



\*CORRESPONDENCE

Suardi, ✉  
[suardi@staff.gunadarma.ac.id](mailto:suardi@staff.gunadarma.ac.id)

RECEIVED 07 January 2026  
ACCEPTED 10 February 2026  
PUBLISHED 30 March 2026

CITATION

Suardi, Wuryandari DA,  
Wurjantoro W (2026). Id, Ego,  
and Superego in The Catcher in  
the Rye: A Psychoanalytic  
Literary Analysis. *Lingua :  
Journal of Linguistics and  
Language*. 4 (1), 19-25.  
doi: 10.61978/lingua.v4i1.1473

TYPE Original Research  
PUBLISHED 30 March 2026  
DOI 10.61978/lingua.v4i1.1473  
VOL 4 Issue 1 March 2026

COPYRIGHT

© 2026 Suardi, Wuryandari, and  
Wurjantoro. This is an open-  
access article distributed under  
the terms of the [Creative  
Commons Attribution License  
\(CC BY\)](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/). The use, distribution  
or reproduction in other forums  
is permitted, provided the  
original author(s) and the  
copyright owner(s) are credited  
and that the original publication  
in this journal is cited, in  
accordance with accepted  
academic practice. No use,  
distribution or reproduction is  
permitted which  
does not comply with these  
terms.

# Id, Ego, and Superego in The Catcher in the Rye: A Psychoanalytic Literary Analysis

Suardi<sup>1\*</sup>, Dyah Ambar Wuryandari<sup>2</sup>, Wawan Wurjantoro<sup>3</sup>

<sup>123</sup> Gunadarma University, Jakarta, Indonesia

## Abstract

Psychoanalytic approaches play an important role in literary criticism for examining the psychological complexity of characters. However, many studies remain general and do not explicitly analyze Freud's structural model of personality within specific literary texts. This study aims to analyze the representation of the id, ego, and superego in *The Catcher in the Rye* by J.D. Salinger and to examine how their interaction shapes the development of the main character. This research employs a qualitative method using psychoanalytic literary analysis through close reading and thematic analysis. The data consist of selected textual units from the novel, including dialogue, narrative descriptions, and internal monologues that reflect the psychological conflicts of the protagonist, Holden Caulfield. The findings show that the id is represented through impulsive emotional reactions such as anger, alienation, and rejection of social norms, which initiate narrative tension. The ego appears in reflective moments where Holden evaluates his actions and attempts to negotiate between his desires and reality. Meanwhile, the superego is expressed through feelings of guilt, moral confusion, and concern for innocence, particularly in his interactions with his younger sister. These interactions contribute to the psychological development of the protagonist throughout the narrative. This study contributes to literary criticism by providing a text-specific psychoanalytic analysis and demonstrating how Freud's structural model can be applied to interpret psychological conflict within a contemporary literary work.

## KEYWORDS

psychoanalysis; id ego superego; the catcher in the rye; holden caulfield; psychological conflict; literary analysis.

## Introduction

Psychoanalytic criticism has become an influential approach in contemporary literary studies for examining the psychological complexity of characters and narrative structures in modern literary works. Contemporary narratives frequently portray characters experiencing internal conflicts, identity struggles, and moral dilemmas that reflect broader social and psychological realities in modern societies. Literary texts often function as symbolic spaces where human emotions, unconscious desires, and moral tensions are articulated through narrative representation. Psychoanalytic theory provides an analytical framework that allows scholars to explore how unconscious psychological processes shape character behavior and narrative development in literary texts (Kayani et al., 2023). As literary narratives increasingly engage with themes of psychological struggle and identity formation, psychoanalytic approaches remain relevant for interpreting the deeper meanings embedded within contemporary storytelling. Freud's structural model of personality, which consists of the id, ego, and superego, provides a theoretical foundation for understanding psychological conflicts represented in literary characters. The id represents instinctual drives and unconscious desires, while the ego mediates between internal impulses and external reality

through rational consideration. In contrast, the superego embodies moral values and social norms that regulate human behavior. These psychological components interact dynamically, often producing internal tensions that influence decision-making and emotional responses. Scholars have noted that literary characters frequently reflect this psychological interplay, making psychoanalytic theory particularly valuable for analyzing character motivation and narrative conflict.

(Dibekulu et al., 2025). Through this framework, literature can be understood not only as a reflection of social experience but also as a representation of the complex dynamics of human personality.

