

# Characterization Shift Through the Use of Affect in “Boys Don’t Cry”

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## ARTICLE INFO

### Article history:

Received May 21, 2025

Revised June 28, 2025

Accepted June 30, 2025

Available online June 30, 2025

### Keywords:

appraisal, affect, characterization, genre-based, novel



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## ABSTRACT

This study looks at how the protagonist and antagonist characters in the novel "Boys Don't Cry" employ affect, as well as the characterization that forms. The purpose of this study is to examine the forms of affect employed by the characters, as well as their characterization and to explain how the use of affect and characterization evolving based on the narrative text's generic structure. This study is a descriptive qualitative research and an embedded single case study. To achieve the objectives, this study employs appraisal framework and characterization theory. The research location takes form of a novel entitled "Boys Don't Cry". The findings revealed 278 applications of affect, the majority of which were negative-antipathy affect. The findings also imply that affect influences the characterization of the characters, with negative-irritable characterization being the most prevalent attribute. Furthermore, it was discovered that the usage of affect evolves based on the narrative text's generic structure, which determines the development of characterization.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Characters are a part of the story. A character must also have traits, both positive and negative. These traits can be seen from the characterization that is built through various elements in the story. These elements are divided into two indicators; direct presentation which is described through adjectives, abstract nouns, nouns, and parts of speech, and indirect presentation which shows traits through descriptions of environment and residence (Rimmon-Kenan, 2003). Based on these indicators, characterization can be analyzed through the use of affect as part of attitude within the appraisal framework proposed by Martin & White (2005).

Affect is used to express the feelings of participants in a narrative, which can be expressed through expressions or activities they do. Affect has four parts, namely dis/inclination, un/happiness, in/security, and dis/satisfaction. Affect is widely used in various media, one of which is literary works in the form of novels. In the novel “Boys Don't Cry”, affect is used to tell the story of a family living in a neighborhood with high poverty and crime rates. Focusing on the point of view of siblings who are told in different time settings, the novel presents various emotional upheavals experienced by the characters. In addition to the two siblings, this novel also presents the antagonist which was represented by Dessie Murphy, their father’s former colleague in drug dealing.

Previous research on the use of attitude in narrative texts often emphasizes the classification of affect categories, without analyzing the sub-subcategories underneath. For example, these studies have not analyzed whether the data found in the happiness subcategory of affect belongs to the cheer or affectionate subcategory (Behnam and Bahar, 2013; Fitriati et al., 2018; Magfiroh et al., 2021; Imran et al., 2022; Kareem and Farhan, 2022; Ul Ghafar and Qasim, 2022; Sodik et al., 2022; Kurniawati et al., 2023). Such in-depth classification is important to dig further into the types of characterization created by the use of affect in the novel.

Furthermore, research on narrative texts also found how authors describe their characters in the text. The research explains how attitude is used to describe the character in the story (Behnam and Bahar, 2013; Li and Gao, 2013; Hadidi and Mohammadbagheri-Parvin, 2015; Min, 2018; Hussein and Mahmoud, 2020; Imran et al., 2022; Sodik et al., 2022). However, these studies have not explained the development of attitude use and characterization at each stage of the narrative text. According to Martin & Rose (2008), the narrative text staging include orientation, complication, evaluation, and resolution.

## 2. METHOD

This research applies descriptive qualitative research with embedded single case study. This research uses the appraisal framework by Martin & White (2005), especially the affect category in the attitude subsystem. This study also applies the theory of characterization by Rimmon-Keenan (2003) to look at the characters in the novel. Furthermore, this research is also a genre-based research to review the development of the use of affect and the characterization formed by it.

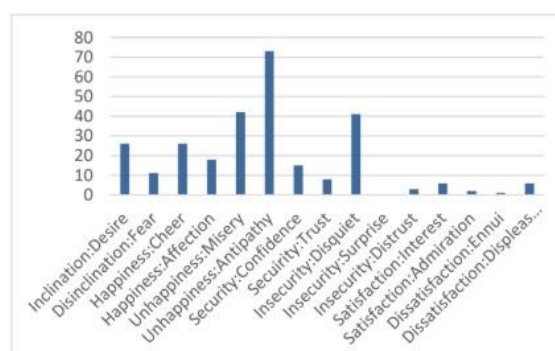
The data were taken from the novel “Boys Don't Cry” by Fiona Scarlett. The data found were analyzed through ethnographic analysis which includes domain analysis, taxonomy analysis, componential analysis, and cultural theme analysis (Santosa, 2021).

