

NARRATIVE IDENTITY AND CHARACTER TYPES: AN INTERDISCIPLINARY FRAMEWORK

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Abstract. *This study examines character classification in literary studies through the lens of dual character relationships. It argues that characters should be analyzed not only as individual entities but as relational constructs that shape narrative meaning. Drawing on interdisciplinary approaches and examples from American and British literature, the research demonstrates that contrasting and complementary character pairs contribute significantly to narrative identity, thematic development, and psychological depth. The findings suggest that a relational model of character classification provides a more comprehensive framework for understanding literary narratives.*

Keywords: *character classification, narrative identity, dual relationships, literary typology, narrative function, protagonist, antagonist, psychology.*

Аннотация. *В данном исследовании рассматривается классификация персонажей в литературоведении через призму бинарных взаимоотношений между персонажами. Утверждается, что персонажей следует анализировать не только как самостоятельные художественные единицы, но и как взаимосвязанные конструкции, формирующие смысл повествования. Опираясь на междисциплинарные подходы и примеры из американской и британской литературы, исследование демонстрирует, что контрастные и взаимодополняющие пары персонажей вносят значительный вклад в формирование нарративной идентичности, развитие тематики произведения и раскрытие психологической глубины. Полученные результаты показывают, что реляционная модель классификации персонажей обеспечивает более комплексную основу для понимания литературных нарративов.*

Ключевые слова: *классификация персонажей, нарративная идентичность, бинарные взаимоотношения, литературная типология, нарративная функция, протагонист, антагонист, психология.*

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Introduction. Literary studies have traditionally prioritized plot over character, often resulting in a less systematic exploration of character typology. While narrative structures have been extensively theorized, character classification remains comparatively underdeveloped. This imbalance restricts a full understanding of how meaning is constructed in literary texts.

This study proposes that character classification—particularly through dual character relationships—offers a crucial framework for interpreting narrative meaning. Characters do not exist in isolation; rather, they function within relational systems that shape thematic and structural dimensions of narratives. By examining selected examples from American

and British literature, this research explores how contrasting and complementary character pairs contribute to narrative identity and the representation of human experience.

Methods. This research adopts a qualitative, interpretive approach grounded in literary analysis and interdisciplinary theory. The study draws on the classification model proposed by Berry and Brown (2017), which categorizes characters across three primary dimensions:

Behavior (proactive vs. reactive)

Purpose (protagonist, antagonist, foil, confidant)

Narrative function (round/flat, dynamic/static)

In addition to this framework, the study integrates:

Psychological theory, particularly Carl Jung's concept of the "shadow"

Structuralist approaches, focusing on relational patterns within narrative systems

A range of canonical literary texts from American and British traditions are analyzed to illustrate how dual character relationships operate within different narrative contexts.

Behavioral categorization of characters often encompasses various traits that influence how characters interact with one another. According to Berry and Brown (2017), characters can be classified as either proactive or reactive. Proactive characters take the initiative, driving the narrative forward through their decisions and actions, while reactive characters are primarily shaped by the decisions and actions of others around them. This divergence in behavior is particularly salient when examining dual relationships; for instance, in William Faulkner's "The Sound and the Fury," the dynamic between Quentin and Caddy Compson illustrates the tension inherent in their contrasting behaviors—Quentin's intense introspection juxtaposed with Caddy's more liberated approach to life foster a complex relationship driven by both agency and dependence.

Purpose serves as a second criterion for character classification. Characters can be categorized based on their narrative roles—protagonists, antagonists, confidants, or foils—each fulfilling distinct functions within their respective texts. The typological distinctions among these roles are significant when analyzing dual character relationships; for example, in Mark Twain's "The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn," the relationship between Huck and Jim can be understood through their respective purposes in the narrative. Huck serves as the protagonist whose journey reflects individual moral growth and societal critique, while Jim embodies the role of the *mentor* and *guardian*, revealing deeper themes of friendship, loyalty, and the quest for freedom. Here, the interplay of purpose underscores the *emotional depth* and *thematic richness* of their relationship.

