

# Textual Analysis of the Short Stories of Francis J. Kong

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## ABSTRACT

A short story as a literary genre mirrors life, which touches the emotions of the readers. This study employs qualitative analysis using the inspirational stories of Francis J. Kong, namely: Scarred Hands, Sweet Success, The Most Important Ingredient in Service, False Conclusions, and Sweet Revenge. The characters' responses to various incidents were analyzed and compiled from consolidated opinions and feelings to assure that contextual presentation is considerable. Internal conflicts of Francis J. Kong's stories are choices between optimism and pessimism, determination and resignation, egoism and altruism, being impulsive and restrained, as well as tranquility and turmoil. Meanwhile, external conflicts are options between trust and wealth, positivity and negativity, declination and approval, indifference and concern, ill-mannered and gracious. These conflicts,

resolutions, and morale are believed to boost readers' strength, confidence, and collaboration. The main characters' choices demonstrate the values of creative thinking, acting, sharing constructive outlook, and rekindling the hearts that relates to the readers' experiences and perspectives. Resolutions narrated are directed towards acceptance of failure and defeat conceptualized through self-realization from a conventional perspective. The moral lessons commonly constitute the virtue of acclimatizing the essence of goodness and reverence of life, as the outgrowth of building one's strength, values, and faith in God would translate an epitome of humanity.

**Keywords** — conflict, resolution, moral, Francis J. Kong, short stories, qualitative method, Philippines

## INTRODUCTION

Textual analysis is a methodology involving interpreting the words, images, or pictures found in texts to obtain knowledge on how people make sense of and convey perceptions of existence and experiences (Allen, 2017). Critical scrutiny on the elements of a piece of literature is a process that creates an appreciation and understanding of a literary genre. Short story analysis, for example, is an avenue to challenge a reader's comprehension, activates critical thinking, and touches the emotion of the reader. As a literary genre, the short story displays unique characteristics resembling unity of effect and impression that would deliver ideas influential in understanding the essence of living.

Short story analysis is seldom studied. It can valuably shape one's knowledge, skills, and values as well as an avenue to equip one's fluency in vocabulary, comprehension, and higher-order thinking. Congruently, it is a valuable teaching tool to enhance the students' speaking and writing skills, as well as their critical and emotional intelligence by sharing opinions and feelings that would lead towards self-development.

Conflict, resolution, and moral lessons are potential elements for short story analysis. In this instance, the inspirational stories of Francis J. Kong are believed to be an advertently precious contribution to enrich one's range of learning and mold humanity. He is a success story writer applauded in his craftsmanship. His exemplary achievements evident in his numerous national and international distinctions received to mark his unique way of dealing with life. A book author, businessman, columnist, broadcaster, and inspirational speaker, Kong's

biographical sketch challenged the researchers to examine and evaluate his literary works of best interest in terms of conflict, resolution, and moral lesson as he transcribed his imagination into writing.

## FRAMEWORK

This study is anchored on Linguistic and Stylistic Categories suggested by Leech and Short (2013) being analytical and independent crafts, yet, crossbred genre connected with multihued points of intention, displaying eluding definitions to uncover the minds of the readers as they enjoy reading and at the same time eventually learning the skills in speaking, writing and thinking and at the same time the skill to apprehend events in the future.

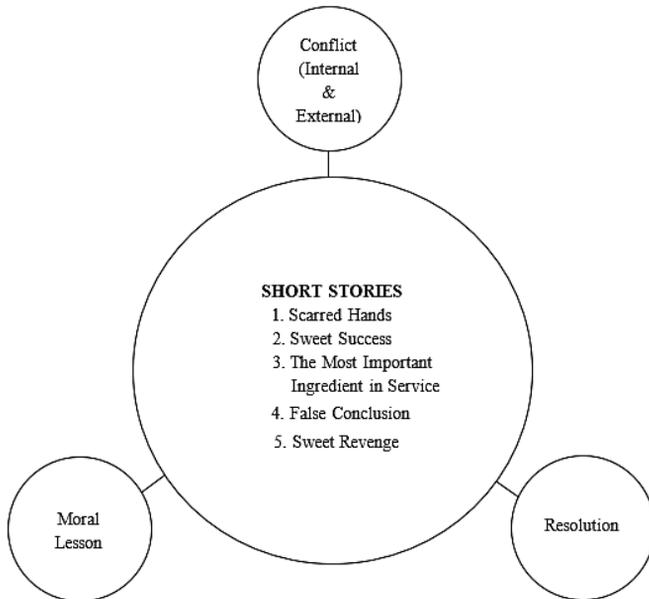


Figure 1 illustrates the schematic diagram of the study. Inner circle enclosed the selected short stories of Francis J. Kong entitled “Inspirational Short Stories.” The three outer circles are the basis of the story analyses.

## OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

In reference to the short stories chosen for analyses, this study aimed to analyze the conflict, the resolution, and the moral lesson that relieve the struggles of the main character's role in the story's flow. Further, it is geared to connect to the readers' emotions and values and, more aptly, to develop the critical thinking skill among the readers.

## METHODOLOGY

This study employs qualitative research based on the gathering of consolidated ideas and feelings cropped from the content of each story in terms of conflict, resolution, and moral lesson. The primary source of data is taken the book "*Inspirational Stories*" of Francis J. Kong, titled *Scarred Hands, Sweet Success, The Most Important Ingredient in Service, False Conclusions, and Sweet Revenge*. To organize information towards concrete analyses, series of investigations in the selection of the literary pieces were repeatedly done to assure that the textual presentation would be agreeably considered as extracted from students' opinions and feelings at the same time consulted to experts to prove the depth of the study. Significant lines were quoted and compiled in summary notes as extracted from interested parties to the concave commonality of opinions focused on the character's social and emotional responses to incidents that happened. Conclusions were drawn inclusive to the indicators included. The implications were raised to give strength and value that would translate humanity's epitome in relevance to connect sensitively with others.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The analyses and interpretation of the stories were done according to conflict classified as internal and external, between the main character against himself and between the main characters against other characters. The resolution stressed the unfolding solution on complicated issues, and the moral lesson expressed the values emphasized, leading to prove the impact of the study.

Story no. 1, *Scarred Hands*, "brings to the reality of God's presence in every life, for in times of needs God so provide. Worrying for death to come was portrayed by a crying child in a house with a feeling of yearning to live. It indicates an *internal* conflict as the character cried for help in a dreadful situation

inside the burning house, afraid to die, seemingly hopeless, and losing the courage and trust in God. In contrast, the *external* conflict is shown when the boy at a public hearing met persons vying over his custody, leading to an implication that money cannot buy persons' trust and confidence. It also caters to how to build a better understanding of the world of trickery. That one can harvest the fruit of honesty by planting goodness in his heart. It made a strong *resolution* to the internal conflict, reflecting tears for help inside the burning house as he was saved. The external conflict observed at the public hearing for adoption when the crowd began to wonder why his choice was unexpectedly observed of picking the simplest man who was interested in his adoption as he pronounced that the farmer is the best among them all. It implies that the boy needs no amount or luxury but the value of a man, the poor farmer who saved him when he was about to burn. It implies further God's pains on earth to the point of saving men from sins, thus "Salvation is about... His scars people are healed." Notably, the *moral lesson* derived from the story can be a common ground that being selflessly good to others at any time is a virtue that is most likely appreciated. Its *implication* denotes to inspire and shape one's continuous courage and faith in God to end up successful and productive.

Story no. 2, "*Sweet Success*," displays the character's failures by trying to apprehend things in life but instead met several failures. It reflects the business venture that after a series of failures, the main character became an owner-producer of Hershey chocolate. The *internal* conflict lay when the main character met multiple failures in business despite numerous attempts of endeavors. The external *conflict* lies in the sadness of Milton as his wife cannot give him a child. With a mind filled with positive thoughts, he can overcome sadness by a diverted thought on the battle that lies between the couple's problem to arrest conflict, which brings to the reality that failure is not the end, but it is a challenge to fight for more. The *resolution* invokes learning towards failure with an open thought that any conflict is not fatal. The character's courage led him to the best strategies in defining the formula for success and the power of discipline to fight against upsetting situations and solving the gaps in between. The *moral* is manifested in extended patience and acceptance of failures as a means to secure a venture for sustainability. In any way, success could be sweeter after experiencing struggles. Its *implication* constitutes that continuous courage in organizing situations and religiously work will be prized with the triumph over the tests of time.

Story no. 3, "**The Most Important Ingredient in Service**," shows the main character's genuine concern on others. The simple incident that happened to the hotel employee towards his client's disdained him becoming the manager in

the couple's 5-star hotel specially built for him out of his kindness. The *internal* conflict is seen when he felt the burden of the couple's situation as observed on his conscientious sympathy on the clients' situation with the extent of self-sacrifice by offering his quarter to the visitors since the hotel rooms had been fully occupied. The *external* conflict is reflected when the couple was denied for room accommodation. The *Resolution* has been noted when the couple perceived him a man of a special kind by offering such rare opportunity by which effect lead him to the best destiny as he never expects to be the manager of their red stoned 5-star hotel, named Astoria Hotel in the USA specially made for him by the couple to manage. The *morale* crafted is quoted from the line kindness begets kindness through genuine service with a heart. The *implication* is noticeably expressed on the employee's inspiring values cleaving him unexpected merit of a congruent joy towards his true service.

