

## THE INFLUENCE OF ENVIRONMENT TOWARDS JEAN LA'BARGE IN LOUIS L'AMOUR'S SITKA

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**Abstract.** This study is about the influence of the environments toward Jean LaBarge's in Sitka. The novel analyzed with qualitative descriptive research method and sociological approach. The analysis shows that character of Jean LaBarge gets influences from nature and other characters in his development. Jean is influenced by the great swamp and Alaska which makes him brave, independent, and ambitious. In addition, there is some social environment influencing him. His father, Captain Hutchins, Peter Hovey, Rob J. Walker, and Princess Helena Gagarin. Jean's characteristics were formed by both nature and social environment.

**Keywords:** *environmental influence, independent, ambitious.*

### INTRODUCTION

This article discusses the development of the main character, Jean LaBargae in Sitka in the term of how the development is related to the environment where the character lives. Kraur (2019) applying Abram's theory on character, defines characters in fiction as "the persons resented in a dramatic or narrative work, and are interpreted by the reader as being endowed with particular moral, intellectual, and emotional quality inferences from what the person says i.e. the dialogue and from what they do-the action".

Sitka is a story about Jean LaBarge's life as the main character in the novel. In this novel Louis L' Amour tells the reader about Jean's condition since his childhood until he becomes a good role for people around him. When he was a child, Jean lived in the middle of a swamp as an orphan, but luckily he had a friend - Rob J. Walker- that support him. They grew up, supported, and

helped one another. While Rob, become a successful fur trader, Jean discovered himself swept up in an epic battle in the wilds of Alaska where a tyrannical Russian seized control of the fur trade and the land. Jean never backed down from a fight, even one as bold and dangerous as a battle that will shape the future of America.

The environment can be understood as everything that surrounds every individual during his or her life. The environment can be divided into two. First, it is people referring to parents, brothers, and friends. Second, it deals with a non-personal environment referring to houses, schools, and nature. Human social environments encompass the immediate physical surroundings, social relationships, and cultural milieus within which defined groups of people function and interact (Matteson. L. K, et.al :2013).

The relationship between environment and human beings has become one of the people's concerns

through times, for good or bad. As it is stated by Morris and Shore that there are direct and indirect influences of the environment toward children. Directly, the environment influences children's well-being by playing significant roles in food and nutrition, water and sanitation, disease and immunity, physical and mental development, and hope and security. Indirectly, the natural environment influences well-being, especially the well-being of children in developing and in poor contexts, by facilitating caregivers' capacity to provide for material needs, their ability to access educational and cultural resources for themselves and their families, and the quality of caregivers' physical and mental health (2013: 4). Furthermore, the environment plays an important and might be the most influencing factor in one's life. The importance of the environment to human life has been part of the discussion through many years. Today, it is getting more and more attention as it can be seen in the massive discussion on pollution, waste, and climate changes (Parasaja, A and Supsiadji M.R, 2019). This shows, furthermore, how the environment plays an important role in human's life. In the same line, Lindsay K. Matteson, et. al. (2013) argue that there is an impact of shared environmental factors on adolescent personality.

## **METHOD**

The writers applied quantitative research, which is a measurement based on some quantity or number rather than on some quality. Blackwell defines the qualitative research method as "an umbrella concept that covers interviews a group or a person, participant observation (in a person or online), and textual analysis of paper or electronic. (2019:4). In this research, the writers are interested in analyzing how the environment gives effect to the characters

in a novel. Here the writers analyze one of Louis L' Amour' s novel entitled Sitka. Also, the writers applied sociological approach to analyzing the influence of the environment towards the main character. In conducting the research, the writers followed the data collection procedures as 1) reading the novel Sitka; 2) analyzing the environment of Jean as a child, teenager, and adult; marking the environments that have been seen as an influence for the main character; 3) grouping in written results; and 4) coding the data and lines where the sentences are located in the novel.

## **RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

The influences of the environment towards the development of Jean LaBarge seems to be one of the main issues in Louis L'amour Sitka. The environment here manifests in two forms, that is the natural environment and society environment. The following discussion will show this matter.

### **A. The Nature's Influence**

Nature's influence toward Jean can be read, mostly, through the way Jean has to keep survive his life alone since he was a child. Since his childhood, an orphan boy has to live alone in a wild forest in the middle of a swamp. For Jean the swamp is his home and in turn, the swamp has shaped Jean into a brave and skillful person in terms of having the capability to cure people using the natural ingredient provided by nature. He lives with his mother in the swamp because his father had been issued passed away and then Jean completely become an orphan because his mother has passed away when Jean was just ten years old. Since his parents passed away Jean has learned about many things to survive alone in the swamp. The swamp is his first home and a place that teaches him about a lot of things

(L'Amour:1957:1). Because of this condition, Jean has to survive without any help from others and the swamp teaches him how to live through his life.

