

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

This chapter consists of the background of study, identification of problem, scope of the study, statements of the problem, objectives of the study, significances of research, and sequence of writing.

#### 1.1 Background of Study

The Victorian Era, from 1837 to 1901, coincided with the reign of Queen Victoria, and is known as one of the most socially, politically and culturally productive periods in the history of Britain. It is also the time when Britain intensified her colonization due to the industry boom and the British middle class. With the increase of industries and factories, the working class became more divided, and there was more emphasis placed on morality, strict social order, and public virtue. Those ideals that dictated what was greatly acceptable behavior were strongly supported by religious and cultural institutions which regarded emotional repression and social organization as hallmarks of virtue.

However, beneath this structured and seemingly stable society, there were unresolved tensions. Class inequality, strict gender roles, and personal repression often went unspoken, contributing to a culture where appearance was prioritized over authenticity, and public conformity was valued more than individual freedom. This climate of cultural repression created inner conflict among individuals who found it difficult to reconcile their personal desires and identities with the rigid norms imposed by society. The Victorian era, while upholding order, paradoxically gave rise to psychological instability in individuals who were expected to perform perfection but often felt disconnected from their authentic selves.

Although existentialism as a formal philosophy had not yet emerged during the Victorian period, many of its core concerns—such as alienation, the tension between appearance and reality, as well as the search for authentic existence—were already present in the lived experiences of people. These existential tensions were closely tied to the psychological struggles of individuals navigating the complexities of Victorian life. In parallel, the late 19th century also marked the emergence of modern psychology as a scientific field. Thinkers such as Sigmund Freud began to examine the unconscious mind, repression, and the role of inner conflict in shaping behavior. The convergence of existential disorientation and psychological inquiry opened new ways to understand the human experience—especially in literature that explored the contradiction between public morality and private desires.



*of Dorian Gray* is a compelling literary work that reflects the complexities of the Victorian era, while also offering a rich portrayal of the struggle. The novel centers on Dorian Gray, a young man who, to preserve his physical beauty eternally, begins to live a life of emotional detachment. As Dorian remains outwardly youthful, his inner self is consumed by the public eye—absorbs the physical effects of his sins and

age, symbolizing the moral corruption of his soul. His journey from innocence to decay illustrates a deep existential crisis: he seeks to escape time, responsibility, and authenticity, but ultimately confronts the emptiness within himself.

Dorian's descent is shaped by the competing influences of two key characters: Lord Henry Wotton and Basil Hallward. Lord Henry, with his provocative views on beauty, sensation, and personal freedom, encourages Dorian to reject conventional morality and pursue aestheticism. His philosophy glorifies pleasure and detachment from consequence, seducing Dorian into a lifestyle of hedonism. On the other hand, Basil Hallward, the painter of Dorian's portrait, represents sincerity, conscience, and artistic idealism. He views Dorian as a symbol of purity and is deeply emotionally invested in him. While Lord Henry draws Dorian toward external indulgence, Basil appeals to his inner sense of morality—thus creating a psychological tension that lies at the heart of the novel.

Structurally, the novel presents this conflict through three movements: Dorian's initial innocence and wish for eternal youth, his gradual immersion in a life of aestheticism and vice, and finally, his psychological unraveling and moral reckoning. The deterioration of the portrait functions as a powerful metaphor for Dorian's fragmented identity and existential despair.

Motivated by this tension between moral appearance and inner psychological conflict, the researcher became interested in examining the existential and psychological journey of the central character, Dorian Gray. This study focuses on how his moral disintegration and identity crisis are shaped by the dual influence of Lord Henry and Basil Hallward—figures who represent opposing worldviews regarding beauty, life, and responsibility. The analysis draws on Rollo May's existential psychology, which emphasizes the importance of freedom, anxiety, and the necessity of choosing one's authentic path in life. May's concept of existential anxiety is particularly relevant to understanding Dorian's inner conflict as he navigates guilt, alienation, and the denial of his true self.

Although *The Picture of Dorian Gray* has been widely analyzed from aesthetic, moral, and psychoanalytic perspectives, there remains a gap in exploring how existential dynamics unfold through the psychological interactions between Dorian and the two key figures in his life. Therefore, this study seeks to fill that gap by applying Rollo May's existential framework to analyze Dorian's existential journey.

## 1.2 Identification of the problem

In this research focuses on the structural aspect of the novel by analyzing its intrinsic elements, especially those related to the theme of existence as reflected in an Gray. The analysis emphasizes his existential journey using gy theory as the main theoretical framework. After reading *The y*, the writer identified several psychological and philosophical rian's inner struggles and search for identity that are relevant to existential perspective. These issues are identified as follows: tion of existential psychology experienced by Dorian Gray the Novel



2. The nature of Dorian Gray's existential psychological struggles
3. The impact of internal and external focus on how these reflections of existential concepts ultimately shape Dorian Gray's existential fate in the novel.