In recent years, psychoanalytic literary criticism has been increasingly applied to examine the psychological dimensions of narrative texts across different cultural contexts. Contemporary literature often depicts fragmented identities, emotional trauma, and existential dilemmas that mirror the psychological challenges of modern life. Such representations highlight the relevance of psychoanalytic perspectives in interpreting literary narratives as reflections of psychological realities. According to [Fountoulakis & Simos, \(2026\)](#), psychoanalytic criticism enables scholars to investigate how unconscious motivations and symbolic meanings operate within narrative structures. This perspective allows researchers to analyze literary characters not merely as fictional constructs but as representations of psychological processes that resonate with human experience.

Despite the growing application of psychoanalytic theory in literary studies, research that systematically examines the representation of Freud's structural personality model in contemporary narratives remains limited. Many previous studies have focused on general psychological interpretations of characters without specifically analyzing the interaction between the id, ego, and superego within narrative development. For example, several studies emphasize emotional complexity or unconscious motivation in literary characters, yet they tend to examine these aspects separately rather than as an integrated structural model ([Dibekulu et al., 2025](#); [Fatah & Saeed, 2024](#); [Ginting, 2025](#)).

This gap indicates the need for a more structured analytical framework that explicitly connects Freud's personality theory with narrative construction and character transformation. [Fowler et al., \(2022\)](#) emphasizes that psychoanalytic criticism should move beyond descriptive analysis toward a more systematic exploration of psychological structures embedded in literary texts. Furthermore, narrative theory scholars argue that integrating psychological frameworks with narrative analysis can deepen our understanding of character development and thematic complexity in literary works ([Sinaga et al., 2025](#)).

More specifically, the existing literature has not sufficiently demonstrated how the id, ego, and superego interact simultaneously within a single narrative to shape both psychological conflict and narrative progression. This study therefore seeks to address this gap by examining the dynamic interaction of these three components within a selected contemporary literary narrative, focusing on how they operate together rather than in isolation. Based on these considerations, this study aims to analyze the psychoanalytic representation of the id, ego, and superego in contemporary literary narratives. The research focuses on identifying how these psychological structures are manifested in the

behavior, motivations, and internal conflicts of the main characters. In addition, the study seeks to examine how the interaction between instinctual impulses, rational mediation, and moral regulation contributes to narrative development and character transformation. By applying Freud's structural model of personality as an analytical framework, this research attempts to reveal the underlying psychological dynamics that shape narrative progression in contemporary literary texts.

The significance of this research lies in its contribution to both theoretical and practical dimensions of literary studies. Rather than making broad general claims, this study specifically contributes by offering a structured psychoanalytic reading of a selected literary text, demonstrating how Freud's structural model can be applied to analyze the interaction between psychological components within a defined narrative context. Theoretically, the study offers a focused application of psychoanalytic theory in contemporary literary criticism by providing a systematic framework for analyzing the interaction between psychological structures and narrative development. Practically, the findings offer insights into how literary narratives represent human psychological conflicts in modern contexts. The research also contributes to interdisciplinary dialogue between psychology and literary studies by demonstrating how psychoanalytic theory can enrich the interpretation of contemporary narratives. Within this limited scope, the study provides a more specific understanding of how psychological conflict is represented in literary texts rather than claiming broad generalization across all contemporary narratives.

## Methods

### Research Design and Analytical Approach

This study employed a qualitative research approach with a psychoanalytic literary criticism framework to analyze the representation of Freud's structural personality model id, ego, and superego in contemporary literary narratives. Qualitative research is appropriate for examining textual meanings, narrative structures, and psychological representations embedded in literary works. This approach allows researchers to interpret symbolic meanings, character motivations, and internal conflicts that appear in narrative texts. Qualitative literary analysis is widely used in humanities research because it enables in-depth interpretation of complex textual phenomena within cultural and psychological contexts ([Obiorah, 2025](#)). In addition, qualitative textual analysis allows scholars to explore psychological dimensions of literary characters by examining narrative elements and symbolic structures within the text ([Hasan, 2024](#)).

