

Winnie Foster's Self-Awareness in Natalie Babbitt's Tuck Everlasting

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Abstract

The research article aims at analyzing 1) the self-awareness portrayed by the protagonist Winnie Foster in Natalie Babbitt's *Tuck Everlasting*; and 2) the reasons behind such portrayals. The qualitative method is used, and the findings are reported in the form of a descriptive analysis. The study finds that Winnie portrays self-awareness, and it is presented three times. For the first time, Winnie's self-awareness is seen when she runs away from home into Treegap woods, owned by the Fosters. For the second time, the self-awareness is shown when she replaces Mae Tuck in jail before Mae is hanged. For the third time, it is portrayed when she chooses to be what she has always been instead of being immortal. The study also identifies the reasons behind such portrayals. Winnie runs away from home into the woods because of the strictness of her family and the need to discover the source of secret sound of music floating from the woods. She decides to replace Mae Tuck in jail because she loves all the Tucks. The accountability for her family and the results of immortal life she learns from the Tucks cause Winnie to choose to be what she has always been instead of being immortal. Self-awareness is displayed through Winnie's decisions which are made by herself when she runs away into the woods, replaces Mae in jail, and chooses to be normal and mortal as she has always been. Winnie uses self-awareness by herself to serve not only her personal interests but also for the benefit of others'.

Keywords: self-awareness, *Tuck Everlasting*, Winnie Foster

Born in Dayton, Ohio, Natalie Babbitt or Natalie Zane Babbitt (1932-2016) was an American writer and illustrator of children's literature. Before becoming a writer, Babbitt had illustrated children's books such as *The Forty-Ninth Magician* (1966), a picture book, written by Samuel Fisher Babbitt, her

husband. Her famous novels include *The Search for Delicious* (1969), *Kneeknock Rise* (1970), *Tuck Everlasting* (1975), *The Eyes of the Amaryllis* (1977), *Nellie: A Cat on Her Own* (1989), and *Jack Plank Tells Tales* (2007). Babbitt was awarded the 1971 Newbery Honor for *Kneeknock Rise*. In 1975, the novel *Tuck Everlasting* won the Christopher Award for Books for Young People. In an interview, someone asks Babbitt if a reader could read only one of her books, which one would she want him or her to read. She answers that it is the novel *Tuck Everlasting*. Babbitt further explains why *Tuck Everlasting* should be read: “People seem to have a good time thinking about the issues raised in that one. And grown-ups seem to like it as much as kids” (Babbitt, 2015, p. 140).

Not only does Babbitt view it as the perfect one to read, but also *Tuck Everlasting* has been hugely popular among readers. The novel was first published by Farrar Straus Giroux in 1975. From that moment onwards, it has been greatly admired; moreover, it is regarded as a classic of modern children’s literature. In 2000, readers felt delighted with *The Special 25th Anniversary Edition of Tuck Everlasting*, published by Sunburst. This special version includes an interview with Natalie Babbitt. Recently, in 2015, the latest digital version of *Tuck Everlasting the 40th Anniversary Edition* was produced by Macmillan and marketed in Kindle, a series of e-readers designed by Amazon.com (an American electronic and cloud computer company). In addition, this children’s story won awards. As mentioned earlier, the novel won the Christopher Award for Books for Young People in 1975. *Tuck Everlasting* was also ranked sixteenth among the Top 100 Chapter Books of all time by *School Library Journal*, a monthly American magazine for school and public librarians and media specialists, in 2012.

Not all versions of Babbitt’s *Tuck Everlasting* are produced for reading, though. The novel was adapted for both films and stage musicals. The movie was made twice. First, the 1981 *Tuck Everlasting* film was directed by Frederick King Keller. Second, the 2002 film was directed by Jay Russell under Walt Disney Pictures (an American production company). In spite of the fact that the first one was not well known, the second film has appealed to world audiences for years. In an article entitled “Everlasting Contrasts: Babbitt’s Use of Opposites in *Tuck Everlasting*,” Gregory Bryan (2003) regards the 2002 film as timeless and as launching a new wave of interest in the book:

With the 2002 release of Disney Pictures’ adaptation of *Tuck Everlasting*, a new audience discovered Natalie Babbitt’s timeless adolescent story. The release of the movie, with its Academy Award-winning cast including Sissy Spacek, Ben Kingsley, and William Hurt, generated a new wave of interest in the book. (p. 1)

Also, there are two musical versions: the 2015 world premiere Atlanta musical in Georgia and the 2016 original Broadway musical in New York. The popularity of the novel which can be noticed in these forms provides impetus to the research.