### 1.3 Scope of Problem

According to the Identification of the Study, the writer focuses on analyzes the existential journey of the character Dorian Gray into the novel. the primary theoretical lens for this analysis will used Rollo May's existential psychology. the scope of this study is delimited by several points, first, it exclusively uses Oscar Wilde's novel, *The Picture of Dorian Gray*. The analysis will concentrate solely on Dorian Gray, examining his internal struggles, decisions, and development throughout the narrative. Other characters will only be discussed in relation to their direct influence on Dorian Gray's existential journey. Second, the study is strictly confined to the application of Rollo May's key concepts within existential psychology. specifically, this research will investigate: first, the reflection of Rollo May's key concepts of existential psychology in Dorian Gray's journey throughout the novel. second, the identification and interpretation of Dorian Gray's psychological problems as existential struggles, aligning with May's understanding of existential psychology. and the last is how the reflections of these concepts, influenced by both internal and external forces, shape Dorian Gray's existential fate in the novel.

### 1.4 Research Questions

Based on the scope of problem above, the writer constructs the research questions about this analysis as stated below:

1. How are Rollo May's key concepts of existential psychology reflected in Dorian Gray's journey into the novel?
2. How do the reflections of these concepts shape Dorian Gray's existential fate in the novel?

### 1.5 Objectives of the Study

Related to the research questions, the writer decided the objectives of the research as follows:

1. To analyze how Rollo May's key concepts of existential psychology are reflected in Dorian Gray's journey and experiences throughout the novel.
2. To explain how the reflections of these existential concepts, influenced by various internal and external forces, ultimately shape Dorian Gray's e in the novel.



### Objectives of the Research

opes that, from an academic standpoint, the results of this on as a supplementary source of insight concerning the ach. Specifically, it is expected to provide meaningful

contributions for the student of the English Literature Study Program, Faculty of the Cultural Science of Hasanuddin University that is implied in this research.

This study aims to help students better understand how the structuralism approach can be practically applied in literary analysis. By examining the structures, patterns, and underlying frameworks within a literary text, the research offers a model for how students can critically engage with literature beyond surface-level interpretations. Furthermore, it is anticipated that this research will serve as a reference for future academic work in the field of literary theory and inspire further scholarly exploration using similar analytical frameworks.

### 1.7 Sequence of Writing

This thesis contains five chapters such as introduction, literary review, methodology, analysis, and conclusion. Introduction contains of the background of research, identification of problems, research question, objectives of writing, and sequence of writing. The second chapter explains the literature review which is consisting of previous study, structuralism approach, existential psychology theory, characteristic, and characterization. The third chapter consist of methodology, contains of the methodological design, data sources, technique of data analysis and research procedure. The fourth chapter of analysis consists of the existential on the central character Dorian Gray of the novel *The Picture of Dorian Gray* that occurred in the novel. The final chapter consists of the conclusion and suggestion for the next research.



## CHAPTER II

### LITERATURE REVIEW

The content of this chapter contains the explanation of the literature review of the research, consisting of the previous study, structuralism approach, existential psychological theory, Victorian society's era,

#### 2.1 Previous Study

In terms of review the literature and running the research by analyzing a literary work, the writer uses library research which is for data collecting techniques and in order to increase the qualities of the research. The writer finds some thesis related to this thesis, such as those by Chairunnisa Nurul Qalbi (2024) from Hasanuddin University, and Dina Wahyu Kurniawati (2023) from State University of Surabaya, as well as Senna Perdana Saputra (2018) from Sanata Dharma University, Yogyakarta

First, in a thesis written by Chairunnisa Nurul Qalbi (2024) entitled "*Mask Upon Mask: Analysis of Jung's Archetypes in Wilde's The Picture of Dorian Gray*" the author explores the psychological dimensions of the main character, Dorian Gray through Carl Jung's archetype theory, specifically The Self, The Shadow, The Anima, and The Persona. The study analyzes how each archetype manifests in Dorian's behavior, identity, and psychological development, showing how his character evolves and is shaped by these inner patterns. Through a qualitative descriptive approach, the research reveals that Dorian embodies all four archetypes with different intensities throughout the novel. These archetypes collectively construct a layered psychological profile that emphasizes the interplay between internal drives and external influences.

The writer finds this study relevant to her own research, *Dorian Gray's Existential Journey in Oscar Wilde's The Picture of Dorian Gray: An Analysis through the Lens of Rollo May's Existential Psychology*", as both studies focus on the psychological transformation of the main character. While Qalbi's work centers on universal psychic patterns in Jung's Theory, the writer's research applies Rollo May's existential psychology to highlight Dorian's confrontation with anxiety, freedom, and authenticity. Thus, Qalbi's thesis provides a comparative psychological framework that enriches the understanding of Dorian Gray's inner journey from both archetypal and existential perspectives.

Second, In a thesis written by Dina Wahyu Kurniawati (2023) titled "*Cinta dan Keterasingan Perempuan dalam Novel Layangan Putus Karya Mommy ASF: Eksistensial Rollo May*" presents a qualitative study employing a



approach. This particular study primarily aimed to articulate the man's love, their experience of alienation, and the subsequent on within Mommy ASF's novel *Layangan Putus*, all meticulously : theoretical framework of Rollo May's existential psychology. framework involved diligent data collection through careful ise note-taking, with the subsequent data analysis employing a

four step process: classifying, interpreting, compiling a corpus, and drawing conclusions. The findings of this research revealed the intricate presence of various forms of love, including *sex*, *eros*, *philia*, and *agape*, as experienced by the novel's female character. Furthermore, the study effectively identified alienation as a significant source of loneliness for this character and thoroughly explored the profound impact of this alienation, which notably manifested as *umwelt*, *mitwelt*, and *eigenwelt* guilt.