### Population and Sampling Technique

The population of this research consisted of contemporary literary narratives that portray psychological conflicts and character development related to Freud's structural personality theory. From this population, the study selected one contemporary literary work as the primary research object using purposive sampling. In this study, the selected text is *The Catcher in the Rye* (1951) by J.D. Salinger, which was chosen due to its strong focus on the psychological conflict of the protagonist, Holden Caulfield. This novel presents complex internal tensions, identity struggles, and moral dilemmas that reflect the interaction between instinctual impulses, rational mediation, and moral awareness. The selection of this text is therefore analytically

justified as it provides a rich narrative context for examining the dynamic relationship between the id, ego, and superego within a single literary work.

Purposive sampling was employed because it enables researchers to select texts that contain relevant psychological conflicts and narrative complexity aligned with the objectives of the study. The selected text met several criteria, including the presence of internal psychological conflicts, clear character development, and narrative situations reflecting instinctual drives, rational mediation, and moral regulation. According to [Tajik et al., \(2025\)](#), purposive sampling is particularly suitable for qualitative research that aims to examine specific phenomena or theoretical constructs in depth. The selected literary work therefore provided a meaningful context for exploring the interaction between the id, ego, and superego within narrative development.

#### Data Sources and Data Collection Techniques

The primary data of this study consisted of textual units extracted from the selected literary narrative. These textual units included dialogues, narrative descriptions, and internal monologues that reveal psychological conflicts experienced by the characters. The unit of analysis in this study consists of specific narrative segments, including sentences and paragraphs that explicitly represent the protagonist's thoughts, emotional reactions, and decision-making processes. These units were selected based on their relevance to the manifestation of the id, ego, and superego within the narrative.

Secondary data were obtained from scholarly books, journal articles, and theoretical studies related to psychoanalytic criticism and narrative theory. Data collection was conducted using close reading and systematic note-taking techniques, which are commonly applied in literary research to identify relevant textual evidence. Close reading allows researchers to carefully examine narrative details, language structures, and symbolic representations that reflect psychological dynamics within the text ([Ohrvik, 2024](#)). Through systematic documentation of textual excerpts, the researcher ensured that the collected data were relevant to the theoretical framework used in the analysis. During the data collection process, the researcher documented textual excerpts and accompanying analytical notes (coding memos) to ensure transparency in interpretation and consistency in categorizing psychological elements.

#### Research Procedure

The research procedure was conducted through several sequential stages. The first stage involved selecting the literary text based on predetermined criteria related to psychological conflict and narrative complexity. The second stage consisted of conducting intensive reading of the selected text to identify narrative segments that reflect manifestations of the id, ego, and superego. The third stage involved a systematic coding process in which each textual unit was categorized based on explicit analytical criteria: passages reflecting impulsive desires and emotional reactions were coded as id; passages showing rational evaluation and decision-making were coded as ego; and passages indicating moral judgment, guilt, or ethical reflection were coded as superego.

During this stage, the researcher examined how instinctual impulses, rational considerations, and moral regulations were represented in the actions and decisions of the characters. According to [Riazi et al., \(2023\)](#), systematic coding and categorization are essential processes in qualitative analysis to ensure that patterns and themes within textual data can be accurately identified

and interpreted. Ambiguous passages that contained overlapping characteristics were re-examined through repeated close reading and categorized based on the dominant psychological function represented in the context of the narrative.

#### Validity and Reliability Strategies

To ensure the credibility and reliability of the findings, the study applied several strategies commonly used in qualitative research. Data credibility was enhanced through prolonged engagement with the text and iterative reading processes to ensure accurate interpretation of narrative elements. Analytical rigor was maintained through theoretical triangulation by comparing interpretations derived from psychoanalytic theory and narrative theory perspectives.

In addition, this study emphasizes analytical transparency and interpretive consistency by maintaining a clear audit trail of coding decisions, including documented excerpts and coding justifications. Interpretations were continuously reviewed through repeated close reading and comparison across textual segments to ensure coherence and avoid selective interpretation. Additionally, detailed documentation of the analytical process was conducted to ensure transparency and replicability of the research procedure. Such strategies are considered essential for maintaining methodological rigor in qualitative textual analysis ([Gunbayi, 2024](#)).

#### Data Analysis Technique

The collected data were analyzed using thematic analysis to identify recurring patterns related to the representation of the id, ego, and superego in the narrative structure. Thematic analysis involves coding textual segments, categorizing them into conceptual themes, and interpreting their relationships within the broader narrative context. The analysis was conducted through several stages, including initial coding, categorization into id, ego, and superego themes, and interpretation of the relationships between these categories within the narrative progression. Each theme was derived from repeated patterns identified in the coded textual units rather than predetermined assumptions, ensuring that the analysis remained grounded in the textual data.

