

SYMBOLISM IN THE FILM SCRIPT *A LITTLE PRINCESS*

A THESIS

BY

SITI NURHALIZA

Reg. No: 71210411011



DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH LITERATURE

UNDERGRADUATE PROGRAM

FACULTY OF LITERATURE

UNIVERSITAS ISLAM SUMATERA UTARA

MEDAN

2025

SYMBOLISM IN THE FILM SCRIPT *A LITTLE PRINCESS*

A THESIS

BY

SITI NURHALIZA

Reg No.: 71210411011

SUBMITTED TO

THE FACULTY OF LITERATURE

UNIVERSITAS ISLAM SUMATERA UTARA

IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS

FOR THE DEGREE OF SARJANA SASTRA

IN ENGLISH LITERATURE

Supervisor,

Safitri Hariani, S.S,M.S

Dean of the Faculty,

Head of Department,

Dr. Purwanto Siwi, S.S, M.A

Dr. Ely Ezir, M.S.

DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH LITERATURE

UNDERGRADUATE PROGRAM

FACULTY OF LITERATURE

UNIVERSITAS ISLAM SUMATERA UTARA

MEDAN

2025

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

With sincere gratitude, the writer would like to begin by praising Allah SWT, the Most Gracious and the Most Merciful, for His endless blessings, health, and guidance throughout the journey of completing this thesis entitled “Symbolism in the Film Script *A Little Princess*.” Without His divine will, this work would not have been possible. The writer also sends peace and blessings upon the Prophet Muhammad SAW, whose wisdom and example continue to inspire strength and patience in every step of life.

This thesis is written in partial fulfillment of the requirements to obtain the degree of Sarjana Sastra at the Faculty of Literature, Universitas Islam Sumatera Utara (UISU), Medan. Throughout the writing of this thesis, the writer has been fortunate to receive support, encouragement, and assistance from many individuals, to whom the writer wishes to express heartfelt appreciation:

1. The Dean of the Faculty of Literature and the Head of the Department of English Literature, Universitas Islam Sumatera Utara Medan, **Dr. Purwanto Siwi, S.S, M.A and Dr. Ely Ezir, M.S**, the writer extends sincere thanks for their leadership and support throughout the academic journey.
2. Deepest appreciation goes to the writer’s supervisor, **Safitri Hariani, S.S, M.S**, for her time, guidance, thoughtful advice, and support throughout every stage of this research. Her insights have contributed greatly to the completion of this thesis.
3. The writer’s beloved parents, **Widia Elvita and Edi Haryanto**, your unconditional love, continuous prayers, and unwavering belief have been the

writer's greatest strength. May Allah SWT grant you both health, happiness, and abundant blessings.

4. To **Lisa Veranita, Muhammad Alfath, and Rasyid Haryanto** thank you for your endless support, encouragement, and for reminding the writer to stay strong and focused during challenging moments.
5. To all lecturers and staff of the Department of English Literature at UISU, thank you for your knowledge, guidance, and encouragement throughout the years of study.
6. Special thanks to dear friends **Tri Octa Santika Siringo-ringo, Elisa Sirait, Nasha Alifia, Feby Rahmadhani, Melani Rianti, and Sari Indah Wahyuni**, whose presence, support, and friendship have been a source of strength and motivation. Thank you for standing beside the writer through every high and low.
7. Lastly, the writer wishes to acknowledge herself **Siti Nurhaliza** for the perseverance, belief, and dedication to reach this point. Thank you for trusting the process and continuing to move forward even in times of doubt. May you always remember that every effort made with sincerity is never in vain.

May this thesis serve as a meaningful contribution to those who read it and provide insight and inspiration for further studies in literature and film analysis.

Medan, 2025

Siti Nurhaliza

(71210411011)

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT	i
ABSTRACT.....	iii
TABLE OF CONTENT	iv
CHAPTER I : INTRODUCTION.....	1
1.1 Background of the Study	1
1.2 Statement of the Problem	4
1.3 Objective of the Study	5
1.4 Scope of the Study	5
1.5 Significance of the Study	5
CHAPTER II : LITERATURE REVIEW	7
2.1 Symbolism.....	7
2.2 Types of Symbolism	10
2.3 Meaning of Symbolism	15
CHAPTER III : METHOD OF STUDY	18
3.1 Study Design	18
3.2 Data Collection.....	18
3.3 Data Analysis	19
CHAPTER IV : ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS.....	20
4.1 Analysis	20
4.1.1 Natural Symbol	20
4.1.2 Conventional Symbol	24
4.1.2.1 Color Symbol	25
4.1.2.2 Object Symbol.....	27

