Brightbill's Character Development in The Wild Robot (2024): A Three-Dimensional, Plot, and Self-Determination Analysis

Hana Syaffa Azzahra[1], Wahyu Budi [2]

Fakultas Bisnis dan Ilmu Sosial Program Studi S1 Sastra Inggris Universitas Dian Nusantara Jakarta[1,2]

Corresponding Author's Email: 311211048@mahasiswa.undira.ac.id

ABSTRACT

This research explores the character development of a major character in The Wild Robot movie (2024), Brightbill, a Canada goose. Brightbill as a major character is depicted as a weak and dependent figure until finally over time he learns to live like a normal Canada goose and transcend against his own weaknesses. The method used in this research is the qualitative method. Using Lajos' theory to describe the character of Brightbill's, and William Kenney's theoretical framework to explores Brightbill's character, characterization, and character development through the narrative, also Ryan and Deci's to reveal the factors of character development in the story. The result of this research is to show the growth and transformation in the characters throughout the storyline that make the characters better than before in the end. Beside this research contains many moral values to the audience, therefore, Brightbill's character development in The Wild Robot movie (2024) reflects a complex and emotional journey from fear and withdrawal to acceptance and courage. This transformation is not only a story of self struggle, but also illustrates how Brightbill's character development is shaped through choices and conflicts."

Keywords: The Wild Robot, Brightbill, character development, movie, animation.

How to Cite:

Azzahra, H. S., & Budi , W. (2026 Brightbill's Character Development in The Wild Robot (2024): A Three-Dimensional, Plot, and Self-Determination Analysis. Jurnal Ilmu Sosial Dan Humaniora, 2(1), 691-698. https://doi.org/10.63822/anygvw12.

INTRODUCTION

Film is an essential part of modern society, serving not only as entertainment but also as a medium for conveying information and messages. As a narrative medium, film combines audio-visual elements, such as dialogue, characters, and plot, to convey meaning effectively. According to Stam (2004), film is also part of literary works because it shares similarities with literary texts in narrative structure, character development, and storytelling. Films are classified into various genres, such as horror, musicals, and science fiction. Conceptually, films are divided into three types: documentary, animated, and experimental (Bordwell, 2010).

According to Wells (1998), animation is a visual medium that brings static images to life through the illusion of movement and allows for transformations of form, space, and character. In terms of genre, animated films have similarities with conventional films, as stated by Bordwell (2010). Animation is also capable of representing emotions, ideas, and character development that are difficult to realize realistically in live action films. Although often associated with entertainment, Furniss (2007) states that animation can convey moral, social, and emotional messages effectively. Therefore, the function of animated movies not only for entertainment, but also as a narrative medium that is able to convey meaning and messages in depth.

DreamWorks Animation is an animation studio from the United States that has an important role in the development of the modern animation industry. Some of the popular movies produced by DreamWorks Animation, such as: *Kung Fu Panda*, *Madagascar*, *Shrek*, *The Wild Robot*, and so on. Besides being entertaining, several DreamWorks movies contain fable elements that convey moral messages. According to Abrams and Harpham (2015, 11th ed.), fables convey moral lessons about human behavior, often bring messages at the end of the story. Therefore, animated films become an effective medium for conveying moral values and reflecting human behavior through engaging and communicative characters.

DreamWorks Animation produced an animation movie that contains fable elements, *The Wild Robot* (2024), directed by Chris Sanders with a duration of 1 hour and 24 minutes. This animated movie carries several genres, such as adventure, science fiction, family and displays technological elements. The combination of fable and technology in *The Wild Robot* movie has similarities to *Zootopia* and *WALL-E* which shows the harmony between nature and technology. The visual aspect strengthens the themes of adaptation and survival. *The Wild Robot* (2024) movie tells the story of a robot named Roz who is stranded on a wild island and accidentally ends up caring for a baby goose, Brightbill, who has lost its mother and becomes a key part of the narrative.

