

**AN ANALYSIS OF SYMBOLISM IN DIAMONDS AND TOADS DRAMA SCRIPT
AND ITS FUNCTION IN BUILDING MORAL VALUES**

Devi Triana¹, Mutiara Angelica Sinaga², Yena Jorena Sembiring³, Yolanda Jesica
Sitanggang⁴, Tessaria Simorangkir⁵, Nessa Lumbantobing⁶, David Togi
Hutahae⁷

^{1,2,3,4,5,6,7} University of HKBP Nomensen Pematangsiantar

Alamat e-mail : ¹devitrianaagara20005@gmail.com,
²mutiaraangelicasinaga@gmail.com, ³yenajorenasembiringuhnp@gmail.com ,
⁴yolandasitanggang2004@gmail.com , ⁵tessatessariasimorangkir@gmail.com,
⁶nessatrifanny@gmail.com , ⁷davidhutahae1701@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

This study analyzes the symbols in the drama script Diamonds and Toads by Charles Perrault and examines their function in building moral values. A descriptive qualitative method was applied, with data collected from the drama script adapted from Perrault's fairy tale. The analysis was conducted using Miles and Huberman's interactive model (data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing) combined with Roland Barthes' semiotic theory, which distinguishes denotation (literal meaning) and connotation (symbolic meaning). The findings reveal three categories of symbols: object symbols (40.91%), character symbols (31.82%), and place/event symbols (27.27%). Object symbols such as roses, pearls, and diamonds connote goodness and virtue, while vipers and toads connote evil and vice. Character symbols position the younger daughter as a symbol of humility and the elder daughter as a symbol of arrogance. Place symbols such as the fountain represent moral testing, the forest symbolizes exile and protection, and the palace represents reward. The symbols function through binary oppositions such as flowers versus snakes, humility versus pride, service versus selfishness, to convey the central moral message that good deeds produce good results and evil deeds produce evil results. The symbols serve four functions: providing concrete representations of abstract moral concepts, creating emotional resonance, serving as memory aids, and establishing a clear moral structure. This study contributes to literary studies, particularly in semiotics and symbol analysis in drama scripts, and offers practical benefits for educators and students in understanding moral values in literary works.

Keywords: symbolism 1, semiotics 2, Roland Barthes 3, moral values 4

ABSTRAK

*Penelitian ini menganalisis simbol-simbol dalam naskah drama *Diamonds and Toads* karya Charles Perrault serta mengkaji fungsinya dalam membangun nilai-nilai moral. Metode kualitatif deskriptif diterapkan dengan data yang dikumpulkan dari naskah drama yang diadaptasi dari dongeng Perrault tersebut. Analisis dilakukan menggunakan model interaktif Miles dan Huberman (reduksi data, penyajian data, dan penarikan kesimpulan) yang dipadukan dengan teori semiotika Roland Barthes, yang membedakan antara denotasi (makna harfiah) dan konotasi (makna simbolis). Temuan penelitian mengungkapkan tiga kategori simbol: simbol objek (40,91%), simbol tokoh (31,82%), dan simbol tempat/peristiwa (27,27%). Simbol objek seperti bunga mawar, mutiara, dan berlian berkonotasi pada kebaikan dan kebajikan, sedangkan ular berbisa dan katak berkonotasi pada kejahatan dan keburukan. Simbol tokoh menempatkan anak perempuan bungsu sebagai simbol kerendahan hati dan anak perempuan sulung sebagai simbol kesombongan. Simbol tempat seperti pancuran air melambangkan ujian moral, hutan melambangkan pengasingan dan perlindungan, serta istana melambangkan ganjaran. Simbol-simbol tersebut bekerja melalui oposisi biner seperti bunga lawan ular, kerendahan hati lawan kesombongan, serta pelayanan lawan keegoisan untuk menyampaikan pesan moral utama bahwa perbuatan baik menghasilkan hasil yang baik dan perbuatan jahat menghasilkan hasil yang buruk. Simbol-simbol ini menjalankan empat fungsi: memberikan representasi konkret atas konsep moral yang abstrak, menciptakan resonansi emosional, berfungsi sebagai alat bantu ingatan, dan membentuk struktur moral yang jelas. Penelitian ini memberikan kontribusi pada kajian sastra, khususnya dalam bidang semiotika dan analisis simbol pada naskah drama, serta menawarkan manfaat praktis bagi pendidik dan siswa dalam memahami nilai-nilai moral dalam karya sastra.*

