

# The Grass Is Always Greener On The Other Side: A Discourseanalysis Of Hedonism As Sweet Poison Inthe Winner Stands Alone

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#### Abstract

It is quite natural that some individuals seem to be unhappy and unsatisfied with the things they have in life; they seem to look better in life.People sometimes do comparisons become envious, and want what the others have.Such kind of comparison and envy destroy an individual's life. The current study is textual analysis of the novel The Winner Stands Alone by Paulo Coelho (2008). Paul Gee's (2014) model of Discourse Analysis is used for textual interpretation. The paper has applied Sirgy et al., (2019) concept of materialism as a theoretical perspective with a focus on the ideal life satisfaction which compels people to evaluate their life standards negatively; as soon as they compare their life with others, it causes them dissatisfaction. It was found that comparison is not a good thing and that living happily in one's own means is a good way to live a satisfactory life. It was concluded that whenever, the characters compared themselves with others in the novel, others' possessions seemed alluring for them and in getting those possessions, they lost many things in life.

Keywords: Comparison; Discourse Analysis; Hedonism; Materialism; Possessions

#### Introduction

Peopleusually spend their whole life in getting pleasures either in the form of satisfaction or achievements. Gettingsuch a pleasure hasprobably become the main purpose of people in the society and they strive to maximize this pleasure through success in life. Success is a series of small wins because an individual cannot get things overnight; in order to achieve a huge achievement, a person must face the hardships in life. By passing through such small steps or small goals, individuals can get a huge success. Weick (1984) affirms that the series of small wins are a constant building block and that is why small wins are more structurally sound than a big win. People must encounter with difficulties; otherwise, they cannot achieve the success because sometimes failures or hardships make an individual strong and successful. In this regards, Kc, Staats&Gino, (2013) opine that an individual can learn a lot of things from failure, can come to know what does not work, and then can develop other ways or try new approach in order to get success in future. Being hedonist is not an awful thing but with required capabilities. People with high self-efficacy are very active in performing any tasks in life while those with low esteem may always be pessimistic and cannot achieve happiness in life (Yilmaz, 2018). Sometimes, to get the desirable things in life by hooks or by crooks, an individual chooses wrong path. Pursuit of joys can be positive or fatal and it really depends upon the psychology of the hedonists. It has both harmful side and helpful feature. People get jealous, do comparisons, always see the riches of others, and do not know whether wealthy people are satisfied from the possessions they have or not. Comparison is commonly the fast way to unhappiness. Sometimes, their most precious time is spoiled by them in focusing on the life of other people. In the view of Lyubomirsky and Ross (1997), happiness and sadness totally depend on people whether they compare themselves to a better or worse companion. An individual sometimes, want to achieve the life of affluent people and develop jealousy towards them; they do not care that such jealousy sometimes works as a poison in their life.People often seem interested in others' life and look curious to know about the things that they (others) have. Such kind of people considers themselves inferior to them and often face failure in life. According to the Gibbons and Buunk (1999), people who seem to make social comparison, are more expected to experience harsh feelings and behaviors than those who do not formulate social comparison. So, Instead of seeing others' lives, an

4696 | Neelam Sultan The Grass Is Always Greener On The Other Side: A Discourseanalysis Of

Hedonism As Sweet Poison Inthe Winner Stands Alone



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individual must focus on their own accomplishment. In this modern world, people have become impractical and do daydreaming. Sándor, Bugán, Nagy, Bogdán, &Molnár, (2021) assert that majority of people experience feelings of anxiety and depression when their daydreaming is disturbed. Individuals should stop daydreaming and should be practical in life. Satisfaction, success and failure may come in life because of some dire decisions that are taken.Throughout life, people make so many wrong decisions and such decisions seem to be made in blind pursuit of joys. Everyone takes decisions or makes choices which affect each and everything in life. According to the perspective of Cenkseven-Önder and Çolakkadioğlu(2013), people can get satisfaction and can live a better life if effective decisions are taken by them. If people cannot take effective decisions are the selected alternatives thatestablish the accomplishment of an organization's strategy. So, the good decisions always lead an individual on the right path to success while the wrong ones ruin the life and make a person disappointed. In order to avoid problems and suffering in life, a person should make better decision for the success and achievements in the future.