The character of Brightbill in *The Wild Robot* (2024) is interesting to study because it shows dynamic character development influenced by various internal and external factors, including challenges, social interactions, and adaptation processes that shape his growth. To examine this phenomenon, this study uses Three Dimensional Character theory to analyze how Brightbill's character is portrayed, fiction theory to examine character development through plot elements, and Self Determination theory to understand the internal motivations behind his actions and choices. Through this approach, this study seeks to uncover Brightbill's character development in more depth and is expected to provide a comprehensive understanding of character development in animated films as a representation of the process of individual growth.

METHODS OF RESEARCH

Research Design

The research design section contains explanations and descriptions of the strategies and plans used by researchers in collecting data and analyzing it. After collecting it, researchers will conduct an analysis so that a data conclusion can be created to answer research questions. This research design is used to help achieve the research objectives that have been set. The research process will run in a structured and efficient manner if the research design is well prepared. With this research design, the results obtained can be accounted for. The research design also contains a discussion of the approach method. The chosen approach method is to use a qualitative approach method because in previous studies with the same topic, character development, they also used this method. In qualitative research, the object of research becomes the main focus to be studied and can also be analyzed more deeply. According to Cresswell in the book *Research Design* (5th edition, 2018) stated qualitative methods rely on text and image data, have unique steps in data analysis, and draw on diverse designs. Qualitative research involves collecting and analyzing non-numerical data (e.g., text, video, or audio) to understand concepts, opinions, or experiences. This method allows researchers to explore the meaning behind the phenomenon being studied in more depth. Thus, qualitative research is very suitable for studying contextual and complex issues (with various factors that can influence).

Source of Data

The source of data in this research is divided into two categories, there are primary data and secondary data, as follow:

1. Primary Data

    The main source of data in this research is *The Wild Robot* movie (2024).

2. Secondary Data

    The secondary data in this research to strengthen the analysis. Secondary data here as supporting data were also collected from literary theory books used and relevant to this study, research journals related to the character development, journals related to the three dimensional aspect, journals related to the self determination and relevant online sources which are related to this research.

Technique of Collecting Data

Technique of Collecting Data in this research uses documentation techniques, a data collection method carried out by collecting, reviewing, and analyzing written, visual, or audio on the object of research (Brightbill).

Technique of Analyzing Data

Here are some things that can be used to analyze data:

1. Choose the Source of Data. Researchers chose *The Wild Robot* movie (2024) as the primary source because this movie explicitly displays Brightbill's journey in his character development process.
2. Watch. The second step to collecting data is to watch the movie. Focus on the selected character (Brightbill) and pay attention to each storyline to gain a thorough understanding of Brightbill's character and the conflicts that affect Brightbill's character development. Then the researcher observes what factors cause the conflict. Furthermore, the researcher studies whether there are other

driving factors that cause character changes. If there are several things related to the theme of this research, the researcher will note them down so that they can be included in the research journal.

3. Re-Watch. The next step is that the researcher re-watches the movie several times. This is useful if there are points and things that are missed, then the researcher can immediately add these points to the notes and ensure all the things needed are fulfilled for the discussion of this research journal.

4. Identify. The other step is to identify the key points for discussion in this study. These points will be explored in depth by the researcher so that the discussion becomes weighty. The author's identification is carried out in a qualitative approach, including the following:

   a. Observation. It can be done by analyzing more deeply to find clues about the character to be studied by understanding the body language and facial expressions, actions or behaviors, interactions with other characters, visual narratives (setting, visual style – fragile to be strong, camera movement), and also the storyline. Data collection through observation tends to be more detailed and focused on each situation that occurs in the storyline.

   b. Dialogue Analysis. Dialogue analysis is done by collecting supporting data based on how the characters speak and respond to a topic or dialogue. The data is collected and will be attached as evidence to support the research material.

   c. Action Analysis. Action analysis is carried out by observing key scenes that show the stages of Brightbill's character development (fear, escape, self acceptance, self change) are identified and sorted for further analysis.

   d. Analysis Visual. Collecting data by analyzing the movie through its visual appearance. In this case, visual analysis can be done by analyzing the depiction of the appearance of Brightbill's character.

   e. Data Organization. In this identification, all data that has been collected, both in the form of dialogue and scene descriptions, is then classified into several thematic categories such as: internal conflict, self-identity, and character transformation.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

This section provides an in-depth explanation of Brightbill's character development in the animated movie *The Wild Robot* (2024) based on the Results. The research results were obtained through an analysis of the three dimensional character from Lagos, analysis of the plot and character structure based on William Kenney's theory and the application of the Self Determination theory proposed by Ryan and Deci. The discussion focuses on how Brightbill's character development is displayed gradually through a series of narrative events, conflicts, challenges, and interactions with the surrounding environment, which contribute to changes in the character's attitudes, behavior, and roles in the storyline. Further explanation will be outlined in the following discussion.

