

# BRIANNA'S AMBITION IN ANGIE THOMAS' *ON THE COME UP*

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## *Abstract*

*This study consists of an analysis of Brianna's ambition in Angie Thomas' On The Come up (2019). The objectives of the study are to find the motives of Brianna's ambition and the way she achieves her ambition. This study uses two kinds of data source: primary and secondary data sources. The primary data source is Angie Thomas' On The Come up (2019) and the secondary data sources are references from journals, books, internet article and other sources that could support this research. To accomplish this study, the writer uses psychological approach and the data analysis technique of this study is qualitative research. The result of the study shows that: (1) The motive of Brianna's ambitions in this novel is that she wants to speak up that she is different from her father, she wants to be a successful rapper who is recognized as herself without being assumed by the fame of her father's name as an underground legend; her mother lost her job and things are getting worse. She has several motivations which drive her ambitions such as: passion, caring, purpose, and revenge. (2) The way Brianna achieves her ambition the novel are: she has to join rap battle at the Ring because it is her chance to get her name out there and, if she wins, she can continue to participate in rap battles. Then, she makes her own song that goes viral. She makes a deal and Supreme becomes her manager. And the last is she gets support to be a rapper from her family. However, after much effort and struggle she has done to pursue her ambitions. She really has the common traits of ambitious people such as: goal setting, motivation to achieve and self-esteem.*

**Keywords:** *Ambition, ambitious, motivation*

## **INTRODUCTION**

For people who want to be successful, ambition can be an important requirement. It can direct someone to be a good or bad person. Without a healthy dose of ambition, no one can succeed. People who wish to be more, know more, do more, and have more, have a purpose and powerful internal drive that leads them to dream bigger and go further. Usually, ambitious people will try to make the results of their work according to certain standards, not as long as they are made, as long as they are fast, or as long as they meet deadlines. They have willpower and determination. They know where they are going and what they have to do to get there. They are capable of changing and measuring up to their dreams, also they are always watchful of the opportunities that are out there for those who are willing to see them and seize them.

Ambitious people always take charge of their life and don't expect others to bow down to their needs. They seek power either for themselves or for others. However, ambitious people need to have limits in pursuing ambition, which is by considering their own environment, moral values and norms, ethics and conditions. Furthermore, ambition never let any person fail it until they achieve their dream. Usually, certain incidents must occur to push and let ambition make somebody become obsessed with the goals and dreams in life. Someone seems to do nothing without ambition. Lack of ambition is one of the main factors that cause failure. If the path to reaching the goal is halting because they have no motivation, it could fail.

Ambition can also be found in the main character of Angie Thomas' *On The Come Up*. In the novel *On The Come Up* the main character; Brianna "Bri" Jackson is sixteen years old, and she misses her father. He passed away eight years previously, suddenly, murdered in a shooting by a rival gang. He was an underground hip hop legend who was on the point of making it big just before his untimely death. Brianna wants to become a rapper like her father but she is labelled a troublemaker at school, things at home are getting worse too. Her mother loses her job, and there is no money. Most days, Brianna goes home to an empty refrigerator, because there is no money for food. Brianna pours her frustration out into her first song, which is angry and combative. Brianna has talent, and she has the lyrics.

The writer chooses the novel *On The Come Up* to analyze because there are many moral values that can be taken as a lesson in life. It is important for human life to have an ambition and it is the story about how Brianna can face many problems in her life to achieve her ambition. Especially to achieve something worth in life, it is necessary to set a high goal. Moreover, because this is Angie Thomas' second novel and the novel is pretty phenomenal, it becomes interesting for the writer to choose Angie Thomas' *On The Come Up* as a research subject.

## **REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE**

### **Psychological Approach**

Psychology researches human behaviors and their causes while literature depicts human behavior through fiction. Those two are branches of science that study human soul. Both of social science studying human behavior are interrelated and mutually beneficial. Emir (2016: 49-50) defines that literary works study human beings and describe their inner world with all its aspects. The reason is that a literary work is at the same time a product of a certain psychological condition.