Besides the popularity, the plot also influences this study. Set in New Hampshire in the late 19th century, the novel is the story of the Tuck family that has eternal life. There are four members in the family: Mae and Angus Tuck (a mother and a father) and their two sons, Miles and Jesse. All four Tucks, including their horse, have not aged and do not die because they drink water from the magic fountain in the woods near the village of Treemap. Having been trapped in such a life for eighty-seven years, the Tucks meet Winnie Foster, an eleven-year-old girl, who runs away from her parents, who are very strict, live in Treemap and own the Treemap woods. Jesse Tuck is the first one who meets Winnie, and he stops her from drinking water from the spring. At that moment, Mae and Miles Tuck arrive, and the three Tucks snatch Winnie to stop her from drinking the magic water. The Tucks do not reveal the hidden secret of the magic spring to Winnie either. After being kidnapped by the Tucks, Winnie gradually develops a steadfast friendship with them. All members of the Tuck family love Winnie, and she loves them, too. When Winnie is about to be snatched by a stranger from the Tucks' home, Mae obviously shows her utmost care for the girl by killing that stranger. Similarly, Winnie proves her wholehearted concern for the Tucks when she manages to help Mae escape from prison before being hanged. Winnie replaces Mae in the cell to give the Tucks time to run away. Although Winnie knows the secret of the Tucks' immortality, it is still a closely-guarded secret throughout the story.

The themes of *Tuck Everlasting* are important factors that draw the researcher's attention to it. While the main theme is "immortality may bring bad results," other themes are illustrated such as how to live forever, curse and blessing, a choice and its results, and the importance of death. Walton Beacham (1996) explains the theme of immortality by asking for an opinion about living forever: "What would it be like to live forever?" (p. 42). Beacham also raises the issue of the polarities between the following pairs: curse and blessing, protection and greed, and mortality and immortality as part of the theme of the story (pp. 46-47). In a section found at the beginning of the novel "Foreword to the 40th Anniversary Edition," Gregory Maguire (2015) gives an example of a theme while explaining the precise meaning of the two words *theme* and *plot*. According to Maguire, one of the themes demonstrated in this children's fiction is that we have to lose something when we make a choice to gain another thing: "In *Tuck Everlasting*—this book belongs among those other great works of literature—one theme might be: Every choice we make has a reward and a cost" (p. 2). Claire Fallon (2016) suggests in an article "The Children's Book Author Who Taught Us to Embrace Death" that the story gives a new perspective on

death everyone, especially children, should understand rather than fear. Fallon points out that the idea of death in *Tuck Everlasting* is depicted as an important step of life: “From *Tuck Everlasting*, we learned that every living creature dies and that although it’s natural to resist this, death is a meaningful part of life” (p. 1). Throughout the story, the study finds that these themes involve Winnie Foster, the main character. Therefore, this study demonstrates how Winnie responds to the actions illustrated under some points of the themes.

Of these themes, “death is a meaningful part of life” is one of the themes displayed when Winnie makes an important decision. In 1987, M. Kip Hartvigsen and Christen Brog Hartvigsen presented an article entitled “Rough and Soft, Both at Once: Winnie Foster’s Initiation in *Tuck Everlasting*” to demonstrate the binary oppositions involving Winnie’s portrayals:

Winnie’s passage from innocence to knowledge requires her to eschew the extreme polarities Babbitt disclaims—beauty or ugliness, freedom or constriction, immortality or death, joy or sorrow, good or evil—and to understand that life is a complex melding of opposites which one must learn to manage. (p. 177)

Among these oppositions, the two topics *death* and *immortality* are placed together. This raises the question why Winnie selects death rather than immortality which people have long been searching for. Also, Walton Beacham (1996) analyzes the story and points out what Winnie chooses. Beacham indicates relations between her and the toad and the moment Winnie uses the magical water on this tiny animal:

Winnie’s caring about animals led her to use the water for the toad. He was her representation of freedom. When Winnie uses the water on the toad, we see that Winnie believes the Tucks’ story. It also foreshadows that Winnie has made her decision between mortality and immortality. (p. 36)

The moment that Winnie pours the magic water onto the toad leads readers to understand that she will not drink that water. This means that, from that moment onwards, Winnie chooses to be what she has always been—to be mortal and normal. Like Beacham, Gregory Bryan (2003) notices that when Winnie rejects eternal life, she does live a life: “This being the case, in learning of Winnie’s death, we understand that she did live. In choosing death, Winnie opted for life” (p. 5). Hartvigsen and Hartvigsen (1987), Beacham (1996), and Bryan (2003) have affirmed the idea that it is death that gives meaning to life. The idea is portrayed significantly in Babbitt’s *Tuck Everlasting*. These critics

also point out that only Winnie, the eleven-year-old girl from the well-off family, presents this idea visibly.