4.1.2.3 Nature Symbol	29
4.1.3 Singular Symbol.....	31
4.2 Finding	34
CHAPTER V : CONCLUSION	35
5.1 Conclusion	35
5.2 Recommendation.....	35
REFERENCES.....	36
APPENDIX	

REFERENCES

- Badan Pengembangan dan Pembinaan Bahasa. (n.d.). *Lambang*. In *Kamus Besar Bahasa Indonesia*. Retrieved from <https://kbbi.kemdikbud.go.id/entri/lambang>
- Creswell, J. W. (2014). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches*. Sage Publications.
- Cuarón, A. & LaGravenese, R. (1995). *A Little Princess*. Warner Bros. Pictures.
- Elvina Juniatri, Sururuddin, & Mila Wahyuni. (2022). Pesan Moral pada Film Mencari Hilal: Analisis Semiotika Roland Barthes. *Journal of Religion and Film, 1*, 96–115.
- Fadaee, E. (2011). *A case study of Animal Farm*. *Journal of English and Literature*. Symbols, metaphor, and similes in literature.
- Guatri, G. (2023). Analisis Representasi Visual : Kajian Kekerasan Simbolik dalam Film. *JRF: Journal of Religion and Film, 2*, 293–312.
- Johnson, R. (2023). The layers of meaning in modern literature: An exploration of symbolism. *Literary Studies Journal, 15*(1), 45-59.
- Jung, C. G., Franz, M. v. (1978). *Man and His Symbols*. Britania Raya: Picador
- Khasan, O. A. (2024). *The symbolism and its representation of meaning in the film Before Sunrise (1995): Meaning through scenes and objects*.
- Lee, T. (2023). Engaging with symbols: The reader's role in literary interpretation. *Journal of Literary Theory, 8*, 71–84.
- Liszka, J. J. (1996). *A general introduction to the semiotic of Charles Sanders*

Peirce. Indiana University Press.

Malhotra, N. . (2004). Marketing Research: An Applied Orientation. In *Marketing Research: An Applied Orientation*. Pearson Education.

Naufalia, N. (2019). Analisis indeks dan simbol dalam film *Surat Kecil untuk Tuhan* karya Agnes Davonar dengan menggunakan pendekatan semiotika.

Oxford University Press. (n.d.). *Symbolism*. In Oxford Learner's Dictionaries. Retrieved from <https://www.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com/definition/english/symbolism?q=symbolism>

Peirce, C. S. (1931). *Collected Papers of Charles Sanders Peirce* (Vols. 1–8). Harvard University Press.

Rizki, U. (2022). *An analysis of symbolism found in Disney's 2015 Cinderella live action movie*.

Smith, A. (2022). The duality of symbols: Peace and conflict in literary texts. *International Journal of Literature and Arts*, 10(3), 123-134

Yahya, N. (2022). *Analisis makna simbolisme dalam karya A'idh Abdullah Al-Qarni telaah buku "Al-Qur'an Berjalan" (Vol. 15)*.

APPENDIX

A. Biography of Richard LaGravenese

Richard LaGravenese is an accomplished American screenwriter, film director, and producer born on October 30, 1959, in Brooklyn, New York. He is best known for his emotionally resonant screenplays and adaptations of literary works. LaGravenese studied at New York University's Tisch School of the Arts, where he developed a deep interest in narrative storytelling and screenwriting. His Italian-American heritage and upbringing in a vibrant urban environment shaped his sensitivity to character-driven stories and emotional arcs.

His breakthrough came with the critically acclaimed screenplay for 'The Fisher King' (1991), which earned him an Academy Award nomination for Best Original Screenplay. This film, blending fantasy and drama, set the tone for the kind of heartfelt, introspective storytelling that would define much of his career. LaGravenese's style is known for its balance of sincerity, poetic dialogue, and exploration of themes such as grief, redemption, and the human capacity for empathy.

In addition to writing, LaGravenese has directed several films, showcasing his versatility in visual storytelling. His work consistently centers on relationships, memory, and the emotional struggles of everyday people, and he is praised for crafting roles that resonate deeply with audiences. He remains a respected figure in Hollywood, contributing significantly to both commercial and independent film landscapes.

