

Exploring the Antihero Characteristics of Light Yagami in the Anime Death Note: An Anime by Tsugumi Ohba (2006)

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Abstract

Death Note is an anime and manga series by Tsugumi Ohba, has become a significant subject of interest in international popular culture. One of the main and important characters in this story is Light Yagami, a high school student who discovers a notebook that gives him the power to kill anyone by writing their name in it. This research aims to analyze the character of Light Yagami as an antihero from various perspectives, including morality, idealism, and courage, using Sigmund Freud's literary psychology theory as an analytical framework. The author traces the development of Light's character in the story, highlighting changes in his behavior and their impact on the plot. This analysis provides a deeper understanding of the complexity of Light Yagami's character and his contribution to the Death Note anime.

Keywords: Death Note, Light Yagami, Antihero, Character Analysis, Anime

Introduction

Anime is a word used by people outside Japan to describe animations or cartoons produced by Japan. The word anime is used in English or Indonesian, it actually describes something as a Japanese cartoon series or animated films and shows from Japan. The word anime is a Japanese word for animation or cartoons that many people use to describe all cartoons regardless of their country of origin.

Aghnia (in Ihsan, 2016) stated that anime is a typical Japanese animation characterized by colored images that display characters in various locations and stories. Meanwhile, John Allen (2015:5) explained that anime is an abbreviation used by Japanese people for all forms of animation in the world. However, as time goes by, anime has become a general term given by world citizens to Japanese-made animation.

Literature and anime have a deep relationship and influence each other. Many anime are adapted from literary works such as novels, manga, or short stories. This adaptation process changes written text into a form that can move and be visual. For example, the Japanese Anime entitled "Death Note" is adapted from a manga of the same name released in 2003. This anime was written by Tsugumi Ohba and directed by Takeshi Obata which was first produced in 2006 and directed by Tetsuro Araki. Death Note has several versions, namely the Manga, Anime, Live Action and Novel versions.

Death Note achieved fantastic popularity especially among anime and manga fans. Death Note received praise for the high production quality of the illustrations and animations produced in detail and well, this series has also been translated into various languages and received good responses from the international community. Death Note until now still maintains its reputation from when it first appeared which makes this work will continue to be remembered for years to come.

Death Note anime began airing in Japan on October 3, 2006 and ended on June 26, 2007 consisting of one series and totaling 37 episodes with psychological, thriller, mystery and supernatural genres. Synopsis Death Note begins when a Shinigami or (God of Death) named Ryuk who begins to feel bored with the Shinigami world and decides to drop his Death Note book into the human world.

The Death Note is a book with the ability to allow its owner to kill anyone by simply writing their name. Ryuk dropped the book in a Japanese city in hopes of causing chaos and seeing how people would react to the power the Death Note grants. Eventually, the book is found by a very intelligent student named Light Yagami. He did not know what the book was when he first found it. However, after taking it home and reading it, Light finds an early clue explaining the rules of the book. In the book, Light finds information that the Death Note's ability can kill someone by simply writing their name. Then, Light tries to test the book by starting to write someone's name and see the results. Since the book works according to the rules written, Light decides to use it to eradicate the world from evil by starting to kill criminals and causing chaos among the criminals.

Light's actions attract the attention of a man named "L". L is a genius detective who tries to uncover the identity and stop Light's murder policy. This creates a cat and mouse game between Light and L as they both try to uncover each other's identities.

This anime takes the audience into a logical battle between Light Yagami and L, where they use their intellectual powers to uncover their identities and achieve their goals. "Death Note" has become one of the most popular and recognized anime worldwide for its serious animation style, interesting story, and complex mind battle. Mentioned on the site www.CBR.com for its character changes, making Light Yagami an antihero.

Research Method

The research method used by the author is descriptive qualitative. The descriptive qualitative method is a research method that focuses on collecting data in the form of words, pictures, and in-depth explanations to understand the observed phenomena. This approach works by explaining and explaining the problems being studied in order to obtain data in accordance with the actual situation. According to Kartika (2022), the descriptive qualitative approach is a research process that is carried out descriptively and the data search process is carried out by analysing directly by analysing and interpreting the data findings with supporting theories as reinforcement. This theory uses a literary psychology approach because its formal object is Death Note.

