



**BOOK REVIEW OF  
*A CHILD CALLED 'IT'*  
WRITTEN BY DAVE PELZER**

**A FINAL PROJECT**

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirement

For S-1 Degree in Linguistics

In English Department, Faculty of Humanities

Diponegoro University

Submitted by:

In Septianingrum

A2B007060

**FACULTY OF HUMANITIES**

DIPONEGORO UNIVERSITY

SEMARANG

2011

**PRONOUNCEMENT**

The writer affirms honestly that this book review is composed by herself without grabbing any results from other research of all degrees in any universities. Additionally, the writer establishes that she does not take the materials from other publications or someone's work except for the references stated in bibliography.

Semarang, 16 September 2011

In Septianingrum

## **MOTTO AND DEDICATION**

Family is like a root, it is the strongest part in growing a child

(anonymous)

This book review is dedicated to my lovely family

## **APPROVAL**

Approved by

Advisor,

Dra. Kusrahayuwati, M.A

NIP. 19470209 197501 2 001

## **VALIDATION**

Approved by  
Strata I Final Project Examination Committee  
Faculty of Humanities Diponegoro University  
On Friday, September 16, 2011

Advisor,

Reader,

Dra. Kusrahayuwati, M.A

Sukarni Suryaningsih, SS, M.Hum

NIP. 19470209 197501 2 001

NIP. 19721223 199802 2 001

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENT**

Praise be to God, the Most Gracious and Merciful, who has given health and power so that this book review on *A Child Called 'It'* written by Dave Pelzer came to a conclusion. On this occasion, the writer would like to express gratitude for all people who have supported her in finishing this book review.

The writer's deepest thank are extended to the following:

1. Dra. Kusrahayuwati, M.A, - the writer advisor - who always gives her continuous

- suggestions in order to help her finish this book review;
2. Her lovely family, who always charge her spirit in finishing this book review;
  3. Her lovely “mickey”, who always be the destiny in her good and bad times;
  4. All her friends, for the nice friendship.

The writer realizes that this book review is still far from perfect. Thus, she will be pleased to receive any practical criticism and suggestions to make this book review better.

Finally, the writer supposes that this book review is really useful for the readers who are still up and down in facing the problems in their lives.

Semarang, 16 September 2011

The writer

## **TABLE OF CONTENT**

TITTLE	i
PRONOUNCEMENT	ii
MOTTO AND DEDICATION	iii
APPROVAL	iv
VALIDATION	v
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT	vi
TABLE OF CONTENT	vii
ABSTRACT	viii
CHAPTER 1 BACKGROUND OF WRITING	1
CHAPTER 2 SUMMARY	3
CHAPTER 3 REVIEW	5
CHAPTER 4 CONCLUSION	8

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

### **ABSTRAK**

*A Child Called 'It'* adalah sebuah buku karangan Dave Pelzer, berisikan tentang pengalaman kekerasan yang dialami beliau saat berusia 4 sampai 12 tahun. Buku ini memaparkan setiap kejadian secara jelas dan dalam agar pembaca lebih merasakan apa yang dialami oleh pengarang pada waktu itu. Didalam ulasan buku ini, penulis bermaksud untuk memberikan sedikit gambaran tentang isi buku tersebut. Penulis berusaha mengemukakan kelebihan dan kelemahan yang terkandung didalamnya agar pembaca lebih mengerti mengenai tinjauan dan pendapat dari sisi penulis. Selain itu, penulis menyimpulkan manfaat-manfaat yang diperolehnya setelah membaca buku ini. Pada akhirnya, penulis berharap semoga ulasan buku ini sedikit banyak memberikan referensi bagi pembaca.