As she chooses to have a normal life instead of being immortal, what leads Winnie to take that choice causes this study to raise some questions. While making a decision, Winnie displays some knowledge and understanding not only of the truth of life but also of herself. This affects this study to focus on what makes Winnie choose to live and die at the end instead of staying alive forever. In *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, John Locke (1632-1704), an English philosopher, states about humans' appropriating actions and merit which involve consciousness: "appropriating actions and their merit; and so belongs only to intelligent agents, capable of a law, and happiness, and misery. This personality extends itself beyond present existence to what is past, only by consciousness" (2004, p. 299). From all this it can be assumed that the ability to perform certain senses involves people's awareness. The study hypothesizes that it is Winnie's self-awareness that leads her to decide to live normally and die at the end.

No study regarding this hypothesis, portrayed through Winnie, would be complete without a clear understanding of the term *self-awareness*. When you are aware of yourself, you know and understand yourself. In an article entitled "What's on Your Mind?," Nancy Douglas and David Bohlke (2015b) define the word *self-awareness* as an ability of humans to think about their own selves and understand their own feelings and suggest that this ability is an essential ingredient of being human: "This self-awareness—the ability to think about yourself and how you're feeling—is an important part of being human" (p. 159). Also, Douglas and Bohlke (2015a) illustrate the concept of self-awareness in the article "Inside Animal Minds." Self-awareness is categorized to be one of five important skills viewed as the key signs of human mental abilities, "Certain skills are considered key signs of higher mental abilities: a good memory, an understanding of symbols, self-awareness, understanding of others' motives, and creativity" (p. 166).

Apart from those psychological contexts, John Locke (2004) gives the meaning of the word *self* which is defined to be closely connected with the word *consciousness*. Locke affirms that self is directly and only affected by consciousness:

Self depends on consciousness, not on substance. Self is that conscious thinking thing, —whatever substance made up of, (whether spiritual or material, simple or compounded, it matters not)—which is sensible or conscious of pleasure and pain, capable of happiness or misery, and so is concerned for itself, as far as that consciousness extends. (p. 293)

Locke's perception about the characteristic of self leads to a consideration of consciousness as something that causes humans to become better aware of their own selves, thoughts, and feelings. Under the definitions in terms of psychology and philosophy, this study defines the term *self-awareness* as the self-ability to consciously think about, know, and understand one's own self, thoughts, and feelings, especially in a certain situation.

According to the definition, the study finds that Winnie, the main character, in Natalie Babbitt's *Tuck Everlasting* not only understands that mortality plays a part in the natural life cycle but also has and performs self-awareness. This study aims at demonstrating Winnie's self-awareness through her distinctive deeds throughout the story. That is why the following two main aspects of Winnie's self-awareness are presented: 1) the self-awareness in Winnie's portrayals in Natalie Babbitt's *Tuck Everlasting* and 2) the reasons behind such portrayals.

The data are from both the primary and secondary sources. This study employs Natalie Babbitt's *Tuck Everlasting* published by Square Fish Farrar Straus Giroux in the United States on January 20, 2015 as the primary source. The data is collected from the dialogues between the young Winnie and other characters: all members of the Tucks, Winnie's mother and grandmother, a man in a yellow suit, and, moreover, a toad. The descriptions of the situations involving this eleven-year-old girl from the beginning of the story until the end are also focused on. Other studies and reviews which are relevant to the objectives of this study are considered as useful secondary sources.

To study Winnie Foster's self-awareness in Natalie Babbitt's *Tuck Everlasting*, this study used a qualitative method. It included examining appraisals of documentary sources about this children's novel, the protagonist Winnie, and the concept of self-awareness as well as watching the 2002 film version of the novel. First, the appraisals were gathered from studies and articles about the novel and the film. In this step, the study also collected background information from those and searched what was found among previous studies and reports of the film. Second, in the novel, the dialogues between Winnie and other characters and the descriptions of the events involving her acts of self-awareness were collected. Third, the analysis of the protagonist Winnie's self-awareness and the reasons behind the portrayals was conducted. Including the extracts from the novel, the findings of the analysis in the form of a descriptive report were shown. Finally, the discussion and the conclusion of the study were drawn.

Winnie Foster's self-awareness is firstly noticed in the prologue. According to the meaning defined in this study, the word *self-awareness* means the self-ability to consciously think about, know, and understand one's own self, thoughts, and feelings, especially in certain situations. The self-awareness can be captured through Winnie's decision when she is introduced to readers. She

decides to secretly leave home alone: “At noontime, Winnie Foster, whose family owned the Treegap wood, lost her patience at last and decided to think about running away” (Babbitt, 2015, p. 4). Home is a place where the members of a family live together. It is also a place in which the family members feel comfortable. People usually love home. When people decide to run away from home, it can be inferred that there are some difficulties they cannot solve or tolerate. It also implies that someone or something forces them to leave home. Furthermore, the runaways do not intend to come back. The word *patience* in the extract indicates obviously that Winnie feels uncomfortable at her home. It also implies that the choice of running away from home takes place after Winnie has spent time considering all the possibilities that this escape might entail. It is found that Winnie reveals this secret journey to a large toad, her only friend. Later on, she decides to start the journey in the coming early morning:

Winnie Foster sat on the bristly grass just inside the fence and said to the large toad who was squatting a few yards away across the road, ‘I will, though. You’ll see. Maybe even first thing tomorrow, while everyone’s still asleep.’ It was hard to know whether the toad was listening or not. (Babbitt, 2015, p. 13)

The statement *everyone is still asleep* makes it clear that Winnie will leave home before dawn breaks to keep this secret from other members of her family. Also, when she mentions it to the toad, Winnie confirms that she will definitely run away. She uses this confirmation as the way to guarantee not only the toad but herself that she will run away from home.