Result and Discussion

Antihero character analysis involves a deep understanding of the traits, motivations, and changes that the character undergoes in a narrative. Antiheroes often possess traits that set them apart from traditional heroes, including moral complexity, courage, and idealism.

Antiheroes are often depicted with flaws or imperfect traits that make them relatable to the audience. They may have dark pasts, deep inner conflicts, or detrimental tendencies that influence their behavior. However, beneath these imperfections, antiheroes often also show signs of goodness or a desire to do what is right, even if it may be in unconventional or unconventional ways.

Antihero characters often undergo complex transformations over the course of a story. Antiheroes may experience growth or learning from experiences, grapple with internal conflict, or face the consequences of their actions. The emotional or moral journey that the antihero goes through allows the audience to relate to the character, as the antihero faces dilemmas and conflicts that are often similar to the common human experience. Overall, analyzing the characteristics of an antihero involves understanding how the character deals with moral challenges, courage, and idealism. For example, in the anime Death Note, there is the character of Light Yagami as a very prominent example of a complex and interesting antihero character. One of Light's defining characteristics as an antihero is his moral complexity.

While his goals may seem noble at first, Light's use of violence, manipulation, and murder to achieve them raises questions about the limits of goodness and justice. He faces a complex inner conflict, where he must choose between what he believes is right and more pragmatic or extreme means of achieving it. Here the author describes the characteristics of the antihero character Light Yagami in terms of morality, courage, and idealism:

Moral Analysis of Antihero Characters

An analysis of the moral characteristics of the antihero Light Yagami describes this character's complex journey in pursuing his goal of eradicating crime using the Death Note. Initially, Light appears as a frustrated student who is disillusioned with the world's crime and has a seemingly noble intention to cleanse the world of evil. However, as time goes on, Light begins to use the power of the Death Note in cruel and extreme ways, transforming him into a controversial antihero. Morally, Light's actions demonstrate ambiguity and ethical doubt. Although his goal is noble, Light's means of achieving it through mass murder and moral manipulation lead to questions about the limits of goodness and justice. The inner struggle he faces reflects a deep moral conflict, where he continues to grapple with questions of good, justice, and individual prerogative. The moral complexity of Light Yagami is encapsulated in the following scene quotes:



Figure 1 A threat scene to Raye Penber from episode 5

- Raito : Soudesu, anata no koto ha shirabe mashita.. sukoshi demo watashi no shiji to kotonaru koudou wo tottara, anata no kazoku mo hukume, minagoroshimasu, mochiron anata mo
- Raye Penber : Wa.. wakatta, watashi ni dou shiyou to..
- Light : That's correct. I've been investigating you, and if you don't do exactly as I say she will die and so will the rest of your family, of course including you.
- Raye Pember : Un... Understood. Just tell me what should I do?

Light Yagami employed the Death Note to intimidate and coerce Raye Penber into acting in accordance with his wishes by issuing horrifying threats of murder. Additionally, Light utilized psychological manipulation to control Raye Penber. He exploited Penber's vulnerabilities, such as his love for his loved ones, to compel obedience. Light constructed situations where Penber was forced to choose between the lives of those he cared about and complying with Light's demands. This demonstrates Light's willingness to exploit others' emotions and weaknesses to achieve his goals.

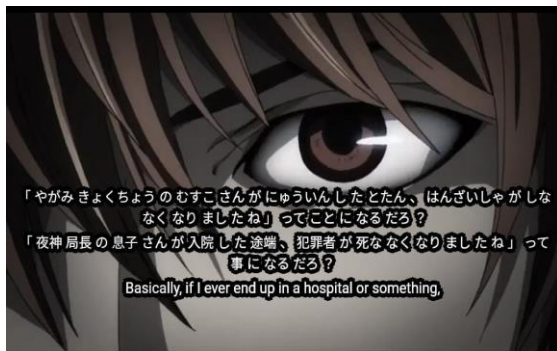


Figure 2 Light method and his Manipulativeness episode 8



Figure 3 Light Method and his manipulativeness episode 8

- Ryuk : Daijyoubu ka, Raito? Mou yokka mo roku ni ne zu ni, desuno-to hanazaisha no namae wo kakitsuzuke te iru zo. Nande sonna nanshuukan mo saki made shi no sukejyu-ru wo kumu hisuyou ga arunda?
- Raito : Kantani ie ba, boku ga nyuuin shitari shitara? 「Yagami kyouchou n musuko san ga nyuuin shi ta ttotan, hanazaisha ga shina naku nari mashi ta ne」
- Ryuk : Are you okay Light? You haven't stopped writing criminals' names in the Death Note for four days straight. So what are you trying to prove? I don't see the point

of writing these names weeks in advance. I've never seen the Death Note used like this.