Kata kunci: simbolisme 1, semiotika 2, Roland Barthes 3, nilai-nilai moral 4

A. Pendahuluan

Language is the main tool used by humans to communicate thoughts, feelings, and ideas. As a system of signs, language helps people understand each other and interact in social life. In literary studies, language is not only used to tell stories but also to express moral values, social criticism, and the author's viewpoint. Wellek and Warren (1989) explain that language in literature is connotative, meaning that words have not only literal

meanings but also symbolic meanings influenced by culture and society. This idea is supported by Hashmi (2025), who states that language use is not only about words but also about social and cultural practices, beliefs, and norms that shape how language is used. Therefore, literary works can be seen as cultural products that reflect and influence the values of society.

Drama is one type of literary work that has strong communicative power. Unlike prose and poetry, which

are usually read, drama is created to be performed and directly experienced by an audience. Drama combines several elements at once, such as dialogue (words), movement and expression (visuals), and sound (intonation and audio). Saksono (2009) states that literature can be seen as discourse, meaning that a text connects language users not only through speech but also through ideas, ideology, roles, and social class. In this view, a text is not only an object but also a process of communication. This shows that literary works are closely related to social and communication contexts.

Fairy tales are one of the oldest forms of cultural communication. Since ancient times, people have shared values, norms, and local wisdom through stories told from generation to generation. Fairy tales function as tools for teaching character, controlling social behavior, and preserving cultural identity. Fairy tales usually have special characteristics: they are anonymous, shared by a community, and contain universal moral messages. Fairy tales are also rich in symbols that are easy to understand, so the values in the stories can influence society. Bettelheim (1976) explains that fairy tales help children's psychological development by helping them understand inner conflicts and moral values through symbols. Gellert (2012) also states that journey motifs in Perrault's fairy tales relate to human development and self-actualization, where symbols represent the search for knowledge and meaning.

One well-known fairy tale that contains many symbols and moral values is *Diamonds and Toads* (original title *Les Fées*) by Charles Perrault. This story was first published in 1697 in *Tales of Mother Goose*. Charles Perrault (1628–1703) is known as one of the pioneers of literary fairy tales, and the works remain important in world literature (Cooper, 2021). The story tells about a widow with two daughters who have very different personalities. The younger daughter is kind and humble and receives a gift from a fairy: flowers and jewels come out every time she speaks. In contrast, the older daughter, Fanny, is rude and arrogant and receives a curse: snakes and toads come out every time she speaks (Cooper, 2021). Gellert (2012) explains that journey or trial motifs in Perrault's stories relate to human development and the search for meaning. The story also includes common folklore themes, such as kind and unkind girls and magical help that allows a character to escape a difficult life (Cooper, 2021).

This study uses Roland Barthes' semiotic theory to analyze symbols in the drama script *Diamonds and Toads*. Barthes divides meaning into two levels: denotation and connotation. Denotation is the literal meaning of a sign, while connotation is the symbolic meaning influenced by emotions, culture, and values (Roosmawanto & Apriyani, 2025). Barthes suggests two steps in analysis: first, identify the literal meaning, and second, find the deeper symbolic meaning. This method helps reveal hidden moral and ideological messages in a text. This study aims to

identify symbols in the drama script, analyze their meanings, and explain how the symbols build moral values such as humility, politeness, and justice.