Kurniawati's study holds considerable relevance for this writer's own research, which is titled "*Dorian Gray's Existential Journey in Oscar Wilde's The Picture of Dorian Gray: An Analysis through the Lens of Rollo May's Existential Psychology*". The fundamental contribution of Kurniawati's work lies in its affirmation of Rollo May's existential psychology as a robust and applicable theoretical framework for literary analysis. This demonstrates its efficacy, particularly in comprehending complex psychological states embedded within fictional characters. Furthermore, the psycho-textual approach meticulously utilized in Kurniawati's research provides a valuable methodological precedent, aligning seamlessly with this writer's intention to conduct a detailed textual analysis to uncover and interpret psychological concepts. Beyond methodological alignment, the study concretely illustrates how specific dimensions of Rollo May's theory, such as the various forms of love and the nuances of guilt, can be effectively employed to explore the profound psychological depth of a character, a central objective in this writer's examination of Dorian Gray.

Third, in a thesis written by Senna Perdana Saputra (2018) titled "*The Effect of Maggie's Unconscious Mind to Maggie's Personality Development in Stephen Crane's Maggie: A Girl of the Streets*", the writer analyzes how the unconscious mind influences the development of the main character's personality. Using a psychoanalytic approach, the study applies Freud's theory of personality structure—including the id, ego, and superego—as well as the theory of dreams. The research focuses on how Maggie's inner conflicts and repressed desires, especially her longing to escape her harsh environment, shape her identity over time. Maggie is portrayed as a girl who initially appears innocent, but eventually becomes a dreamer and a rebellious figure due to the pressures from her family, environment, and internal psychological turmoil. The writer finds this study relevant to the writer's own research titled "*Dorian Gray's Existential Journey in Oscar Wilde's The Picture of Dorian Gray: An Analysis through the Lens of Rollo May's Existential Psychology*". Although Saputra's study relies on Freud's psychoanalysis, while the writer's research applies Rollo May's existential psychology, both studies emphasize the psychological transformation of a character shaped by internal and external pressures. Maggie's



conflicted and ultimately tragic figure mirrors Dorian Gray's; he struggles to maintain a false sense of self. The writer sees on in how both characters confront environments that challenge v their responses—whether unconscious or existential—lead to d loss of authentic being.

analysis of the previous related studies, the writer finds that each utilizes psychological theories such as Jung, Freud, and May to

analyze literary characters. These studies, which examine Dorian Gray's psychological transformation through Jungian archetypes, Maggie's character evolution through Freudian psychoanalysis, and the manifestations of love, alienation, and guilt in the *Layangan Putus* character through May existential psychology, collectively affirm the relevance of psychological literary criticism. They demonstrate how internal dynamics and external pressures shape fictional personalities, providing a robust foundation for this writer's further exploration into a character's inner world.

While the preceding studies offer valuable insights, this writer identifies a significant gap in the comprehensive application of Rollo May's existential psychology, particularly concerning Wilde's novel *The Picture of Dorian Gray*. Qalbi's and Saputra's research, though strong within their respective Jungian and Freudian theory, do not specifically address May's existential concerns. Meanwhile, Kurniawati's study, while employing May's theory, focuses on a different literary work and only a subset of his key concepts.

This writer's research aims to bridge this gap by offering a holistic and in-depth existential analysis of Dorian Gray's journey, exclusively through the lens of Rollo May's psychology. By meticulously applying all seven key points of Rollo May's existential psychology such as Dasein, Anxiety, Freedom and Responsibility, Guilt, Care, Love and Will, Meaning and Meaninglessness, and Destiny, this study will provide a novel and richer understanding of Dorian's psychological transformation. This comprehensive approach not only builds upon existing psychological literary criticism but also, from writer's view, significantly enriches the scholarly discourse surrounding *The Picture of Dorian Gray* with an unprecedented existential perspectives.

## 2.2 Structuralism Approach

In literary theory, structuralism approach is one of general theory that have been applied to the study of literature which relates with structuralist criticism which focused to analyzes literary texts in relation to a broader framework, which could be a specific genre, intertextual associations, a universal narrative structure, or recurring patterns and themes within a system. According to Endraswara (2013), structuralism in literary criticism emphasizes the objective analysis of intrinsic elements by dissecting their relationships and systemic functions within a text. This approach allows critics to uncover the underlying rules that shape the narrative structure and textual meaning. Ferdinand de Saussure as a linguist is pioneered structuralism with his work on language in the early 20th century. His ideas influenced applying



; to analyze literature by emphasizing the underlying structures exts. In research study about structuralism analysis, a literary a structure which containing of inter-related elements. These ad by characters, plot, setting, themes, language style, and , Bal, and Weststeijn (1992) emphasize that a literary work red unity in which each element interrelates to form an internal This internal coherence is the focus of structuralist analysis,

which emphasizes examining how each component contributes to the total structure. According to Wellek and Warren (1989:26), every component within the text plays a distinct role and serves a specific purpose, contributing to the overall structure of the text. Therefore, Structuralism analysis in modern literature enables a more thorough exploration of literary works. It facilitates the discovery of themes, characters, plot, and style in a novel, as well as the examination of interconnected elements in a poem.