The swamp provides rich plantations that can be used for medication. He has learned this from his mother. When his mother died, Jean has decided to learn more about the plantation for medication. By the time goes by, he is skillful of observing the plants that are useful for medication and he sells the herbs to the villagers to survive (L'Amour: 1957: 13).

In addition, another influence that the swam gives to Jean is in terms of bodybuilding and skill to move soundlessly as an animal does as can be read in the following quotation.

"Jean was a tall fourteen, a slender boy with a large dark eye and shock of curly black hair. Already her shoulders were board, although his body was painfully thin. The was more than a hint of the man he would become in the size of his the easy way he moved. Growing up in the forest he had early learned to move as silently as would a fox or panter "(L'Amour: 1957:3)

There is another point that shows the impact of Jean's living in the swam that will not happen if Jean lives in a different environment. Being living alone in the swam which is regarded by many people as a scary place forces Jean to be brave. There are some moments when he realizes that he is alone and this makes him afraid sometimes. However, he can overcome his being loneliness and his fears for "(t)he swamp became the training ground for that great day when he would be "big" and could go away" (L'Amour:1957:7).

#### **B. Social Environment Influence**

Environmental factors are important in determining of child 's development. The statement is true as it can be read on the following citation"

"It has long been understood that factors at the individual, family, community (including school and health care systems), and societal levels have profound effects on children's development. Nor is it news that the ratio of positive, supportive influences to negative ones is likely worse for children born into lower socioeconomic circumstances." (Division of Behavioral and Social Sciences and Education, 2019:4)

Interactions between children and their parents and/or caregivers differ across cultures. Interactions between parent and child are largely influenced by cultural beliefs, values, and personal experiences of one's own family and family beliefs. Factors in the social environment that are influence toward someone characteristic are those related to safety, violence, and social disorder in general, and more specific factors related to the type, quality, and stability of social connections, including social participation, social cohesion, social capital, and the collective efficacy of the neighborhood (or work) environment.

#### **Jean LaBarge's Father's Influence**

Jean LaBarge is fond of his father and there are some points that one can read about Jean gets influence by his father. Jean keeps acting like his father, such as how he handles every problem and how he acts among people. One thing, Jean has a dream to be a trapper and becomes a fabulous man. Another thing, he has the same dream as that of father's story that "(o)nce he had a riffle he would go west and become a mountain man like his father, and perhaps in some trappers' rendezvous in the mountains he might meet him .....". (L' Amour . 1957:4). Even though Jean does not know how his father's figure outside there, his memory about his father and words that spread among people is enough

to convince him to get his future as a fabulous man.

### **Captain Hutchins' Influence**

Captain Hutchins is a great person and Jean has respected him since his childhood. He is a great teacher for Jean LaBarge. The first time Jean meets with Captain Hutchins is when there are some strangers people who have recognized them as Carter a serial killer, and Hutchins jumps to help the little Jean after he hears the news that Jean is being locked in the cabin from Rob Walker, Jean Labarge's best friend. Hutchins's character and words are always affected and practically Jean will because those words can change Jean's mindset. Captain Hutchins has a lot of knowledge, not only about fur or sailor but also about the political issue and how it is a condition outside there. Jean ever once met Hutchins and some words of Hutchins make Jean dream to be a sailor as a fur trader. He believes every word of Hutchin's s said, it makes him have a big expectation. Another thing about Captain Hutchins is that he is distinct but being respected because of his power. He owns the most of the horses and has been free about providing powder and ball and others know they need a while finding a man to replace him. It can be seen by how people listen to his favor when he was asked for it. At Jean's s first travel it is not as easy as his dream. Many people refuse to accept him as a worker because he is too little and inexperienced in the sea. However, Captain Hutchins stands behind him and help him to get out of that hard situation, ensures people that Jean will be really helpful as a trapper.

### **Peter Hovey's Influence**

At the beginning of Jean's trip, he still needs to learn about a lot of stuff about being a sailor and trapper. Even though Jean has already known about furs, he still

needs to know more about furs and a n-apper in any condition or place different from the swampland, until he meets Peter Hovey Captain Hutchins ' friend. Peter Hovey teaches Jean the most important part of Jean's life. He is the first person who welcomes Jean on his first trip and willing to teach Jean how to be a mountain man. After he meets with Peter Hovey, Jean becomes a good trapper not only in the swamp but also in the mountains. He knows a lot about furs, he can sell his own and be a good trapper as other men who has a lot of experience.