This analytical process allowed the researcher to examine how psychological structures influence character transformation and narrative progression. Data organization and coding were assisted using qualitative data management techniques to ensure systematic categorization of textual evidence. To avoid circular interpretation, coding decisions were based on explicit textual indicators such as emotional expression, rational deliberation, and moral reflection, rather than solely on theoretical assumptions. Thematic analysis is widely recognized as an effective method for analyzing qualitative textual data because it facilitates the identification of patterns and meanings across narrative contexts ([Naeem et al., 2023](#)). Through this analytical framework, the study aimed to reveal the psychological dynamics underlying character behavior and narrative development in contemporary literary narratives.

## Result and Discussion

### Representation of the Id in Contemporary Literary Narratives

The analysis of the selected contemporary literary narrative revealed that the representation of the id appears

prominently through instinctual impulses, emotional reactions, and unconscious desires expressed by the main character. For instance, the protagonist's impulsive perception of social reality is reflected in the statement "People always think something's all true" (Salinger, 1951), which illustrates an immediate emotional judgment rather than a rational evaluation. This response demonstrates how instinctual dissatisfaction and subjective interpretation dominate the character's reactions, indicating the operation of the id.

Based on the close reading procedure described in the methodology, several textual segments illustrate how the protagonist responds impulsively to emotionally charged situations without rational consideration. These expressions often manifest through anger, desire, jealousy, or immediate emotional responses toward external conflicts within the narrative. Such behaviors align with Freud's conceptualization of the id as the primitive component of personality driven by the pleasure principle. As noted by Freud (2024), the id functions as the unconscious source of instinctual drives that shape human behavior before rational mediation occurs, while Akpoti, (2025) emphasizes that psychoanalytic literary criticism remains particularly useful for tracing how unconscious dimensions are articulated through textual representation.

The data collected through systematic note-taking indicated that the protagonist frequently demonstrates instinctual motivations when confronted with interpersonal conflicts. These manifestations were identified through dialogue, internal monologue, and narrative descriptions that reveal emotional tension between the character and surrounding social conditions. This tendency is further reinforced by the protagonist's repeated use of emotionally charged labels such as "phony" to describe others, which reflects an immediate evaluative reaction rooted in affect rather than reflective reasoning. Such linguistic patterns indicate that instinctual judgment precedes rational deliberation.

For instance, in several narrative moments the character expresses anger or desire without considering moral consequences, illustrating the dominance of instinctual impulses. Such narrative patterns confirm that literary characters often embody psychological dimensions that reflect unconscious drives. According to Horváth, (2024), literary narratives frequently depict characters whose actions are influenced by unconscious desires that remain hidden beneath the surface of narrative events, and Eekhof et al., (2022) similarly shows that textual features can strongly shape readers' recognition of emotional and psychological states in narrative characters.

The thematic coding process identified multiple textual segments in which emotional impulses serve as catalysts for narrative progression. These findings correspond with the methodological framework that categorizes narrative expressions according to Freud, (2024) structural personality model. The id appears primarily in scenes where the character reacts spontaneously to emotional triggers such as betrayal, humiliation, or personal loss. In such moments, instinctual responses dominate before rational thinking or moral reflection takes place. Similar observations were reported by Fatah & Saeed (2024), who argues that contemporary narratives often represent instinctual conflict as a narrative mechanism that initiates psychological tension in literary characters.

Furthermore, the presence of the id contributes significantly to the development of narrative conflict within the text. The impulsive actions of the protagonist often generate complications that shape subsequent narrative events. This finding aligns with narrative theory perspectives that emphasize the role of psychological

tension in driving plot development. Psychological impulses frequently function as narrative triggers that move the storyline forward and deepen character complexity. This pattern is also compatible with the findings of Stapledon, (2022), who argue that fictional narratives activate readers' engagement with character-centered psychological processes, including identification with protagonists under emotional pressure.

