



## PRONOUNCEMENT

The writer honestly confirms that she compiles this final project entitled **“Individualism, Self Reliance, and Self Confidence As Reflected On Walter Mitty’s Character In *The Secret Life Of Walter Mitty*”** by herself without taking any result from other researchers in S-1, S2, S-3, and in diploma degree of any university. The writer also confirm that she does not quote any material from other publications or someone’s paper except from the references mentioned.

Semarang, September 2018

Karina Wahyu Rahmawati

## MOTTO AND DEDICATION

*I'd made it this far and refused to give up because all my life I had always finished the race.*

- **Louis Zamperini, Devil at My Heels**

*A good laugh heals a lot of hurts.*

- **Madeleine L'Engle**

*Man jadda wajada,*

*Who earnestly will surely succeed*

- **Ahmad Fuadi, Negeri 5 Menara**

*This final project is dedicated to my beloved parents, my sister and friends, who  
always support me.*

*Thank you very much.*

**APPROVAL**

**INDIVIDUALISM, SELF RELIANCE, AND SELF  
CONFIDENCE AS REFLECTED ON WALTER MITTY'S  
CHARACTER IN *THE SECRET LIFE OF WALTER MITTY***

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## Abstrak

*The Secret Life of Walter Mitty* adalah sebuah film yang menceritakan kehidupan Walter yang seketika berubah 180 derajat setelah perusahaan majalah *Life* tempat dia bekerja akan segera ditutup. Dengan penuh tanggung jawab, pada akhirnya dia bisa menyelesaikan masalah tersebut. Tujuan dari penelitian ini adalah untuk menganalisis dan menjelaskan *individualism*, *self reliance* dan *self confidence* yang ada di dalam karakter Walter Mitty, aktor utama di dalam film *The Secret Life of Walter Mitty*. Penulis menggunakan teori *Individualism* dari Bellah dan *Self Reliance* dari Ralph Waldo Emerson. Penulis menerapkan dua metode yaitu *Library Research* dan *Exponential Approach* dalam penelitiannya. Pada penelitian ini, penulis menemukan bahwa Walter mencerminkan sikap *individualisme*, *self reliance*, dan *self confidence*.

**Kata Kunci:** Individualisme, Self Reliance, Self Confidence, Ralph Waldo Emerson.

# 1. INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 Background of The Study

Alexis de Tocqueville is a European who visited America in the 18th century. He was amazed by the conditions of the New World that is very different from Europe. This statement was expressed by Tocqueville, "Individualism is a truly new expression then gave birth to other new ideas" (Tocqueville, 1945: 95). The statement asserts that individualism is an important element of culture that has long existed in America and its existence became popular by the Americans. He also said that individualism is different from selfishness, but rather to "a mature and orderly nature, which governs every member of society to separate from the crowds of society, and after that, they form a small circle that is comfortable for themselves, they will let people manage what is best for themselves." (Tocqueville, 1945:236).

Therefore, as Bellah et. al. said in his books *Habits of the Hearts: Individualism and Commitment in American Life* (1985) that individualism is often regarded as the core of American culture.

We believe in the dignity, indeed the sacredness, of the individual anything that would violate our right to think of ourselves, judge for ourselves, make our own decisions, live our life as we see fit, is not only morally wrong, it is sacrilegious. (Bellah, 1985:142)

That statement explains American will become very sensitive if their rights are disturbed. They will maintain their dignity and defend what has become their decision. If they have chosen to be an individualist, then no one can deny it.

Some people assume that individualism is the element that distinguishes America from other nations. According to Aldo Leopold (in Kammen, 1980:17) he wrote: "If we have something that is perceived as American culture, the element that differentiates us (with other nations) is a strong individualism. This is one part of what we call Americanism, a trait that distinguishes it from other nations, and is an invention of the American people and at any time continues as a legacy for civilization."

*The Secret Life of Walter Mitty* (Ben, 2013) is one of the movies that presents the individual life in America. The main character is Walter Mitty, a hard worker who does everything independently. He prefers to solve his own problems by himself without asking help from others. Ben Stiller, the director of the movie, interestingly directed himself to be Walter. That uniqueness is the reason why the writer chooses to analyze this movie.

The story of *The Secret Life of Walter Mitty* is adapted from James Thurber's short story in 1939, which was also brought to the theater in 1947 with the same title. The story describes that Walter is someone who has a very monotonous life which is full of pressure. He always imagined the great adventures happened to his life but actually his life is boring. Until finally he met a woman he liked, and the threat of closing the magazine press where he worked forced him realize the real adventure he would soon face.