Light : Basically, if I ever end up in a hospital or something, people won't be able to say "The son of the Detective Superintendent of the NPA was hospitalized, the killing stopped".

The moral characteristics of the antihero Light Yagami are evident in his use of manipulative tactics, as seen in his employment of the Death Note. Light utilizes the Death Note as a tool to manipulate situations to his advantage. He deliberately writes the names of criminals in the Death Note for four consecutive days, aiming to create a false causal link between his actions and real-world events such as illnesses or deaths. This method reveals Light's willingness to employ violence and manipulation to achieve his goals, disregarding ethics or morality in the process.

Furthermore, Light employs the Death Note to create an indirect threat against himself by stating that if he ends up in the hospital, the deaths of criminals will cease. Light attempts to intimidate others with the dire consequences of such an action, demonstrating his readiness to use threats to maintain his power and preserve his identity as Kira.

Light exhibits a skeptical attitude towards Ryuk, the Shinigami who granted him the Death Note. Light does not fully trust Ryuk, indicating that he places greater faith in his own power and control than in Ryuk's presence. This attitude reflects Light's authoritarian and egoistic nature, as he tends to seize control and act according to his own desires without relying on or considering others.

Analysis of the Antihero Light Yagami's Characteristics from an Idealistic Perspective

Analysis of the character Light Yagami from an idealistic perspective as an antihero who bases his actions on the belief that he is an agent of justice bringing about world change. Light's idealism is manifested through his belief in his right to uphold the law and effective justice, which he believes cannot be achieved through the legal system. Light believes that crime and corruption are rampant in society, and he has a strong conviction that extreme actions such as killing criminals with the Death Note are the right and necessary actions to cleanse the world of evil.

In his view, Light justifies means, it involves murder. Light also has an idealistic vision of social transformation, dreaming of creating a better world by eliminating criminals and reforming society. However, Light's idealism also faces deep moral challenges, as the methods he chooses to achieve his goals often conflict with general moral values. Although Light may have noble intentions to create a better world, his actions often ignore ethical principles such as the right to life and justice. Light tends to sacrifice individuals to achieve his greater goals. Light Yagami's idealism reflects his determination and strong belief in his vision to create drastic change in the world. Light Yagami's idealism is summarized in the following dialogues:



Figure 4. Light idealism to be a god at episode 2

Ryuk : Desuno-to wo tsukatta ningen ga.. tengoku ya jigoku ni ikeru to omou na

Raito : Yononaka ni shira shimeru n da. Boku no sonzai wo.. seigi ni sabaki wo kudasu mono ga iru tte koto wo! Soshite boku mo shinsekai no kami to naru!

- Ryuk : Any human who's used a Death Note can neither go to heaven nor hell for eternity
- Light : I want the world to know of my existence. That there's someone passing righteous judgement on the wicked! And I... I will become the God of this New World!

The characteristics of the antihero Light Yagami, in terms of idealism are reflected in his ambition and determination to create a new world based on his personal view of justice. Light expresses his idealism by stating his desire to introduce himself to the world as the "God of the New World". He believes that he is the one who has the right to impose punishment on evil people and create a just world through the use of the Death Note. His idealism is manifested in his great ambition to bring about radical change in society and assert his authority over life and death.