The representation of the id also reflects broader social and psychological conditions depicted in contemporary literature. Many narrative episodes illustrate how instinctual impulses interact with external social pressures, creating tension between individual desire and social expectation. Such representations indicate that literary narratives do not merely portray personal emotions but also mirror the psychological struggles experienced in modern societies. According to Fernández-Santiago & Gámez-Fernández, (2022), contemporary literary works frequently explore emotional intensity and psychological vulnerability as reflections of modern human experiences. In a related context, Nisha & Kumar, (2025) demonstrate that literary representations of complex psychological experiences can make inner conflict more intelligible and emotionally accessible to readers.

Overall, the findings demonstrate that the id plays a central role in shaping the psychological foundation of the protagonist's behavior. The instinctual impulses identified in the textual data reveal how unconscious desires contribute to narrative conflict and emotional tension. These findings support the methodological assumption that close reading and thematic analysis can effectively reveal psychological structures embedded within narrative texts. By identifying manifestations of instinctual impulses, the study provides empirical evidence of how Freud's structural personality theory can be applied to interpret contemporary literary narratives. In this sense, the findings remain consistent with Gorelick, (2024) argument that psychoanalysis and literary theory intersect productively when literature is read as a site where unconscious tensions are symbolically staged.

#### Representation of the Ego as a Mediating Psychological Structure

The thematic analysis also revealed that the ego functions as a mediating structure that regulates instinctual impulses and external reality within the narrative. This mediating function is observable in reflective expressions such as "I don't exactly know what I mean by that, but I mean it" (Salinger, 1951), which indicate the protagonist's attempt to organize emotional experience into a more coherent and rational form. This statement reflects a transitional state between impulse and reflection, demonstrating the operation of the ego.

Unlike the impulsive behavior associated with the id, the ego appears in moments where the protagonist reflects on the consequences of their actions. These moments are identified through narrative passages that depict rational thinking, hesitation, and strategic decision-making. The presence of the ego demonstrates how characters negotiate between internal desires and social expectations. Freud described the ego as operating under the reality principle, which enables individuals to manage instinctual drives in socially acceptable ways, and this balancing function can also be related to the distinction between personality and character discussed by Bernard, (2024).

In the analyzed narrative, several scenes illustrate how the protagonist begins to reconsider impulsive decisions after experiencing emotional conflict. For example, moments of hesitation occur when the protagonist reflects on his own behavior and considers alternative actions, indicating that rational evaluation begins to intervene in previously

impulsive responses. These reflective pauses demonstrate how the ego mediates between emotional impulse and situational reality.

These reflective moments often occur after the character confronts the consequences of earlier actions driven by instinctual impulses. Through narrative introspection, the character attempts to balance personal desire with practical considerations. This dynamic illustrates the mediating role of the ego within the psychological structure of the character. According to Ginting (2025), the ego represents the rational dimension of personality that negotiates between unconscious desires and the constraints imposed by social reality, while Eekhof et al., (2023) further suggest that readers' engagement with character perspective often depends on how narratives structure access to such reflective mental processes.

The findings further demonstrate that ego-driven reflections contribute to character development within the narrative. When the protagonist evaluates personal decisions and acknowledges their implications, the narrative moves toward psychological transformation. These moments were identified during the coding process as instances where rational deliberation replaces impulsive action. The ego therefore functions as a stabilizing force within the narrative structure. Scholars have argued that character development in literary narratives often emerges through moments of rational self-reflection and psychological awareness (Kenshinbay et al., 2025). This result also resonates with Aziz, (2022) observation that reader responses to characters are shaped not only by plot events but also by how the narrative presents interiority and reflective consciousness.

Another important observation concerns the relationship between the ego and narrative resolution. In several narrative segments, rational considerations lead the protagonist to adopt alternative strategies for dealing with conflict. Rather than responding impulsively, the character evaluates different possibilities before acting. This process demonstrates how the ego mediates between internal emotional pressure and external circumstances. Such narrative patterns support the argument that rational mediation plays a crucial role in shaping character transformation. As suggested by Jiang, (2025), narrative characters often evolve through processes of reflection that reconcile internal psychological tensions with external realities.

The role of the ego also reflects broader themes of psychological maturity and personal responsibility within the narrative. As the protagonist encounters increasingly complex situations, rational thinking becomes more prominent in guiding decisions. These moments illustrate how psychological development unfolds through the gradual strengthening of ego functions. Contemporary literary narratives frequently explore such transformations as part of character growth.

According to Huang, (2026), narrative representations of psychological mediation often symbolize the human capacity to negotiate between emotional impulses and moral obligations. In methodological terms, the close reading process used in this study was particularly effective in identifying these shifts because it captured gradual changes in tone, focalization, and introspective depth across the narrative.