According to book entitled *The Elementary Structures of Kinship* (1955) and *Structural Anthropology* (1958), Claude Lévi-Strauss defined structuralism as an approach that focuses on the underlying structures and patterns that shape human societies, culture and thought. Lévi-Strauss viewed structuralism as a method for understanding and interpreting cultural phenomena. He argued that these phenomena are not simply a random collection of elements but are structured according to certain rules and underlying patterns. These structures give rise to meaningful relationships and contribute to the functioning of society and culture. In essence, Lévi-Strauss saw structuralism as a way to uncover the hidden structures and universal patterns that underlie the diversity of human cultures. By examining the structures and relationships within cultural phenomena, structuralists aim to reveal the fundamental principles that govern human thought, behavior, and social organization.

The application of the structuralism approach in literary theory to the intrinsic analysis of fictions involves examining the underlying structures, patterns, and symbolic systems within the text itself. It focuses on elements such as narrative structure, character relationships, symbolism, and thematic motifs.

### 2.2.1 Character and Characterization

The relationship between character and characterization is crucial because how a character is developed and portrayed through effective characterization significantly impacts the reader's understanding and emotional connection to the story. Well-crafted characterization breathes life into characters, making them feel actual and relatable. It allows readers to understand the characters' motivations, desires, conflicts, and struggles, thereby enriching their experience of the narrative.

Through characterization, authors build the foundation for the reader's engagement and emotional investment in the story. Readers become more immersed in the plot when they can relate to or understand the characters' actions and decisions. Characters with depth and complexity resonate with readers, making the literary work more memorable and thought-provoking.

Therefore, character and characterization are inseparable in literary studies.



Characters within the story, while characterization is the art of bringing life through vivid descriptions and meaningful portrayals of their actions and actions. The relationship between character and characterizes the reader's experience, making the narrative more meaningful and impactful.

According to DiYanni (2001, p.55) character is the imagery people that the writers create. The authors make the people in the story based on their fantasy. There are two types of character, there are major character and minor character.

### 1. *Major Character*

DiYanni (2001, p.55) defines major characters as significant figures who play a central role in the story's action. Typically, two characters take the lead in driving the narrative, and one of them is known as the protagonist, who faces conflicts with an antagonist.

In literary works, the major character holds a central and pivotal role in the story. They are the main focus of the narrative and are often involved in the primary conflicts and challenges that drive the plot forward. Major characters are well-developed and undergo significant growth or transformation throughout the story. Several characteristics of major characters seems like as central to the plot, complex and multidimensional, undergo development, face conflicts and challenges, and evoke emotional engagement for the readers from literary works.

### 2. *Minor Character*

Minor characters serve as supporters for the major character, and occasionally, there might be two minor characters. Distinguishing between major and minor characters is relatively straightforward. Major characters hold significant roles and take charge of the story's direction, while minor characters only appear in certain scenes with less importance compared to the major character (DiYanni, 2001, p.55). additionally, according to Arp and Johnson (2005), there are other character types, including flat characters and dynamic characters.

Minor characters are secondary figures in a literary work who do not hold as significant a role as major characters. While they may not be the central focus of the story, they still play important supporting roles, enriching the narrative and contributing to the development of the major characters and the plot.

Several characteristics from minor characters are supportive role which they can offer advice, guidance, or provide contrasting traits to emphasize the major characters attributes. Limited presence, typically, minor appear in fewer scenes and have less overall impact on the story compared to major characters. Plot advancement, minor might trigger specific events or contribute to the progression of the storyline, but their presence usually does not alter the overall narrative significantly.

Specifically, minor characters might be introduced with concise descriptions, focusing on the traits relevant to their role in the story. Through the interaction, major their personalities and contribute to the overall atmosphere of the dialogues in the literary works, minor characters can offer or, or add depth to the narrative.

used on their development is an important approach to roles and functions within a story. This perspective highlights undergo significant changes or remain static throughout the plot, it into the internal and external dynamics that shape them. One



of the most common classifications in this context is the types of character based on development, which includes flat and dynamic characters.

### 3. Flat Character

According to Arp and Johnson (2006, p.105), stated that, “*a flat character is a type of character crafted by the author with straightforward traits that can be described succinctly in just a few sentences*”. This indicates that a static character remains unchanged throughout the entire story, maintaining the same personality from the beginning to the end.

By the flat characters we can see the characteristics seems the simplicity which relatively simple and uncomplicated with limited emotional depth or backstory. Lack of development, they remain static and do not experience significant personal growth or transformation during the course of the narrative. Predictable behavior, flat characters tend to behave in expected ways, conforming to familiar archetypes or stereotypes. And also the characteristic of flat characters is had narrative function which may serve a particular function, such as providing comic relief, presenting obstacles, or conveying specific information.