Story no. 4, "**False Conclusion,**" expounds the main character's attitude of biased accusation, which brought him to embarrassment. He easily raised his voice and got mad at upsetting situations. In an instant, he accused others of using his calculator but later noticed it inside his office table drawer. Another embarrassing moment was when he sent his high-tech computer for repair, which did not function as a computer service center with heightened emotion. It was demanding to be treated with the immediacy only to find out that his gadget has no problem. Maybe it was unplugged as he manipulated the gadget. The *Internal* conflict lies in his uncontrolled emotion and self-centeredness without considering reasons. *External* conflict is evident in his indifference towards the people around him. A *resolution* describes his realization of the consequence of his acts that diligence in investigating things and patience in finding the cause of a problem will bring one to the right conclusion. The moral is hinted on the idea that "One must not jump into conclusion and not blow one's top without listening to reasons to minimize conflicts and intrigues that would redound to humiliation." The *implication* defines the importance of listening to reasons, being consultative, and weighing the bane and the boon to come up with a fair decision.

Story no. 5, "**Sweet Revenge,**" divulged the misery of the main character being naïve and inexperienced. He received many unpleasant memories with the bullies around his workplace, targeting him too often into ridicule and humiliation. His being passive and forgiving despite the ills and inhuman treatments finally mellowed their conscience and figured him to be a man good trait. The *internal* conflict reflects the main self-keeping character of being resistance over his co-worker's indecent manners he inescapably faced most often. The *external* conflict

observed displayed the inevitable moods of the people around him, which did not cause him to retaliate. It inferred that those who appear weaker and stand lower are the usual subjects of bullying. The *resolution* led to qualifying the bullies' manifestations of lack of knowledge, skill, and values of being human. They noticed the weaker party with no avenger, staying cool, and through his prayers in silence for the bullies caused them a self-constructive direction to understand the value of respect. The *moral lesson* implies that the more one shares a good heart to those who pained him is a laudable act of winning every time one bears it. Thus, the *implication* on resisting to pains, out of discrimination and leaving revenge on God's wrath merit a positive value of major considerations and can be an instrument of better chance to penetrate the lives of the bullies as its effects will redound to the consequence of their deeds.

Students generally opined that based on the stories deliberated in this study to be good as much as possible is a manifestation of keeping a healthy mind commendable to convey better relationship towards any human entity or even to lower forms of animals. Others commented that since conflict is inevitable to surface in any undertakings, an immediate resolution to pacify like situations is a better option to end up confronting problems and mend relationships. Hence, there is a necessity to educate and constantly re-educate humanity to the best values in life to minimize actions that would result in conflicting situations. Although, in some cases, there is a need to argue to come up with the best result, such that Brannagan and Oriol (2014) suggested that making conflict resolution is necessary as a part of the training. On the other side, Schroeder (2014) placed forward the suggestion that so much focus on being polite may impede learning as students may withdraw from voicing an alternate view. It is perhaps shading importance on the values of reading literature that would promote a better understanding of ourselves and others' value. According to Eagleton (2011), faith in the morally educational literature persisted and made English literature a more appropriate source for moral instruction and less remote from life than the classics.

In the stories of Francis J. Kong, the general implication substantiated a commonality depicting a central foundation that would translate humanity's epitome towards the outgrowth of building one's strength and values as well as the sensitive connection to others' lives. His success stories have inspired many readers that even relate to their own experiences and encourage them to crave for the true, the good, and the beautiful.

## SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

*Story no. 1* “Scarred Hands.” the internal and external conflicts as felt by the main character on a dreadful situation inside a burning house and at a public hearing over interested persons’ drive for his custody after he was saved from the incident led a decision that made the calm and soft mood of the court. The resolution affected the society’s atmosphere by his decision to pick the simplest man, the farmer with scarred hands for his adoption over the other prominent persons who wished his custody. The moral lesson derived is practically leading to a common ground that being selflessly good to others is a virtue worthy of appreciation. It inspires and shapes the courage to help others and engulf oneself with faith in God.