Several previous studies have used semiotic theory to analyze drama scripts, but this study has some differences. Roosmawanto and Apriyani (2025) focused on the myth of death in *Bulan Bujur Sangkar*, while Khoshshans and Bakhtiarian (2025) studied how Barthes' five codes shape the structure of a Persian play. Sitinjak (2024) used Peirce's theory to study social and cultural representation, and Hendriani and Krisna (2024) focused on cultural values in *Tambo*. Putri and Waluyo (2023) analyzed moral values in *Si Jago*. In contrast, this study focuses on Barthes' denotation and connotation in a fairy tale drama script and emphasizes how symbols build moral values. This study also uses a classic fairy tale, not a modern or local drama, to give a broader cultural perspective.

Based on this background, this study has three research questions: (1) What symbols are found in the drama script *Diamonds and Toads*? (2) What are the meanings of the symbols based on Barthes' theory? (3) What is the role of the symbols in building moral values? The objectives are to identify symbols, analyze meanings, and explain the role of symbols in delivering moral values. To answer these questions, the researcher analyzed the data using Miles and Huberman's (1994) interactive model consisting of

data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing, combined with Roland Barthes' semiotic theory (1964) to examine denotative and connotative meanings. This study is expected to give benefits for theory in literature and semiotics, and also practical benefits for teachers, students, and readers in understanding moral values in literary works.

II. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study employs a descriptive qualitative method (Creswell, 2014). The primary data source was the drama script *Diamonds and Toads*, adapted from Charles Perrault's fairy tale, taken from the SAGE Edge website in PDF form. Data collection involved downloading the script, reading it repeatedly, identifying words, phrases, or dialogues containing potential symbols, and classifying the data into three categories: objects, characters, and places/events.

The collected data were analyzed using the Miles and Huberman (1994) interactive model, consisting of data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing, with Roland Barthes' semiotic theory (1964) as the theoretical framework distinguishing denotation and connotation. Data reduction was conducted by selecting and summarizing relevant symbols from the script. Data display was carried out through tables presenting each symbol with its evidence, denotative meaning, and connotative meaning, followed by analysis of binary oppositions and interpretation of moral values.

Conclusion drawing was conducted by analyzing the meaning of each symbol based on the story's context and connecting the findings to the moral values conveyed.

III. DATA ANALYSIS, FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

3.1. Data Analysis and Findings

This section presents the findings of the study, with emphasis on answering the first research question: (1) What symbols are found in the drama script *Diamonds and Toads*?

The analysis identified three categories of symbols in the drama script: object symbols, character symbols, and place/event symbols. The distribution of each category is presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Frequency and Percentage of Symbol Categories

Category of Symbols	Total	Percentage
Object Symbols	9	40.91%
Character Symbols	7	31.82%
Place/Event Symbols	6	27.27%
TOTAL	22	100%

As shown in Table 1, object symbols constitute the majority with 9 occurrences (40.91%), indicating that the narrative heavily depends on concrete objects to convey symbolic meanings. Character symbols follow with 7 occurrences (31.82%), while place/event symbols appear 6 times (27.27%).

1. Object Symbols

Object symbols appear 9 times in the script, realized through items such as water, fountain, pitcher, silver tankard, rose, pearl, diamond, viper, and toad. Table 2 presents each object symbol with its evidence and its denotative and connotative meanings based on Roland Barthes' semiotic theory.

Table 2. Object Symbols

No	Symbol	Evidence from the Script	Denotative Meaning	Connotative Meaning
1	Water	"...she took some of the clearest water from the fountain"	Clear liquid used for drinking	Purity, humility, life
2	Fountain	"...she took some of the clearest water from the fountain"	A place to get water	Moral testing, turning point
3	Pitcher	"bring home a pitcherful" and	A container for water	Willingness to

4	Silver Tankard	"holding up the pitcher" "taking with her the best silver tankard in the house"	A luxurious drinking cup	Greed, arrogance, superiority
5	Rose	"there came out of her mouth two roses. ..."	A flower with petals and thorns	Kindness, beauty Of heart, virtue
6	Pearl	"...two pearls"	A white gemstone from shells	Wisdom, purity, sincerity
7	Diamond	".....two large diamonds."	The hardest gemstone	Strength, nobility, priceless value
8	Viper	"throwing out of her mouth a viper.. ."	A venomous snake	Hatred, deceit, evil
9	Toad	"....her mouth a toad"	An ugly, rough-skinned	Ugliness, rottenness of