## **Rationale of the Research**

A great need to do a researchin response to social comparison, acquisitiveness, gloominess, jealousy, daydreaming and loss of principles etc. was felt and to take a firm footstep for the making of theory in the shape of new epistemological knowledge.For this purpose the novelThe Winner Stands Alone was found to be a significant and suitable one for researchas for as the modern-day world is concerned. Modern generation do comparison with one another and never feel happy with the things they have; they always seem in searching to achieve the blind pursuits of pleasures in life. After getting a desirable thing, more desires and aspirations of an individual are bound to increasewhich sometimes seem harmful for a person's life.This paper will present anassessment of the society which is in the form of critical study done through the parameters of textual interpretation.

## **Statement of the Research Problem**

An individual, who always focuses on others' lives and feels jealous of the prosperous life of others, will be suffering from pain. Jealousy can make a person depressed and insecure in life, and such a person never gets satisfied with anything in life. Sometimes a person wants to get a thing that the others have without having necessary capacity. An individual should know about the strength and weakness they have, and a person must have some potential in order to get joys in life (Clarken, 2012). Characters in the The Winner Stands Alone want to getsuccess and fame, and want to achieve all those things that others have, without having the necessary capabilities and without knowing the disastrous outcomes. According to the Uusiautti(2016), accomplishment at work dependson positive individual features like proficiency, motivation, and ability to choose positive strategies. The current paper exploreshow pleasures and jealousy will affect the characters' lives in multiple ways andwill leave them unsatisfied, disappointed and anxious.

## Methodology

The data of this paper is in the form of the paragraphs which were randomly chosenfrom the novel The Winner Stands Alone.For this paper, the method of data analysis was set to be textual interpretation throughdiscourse analysis.Textual interpretation is done for gathering information about the views of other people about the realities of the world. Actually, it is an approach and method for collecting data for such researchers who study cultures and want to analyze the ways in which inhabitants of the society think about the roles that they play, their identities, and their position on the basis of the realities and experiences that they have in one culture or another (McKee, 2003). As the paper adopts textual interpretation, there are some reasons behind using this approach. The First reason is that the data is in the form of text. It is pure qualitative data having selected paragraphs from the novel under study. Secondly, as the topic suggests, hedonism as sweet poison seems to become a social reality in any culture. The paper under the methodological framework of discourse analysis, will interpret how the people suffer in the course of blind pursuit of joys and in comparison with each other. As the paper is based on textual interpretation, therefore,



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the research strategy is kept to be Paul Gee's (2014) model of discourse analysis. Gee has explained 28 tools in his model which are applied to the text of the novel during the analysis and interpretation of data.