In summary, the findings indicate that the ego plays a crucial role in regulating instinctual impulses and facilitating character development. The presence of rational reflection within the narrative highlights how literary texts portray psychological balance between emotional desire and social reality. Through thematic analysis, the study

demonstrates that the ego functions as a narrative mechanism that supports psychological transformation. This result confirms that Freud's structural model remains a useful analytical framework for examining character psychology in contemporary literary narratives. It also strengthens the study's central claim that the tension between impulse and regulation is narratively mediated rather than statically presented.

#### Representation of the Superego and Moral Regulation

The analysis also revealed that the superego emerges through expressions of moral judgment, guilt, and ethical reflection within the narrative. This moral dimension is particularly evident in the protagonist's idealized vision expressed in the statement "I keep picturing all these little kids playing some game in this big field of rye..." (Salinger, 1951), which reflects a strong ethical desire to protect innocence and prevent moral corruption. This vision represents the internalization of moral values, indicating the operation of the superego.

Unlike the instinctual impulses associated with the id or the rational mediation of the ego, the superego reflects the internalization of social values and moral expectations. In the selected narrative, these manifestations appear when the protagonist questions the moral implications of previous actions. Such reflections often arise after moments of emotional or rational conflict. According to Makrifah et al., (2026), the superego functions as an internal moral authority that shapes human behavior through feelings of responsibility and ethical awareness, and Al Jbour, (2023) likewise underlines the continuing relevance of psychoanalytic criticism for examining how texts negotiate ethical and interpretive tension.

Several textual segments illustrate how the protagonist experiences guilt after acting according to instinctual desires. These moments are also reflected in narrative episodes where the protagonist expresses discomfort, regret, or self-criticism after his actions, suggesting an internal conflict between desire and moral expectation. This demonstrates that the character evaluates behavior not only through emotional or rational processes but also through internalized ethical standards.

These moments represent the internal moral conflict between personal impulses and socially accepted values. The narrative frequently portrays such conflicts through introspective passages where the character evaluates past decisions. These reflections indicate that moral consciousness influences character behavior throughout the narrative. As noted by Hogan, (2022), literary narratives often portray moral tension as an internal psychological struggle between desire and ethical responsibility. In a complementary way, da Cunha Koch et al., (2024) show that literature can render psychologically difficult experiences more comprehensible by contextualizing emotion and moral response within the character's lived situation.

The presence of the superego also contributes to narrative tension by creating internal dilemmas for the protagonist. Characters are often forced to reconsider their actions in light of moral principles or social norms. This tension between personal desire and moral responsibility deepens the psychological complexity of the narrative. Such representations highlight how literature reflects the ethical dimensions of human experience. According to Zhenzhao, (2023), literary narratives frequently explore moral dilemmas as a way of examining the ethical dimensions of human life. The present findings support that view by showing that ethical reflection is not secondary to plot, but constitutive of character development itself.

Another significant finding concerns the interaction between the superego and narrative transformation. This

interaction becomes evident when the protagonist begins to reassess earlier impulsive actions through moral reflection, particularly in relation to his concern for innocence and his protective attitude toward his younger sister. These moments indicate a shift from instinctual reaction toward ethical awareness. As the protagonist confronts moral consequences, the narrative gradually moves toward psychological reconciliation. The character begins to integrate emotional impulses, rational considerations, and moral awareness into a more balanced psychological state.

This integrative process is reflected in the character's increasing tendency to reflect before acting and to consider the ethical and emotional consequences of his behavior, suggesting that moral awareness becomes a guiding force in his psychological development. This process illustrates how moral reflection can influence character growth and narrative resolution. Scholars have argued that ethical awareness often functions as a turning point in character development within modern literary narratives (Mäkelä & Meretoja, 2022). Halim, (2026) similarly suggests that literary language can mediate difficult psychic realities by enabling symbolic return, reformulation, and reflective distance.

The superego also reflects the broader social context depicted in the narrative. Moral expectations within the story often derive from cultural norms, family values, or social institutions. These influences shape the protagonist's perception of right and wrong throughout the narrative. Such representations indicate that literature serves as a medium for exploring the relationship between individual psychology and social morality. As suggested by Coleman, (2026), literary texts frequently depict moral consciousness as a product of both personal reflection and social conditioning. This is consistent with the present methodological approach, because the coding process identified recurring patterns in which external norms became internal moral pressure within the protagonist's self-evaluation.