In addition to that, the study finds that the place Winnie decides to go into is the Treegap wood, owned by her family: “Well, anyway, she could at least slip out, right now, she decided, and go into the wood. To see if she could discover what had really made the music the night before” (Babbitt, 2015, p. 23). Before choosing the wood, it is found that Winnie has read stories and has been taught to become aware of the dangerous world outside: “The characters in the stories she read always seemed to go off without a thought or care, but in real life—well, the world was a dangerous place. People were always telling her so. And she would not be able to manage without protection. They were always telling her that, too.” (Babbitt, 2015, p. 22). The Treegap woods are her family’s property. As a result, she can go into the woods, but no one else, except the members of her family, can. This means that Winnie chooses to go into the woods because she knows well about the situations in the real world and wants to prevent herself from having any contact with the outside world. The next morning, Winnie can run away from home into the Treegap woods. The three conditions: 1) the morning time she chooses, 2) the promise to the toad, and 3) her family’s Treegap woods indicate that Winnie has thought carefully before

running away. It is suggested that these conditions support her to do this secret mission. Winnie chooses the time before dawn breaks because it is the time when everyone is still asleep. No one sees her, so this time is suitable for running away. Also, as a day begins at sunrise, the following sunrise after dawn not only is safer for Winnie than the dark but also leads her to be surrounded by the beauties of nature in the woods. The promise to the toad reflects a profound sense of her intention to run away. Like the morning time, the family's Treegap woods are also a safer place for Winnie. Moreover, her patience indicates her ability to keep waiting until the patience has been lost at this moment. The long wait for this journey, in return, helps her think consciously about what and when she is going to leave and where to. It can be said that, to confront such a situation, Winnie not only thinks consciously about running away safely but also understands the strong wish of her own self. The three conditions (the time, the place, and the promise) Winnie chooses as well as her patience visibly reflect her self-awareness which results in the successful running away.

This research also finds that the strictness of her family, especially of the grandmother and the mother, is one of the main reasons that causes Winnie to run away from home alone. The strictness is shown when the grandmother and the mother call her to come into the house. First, the grandmother calls Winnie with a thin voice: "At this moment a window at the front of the cottage was flung open and a thin voice—her grandmother's—piped, 'Winifred! Don't sit on that dirty grass. You'll stain your boots and stockings'" (Babbitt, 2015, p. 14). In general, when a grandmother is calling a grandchild, her voice should be gentle and soft. The thin voice used by this grandmother can be noticed to be a high voice which is unpleasant to hear. As a result, such a voice causes Winnie to feel a genuine sense of tension rather than relief. Also, when the grandmother uses the word *don't* in her calling, it reflects a direct and strict order instead of real concern. In addition, when the grandmother brings the boots and stockings into this calling, the action implies that she is worrying about the grandchild's clothes and belongings, but not about the well-being of the child. According to the novel, there are no other children in the family for Winnie to associate with. This leads her to have an only friend that is the toad living outside the house. Being alone at times, Winnie wants to play outside and talk to someone. In addition, the areas around the house are not as clean as the places inside. This causes her grandmother to behave like a strict one. Grandmother's action seen in this call prevents Winnie from playing outside. This leads Winnie to feel uncomfortable and think that the grandmother is too strict.

Apart from the grandmother, Winnie's mother displays too much protection over her, too. In this situation, after the grandmother has just finished speaking, the mother immediately calls Winnie with a firmer voice: "And another, firmer voice—her mother's added: 'Come in now, Winnie. Right away. You'll get heat stroke out there on a day like this. And your lunch is ready'"