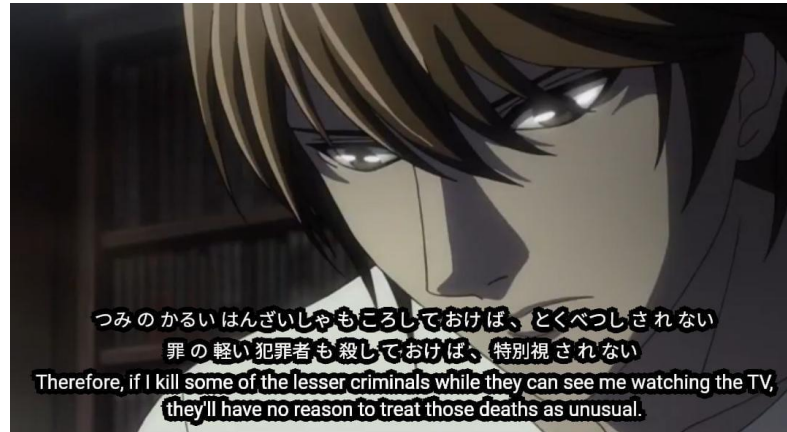


Figure 5 Light ambition to a Death Note book at episode 9

- Raito : Boku ga terebi ya netto mitei nai toki ni, houdou sareta hanzaisha ga shinde mo, gyaku ni boku ga houdou tokute I nai toki ni dake, karui tsumi no mono ga shin da toiu koto de, utagu koto mo kanou de ha aru. Tsumari, boku ga terebi wo miteru toki ni houdou sareta tsumi no karui hanzaisha mo koroshi te oke ba, tokubetsushi sa re nai. Soshite, soto ni de ta toki no tame ni, tsumi no omosa ni kakawara zu, nyu-su nado de houdou sa re ta mono no namae wo oboe te oki, saihsu no naka ni shikon de oi ta desuno-to de shino jikan wo tekitou ni baratsuka se, korosu.. kore de kanshi kamera taisaku ha kanpeki da.
- Light : I killed criminals whose names and faces were broadcast when I didn't have access to the TV or the internet. But there's still a chance that I'll be suspected because only minor criminals die when I don't have any information... In other words, if I also kill minor criminals being broadcast when I watch TV, I won't call attention to myself. Also, when I go out, regardless of the severity of the crime, I should remember the names of criminals that were broadcast. And kill them at random times with the piece of the Death Note I left in my wallet. Now my measures against the cameras are perfect.

The characteristics of the antihero Light Yagami, in terms of idealism, are reflected in his tough stance on justice and the use of the Death Note to achieve his ideal vision of a better world. Light has a strong belief that his actions of killing criminals with the Death Note are a necessary form of justice to cleanse the world of evil. Although Light realizes that his actions of choosing targets that are broadcast in the media can raise suspicion, Light feels that this is a necessary step to achieve his goal. Light shows a high level of sacrifice and strong dedication to his vision of creating a better world.

Light is willing to take risks and spend a great deal of time and effort to carefully plan his actions so as not to attract unwanted attention to himself. This shows that he is very committed to his ideal vision. Despite having strong idealism, Light also shows the ability to adapt his tactics to

evolving situations. Light does not hesitate to adjust his strategy by considering the possibility of suspicion and finding ways to avoid unwanted surveillance or suspicion.”

Characteristics of the Antihero Light Yagami in Terms of Braveness

Light Yagami displays a complex antihero characteristic. While Light often expresses his courage in the face of great risks and takes dangerous actions to achieve his goals, his courage is sometimes driven by a strong ego and a belief in his superiority. Light does not hesitate to face danger and take extreme measures, such as using the Death Note to kill criminals or even his opponents. However, behind his seemingly unshakable courage, there is sometimes a deep fear of the consequences of his actions.

In addition, Light also shows his courage in facing the unexpected challenges he encounters in the hunt with L and other agents. Often facing great pressure and deadly situations, Light remains calm and courageous in the face of everything. However, his courage can also be influenced by the fear of losing control or revealing his identity as Kira, which leads to increasingly extreme actions in an effort to maintain his secret and power.

The antihero characteristic of Light Yagami in terms of courage is seen through a combination of the actions he takes to achieve his goals, his firmness in the face of danger, and his fear of the consequences of his actions. Light's courageous side is described in the following explanation:



Figure 6 Death Note, 2006. Episode 15

Light Yagami demonstrates his braveness by taking a huge risk. By directly interacting and commanding Misa Amane and asking for help from the Shinigami named Rem. Although this action is high-risked and could reveal his identity as Kira, Light is still brave in facing such a situation to achieve his goal. He does not hesitate to use any means necessary, including using his relationship with Misa Amane and the Shinigami named Rem to achieve his goals. His courage lies in his ability to face danger and risk in carrying out his plans, even if it means gambling with his own life and reputation.



