution can be an effort to improve citizens' character education by cultivating multicultural values. In an era of rapid technological advancement and altering societal standards, the persistent influence of literature, particularly classic short tales, on molding moral principles among Generation Z (Gen Z) is a topic of great importance. While modern media bombards Generation Z with varied storylines, with love and lust theme, the ageless attraction of classic short stories endures, providing essential insights into ethics and human behavior.

This research endeavors to explore the enduring power of classic short stories as conduits for moral education and ethical reflection among Gen Z. Through the assembly of a comprehensive database, each entry meticulously catalogues classic short stories alongside their embedded moral lessons, providing accessible avenues for engagement and exploration. By curating a diverse selection of narratives spanning various themes and genres, this study aims to demonstrate the enduring relevance and universal resonance of moral storytelling across generations.

Despite the age of these literary works, their capacity to provoke thought and stimulate moral inquiry remains undiminished. Within the pages of classic short stories, Gen Z is afforded the opportunity to confront timeless truths about duty, humility, greed, sacrifice, friendship, and compassion. By engaging with these narratives through digital platforms and multimedia adaptations, Gen Z can navigate the complexities of contemporary life while drawing upon the wisdom of the past.

As we embark on this journey through the annals of classic literature, we acknowledge the transformative potential of storytelling to foster empathy, critical thinking, and moral integrity among Gen Z. Through the exploration of these timeless narratives, Gen Z embarks on a voyage of self-discovery, enriched by the profound insights and enduring values encapsulated within classic short stories.

METHOD

To construct the database of classic stories, a systematic approach to data collection and organization is employed. Utilizing a combination of online research and literary analysis, a selection of short stories was identified based on their moral significance. For each story included in the database, information was gathered meticulously, such as the title, year of publication, author and prominent moral values depicted with in the narrative. Furthermore, to supplement the understanding the moral values present in each story, a thorough review of scholarly article and educational resources was conducted. It aims to provide a comprehensive overview of the moral value portrayed in the stories.

The steps of collecting the data can be seen in the Figure 1 below:

Figure 1. Data Collection Method
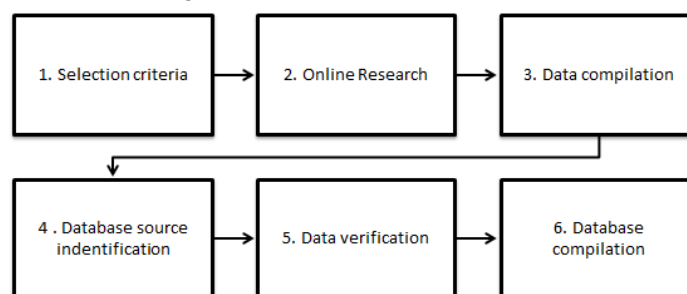
1. Selection criteria.

   First, establishing criteria for selecting classic short stories based on their enduring popularity, literary significance, and thematic richness. Stories were chosen based on their ability to convey moral values and resonate across generation.

2. Online Research.

   The second step is conducting extensive online research to identify a diverse range of classic short stories that met the selection criteria. This involved exploring literary websites, digital libraries, educational platform, and reputable literary publications to compile a compressive list of titles.

3. Data compilation.

   This step is gathering relevant information, including the title, author, year of publication, and a brief synopsis for each story. Additionally, identifying the primary moral values or themes depicted within each narrative.

4. Database source identification.

   Categorizing the sources from which each story could be accessed, including video platforms, e-book retailers, and scholarly journals. it aims to provide Gen Z with multiple options for accessing the stories based on their preferred medium and interests.

5. Data verification.

   A cross-referenced multiple sources consulted scholarly analysis and literary critiques where available. This verification process helped to validate the inclusion of each story in the database and confirm its value.

6. Database compilation.

   Using the compiled data to organized the information into a structure database format, consisting of columns of title, author, publication year, moral values, and database sources. This database served as a comprehensive repository of classic stories and their moral values, ready for analysis and dissemination.

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RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

There are three ways to address the discrepancy between the age of classic stories and the preference for newer references, especially in academic contexts where recent research is often prioritized. First, Cross-Generational Appeal: Recognize the cross-generational appeal of classic literature. Classic stories are not limited to any particular generation; they have been passed down through generations and continue to captivate readers of all ages, including Gen Z. Emphasize the timeless themes and universal truths found in classic literature that transcend generational boundaries. Second, Educational Value: Highlight the educational value of studying classic literature. While newer research may provide valuable insights into contemporary issues, classic literature offers unique opportunities for intellectual growth, cultural appreciation, and moral development. Discuss how studying classic stories can enrich Gen Z's understanding of literature, ethics, and humanity. The last is Contemporary Interpretations: Highlight contemporary interpretations and adaptations of classic stories. While the original texts may be old, modern retellings, adaptations, and analyses provide fresh perspectives and insights that appeal to contemporary audiences. Reference recent articles, essays, or multimedia content that explore classic literature from a contemporary point of view.