(Babbitt, 2015, p. 14). Without delay, the mother's firmer voice and the statements force Winnie to come into the house. To strengthen this force, the mother also voices a warning about having heat stroke to raise Winnie's fear of the sun's heat. The mother also uses the excuse of "having lunch" to keep Winnie away from staying outside. It is obvious that while the grandmother and the mother help each other to call Winnie to come into the house, both of them uphold the power of keeping the girl in order. This strictness results in Winnie's lack of friends. The presence of loneliness while she is walking from her house to the fence without anyone but the toad and the gnats implies that she meets just the small and tiny animals in the area of her house: "She had come out to the fence, very cross, very near the boiling point on a day that was itself near to boiling, and had noticed the toad at once. It was the only living thing in sight except for a stationary cloud of hysterical gnats suspended in the heat above the road" (Babbitt, 2015, p. 13). Not only the loneliness but also the limitations of the area to walk and of the living things to meet bring about the need to have a pet. Then, Winnie wants to keep the toad as a pet: "I might even decide to have a pet. Maybe a big old toad, like you, that I could keep in a nice cage with lots of grass" (Babbitt, 2015, p. 15). Winnie and the toad live in the countryside, so they have something in common. It is possible for them to be friends. Furthermore, she is glad to have the toad as company. Being friends with the toad, Winnie feels more comfortable to share something with the toad. Therefore, it sounds common when Winnie says she will have the toad as a pet. However, this implies that, outside the house, Winnie cannot find anybody else to talk and play with. The toad makes Winnie choose to go outside and talk with it instead of staying in the house and talking with her family members: the mother, the father, and the grandmother. In addition, everyone knows that a toad cannot talk and is unable to understand human language. However, the toad is the only a living thing Winnie can talk to. It is clear that the lack of friends causes Winnie to view the toad as a precious thing which deserves to be kept and fed in a nice cage. For more interpretation, Winnie may feel lonely because of being an only child. It is time for her to find someone outside the area of the house to become her friends.

In addition to that, longing for independence is part of the reason for running away from home. Trapped in the strictness of her family, Winnie finds her own way to go into the Treegap woods. The study finds that before going into the woods, Winnie feels tired of being watched by the members of her family: "I'm tired of being looked at all the time. I want to be by myself for a change" (Babbitt, 2015, p. 14). This feeling pushes her to look for a way to be by herself. She, in other words, tries to be free from such strictness. Also, as Winnie's loneliness means the state of not having any child to talk to, both strictness and loneliness push her to keep thinking up a way to change something or to become open to new experiences. Perhaps she wants to find the

way with friends. Moreover, to avoid feeling bored, Winnie even creates something interesting in her hope to support that her decision is right: “I’m not exactly sure what I’d do, you know, but something interesting—something that’s all mine. Something that would make some kind of difference in the world” (Babbitt, 2015, p. 15). Later on, Winnie finds a place outside the house where she feels free not only from the family’s control but also to make her own decisions: “It’d be better if I could be like you, out in the open and making up my own mind. Do you know they’ve hardly ever let me out of this yard all by myself?” (Babbitt, 2015, p. 15). The strict rules and the atmosphere in the Fosters’ house result in the decision to go out. Also, something in the world outside inspires this young lady to leave home. These elements are so well intertwined that Winnie decides to choose a place where she can stay alone without any control or forces of her family.

The opportunity to make her own decision is not the only cause that allows Winnie to leave home. The study finds that the secret sound of music she hears is another thing Winnie pays attention to: “And then she paused. For, through the twilight sounds of crickets and sighing trees, a faint, surprising wisp of music came floating to them, and all three turned toward it, toward the wood. It was a tinkling little melody, and in a few moments it stopped” (Babbitt, 2015, p. 20). The statement *all three turned toward it* in this extract implies that the music is pleasant or interesting or strange enough for the grandmother, Winnie, and the stranger to listen to. On the other hand, this implies that the musical sound is not expected to be heard from the Treegap woods. As a result, the music from the woods surprises all three (Winnie, the grandmother, and the stranger) standing still in the area of the Fosters’ house. Winnie has just heard the music sound for the first time. The grandmother does not believe that it is a sound created by human beings. The stranger knows something about the music, but he does not expect to hear it at that moment. Thereupon, the music sound comes for the second time, and all of them stop to listen to the music again: “This time it tinkled its way faintly through the little melody three times before it faded. ‘It sounds like a music box,’ said Winnie when it was over.’ ‘Nonsense. It’s elves!’ crowed her grandmother excitedly” (Babbitt, 2015, pp. 20-21). The musical sound is so clear that everyone hears it. They all stop to listen to it again. This proves that Winnie, the grandmother, and the stranger are really interested in that sound. Winnie is the first one who gives an opinion about it. She thinks that it is the sound of a music box. Immediately, the grandmother shows her disagreements about the music. The grandmother believes that the musical sound belongs to elves. Elves are magical and supernatural beings. From this it can be inferred that the grandmother also believes that there are not any human beings in the woods. As a result, she does not want her grandchild to feel interested in the music. In other words, she keeps Winnie from both the music and the woods.