Furthermore, narrative function plays a critical role in character classification. Characters can be examined through their contributions to plot *progression*, *thematic development*, and *audience engagement*. As posited by Berry and Brown (2017), characters can be grouped into categories such as *round or flat* characters, *dynamic or static* characters, and types that fulfill necessary narrative functions such as *comic relief* or

tragic figures. For example, in Shakespeare's "Hamlet," the duality of Hamlet and Claudius illustrates the complexity of narrative function, with Hamlet as the round and dynamic protagonist whose internal conflicts and transformations drive the plot, while Claudius, as a flat character, provides a stark contrast to Hamlet's multifaceted nature. Their relationship exemplifies the tension between ambition and morality, contributing significantly to the overall thematic exploration of the play.

Results. The analysis reveals that dual character relationships play a central role in shaping narrative meaning across multiple dimensions.

Behavioral Contrasts - Characters categorized as proactive or reactive often form dynamic relational pairs. For example, in *The Sound and the Fury*, Quentin's introspective nature contrasts with Caddy's independence, creating tension that drives both narrative and psychological depth.

Functional Roles and Purpose - Character roles such as protagonist and mentor are clarified through relational dynamics. In *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, Huck's moral development is shaped through his relationship with Jim, whose role extends beyond companionship to moral guidance and thematic representation of freedom and humanity.

Narrative Function and Complexity - Dual relationships frequently highlight differences between round and flat characters. In *Hamlet*, the contrast between Hamlet and Claudius emphasizes internal conflict versus moral rigidity, reinforcing themes of ambition and ethics.

Relational Dynamics and Thematic Development - Character pairs often embody broader thematic oppositions: Elizabeth Bennet and Mr. Darcy (*Pride and Prejudice*) — pride vs. prejudice. Hester Prynne and Dimmesdale (*The Scarlet Letter*) — public morality vs. private guilt. Pip and Estella (*Great Expectations*) — social class vs. personal desire.

These relationships demonstrate how narrative meaning emerges from interaction rather than isolated characterization.

Thus, the classification and typology of characters in literature, as outlined by Berry and Brown, provides a robust framework for understanding the complexities of dual character relationships within the rich tapestry of American and British literature. The exploration of dual character relationships serves as a vital lens through which the multifaceted nature of literary narratives can be critically examined. Central to the fabric of narrative structure, these relationships illuminate the *emotional, psychological, and thematic constructs* that underpin various literary works. Literary scholars have long recognized that characters are not merely vessels through which stories are conveyed; rather, they exist within relational dynamics that enrich the narrative tapestry and provide deeper insights into human experience.

Discussion. The findings confirm that character relationships are fundamental to narrative construction. Dual character dynamics function as a mechanism through which psychological depth, thematic tension, and structural coherence are developed.

From a **psychological perspective**, relationships between characters reflect internal conflicts and identity formation, particularly through oppositional or complementary traits. Jung's concept of the shadow is especially useful in explaining how characters externalize hidden aspects of the self.

From a **structuralist perspective**, characters operate within systems of meaning where their relationships form patterns that shape the narrative as a whole. This approach shifts the focus from individual traits to relational functions.

Importantly, this study demonstrates that character classification should not be limited to static categories. Instead, it should be understood as a dynamic, relational process that reflects broader cultural, social, and philosophical concerns embedded in literature.

In addition to psychological frameworks, dual character relationships can also be understood through structuralist approaches. From a structuralist perspective, characters can be classified not solely based on their individual traits but as components of a larger narrative system where their relationships form patterns that contribute to the overall meaning of the work. This relational approach allows for a classification that includes antagonistic, complementary, or ambiguous pairs, each of which offers varying and overlapping thematic interpretations. For example, the dynamic between Pip and Estella in Charles Dickens' "Great Expectations" reveals complexities surrounding social class, desire, and the quest for self-identity against the backdrop of Victorian societal norms.

Conclusion. This study has shown that literary meaning is fundamentally shaped by relationships between characters rather than by isolated character traits. By analyzing dual character dynamics, it becomes evident that such relationships reveal deeper psychological, thematic, and structural dimensions of narrative texts.

The integration of interdisciplinary perspectives further highlights that character relationships are not merely narrative devices but reflections of complex human experience. A relational approach to character classification therefore provides a more comprehensive and effective framework for literary analysis.

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