

CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

A.1 Background of the Research

Cinema has long served as a mirror of society, reflecting cultural values, ideologies, and social structures through narrative and visual representation. As a medium of popular culture, film not only entertains but also communicates meanings that influence public perceptions of social realities, including class distinctions. *The School for Good and Evil* (2022), a fantasy film based on the novel by Soman Chainani, presents a fictional world divided into two opposing realms—Good and Evil—embodied by two contrasting educational institutions. Beneath its fantastical surface, the film subtly encodes messages about identity, morality, power, and social hierarchy that can be unpacked through semiotic analysis.

The film begins with a scene where we are introduced to two characters, namely "Rhian" and "Rafal". They are the founders of the school of Good and Evil, where they want to groom the fairy tale heroes called "Ever" and the Villains "Never". However, in the end Rafal killed Rhian with blood magic. Several years passed, in a small village called Gavardol, there were two friends, namely Agatha and Sophie. The two of them often studied books about magic school stories. In contrast to Agatha, who was skeptical about the contents of the book, Sophie was actually very obsessed with the life told in the book, Sophie even imagined herself becoming a princess and living a very enjoyable life like the life in the book. Until one day they both tried the method written in the book to open the portal to the

magic school, in the end they both opened the portal and entered the magic school.

However, an unexpected thing happened, Sophie and Agatha were swapped in different classes. Sophie, who really wanted a life like a Princess, ended up being trapped in the Villain class, while Agatha, who did not really care about school, ended up in the Hero class. They both live very different lives. Sophie, who is so obsessed with being a beautiful princess, ends up in the villain class, where they look like witches. while Agatha, who does not really care about appearance, is instead included in the *good class*, where they prioritize elegant appearance and are demanding about beauty and good looks.

Based on the explanation above, class is shaped by an individual's material resources as well as perceived ranking compared to others in society, and in this article, the author (Barthes, 1968) examine how class influences behavior. Reduced resources and lower rank create a context that limits social outcomes for lower-class individuals and increases contextualist tendencies—that is, a focus on uncontrollable external social forces and other individuals that influence one's life outcomes. In contrast, abundant resources and rising ranks create a context that increases the personal freedom of upper-class individuals and gives rise to solipsistic social cognitive tendencies—that is, an individualistic focus on one's internal states, goals, motivations, and emotions. (Kraus,et al) (2012).

Chris Barker (2000) said that representation is a person's thinking pattern about what is in the message he receives through various signs or other forms,

then from receiving the message an idea or concept arises that he understands and is accepted through the selection process. To achieve interests and communication goals is basically temporary, especially in communication, the delivery of messages in the media can be found in certain signs and not all of them can be accepted or can be done continuously. So that it forms several signs that occur in life such as an example of a person who behaves well (hero) who is described as someone who is authoritative, dashing, brave and has an upperclass appearance, while people who behave badly are scary, muscular, poor people with wrinkled and shabby clothes (Subiakto,2003). Makes people think of ordinary things.

This study focuses on how the class is represented in *The School for Good and Evil*, particularly how characters, settings, and symbols visually and narratively construct and differentiate class identities. The binary structure of Good and Evil within the school setting offers fertile ground to explore how class stereotypes, privileges, and marginalizations are embedded in cinematic signs.

To analyze these meanings, the research adopts the semiotic framework of Roland Barthes. Barthes' theory distinguishes between denotation (literal meaning) and connotation (associated or cultural meaning), emphasizing how signs function in layered ways to produce ideology. Through his concepts of myth and signification, Barthes reveals how media texts reinforce dominant social values while appearing natural or inevitable. Applying Barthes' approach allows the researcher to decode the symbolic elements in the film and investigate how

notions of social class are mythologized—naturalized through costume, setting, character behavior, and narrative structure.

In an era where class divisions continue to shape access to resources, education, and social mobility, it is essential to critically examine how these divisions are represented in popular media. This research contributes to understanding how film constructs and perpetuates class ideologies, especially in stories aimed at younger audiences. By exploring *The School for Good and Evil* through Barthes' semiotic lens, this study aims to expose the deeper cultural messages hidden beneath its fantastical exterior.

A.2 Problem of the Research

Based on the background above, the formulation of the problem in this study is to breakdown the representation differences class between “Good” and “Evil” class in “The School for Good and Evil” using Roland Barthes theory. The core problem of this research is how the film *The School for Good and Evil* represents class distinctions through its visual and narrative elements, and how these representations encode ideological meanings. This study investigates the way signs such as costumes, settings, character behavior, and cinematic composition construct and differentiate between the “Good” and “Evil” classes. Using Roland Barthes semiotic theory, the research aims to decode the denotative, connotative, and mythological meanings of these signs in order to reveal the hidden ideologies about, identity, and morality. The main question is: How does the semiotic analysis represented in “*The School for Good and Evil*” movie?

A.3 Objective of the Research

Through this objective, the research seeks to deepen our understanding of how *The School for Good and Evil* (2022) uses semiotic strategies to represent of class, ultimately contributing to broader discussions about the role of the character in shaping public perceptions of social identity and morality.

A.4 Significance of the Research

In the modern era, film remains one of the most powerful tools for cultural expression and communication. Movies not only entertain but also reflect and shape societal values, power dynamics, and perceptions of class, identity, and morality. *The School for Good and Evil* (2022), a film adaptation of Soman Chainani's bestselling book series, presents an intricate world where characters are sorted into the "Good" and "Evil" schools, a clear manifestation of social class divisions. This research aims to analyze the social class representations in the film using semiotic analysis, specifically employing Roland Barthes' theories of semiotics, mythology, and connotation.

By analyzing the connotative and denotative meanings within the film, the research can examine how these class-based representations affect viewers' understanding of social dynamics. The division between "Good and Evil", portrayed through stark visual contrasts, influences how audiences perceive different social classes in real life. Such representations can reinforce existing stereotypes about

the wealthy (as inherently good) and the underprivileged (as morally flawed or problematic).

A.5 Limitation of the Research

This study aims to focus on the representation of class in the film "The School for Good and Evil" using connotative, denotative, myth in Roland Barthes theory and also through analysis using cinematography theory.

A.6 Definitions of the Key Terms

To provide the misconception on the data on this study, the following key terms are defined as they are used in the context of the research:

1. Semiotic Analysis

A method of interpreting signs and symbols in media texts to uncover deeper meanings. In this study, it refers to analyzing the signs (visuals, dialogues, costumes, settings, etc.) in the film *The School for Good and Evil* using Roland Barthes' model of denotation, connotation, and myth.

2. Sign

According to semiotic theory, a sign is anything that communicates a meaning.

A sign consists of a signifier (the form the sign takes) and the signified (the concept it represents). In this research, signs include visual and narrative elements in the film that represent social class.

3. Denotation

The literal, surface-level meaning of a sign. For example, a character wearing a crown denotes royalty. This is the first level of meaning in Barthes' semiotic theory.

4. Connotation

The associated or cultural meaning of a sign beyond its literal interpretation. For instance, a crown may connote wealth, power, or privilege, depending on cultural context.

5. Myth

In Barthes' theory, myth refers to the way cultural values and ideologies are embedded in signs and presented as "natural" or "common sense." In this study, myth is used to reveal how the film constructs ideas about social class in ways that reflect or reinforce broader social beliefs.

6. Representation

The way in which people, ideas, or social groups are portrayed in a media text. In this thesis, representation refers to how the film depicts different social classes through characters, institutions, and symbolism.