B. Literary Works of Richard LaGravenese

Richard LaGravenese has a rich portfolio of works that span across drama, romance, fantasy, and literary adaptations. Each work reflects his distinctive voice as a storyteller, marked by emotional intelligence and deep character exploration. Some of his most notable contributions include:

1. *The Fisher King* (1991) – A moving story of redemption and friendship, nominated for multiple Academy Awards.
2. *A Little Princess* (1995) – An adaptation that elevated the source material through symbolism and cinematic poetry.
3. *The Bridges of Madison County* (1995) – A romantic drama adapted from Robert James Waller's novel, exploring the complexity of love and duty.
4. *P.S. I Love You* (2007) – A romantic drama about grief and healing, adapted from Cecelia Ahern's novel.
5. *Freedom Writers* (2007) – Based on a true story, this film portrays the power of writing in transforming lives.
6. *Beautiful Creatures* (2013) – A young adult fantasy film that blends supernatural themes with teenage identity issues.

These works not only reveal LaGravenese's range as a screenwriter but also his commitment to portraying the emotional truths of his characters. His ability to humanize even the most fantastical settings sets him apart in modern screenwriting.

C. The Summary of A Little Princess

'A Little Princess' (1995), directed by Alfonso Cuarón and written by Richard LaGravenese and Elizabeth Chandler, is a heartfelt adaptation of Frances Hodgson Burnett's classic novel. Set during World War I, the film follows the story of Sara Crewe, a kind and imaginative girl who is sent to a strict boarding school in New York while her father goes to war.

Initially treated like royalty due to her wealth, Sara's world turns upside down when her father is presumed dead and his assets are frozen. Deprived of her status and comforts, she is forced to work as a servant in the attic. Despite the cruelty she faces, especially from the stern headmistress Miss Minchin, Sara holds onto her belief in kindness, magic, and imagination.

The narrative emphasizes how Sara uses stories, symbols, and emotional resilience to maintain her sense of identity and hope. The attic becomes both a prison and a sanctuary, transformed by Sara's inner world. Through her interactions with other characters like Becky, Ram Dass, and even Miss Minchin's timid sister Amelia, the film weaves a story about empathy, courage, and the sustaining power of imagination.

The climax of the story arrives with the revelation that Sara's father is still alive. After enduring hardship with grace, Sara is finally reunited with her father in a moving and emotional scene. This resolution not only restores her place in society but also validates her belief in magic and love.

LaGravenese's script adds layers of symbolism and psychological depth to the story, making it a powerful exploration of identity, loss, and resilience in the face of adversity.

Beyond the core narrative, the film's setting plays a crucial role in shaping the symbolic landscape. The boarding school, with its rigid rules and oppressive structure, serves as a symbol of social hierarchy, gender expectations, and emotional repression. Sara's descent from privilege to servitude mirrors a fall from innocence to confrontation with harsh realities.

One of the central motifs in the film is imagination as a tool for survival. Sara doesn't simply escape into fantasy, she uses it to redefine her world. The attic, initially a symbol of punishment and abandonment, becomes a sanctuary through her imagination. She envisions feasts, lush fabrics, and warmth in the cold, dark space, demonstrating how inner strength can transform even the bleakest surroundings.

The film also introduces elements of Eastern mysticism and multiculturalism through Sara's Indian background and her father's service in colonial India. These cultural threads are subtly woven into the narrative through storytelling, music, and the presence of Ram Dass, who acts as a gentle bridge between two worlds. His quiet kindness and ability to empathize with Sara further highlight the universal nature of compassion.

Symbolism in the film extends to specific objects. The doll Emily represents not just comfort, but continuity of love and memory. The locket containing her mother's picture is another deeply symbolic object, representing Sara's connection to her family and identity. When it is taken from her, it symbolizes the stripping of her personhood, but when returned, it becomes a symbol of restored dignity.

Color plays an essential role in storytelling. Bright, warm colors signify love, celebration, and familial joy, especially in flashbacks or moments of imagination. In contrast, the grays and blues of the attic and cold seasons express emotional

suppression and social isolation. This contrast not only enriches the narrative but also guides the viewer's emotional journey.

Ultimately, *A Little Princess* is not just a story of a girl overcoming adversity, it is a visual and emotional poem about the enduring power of belief, memory, and kindness. Richard LaGravenese's adaptation ensures that the themes resonate deeply with both children and adults, encouraging empathy and hope in even the most challenging circumstances.

The ending of the film, where Sara is miraculously reunited with her father, restores balance and justice, aligning with the fairy-tale structure of reward for virtue and endurance. However, it is the journey, the symbolic trials, emotional growth, and quiet acts of resistance, that leaves a lasting impression.