Recognizing the varying interest and accessibility preferences among contemporary readers, a range of media formats are included here, such as video (YouTube), e-book, audiobook, and journal articles. This strategic allows Gen Z to engage with the classic stories based on their preferred medium, whether it be through visual storytelling, audio narration, digital reading, or scholarly analysis. By providing multiple avenues, it aims to enhance the accessibility of classic short stories to modern audiences, fostering engagement with its timeless moral values. The database below contains long-lasting classics stories with significant moral lessons.

No	Author	Title, Year	Moral of the Story	Sources
1.	Ambrose Bierce	A Horseman in the Sky, 1889	The moral cost of doing one's duty. The story explores the internal	https://americanliterature.com/author/ambrose-bierce/short-story/a-horseman-in-the-sky#google_vignette

			conflict faced by a soldier torn between his duty to his country and his personal beliefs.	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lELLfMIKVO8
2.	Bjørnstjerne Bjørnson	The Father, 1860	Be modest and not being over prideful. Thord's status, wealth, and pride could not save his son, and he now seems to realize that they will not save him either. Thord has moved from pride to humility, and the story suggests that this change is for the best, despite the pain Thord has experienced.	https://americanliterature.com/author/bjrnstjerne-bjrnson/short-story/the-father https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZrWy7Q19vj4
3.	D. H. Lawrence	The Rocking-House Winner, 1885-1930	Greed makes people unhappy and inhumane. Money and material possessions cannot substitute for love. A tragic story that demonstrates how materialism is very destructive in people's lives	https://www.classicshorts.com/stories/rockwinr.html https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IskklHk7EUo
4.	Guy de Maupassant,	The Necklace, 1884	A person will pay dearly for coveting false values, and a person's preoccupation with appearance and materialism is fruitless and vain. Important to live within one's means. The story teaches us not to borrow things or money unnecessarily.	https://susannahfullerton.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/The-Necklace.pdf https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=E9Bmp_Ce8zI
5.	H.G. Wells	The Treasure in the Forest, 1895	Greed, hubris, and the consequences of unchecked ambition. The story serves as a cautionary tale about the dangers of pursuing material wealth at the expense of ethical principles and human relationships.	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XuxmB7RENrg http://www.vb-tech.co.za/ebooks/Wells%20HG%20-%20The%20Treasure%20in%20the%20Forest%20-%20GE.pdf
6.	H.H. Munro	The Open Window, 1914	The consequences of falsehood. The story highlights the power of storytelling and the dangers of taking things at face value.	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x4DbVvyukPE https://openlibrary-re-po.ecampusontario.ca/jspui/bitstream/123456789/417/1/English-Literature-Victorians-and-Moderns-1511376181.pdf#page=607
7.	Jack London-	To Build a	The story emphasizes the im-	https://www.youtube.com/wat

	don	Fire, 1908	portance of humility and prepar-edness in the face of adversity.	ch?v=LzRrPQJlUwM
8.	Liam O'Flaherty	The Sniper, 1923	The futility of war, the dehuman-izing effects of conflict, and the potential for redemption. The sto-ry explores the personal and psy-chological toll of violence and the possibility of finding humanity amidst chaos.	https://americanliterature.com/author/liam-oflaherty/short-story/the-sniper https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QXvHpPDQbLc
9.	O. Henry,	The Gift of the Magi, 1905	It teaches us the valuable lesson of loving caring for others	https://americanenglish.state.gov/files/ae/resource_files/1-the_gift_of_the_magi_0.pdf https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yAPZC7o6Y9k
10.	O. Henry,	The Last Leaf, 1907	We should never lose hope in life quickly. It also teaches the mean-ing of friendship. The moral of the story is humani-ty, how selfless Mr.Behrman was able to paint a masterpiece till his last breath.	https://americanenglish.state.gov/files/ae/resource_files/the-last-leaf.pdf https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sYGggWbX0vI
11.	Patricia MacLachan	Trough Grandpa's Eyes, 1971	This story emphasizes compas-sion, understanding, and the rich-ness of experiences beyond what can be seen with the eyes. It teaches how to look at the world in different ways.	https://books.google.co.id/books/about/Through_Grandpa_s_Eyes.html?id=XOec_3xkqJ4C&redir_esc=y https://www.goodreads.com/en/book/show/121468 https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=N3TRz9wqDQU
12.	W. W Ja-cobs,	The Mon-key's Paw, 1902	Don't tempt fate and be careful what you wish for	https://americanliterature.com/author/w-w-jacobs/short-story/the-monkeys-paw#google_vignette https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D0DsyJD0DZI

Table 1. Database of classic short stories contains significant moral values.

