

# CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION

This chapter describes the background of the study, research question, aims of the study, the scope of the study, significance of the study, research method, research procedure, clarification of terms, and the organization of the paper.

### 1.1 Background of the Study

Many people, including adolescents, find pleasure in reading literary works, especially novels. A novel, as a literary genre, is distinct from other literary genres because it is structured through certain features, such as plot, characterization, and narrative point of view. Thus, it is apparent that through reading a novel, readers will be able to understand a particular phenomenon that is depicted in it. One of the most popular young adult novels in the United States is *A Walk to Remember*, which was written by Nicholas Sparks, published in 1999. Narrated by the main character himself, the novel generally tells about a young adult named Landon Carter, aged 17, whose life changes after encountering Jamie Sullivan, a daughter of the priest in the town he lives in. An interesting aspect about the novel that seems to attract many young adult readers is the growth experienced by the main character, Landon Carter, from being an immature person to becoming a more mature person. Considering that readers can learn a way to self-develop from Landon Carter's characterization in *A Walk to Remember*, the book is then particularly chosen for this study. *A Walk to*

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*Remember*, moreover, is also a best-selling novel which is already made into a Hollywood blockbuster movie.

In the beginning of the novel, Landon is shown as an immature person. This is evident in the way he humiliates the reverend to seek for gratification and attention from people around him and how he is very easily influenced by other people as well. Later on in the novel, however, Landon as a character gradually evolves after falling in love with Jamie Sullivan, a girl who is later revealed to be suffering from leukemia. This is an event that some define as an ‘epiphany’ for Landon, which is an extraordinary event that changes his life. Falling in love with Sullivan leads Landon to do many things that he never does before when he still acts like an immature person. In general, this case shows that Landon Carter as a character evolves into becoming a more mature man throughout the story. Encountering a significant other, which in this case is Jamie, may be a significant event for Landon to grow to become a mature man. However, Jamie may not be the only factor that helps Landon evolve as a character because his family, his environment, and even Landon himself can serve as supporting factors as well.

Reflecting on Landon’s journey throughout the story, it may be accurate to state that there is a case of a journey to maturity in *A Walk to Remember*. Maturity, in this case, may be identified through the attitude of caring more about other people than about themselves (Allport, 1961). Alexander (1967), moreover, designates maturity as a phase of personality development which corresponds to biological and psychological maturation. A person is said to be psychologically mature after they reach a certain level of intelligence and emotional outlook. In the context of the **Adisti Khairunnisa, 2018**

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novel, the emotional development of Landon can be seen in the way he always tries to make his significant other Jamie happy, including making the big decision to marry her.

As one of the most popular young adult novels, *A Walk to Remember* in a way reflects common themes and values of most young adult literature. Patty Campbell (In Nilsen & Donelson, 2008) suggests that the central theme of YA fiction concerned with becoming an adult and finding the answer to the question “Who am I and what am I going to do about it?”. She further states that no matter what events may be going on in the book, answering that particular question is actually what the book is mostly about. In the climactic moment of the book, then, the resolution of the external conflict tends to lead to the protagonist's realization, which eventually helps shape an adult identity.

As an example of young adult books, it is apparent that *A Walk to Remember* also has a young adult character, named Landon Carter, at the center of the learning experience (Bean & Moni, 2003). The main premise of the book is to present a story that adolescent readers can relate to and learn something from. By reading the book, it is expected that its young readers may find out how the story can move them and reveal to them different perspectives on certain issues. In this book, perspectives on maturing process become crucial aspects of knowledge that young adults can obtain from reading it.

Furthermore, although it may seem quite simple, the theme of maturity in the book is actually more complex than what it seems. Even though Landon's journey to maturity is mainly influenced by a significant other, throughout the process, he

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actually deals with more complex issues, such as religious beliefs, masculinity, and even systemic bullying. Such phenomena may appear because according to Manning (2009), contemporary young adult literature have matured, in which authors have begun to incorporate more complex characters, subjects, and situations into the book (Cart, 2001).

Many previous studies on this particular literary work have provided knowledge by previous researchers across different academic fields. In the field of psychology, for instance, previous studies have observed the psychological aspect of ‘teen romances’ in this particular young adult book (Dickson, 2001). Meanwhile, others have pointed out how diseases serve as metaphorical implications of romanticized illness in the book (Bey, 2017). Aside from that, in the field of cultural studies, *A Walk to Remember* has also been observed as an object of reader responses to reflect a high school female student’s negotiation of cultural models acquired and explored through participation in social, cultural, family, and text worlds (Thein, 2005). Other studies on the particular field of Young Adult Literature and Maturity can also be found in Stoffel (2015) and Fajarrani (2013). Stoffel (2015), in this case, focuses on three novels which depict the struggles of teenagers who seek to find their own identity through an interaction with their surroundings. The three books are *A Long Way Gone*, *The Breadwinner* and *Tree Girl*, and they are quite distinct in that they take place in various geographic locations and periods and display the struggle of teenagers at times of social unrest. Fajarrani (2013), on the other hand, observes the issue of coming of age in Ellen Hopkins’ Young Adult novel *Crank*. As a result, coming of age issue in the book shows a process of adolescents shifting from immaturity to maturity. However, none of these studies specifically focus on the journey to maturity experienced by Landon in *A Walk to Remember*.

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Based on this, it can be concluded that the previous studies on *A Walk to Remember* seem to have not yet related the findings regarding Landon or Jamie's characterization with the process of maturity. Furthermore, previous studies on maturity which use literary elements as their analytical tools have yet to examine this particular novel. Therefore, this study will then primarily focus on the journey to maturity experienced by Landon in *A Walk to Remember*.