In this paper, the writer analyses *The Secret Life of Water Mitty* movie from individualism, self reliance, and self confidence reflected of the main

character to support this paper, entitled American Individualism of Walter Mitty in *The Secret Life Of Walter Mitty* movie.

### **1.1 Aim of the Study**

The writer has purposes when writing this paper.

1. To analyze how Walter Mitty solves the problems with his individuality.
2. To give explanation about individualism, self reliance, and self confidence reflected on Walter Mitty's character.

## **2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

### **2.1 INTRINSIC ASPECT**

#### **2.1.1 Character**

According to Irwin, he describes that characters is the particulars that bring individuals to live within the context of the plot (1996:47). Character is divided into antagonist and protagonist. Irwin states protagonist as the main character around whom action takes place or the hero in the story (1996:65).

According to E.M. Forster in his book *Aspects of the Novel* (1927), he describes character into flat character and round character. Flat character is a character who has one image (1927:1). Most of them are supporting what the other characters did. Meanwhile, round character is a character who shows anything about himself. As readers or viewers, we can see what the round character's feeling, thought, and idea. It is often called as main

character. The round character appear more often than the flat character because they lead the story.

## **2.2 EXTRINSIC ASPECT**

### **2.2.1 INDIVIDUALISM**

According to Bellah, “to serve the society one must be able to stand alone, not needing others, not depending on their judgement, and not submitting to their wishes. Yet individualism is not selfishness” (Bellah, 1986:146). It explains that an individualist is someone who believe with himself and brave to do anything alone without relying on others. They prefer to solve the problems by their own way. They are not expecting help from people. An individualist still makes an interaction with others. They are giving help to the people around them but they are not asking help if it is not an important problem. Yet, Individualism is different from selfishness. Sometimes, it brings positive impact. They can focus on the goal to live better in America without thinking other people’s life.

### **2.2.2 SELF RELIANCE**

Ralph Waldo Emerson is an author who is concerned with self-reliance. According to Emerson, an individualist should do what he believes and he does not care about what others think. Emerson states:

All I must do is all that concern me, not what the people think. This rule equally arduous in actual and in intellectual life, may serve for the whole distinction between greatness and meanness. It is the

harder because you will always find those who think they know what is your duty better than you know it (Eduard C, 1954:64).

From the sentence “All I must do is all that concern me, not what the people think”, it explains about self-reliance. He does not care what others think because he believes his own thought and it is appropriate with his heart.

Self reliance and self responsibility have the same meaning. An individualist should has self responsibility to fulfill everyting for himself. They will be carefully to choose the decision and being responsible to everything. This statements can be prove by the quotation from Emerson.

There is time in every man’s education when he arrives at the conviction that envy is ignorance; that imotation is suicide; that he must take himself for better, in worse, as his portion; that tought the wide universe is full of fiid, no kernel of nourishing corn can come to him trough his toil bestowed in that plot of ground which is given to him to till. (Eduard C, 1954:55)

From the sentence ”no kernel of nourishing corn can come to him trough his toil bestowed in that plot of ground which is given to him to till”, it explains about self responsibility that people should work hard to be responsible of himself and his family. An individualist is well known as someone who do anything alone without relying on others. So, he must works hard to reach his goal in life.

### **2.2.3 SELF CONFIDENCE**

An individualist must brave to express his opinion because he has self confidence. He must believe in himself, in his actions, in his opinion

because it all comes from himself, not from others.. By having self confidence in himself, someone will state what he wants to be achieved proudly. Emerson states:

I shall endeavor to nourish my parents, to support my family, to be a chaste husband of one wife,- but this relations I must fill after a new and unprecedented way. I appeal from your custom. I must be my self. I cannot break myself any longer for you, or you. If you can love me for the way I am, we shall be happier. (Eduard C., 1954:69)

From the sentence “I must be my self. I cannot break myself any longer for you, or you”, it can be concluded that someone who has self confidence do not want to follow and do not want to submit to a higher authority any longer. He also has his own opinions and ways without breaking the rules. He can speak up his decision to the public without fearing anything.

### **3. RESEARCH METHOD**

In analyzing this paper, the writer uses two methods; method of research and method of approach.

#### **3.1 Method of Research**

The writer uses Library Research in analyzing the topic. According to Jorge Marx Gomez and Sulaiman Mouselli in their *Modernizing The Academic Teaching and Research Environment*, library research is a type of research that is gotten principally using written materials located in libraries, World Wide Web, and in virtual databases (2018:8). The writer

was collecting the data by reading some books in the library and searching from internet which is correlated with the topic. The main data is *The Secret Life of Walter Mitty* movie which is directed by Ben Stiller.