### **The Concept of Ambition**

Ambitious people believe in themselves and their capabilities. They understand that everyone is capable of achieving far much more than they typically give ourselves credit for. Moreover, ambition cannot be separated from human life because it provides the motivation and determination to help give direction in life. Ambition motivates, gives strength, creates, and leads to progress. Having ambition means to have desire to reach the goals. Having an ambition needs continuous efforts, towards achieving it. Without efforts we cannot realize anything in life. Kenney (1966: 25) defines that ambition is as strong as desire to achieve something in life or getting something for certain reason. So, it means ambitious people will have strong motivation and desire to do anything to help them reach their goals or purposes and completely will get satisfaction and happiness in life.

### **Motivations that Influence Ambitions**

Usually, people who have ambition seek to be the best at what they choose to do for attainment, power, and superiority. Most of them want to make it happen and reach it. Ambition increase the efforts in life and drives the success because ambition can motivate someone who has certain reason and purpose in life. Furthermore, the efforts to achieve the ambition depend on the person and it depends on each ambition and behaviour. Ambition gives us a sense of direction and motivation towards our goals in

the life. Having a dream, coupled with the will, courage and ambition to be on top of the world, will get you further in life than you can imagine. Moreover, Campbell (2016: 1-3) describes there are some of the internal motivators which drive ambition: passion, caring, purpose, success, fear, and revenge.

### **Types of Ambition**

Johnson (2019: 1-2) defines there are different types of ambition, however, and both are not created equal. Ambition and blind ambition are the two sides to the ambition sword. Ambition as we know it is a collection of intent and focused will, but blind ambition is the sabotaging version of this drive; a need to succeed regardless of right and wrong.

### **The Common Traits of Ambitious People**

The kind of people with that irresistible ambition are the ones that live life to the fullest, while maintaining their sense of self, their intention and their will to succeed. It is not all about getting the job done. It is more about refusing to quit. Johnson (2019: 3-6) describes there is a few common traits that all truly ambitious people have and, though they can vary from person to person, they center around 7 basic themes: goal setting, motivation to achieve, self-esteem, solid attitude toward others, a professional attitude, self-regulation and cognitive awareness.

### **RESEARCH METHOD**

This research is qualitative. According Vanderstoep and Johnston (2009: 7-8), qualitative research is a research that produces narrative or textual descriptions of the phenomenon under study, so the researcher provides a richer and deeper understanding of the population. For qualitative research is textual description, this research uses qualitative textual analysis because the data which are taken are texts or words.

### **ANALYSIS**

This chapter presents the analysis of Brianna's ambition. Brianna is the main character in Angie Thomas' *On The Come Up*. She wants to fulfill her ambition to become a successful rapper since her father has passed away. The discussion will be divided into two parts. The first is Brianna's motives to be a successful rapper and the second is the way of Brianna achieve her ambition.

#### **Brianna's Motives to be a Successful Rapper**

Brianna is a sixteen-year-old girl who wants to speak up that she is different from her father. She probably inherits the rap talent from her father. However, the first person who makes Brianna ambitious about rap is Aunt Pooh. When her father is still alive, he is famous as an underground legend. Everyone cheered when they heard the name Lawless. So people often assume that Brianna is only hiding behind the fame of her father's name. This makes Brianna upset. Her father died by Crown gang shots when Brianna was only four years old. At that time Brianna was still very young and her father's fame had nothing to do with Brianna's ambition to become a rapper.

“Can't lie, I'm a tad bit annoyed that he mentioned my dad. I get why, but damn. Whether I'm good or not shouldn't have a thing to do with him. He didn't teach me to rap. I taught myself. So why does he get the credit?” (Thomas, 2019:34)

At the beginning, Jay works as a secretary at Christ Temple Church, which her family also attends. She attends night school to earn a social work degree so that she can give others addicted to drugs the help that she could not get when she was addicted. But everything is not going well. Jay is forced to lose her job as secretary. Since the church was damaged in the riots, they have to reallocate funds to fix damage and have to let Jay go. Brianna knows that her family is in trouble now—they are already struggling to pay the rent and running out of gas.

“I’m not stupid. Jay tries to act like everything’s all good, but we’re struggling. We already don’t have gas. Last month, we got an eviction notice. Jay used most of her check to cover the rent, and we ate sandwiches until her next payday. But if she lost her job, she won’t have a payday. If she doesn’t have a payday, we might not ever have gas again. Or a food. Or a house.” (Thomas, 2019:75)

Based on the theory explained in chapter two, Brianna as the main character in this novel does have several motivations which drive her ambitions. First is passion, seen when she is very sure that she wants to become a rapper. Second is caring, she is very concerned with all her actions to fulfill her amusement as a rapper. She also cares so much about her family that she really wants to make things about rap successful. Third is she has very strong purpose so that purpose really guide her in achieving her ambitions. Finally, the last is revenge, which means she makes bad assumptions and negative people's talk to fulfill her ambitions. Moreover, success is the best revenge for doubtful, critical, envious, and negative people.