Figure 7 L Suspicious at episode 15

L's suspicion of Light Yagami reflects his braveness in facing difficult situations. Light Yagami is known for his braveness in pursuing his ambition as Kira, and L's suspicion shows that Light is a worthy opponent for him. Although Light cleverly hides his identity, L still explores the possibility that Light is Kira. This suspicion demonstrates L's determination to face potential confrontation with someone who has great power like Kira, as well as his ability to uphold justice and truth in complex situations. L is also seen in his willingness to uncover the truth despite the great risks, showing that he is not afraid to explore the worst possibilities even if it means challenging a dangerous person.



Figure 8 the returning of Misa Amane's Death Note scene at episode 6

There is a scene where Misa Amane returns the Death Note to Light Yagami, he exhibits antihero characteristics in terms of courage through his cunning and manipulative actions. Light uses Misa Amane as a tool to achieve his goal, which is to ask Rem to use Misa's Death Note to kill L. Light demonstrates his ability to manipulate others, even friends or allies, for his own benefit without caring about the consequences. His actions also show that Light is not afraid to take great risks to achieve his goals, even if it means using others as tools to achieve his ends. This portrays Light as a manipulative, intelligent, and ruthless character in pursuing his ambitions and goals as Kira.

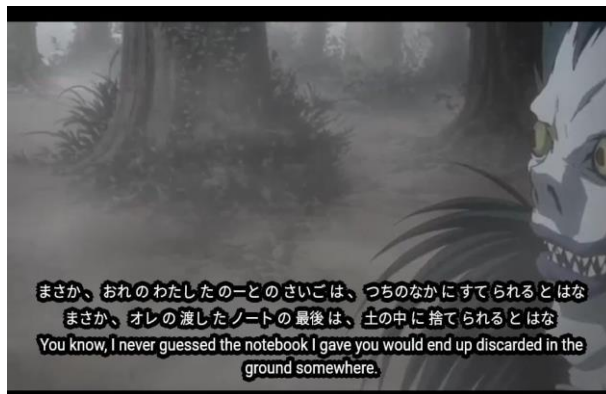


Figure 9 Light Yagami's death note burial in episode 16

Light's antihero characteristics are evident in the scene where he hides the Death Note. His manipulative and cunning actions are on full display. Light chooses to hide his Death Note as part of his strategy to avoid being exposed as Kira. Ryuk, though not surprised, didn't expect Light to hide it in such a way. This action shows Light's willingness to use any opportunity to keep his secret and maintain his position as Kira. Light doesn't hesitate to take unethical or even selfish actions. In this instance, Light shows his courage in maintaining control of the situation, even if it means surprising or disappointing others, including those who are on his side. This reflects Light's cunning and manipulative side.