## CHAPTER 1 BACKGROUND OF THE WRITING

Personality formation of an individual is based on many factors. The strongest one is the role of a family. Actually, there are many problems in a family, one of them is child exploitation. *A Child Called 'It'* is a book that explores the worst child abuse in a family happening in California. This book was translated into Indonesian by Danan Priatmoko and was published by PT Gramedia Pustaka Utama on May 2001. This is an autobiography of its author, Dave Pelzer. He, as the main character, described all of exploitation in his childhood when he was 4 to 12 years old. It becomes more shocking because it was done by his mother. This book not only includes Dave's efforts to stay alive but also tells how big this abuse impacts on Dave's personality. By reading this book, the readers will see what was felt by Dave and how hard he could stand at that time. Thus, they will be more grateful because God has given a lovely family in their lives. In addition, this book motivates the readers to keep survive in any conditions because there must be a smart solution of each problem.

Dave Pelzer also known as David James Pelzer was born on December 29, 1960 in Daly City California. He suffered mistreatment from his mother when he was 4 years old. It happened at his home for about eight years. When he was 12 to 18 years old, he was placed in foster care. Then, in 1979 he worked in U.S Air Force. In this year, he also concerned many programs talking about 'the threatened teenagers' in California. Dave got some appreciations on his success in preventing child abuse and campaigning tolerant act for all of people. Additionally, he also wrote some other books such as *The Lost Boy*, *A Man Named Dave*, *Help Yourself*, *Help Yourself for Teens*, and *The Privilege of Youth*. Some of them have won the International prizes. <[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dave\\_Pelzer](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dave_Pelzer)> (July 14, 2011).

According to the explanation above, the writer is really interested in reviewing this book. She would like to summarize and explain the strength and the weakness of this book so that the readers can get general description of this book. In addition, she expects it would attract the readers' attention to read. She believes that after reading this book, the readers will both realize the importance of love in a family and keep struggle to overcome all of problems in their lives. Therefore, the writer hopes that this book can inspire the readers to be as strong as David.

Furthermore, the writer begins with the background of reviewing this book in Chapter I. Then, she gives the summary of the book in Chapter II. Next, she explains the strength and the weakness of the book in Chapter III. Finally, she presents the conclusion in Chapter IV.

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **SUMMARY**

In 1960s there was a happy family living in Daly City, California. It consisted of Stephen Joseph as a father, Catherine Roerva as a mother, Ron, Stan, and David as the children. Stephen was a fireman so that he seldom stayed at home. Roerva was a housewife and she handled all of things.

Few years later, when David was 4 years old, Roerva changed into a 'different' mother. She acted strangely and really hated David. She believed that David was a disobedient boy. She prohibited David to play with his brothers, she let David to sleep alone in the garage, and she also called him 'it'. Everyday, she loved to kick, hit and make David starve anytime-she thought it as a 'game'. Stephen knew it, but he could not do anything because Roerva would be 'wilder' if he protected David. At first, David felt confused about what made her lovely mother change into a "cruel monster". She became a mortally drinker, untidy woman and never gave him food. She usually asked David-a child aged 4 to do all of house work like washing up, mopping floor, cleaning bathrooms, and so on. If he could not finish them on time, she would give him some 'games' such as burning his arm on the gas stove, smashing him in the mirror, stabbing his stomach, forcing him to drink ammonia, and eating filth. David thought that he was treated as an animal. He was alone, scared and panic all time. Then, because of his hunger everyday, David did everything to get food. He stole both his friends' lunch and some snacks in mini market not far from his school. Unfortunately, his mother always knew about that and she gave more 'challenging games' for David at home.

By the time, all teachers were suspicious with David's bad behavior and many wounds in his body. They often asked what had happened to him, but David always kept silent. He was afraid of telling people about the violence he got because if someone knew about it, his mother would kill him. A school nurse always invited David to check his wounds in her room. She wrote all David's wounds in her clipboard everyday. She realized that there was something wrong with David's family, especially David's mother. She told it to Mr. Hansen-the headmaster- and all teachers in order to protect David from her mother. However, every time they asked, Roerva always acted as if she was a good mother and she told them that David was just jealous with his new born brother, Russell. In fact, before and after she born Russell, she did not stop mistreating David. Thus, David felt as if he lived alone in this world. His father, brothers and teachers could not help him to get out from this condition. If he still wanted to live, he should fight to face this life by himself. All of them made David more enthusiastic to be a strong boy who did not depend on others.