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amphibian
heart,
rudeness

2. Character Symbols

Character symbols appear 7 times in the script, realized through the younger daughter, elder daughter (Fanny), mother, fairy, king's son, poor woman, and princess. Table 3 presents each character symbol with its evidence and its denotative and connotative meanings.

Table 3. Character Symbols

No	Symbol	Evidence from the Script	Denotative Meaning	Connotative Meaning
1	Younger Daughter	"the very picture of sweetness of temper and virtue"	The younger girl who works hard	Kindness, humility, patience, true virtue
2	Elder Daughter (Fanny)	"so disagreeable and so proud"	The spoiled eldest daughter	Arrogance, pride, selfishness
3	Mother	"doted on her elder daughter" and "had a great aversion for the	A widow with two daughters	Injustice, favoritism, destructive parenting

		younger"		
4	Fairy	"taken the form of a poor country woman" then "the air and dress of a princess"	A magical being in two forms	Divine justice, rewarder of deeds
5	King's Son	"returning from the chase" and "fell in love with her"	A prince	Savior, reward for goodness
6	Poor Woman	"a poor woman, who begged of her to let her drink"	An old, poor woman	Test of humility
7	Princess	"a magnificently dressed lady, who asked to drink"	A richly dressed lady	Test of arrogance

3. Place and Event Symbols

Place and event symbols appear 6 times in the script, realized

through the fountain, forest, palace, kitchen, the 1.5-mile journey, and the phrase "twice a day." Table 4 presents each place/event symbol with its evidence and its denotative and connotative meanings.

Table 4. Place and Event Symbols

No	Symbol	Evidence from the Script	Denotative Meaning	Connotative Meaning
1	Fountain	"...she took some of the clearest water from the fountain"	A place to get water	Moral testing, destiny
2	Forest	"hid herself in the forest" and "a corner of the wood"	A wild, wooded place	Exile, death, protection
3	Palace	"conducted her to the palace of the King"	Royal residence	Reward, happiness
4	Kitchen	"She made her eat in the	A cooking place	Oppression, injustice

		kitchen		
		n"		
5	1.5 Miles	"more than a mile and a half"	Distance	Sacrifice, hard work
6	Twice a Day	"go twice a day to draw water"	Frequency	Tireless perseverance

3.2. DISCUSSION

This section elaborates in detail the roles of the three categories of symbols in constructing the story and conveying its moral values, thus answering the second and third research questions: (2) What are the meanings of these symbols when analyzed using Roland Barthes' semiotic theory? (3) What is the function of these symbols in building moral values?

The analysis reveals that symbols function not merely as decorative elements but as strategic narrative devices that simultaneously build story elements and encode moral values through the two-stage meaning system of denotation and connotation, as proposed by Roland Barthes.

1. Object Symbols as Moral Representations

Object symbols represent abstract moral concepts through concrete items. In Act 3, the narrator describes: "*And in speaking these*

words there came out of her mouth two roses, two pearls, and two large diamonds." The denotative meaning refers to beautiful and valuable objects, while the connotative meaning represents kindness, purity of heart, and virtue. The younger daughter's humility results in these beautiful objects, encoding the moral message that goodness produces beautiful results.

In contrast, Act 5 states: "*...throwing out of her mouth a viper and a toad.*" The denotative meaning refers to dangerous and disgusting creatures, while the connotative meaning represents hatred, deceit, and evil. The elder daughter's pride results in these disgusting creatures, encoding the moral message that rudeness produces ugly results.