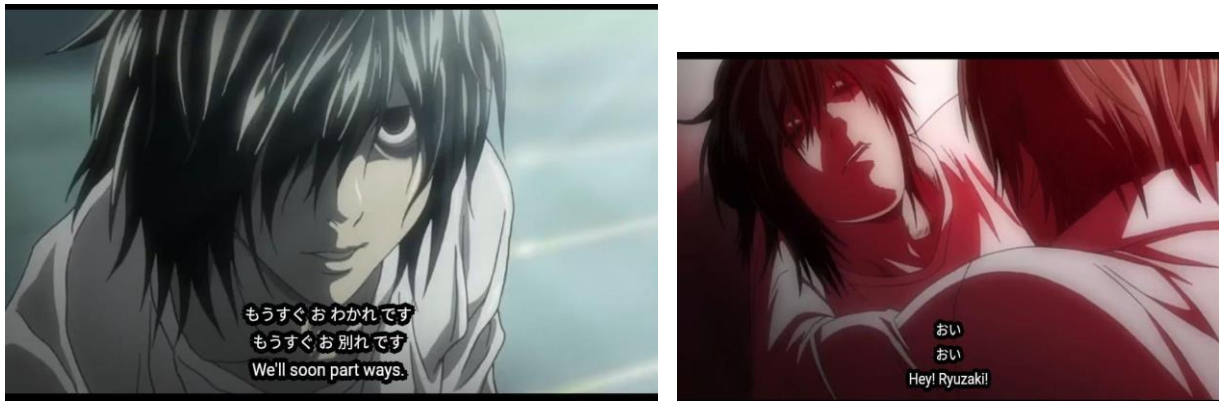


Figure 10. L's death and Light Yagami's momentary victory in episode 25 25

L's premonition of his death is reflected in a brief interaction between him and Light during a heavy rain. Despite being enemies, L shows sensitivity to his surroundings by sensing that the end of his life is drawing near, while Light shows his firmness by standing his ground even when L tries to approach him personally. Although L tries to mend their relationship by offering help and apologizing, Light remains unmoved. This shows that Light has the courage and determination to face any situation, even when confronted by his most formidable enemy. In episode 25, when L dies, Light Yagami displays his braveness by accepting his momentary victory over L. Despite L being a tough opponent and having been Light's rival from the beginning, Light shows no hesitation or regret over L's death. Instead, he accepts the victory as part of his plan to achieve his goal as Kira. Light demonstrates courage by not hesitating to continue his steps, even after losing his most formidable enemy. This shows that Light has extraordinary determination and courage in pursuing his ambitions, even when faced with difficult or unfair situations.



Figure 11 Light's defeat and death in episode 37

The scene of Light's defeat by Near's trap in episode 37 shows clear fear and frustration due to a major failure and the exposure of his crimes. However, Light remains firm and does not give up. Although the situation is very difficult and the hope of escape is dwindling, Light's courage is seen in his steadfast mind when facing the consequences of his actions. Even though he realizes that he will eventually be caught and punished, Light still maintains his position with a firm attitude.

Light Yagami's defeat occurs when Ryuk, the Shinigami who gave him the Death Note, finally fulfills his promise to end Light's life. After failing in his evil plan and his identity as Kira being revealed, Light realizes that the end has come. Although initially he tried to continue to survive and find a way out, Light finally accepts his fate when Ryuk writes his name in the Death Note, ending his life. This shows that, although Light had the courage to fight to the end, he eventually had to accept the consequences of his actions and accept a losses with dignity.

Antihero is an evolution of the more traditional hero figure, who has qualities of idealism, wisdom, and compassion. In the 20th century, antiheroes became more popular due to changing societal thinking, which focused more on the individual and the beauty of individual life, rather than

the beauty of communal life. Antiheroes are also a reflection of changes in life and culture, showing that individuals do not need to be idealistic heroes to make a change.

Antiheroes are also known by other terms such as anti-heroes, which all mean the main character in a story who does not have the qualities of an ordinary hero. According to Brian K. Williams (1985), the Early Stages of the Antihero are described as complex and interesting characters, often with tragic backgrounds or unusual motives. The development of this character undergoes changes and internal growth, although not always following traditional moral norms. The Antihero's resolution achieves redemption or finds meaning in their tragedy, or they may remain ambiguous and unresolved.

The development of the Antihero figure in the character of Light Yagami is shown in terms of literary psychology. At the beginning of the story, Light is shown as an ordinary student who simply lives life by going to school. However, when he becomes the owner of the Death Note, Light begins to act with unlimited power, which results in moral conflicts and individual lives. Light Yagami's development in Death Note can be seen from the change in psychology. Light undergoes a psychological change that causes him to fail to control himself, which eventually leads to unwanted changes.

Conclusion

Light Yagami's Characters

After conducting an in-depth analysis of the exploration of the antihero characteristics of Light Yagami in the anime Death Note from various perspectives, we have gained an understanding of the complexity of this character as explained below, **Moral Aspect:** Light Yagami is depicted as an antihero whose nature is contradictory between the desire to cleanse the world of evil and the excessive use of the Death Note's power, often violating human moral principles. **Idealism Aspect:** Light Yagami's idealism is depicted in his strong vision to create a world without crime. However, the methods used are cruel and manipulative, often deliberately blurring the lines between good and evil. **Brave Aspect:** Light Yagami shows his braveness and certainty in facing complex and challenging situations, such as when fighting L and Near.

Through this analysis, it shows that the character of Light Yagami is a complex character with various problems since finding the Death Note, which encourages viewers of the Death Note anime to ponder various aspects of morality, idealism, and courage.

L's Characters

Meanwhile, the conclusion about the character of L in the anime Death Note is that L is a complex figure with extraordinary intelligence, unwavering dedication to justice, and deep vulnerability behind his cold demeanor. L shows moral firmness in pursuing Kira but also faces internal conflicts and difficulties in maintaining a balance between professionalism and his emotions. Although sometimes seen as strange in his behavior and personality, L remains a strong figure and has a big impact on the story. With his fearless courage in the face of danger, L represents a strong but also human side of justice in the battle against evil.

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