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THE HEROINE'S JOURNEY OF NORA SEED IN MATT HAIG'S THE MIDNIGHT LIBRARY

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Abstract

This study analyzes the heroine's journey of the female main character in Matt Haig's *The Midnight Library*. The purpose of this research is to examine the emotional, and character development of the female main character as she navigates her inner struggles and life choices. The study applies Maureen Murdock's theory of *The Heroine's Journey* to understand how the protagonist experiences separation from her feminine identity, confronts internal conflict, and ultimately achieves healing and self-acceptance. This research focuses on key aspects of the heroine's journey, including regret, emotional pain, and the process of reconciliation with the self. this study explores the feminism values reflected in the female main character's journey, such as independence, emotional resilience, self-acceptance, and the balance between feminine and masculine traits. These values highlight how the novel presents female empowerment not through physical strength or external success, but through inner awareness and emotional growth. The method used in this research is qualitative, with the novel serving as the primary data source. Data are analyzed through close reading and interpretation based on Murdock's theoretical framework. The findings show that the main character's journey follows the stages of the heroine's cycle, beginning with separation, continuing through trials, despair, concluding with integration, and self-understanding. The study concludes that *The Midnight Library* presents a modern representation of female heroism that emphasizes personal healing, self-discovery, and the importance of choosing life. Through this journey, the novel encourages readers to reflect on identity, regret, and the possibility of growth through acceptance.

Keywords: Emotional growth, Feminism values, Heroine's Journey, Inner healing.

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INTRODUCTION

Stories about heroes and heroines have existed for thousands of years, and they help people understand courage, identity, and personal growth. In many cultures, a hero or heroine is someone who shows bravery, strength, or strong character. Traditional hero stories itself usually focus on adventure, challenge, and a return with new wisdom. However, this model mainly describes the male hero's experience. Over time, scholars realize that women often experience a different kind of journey, one that focuses more on emotional healing and inner conflict. (Vogler, 2020) explains that female protagonists frequently embark on transformative inner journeys that challenge conventional heroic paradigms, highlighting relational and emotional development as central elements of their narrative arcs.

Nowadays, the main character as the hero in a story is not always a man. The development of the Heroine's Journey as a female version of the Hero's Journey brings an important change, especially for women's understanding of identity and growth. This narrative offers a new form of heroism that supports gender equality between men and women. Many feminist scholars, including Maureen Murdock, use this idea to challenge the limitations of Joseph Campbell's Hero's Journey from his book entitled *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* (1968). As a response, Murdock introduced a revised model in her book *The Heroine's Journey: Woman's Quest for Wholeness* (1990), which has become a significant reference for understanding women's experiences in literature and storytelling.

According to Maureen Murdock (1990) in her book *The Heroine's Journey: Woman's Quest for Wholeness*, the words feminine and masculine do not actually talk about gender. Instead, they

describe two different ways of thinking, acting, and being that exist inside all human beings, whether they are men or women. However, Western culture has changed the meaning of these words. Feminine is often seen as something weak or only for women, while masculine is often seen as something strong or only for men. Murdock explains that this is not correct. These qualities are part of a wide range of human characteristics that everyone can have.

The novel entitled *The Midnight Library* is written by Matt Haig. In this article, the writer will use the heroine's journey as the theory to discuss the novel. The Heroine's Journey really brings diversity and also response to the previous book *The Hero's Journey* by Joseph Campbell. Therefore, Maureen Murdock's book *The Heroine's Journey: Woman's Quest for Wholeness* contains of various stages especially inner healing and emotional growth.

The writer chooses the heroine's journey theory for *The Midnight Library* because the novel strongly focuses on a woman's personal struggle and emotional growth. Nora Seed, the main character, clearly represents a modern heroine who searches for meaning, hope, and identity. This makes the heroine's journey a suitable theory to analyze her story. The novel also fits this topic because it shows the big difference between Nora's unhappy life and the many possible lives she could have. The novel includes strong feminist values. It shows how a woman can question society's expectations, find her own voice, and make choices based on her true choices. The combination of heroine journey and feminism values existed in the main character of this story makes the writer interested to analyze this topic.

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This article explores the heroine's journey of Nora Seed in Matt Haig's *The Midnight Library*. While much analysis on the script focuses on existential or philosophical themes, less attention is given to the narrative structure of the heroine's journey. The research seeks to answer the following problems:

1. How is the heroine's journey in Matt Haig's *The Midnight Library*?
2. What feminism values are reflected in heroine's journey Matt Haig's *The Midnight Library*?

From the problem statement above, the objective of the study is to analyze the heroine's journey and the feminism values of heroine's journey Matt Haig's *The Midnight Library*.