## 3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

### 3.1. Result

In general, Boys Don't Cry has two main characters when referring to the function of character appearance proposed by Nurgiyantoro (2010). The first character is the protagonist, which is a character who displays attitudes, views, and behaviors that are in accordance with the expectations or views of the reader. In this novel, the protagonists are represented by Joe and Finn, both of whom play an important role in driving the storyline and building reader sympathy. On the other hand, there are also antagonists, which are characters who are opposed to the protagonists, both in terms of attitudes, actions, and values. The antagonist in this novel is represented by Dessie Murphy, whose presence provides the dynamics of conflict and tension in the narrative.

In addition to characters, the novel is also built with a narrative text structure that has its own social function. The structure consists of four main stages, namely orientation, complication, evaluation, and resolution, as described by Martin and Rose (2008). Each of these stages plays an important role in shaping the storyline and influencing the way characters and their emotions are displayed throughout the narrative.



**Figure 1.** Affect found in the novel “Boys Don't Cry”

The results show that affect is used 278 times in the novel Boys Don't Cry, where each occurrence of affect helps in shaping the characterization of the characters. The types of affect found include inclination-desire, disinclination-fear, happiness-cheer, happiness-affection, unhappiness-misery, unhappiness-antipathy, security-confidence, security-trust, insecurity-disquiet, insecurity-distrust, satisfaction-interest, satisfaction-admiration, dissatisfaction-ennui, and dissatisfaction-displeasure. Of all the affect types analyzed, unhappiness-antipathy is the most dominant affect employed. This reflects the tendency for negative emotions to be quite strong in the depiction of the characters, especially in the context of conflict and relationships between characters. In contrast, insecurity-surprised affect is not found at all in the text, which suggests that the expression of surprise is not an emotion that is emphasized in this story. The complete distribution of each affective type found in the novel can be seen in Figure 1, which visually depicts the frequency as well as the proportion of each affective type in the novel.

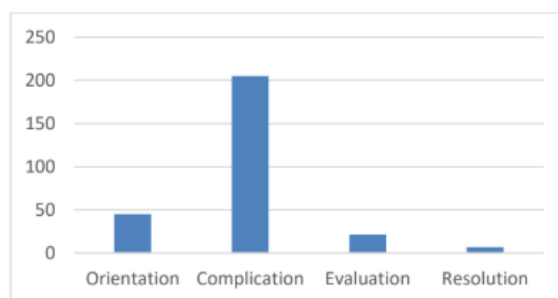


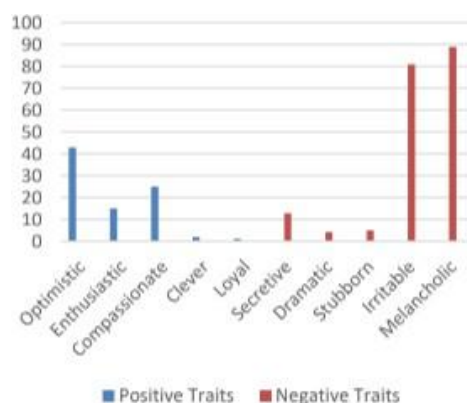
Figure 2. Distribution of affect in each of narrative text stages

In addition, when viewed based on the stages in the narrative text, there is not much use of affect in the orientation stage. This is due to the social function of the orientation stage which focuses on the introduction of characters, settings, and the initial context of the story, so affective expressions are not very prominent. In contrast, there is a significant increase in the use of affect at the complication stage. This increase occurs due to the emergence of the main conflict in the story, which encourages characters to show more complex and intense emotional reactions. Meanwhile, a decrease in the use of affect begins to be seen at the evaluation and resolution stages, as the conflict begins to subside and leads to the resolution of the story. These changes in the intensity of affective use at each stage show that the storyline and social function of each stage of the text structure greatly influence not only the number but also the complexity of the affect used. In a more detailed way, the distribution of affect use at each stage of the text can be seen in Table 1.