Three Dimensional Character

This section discusses Brightbill's character in *The Wild Robot* (2024) by applying Lajos's three-dimensional character theory, which includes physiological, sociological, and psychological aspects. At the beginning of the story, physiologically Brightbill is portrayed as a small and weak gosling with limited physical strength. Sociologically, he is initially isolated and often ostracized by the goose flock because he is raised by a robot and grows up in an unusual social environment, making it difficult for him to adapt and

be accepted. Psychologically, he is depicted as an innocent, curious, anxious, and dependent character. As the story progresses, these aspects develop significantly. Although his body posture remains small, Brightbill becomes physically stronger through continuous training in swimming and flying. In sociological terms, his position changes from being marginalized to being trusted as the leader of the flock during migration, which marks his full acceptance within the community. Psychologically, he grows into a confident and independent individual who is able to control his fear and take responsibility. Overall, the three-dimensional analysis shows that Brightbill's character develops from physical weakness, social isolation, and emotional dependence into a figure marked by physical capability, social recognition, and psychological maturity.

Character Development Through Plot

Brightbill's character development in *The Wild Robot* (2024) is revealed through the plot structure, showing gradual changes from the beginning to the end of the story. At the beginning stage, specifically at the exposition, Brightbill first appears as a newly hatched gosling who fully depends on Roz, and no character development is visible yet. In the middle stage, the conflict begins when Brightbill is required to master essential survival abilities, namely learning how to eat, swim, and fly. During this process, he experiences several failures, such as being unable to recognize his food, struggling in the water, and failing in his early attempts to fly, as well as facing social challenges when he feels different and is not fully accepted by the flock. However, with guidance and support from Roz and Fink, he gradually improves and begins to master these abilities. The climax occurs when Brightbill successfully joins the migration and is eventually trusted to lead the flock during the journey. In the final stage, he returns to the island with his flock, showing that he has fully developed by mastering basic survival skills and gaining acceptance within his social environment. Through these stages, Brightbill can be identified as a complex character shaped by continuous growth and significant development throughout the story.

Factor Influencing Character Development

Brightbill's character development in *The Wild Robot* (2024) is influenced by key aspects of Self Determination Theory: relatedness, competence, and autonomy. It reflected through factors such as support from significant relationships, social and environmental challenges, internal motivation, and independent decision-making. Relatedness appears through Roz and Fink's emotional support and guidance as Brightbill learns survival skills. Competence develops through social pressure and environmental challenges that push him to master abilities like eating, swimming, and flying, and to gain acceptance from the flock. His internal motivation strengthens both competence and autonomy as he overcomes fear and builds confidence. This process ultimately leads to autonomy, shown in his ability to make independent decisions and take responsibility, especially as a leader. Overall, these aspects shape him into a more capable, confident, and independent character.

CONCLUSION

In this research, the writer focuses on the study of Brightbill's character development as the major character in *The Wild Robot* movie (2024). *The Wild Robot* is an animated movie produced by DreamWorks Animation and directed by Chris Sanders. This movie presents meaningful messages about growth, independence, and social relationships through its major character. Therefore, Brightbill's

character becomes an interesting subject for literary analysis. Furthermore, the writer formulates three research questions to analyze character portrayed, character development, and the factors that influence the development.

The first part, the writer discusses about how Brightbill's character described in *The Wild Robot* movie (2024). In this section, the reader can learn through physiological, psychological and sociological aspect that Brightbill's physically as a small and weak figure then by psychological he is depicted as an innocent and dependent character so that he feels anxious when he faces his challenges. Also, from sociological he is often ostracized because considered weird by his environment. So, we can see how the character depicted, either from how the character see themselves, or from how other character see them. The second part, the writer discusses about the development of Brightbill's character through the plot which shows the process of his transformation from a weak character to being more independent and brave in facing various challenges. The third part, the writer discusses about the factors that bring Brightbill's developed, such as the aspects of relatedness, competence, and autonomy play an important role in shaping Brightbill's motivation and personality.