The elaborated data presents a diverse collection of classic short stories spanning various themes and moral lessons. Each narrative offers unique insights into human nature, ethical dilemmas, and the conse-quences of individual actions. Let's delve into the discussion of these stories:

1. Variety of Moral Themes: The selected stories cover a wide range of moral themes, including duty, humility, greed, sacrifice, friendship, and compassion. This diversity allows readers to explore dif-ferent aspects of morality and contemplate their significance in contemporary society. For example the morals of "The last Leaf by O Henry"; it teaches the significance of friendship and social solidar-

ity. It is suitable with the research result done by Cintya Andindita Mayangsari, Cahyo Budi Utomo, Amin Pujiati [1] The main function of social solidarity in everyday life is interpreted by Generation Z as the glue in life. Social solidarity is considered as one of the elements that strengthen brotherhood and friendship. On a broader scale, it strengthens the ties of unity. They stated that social solidarity has an important role in society.

2. Timeless Relevance: Despite being written decades or even centuries ago, the moral lessons conveyed in these stories remain remarkably relevant today. For example, Ambrose Bierce's "A Horseman in the Sky" explores the conflict between duty and personal beliefs, a theme that resonates in contemporary discussions about moral responsibility and individual conscience.

3. Cross-Generational Appeal: Classic literature transcends generational boundaries, appealing to readers of all ages, including Gen Z. By revisiting timeless stories and engaging with their moral messages, younger generations can gain valuable insights into universal human experiences and ethical dilemmas.

4. Accessible Sources: The availability of online resources, such as texts and videos, makes these classic stories easily accessible to contemporary readers. Whether through online platforms or digital adaptations, individuals can immerse themselves in the rich narratives and explore their moral dimensions at their convenience.

5. Educational Value: Beyond their entertainment value, classic short stories serve as valuable educational tools, fostering critical thinking, empathy, and moral reflection. Incorporating these narratives into educational curricula can enhance students' understanding of literature, ethics, and the complexities of the human condition.

6. Cultural Heritage: The preservation and study of classic literature contribute to the preservation of cultural heritage and literary traditions. By examining the moral lessons embedded within these timeless stories, readers can appreciate the enduring legacy of literature and its role in shaping societal values and norms.

7. Contemporary Interpretations: While rooted in historical contexts, classic stories continue to inspire contemporary interpretations and adaptations. Through modern retellings and multimedia formats, these narratives are reimagined for new audiences, highlighting their enduring relevance and universal appeal.

According to Tarigan (2022), Generation Z is particularly susceptible to internet addiction, which may result in a decrease in their social engagement because of their over-fixation on the virtual world. Furthermore, if a smartphone is used carelessly for illicit activities like downloading porn, it might become a "harmful smartphone" and contribute to the erosion of moral standards in the younger generation. Readers of all ages can learn important lessons about morality, society conventions, and the difficulties involved in making moral decisions by going back over these stories and considering their moral lessons.

The elaborate discussion underscores the enduring significance of classic short stories as timeless repositories of moral wisdom and ethical insight. Through a diverse array of narratives spanning various themes and genres, readers are afforded the opportunity to delve into the complexities of human nature, confront ethical dilemmas, and ponder the repercussions of individual choices. However, amidst the proliferation of digital media and the challenges posed by internet addiction among Generation Z, it becomes imperative to recognize the importance of literature as a counterbalance. As Tarigan et al (2022) suggests, excessive immersion in the virtual world may lead to a decline in social engagement and moral erosion. Nevertheless,

by revisiting classic short stories and reflecting on their moral lessons, readers of all ages can cultivate a deeper understanding of morality, societal norms, and the challenges inherent in ethical decision-making. Thus, classic literature stands as a timeless beacon, guiding readers through the intricacies of moral reasoning and ethical conduct, even in the face of contemporary technological challenges.

CONCLUSION

The accessibility of online resources facilitates broader engagement with classic literature, allowing Gen Z to explore texts and multimedia adaptations at their convenience. Whether through online platforms, digital texts, or video adaptations, individuals have the opportunity to immerse themselves in the rich narratives and contemplate their moral dimensions.

In conclusion, the elaborated data underscores the enduring value of classic short stories as sources of moral guidance, cultural heritage, and literary excellence. By embracing these timeless narratives, Gen Z can enrich their understanding of morality, empathy, and the human condition, contributing to personal growth, ethical reflection, and cultural enrichment across generations.

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