

Antiheroic nature of Dexter in Jeff Lindsay's *Darkly Dreaming Dexter*

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Article Received: 10/7/2022,
Article Accepted: 28/08/2022,
Published online: 31/08/2022,
DOI:10.47311/IJOES.2022.4.8.14

Abstract

Jeff Lindsay is an American writer, and his works mostly have mysterious stories. He is famous for his book series Dexter which was adapted and telecast in the TV shows. Now, this Dexter is considered a significant award-winning tv series. His idea and how he writes in his work mainly deal with the character's psychological aspects. Even his book *Darkly Dreaming Dexter* was about the character Dexter's psychic nature. He is the novel's protagonist, but he is neither a villain nor a hero but an antihero. An antihero (protagonist) has contrasting qualities to the typical hero and takes the law into their hands. They follow specific ethical codes in their life. They take the rules into their own hands and kill the people escaping justice. Rather than his other novels in this series, this first novel reflects the mental development of the character Dexter and this story took over his action as a central role. This paper analyzes the characteristic of Dexter, a serial killer; it also explores his nature as an antihero and psychopath.

Keywords: protagonist, antihero, psychopath, serial killer, crime, characteristic.

Jeff Lindsay wrote *Darkly Dreaming Dexter* Jeff Lindsay wrote *Darkly Dreaming Dexter*, which is about the life of the serial killer who played the protagonist role. Even though he is a serial killer, he is considered a protagonist who is a charismatic serial killer. He is a serial killer but also specializes as a Forensic blood spatter analyst in Miami. Though Dexter is a serial killer, he did not kill all the men he saw to satisfy his anger in whatever way to seek pleasure. He is not considered a typical hero, but he is still a protagonist known as an antihero. He plots a perfect plan and kills the people who have escaped from justice by taking the laws into his hands. So he comes under the category of the antihero but not an antagonist. An antagonist of any story is the one who works against the rules or changes the pattern, which the protagonist works hard to fix or fight for. An Antihero is a protagonist, an ambiguous character who fights for justice by taking and breaking the law in his way by giving the judge for the innocent at all cost. The author portrays the Dexter character as a charming, intelligent, and cunning man.

The action and thoughts are the essential elements that build the character. The characterization of the character makes the plot of the story. The description makes the reader think about the vital points that the writer wants to share in his books which the readers can explore from different perspectives. Through the characters and their dialogues, the writer indirectly talks to the readers and conveys their thoughts. The characterization in the fiction reveals the personality of the character. Here the character Dexter was characterized as Antihero and Psychopath.

Most of the time, an antihero never shows empathy and pity for others; they do things in their way without any guilt and regrets. The antiheroes are well-known in society, like Dexter, a forensic blood spatter analyst in the police department in Miami. The antiheroes are a combination of both good and bad. They also have emotions for the helpless and those living an unfair life. They never show pity for the criminals. Like Dexter, who was kind to his foster sister Deborah Morgan, his girlfriend Rita, and her kids Astor who was eight years old, and Cody, who was five years old. He helps Deborah in several situations; even in the book's last chapter, when his biological brother Brain wants Dexter to kill Deborah, he does not do it because he has empathy for her. When seeing the character Dexter is not entirely evil; he also has some compassion for others. Even he has some sympathy for innocent people. Harry's code made him a good guy; instead of killing the innocent, he killed the people who deserve it as punishment for their wrongdoings.

By this quote, the character of Dexter is seen. For him, his living place in Miami is his hometown, and he does not want the people who are against justice to keep doing wrong things in the society where he lives. So his killing is about cleaning the unwanted pasture from the organization. For that, he follows Harry's code and cleanses society. This characterization shows his antiheroic quality.

An antihero has the quality of both good and bad, like the combination of half monster and half human. In this book, Dexter is represented as an excellent human to people close to him, and at the same time, without any guilt, he follows his ethical code and kills the people who escaped from justice. The one-line definition of the antihero is a criminal who kills other criminals, as Dexter did. He killed many criminals without surrendering to the police by playing a double role. His secret identity is being a serial killer, and his social identity is being a blood spatter analyst. He hides his dark nature from others in the mask of a Forensic Blood spatter analyst.