#### **Literature Review**

Materialistic people are mostly attached to worldly possessions and prefer their material good to spiritual values. Such kind of individuals seem to be self-centered and focus on getting money instead of spending it. In the view of Dambrun (2017), by trying to maximize pleasures and avoiding displeasures, self-centeredness induces a fluctuating gladness in which phases of happiness and unhappiness alternate constantly. It is human nature that a man always wishes to have more. Individuals work hard to make money in order to live a happy life and their happiness depends on money. The more they have money, the more they feel happiness. They have a lot of wishes or desires to complete. They want to get power in order to make themselves superior to others. Such people are also health-conscious as they think that if they are physically fit, only then can they get their desires in life. According to Garson (2016), people have desires like getting money, good health and power in order to get pleasures in life. Such people give first priority to worldly pleasures than all the other valuable things in life. For them money is key to happiness. The main aim in their life is to earn money in order to live a happy life. For a moment, worldly possessions give a person temporary happiness but such pleasures cannot stay eternally. Money and material possessions do not bring happiness and peace. It depends on the people as how much they are grateful for the things that they have. In the view of Siddiqui (2019), pursuing pleasures through material acquisition decreases the level of satisfaction and sometimes lay negative effect on the wellbeing. Being materialistic is not a bad thing but as excess of everything is bad, a person should not, therefore, be fully involved in getting money and the impossible desires. No doubt, wealth is important to survive but not to the extentthat people losethemselves in getting it.In Dittmar's (2014) view, if individuals are fully attached with worldly possessions, they can negatively affect their life. So, there is a positive relation between the materialism and lower wellbeing. In the view ofRuggeri, Garcia-Garzon, Maguire, Matz and Huppert (2020), wellbeing goes further than the pursuit of pleasures and it encompasses how an individual is functioning. So, in order to live a happy life, a person should not be involved in earthly comforts without having possible capacity to get impossible desires. Ambitions are good in life and an individual should work hard in order to get the wishes that they havein life. They should keep their desires in limits. According to Yeshi (2018), the more people possess the things in life, the more their expectations increase. Keeping limited expectations and hopes is good in life.A person also becomes upset when they do not get all the things in life. In the same way, expectations also seem to be the root cause of all the disappointments. So, a person should never run after getting impossible desires that becomes the purpose of depressions. A person should be satisfied with who they are and what they have in life. Moreover, people who do comparisons of their life with others and are not satisfied with their present situation, cannot get accomplishments in life. An individual can get goals through the intrinsic motivation that gives a personal satisfaction or pleasure to the person (Omar, Jain&Noordin, 2013). So, instead of comparison, people should focus on their own satisfaction and success. Comparison also impacts negatively. It tends to lower the people's confidence. Theystart feeling bad about themselves and become frustrated and hopeless because of such negative assessment. People must focus on things that they have presently instead of feeling jealous with others. Miceli andCastelfranchi (2007) assert that the envier sometimes suffers from inferiority complex and loss self-esteem because of feeling hopeless. Jealousy distracts a person from their way to success. Instead of focusing on the progress of others, people should focus on their own. Feeling jealous with others make people consider themselves as inferior and they cannot focus on their own improvement properly. If people free their minds from the consideration of comparison, they can achieve whatever they want in life. They must focus on their own goals and make commitment with themselves to get it. Latham and Locke, (1991) say that commitment refers to the degree to which the person is attached to the goals, considers it essential or important, and is determined to accomplish it. When they are confident then they seem to deal any hardships in life and achieve achievement in life. Once, they get their precious things or goals in life, then with passage of time they never seem to appreciate it as they did before. Also, if people focus on what is not happening in their life then they definitely miss all the other blessings of their life. A life becomes more alive who appreciates all the things they have in their life. According to Tsang, Carpenter, Roberts, Frisch and Carlisle (2014), materialistic people are usually unhappy in life because they seem to be



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ungrateful about the things they have. They suffer from depression and stress. So, people should count their blessings and be grateful for all the things they have in life. People should appreciate the things they have because others may not be as fortunate as them. A person should realize the true value of the things; even the little things in life should be appreciated. People want joys that are often beyond the level of their achievement and which are not fine for them as far as the practical approach is concerned. An individual should stay positive in order to get achievable dreams and must haveoptimistic view of life. In the view of Haybron(2013), much of the consideration of the people has been paid to what can they do to make themselves successful and happier. For that, they should develop self-compassion, will power and positive approach towards the things they want to achieve. Everyone defines happiness according to their own perspective. For some, pleasure is the achievement in professional success while for others, happiness can be accomplished by those things that make their mind fresh and relax. According to Ventegodt, Andersen, Kandel and Merrick (2013), happiness occasionally comes from the environment where people live or feel comfort and from doing such things they like to do in life. Happiness is not something that a person feels from outside; it is something which comes from inside of a person. So, people should not follow the impractical worldly desires in order to find true happiness in life. Actively working for getting goals gives to the person a great level of satisfaction and success. Theattainment of these goals gives long lasting happiness to people.

## **Theoretical Perspective**

People will never satisfy with the things they have in their life. Instead of accepting or appreciating the things they have, they always try to get something better. They feel jealous of the things others have. They never maintain firmness in life because for them, the grass will always be greener on the other side. According to Sirgy, Grace, Lee, Joshanloo, Bosnjak, Jiao, Ekici, Atay and Grzeskowiaket al., (2019), when materialistic people evaluate their standard of living using fantasy-based expectations (e.g. ideal expectations), it causes them to evaluate their standard of living negatively. In turn, dissatisfaction with standard of living makes them evaluate their life negatively. People think about to maximize their pleasures and become materialistic day by day. According to Brouskeli and Loumakou (2014), there is direct association between materialism and anxiety; materialism not only seems to be source of pleasure but stress too. Individuals worry about how to get money and never think whether the things they want are good for them or not. Such people seem to be impulsive by nature. They act hastily with no idea to the consequences and make rash decisions. They never think that such rash decisions sometimes can develop a lot of trouble or may affect life negatively. In the view of Hsee, Hastie and Chen (2008), people act impetuous because they wrongly predict an outcome's consequences. Sometimes, people become the victim of wants which make them unsatisfied in life. Such people make mistakes by thinking about future events. They always predict for their future utility. If the wants are not got, they become reckless without thinking that appropriate time brings appropriate things if they have positive self-esteem and self-confidence. If people want the things that others have like success, wealth and possessions, they must possess the ability to achieve all such things. Success comes to those who are optimistic and positive by nature. Only prediction about future welfare cannot give success or happiness to person; rather, they should possess confidence and self-belief to achieve the goals and wishes in life. Heine, Lehman, Markus and Kitayama, (1999) assert that self-esteem refers to the way people usually believe in themselves every time but mostly in hard situations. People with highly self-esteem are confident on their own decisions or opinions in life. They never seem to be worried about future or about anything in life. Such confidence makes them satisfy and they never feel jealous about others' success. They are happy with what they have in life. Whenever, a mistakeis made, they accept it and learn something from the mistakes that they have done. On the other hand a person with a low self-esteem never gets success in life. They often try to impress others by copying others.