Despite the grandmother's belief about elves, Winnie presents her eagerness to discover the truth about the secret musical sound from the Treegap woods. One reason causing Winnie to leave home is to discover the source of secret music: "Well, anyway, she could at least slip out, right now, she decided, and go into the wood. To see if she could discover what had really made the music the night before" (Babbitt, 2015, p. 23). It is usual for everyone to feel pleasant when listening to soft or sweet music. However, it is unusual to hear the sound of music tinkling from the woods. At that moment, the secret music encourages Winnie to discover its source. It can be inferred that Winnie views such music as something that has a significant part to search for after running away. The music and the one who makes that music influence Winnie to run away from home. Walking into the Treegap woods, Winnie finds more things in the woods that capture her attention. The strange things and the people she finds later cause great excitement. They also shape her ideas about life. However, it can be said that the secret music brings about Winnie's other discoveries. Also, the music encourages Winnie to think about her desire to discover its secret.

Winnie Foster's self-awareness is found not only when she decides to secretly leave home, but also when she thinks about replacing Mae Tuck in jail in order to give the Tucks time to escape. This awareness is found after Mae has been charged with murder and is going to be hanged. To help Mae and the three Tucks, Winnie makes up her own mind to replace Mae in jail. Moreover, she sets up the actions and steps of the plan for their escape by herself. This is seen when Winnie explains the plan to Jesse Tuck:

When your mother climbs out the window, I'll climb in and take her place. I can wrap myself up in her blanket, and when the constable looks in, he won't be able to tell the difference. Not in the dark. I can hump up and look a lot bigger. Miles can even put the window back. That would give you time to get away! (Babbitt, 2015, p. 114)

Also, Winnie chooses midnight as a suitable time to do this. The time is chosen when she says that she wants to help: "'Tell you father I want to help. I have to help. If it wasn't for me, there wouldn't have been any trouble in the first place. Tell him I have to.' 'Well...all right. Can you get out after dark?' 'Yes,' said Winnie. Then—at midnight'" (Babbitt, 2015, p. 115). It makes sense here to carry out the plan at night because it would be much riskier to do so during the day. However, running away from home again but at night, climbing into the jail, wrapping herself up, and lying on the jail floor are the actions that no one expects to see the girl to do. Like the actions, her destination, a jail, reflects undesirable consequences. A jail is a place where criminals are kept. Constables have a duty there to make sure that prisoners cannot escape. By law, constables won't let anyone do anything in a jail. Despite the fact that it is a very risky and

difficult task for a little girl, Winnie shows her strong will to help the Tucks. She dares not only to climb in and take Mae's place but also to confront the constable in case he knows what has happened. Winnie shows her utmost care and bravery while she is offering help for the Tucks. Later on, with the help of the three Tucks (Angus, Miles, and Jesse), Winnie succeeds in doing it: "Everything, it seemed, was waiting. Winnie lay down and closed her eyes. Thinking of Tuck and Mae, of Miles and Jesse, her heart softened. They needed her. To take care of them" (Babbitt, 2015, p. 119).

Replacing Mae Tuck in jail reflects Winnie's bravery to do the difficult and dangerous task. It can be said that Winnie's self-awareness leads her to decide to do that task. As her self-awareness influences this decision, love is another factor encouraging Winnie to perform the self-awareness. Winnie's love for all the Tucks can be sensed through her feeling displayed after she has already replaced Mae in jail and while the Tucks are escaping: "And before the thunder followed, in a pause while wind and rain held back for one brief moment, she thought she heard, fading in the distance, the tinkling little melody of the music box. The Tucks—her darling Tucks—were gone" (Babbitt, 2015, p. 126). This love results in Winnie's decision to help all the Tucks although it is against the law. This means that she understands her strong feeling of loving and caring about the Tucks, so she decides to do it. In other words, Winnie portrays self-awareness, based on the love for the Tucks, through the action of replacing Mae in jail. When she explains to her family why she has helped them, love is mentioned again as an important reason: "the only explanation: the Tucks were her friends. She had done it because—in spite of everything, she loved them" (Babbitt, 2015, p. 130).

Another clue that reflects Winnie's self-awareness is her choice of mortality instead of immortality. Mortality is a condition that a man as a human being finally dies. On the contrary, immortality is a condition that a man lives forever or is remembered forever or does not die. In the story, Jesse asks Winnie to drink the magical spring water when she is seventeen in order to stop getting any older: "Look now—here's a bottle of water from the spring, You keep it. And then, no matter where you are, when you're seventeen, Winnie, you can drink it, and then come find us. We'll leave directions somehow. Winnie, please say you will!" (Babbitt, 2015, p. 114). However, Winnie gives the water to the toad: "The toad still squatted where she had dropped it, the dog still waited at the fence. Winnie pulled out the cork from the mouth of the bottle, and kneeling, she poured the precious water, very slowly and carefully, over the toad" (Babbitt, 2015, p. 132). Winnie uses the magical water to protect the toad from a dog. At that moment, the thing she has to do is save the toad. She still has not decided to live forever or to die like general human beings. When she is seventeen, she will take the water in the Treegap woods if she chooses to be in the state of immortality: "If she should decide, there was more water in the

wood. Winnie smiled. Then she stopped and put her hand through the fence and set the toad free” (Babbitt, 2015, p. 132). At that time, it cannot be said that Winnie sacrifices herself for the toad. She just uses the magical water to protect it. On the other hand, it can be said that Winnie chooses to be what she has always been. It is uncertain how likely it is that Winnie will go into the woods again to take the magical water. It can be assumed that, at that moment, the magical water does not mean something to her.