Dexter is a psychopath, which makes him an antihero in the story. Psychopaths and sociopaths are characters who suffer from antisocial personality disorders. Antisocial personality disorder means someone who is against all the laws and often commits a crime. It was known as ASPD, one of the most well-known personality disorders. The person with this disorder harms other people without feeling pity and empathy. They never feel guilty for their mistakes and fail in their family life. They never felt responsible for their actions or took responsibility in the family, but mostly they show violence and arrogance in their emotions. This personality disorder begins when a person develops it in their childhood. It creates more

violently when the affected person is near the age of 11, and it reaches its peak in adulthood, which decreases when the person is in late adulthood.

Dexter is a psychopath who is a good-looking, handsome man who hid his dark identity and made society believe that he is nothing more than forensic blood spatters analyst in the police department in Miami. Even his foster sister cannot find his identity because psychopaths are charming and cunning. Their dark side cannot be found easily because they deceive people with their unique looks, outfits, skills, and intelligence. His psychopathic nature was first seen by his foster father, Harry Morgan, who was a police officer. When Dexter was 11, he found that he killed the dog due to his killer instincts, and he guided him in a particular way to kill the people. Harry taught him that he should kill the bad guys rather than innocent people; he introduced him to killing the people who have escaped from justice by committing more crimes. He also taught Dexter to be careful, exact, and intelligent enough to run without leaving any evidence. That is what Dexter calls Harry's code, and he follows this code and kills the people just like Harry thought and makes him be

Dexter trusted his words, and for him, what Harry taught shaped his life.

The need to kill the priest is strong, and he waits to satisfy his need until the right time comes, according to his plot. His inner voice pushed him to kill the people of injustice; for three weeks, it increased at a higher rate. So he follows a priest for five weeks until he gets the proper chance to kill him. He referred to that inner voice as a Dark passenger, which pressured him to kill people. It was satisfying for quite a while and caused his urge to kill later on. He also mentioned that the dark passenger, who made the killing urges, is not a stranger to him. For him, the dark passenger and he are the same; they are one together, and that is what made his life. By this, it reveals that he was clear-minded in killing the people. He was very sure that his inner voice made him kill other people. The psychopath knows what they are doing, but the sociopath will not. Sociopath argues without knowing anything; they quickly show off their violence to others. Psychopaths like Dexter have a clear plan to kill others despite their urges and need to kill others. Psychopaths wait patiently and make a move at the perfect time in a professional style without evidence that it is a creative art. They plot just like Dexter did, but sociopaths do not think before they act. Dexter often kills people at night, and while staring at the moon, his inner voice wakes up. He also mentioned that in chapter 13, while he was staring at the moon and thinking about Barbie's head left by his brother Brain, he went near the window and observed the sky and moon; at that time, his urge to kill other people arose. He mentioned his inner voice as a dark passenger and his dear friend.

His first victim in the novel's opening scene was a priest named Father Donovan. He taught music to the children at St. Anthony's Orphanage in Homestead, Florida. He loves children, and children love him. He did many social services for the children like he devoted his whole life to children. Father Donovan acted well in society, but his true nature is revealed to be abusing the orphan children and killing them in numbers. Dexter kidnaps Father Donovan, and they enter the house, which is a fifty years old building. The priest wrapped the

seven children's bodies with rubber shower sheets there. Dexter kills the priest for his mistake and does not feel guilt for it but feels justified. He wrapped his body and tidied with the children's bodies.

The next victim he murdered is Jamie Jaworski, a part-time janitor at Ponce De Leon Junior High school. He targets children under twelve to thirteen years old, primarily light-haired girls. He kidnapped light-colored, blond hair girls and sexually abused them, shot nude videos of them, and uploaded them on the internet. Dexter cannot kill him at his house because he is scared of dogs. After all, dogs do not like him. Whenever dogs saw him, they began to bark furiously at him. So, he planned to kill Jaworski somewhere and started following Jaworski. He reached a construction site that seemed suspicious to Dexter. It is where he killed the girls, and it is unsecured. Jaworski also stole the copper wire and sold it illegally. Finally, Dexter grabbed him with a knife pointed close to Jaworski's skin and asked him about the girls he killed.

Jaworski answered that he was never sorry for the mistake that he had made for the children. Then, Dexter and the dark passenger replied that they would never feel sorry for the mistake they were going to make. Which means Dexter is going to kill Jaworski. In the above-quoted lines, he represents both Dexter and the Dark Passenger inside him, which shows his dualities but acting together with intelligence. When Dexter was around nineteen, his step-father was hospitalized; he was overdosed by the Nurse. Dexter referred to her as the Last Nurse. She overdosed him with morphine to kill Harry. When Harry came to know, he let Dexter kill her. The Last Nurse was his first human victim.