### **3.2 Method of Approach**

The writer uses the exponential approach in analyzing narrative elements of the movie. As Guerin et al said in *A Handbook for Critical Approaches to Literature*, “We designate this method as the exponential approach because the inclusiveness of that term suggests at once the several meanings of motif, image, symbol, and archetype” (1992: 197).

## **4. ANALYSIS ASPECTS OF INDIVIDUALISM, SELF RELIANCE, AND SELF CONFIDENCE**

In this chapter, the writer will only explain the main character, Walter Mitty.

### **4.1 Walter Mitty and His Individualism**

Walter is the main character in a movie because he leads the story. He is a hard worker because he had to finance his family. He is the oldest son, living with his mother and younger sister.

After 20 years working at *Life* magazine, he got a big problem that would threaten his career. He must get out of the comfort zone to solve the problem. The problem starts when a negative 25 disappears and Walter is

the head of the negative assets section. He must find Sean, *Life* magazine photographer to ask where negative 25 is.



Picture 4.1 Cheryl is motivating Walter  
Greenland (00:34:36)



Picture 4.2 Walter going to  
(00:37:20)

Picture 4.1 happens when Cheryl, Walter's office friend, tell him about the meaning of Major Tom song.

*Cheryl* : *I wanted to tell you, that song, "Major Tom"? That song is about courage and going into the unknown. It's a cool song.*

(Ben, 2013 00:34:36 – 00:34:48)

The song tells about the passion for exploring new places. That is such a motivation words for Walter to run out from the comfort zone. He had to find Sean, a photographer from *Life* magazine, to ask where negative 25. If he does not find him immediately, Walter will be fired from the company.

Then, from the picture 4.2, it tells the condition on the plane. He will go to a place where Sean is. The interesting part is he goes alone without inviting friends to accompany him. It proves that Walter is an individualist. He did not depend on others to accompany him to find Sean.



Picture 4.3 Walter climbing Mountain goal

(01:21:04)



Picture 4.4 Walter reaching the goal

(01:23:53)

From the picture 4.3 there is sentence *I am alone* as a background of a picture. Walter travels alone and climbing Himalaya mountain to find Sean. As an individualist, he should reach his goal without expecting help from others even though it is not easy. Walter's goal is to meet Sean and find negative 25. Finally, he can meet Sean and know where negative 25 is as shown in picture 4.4.

Walter's mother give a proof that Walter is someone who works harder to finish his work although he stands alone and that it belongs to the attitude of individualism.

*Mom : They can't let you go. You were Sean's partner. He told me that you were the person who worked the hardest to make sure his work was realized the way he wished. You finish his work.*

(Ben, 2013 01:17:46 – 01:18:05)

The dialogue, told by Walter's mother, explained that Walter is an individualist who works hard for his career. He never ask for helping, but

he gladly help his colleague. No matter how hard the work comes, he will finish in his own way.

#### **4.2 Walter Mitty and His Self Reliance**

Remember the quotation from Emerson about self reliance, “All I must do is all that concern me, not what the people think”. This conversation below prove that Walter applies self reliance in his life.

*Tedd : And what do you do, cake man?*  
*Walter : Ohh..*  
*The cake is just for today. I am not a cake man.*

(Ben, 2013 00:07:38 – 00:07:45)

From the conversation, Walter is being ridiculed by his new manager because of Walter's strange behavior at the office. And from that moment, he was constantly ridiculed by his new manager. But, Walter did not really think about it. He does not care about other people's ridicule. He continues to carry out his work professionally.

The conversation below is also prove that Walter is a hard worker and has self reliance.

*Cheryl : So, you said that you left Papa John's because of the cups?*  
*Walter : No, I just worked there, that's all.*  
*I used to have a mohawk and a backpack... and this is idea of who I wanted to be and what I wanted to do.*

(Ben, 2013 01:08:16-01:08:40)

The conversation above happens when Walter called Cheryl by phone because they are very far away from each other. Walter is sad because he

failed to find Sean in Greenland. From the sentence “this is idea of who I wanted to be and what I wanted to do”, it can be seen that Walter has self reliance. He wants to be himself and do whatever he wants without fearing anything. He is also a hard worker who works in a food outlet after his father was dead. He stands alone to support his family.

An individualist should have an attitude of responsibility. Self-responsibility has the same meaning as self reliance. So, the author will analyze the Walter’s responsibility.

*Walter : And he died when I was 17, on a Tuesday.  
And we didn't have any savings.  
So I got a haircut thatThursday and a job the same  
Thursday.*  
*Cheryl : Papa John's?*  
*Walter : Yeah.*

(Ben, 2013 01:08:16-01:08:40)

From that conversation, Walter begin to replace his father's role to become the head of the household by starting work when he was 17 years old. He is making money because he realized that it has become his responsibility as the oldest son. The writer categorizes that conversation as a part of self reliance because Walter is independent man and responsible for his family.