## **Analysis and Discussion**

## **1. Inferiority Complex**

"They need.....right path". (Coelho, 2008: 289)



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## **Reference to the Context**

Cannes Film Festival begins to start and almost all the guests are reached. Gabriela, who wants to be a superstar, is worried about her age. Her excitement for the Festival is going to decrease because of thinking about the growing age. Her mind is possessed by negatives thoughts.

## **Categorization/Labeling**

Novel Text	Tools
Hopelessness	The Framing Tool
She wants to be happy	She (Subject), Wants to be happy (Predicate), The Subject and Predicate Tool
She wants to be happy, and she's not entirely sure she's on the right path	The Connection Tool
She feels helpless and can't remember now why she came to Europe	On Topic, The Topic Flow or Topic Chaining Tool
After all, it's not so dreadful being an actress in small-town America, doing exactly what she likes and not what other people make her do	Topically, The Topic Flow or Topic Chaining Tool
Wants to be happy and she is not entirely sure	Cohesion, Conjunctions
Again the feeling that, despite the long struggle, she does not deserve what's happening to her	Again the feeling that, despite the long struggle (Multi-part theme), she (Topic), The Topic and Theme Tool
Again the feeling that, despite the long struggle	Backgrounded Information, The Significance Tool
She does not deserve what's happening to her	Foregrounded Information, The Significance Building Tool
She wants to be happy, and she is not entirely sure she is on the right way	Main clauses, The Integration Tool
She is not entirely sure she is on the right way	Entirely (Intonation focus), The Intonation Tool

## **Analysis and Interpretation**

This paragraph is about Gabriela who is suffering from Inferiority complex. The immediate context shows us that Gabriela works hard in order to get fame or success in life. At the same time, she also feels ill-prepared to get what she wants in life. She does not know what to do. She does not know how to deal with media or press and everything seems new to her. She does not know whether the field of film industry is right for her or not. The other possible context i.e. 'Frame Tool' is hopelessness of Gabriela in the field of film industry. For example, "Again the feeling that, despite the long struggle, she doesn't deserve what's happening to her; she's just a girl who's worked hard at her job, but who's still ill-prepared for life". Through these sentences the writer shows the hopelessness of Gabriela to his reader. Her hopeful expectation changed into hopelessness because she does not get what she wants. She works hard but she does not receive good results. Her expectation for the future success becomes reduced. In the sentence "She wants to be happy", 'she' is the subject or the topic of sentence while "wants to be happy" is the predicate of this sentence. 'She', being the subject of the sentence "She wants to be happy", is the center of information or the topic of the whole contention. The writer wants his readers to understand the situation by focusing on 'she' that Gabriela wants to be pleased and cheerful. She tries hard to get all the pleasures in life, while the predicate "wants to be happy" allows us to have information about the subject 'she'. 'The Connection Tool' is also applied on this paragraph because all the sentences are connected or relevant with each other. Association exists among the