**Table 1.** Distribution of the affect used by the characters throughout the narrative stages

Gene ric Struc ture	Characters		Affect														Σ	
			Irrrealis				Realis											
			IN C	DI SI NC	HAP		UNII		SEC		INS			SAT		DISSA T		
			D es	Fe a	C he	Af f	Mi s	A nt	Co nf	T ru	Di sq	Su rp	Di st	I nt	Ad m	E nn		Di sp
Or	Protag onist	Joe	1		2	5	3	1	1		5						3	
		Fin n		1	2		2	1	1	1	3						0	
	Antag onist	Des sie						4									1	
Com p	Protag onist	Joe	6	3	7	8	10	5	5		18					2	1	
		Fin n	17	7	13	3	11		7	3	14		3	6	2	1	0	
	Antag onist	Des sie						5								4	9	
Eva	Protag onist	Joe	1		1		11										1	
		Fin n	1		1		1			4	1						3	
	Antag onist	Des sie															8	
Res	Protag onist	Joe				1	3		1								5	
		Fin n					1	1									2	
	Antag onist	Des sie																
Σ			26	11	26	18	42	7 3	15	8	41		3	6	2	1	6 7 8	

As explained previously, affect can be used as a tool to shape the characterization of actors in a story. The characterization analysis in this study was conducted by adjusting the findings about affective identified in the text to the classification of positive and negative characterization. Positive characterization includes traits such as optimistic, enthusiastic, compassionate, clever, and loyal, which reflect the character's positive attitude, empathy, intelligence, and loyalty to certain values in the story. Meanwhile, negative characterization consists of secretive, dramatic, stubborn, irritable, and melancholic traits, which describe the dark or complex side of a character between the emotions expressed by the characters and the character construction that appears throughout the storyline.



**Figure 3.** Characterization formed through the use of affect

In line with the finding in relation to affect, the characterizations discovered were 278, with melancholic characterization as the highest number. In contrast, loyal characterization was found to be the least in the novel. In addition, similar to the affect findings, characterization becomes more complex when entering the complication stage. During the orientation stage, there is only an introduction to the characters and setting of the story so that the characterization found is not so complex. However, the appearance of some characterization in the orientation stage becomes the foundation of the characterization in the following stages. Complexity increases sharply at the complication stage due to the conflicts that the characters have to face. The decline then occurs at the evaluation and resolution stages. The decline occurs because at the evaluation stage, the conflict begins to decline in number. Moreover, at the last two stages, the antagonist character no longer appears. In a more detailed way, the characterization manifested in the novel “Boys Don’t Cry” is shown in the Table 2.

**Table 2.** Distribution of characterization formed by the use of affect throughout the narrative stages

Generic Structure	Characters		Characterization										Σ
			Positive					Negative					
			Opt	Enth	Comp	Cle	Loy	Secr	Dra	Stu	Irr	Mel	
Or	Protagonist	Joe	2		7			1			16	4	30
		Finn	3					5	1		2		11
	Antagonist	Dessie									4		4
Comp	Protagonist	Joe	9	3	10	1	1	5	2	2	51	25	109
		Finn	25	11	4	1		2	1	4	1	42	91
	Antagonist	Dessie									5		5
Eva	Protagonist	Joe		1							2	10	14
		Finn	3		2							3	8
	Antagonist	Dessie											
Res	Protagonist	Joe	1		1							3	5
		Finn			1							1	2
	Antagonist	Dessie											
Σ			43	15	25	2	1	13	4	6	81	89	278

### 3.2. Discussion

The main protagonists in this novel consist of Joe and Finn, the two brothers sharing their point of view in different time backgrounds. Meanwhile, the main antagonist consists of Dessie Murphy, their father’s former colleague in illegal drug dealing. In addition, to observe the development, the narrative text staging becomes a

substantial part. The narrative text staging consists of orientation, complication, evaluation, and resolution (Martin & Rose, 2008). Each of this stage serves their own social function. Whereas the orientation stage functions as introductory part, complication stage functions as the part where problems rise, evaluation stage serves as a part where the problems begins to dissipate and the characters evaluate themselves, and resolution stage serves as the part where the problems are solved.

Affect is not only expressed through the expression of dialogue, but also through the actions taken by the participants in the text. This also applies to the novel "Boys Don't Cry". At the orientation stage, Joe predominantly expresses affection to others through physical actions. The expression of affect described through gesture actions and behavior shows a high level of affection. This is in line with the findings of Imran et al. (2022) which shows that the behavioral process is a very appropriate way to show the feelings possessed by the character. The affection he shows leads him to be a compassionate character. However, at this stage, Joe often shows his irritable trait due to his background as the son of a criminal and the loss of his younger brother. Contrary to Joe, the younger brother Finn, was described as secretive character due to him often hiding something to run from the consequences.