In the last chapter, when Mae and Angus Tuck come back to Treegap wood, they find that Winnie decided to have a normal life as a normal human. In the cemetery of the village is where Mae and Angus find the truth about Winnie: “He knelt and read the inscription: In Loving Memory Winifred Foster Jackson Dear Wife Dear Mother 1870-1948” (Babbitt, 2015, p. 137). The inscription makes it clear that when she grows older, Winnie decides to have a husband and children instead of being Jesse’s wife and living with the Tucks. This is like what Angus Tuck has told her before: “A child now, but someday a woman. And after that, moving on to make room for the new children” (Babbitt, 2015, p. 63). Winnie accepts the truth to get older and to die just like a normal human. This is also like what Angus Tuck has said to her before, too: “But dying’s part of the wheel, right there next to being born” (Babbitt, 2015, p. 63). It is obvious that both Mae and Angus know well about Winnie’s decision and come here to prove what they know. That is, the inscription in the cemetery is the only thing they try to find and look at. The story does not tell if Winnie tries to find the magical spring in the woods when she becomes a woman. Also, it never tells readers that her memories of the Tucks have faded away with the passing years. However, the cemetery leads the readers to understand that Winnie understands her own desire well. She does not let herself be persuaded into doing something she does not want to do. This can be seen when Jesse fails to persuade Winnie to drink the magic water on the night she plans to help Mae in jail: “Winnie, you can drink it, and then come find us” (Babbitt, 2015, p. 114). At that cemetery, when Mae shows her sympathy for Jesse, Angus Tuck says that they all have already known what Winnie would decide to do: “At least, he knowed she wasn’t coming. We all knowed that, long time ago” (Babbitt, 2015, p. 138). Immediately, Mae says that it is just the same: “Just the same” (Babbitt, 2015, p. 138). No one knows about the magical spring but only Winnie and the Tucks know. Therefore, Winnie would become immortal if she wanted to. When Mae states the phrase *just the same*, this implies that, like other humans, Winnie chooses to be born, grow up, change, move on, and finally turn into nothing. In terms of self-awareness, it is obvious that Winnie consciously thinks about herself and understands herself enough to reject immortality. She knows that she has to be what she and other humans have always been. It can be said that it is Winnie’s own decision that stops her from being in the state of immortality and instead live a normal life and die as a human.

Though the inscription implies that Winnie chooses the mortal life, the story never demonstrates a clear reason why she does so. As a result, the study assumes from the last scene describing Winnie's thoughts and feelings that she chooses a normal life because she is accountable for what she does and what she learns. After Winnie is found in jail and taken home by the Fosters, it is obvious that she feels guilty for leaving home at night to replace Mae in jail: "Over and over they asked her, shocked at first and then wistful: why had she done such a thing? Why? She was their daughter. They had trusted her. They had tried to bring her up properly, with a true sense of right and wrong" (Babbitt, 2015, p. 129). Winnie also becomes well aware that she has disgraced her parents: "It was hard for them in the village, Winnie knew it was, and the knowledge gave her pain. For they were proud. And she had shamed them" (Babbitt, 2015, p. 130). What Winnie does in jail might embrace a sense of accountability for the quality of good care gained from her parents with the deep sense of gratitude to them. From that moment onwards, the actions of running away into the Treegap woods and into the jail might be the root and the master of her own decision about life. From her death at the end it can be assumed that after she helped Mae Tuck escape from jail, she did not keep in touch with the Tucks. On the one hand, her awareness of accountability leads her to accept her parents' strict discipline that raises her to be a good person. It is because she hopes that the parents will feel proud rather than be ashamed. On the other hand, the effects of immortality she learns from the Tucks might cause her to understand that a normal cycle of life with being born, growing up, changing, and turning into nothing is the natural way of life of a human. In other words, no life would be complete without death.

Like the criticisms of Hartvigsen and Hartvigsen (1987), Beacham (1996), Bryan (2003), Maguire (2015), and Fallon (2016), the study finds that the lofty idea viewing death as a meaningful part of life is displayed in Natalie Babbitt's *Tuck Everlasting*. The idea is mainly presented through the protagonist Winnie. Also, it is found that friendship appears to be part of the reason to help others. It is friendship that results in love which, later on, encourages the characters to practice not only sympathy but also compassion.