D. The Characters of A Little Princess

1. **Sara Crewe**, The protagonist, known for her imagination, intelligence, and kindness. Despite facing great adversity, she maintains her inner strength and hope, often retreating into her fantasy world to cope with suffering.
2. **Captain Crewe**, Sara's devoted father who appears to die in the war but is later revealed to have survived. His love and encouragement remain a guiding light for Sara throughout the story.
3. **Miss Minchin**, The main antagonist, a cold and authoritarian headmistress who strips Sara of her privileges when her financial status changes. Her character symbolizes societal cruelty and rigid class structures.

4. **Becky**, A servant girl and Sara's closest friend. Her loyalty and courage illustrate solidarity and friendship across class lines. Together, she and Sara endure hardship with compassion.
5. **Amelia Minchin**, Miss Minchin's sister, who is more gentle and eventually sympathetic to Sara. Her character represents moral conflict and the possibility of redemption.
6. **Ram Dass**, A kind servant who lives next door and quietly aids Sara. His presence introduces themes of kindness, cross-cultural empathy, and spiritual wisdom.
7. **Lavinia**, A fellow student who bullies Sara, especially after she loses her wealth. She represents jealousy and the societal tendency to mistreat those who fall from status.
8. **Emily**, Sara's cherished doll, symbolizing emotional security, continuity, and her connection to her father. Emily is more than a toy; she embodies Sara's hope and belief in unseen support.

These characters form the emotional core of the narrative. Each one contributes to the story's symbolic and emotional depth, reinforcing the film's central themes of resilience, kindness, and the power of imagination.

A Little Princess Film Script

(Data 1 : Page 14)

Miss Minchin, calls Sara to her office. After receiving news that Sara's father has died in the war, she heartlessly decides that Sara must leave her luxurious room and be treated as a servant.

Miss Minchin: "You'll move to the attic and work as a servant."

(Data 2: Page 16)

After being moved to the cold, dark attic, Sara spoke with her best friend, Becky, shivering in the cold. During the conversation

Sara: "Is it ever this cold where you come from?"

(Data 3: Page 23)

In the midst of her suffering, Sara tried to cheer Becky up by imagining the aroma of delicious food. With imagination and a small smile on her face

Sara: "Smell those sausages!"

(Data 4 : Page 17)

As she reminisced about India and her happy childhood, Sara pointed out the beauty of the sky to Becky and said with admiration

Sara: "The sky... is all different colors... like a peacock's tail."

(Data 5: Page 13)

Upon hearing the news that Sara's father had passed away, Miss Minchin immediately instructed her sister to fetch a simple black dress from Sara's room. With an expressionless face.

Miss Minchin: "Amelia, go to Sara's room and find a simple black dress."

(Data 6: Page 14)

After Miss Minchin's order, Sara lost her room, status, and comfort.

Miss Minchin: "You'll move to the attic and work as a servant."

(Data 7: Page 13)

The room is decorated with bright colors and full of cheerfulness. Miss Minchin announces the purpose of the event:

Miss Minchin: "We're celebrating Sara's birthday."

(Data 8: Page 6)

Before leaving for the battlefield, Captain Crewe gave Sara a doll named Emily as a memento.

Captain Crewe: "Whenever you're afraid, or miss me terribly... just tell Emily. She'll get the message to me, wherever I am. And I'll send one back right away... so when you hug her... you'll be getting a hug from me."

(Data 9: Page 21)

Sara received a surprise from her friends. They brought her a small cake that they had managed to save.

Lottie: "We brought you something. Princess Sara, we present you with something we rescued"

(Data 10: Page 26)

Sara pleads not to be separated from her mother's precious keepsake:

Sara: "The locket with Mama's picture? Oh, Papa, please!"

(Data 11: Page 17)

In an imaginary conversation with Becky, Sara again mentions the colorful sky that reminds her of India:

Sara: "The sky... is all different colors... like a peacock's tail."

(Data 12: Page 16)

Sara: "Is it ever this cold where you come from?"

(Data 13: Page 17)

Sara: "The warm wind blows through the fields... and the spirits ride it..."

(Data 14: Page 6)

Before leaving for the battlefield, Captain Crewe assured Sara that miracles really do exist if she believes in them

Captain Crewe: "Magic has to be believed. That's the only way it's real."

(Data 15: Page 2)

Captain Crewe reads the legend of Sita and the magic circle.

Captain Crewe: "This is a magic circle. So long as you stay inside it... no harm can come to you."

(Data 16: Page 23)

In her most desperate moments, Sara imagined the attic as a beautiful room filled with food.

Sara: "See that table there? It's covered with a beautiful cloth... and trays of good things to eat."