Affect can be used as a projection to build and represent characters in a story (Djarmika et al., 2023; Ayuknimah et al., 2024). Through affective expressions shown by characters, readers can capture the various emotional and psychological sides of the character. In other words, affect not only reflects a character's feelings towards an event, but also plays a role in constructing the character's nature, personality, and motivation. In this case, affect can function as a lens to understand the character's true nature. This view is reinforced by Untung (2015), who stated that a character's background, in terms of life experience, social relations, and the environment in which he or she grows up, greatly influences the character's nature and the way the character speaks and acts in the story. Therefore, affect analysis can provide a more comprehensive picture of the character. In *Boys Don't Cry*, this is clearly reflected in the orientation stage, where the harsh reality faced by Joe is shown from the beginning. Joe is described as a character who lives in an area with high poverty and crime rates. In addition, he also has to deal with the fact that his brother has passed away due to cancer. This then triggers him to use a lot of negative affect which brings out his irritable nature.

Furthermore, at the complication stage, there is an increase in the complexity of the use of affect in line with the characterization shown by the characters. Djarmika et al. (2023) stated that the emergence of conflict triggers the use of many expressions. In addition, the use of affect and characterization that appears shows that affect is in line with characterization (Hadidi and Mohammadbagheri-Parvin, 2015). In addition, in this complication stage, where the problems begin to rise, there were many interactions between the characters. This results in the building of the relationship between the characters. To support this, Kurniawati et al. (2022) mentioned that dialogues become the main aspect of interpersonal relationships between the characters. In this stage, Joe's irritable trait becomes more intense, and he also shows his other traits, which have not appeared in the previous stage. This results in his complex characterization, which shows how the use of affect shows the complex emotional states the character experiences (Ul Ghafar and Qasim, 2022).

In addition, Finn also experiences the increase in complexity at the complication stage. Through this stage, he often expresses his feelings and thoughts through the monologues in his mind. This proves that the use of affect, even through the silent monologues in mind, contributes as a medium of emotion delivery (Li, 2022). In this stage, Finn shows both positive and negative traits. Whereas in the positive traits, he mainly shows his optimistic nature represented by his use of positive affect (Hadidi and Mohammadbagheri-Parvin, 2015). Meanwhile, in the negative trait, he often shows his melancholic side due to the cancer in his body.

At the evaluation stage of the narrative structure, the earlier rising conflict begins to dissipate, reducing the emotional intensity of the story. This decline has a direct impact on the frequency of affect use, as the character's emotional expression becomes more relaxed and introspective. At this point, the story concentrates on the character's internal appraisal process, particularly how the character responds to past occurrences. The character begins to ponder and assess himself, his relationships with others, and the life choices he takes, rather than simply reacting emotionally to external events. In this situation, the use of affect tends to reduce in number while maintaining a deeper emotional quality.

This change is also accompanied by a shift in characterization, which is clearly seen in the character Joe. If in the previous stages, Joe was depicted as an irritable, easily angered and full of emotional outbursts, at the evaluation stage, he experiences a shift in characterization towards a melancholic nature. This nature reflects deep sadness, feelings of loss, and more complex emotional reflection. This shift indicates significant character development. Joe begins to face reality emotionally and mentally, including accepting the death of his younger brother and letting go of the negative influences from his past related to his father's criminal legacy. This process of reflection shows the emotional maturity of the character and becomes an important point in depicting his transformation towards the end of the story.

Finn experiences a similar situation. If Finn's character exhibits more negative features at the start of the novel, he exhibits a variety of positive attributes as the storyline unfolds, particularly near the end, indicating considerable character development. This shift depicts Finn's emotional dynamics, as he attempts to balance his emotions while

dealing with numerous complicated events. The contrast between the beginning and end of the novel demonstrates that Finn's character development is not static, but rather the product of internalizing values, emotional experiences, and reflection on the conflicts he faces (Arianto & Septriani, 2023). Furthermore, Finn's emotional shift towards positive affective expressions shows his efforts to reach a point of character's equilibrium, a condition where the character achieves a new understanding of himself and his environment after going through various conflicts and emotional stress (Kristianto et al., 2022).