The contrast between the ordinary pitcher and the silver tankard further reinforces this moral structure. In Act 2, the younger daughter uses a simple pitcher to serve the poor woman, demonstrating her humility. In Act 4, the elder daughter takes "*the best silver tankard in the house,*" reflecting her greed and arrogance. The denotative meaning of the pitcher is a simple container, while its connotative meaning is sincerity and willingness to serve. The silver tankard denotes a luxurious cup but connotes greed and superiority.

2. Character Symbols as Moral Archetypes

Character symbols construct moral identities through their actions. The younger daughter is described as "*the very picture of sweetness of temper and virtue*" in Act 1, positioning her as a symbol of goodness. Throughout the story, her actions consistently align with this characterization, she serves the poor woman willingly, accepts her mother's scolding patiently, and speaks kindly to everyone. She functions as a moral archetype of the good person who is rewarded for her virtue.

The elder daughter is described as "*so disagreeable and so proud*" in Act 1, positioning her as a symbol of arrogance. Her actions consistently reflect this characterization, she refuses to serve the fairy, speaks rudely, and shows no concern for others. She functions as a moral archetype of the bad person who is punished for her vice.

The mother figure provides additional moral complexity. In Act 1, the narrator states: "*This mother doted on her elder daughter, and at the same time had a great aversion for the younger.*" The denotative meaning describes the mother's favoritism, while the connotative meaning positions her as a symbol of injustice and destructive parenting. Her favoritism toward the arrogant elder daughter spoils the elder daughter's character, while her aversion to the virtuous younger

daughter causes her to lose both daughters in the end. This encodes the moral message that parental favoritism damages children and destroys families.

The fairy functions as a symbol of divine justice. She appears in two forms, in Act 2 as "*a poor woman*" and in Act 4 as "*a magnificently dressed lady.*" The denotative meaning is a magical being in two disguises, while the connotative meaning is divine justice that tests people's true character. The younger daughter passes the test by treating both forms with kindness, while the elder daughter fails by treating both with rudeness. This encodes the moral message that justice is unavoidable and that everyone will be judged by their actions.

3. Place and Event Symbols as Moral Geography

Place and event symbols establish spatial and temporal dimensions that reinforce the story's moral structure. In Act 1, the narrator describes the younger daughter's task: "*...go twice a day to draw water more than a mile and a half from the house...*" The denotative meaning describes the younger daughter's daily chore, while the connotative meaning positions the fountain as a place of moral testing and the journey as a symbol of sacrifice and hard work. The younger daughter's willingness to perform this difficult task without complaint demonstrates her patience and virtue. The elder

daughter, in contrast, grumbles and complains, failing the test when she arrives.

The forest appears twice in the story: in Act 5 when the younger daughter "went to hide herself in the forest nearby" and in the Epilog when the elder daughter "went to a corner of the wood, and there died." The denotative meaning is a wild, wooded place, but the connotative meaning differs for each character. For the younger daughter, the forest becomes a place of protection and a meeting with the king's son; for the elder daughter, it becomes a place of exile and death. This spatial opposition encodes the moral message that the same place can have different meanings depending on one's moral character.

The palace represents the reward for goodness. In Act 6, the king's son conducts the younger daughter "to the palace of the King, his father, and there married her." The denotative meaning is a royal residence, while the connotative meaning is happiness, reward, and a better new life. The palace stands in opposition to the kitchen, where in Act 1 the younger daughter was forced to eat and work. This spatial contrast encodes the transformation from oppression to reward that comes through virtue.

4. Binary Oppositions as Moral Structure

The analysis reveals that the script systematically employs binary

oppositions to create moral meaning. According to Barthes, meaning is produced through contrasts. The following table summarizes these oppositions.