Overall, the findings demonstrate that the superego plays a crucial role in shaping the ethical dimension of character development. Moral reflection, guilt, and ethical awareness function as narrative elements that influence the protagonist's psychological transformation. These findings confirm that Freud's structural model can effectively explain the interaction between psychological and moral dynamics within contemporary literary narratives. The thematic analysis therefore provides empirical support for the relevance of psychoanalytic theory in literary criticism. More specifically, the results reinforce the article's overall conclusion that narrative conflict is shaped by the tension between instinctual desire

and moral regulation, with the ego functioning as the mediating structure that organizes transformation across the plot.

## Conclusion

This study demonstrates that the representation of Freud's structural personality model id, ego, and superego plays a significant role in shaping psychological conflict and character development in contemporary literary narratives. Through qualitative psychoanalytic literary analysis using close reading and thematic analysis, the findings reveal that the id manifests through instinctual impulses and emotional reactions that initiate narrative tension, while the ego functions as a mediating structure that balances desire with social reality through rational reflection. Meanwhile, the superego emerges through moral awareness, guilt, and ethical judgment that guide the protagonist toward psychological reconciliation.

The interaction among these three psychological components contributes to the progression of the narrative by structuring internal conflicts that influence the protagonist's decisions and transformation throughout the story. However, these findings are specifically derived from the analysis of a single selected literary work, and therefore should be understood within this limited textual scope rather than as broadly generalizable across all contemporary literary narratives. Within this scope, the study demonstrates that Freud's structural model remains a relevant analytical framework for interpreting the psychological dynamics of characters in the selected narrative, rather than making universal claims about literary representation in general.

This study is limited by its focus on a single literary text and does not attempt to compare multiple works, genres, or cultural contexts. As a result, the findings are interpretive and context-specific, reflecting the particular narrative and character construction of the analyzed work. Future research is recommended to expand this approach by examining multiple literary works, comparing different authors, genres, or cultural contexts, and exploring how the interaction between id, ego, and superego may vary across diverse narrative forms. Such studies may provide a broader understanding of the applicability of psychoanalytic theory in literary criticism. Therefore, rather than proposing a universal framework, this study offers a focused contribution to psychoanalytic literary criticism by illustrating how psychological conflict can be systematically analyzed within a specific narrative context.

## References

- Akpoti, P. O. (2025). Universal Celestial Symbols in the Love Poems of Niyi Osundare and William Shakespeare. *Agidigbo: ABUAD Journal of the Humanities*, 13(2), 801–817. <https://doi.org/10.53982/agidigbo.2025.1302.24-j>
- Al Jbour, M. (2023). *Metamorphosis Unveiled: A Comprehensive Study of Transformation Themes in Modern English Literature*.
- Aziz, F. H. (2022). Free Association as a Stream of Consciousness Narrative Technique in Virginia Woolf's *To the Lighthouse*: A Stylistic Study. *Research in Educational & Human Sciences Arts & Languages*, 3(7).
- Bernard, L. L. (2024). *Instinct: A Study in Social Psychology*. Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003562702>
- Coleman, J. (2026). *English Literature in History, 1350–1400: Medieval Readers and Writers*. Taylor & Francis. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003742388>
- da Cunha Koch, C., Coughlan, H., & Cannon, M. (2024). Representations of Hallucinations and Dissociation in Young Adult Literature. *Irish Journal of Psychological Medicine*, 41(1), 125–131. <https://doi.org/10.1017/ipm.2022.43>
- Dibekulu, D., Dagnew, T., & G/Meskel, T. (2025). Exploring Ambivalence: A Psychoanalytic Analysis of Emotional Complexity. *PLoS One*, 20(7), e0327631. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0327631>
- Eekhof, L. S., Van Krieken, K., Sanders, J., & Willems, R. M. (2023). Engagement with Narrative Characters. *Discourse Processes*, 60(6), 411–439. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0163853X.2023.2206773>
- Eekhof, L. S., Van Krieken, K., & Willems, R. M. (2022). Reading about Minds. *Psychonomic Bulletin & Review*, 29(5), 1703–1718. <https://doi.org/10.3758/s13423-022-02079-z>
- Fatah, S. M., & Saeed, Y. F. (2024). Primal Instincts and Societal Constructs. *Language Literacy*, 8(1), 390–405. <https://doi.org/10.30743/ll.v8i1.9111>

