

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents five key aspects of introduction to support the research. The first is background of the study, the next is research questions, the third is objective of the study, fourth is significance of the study, and the last is scope and limitations of the study.

1.1 Background of the Study

Character development is an important part of a literary work because it plays a major role in shaping the quality of the story. The term character development refers to the process of change or development experienced by the character throughout the story, whether emotionally, psychologically, or morally. As cited in Taylor, Hasanah *et al.*, (2018) explained that character development is the process of change or growth of a character's personality that represents particular attributes. Through character development, readers can understand the feelings, motivations, and decisions made by the characters and also the deeper meaning of a work. The author has sufficient narrative space to describe the progression and the develops of characters, because character development is one of the most significant aspects of a novel.

Considering the importance of character development in a novel, the writer focuses on how this development is shown through the plot, as seen in the title of the thesis, *Reading Sophie's Character Development Through Plot Structure in Julianne Maclean's The Color of Heaven*. The term “reading” in the title indicates that this study uses interpretive literary analysis through in-depth reading of the text, or in other words, close reading, and also emphasizes the intrinsic elements of literary works. Through the structure of the novel, the stages of the plot form a clear narrative framework that allows the author to show the process of character development of the main character in a coherent and meaningful way.

Novel is a long literary work in which the author aims to make the reader feel as though they are living through the story (Kennedy, 2010). While Eagleton (2015) stated that novel is a piece of prose fiction of reasonable length. Through novels, readers can experience a wide range of emotions, values, and new perspectives that authors express about life. According to Faraditha *et al.*, (2022) said when the readers read a literary work, they can get the pleasure and recreate, imagine, and feel entertained by the story. By reading novels, readers are not only entertained by the stories created by the authors, but they can also interpret the messages conveyed by the authors through the characters they create. This process reveals that readers' interpretation of the author's message depends on how character development interacts with the plot structure.

The character development and the plot are closely related in a novel because each event in the plot influences the character's thoughts, emotions, and actions. As the story progresses, the experiences encountered by the character lead to changes in personality, attitudes, and behavior. At the same time, the character's decisions and responses to these events determine how the plot unfolds. Therefore, plot and character development are interconnected elements that cannot be separated in a literary work. According to Abrams (1999) The plot comprises events and activities that are portrayed and organized to achieve specific creative and emotional effects.

As cited in Karina's thesis entitled *Structural Analysis on Bryce's Character Development in Wendelin Van Draanen's Flipped* (2021) said, conflict makes individuals have character development, and it showed through the plot. Through character development as seen in the plot of the story, readers can understand the thoughts, emotions, and behaviors of the characters. In other words, both of these things can also reveal the ideas and themes created by the author because they make the story more realistic and meaningful. Then, the literary work that will be used in this study is from a novel titled *The Color of Heaven* by Julianne Maclean was published in 2011 by Blue Ocean Publishing with employing New Criticism approach as a grand theory.

New Criticism is one approach that is still used today in analyzing intrinsic or formal elements like setting, plot, theme, tone, and character in literary works such as novels. As Tyson (2011) highlighted, New Criticism's focus on the text itself has remained a foundational element of literary studies. In fact, New Criticism's insistence on textual evidence to support our literary interpretations is shared by all the interpretive approaches we'll use in the following chapters (p. 70). New criticism itself has existed since the late 1940s until the late 1960s in a book written by John Crowe Ransom in 1941 entitled *The New Criticism*.

Therefore, using the New Criticism approach in analyzing literary works can certainly make it easier for researchers to explore the novel in greater depth. In addition, this approach can also help readers appreciate the complex artistic nature of the text without including external elements such as the biographical background of the author, existing social issues, and other similar things.

From the information mentioned before, one of the novels that the writer wants to analyze uses the New Criticism approach as the main theory, especially in character development as seen from the plot, entitled *The Color of Heaven*, written by Julianne Maclean and was published in 2011. This is a romantic novel that contains themes of love, loss, forgiveness and redemption, hope, the search for identity, and the trauma experienced by the main character, Sophie Duncan. The story begins with Sophie Duncan's seemingly perfect life. She is a successful columnist with a loving and caring husband and a daughter whom she loves deeply. However, that happiness disappears when her only child dies from an unexpected illness and her husband, whom she thought loved her deeply, turns out to be cheating on her. These two events become the beginning of a conflict that drives a change in Sophie Duncan's personality. Through a series of events that shape the plot, particularly when she was involved in a car accident that nearly killed her, Sophie gradually discovered the meaning of love and inner peace, as well as her true self.