*Story no. 2* “Sweet Success.” External and internal conflicts are observed when the main character met multiple failures despite numerous attempts of endeavors and on his yearning for a child by which his wife cannot give. A constructive thinker, he diverted his thought on the battle to arrest conflicts, which brought him to the reality that failure is not the end, but it is a challenge to fight for more. The resolution invokes that any failure is not fatal as he kept experimenting with new formulas in his business and finally succeeded. Of course, these were coupled with the power of discipline to fight against upsetting situations and solving the gaps in between. The morale applies to extended patience and acceptance of failures as good manifestations to venture life for sustainability and success could be sweeter after experiencing failures. His move made him a bigger family in his firm and became known to the world with his tasteful chocolates. Its implication denotes that continuous courage in organizing situations and religious work will end up in triumph over the tests of time.

*Story no. 3* “The Most Important Ingredient in Service.” The character was initially refused as he offered his room to the couple that night as the hotel ran short of bed space until he was able to convince them for security reasons. The internal conflict is seen over his conscientious sympathy on the clients’ situation with the extent of self- sacrifice by offering his room to the visitors. The external conflict is reflected when the couple was denied room accommodation at the front desk. The resolution has been noted when the couple perceived him of a special kind which opportune him to the best destiny as he never expects to be the manager of the red stone 5-star hotel, named Astoria Hotel in the USA built years after, specially made for him by the couple to manage. The morale crafted is kindness begets kindness through genuine service. It implies an expression of

man's inspiring values that will merit a congruent joy to true service recipients.

*Story no. 4* "False Conclusion." The main character usually met arguments in his workplace because of his being vindictive and inconsiderate. He complained about his high-tech computer brought to the computer service center for repairing the arguments sprouted with anger with the computer technician due to his demand to deal with him with immediacy. The gadget was operational but was unplugged as he manipulated the gadget. Internal and external conflicts depicted his uncontrolled emotional responses, self-centeredness, and indifference towards him. It led him a resolution to his problem upon his realization of the consequence of his acts. That, diligence in investigating things and patience in finding the cause of a problem will top up to the right conclusion. The moral is, "One must not jump into conclusion without listening to reasons to minimize conflicts and intrigues that would redound to humiliation." The implication is to listen to reasons and be consultative and be accountable for any act to settle towards a fair decision.

*Story no. 5* "Sweet Revenge." His co-workers often bullied the main character due to his lack of experience in the job. He received numerous ridicule and humiliation, but his being considerate and forgiving despite the negative attitude around finally neutralized their conscience and perceived him to be a person of good character. The external conflict reflects the main character's resistance over the indecency he faced holding his strength towards retaliation. The resolution is transparent in his still coolness and expressive silent prayers, which effectively led to a self-constructive direction to a bullied man. The moral lesson suggests that the more one wears a good heart, the more he expects to win every time he bears the pain. To the bullies, their acts are manifestations of a lack of knowledge, skill, and values of being human. Thus, resistance to pain, out of bullying and discrimination, and leaving revenge on God's wrath, can be an instrument of strength and boost confidence. It implies that one should not plant revenge inside but instead wear a forgiving heart and culture oneself with options that would generate a meaningful life that is displayed in the behavior of the main character.

## CONCLUSION

This context demonstrates the aspects of creative thinking, sharing constructive outlook, and rekindling the hearts that relates to the readers' experiences and perspectives. These are a good contribution to effective learning strategies in winning life. Conclusively, the author's emerging internal and external conflicts are expressed from a psychological and sociological point of

view. The conventional attributes narrated in the resolutions are directed towards acceptance of failure and defeat conceptualized through self-realization, which finally commensurate one's pattern of self-control and life's choice. Based on further analyses of the stories, the moral lessons constitute values that would translate the virtue of acclimatizing God's essence of goodness and faith. Thus, biblically, actions performed by godly means assure the luck to conform towards one's satisfaction, a feeling of fulfillment, and even an afterthought of eternal happiness.

### **TRANSLATIONAL RESEARCH**

This study's findings may be best translated into illustrational books, storytelling books, or posters that could be displayed in the reading corners of a classroom for the students to have easy access to it. It may further teach them how to be successful in life and overcome the struggles and obstacles that hinder their success.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

Based on the analyses of the selected short stories of Francis J. Kong as to conflict, resolution, and moral lesson, it is then recommended that story analysis via conflict, resolution, and related literary elements may enhance students' critical thinking contributory to the 21<sup>st</sup>-century skills. Crafting the moral and implication in a literary genre is a good springboard to conceptualize the best directions in life. Furthermore, researches are suggested for replication to augment the culture of literary analysis for the best advantage.

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