- Fernández-Santiago, M., & Gámez-Fernández, C. M. (2022). *Representing Vulnerabilities in Contemporary Literature*. Taylor & Francis. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781032130323>
- Fountoulakis, G., & Simos, C. (2026). Mapping the Unconscious. *World Journal of Advanced Research and Reviews*, 29(2), 586–597. <https://doi.org/10.30574/wjarr.2026.29.2.0360>
- Fowler, A., Das, A., & Fowler, J. G. (2022). Literary Criticism in Advertising. *Journal of Advertising*, 51(3), 336–351. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00913367.2022.2031353>
- Freud, S. (2024). *The Ego and the Id*. Continental Press.
- Ginting, D. A. (2025). The Mirror of Hidden Desires. *Channing Journal*, 10(2), 49–56. <https://doi.org/10.30599/zshpqm61>
- Gorelick, N. (2024). *The Unwritten Enlightenment*. Northwestern University Press. <https://doi.org/10.2307/ij.18531018>
- Gunbayi, I. (2024). Rigor in Qualitative Research. *JAQMER*, 3(2).
- Halim, N. M. (2026). *Psycholinguistics and Literature*. Idebuku.
- Hasan, A. M. M. (2024). The Power of Words. *Journal of Language Studies*, 2(2), 122–134. <https://doi.org/10.58881/ijllscs.v2i2.80>
- Hogan, P. C. (2022). *Literature and Moral Feeling*. Cambridge University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009169509>
- Horváth, L. (2024). The Narrative Self. In *The Affective Core Self* (pp. 37–86). Springer. [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-56920-3\\_2](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-56920-3_2)
- Huang, Y. (2026). Psychoanalytic Inquiry into Holden. *Journal of Advances in Social Sciences*, 2(1), 76–86. <https://doi.org/10.65192/8kqwrr55>
- Jiang, H. (2025). Emotional Contagion in Education. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 16, 1549660. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2025.1549660>
- Kayani, Z., Solangi, S. A., & Khoso, J. A. (2023). Psychoanalytic Elucidation of Edgar Allan Poe. *Jahan-e-Tahqeeq*, 6(4), 580–592.
- Kenshinbay, T., Ghorbandordinejad, F., Bolatova, A., & Kiyassova, K. (2025). Enhancing Language Teacher Reflection. *Bulletin of Language and Literature Studies*, 2(1). <https://doi.org/10.59652/blls.v2i1.482>
- Mäkelä, M., & Meretoja, H. (2022). Critical Approaches to Storytelling. *Poetics Today*, 43(2), 191–218. <https://doi.org/10.1215/03335372-9642567>
- Makrifah, F. L., Purwoko, B., & Habsy, B. A. (2026). Role of Id, Ego, Superego. *QUANTA*, 10(1), 77–84.
- Naeem, M., Ozuem, W., Howell, K., & Ranfagni, S. (2023). Thematic Analysis Process. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 22. <https://doi.org/10.1177/16094069231205789>
- Nisha, S. R., & Kumar, S. H. P. (2025). Climate-Induced Trauma. *Theory and Practice in Language Studies*, 15(9), 3031–3039. <https://doi.org/10.17507/tpls.1509.25>
- Obiorah, C. A. (2025). *Investigation of Research Methods in Literary Studies*. Ohrvik, A. (2024). What is Close Reading. *Rethinking History*, 28(2), 238–260. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13642529.2024.2345001>
- Riazi, A. M., Ghanbar, H., & Rezvani, R. (2023). Qualitative Data Coding and Analysis. *Iranian Journal of Language Teaching Research*, 11(1), 25–47.
- Sinaga, Y. K., Matondang, S. A., & Manugeran, M. (2025). Exploring Narrative through Linguistics. *Journal of English Language and Education*, 10(5), 1015–1021.
- Stapledon, O. (2022). *Collected Works*. DigiCat.
- Tajik, O., Golzar, J., & Noor, S. (2025). Purposive Sampling. *International Journal of Education & Language Studies*, 1–9. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s40862-024-00299-5>
- Zhenzhao, N. (2023). *Introduction to Ethical Literary Criticism*. Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003231899>