Notwithstanding similarities, this study applies the term *self-awareness* in examining the binary oppositions categorized by Hartvigsen and Hartvigsen (1987), Beacham (1996), and Bryan (2003). These binary oppositions include the biggest pairs such as mortality and immortality; good and evil; and so on. Researchers still focus on the importance of death which is the main theme of the novel. However, this study reports the term *self-awareness* portrayed by the protagonist Winnie Foster. The study finds that Winnie's self-awareness is distinctively displayed in these three situations: running away from home, replacing Mae Tuck in jail, and rejecting immortality. Although everlasting life is put forth by Jesse with the idea to eternally stay together, Winnie decides to

reject it and continue living a normal life. That is, the findings in this study confirm one description given by Nancy Douglas and David Bohlke (2015b) that self-awareness is necessary for being human: “This self-awareness—the ability to think about yourself and how you’re feeling—is an important part of being human” (p. 159).

The study sees Winnie’s performances in a different way from Walton Beacham (1996). When Winnie uses the magical water with the toad, Beacham notices that it indicates the choice of eternal life Winnie decides to have:

Winnie’s caring about animals led her to use the water on the toad. He was her representation of freedom. When Winnie uses the water on the toad, we see that Winnie believes the Tucks’ story. It also foreshadows that Winnie has made her decision between mortality and immortality. (p. 36)

However, this study finds the contrary. The use of magic water may not suggest Winnie’s belief in immortality at that time. However, because of her self-awareness, she sees herself as a girl who is too young to make such an important decision. The only thing she wants to do at that time is to save the toad’s life.

Spawning not only in literature but also in film, the 2002 film version of *Tuck Everlasting* has a slightly different scene. In the book, Mae and Angus Tuck visit the cemetery and find proof of what life Winnie chooses by reading the inscription on the grave of Winnie’s body. In the film released by Disney Pictures, Jesse comes to the grave. Jesse appears in front of the inscription and reads it. The book depicts the old Tucks slowly going there with a clattering wooden wagon pulled by the fat old horse. Unlike the book, the movie lets Jesse, the good-looking young Tuck, appear there more quickly on a big motorcycle and wear jeans. The book and the film remind *Tuck Everlasting*’s fans of a piece of a conversation between Angus Tuck and Winnie about the truth of life: “Life. Moving, growing, changing, never the same two minutes together” (Babbitt, 2015, p. 61).

Winnie Foster in Natalie Babbitt’s *Tuck Everlasting* (1975) exudes self-awareness. Although the story depicts many themes including the importance of death, friendship, magic, evil, and family, the study finds self-awareness portrayed by Winnie, and it leads her to decide to do something throughout the story. Three situations are found as the key signs reflecting the young Foster’s self-awareness: running away from home into the Treegap woods owned by her family, replacing Mae Tuck in jail to give the Tucks enough time to escape, and living a normal life in order to die at the end instead of entering in the state of immortality.

Of the three situations, leaving home is the first situation reflecting Winnie's self-awareness. At the beginning of the novel, Winnie decides to run away from home into the Treegap woods, owned by her family. Her promise to a toad to leave home means that her secret decision has already been made. Winnie chooses the time before dawn breaks when she leaves home. The Treegap woods, the promise to the toad, and the time indicate that Winnie has thought carefully before running away. Also, the study finds two main reasons causing Winnie to run away. The first reason is the strictness of her family which results in the lack of friends. The second reason is the secret sound of music she hears, floating from the Treegap woods. These two reasons serve her intent.

The time when Mae Tuck is arrested and is going to be hanged also illustrates Winnie's self-awareness well. In the Treegap woods, after Winnie has had a close relationship with the Tucks, her self-awareness can be captured for the second time. Mae Tuck is in jail and is going to be hanged because she is charged with killing a man who violently drags Winnie away. In the face of this situation, Winnie decides and sets a secret plan to help Mae by replacing her in jail. Like running away from home, the time and promise are seen again when she explains the plan to Jesse. Unlike the decision about running away from home into the Treegap woods, the reason to replace Mae in jail is love for all Tucks. This means she does it for others, not for herself.

Take another situation, Winnie's death found in an epilogue at the end of the book indicates that she decides to be what she has always been. This means she believes that death is a natural part of life. The story does not demonstrate any obvious reasons why Winnie decides to have a normal life. Nonetheless, the study assumes that her accountability for her family and the results of immortal life she learns from all the Tucks lead her to decide to live a normal life.

The researcher recommends that further research should be conducted on the concept of eco-criticism and naturalism. The protagonist Winnie Foster is displayed going into and staying in Treegap woods with the Tucks, who have inhabited the woods for decades. After the first scene taking place in the Fosters' house, the majority of *Tuck Everlasting* is set in the woods. The woods are described as having great biodiversity, and large parts of them are in pristine condition. Water, trees, climate, and animals can draw researchers' attention. Especially, the pond, the place where Winnie learns something from Angus and Miles, also draws attention to study. As a result, the influence of the woods on the main characters should be examined. Furthermore, there should be research reporting a comparison of the truth of life found in this story and in Buddhist philosophy.

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