This study focuses on heroine journey which is raised by Maureen Murdock. The analysis is done to explain the heroine's journey of the main character. The study limits to the analysis on the female main character in Matt Haig's *The Midnight Library*.

This study contributes to literary studies by applying Maureen Murdock's Heroine's Journey theory to the analysis of Matt Haig's *The Midnight Library*. By focusing on the emotional and psychological journey of the female main character, this research helps deepen the understanding of women's inner struggles, self-acceptance, and healing in modern literature. The study also highlights how feminist values such as independence, emotional strength, self-worth, and balance between feminine and masculine traits are represented through the heroine's journey. This research is significant for students and scholars of English literature, especially those interested in feminist literary criticism and character

development. This study is expected to help readers understand the importance of self-acceptance, emotional healing, and personal choice, especially for women facing social pressure and identity struggles.

This article consists five chapters. The first chapter presents the introduction, The second chapter is literature review, The third chapter is Method, the fourth chapter is Result and Discussion, The fifth chapter is Conclusion.

LITERATURE REVIEW

There are 3 studies that discuss about heroine's journey. The first researcher is Pungky Priska Sari from Universitas 17 Agustus 1945 Surabaya with her thesis with entitled "*The Heroine's Journey in Suzanne Collins' the Hunger Games*." (2021). The researcher explains how the main character's growth and struggles follow the stages of the heroine's journey, such as facing trials, handling family responsibilities, and finding her own identity. The study shows that the main character fits the role of a modern heroine and that Murdock's theory is suitable for analyzing female characters.

The second researcher is Royke Hadrian Askari Sembayu from Universitas 17 Agustus 1945 Surabaya in his study entitled "Exploring The Batman Journey in Matt Reeves's *THE BATMAN*." (2025). The researcher explains how the main character goes through several stages of the hero's journey, such as facing personal trauma, experiencing inner conflict, and transforming his identity as Batman. The study focuses on Bruce Wayne's psychological struggle, moral responsibility, and his role as a symbol of hope for Gotham City. The findings show that the hero's journey in *The Batman* emphasizes emotional and

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mental development rather than physical strength. The researcher concludes that Campbell's theory is effective for analyzing character growth and inner transformation in modern cinematic narratives.

The third researcher is Intan Permata Sari from Universitas Gadjah Mada in her study entitled "The Heroine's Journey towards Wholeness as Seen in Margaret Atwood's *Surfacing* (2017)" (2019). The researcher explains how the female protagonist in *Surfacing* goes through a psychological and emotional journey that reflects the stages of the Heroine's Journey. The study shows that the character's struggles with identity, trauma, and emotional wounds lead her toward self-understanding and inner healing. Intan argues that the heroine's journey in this novel is not about physical adventure, but about recovering the feminine self, confronting past pain, and achieving emotional balance. Her findings support the idea that Murdock's framework is effective for analyzing female characters who experience inner conflict and a search for wholeness.

2.1 Theoretically Framework

The Heroine's Journey is a narrative structure that focuses on the emotional, psychological, and spiritual development of a female protagonist. Unlike the Hero's Journey, which often centers on physical challenges and external adventures, The Heroine's Journey explores the inner transformation of a character who must balance her inner and outer worlds. This framework shows how a heroine grows through separation, struggle, and self-discovery, eventually finding her true identity and power.

The concept of the Heroine's Journey was popularized by Maureen Murdock in her book *The*

Heroine's Journey: Woman's Quest for Wholeness (1990). Murdock developed this model as a response to Joseph Campbell's Hero's Journey, which she believed did not fully represent women's experiences in myth and storytelling. According to Murdock (1990), The Heroine's Journey begins with the heroine's separation from the feminine world and her search for identity in a masculine system. Throughout the journey, she faces internal conflict, rejection, and loss before reconnecting with her own feminine nature and achieving inner balance.

2.2 Definition and Concept of the Heroine's Journey

The Heroine's Journey is a narrative cycle in which a heroine embarks on an adventure, faces and overcomes various challenges, and returns transformed, having gained wisdom, strength, or insight that benefits her community or herself. This journey is similar to the Hero's Journey, but it often focuses more on women's personal growth, relationships, and emotional transformation. The concept recognizes that women's stories may follow different patterns, emphasizing connection, self-discovery, and the balance between independence and community.

2.3 Hero's Journey and Heroine's Journey

In Joseph Campbell's book entitled *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*, Campbell deals with the history of the hero throughout the ages. He also describes heroic myths and legends from around the world to define and explain the hero quest (Campbell, 1968). Then he describes hero who leaves home immature and then he returns home with stronger traits because of challenges that he has been facing through his journey or as Campbell described as the hero's journey. But, unfortunately

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after become so popular, hero's journey clearly intended for men and not for women.

journey begins with separation from the feminine and ends with the integration of feminine and masculine qualities.

