

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This chapter includes the background of the study, research questions, objectives, significance, and the scope and limitations of the study. It explains why the study is being done and why this topic was chosen. The objectives of the study also set a restriction for how the study should be conducted, which are elaborated in detail in the sub-chapter of the scope of the study. Another part is the significance of the study, which describes its contributions to the study's theory and practice.

1.1 Background of the Study

This study focuses on the romance formula in *Happy Place* by using genre criticism. Literature always helped people understand life, culture, and emotions. Wellek & Warren (1956:22) mention that "literature" means artistic and imaginative writing, even if the meaning is sometimes unclear. They are not only for fun, but also share values, feelings, and cultural experiences (Wellek & Warren, 1956: 102). Genres group stories by themes and styles. Each genre, like romance, mystery, or fantasy, shows different parts of human life. Cawelti (1977: 6) mentions that genres mix common story patterns and cultural traditions. For example, romance often follows a known structure, such as falling in love, facing problems, and finding a happy ending. These patterns help readers enjoy the story and reflect what matters in the society at the time.

These patterns are timeless because they connect to human emotions and experiences that everyone understands. Cawelti (1977: 6) also says that genres use cultural themes and stereotypes to make these universal stories feel familiar to a specific audience. For example, gothic romance stories mix love overcoming obstacles with cultural details like haunted houses, hidden secrets, or spooky settings. These details make the stories easier for people of a certain time or place to relate to. Genres are not just for entertainment. They also show what people care about, fear, or hope for during a certain time. As society changes, genres change too, adding new ideas while keeping familiar

story patterns. This makes genres a strong way to connect with readers and explore human life in different ways.

Cawelti (1977: 42) mentions that romance formula theory shows that many romance stories use similar patterns, like love overcoming obstacles, mixed with cultural ideas. These patterns help meet readers' expectations while showing important ideas about society. By studying these patterns, we can better understand the deeper meanings of romance stories and how they shape our views on love and relationships.

Building on Cawelti's work about romance, his later work focused on how romance stories have certain patterns that shape the plot. Cawelti (1977: 41) mentions that he explained that contemporary gothic stories, which are very popular, often mix adventure and mystery. Unlike detective stories, where solving the mystery is the main goal, gothic romance uses mystery to bring people together, create challenges in their relationship, and in the end, help them overcome those challenges to be with each other.

We look at different ways, which means that when stories are told, we need to recognize that every version of a story is just one way to interpret, and this interpretation can be very different. In literature, this is especially important because characters often have different perspectives on the same events, which can lead to conflicts and rich dialogues between them. Understanding that these interpretations arise from specific social contexts allows us to see how characters' backgrounds and environments shape their views and interactions.

Happy Place is a contemporary romance novel by Emily Henry (2023), published by Berkley Books. It tells the story of two people who once thought they were soulmates but now find themselves in a complicated situation, mixing love, humor, and deep emotions. Emily Henry is well-known for writing contemporary romance, and *Happy Place* shows how the genre can mix traditional romantic themes with modern ideas.

The previous study consisted of five studies that were conducted on the same

theory as this study, which is the romance formula similar to the one explored in this research. Safitri & Dewi (2021) analyzed *Rainshadow Road* by Lisa Kleypas, focusing on how character types, plot structure, and themes align with and adapt romance genre conventions. Praywana et al. (2023) examined *Fireside*, exploring how its plot, characters, and themes follow or modify traditional romance structures. Arrofifah, Pujiati, et al. (2021) studied *Through the Looking Glass*, highlighting its use of repeating events, mirrored situations, and circular storytelling. Jusrianti et al. (2024) investigated *Redeeming Love* (2022), analyzing how the film adheres to or challenges common romance tropes like relationship development, conflict, and resolution. Zahrani Firsta et al. (2025) applied John G. Cawelti's theory to *The Gift of the Magi*, showing how the story follows the classic pattern of love overcoming obstacles.

A gap in the study is how Cawelti's romance formula theory applies to modern romance books, especially in today's world. While Cawelti's theory helps us understand traditional romance stories, there is not much research on how these formulas change with new social and cultural ideas. For example, modern romance novels, like those by Emily Henry or Lisa Kleypas, may include new themes, character types, or storylines that change or build on old formulas. So, more research is needed to see how Cawelti's romance formula fits with today's stories and how these books reflect changing cultural values and reader expectations.

1.2 Research Questions

1. What conventions of the romance formula are reflected in the novel *Happy Place*?
2. How does the novel *Happy Place* innovate the romance formula?

1.3 Objectives of the Study

1. To identify the patterns of the romance formula in the novel *Happy Place*.
2. To understand how the novel innovates the romance formula.

1.4 Significances of the Study

This study of the romance formula in contemporary romance, particularly through a narrative analysis of *Happy Place* by Emily Henry, holds significant implications for understanding the genre's role in shaping cultural narratives and individual experiences, a study of Cawelti's romance formula in Emily Henry's *Happy Place* is important as it offers both theoretical and practical contributions to literary analysis, especially in exploring how these patterns reflect societal values and expectations.

This study explores the common patterns in contemporary romance stories, specifically through an analysis of *Happy Place* by Emily Henry, using Cawelti's theory of the romance formula. The research looked closely at the main characters and examined how their experiences follow or differ from traditional romance patterns, such as overcoming challenges, developing relationships, and finding resolution. By studying how the characters' journeys reflect or challenge societal ideas about love, relationships, and personal growth, the study showed how romance stories influence readers' understanding of these themes. It also focused on how cultural contexts shape romance stories and how these stories, in turn, influence the way characters experience their lives. This is important for understanding how contemporary romance stories can both reflect and challenge cultural norms, giving insights into how characters manage their identities and relationships and helping us better understand cultural self-awareness.

This analysis helps readers better understand the romance formula in *Happy Place*. It improves reading skills by giving readers tools to see how the story follows or changes traditional romance patterns. This includes looking at the main features of romance, like how the characters' relationship grows, the challenges they face, and how everything is resolved. By understanding these patterns, readers can connect more deeply with the story. This study also gives readers ways to think critically about the common elements in romance stories, making their reading experience richer and helping them understand love, relationships, and society more thoughtfully.

1.5 Scope and Limitation of the Study

The scope of this study is focused on the romance genre formula in Emily Henry's *Happy Place*, using Cawelti's theory of romance formulas. This study only looks at the romance formula that appears in the novel, especially in the characters and the way the author tells the story. It does not cover all parts of the novel but only focuses on the parts that show the romance formula, such as how the characters behave, what they feel, and how their relationship develops over time. It also looks at the author's narration or the way Emily Henry uses words to describe events, emotions, and actions. These parts are important because they help show how the romance story is built. The study examines how the author uses these elements to create meaning in the story and to share the main themes with the readers. Through this, the research tries to understand how traditional romance patterns are used or changed in a modern story like *Happy Place*, and how this helps readers connect with the story.