Sometimes, authors use various techniques to depict flat characters in the narrative for example is the limited background, authors provide minimal background information about flat characters, focusing on their roles in relation to the major characters or plot. And then stereotypes where flat characters may embody recognizable stereotypes, such as the brave hero, the naïve sidekick, or the wise mentor. Also, from consistent behavior, these characters demonstrate consistent behavior throughout the story, adhering to their established traits.

### 4. Dynamic Character

Following the concept of flat characters, there is also known as dynamic character. Arp and Johnson (2006, p. 106), explained that, “*Dynamic character are individuals characterized by intricate traits who experience significant changes in behavior, traits, or features by the conclusion of the story*”. This implies that dynamic characters undergo essential transformations throughout the plot of the narrative.

From the characteristics of dynamic characters seems like evolution, inner conflict, realism, impact on plot, and depth and complexity. Authors use various techniques to depict dynamic characters in novels seems about the character arc, dynamic characters typically follow a character arc, starting from a particular point and undergoing changes that lead to personal growth or transformation. Internal monologue, which through internal monologues or reflections, readers gain insight thoughts, emotions, and struggles, also from the interactions with 's interactions with other characters can trigger or reflect their ng how they respond to different situations. acters add depth and complexity to a novel, capturing the empathy as they navigate the challenges and changes faced by ourney of self-discovery and transformation often serves as a



significant thematic element, providing insight into the human condition and the power of personal change.

The writer summarizes that characters play a crucial role in literature, significantly influencing a story's plot, themes, and messages of the story. A skillfully developed character enhances reader engagement, fostering relatability and adding depth to the narrative. Whether major protagonists or minor supporting figures, distinctive traits and personalities make reading a memorable and captivating experience.

### 2.2.2 Plot

In structuralism, plot refers to the sequence of events that make up the storyline of a narrative. It encompasses the events, actions, and conflicts that occur within the story, leading to the development and resolution of the central conflict. A well-structured plot is essential for creating a cohesive and engaging narrative, drawing readers into the world of the story and keeping them invested in the characters' journey. It allows the author to explore themes, develop characters arcs, and evoke emotions in the reader. An author utilizes the plot to organize the sequence of events in a story. These events typically emerge from conflicts faced by the main character. The conflict may originate externally, like confronting a dragon or dealing with an overbearing mother, or internally, such as grappling with jealousy, identity loss, or overconfidence. As the character makes decisions and attempts to resolve the issues, the story's action unfolds, and the plot takes shape. While some stories follow a chronological structure with events unfolding in a linear fashion, others incorporate flashback techniques, interrupting the current events with plot events from earlier times.

Forster (1980:87) define that a plot is a sequence of events in a narrative, with a focus on causality. It is not merely the preservation of time sequence, but the emphasis on cause-and-effect relationships that gives the plot its significance.

A successful plot consists of a series of incidents that are causally connected to one another. Causality is a core aspect of a realistic fictional plot, where events occur as a result of other occurrences. It forms the foundation of the story or novel, shaping the mood, characters, setting, and conflicts within the narrative. Complex plots are referred to as imbroglios, while even the most straightforward plot statements can offer multiple interpretations, similar to the ballad tradition in songs.

Examine plot involves exploring the actions or events that typically find resolution at the end of a story. The fictional plot may encompass various struggles such as conflicts, love, and more, and it usually reaches a resolution by the story's



essential parts of plot such as exposition, rising action, climax, and resolution.

The opening of a story introduces the characters and setting, the exposition it serves to hook the reader, providing sufficient details to encourage them to continue reading.

2. **Rising Action:** the rising action is the phase of the plot where events become intricate, and the central conflict is unveiled, occurring between the introduction and climax. It is in the rising action that the conflict or problem is introduced, depicting what the main character or protagonist is up against. During this part of the plot, the main character grapples with the conflict or problem, navigating through the challenges it presents, the conflict may be:
  - a. Character vs character: the protagonist's challenge involves another character.
  - b. Character vs society: the protagonist encounters a problem that involves another character.
  - c. Character vs self: the character experiences an internal struggle within themselves.
  - d. Character vs nature: the protagonist grapples with a natural force (such as an earthquake, heavy rain, snow, hot weather, etc.)
3. **Climax:** the climax marks the pinnacle of the story, where the conflict or problem undergoes a significant change or is resolved. It is a critical moment that acts as a turning point for the characters in the narrative. Something momentous occurs during the climax, altering the course of events and the characters' journeys.
4. **Falling Action:** encompasses the events that unfold after the climax, during which the protagonist responds to the changes brought about by the climax. It is the phase where events and complications start to find resolutions. The reader becomes aware of what happens next and whether the conflict has been resolved or not, as it occurs between the climax and the denouement.
5. **Resolution:** the denouement serves as the ultimate result or resolution of events in the story. It comes after the climax and sets a new standard or state of affairs for the characters. This section establishes how things will be moving forward. The author typically ties up any loose ends in the plot to bring the story to a satisfying conclusion.