At last, Mr. Hansen and David's teachers recognized that they had to help David to escape from his mother. On March 5<sup>th</sup> 1973, when David was 12 years old, they asked him to go with a policeman who had picked him up to San Mateo Juvenile Department. In short, David was on their protection at a foster care and her mother could not hurt him anymore.

## **CHAPTER 3**

### **REVIEW**

Generally, the writer believes that Dave told about his childhood to the readers as well as possible in this book. He tried to make it perfect. It shows in the following facts as the strength of this book.

First, the front cover of this book makes the readers interested to know it more. The picture of a baby and the strange title of this book will appeal the readers to read this book. Moreover, an additional sentence “perjuangan seorang anak untuk bertahan hidup” in this cover creates the readers’ assumption about what will be explained in this book so that they want to see what happened with that child. Then, the cover adds that this book is based on a true story and is the International bestseller book. This may cause the readers more attracted with the quality of this book.

Second, the book just consists of 184 pages with 7 chapters. Readers will imagine how simple and easy to read it is. They can easily bring and read this book anytime and anywhere. Readers are able to read this book as often as they want.

Third, the topic of this book is different from other books. It explains the worst child abuse that happened in 1960s and it was done by the author’s own mother. It will be more challenging to read. In addition, this book includes some points of view about child abuse from David as the sufferer, Steven as David’s teacher, Valerie as a social worker, and Glenn as the executive director of California Consortium for the prevention of child abuse.

Furthermore, the author explains all of things deeply and clearly. He describes each part of the story in detail such as describing the physical appearance of his mother like “dulu matanya bagus, rambutnya sekarang acak-acakan tak terurus. Ia tidak memakai riasan wajah, seperti biasanya” (p. 5). He also writes the story in a point of view as an abused child. He explains his fear, hunger, and lowness deeply like “ingin sekali aku berlari ke atas, mau memakai kamar mandi. Tapi tanpa perintah Ibu, aku tak diizinkan melakukan apa pun-aku seorang tahanan” (p. 68). So, the readers will be more understand with what was going on with him at that time.

Then, the setting of the story is really incredible. Dave got the violence mostly at his home and done by his own mother. It is hard to believe that there was a worst abuse happening in a place that should be the safest place for a child. This makes the readers astonished to realize such an affair like that. Additionally, it can open the readers’ minds to recognize that violence can happen anywhere if there is an opportunity.

Next, the story in this book can motivate the readers. The author writes some ‘powerful’ sentences in this book to inspire the readers like “Menangis berarti mati” (p. 90). So, after reading this book, the writer believes that readers can be more grateful with their conditions at this time. Besides, they can be more motivated to face this life like what was done by David-a child aged 4 who always did everything to stay alive.

On the other hand, although the author did his best to write, there is a weakness of this book. Sometimes the author writes too clear sentences which make the readers repulsed because he gave details when he ate his own vomit. It shows in some sentences like “Lalu, dengan tangan, kuambil muntahan hotdog dari mangkuk itu. Tetesan kental ludah jatuh dari antara jari-jari tanganku ketika aku menyuapkan muntahan hotdog itu ke mulutku” (p. 63). The writer argues that he did it in order to make the story more “alive”, but for many people, it is very disgusting.

## CHAPTER 4

# CONCLUSION

*A Child Called 'It'* is an extraordinary book written by Dave Pelzer. This book describes a different topic from other books. It becomes more interesting because it is based on the author's true story. In addition, its simple cover, qualified content, brilliant writing style and good benefits for the readers make it attracts all people, especially for teenagers who are still up and down in facing their lives. After reading it, the readers will not only more understand about child exploitations happening in a real life but also be more grateful by having a lovely family and lovely friends who always support them anytime.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

Pelzer, Dave. 2001. *A Child Called 'It'*. Jakarta: PT Gramedia Pustaka Utama.  
<[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dave\\_Pelzer](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dave_Pelzer)> 14 July 2011.