Table 5. Binary Oppositions in the Drama Script

Category	Goods (Younger Daughter)	Evidence	Evil (Elder Daughter)	Evidence
Objects	Rose, Pearl, Diamond	"two roses, two pearls, and two large diamonds" (Act 3)	Viper, Toad	"a viper and a toad" (Act 5)
Attitude	Humble, Polite	"Oh, yes, with all my heart, Good y" (Act 2)	Proud, Rude	"Am I come hither to serve you with water, pray?" (Act 4)
Treatment	Serves since rely	"holding up the pitch	Refuses rudely	"I suppose this

		er... that she might drink the easie r" (Act 2)		silve r tank ard was brou ght purel y for your lady ship" (Act 4)
Fairy 's Resp onse	Rew ard	"a flowe r or a jewel " (Act 2)	Punis hmen t	"a snak e or a toad " (Act 4)
Final Fate	Happ iness	"cond ucted her to the palac e... and marri ed her" (Act 6)	Death	"wen t to a corn er of the woo d, and ther e died" (Epil og)

The binary oppositions encode the story's central moral message, good deeds produce good results, and evil deeds produce evil results. Every element of the story works in pairs: flowers versus snakes, jewels versus toads, humility versus pride, service versus selfishness. The consistent opposition between these pairs creates a clear moral

framework that guides the audience's interpretation and makes the moral lesson easy to understand and remember.

3.2.5. Functions of Symbols in Building Moral Values

Based on the analysis, the symbols in *Diamonds and Toads* serve four main functions in building moral values.

1. Symbols provide concrete representations of abstract moral concepts. Instead of simply stating that "*humility is good*," the script shows humility rewarded with flowers and jewels. Instead of stating that "*pride is bad*," the script shows pride punished with snakes and toads. This function makes the moral lessons accessible and memorable, especially for children.
2. Symbols create emotional resonance. The beauty of roses, pearls, and diamonds evokes positive emotions, while the disgust associated with vipers and toads evokes negative emotions. This emotional dimension strengthens the moral message by linking virtue with aesthetic pleasure and vice with aesthetic disgust.
3. Symbols serve as mnemonic devices. The image of flowers and jewels coming from someone's mouth is vivid and unusual, making the moral

lesson easy to recall and share. This function is particularly important for fairy tales, which are often used to teach moral values to children.

4. Symbols create a clear moral structure through binary oppositions. The consistent contrast between good symbols and evil symbols guides the audience's interpretation. The audience knows that flowers and jewels mean goodness, while snakes and toads mean evil. This clear structure helps the audience understand and accept the story's moral message without explicit explanation.

The moral values built through these symbols include humility, politeness, justice, fairness, selfless kindness, and the importance of guarding one's speech. These values remain relevant today. In a world where social media makes words more powerful than ever, the story's message about the consequences of speech is particularly significant. Similarly, the critique of favoritism warns parents, teachers, and leaders against unfair treatment.

E. Kesimpulan

Based on the data analysis conducted on the drama script *Diamonds and Toads* by Charles Perrault using Miles and Huberman's interactive model (1994) and Roland Barthes' semiotic theory (1964), the study found three categories of

symbols: object symbols (9 occurrences, 40.91%), character symbols (7 occurrences, 31.82%), and place/event symbols (6 occurrences, 27.27%). Based on Barthes' theory, each symbol carries denotative and connotative meanings. Roses, pearls, and diamonds connote goodness and virtue, while vipers and toads connote evil and vice. The fountain symbolizes moral testing, the forest represents exile and protection, the palace symbolizes reward, the mother symbolizes injustice, and the fairy represents divine justice.

The symbols function to build moral values through binary oppositions: flowers versus snakes, jewels versus toads, humility versus pride, and service versus selfishness. These oppositions encode the story's central moral message that good deeds produce good results and evil deeds produce evil results. Symbols provide concrete representations of abstract moral concepts, create emotional resonance, serve as memory aids, and establish a clear moral structure.

These findings align with previous studies by Bettelheim (1976), Roosmawanto and Apriyani (2025), and Putri and Waluyo (2023). With these findings, the researcher hopes this study can contribute to literary studies, particularly in semiotics and symbol analysis in drama scripts, and serve as a reference for future researchers. The researcher also hopes this study can

benefit teachers and students in understanding moral values in literary works, as well as encourage readers to appreciate fairy tales as a medium for moral education.

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