Based on previous explanation, the writer's conclusion is that a plot entails a chronological arrangement of events, unfolding from what happens first, followed by subsequent occurrences, until the story reaches its conclusion. A plot is essentially a narration of events that make up a story or novel. The author shapes a plot by arranging the sequence of incidents that drive the narrative forward.



id how the environment influences characters and events in a ential to examine the concept of setting. According to Abrams nspasses not only the broader context of a story but also the in it:

*“The setting of a narrative or literary work refers to the overall context, including the general place, historical era, and social conditions in which the actions unfolds. On the other hand, the setting of an episode or scene within the work specifically pertains to the specific physical location where that particular part of the story occurs.”* (Abrams, MH, 1969:75)

Setting in a story not only indicates the place and time of events but also serves as an expression of the characters involved. For instance, if the setting is a house, the house itself can reveal the character of its owner. By observing the interior of the house, one can deduce whether the owner is wealthy, as a rich man's house would likely be spacious and filled with luxurious items. Wellek and Warren, in their book *Theory of Literature*, explains about this concept; *“The setting, particularly the domestic interior, can be seen as a metonymic or metaphoric representation of a character's personality and traits.”* (Wellek, Warren.1977:221)

Setting encompasses the natural, constructed, political, and temporary surroundings, which includes everything characters are familiar with and possess. Similar to real individuals, fictional characters don't exist in isolation. Their humanity emerges through interactions with other characters, their cultural and political affiliations, their possessions, occupations, and the places they inhabit, traverse, and exist in.

Consequently, stories must inevitably incorporate descriptions of places, objects, and backgrounds. Thus, setting encompasses the time, location, and all elements in which a story unfolds, establishing the primary backdrop and atmosphere. Setting has also been referred to as the story world or milieu, encompassing a broader context, particularly the societal surroundings beyond the immediate story setting. Elements of setting encompass culture, historical era, geography, and time of day. Together with plot, character, theme, and style, setting is regarded as one of the fundamental components of fiction. In essence, the setting of a story encompasses the time, place, and social environment in which it occurs.

Setting plays a important role in the plot, especially in stories where conflicts arise between individuals and nature or society. In certain narratives, the setting takes on the qualities of a character, becoming a plot device or literary element. The term “setting” is commonly used to describe the social environment in which the events of a novel unfold. Characters can be influenced positively or negatively by their surroundings, leading the struggles over possessions and objectives. Moreover, through interactions and conversations, characters unveil the extent to which they adhere to the customs and beliefs of their era.

Above the statement highlights that setting primarily acts as the backdrop for encompassing elements such as place, time and the surrounding



:  
: if place refers to the location where the events of a story take could have distinct characteristics that distinguish it from others, then for a setting should reflect its geographical conditions.

Descriptions of the places are essential to create a vivid impression for readers, making them believe that the events truly occurred in that specific setting. Novels typically involve multiple locations as the plot and characters develop, leading the narrative to move from one place to another. The decision on setting places relies on the accuracy of description, its function in the story, and how well it harmonizes with other elements of the setting.

## 2. Setting of Time:

Setting of time in a story pertains to the specific timeframe in which events occur. It is closely related to the question of “when” the story takes place and often involves a connection with historical events or factual time. Readers seek to comprehend and appreciate the story based on the period it is set in.

Setting of time plays an important role in shaping the context and atmosphere of a narrative. It provides readers with essential background information about the historical, social, and cultural context in which the events unfold. The time period influences the language, customs, beliefs, and societal norms depicted in the story, contributing to its authenticity and realism.

The setting of time is a powerful tool that authors use to immerse readers in the world of their story and make it resonate with the audience. It enhances the narrative’s authenticity, enables readers to connect with the characters’ experiences, and contributes to the overall impact and enjoyment of the story.

## 3. Setting of Society:

Social setting in a novel pertains to the problems and behaviors of social life within a specific place and time. It is intricately connected to the societal system, encompassing a wide range of complex issues, such as customs, beliefs, religion, ideology, and thought processes.

Setting of society plays a significant role in shaping the characters’ interactions, motivations, and conflicts in a story. It influences their values, attitudes, and decisions, adding depth and realism to their portrayal. By depicting the social context, an author can explore various themes, address cultural dynamics, and reflect on the complexities of human relationships within a particular community or time period. Social setting provides a framework for understanding the characters’ choice and actions, making the narrative more relatable and engaging for readers.

Above the explanation, the writer’s summarize that setting in a story encompasses place, time, and the societal background. It holds significant importance as it allows readers to immerse themselves in the story’s atmosphere and experience the situations crafted by the authors. Setting plays a crucial role in bringing the narrative to life and creating a vivid and engaging reading experience for



literary works represents the central idea or insight that unifies underlying meaning of the story, reflecting the author’s thoughts perspective on human nature. Theme serves as the heart and

soul of the story, providing a significant statement about society, nature, and the human condition. While characters, plot, and setting form the body of the narrative, theme is the core element that drives the story's ideas and meaning, making it central to the overall work. According to Birkerts (1993:67), theme is the dominant concept that the story revolves around and holds the key to understanding the essence of the narrative.

Lukens (1999; 138) emphasizes that themes in literature should not be viewed as mere "morals", "lessons", or "messages" that instruct us on how to behave. Instead, a good story's primary goal is to entertain through its engaging action and well-developed characters. While doing so, it provides us with valuable insights into human nature, emotions and thoughts, broadening our understanding of the world and the people within it.