### **Rob J. Walker's Influence**

Jean has been used to meet new people in the village, in a moment he meets Rob Walker, his best buddies. Rob is already fascinated by Jean ' s figure since the first time they meet. He is friendly toward Rob. Jean recognizes the curiosity and sincerely in Rob ' s question in the first they meet, and it leads them to be friends and to share the same dreams. As childhood friends, Jean and Rob share a dream to go west. The saddest moment happens to little Jean Labarge when he has to leave the swamp and his best friend, Rob Walker. Jean leaves it for his future and sta11s his adventure. Every time Jean gets a chance, he will write a letter for Rob. Until he vis its Alaska he remembers his promise with Rob and they start trying to achieve their dream. It is not only Jean who grows up so well but his best friend, Rob Walker also grows well and has already gotten married. Rob gains his career as a senator, and it is kind of a start of their journey to make history. Rob Walker has an important role in the nation, and Jean knows that Rob has the capability to buy a continent which can help both of them to achieve their dream to make Alaska become a part of the United States. Another reason for his dream about Alaska is because of the

feeling of patriotism for his country, and it is an influence from his best friend. Jean believes that his friend will help him no matter what (239).

### **Princess Helena Gagarin's Influence**

When Jean turns as a mature man he starts to sail his own ship under his own command, starting to get some crew in San Fransisco. Jean starts his command to Kohl as the dock man. In San Fransisco harbor he meets a girl who takes attention from Jean because this girl is so different from the other girls he has ever met before. Start from the way she gets dressed and the way she speaks. There is an accident that makes the girl falls in Jean 's arm all of sudden Jean kissed the girl on the lips and it gets a slap for Jean. Even the girl so angry Jean does not regret it at all. Jean becomes a patient man for Helena. Starting from his first met until they end up being together. His second meeting with the girl is when Jean is introduced to the Russian prince, Prince Rotcheff. Jean respects the Prince, for being friendly and polite. He is also asked to help Jean. At that moment he just knows that she is a princess from Russian and wife of Prince Rotcheff. " And after some moment conversations he knew the girl' s name, it is princess Helena Gagarin, niece of His Majesty, the Czar of Russia, Grand Duke Constantin." (L' Amour. 1957:56). The reality that Helena is someone' s wife makes Jean sad but he respects the Prince. Jean will not try to steal the Princess because Jean respects Prince Rotcheff, who is friendly and polite, he will wait patiently to get the princess. Jean turns into someone who able to speak openly in front of Helena. Helena makes Jean realizes how lonely he was all this time, until the moment Helena also confess her feeling, but part of his men pride would not let him take her from her husband so Jean waits for her patiently. He does not

hesitantly do a dangerous thing to protect her. After a long journey, Jean still remembers about Helena, a lot of thought coming to him. He thinks that no man should walk on earth alone. A man should have a partner, to share his luck and his strength, but his sorrows as well. And this thought comes at the same time as Jean remembers Helena.

### **CONCLUSION**

There are two kinds of environments that influence Jean LaBarge's characteristics in Sitka nature and social environment. The swamp where Jean lives is the natural factor that makes Jean turn into an independent boy, brave, strong, determined person and has knowledge about herbal and furs makes his own source of living. Besides nature, people surrounding Jean LaBarge also influence him, especially people who motivate and make him turn into a good trapper and sailor. The first person who inspires him about going to the west and becomes a fabulous man is his father. The biggest influencer in Jean's life is Captain Hutchins. The little Jean respects Captain Hutchins, first because of his great figure, and second because of Captain Hutchins helps him in the swamp. There is an attachment in Jean toward Captain Hutchins because of their history. Jean's first journey becomes a crew for Captain Hutchins, while others are hesitated to take Jean as their crew, Captain Hutchins stands for him and takes care of everything for him. Hutchins gives Jean some books to learn in every chance so he is not an illiterate anymore. Peter Hovey, Hutchins' friend teaches Jean how to be a trapper in the mountains. He is able to face every obstacle with help from his friend, Rob J. Walker who teaches him to be a loyal citizen to his country and inspires him in his patriotism. Besides Rob, Jean always trusts his lover, Princess Helena.

Jean is a protected characteristic who only shows up when he is with Helena. His ambition to have Helene as his partner is achieved because of his patience.

The environment gives a big impact and influence on the main character. Jean's characteristics get influences by the physical and or psychological environment. Through nature, he learns so much, builds motivation, and becomes stronger as the time flies. People surround Jean, gives influences by their characteristics, action, and also their words which one in a moment will struck in Jean's heart and he applies it in the future. Jean LaBarge's characteristics are formed by nature and the social environment around him. It is the swamp that becomes his natural teacher and Alaska which makes lead his dream. Unconsciously, Jean learns to be a brave person and smart because of the urge to live alone from nature and also his social environment.

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