SUGGESTION

Based on the conclusion, the writer suggested to the future researchers conduct deeper and more comprehensive studies on character development, especially in animated movies by applying the various literary theories for every research question. Further research may combine psychological, sociological, and motivational theories to obtain a richer analysis of character transformation. In addition, future studies are suggested to explore other character in *The Wild Robot* movie or similar animated movies in order to compare different patterns of character development. For students and readers, this research is expected to increase understanding of how literary works, especially animated movies, convey meaningful values related to growth, independence, and social relationships. Moreover, this study can be used as a reference for further literary research, particularly in analyzing character development through plot and motivation.

REFERENCE

Abrams, M.H. (1981). *A Glossary of Literary Terms*. Holt, Rinehart and Winston. Abrar, M. (2016). *Learning from Fables: Moral Values in Three Selected EnglishvStories*. Dinamika Ilmu, 16(1), 2. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/305712762_Learning_from_Fables_M oral_Values_in_Three_Selected_English_Stories

Achmad, R. I. A., Langit, P. B., Aji, G. G., Dimisyqiyani, E., & Sinulingga, R. A. (2026). *Representasi Motivasi Intrinsik dalam Meraih Mimpi Karakter Don pada Film Jumbo (2025)*. IKRA-ITH HUMANIORA: Jurnal Sosial dan Humaniora, 10(1), 171-179.

Animalia. (n.d.). *Canada Goose*. https://animalia.bio/canada-goose

Aristotle; Butcher, S., H. (1895). *The Poetics of Aristotle*. Macmillan and Co.

Asmawati, N. (2016). *Maleficent's Character Development As Seen In Maleficent Movie* (Doctoral dissertation, UIN SUNAN KALIJAGA YOGYAKARTA).

Bennett, A. and Royle, N. (2004). *An Introduction to Literature, Criticism and Theory*. Pearson Education.

Creswell, J., W. & Creswell, J., D. (2018). *Research Design* (5th ed.). SAGE Publications Ltd.

Dewi, N. K. S., Soethama, P. L., & Mulyawan, I. W. (2021). *The analysis of the main character through three-dimensional aspect and characterization in the novel The Namesake by Jhumpa Lahiri*. Journal of English Studies, 5(2), 45–58.

Egri, L. (1946). *The art of dramatic writing*. Simon & Schuster.

Empawi, A. A., Sada, C., & Rahmani, E. F. (2024). *An Intrinsic Motivation Analysis of the Main Character in the Joy Movie*. Journal of Scientific Research, Education, and Technology (JSRET), 3(1), 374-386.

Fink, Arlene (2005). *Conducting Research Literature Reviews: From the Internet to Paper* (2nd ed.). SAGE Publications.

Fink, Arlene (2014). *Conducting Research Literature Reviews: From the Internet to Paper* (4th ed.). SAGE Publications.

Fitria, D. R., Rusmana, D., & Yatmikasari, I. (2025). *Roz's emotional growth through mood system analysis in The Wild Robot movie*. Leksika: Jurnal Bahasa, Sastra dan Pengajarannya, 19(1), 35-45. https://jurnalnasional.ump.ac.id/index.php/LEKSIKA/article/view/25583

Forster, E.M. (1927). *Aspects of The Novel*. Harcourt, Brace and Company.

Habriani, N. M., Putri, I. G. A. V. W., & Winarta, I. G. N. (2022*). Stella Grant and Will Newman's character development throughout a movie entitled Five Feet Apart*. ELYSIAN JOURNAL: English Literature, Linguistics and Translation Studies, 2(1), 33-46.

Kenan, S., R. (2002). *Narrative Fiction: Contemporary Poetics*. Routledge.

Kennedy, X. J., & Gioia, D. (2007). *Literature: An Introduction to Fiction, Poetry, Drama*. New York: Pearson Longman.