Themes in literature serve as a rich tapestry of ideas, emotions, and perspectives. They elevate stories beyond mere entertainment, providing readers with meaningful experiences, insights, and connections. Themes offer a powerful tool for writers to explore the human experience, while readers find in them an avenue for self-reflection, empathy, and personal growth.

Theme in a literary work represents to the central idea or underlying meaning that can be either explicitly stated or subtly implied. It encapsulates the essence of the entire story, serving as its foundational element. Identifying the theme require a thorough reading and comprehension of the novel to grasp and message conveyed by the story. According to Stanton (2007:19), the theme of a story corresponds to the meaningful aspect of human experience that leaves a lasting impression. Like the essence of a human experience, a theme sheds light on or comments upon certain facets of life, making it valuable beyond the confines of the story.

It is crucial to differentiate between the theme and the subject of a literary work. The subject refers to the chosen topic on which the author focuses their writing. On the other hand, the theme delves deeper and conveys statements or opinions about that topic. For instance, while the subject of a story might be war, the theme could revolve around the notion that war is futile. Themes can be categorized into major or primary themes, which are the central ideas the author consistently emphasizes, and minor or secondary themes, which are ideas that appear sporadically and hold less prominence compared to the primary theme. (Lukens, 1999:139-140)

To identify main themes in novel, Gill (1995:189) suggests several approaches:

1. **Title:** the book's main themes may be evident in the title, serving as message to readers.



2. **Development:** Themes can be revealed through how characters evolve, make decisions, and experience moral and emotional growth.

3. **Repetition:** Repeated symbols or those used strategically can express themes, complementing characters and settings.

4. **Emphasizing words:** authors can convey themes by carefully stressing certain words, directing readers to the heart of their concerns.
5. **Character Dialogue:** paying attention to what characters say provides valuable insights into the plot's main concerns and themes.
6. **Events:** themes can be expressed through the events in the novel, enriching the narrative with meaning.
7. **Climax:** a well-handled climax can effectively convey the book's themes, enhancing the reader's enjoyment.
8. **Treatment of ordinary events:** not all significant events need to be dramatic; an author can infuse everyday occurrences with deep meaning, offering a gratifying reading experience that reveals profound themes.

Identifying the main themes in a novel can be achieved through various approaches, from these methods can help readers grasp the central message and profound ideas woven into the fabric of the narrative, enriching their understanding and enjoyment of the story itself.

Based on above explanation, the writer concludes that theme stands as the central and fundamental element of a literary work. The writer perceives theme as the primary idea that embodies the entirety of the novel or story, distinct from the plot which follows a chronological sequence. Themes are preconceived by the author before embarking on the writing process, defining the overarching concept and significance that permeates the narrative.

### 2.3. Existential Psychological Theory

Existential psychology is a school of thought rooted in 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century existential philosophy, with figures such as Søren Kierkegaard, Friedrich Nietzsche, Martin Heidegger, and Jean-Paul Sartre. Existential psychology does not offer a rigid set of therapeutic techniques but rather a way of understanding human experience. It centers on the idea that humans are always in a process of becoming, constantly facing choices and the consequences of those choices. Anxiety is viewed as an inherent part of existence, not always as a pathology but rather as a response to the freedom and uncertainty of life.

Rollo Reece May (1909–1994) was a prominent American psychologist known for developing existential psychology in the United States. He merged insights from European existential philosophy—particularly those of Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, Heidegger, and Tillich—with clinical psychology, advocating a perspective that prioritizes the conscious, subjective experience of being human (May, 1983:5).



May was not only a theoretician but also a practitioner who emphasized the authentic therapeutic relationship. His most significant contribution is to translate complex philosophical concepts into a workable framework for helping individuals in their life struggles. He introduced several central concepts that form the core of his approach to therapy. These concepts are highly relevant for analyzing the depth of human experience in literary works.

### 2.3.1 Being-in-the-World (Dasein)

The concept of Dasein, derived from the philosophical contributions of Martin Heidegger, serves as a cornerstone of May's conceptual framework. It articulates the fundamental premise that human beings are inextricably linked to the world they inhabit. The individual and their environment are mutually constitutive and cannot be understood in isolation. May delineated *being-in-the-world* into three distinct, yet interconnected, modes of existence:

- 1) Umwelt (The Around-World): This refers to the natural and biological dimensions of existence, encompassing our physical environment, physiological needs, and innate drives.
- 2) Mitwelt (The With-World): This domain pertains to our interpersonal relationships, social interactions, and the shared meanings we construct in communion with others.
- 3) Eigenwelt (The Own-World): this mode signifies the realm of the authentic self, our subjective relationship with ourselves, our self-awareness, and the unique way we experience our own being within the world.

A failure to fully engage with or integrate experiences across one or more of these modes can precipitate existential difficulties. According to May (1983), individuals can attain a sense of inner certainty only by fully recognizing and affirming their own existence.

### 2.3.2 Anxiety

One of May's central concepts is existential anxiety, which he distinguishes from neurotic anxiety. In *The Meaning of Anxiety (1950)*, he explains that existential anxiety emerges when individuals face core aspects of human existence, including mortality, isolation, freedom, and the potential absence of meaning of life.

