

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the study

Film is one of the popular forms of literary works that presents stories through moving images, dialogues, and characters (Bordwell & Thompson, 2023). Similar to novels, films also contain intrinsic elements such as characters, plot, setting, and theme. One important intrinsic element in a film is character, because characters help convey the story and the message of the film to the audience. Saputra & Loisa (2021) stated that through characters, viewers can understand values, conflicts, and meanings represented in the narrative. Therefore, analyzing characters and their development is an important aspect in literary and film studies.

Character is a person who is presented in a narrative work such as a novel, drama, or film. According to Abrams & Harpham (1999), a character is a person represented in a narrative or dramatic work who is interpreted by the audience as having certain moral, emotional, and psychological qualities. These qualities are shown through the character's speech, actions, appearance, and interactions with other characters. The way an author or filmmaker presents a character is called characterization. Characterization helps the audience understand who the character is and how the character changes throughout the story (Syahidah & Laksono, 2021).

Character development refers to the changes that happen to a character during the story. Hasanah et al. (2018) argued that a character may change in terms of

personality, attitude, or way of thinking because of experiences and events in the narrative. Character development is important because it often reflects the theme or message of the story (Ermina et al., 2023). When a character grows or changes, the audience can learn lessons or moral values from that character's journey. Therefore, analyzing character development helps reveal the deeper meaning of a film.

Zootopia (2016) is an animated film produced by Walt Disney Animation Studios (Wang, 2017). The film tells a story about a city called Zootopia, where animals from different species live together in harmony. The film explores social issues such as prejudice, stereotypes, and discrimination through the lives of animal characters. *Zootopia (2016)* is not only an entertaining animated film but also a film that carries strong moral messages about equality, tolerance, and acceptance in society.

One of the important characters in *Zootopia (2016)* is Nick Wilde. Nick Wilde is a fox who is portrayed as clever, sarcastic, and skeptical (Batubara et al., 2020). At the beginning of the film, Nick is shown as a con artist who does not trust society and believes that animals will never change their stereotypes. His personality is shaped by negative experiences he faced in his childhood, where he was treated unfairly because he was a fox. Because of this, Nick grows up believing that society will always judge him based on his species.

Throughout the film, Nick Wilde's character shows significant development. His interaction with Judy Hopps, a rabbit who becomes the first police officer in Zootopia, plays an important role in his character development. At first, Nick is reluctant to trust Judy and prefers to live according to society's expectations of him. However, as the

story progresses, Nick begins to change. He becomes more responsible, honest, and confident. This change shows how Nick develops from a cynical character into someone who believes in justice and equality.

Several previous studies related to *Zootopia* (2016) have mainly focused on themes such as stereotypes, prejudice, and discrimination portrayed in the film, like (Atillah et al., 2020; Yahya & Hikmat, 2024). Many researchers analyze how social bias and prejudice are represented through the animal characters and the social structure of Zootopia. However, most of these studies emphasize the social issues and thematic analysis rather than focusing specifically on the character development of Nick Wilde using a character and characterization approach. There is still limited research that discusses how Nick Wilde is characterized and how his character development contributes to conveying the message of the film based on literary character theory.

This research focuses on analyzing Nick Wilde's character and character development in *Zootopia* (2016). The analysis uses M. H. Abrams' theory of character and characterization to examine how Nick Wilde is portrayed and how his character develops throughout the film. Abrams' theory is suitable for this study because it provides a framework to analyze characters through their speech, actions, and interactions within the narrative. By using this theory, the researcher can systematically explain how Nick Wilde's character is constructed and developed.

The reason for choosing Nick Wilde as the object of this research is because his character shows clear development and plays a significant role in delivering the moral message of the film. Nick's journey from a skeptical fox to a cooperative police officer

reflects important social values that are relevant to real-life issues. Analyzing his character development can help audiences better understand the message of *Zootopia* and the importance of overcoming prejudice.

Based on the explanation above, and considering the lack of studies that specifically analyze Nick Wilde's character development using the theory of character and characterization, the researcher is interested in conducting a study entitled *A Study of Character Development of Nick Wilde in Zootopia (2016): from Egoistic to Sympathetic*.

1.2 Problem Statement

Based on the explanation of the background of the study above, the researcher formulates the research questions as follows:

1. How is the characterization of Nick Wilde in *Zootopia* (2016)?
2. How does Nick Wilde's character develop throughout the film *Zootopia* (2016)?

1.3 Objective of The Study

Dealing with the problem statements above, the objectives of this study are:

1. To analyze how Nick Wilde is characterized in the film *Zootopia* (2016).
2. To analyze how Nick Wilde's character develop throughout the film *Zootopia* (2016)

1.4 Scope and Limitation

This research focuses on the animated film *Zootopia* (2016) produced by Walt Disney Animation Studios. The scope of this study is limited to the analysis of Nick Wilde as one of the main characters in the film. This study only discusses Nick Wilde's

character and character development based on the theory of character and characterization proposed by M. H. Abrams (1999).

The limitation of this study is that it does not analyze other characters, visual techniques, cinematic elements, or psychological aspects in depth. The analysis is restricted to how Nick Wilde is characterized and how his character develops to convey the message of the film.

1.5 Significance of The Study

The result of this study is expected to give both theoretical and practical significance. Theoretically, this research is expected to contribute to literary and film studies, especially in understanding character and character development using M. H. Abrams' theory of character and characterization. This study can also enrich students' knowledge about how characters are constructed and developed in animated films.

Practically, this research can be useful for students, researchers, and readers who are interested in literary analysis, especially character analysis in films. It can be used as a reference for future research related to character development and moral messages in films.

1.6 Definition of Key Terms

The key terms of this study need clarification to avoid misunderstanding and misinterpretation.

1.6.1 Character

Character refers to a person represented in a narrative work such as a film or novel. In this study, the character refers to Nick Wilde, who is portrayed as a fox with certain moral, emotional, and behavioral traits in *Zootopia* (2016).

1.6.2 Characterization

Characterization is the method used by the filmmaker to present and reveal a character's personality. According to Abrams, characterization can be seen through the character's speech, actions, appearance, and interactions with other characters.

1.6.3 Egoistic

Egoistic refers to a personality trait in which a character tends to prioritize personal interests and self-protection over others. In this study, egoistic describes Nick Wilde's early behavior, where he focuses on his own survival and avoids trusting others due to his negative past experiences.

1.6.4 Sympathetic

Sympathetic refers to a personality trait in which a character shows understanding, care, and concern for others. In this study, sympathetic describes Nick Wilde's later character development, where he becomes more caring, cooperative, and willing to help others, especially in his relationship with Judy Hopps.