In response, some of the feminists created their own female version of hero called heroine. Then Maureen Murdock created a book entitled *The Heroine's Journey: Woman's Quest for Wholeness* as the response to Campbell's. Murdock's model describes the female hero experience of psycho spiritual journey. Murdock stated that heroine 's journey is the healing of the wounding of the feminine that exist within the culture (Murdock, 1990).

2.4 Factors of The Heroine's Journey

The Heroine's Journey, as described by Maureen Murdock, is a storytelling pattern that comes from real experiences of women and is strongly connected to psychological and cultural ideas. This narrative model is built on several important factors that make it powerful and useful for both writers and anyone seeking to understand women's lives. First, the Heroine's Journey starts with the challenges many women face in societies where feminine qualities may be misunderstood or undervalued. It focuses on healing from emotional or cultural hurts, showing how a woman can reconnect with her true self and become whole.

2.5 Heroine's Journey version of Maureen Murdock: The Cycle

According to Murdock, the heroine's journey does not follow a linear path but moves in a cyclical process. A woman may experience several stages of the journey at the same time, and the process of growth and self-understanding continues throughout life. The heroine's journey represents a continuous cycle of emotional, psychological, and spiritual development. The

METHODS

3.1 Research Design

This research uses a qualitative research design, which focuses on understanding feelings, thoughts, and meanings rather than using numbers or statistics. Qualitative research aims to understand people's experiences and perspectives by analyzing words, patterns, and themes instead of numerical data. In this study, the researcher examines Matt Haig's novel *The Midnight Library* to explore the heroine's journey of the main character, Nora Seed (Bazen et al., 2021).

3.2 Literary Approach

The writer explains that this article uses a literary approach supported by the theory of the Heroine's Journey by Maureen Murdock. In literary studies, a literary approach focuses on understanding how a text creates meaning through structure, character development, and thematic patterns. According to Abrams and Harpham (2012), a literary approach uses concepts from scholars to analyze a work, not by retelling the story, but by examining how the story reflects certain ideas or frameworks. In this research, the literary approach is used to study how the journey of the main character follows the stages of Murdock's Heroine's Journey. The writer explains that this theory helps to identify patterns of separation, conflict, healing, and integration in the character's emotional growth.

3.3 Data Source

The main data source for this study is the novel *The Midnight Library* (2020), written by Matt Haig. The novel is used as a written text to

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explore the emotional and transformative journey of the main character, Nora Seed. The novel includes all the dialogues, narrative descriptions, and character interactions. These parts are important to understand Nora's regrets, choices, and inner conflicts throughout the story. By reading the novel, the researcher can identify key moments where Nora experiences despair, hope, healing, or acceptance, and analyze how these stages reflect the pattern of the Heroine's Journey.

3.4 Instruments

The main research instrument in this study is the researcher. Since this is a qualitative study, the writer is the one who collects, selects, and interprets the data from the novel *The Midnight Library*. The writer uses the Heroine's Journey framework to study Nora Seed's transformative journey by looking closely at the main character's words, actions, and emotional struggles in the narrative. The writer reads and analyzes important passages, dialogues, and events to understand the deeper meaning behind Nora's experiences and how they reflect the stages of the Heroine's Journey.

3.5 Data Collection Procedure

The data in this article is collected from the novel *The Midnight Library* (2020), written by Matt Haig. The steps for collecting the data are as follows:

1. Reading the Novel Thoroughly
2. Identifying Stages of Heroine's Journey and Feminism Values
3. Classifying the Data
4. Analyzing the Data

3.6 Data Analysis Procedure

Data analysis is the process of examining the selected data in order to answer the research questions. In this article, the writer analyzes the data collected from Matt Haig's *The Midnight Library*. The focus is on understanding the main character's transformative journey by looking at her words, actions, and inner struggles throughout the narrative. The writer identifies signs of regret, despair, hope, healing, and acceptance, and then organizes them into the stages of the Heroine's Journey.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The heroine's journey in Matt Haig's *The Midnight Library* is the story of Nora Seed's emotional and spiritual transformation as she learns to find meaning, balance, and self-acceptance in her life. In this part, the analysis explains how Nora moves through different stages of Maureen Murdock's Heroine's Journey and how each stage teaches her something important about herself. This sub-chapter also shows how Nora's regrets, choices, and alternative lives guide her toward healing and a better understanding of who she truly is. Through this journey, Nora discovers that real strength comes from facing her feelings, accepting her past, and choosing her own path.

4.1 Separation from the Feminine

The first step in the Heroine's Journey is called "Separation from the Feminine." In this stage, the main character starts to move away from the parts of herself that are usually seen as gentle, emotional, caring, or creative. These are things called "feminine" in her family or community. This separation is not just about moving away from her mother or other women in her life. It's also about turning away from kindness, intuition, and

feelings that are often not valued as much in her society.