May differentiated between two primary forms of anxiety: normal anxiety and neurotic anxiety, as stated:

- 1) Normal Anxiety: This constitutes a proportionate and constructive response to perceived threats against the values that define our existence. It does not suppress consciousness and can be leveraged productively to address challenges. Normal anxiety is recognized as an inherent and unavoidable component of personal growth and the exercise of freedom.
- 2) Neurotic Anxiety: In contrast, this represents a disproportionate reaction to a threat, often characterized by repression, internal conflict, and avoidance behaviors. Neurotic anxiety typically emerges when individuals evade the normal anxiety associated with embracing freedom and responsibility, thereby ultimately constraining their potential for living.



### 2.3.3 Freedom and Responsibility

Freedom is defined as the intrinsic human capacity to exercise choice and make decisions within the parameters of a given situation. Freedom is not merely the absence of external constraints, but rather the profound ability to recognize and act upon the choices available in responding to those limitations. This inherent freedom is inextricably linked to substantial responsibility. Individuals are held accountable for their choices and fundamentally, for their own existence. The evasion of freedom and responsibility (e.g., through external blame or rationalization) is considered a primary catalyst for existential distress. May (1975) suggested that human freedom involves the capacity to create a pause between stimulus and response, allowing individuals to deliberately choose how they will act.

### 2.3.4 Guilt

May delineated three distinct forms of existential guilt, which correspond to the three modes of being-in-the-world. This guilt arises from a failure to live authentically in relation to one's natural environment (*Umwelt*), a neglect of one's interpersonal relationships or a manipulation of others (*Mitwelt*), or a failure to actualize one's own inherent potential or a denial of opportunities for personal growth (*Eigenwelt*). It is important to note that this existential guilt is not inherently pathological; rather, it can serve as a vital signal that one is not living authentically. May (1953) asserted that when individuals fail to realize their own potential, they will unavoidably experience a sense of guilt directed at themselves.

### 2.3.5 Care, Love, and Will

May considered care to be a foundational human condition, from which both love and will emanate. It signifies the capacity to genuinely concern oneself with the well-being of others and oneself. A deficiency in care can lead to states of apathy and existential emptiness.

May further distinguished four archetypal forms of love:

- 1) *Libido*: This represents the biological drive and primal sexual desire.
- 2) *Eros*: This is the impulse to seek unity with what is perceived as lacking within oneself, a profound longing to create and to build. It embodies the drive towards growth and fulfillment.
- 3) *Philia*: This denotes brotherly affection, friendship, and non-sexual companionship.
- 4) *Agape*: This is characterized by selfless love, an unconditional concern for the welfare of others, even without expectation of reciprocation.



framework, is the capacity to intentionally direct oneself toward a goal. It encompasses both intention and determination. May argued that love and will must operate in a complementary fashion; an isolated will can become manipulative, while love without the guiding force of will is sentimentally and ineffectiveness. May (1969) stated that to truly experience both the positive and negative aspects of experience,

including grief, sorrow, and disappointment, alongside joy and fulfillment, leading to an intensity of consciousness previously unknown. May (1969) emphasized that care, in contrast to apathy, reflects a condition in which individuals truly value something, making it an essential foundation for love and human compassion.

### 2.3.6 Meaning and Meaningless

Human beings possess an inherent and profound need to discover or create meaning in their lives. Confronted with the inherent meaninglessness that can be perceived in the universe, individuals are compelled to construct their own frameworks of meaning. Meaninglessness, or the existential vacuum, is a pervasive issue in contemporary society and frequently underlies experiences of anxiety and despair. May (1953) argued that individuals are unable to remain in a prolonged state of inner emptiness; when they lack direction or purpose, they don't just remain static but tend to fall into deterioration, leading to despair and harmful actions as their unrealized potentials become distorted.

### 2.3.7 Destiny

May conceptualized destiny not as a rigid, pre-determined fatalism, but rather as the intrinsic patterns and inherent limitations of our existence (e.g., genetic predispositions, environmental factors, historical context). While individuals cannot alter their fundamental destiny, they possess the freedom to choose how they respond to and engage with these given parameters. Destiny is understood as “the pattern of our potentialities”, and freedom represents our capacity to actualize these potentialities within the boundaries established by destiny. May (1981) described destiny as the expression of the universe's structure manifesting uniquely within each individual's being

In the specific context of *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, May's theory will prove invaluable in elucidating the multifaceted psychological layers of Dorian Gray, providing insights into his choices, and explaining how these choices, influenced by the portrait and his environment, ultimately determine his existential fate.

Rollo May's existential psychology offers a profound and nuanced perspective on the human condition, emphasizing the critical interplay of freedom, responsibility, and the imperative to find meaning when confronted with his life's inherent anxieties and limitations. His seminal concepts, including being-in-the-world, anxiety, freedom, guilt, care, love, will, meaning and destiny was provide powerful analytical tools for dissecting the psychological complexities embedded within literary characters. By systematically applying this comprehensive framework to the novel,

ors to illuminate Dorian Gray's intricate existential journey and  
nent with the universal themes of human existence