Even though Walter is old, he still finance his family as you can see this conversation below.

*His sister : Hy, tipping time now.*  
*Walter : This all I got.*

(Ben, 2013 01:14:28)

The conversation happens when Walter's mother is moving the piano to their apartment and paying money tips for workers who had moved the piano. He keeps spending money on his mother's needs even though he is only having a little money and the needs are not really important as in the conversation above when Walter pays the piano transport. Therefore, this is the part of self-reliance because he is independent and not desperate to make his family happy.

There is other evidence that Walter is a hard worker and he has an individualistic attitude.

*Walter : Hey. Do you know our motto?*

*Tedd : "Life...?"*

*"I'm lovin' it?"*

*Walter : No. That's Mc Donald's.*

*This thing that you do, Tedd... Where you come into a place and you push people out. You should know that those people worked really hard to build this magazine. They believed in the motto.*

(Ben, 2013 01:36:40 – 01:37:17)

Then, there is a sentence *you should know that those people worked really hard to build this magazine. They believed the motto* shows that Walter fulfills aspect of individualism, self-reliance. He is responsible for his work and he works very hard to build the company. If a company has succeeded, then Walter will also be successful of his career in America.

Walter believe in the motto of the company because the motto is being a guide in carrying out his works. An individualist must have a guideline in their life to believe because an individualist has difficulty to believe in others.

### 4.3 Walter Mitty and His Self Confidence

After he find negative 25 in his wallet, he go straight to Tedd's office to return it.



Picture 4.5 Walter is brave to speak (01:36:16)



Picture 4.6 Walter is motivating Tedd (01:36:40)

*Tedd : Welcome.  
Wait, I am sorry, not welcome... Not an employee.*  
*Walter : Sorry (throw something on a desk).  
There is the picture Sean wanted.*

(Ben, 2013 01:36:16 – 01:36:25)

From the scene above, it can be seen that Walter is brave to speak loudly to Tedd because he has success to find the negative 25. Previously, Walter never be brave to speak loudly with his manager because he realized his position in the office. After that, Tedd fired Walter because Walter could not give negative 25. From the conversation and Figure 4.5 above we can

conclude that Walter fulfills the element of individualism, self confidence.

He is brave to prove his quality to the person who under estimate him.

After throwing the negative 25 on the meeting table, Walter tries to advise Tedd how to be a good leader. From picture 4.6, it shows that Tedd is confused in answering Walter's question about what the motto of the company is. Walter has self confidence in himself because he is never brave to speak with his manager before.

## **5. CONCLUSION**

Based on the analysis, individualism, self reliance, and self confidence are reflected on Walter Mitty's character.

The individualism is reflected when Walter goes alone without inviting friends to accompany him. He did not depend on others to accompany him to find Sean. The next part is Walter travels alone and climbing Himalaya mountain to find Sean. As an individualist, he should reach his goal without expecting help from others even though it is not easy. And finally, he can find Sean and solves his problem. The last part is explained by Walter's mother that Walter is an individualist who works hard for his career. No matter how hard the work comes, he will finish in his own way.

The second part is self reliance. It can be seen from the scene when Walter is being ridiculed by his new manager because of Walter's strange behavior at the office. But, he does not care about other people's ridicule. He continues to carry out his work professionally. The next proof is that he used to has a

mohawk and a backpack when he was young because he wants to be himself and do whatever he wants without fearing anything. Many people maybe consider him as a strange person because of his unique acts, but an individualist should believe with his own thought. Then, the last part is from Walter's responsibility. Walter begin to replace his father's role by starting work when he was 17 years old. He is making money because he realized that it has become his responsibility as the oldest son. Walter also shows how much he loves his family. He is responsible for his mother and sister. When his father died, Walter immediately cut his mohawk hair to work in the Papa John's restaurant.

The last one is self confidence. It can be found in Walter's act. He is brave to prove his quality to the person who under estimate him. He also tries to advise his ex manager how to be a good leader. He is never brave to speak with his manager before We can conclude that the self confidence of Walter is coming after the hard work of the self reliance. He should through ups and downs of his problems to be more confidence without losing the individualism. Thus, he still needs a help from other people. He can not face all the problems alone. Without the help from his mother, he could not find the wallet that containing a negative asset number 25 he has been looking for. Without the help from foreigner, he could not safe himself from the volcano eruption in Greenland. And then, without Cheryl's support, he would not believe in himself that he could get out of his comfort zone.

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