**4700** | Neelam Sultan The Grass Is Always Greener On The Other Side: A Discourseanalysis Of

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sentences. In the sentence "She wants to be happy, and she's not entirely sure she's on the right path", the conjunction 'and' is used to connect the sentences with one another. The writer shows that Gabriela is upset because she does not know whether she choose the right path or not. "She feels helpless and can't remember now why she came to Europe", in this sentence the writer talks 'On Topic'; he shows that Gabriela feels remorse over the time when she came to the Europe because she feels unhappy and unsatisfied. The writer also talks 'Topically', e.g. "after all, it's not so dreadful being an actress in small-town America, doing exactly what she likes and not what other people make her do". In this sentence she expresses her sadness and says that it is not so terrible to work in small town America, where she faced no orders and did what she wanted. The writer co-relates 'On Topic' with 'Topically' in order to produce cohesion. 'The Cohesion Tool' is seen in the form of grammatical devices in order to make connection among the sentences, which are called cohesive devices. Different conjunctions like 'but' in the sentence for example, "This world doesn't belong to her and she'll never be a part of it' are used. In this sentence the conjunction 'and' is used to connect two compound sentences with each other in order to make them one. The writer makes his reader understand that the world of film industry is not the right place for Gabriela, and she feels sad because she is totally stuck in the world of show biz.In the sentence "Again the feeling that, despite the long struggle, she does not deserve what's happening to her", 'again the feeling, despite the long struggle', is a multi-part theme of the sentence because it comes before the subject and is used as a framework in order to modify the clause, "she does not deserve what's happening to her" and 'she' is the topic of this sentence. Through this topic and theme, the writer gives us information about Gabriela that she works hard but she cannot achieve what she wants in life. Instead of hard work, she did not get any welfare in her life. The same sentence "Again the feeling that, despite the long struggle, she does not deserve what is happening to her" has 'The Significant Tool'. In this sentence "again the feeling that, despite the long struggle" is a subordinate clause and a backgrounded information that is not asserted but just assumed, while "she does not deserve what is happening to her" is a main clause and foregrounded information; the most significant information lies here and through this significant information, the writer makes his readers clear about the situation of Gabriela that whatever happens to her is not good. In the same way, two main clauses are combined in a loose way through 'Integration Tool'. For example, "she wants to be happy", and "and she is not entirely sure she is on the right way". Both sentences relate to each other with the help of conjunction 'and'. Through these sentences the writer makes his reader understand about the condition of Gabriela that she wants happiness, but she is confused whether the path she selected is right or wrong. The word 'entirely' in the example "She is not entirely sure she is on the right way" is the most unpredictable and informationally salient. The writer gives this word more stress i.e. 'The Intonation Tool' because Gabriela does not completely know whether she is on the accurate path or not. When the readers utter this word, the pitch of the voice goes up and then down (Sultan, 2020).

## 2. Drunkenness

"Gabriela open .....of fame". (Coelho, 2008: 213)

## **Reference to the Context**

Gabriela comes to the Cannes Film Festival because she wants to be an actress. She wants fame and popularity in the world, but is little bit nervous and confused. Everything seems to her strange. She becomes tense, when an androgyne gives her instruction about how to appear and behave in red carpet.

## **Categorization/Labeling**

Novel Text	Tools
Success and Life partner	The Framing Tool
Gabriela opens the cabinet and gets out a glass	Gabriela (Subject), Opens the cabinet and gets out a glass (Predicate), The Subject and Predicate Tool
Relax, Gabriela. Don't forget who you are	Relax (Topic as well as



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	Theme), The Topic and
	Theme Tool
Her hands are trembling	On Topic, The Topic Flow or
	Topic Chaining Tool
She considers drinking another glass of champagne, but decides	Topically, The Topic Flow or
not to risk turning up drunk on the step of fame	Topic Chaining Tool
Another glass of champagne, but decides not to risk	Cohesion, Conjunctions
She remembers,	Subordinate Clause, The
	Integration Tool
She left her clothes and her handbag in the Gift Room	Main Clause, The Integration
	Tool
She remembers,	Backgrounded Information,
	The Significance Tool
She left her clothes and her handbag in the Gift Room	Foregrounded Information,
	The Significance Building Tool
Cabinet; glass; bottle; champagne	Collocational words