At the final stage in the narrative structure, namely resolution, there is a decrease again in the use of affect and intensity of characterization, which reflects the emotional condition of the character who starts to stabilize after going through the conflict. For example, Joe's characterization shifts from irritable to melancholic. The irritable characterization that previously dominates shifts to melancholic, which shows reflective sadness and acceptance of reality. If irritable describes anger and explosive emotional reactions, melancholic reflects a form of emotional maturity, where the character is able to reflect on his life experiences with a feeling of calm sorrow. Even though the characterization change does not come from negative to positive, this shift shows significant character development, especially in the character Joe, who shifts from a tough attitude to a softer and more reflective attitude. Thus, the resolution stage not only serves as the conclusion of the storyline, but also marks the complete psychological transformation of the character. In line with Piscayanti's view (2020), this stage shows emotional character development, where the character achieves understanding and acceptance of the conflict he has experienced.

This character development also happens to the other protagonist, Finn. At the beginning of the story, at the orientation stage he is described as a secretive character. Moving towards to the complication and evaluation stage, he mainly shows his melancholic trait. This trait of melancholic is shown mainly through negative affect such as unhappiness-misery and insecurity-disquiet. Different from Joe, Finn's characterization at the end of the story shows positive development. At the end of the story, the author portrays him as a compassionate character. This shift marks how a narrative stage functions as a medium to construct and develop a character's identity.

In addition to the protagonists, this novel features an antagonist, Dessie Murphy. Dessie's presence is not as prominent as the protagonists, as he appears only in the first two stages of the narrative structure, orientation and complication stages. Despite his brief presence, his character plays a crucial part in the progression of the story. Dessie's portrayal does not exhibit sophisticated development in any stage, but rather underlines the increasing intensity of his irritable disposition, which has been present since the beginning. This means that Dessie's character does not undergo considerable development, but rather serves as a source of emotional strain for the main character.

Although his appearance is brief, Dessie's role is quite dominant in influencing Joe's emotional dynamics. Every interaction between the two manages to trigger an explosion of negative affect from Joe, especially in the form of anger and frustration. This is in line with the findings of Lutfia and Wahyono (2024) who stated that interactions between characters contribute greatly to enriching the emotional dynamics in a story. In other words, antagonist characters, like Dessie have a strategic role in strengthening the affective dimension of the narrative through interpersonal conflict. In addition, according to Nurgiyantoro's view (2010), antagonist character does indeed function to bring up the main conflict in the story. In this context, Dessie Murphy successfully carries out his function as a character who opposes the protagonist, both emotionally and ideologically, and encourages the development of the main character's traits through the conflict he causes.

Affect is an important element in describing the depth of characters and the psychological dynamics they experience throughout the story. In addition, the findings regarding character development in this study also strengthen the results of research conducted by Ayuknimah et al. (2024), suggesting that characters experience gradual development in each part of the text. This development includes changes in attitude, perspective, and behaviour displayed by the characters as the storyline progresses. Therefore, both the use of affect and the dynamics of character development not only enrich the emotional aspects of the narrative, but also become important indicators in discourse analysis, especially in understanding the narrative structure and its contribution to the construction of meaning in the text.

#### 4. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

The results showed that all affect types were successfully identified in the analysed novel, except for the insecurity-surprise affect type. The most dominant affect used is unhappiness-antipathy, which reflects the negative emotional mood of the characters in the story. In line with these findings, characterization with negative tendencies, especially the irritable trait, is the most frequently identified type of characterization. Thus, it can be concluded that the emergence of characterization is closely related to the type of affect used in the text. The use of affect not only clarifies the characters' emotional responses but also serves as a means to represent the characters in a narrative in a more in-depth and contextualized manner.

In terms of the stages of text structure, both the use of affect and characterization are strongly influenced by the social function of each stage. The use of affect experiences a significant increase at the complication stage,

which simultaneously also shows a higher complexity of characterization. This stage marks the point of conflict in the storyline, which naturally demands more intense and in-depth emotional and character portrayals. Furthermore, based on the results of the analysis, the final stage in the text structure, the resolution, provides closure to the development of the characters in the story. At this stage, the character dynamics reach the final form that reflects the change or consistency of the character throughout the narrative, while emphasizing the contribution of text structure in shaping the character's journey.

This study specifically focuses on the use of affect as an approach to analyse characterization. Therefore, for future research in the same field, it is suggested that researchers consider integrating other attitude categories in appraisal theory, such as judgment and appreciation, to gain a more holistic understanding of character representation. In addition, other elements of appraisal theory such as engagement and graduation also have the potential to be studied further to expand and deepen the findings related to how attitudes, evaluations, and emotional intensity are constructed in narrative texts.

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