It was hard not to compare Mrs Elm to her mother, who treated Nora like a mistake in need of correction. For instance, when she was a baby, her mother had been so worried Nora's left ear stuck out more than her right that she'd used sticky tape to address the situation, then disguised it beneath a woollen bonnet. (Haig, 2020: opening)

In this quotation when Nora is very young, her mother makes her feel like she does not good enough and that her natural self-needed to be changed. For example, her mother tries to "fix" Nora's ear because it stuck out. This make Nora feel like something is wrong with her just for being herself. Because of this, Nora starts to hide or reject her own natural feelings and qualities.

4.2 The Road of Trials

The second stage of the Heroine's Journey is called The Road of Trials. In this stage, the heroine faces many challenges that test her strength, beliefs, and understanding of herself. For Nora Seed, her trials are not about physical danger but about emotional pain, regret, and the results of her past choices.

She learned that undoing regrets was really a way of making wishes come true. There was almost any life she was living in one universe, after all. In one life she had quite a solitary time in Paris, and taught English at a college in Montparnasse and cycled by the Seine and read lots of books on park benches. In another, she was a yoga teacher with the neck mobility of an owl. (Haig, 2020: 186)

This part clearly shows the many kinds of "trials" that Nora faces. In her journey through The Midnight Library, each new life she tries represents a wish a chance to fix a regret or live a dream she once gave up. But as Nora lives in these different worlds, she learns that no life can make her completely happy or take away all her pain.

4.3 Strong Woman can Say No

The Third form of The Heroine's Journey is Strong Women can Say No. This stage, as explained by Maureen Murdock, shows the heroine's moment of awakening a point when she realizes that success and achievements cannot bring real happiness or peace. This awakening often happens when the heroine feels empty inside, even after reaching her goals.

'I don't want to die,' said Nora, her voice suddenly raised but also fragile. She was shaking from her very core. 'I don't want to die. (Haig, 2020: 235)

Nora's decision to say "I don't want to die" is the most powerful and emotional moment in her journey. Before this point, Nora has lived with hopelessness and self-blame, believing that she is a failure, unworthy of love, and a burden to others. For a long time, she accepted her sadness without fighting back, letting her pain and regrets control how she saw herself and her life.

The feminism values in The Midnight Library appear through Nora Seed's personal growth and transformation. This personal growth reflects core feminist principles such as self-acceptance, independence, and the dismantling of social scripts (Sara Ahmed, 2010). Her journey reflects the main ideas of feminism, such as self-acceptance, equality, independence, emotional

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strength, and breaking free from social expectations. Nora's experiences show how women can find their true selves by listening to their own voices instead of living to please others. Each stage of Nora's heroine's journey shows an important feminist message that teaches women to value themselves and their choices.

4.4 Self-Discovery and Self-Acceptance

At the beginning of the story, Nora feels lost, depressed, and full of regret. She believes her life has no meaning because she always compares herself to others and tries to meet other people's expectations. This represents how women are often pressured by society to be perfect to succeed to look a certain way or to make others happy. Through her experiences in the Midnight Library, Nora learns that her value does not depend on her achievements or other people's opinions.

4.5 Emotional Strength and Healing

Many societies believe that showing emotions makes women weak, but Nora's story proves the opposite. Her healing process begins when she allows herself to feel pain, regret, love, and hope. She becomes stronger when she stops hiding her emotions and starts accepting them. This reflects feminist thought that emotional honesty is not a weakness but a source of wisdom. (Susan Brison, 2002) states that "the ability to tell one's story and to feel the full weight of one's emotions is not a sign of fragility, but the very foundation of reclaiming a battered self."

CONCLUSION

From the analysis, the writer finds there are two main points can be shown in this study, the heroine's journey and the feminism values. The heroine's journey in The Midnight Library shows Nora Seed's emotional and spiritual transformation as she moves through the ten stages of Maureen Murdock's cycle. Nora begins by separating from her feminine side and trying to follow society's standards of success. Through the different lives she experiences in the Midnight Library, Nora faces her regrets, fears, and broken dreams. These moments guide her through trials, crisis, and finally healing. At the end, Nora reaches balance and wholeness when she accepts both her strengths and weaknesses.

The second finding is the feminism values reflected in Nora's journey. These values appear in her process of self-acceptance, emotional strength, independence, and the ability to make her own choices. Nora learns that she does not need to be perfect or follow other people's expectations to have value. She discovers that showing emotions is not a sign of weakness, but a sign of honesty and courage. Her forgiveness toward her parents, her decision to accept her life, and her choice to live for herself all show strong feminist ideas about freedom, equality, and self-worth.

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