### **The Way Brianna Achieves Her Ambition**

Many folks just want to get in the Ring, and tonight may be the perfect time for Brianna to show off her talent at rapping, and the Ring is the perfect place. It is one of the most sacred spots in Garden Heights and Brianna is looking forward to tonight's battle rap. She does not want to waste this good opportunity. She comes with ambition to win the rap battle tonight. That way she can continue to be in the ring and be famous.

“That’s why I gotta kill it. I win tonight, I’ll get a spot in the Ring’s lineup, and if I get a spot in the lineup, I can do more battles, and if I do more battles, I’ll make a name for myself. Who knows could happen then?” (Thomas, 2019:15)

After Brianna wins rap battle at the Ring, she definitely has the Ring talking. Somebody tells Brianna that her performance is dope. She kills it in the Ring. Aunt Pooh also arranges for Brianna to record a song with a local producer the day after. Brianna is very passionate about making her own songs. Aunt Pooh picks up Brianna as they plans then she introduces Brianna to Doc—a song producer.

“Damn. I’ve dreamed of going into a studio since I was like ten. I would stand in front of my bedroom mirror with my headphones on my ears and a brush in my hand like it was a mic, as I rapped along with Nicky Minaj. Now I’m gonna make my own song.” (Thomas, 2019:89)

Brianna finally makes a deal with Supreme. She receives Supreme on condition that her family would remain fine. As is well known that Brianna's family's condition is currently not good. They are experiencing financial difficulties. Brianna wants to help her family get out of this trouble. To the extent that Brianna reluctantly has to let Aunt Pooh go and recruit

Supreme to be her manager, as in the following quotation, “If I work with you, can you make sure my family is okay?” “I’ll make sure you and your family are good,” he says. “You got my word.” (Thomas, 2019:250)

Previously her mother strongly opposed Brianna to become a rapper. However, after much effort and struggle she has done to pursue her ambitions. Finally, Brianna tells the truth about her ambition and desire to become a rapper to her mother. Brianna admits that she has acted stupidly. She followed all of Supreme's words and she regrets her actions. That makes her mother begin to melt. Her mother realizes Brianna's ambition to become a rapper is very strong.

“Fine. Bri, if you wanna perform at the Ring, you can. But if you go out there, acting a damn fool, best believe I will snatch your soul from your body.”

Oh, I definitely believe it. “Yes, ma’am”

“Good,” she says. (Thomas, 2019:412)

Based on the theory explained in chapter two, Brianna as the main character in this novel does have common traits of ambitious people. First is the goal setting, it looks like she is very confident to fulfill her ambition to become a successful rapper. She started by taking part in the battle rap because she believes that her hard work will make her known as a successful rapper. Second is she has motivation to achieve, she is very focused and never gives up, she even tries to make her own songs. She also has self-esteem, meaning that she knows that she has talent and ability, she knows herself better than people think about her. She is not afraid of failure and continues to pursue her ambition to become a rapper.

## CONCLUSION

Based on the analysis it can be concluded that motivation greatly influence people in achieving their ambition. Brianna as the main character in the novel shows that her motivation to become a rapper is because she has the ability and she wants to be recognized as herself not because of her father's fame. Another motive that makes Brianna increasingly want to become a successful rapper is because her mother has lost her job. She has several motivations which drive her ambitions such as, passion, caring, purpose and revenge.

Then, based on the analysis in the previous chapter it can also be concluded that Brianna has to do many things and efforts to achieve her ambitions. All these ways and struggles led her to achieve her ambitions. However, the way's Brianna achieves her ambition are different. She has to join rap battle at the Ring because it is her chance to get her name out there and, if she wins, she can continue to participate in rap battles. Then, she makes her own song that goes viral. She makes a deal and Supreme becomes her manager. The last is she get support to be a rapper from her family. However, after much effort and struggle she has done to pursue her ambitions. She really has the common traits of ambitious people such as, goal setting, motivation to achieve and self-esteem.

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