## Analysis and Interpretation

This paragraph shows the nervousness of Gabriela in the event of Cannes Film Festival. The immediate context shows us that Gabriela takes a glass of champagne in order to relax herself. She is going to start her career in the field of film industry. She wants to be a successful actress. She does everything in order to get what she wants in life. She is optimistic and a hard worker. She works hard. She hopes that her all dreams will become true. She thinks that she will never forget those days in which she faced so many hardships in life. So, now she is ready to walk on the red carpet but thinking that red carpet might make her nervous. The other possible context such as 'The Frame Tool' is that Gabriela wants not only to be successful in the world of film industry but in finding a life partner as well. For example, "Soon, she and the star will be together, the beginning not just of a new career, but of an incredible, beautiful, intense love story", in this sentence the writer shows that Gabriela wants all the pleasure of the world in the form of success. All the predicates that are used in this paragraph give new information about the subjects. For example, "Gabriela opens the cabinet and gets out a glass". In this sentence "Gabriela" is a subject and "opens the cabinet and gets out a glass" is a predicate of the sentence. "Gabriela" being the subject of the sentence "opens the cabinet and gets out a glass", is the center of information or the topic of whole contention. The writer wants his reader to understand the situation by focusing on the subject "Gabriela" that Gabriela opens the cupboard in order to take glass from it. In the sentence: "Relax, Gabriela. Don't forget who you are", Gabriela is the topic of the whole contention or the center of information while "relax" is a theme because it comes before the subject and is used as a framework in order to interpret the sentence. In this sentence the writer allows us information about Gabriela that she tries to console herself that she should not forget who she is; she should control herself. In the sentences like "Her hands are trembling. She considers drinking another glass of champagne, but decides not to risk turning up drunk on the step of fame", the writer talks 'On topic and Topic' i.e. "Her hands are trembling" that Gabriela feels nervous and because of her nervousness her hands are trembling; he then shifts his topic to the new one which relates with the old one i.e. 'Topically' e.g., "She considers drinking another glass of champagne, but decides not to risk turning up drunk on the step of fame". In this sentence, the writer gives us information that Gabriela wants to drink some wine in order to remove her nervousness but she avoids to do this by thinking of fame that she wants to get in film industry. The writer co-relates 'On Topic' with 'Topically' in order to produce cohesion. 'The Cohesion Tool' exists in this paragraph. Cohesive devices are also used in this paragraph in order to make connection among the sentences. Take an example: "she considers drinking another glass of champagne, but decides not to risk turning up drunk on the step of fame", in this sentence the conjunction 'but' connects two sentences. The writer uses this conjunction, because he expresses two opposite ideas; on one hand, Gabriela wants to drink wine but on the other hand, she does not want any type of hazard in the way of fame. 'The Significance Building Tool' can be referred to in the sentence "she remembers that she left her clothes and her handbag in the Gift Room". In this sentence



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"she remembers" is subordinate clause and a backgrounded information which is not asserted and is less significant, and it is just assumed while "she left her clothes and her handbag in the Gift Room" is a foregrounded information and the main clause, that is asserted and the most significant information exists here that is about Gabriela's clothes and handbag that she forgot in the Gift room. Writer used utterance to have patterns, means related class of words called collocational words. For example, "Gabriela opens the cabinet and gets out a glass; then, holding the bottle well away from her dress, she pops the cork and pours herself a glass of champagne which she downs in one and immediately refills" in theses sentences the collocational words are "cabinet", "glass", "bottle" and "champagne". The writer uses the same class of words because it gives the key sense and the readers are easily understood. About the nature of activity i.e. drinking wine by her (Sultan, 2020).

## Conclusion

This paper has critically analyzed that blind pursuit of joys sometimes becomes destructive. It can be a worst thing when the people go after such things that are impossible to get. It has explained how feeling of jealousy make the people insecure and scared about the future. Some characters lose themselves in order to get such things that the others have. They seem to dig a hole for themselves in jealousy. This novel shows that the characters are self-centered. Models in the novel focus on moving ahead by hooks or by crooks. The comparison that they make with the lives of others, always do make them stressed in their career. They never pay attention to their own potentials and efforts to get fame in the world of showbiz. It is useless trying to get something that seems to be impractical. Being hedonist is good but, sometimes hedonists would not realize what they lost in getting something beyond their capability. Pleasure and mental peacecome to those people who are hard workers and accept who they are. So, people should stop comparing with one another. Everyone should focus on their own purpose in life. Focusing on one's own goals and desires sometimes gives an individual great achievements and comfortable life. An individual who focuses on the success or rich life of others, will always be depressed in life. Overthinking about the popularity and fame makes an individual upset and it should be avoided. So, to achieve a long-term happiness in life, people should believe in their own ability and present means; they must not look at others' lives a successful, the others may be like them as the gross always seems greener on the other side.

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