## **1.2 Research Question**

To guide this research, in accordance with the purpose of the research mentioned above, there is a specific question that is raised for this research. The question is:

How is Landon Carter's journey to maturity depicted in *A Walk to Remember*?

## **1.3 Aims of the Study**

This research aims to examine how Landon Carter's journey to maturity is depicted in *A Walk to Remember* by analyzing the literary elements that construct it. The examination of Landon Carter's journey to maturity is conducted within the theory of maturity by Allport (1961) and young adult literature by Bean and Moni (2003) to describe the characterization of Landon Carter throughout his journey from being immature to becoming mature.

## **1.4 The Scope of the Study**

This research examines the personality changes experienced by the main character, Landon Carter, in the novel *A Walk to Remember* by Nicholas Sparks. The

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change here is mainly indicated by how the character grows from being an immature person to becoming a more mature person with some events in the book. Therefore, the analysis in this study is limited to Landon Carter's change of attitude, speech, and way of thinking, while other external aspects are briefly discussed to support the analysis.

### **1.5 Significance of the Study**

A fictional character in a literary work is constructed by an author in certain ways so that he or she may leave a distinct impression for the readers. This research, then, is expected to be able to show readers the exploration of a moral value that can be obtained from the literary work that they read with different perspective. A man who proclaims himself as a bad boy, for instance, can evolve into a more mature man when certain aspects appear in his life.

### **1.6 Research Method**

This research is conducted by using a textual analysis method. This method is chosen because it corresponds with the aim of the research, which is to examine the nature of Landon Carter as a character, who changes from being an immature person to becoming a more mature person. Framed by the theory of maturity by Allport (1967), this research analyzes the literary elements which are used to construct Landon's journey to maturity. To enhance the analysis, the theory of young adult literature by Bean and Moni (2003) is also employed to discuss there are other moral

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values that can be obtained by young adult readers if they use different perspectives while reading Landon's journey to maturity.

### **1.7 Research Procedures**

The data for this study are collected from *A Walk to Remember* (1999), a young adult novel written by Nicholas Sparks. Several excerpts in the novel that show Landon's characterization as an immature person and his process of achieving maturity are chosen as the data for this study. The data are collected through performing a close reading of the novel. The first step of close reading in this study is to understand the whole story and decide which character will be the focus of the study. Then, several excerpts which contain types of immaturity and maturity are highlighted. The next step is to discover certain literary elements that construct the journey to maturity experienced by the main character, Landon Carter. After that, the researcher takes notes of the possible explanations behind Landon's immaturity or maturity by focusing on four main aspects. These four aspects are the character himself, other characters in the novel, specific circumstances in the novel that indicate the character's transition from being immature to becoming mature, and specific conversations that lead to the character's maturity.

The next step is analyzing the data. First, the writer analyzes the types of immaturity and maturity shown by Landon Carter by using Allport's (1961) theory of maturity. Then, the writer analyzes the journey to maturity experienced by Landon from being an immature person to becoming a more mature person by analyzing certain events and characterization which support his change of personality. After that, the analyzed data are presented in form of tables which consist of three columns. Finally, the analyses are evaluated by interpreting and discussing the findings. The

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discussion in this study relates Landon's journey to maturity to Bean and Moni's theory (2000) on how young adult readers can gain a moral value from phenomena depicted in young adult novels with different perspective by the readers.

### **1.8 Clarifications of Terms**

There are several key terms in this research:

1. First, young adult literature is defined by Bean and Moni (2003) as works of literature intended for readers between the ages of 12 and 20 which offer different perspectives to adolescent readers and allow them to explore the text and learn from the events described in it.
2. Second, maturity is defined by Alexander (1967) as a person that is psychologically mature; this is achieved when he or she has reached a certain level of intelligence and emotional outlook.
3. Third, immaturity, as defined by Allport (1961), refers to traits of a person who cannot control his/her emotion, is self-absorbed, and pursues goals that are unrealistic.
4. Fourth, according to Roberts and Jacobs (2004) literary elements is common intrinsic elements in many literary works which consist of character, plot, structure, and theme.

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5. Fifth, the readers in the study refer to the young adult readers of *A Walk to Remember* who may have a role in delivering the impression towards Landon Carter's characterization as an immature person.
6. Lastly, journey, as defined by Brown and Friederwitzer (2012) in the context of literature, refers to personal growth or the process of overcoming unimaginable odds.

## **1.9 Organization of the Study**

The study is organized into five chapters, which are as follows:

### 1) Chapter I: Introduction

This chapter includes background of the study, research question, aims of the study, the scope of the study, significance of the study, research method, research procedures, clarification of terms, and the organization of this paper.

### 2) Chapter II: Literature Review

This chapter discusses the theories used as the framework in the study. It includes the theories of young adult literature, maturity, journey, and literary elements. Related previous studies and synopsis of the novel are also presented in this chapter.

### 3) Chapter III: Methodology

This chapter mainly consists of purpose of the research, data source, research design, research methods, data collection and analysis.

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4) Chapter IV: Findings and Discussion

This chapter describes the analysis, findings and discussion of this study. The findings will be explained in details and the discussion of the data will also be presented in this chapter.

5) Chapter V: Conclusions and Suggestions

This chapter presents the conclusion of the study which is based on the findings and discussions in Chapter IV. This chapter also presents suggestions for further study on textual analysis.

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