The development of Sophie Duncan from the beginning to the end of the story demonstrates significant character development. Each phase of events in the plot contributes significantly to her emotional growth. From the beginning of the story, where she appears to be happy, to a phase of such a deep misery, she eventually develops into a person who finds an enlightenment within herself. Definitely, all of these events are related and create a complete story structure.

In the New Criticism approach, the relationship between plot and character development is very close. These two elements become the main focus of the writer's analysis. On the other hand, the New Criticism theory emphasizes the importance of reading the text intrinsically without involving external elements. With this approach, analysis can be carried out through intrinsic elements such as plot, conflict, and character development to create a continuous meaning within the novel. Thus, Julianne Maclean's novel, with titled *The Color of Heaven*, can be an interesting object for analysis because of the combination of the plots and developments experienced by the main character.

The urgency of this study is on the importance of how readers understand character development through the plot in a literary work. Through the plot, readers can explore how the character reacts to the conflicts they experience, which then leads to emotional development that shape their personality. The writer uses Julianne Maclean's novel *The Color of Heaven* as a source of data because it has a strong and complex plot structure that also displays the emotional journey of its main character, Sophie Duncan, in depth, which can be seen from the exposition to the resolution or stable condition. Therefore, studying character development through plot is important in understanding how a literary work can construct the meanings and values contained within it.

The writer also found several previous studies related to this research. The first study entitled *Imagery in Julianne Maclean's The Color of Heaven* by Lestysiana Dwi Sevtira (2022). This study focused to find imageries in the novel, to identify and classify the types of imagery, and reveal the purposes of the imagery.

Secondly, the study entitled is *Character Development of Agatha Prenderghast in Cody Kimmel's Paranorman Novel* by Hasanah *et al.*, (2018). This study focused on characteristics and character development of a female antagonist. The last studies are *The Character Development of Isabella Linton in Emily Bronte's Wuthering Heights Novel* by Asmiaty *et al.*, (2022). This study focused to find the character development of Isabella Linton and what are the events that influence Isabella Linton's character development.

From the previous studies mentioned above, many literary studies have analyzed using New Criticism theory with different focuses. There are no previous studies that discuss similar topics in the novel *The Color of Heaven*. To show the development of the main character as seen through the plot, the writer uses John Crowe Ransom's (1941) New Criticism theory as the grand theory and other supporting theories. Hence, this study aims to analyze Sophie Duncan's character development in Julianne Maclean's *The Color of Heaven* by applying New Criticism, focusing on how the plot structure shapes her character development throughout the story.

1.2 Research Questions

Based on the description in the background of the study, there are two questions can be formulated by the writer in this paper:

1. How does the plot of Julianne Maclean's *The Color of Heaven* portray the character development of Sophie Duncan throughout the story?
2. What are the factors that influence Sophie Duncan's character development in Julianne Maclean's *The Color of Heaven*?

1.3 Objectives of the Study

Based on the previous research questions, the writer tried to break down the two purposes as follows:

1. To analyze how Sophie Duncan experiences the character development through the plot of Julianne MacLean's *The Color of Heaven*.

2. To identify the factors within the plot that contribute to Sophie Duncan's character development in Julianne Maclean's *The Color of Heaven*.

1.4 Significance of the Study

This research is expected to have two benefits, both theoretically and practically. The first is the theoretical benefit, of course the writer hopes that this research can provide several benefits, especially regarding in-depth explanations related to the application New Criticism theory in analyzing character development and the plot structure in novel *The Color of Heaven* by Julianne Maclean. With a detailed explanation related to how the plot contributes to the main character's development, it can certainly help readers or people who are interested in this research to get information about the relationship between plot and character development from the perspective of New Criticism. Then the benefits of this research practically can help readers or the society understand that through character development, they can evaluate and reconsider their attitudes in everyday life, such as understanding how to make decisions, the moral values they have acquired, etc. Thus, novels are not only entertainment, but also can increase social awareness and moral literacy in society.

1.5 Scope and Limitations of the Study

The scope of this study focuses on analyzing the relationship between plot and character development of the main character namely Sophie Duncan in the novel *The Color of Heaven* by Julianne Maclean using New Criticism theory that proposed by John Crowe Ransom (1941) in his book entitled *The New Criticism*. This analysis emphasizes how the plot structure contributes to the development of the main character throughout the story.

In the limitations of this study, the analysis is limited to the intrinsic elements of the novel, especially plot and character without involving external factors such as the author's biographical background, social context, and other similar aspects that are not intrinsic. Using New Criticism as an analytical approach means focusing on the text itself. Therefore, the author does not

discuss feminism, historical aspects, or social culture in this study, but focuses on the text, where the plot builds and reveals the character development of Sophie Duncan as the main character.