'Dexter,' Harry said at last. [...] He gave me a strained half smile when he saw that I was with him at last. 'I'll be gone soon,' Harry said. 'I can't stop you from...being who you are.' 'Being what I am, Dad,' said. He waved it away with a feeble, brittle hand. Sooner or later... you will – need – to do it to be person,' he said, and I felt my blood sing at the thought 'Somebody who ... needs it ...' 'Like the Nurse,' I said with a thick tongue. 'Yes,' he says. [...] 'She needs it, Dexter. That's-[...] She's deliberate – overdosing patients ... killing them ... killing them ... on purpose ... she's a killer. Dexter ... A Killer ...' (158)

The last Nurse is Dexter's First Victim; by the above quotes, we can observe that Dexter was motivated by Harry to kill the people who deserve it as punishment for their crimes. At 19, Dexter began killing the people who escaped from justice by using Harry's code for the first time. Harry is the only person who knows about Dexter's dark side (killer instinct mental condition); even his step-sister did not know about him until Brain kidnapped her. Dexter enjoyed the time when he killed the Last Nurse. Dexter mentioned his first victim experience below as follows.

Yet the memory still pulsed in me. Of course, I still had that first dry drop of blood on its slide. It was my first, and I could call up that memory any time by taking out my little slide and looking at it. I did, every so often. It had been an excellent day for Dexter. The last Nurse was my First Playmate, and she opened

many unique doors for me. I had learned so much and found out so many things.
(161)

Dexter is a real Psychopath who enjoys killing without any worries. He is not an evil person who slays all kinds of people; he is intelligent enough to know about background details of people who are harmless and harmful to his society. He only kills the people who deserve death as a punishment for their unforgivable crime in which the law failed. He has a clear mind to plot a perfect plan and kill the wrong people by puzzling the cops and leaving no evidence. By this, we can say that he is a Psychopath, not a Sociopath. He is well prepared before each killing of the wrong people. Even when he was in the process of killing Jamie Jaworski, suddenly, security named Gervasio Cesar Martez arrived. A clean kill is his signature style for Dexter, but when safety comes, he escapes without cleaning and hiding the evidence. If Dexter was an evil person, he could have killed the guard if he wanted to, but he knew that the security was doing his job and left him alive because he was not harmful to society for Dexter to clean. Dexter expressed,

But no., Of course not. It wouldn't do. The guard was as innocent as anyone and still lived in Miami. He'd probably done nothing worse than shoot at other drivers on the Palmetto Expressway a few times. Practically snow-white. No, I had to make a hasty retreat, and that was all there was. And if I had to leave the Janitor not quite finished and me not entirely satisfied, better luck next time.
(143)

Dexter also has a kind heart for reasonable people because he does not want to kill innocent people who are not a threat to his society. So Dexter is a combination of both evil and sound characteristics. He never feels bad about killing the bad guys. Harry's code makes him differentiate between good and bad people, which guides him to kill the wrong person who deserves it. Otherwise, as a Psychopath, he would have killed the people who were against society and him without any mercy and any category of good and evil, including the innocent people as his victims. Harry's code is like a map that guides him to do the right things. So Harry's code made Dexter show his good and evil personalities to different people according to their societal roles. Otherwise, his motive would have been wrong. The code Dexter follows is known as Harry's Code, which makes Dexter an Antihero.

I felt a lot better. I always did, after. Killing makes me feel good. It works the knots out of darling Dexter's dark schematic. It's a sweet release, a necessary letting go of all the little hydraulic valves inside. I enjoy my work; sorry if that bothers you. Oh, very sorry. But there it is. And it's not just any killing, of course. It must be done the right way, at the right time, with the right person-very complicated but necessary. (13)

This passage shows that Dexter is a real antihero who wants to kill people in a particular way and follows Harry's code. As a psychopath, he kills the people who escape from justice, and at the same time, he follows a specific pattern of killing others for his killer urge. Harry's code made his Dark passenger satisfy his desires in a positive direction without killing

innocent people. Through this analysis, we can see Dexter's character as a real antihero and psychopath.

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