Kenney, William. (1966). *How to Analyze Fiction*. Monarch Press.

Manshur, F., M. (2023). *The Function of Fables for Early Children's Character Education*. Scientific Research and Community: Journal of Media &

Management, 5(5). https://www.researchgate.net/publication/375113898_The_Function_of_Fables_for_Early_Children's_Character_Education

Parida, F., Saragih, A., & Gafari, M.O. (2019). *The Development of Teaching Material in Writing Fable Story Text with Children's Film Assistance for Grade VII in Junior High School 6 Tambusai Utara Rokan Hulu Riau, 2018/2019*. Budapest International Research and Critics in Linguistics and Education (BirLE) Journal, 2(3), 3. https://pdfs.semanticscholar.org/728e/490a32740a009fee847660bc86f7912367e 1.pdf

Permana, I., G. (2021). *Identity Change of Characters in Gaston Leroux's The Mystery of The Yellow Room*. LITERA KULTURA: Journal of Literary and Cultural Studies, 9(2), 4. https://ejournal.unesa.ac.id/index.php/litera-kultura/article/view/43301/37398

Petrie, D., W. & Boggs, J., M. (2018). *The Art of Watching Films* (9th ed.). McGraw-Hill Education.

Pickering, J., H & Hoeper, J., D. (1962). *Concise Companion to Literature*. Prentice Hall.

Putri, Cindy. (2017). *The Characterization of The Main Character in Gone Girl Film* [Skripsi, Universitas Negeri Medan]. Media Neliti. https://media.neliti.com/media/publications/146117-EN-the-characterization-of-t he-main-charact.pdf

Rahmah, A., A., Mustofa, M., Nisa, I. (2021*). An Analysis of The Characterization of The Characters in Short Movie Entitled IBU*. British: Jurnal Bahasa dan Sastra Inggris, 10(2), 1. https://journal.umgo.ac.id/index.php/British/article/view/823/605

Rasyid, A., N. (2018). *Characterization in the "Suicide Squad" Movie* [Skripsi, Universitas Islam Negeri Alauddin Makassar]. Repositori UIN Alauddin. https://repositori.uin-alauddin.ac.id/14667/1/A.%20Nurcahyadi%20Rasyid.pdf

Roberts, E., V. (2008). *Literature An Introduction to Reading and Writing* (4th ed.).
Pearson Prentice Hall.

Ryan, R. M., & Deci, E. L. (2017). *Self-determination theory: Basic psychological needs in motivation, development, and wellness*. Guilford Press.

Sardiana, G. K. L., Utami, N. M. V., & Ariyaningsih, N. N. D. (2024). *A Study on Development of Main Character and Characterization in "Bohemian Rhapsody" Movie*. ELYSIAN JOURNAL: English Literature, Linguistics and Translation Studies, 4(1), 93-103.

Seger, Linda. (1990). *Creating Unforgettable Characters*. Henry Holt and Company, LLC.

Seger, Linda. (2010). *Making A Good Script Great* (3rd ed.). Silman-James Press.

University of Southern California Libraries. (2018). *The literature review: Organizing your social sciences research paper*. LibGuides. https://libguides.usc.edu/writingguide/literaturereview

Vitrina. (2024, Juli). *DreamWorks Animation: Revolutionizing Animated Storytelling*. Diakses dari https://vitrina.ai/blog/dreamworks-animation-impact-animated-entertainment/ Wellek, R., & Warren., A. (1948). *Theory of Literature*. Jonathan Cape.

Wells, Paul. (1998). *Understanding Animation* (1st ed.). Routledge.

Yudistira, G. T., Winarta, I. B. G. N., & Permana, I. P. A. (2023). *An Analysis of Characterization of Main Character in the Up 2009 Movie by Pete Docter*. Elysian Journal: English Literature, Linguistics and Translation Studies, 3(3), 167-176.

Yuniarti. (2022*). An Analysis of Characterization Through The Main Character in Mary and Max (2009) Movie* [Skripsi, Universitas Islam Sultan Agung].
UNISSULA Repository. http://repository.unissula.ac.id/27855/1/30801500238_fullpdf.pdf