

MALORIE'S MOTHERHOOD DESCRIBED IN JOSH MALERMAN'S *BIRD*

BOX

THESIS

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**DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH LITERATURE
FACULTY OF HUMANITIES
UNIVERSITAS ISLAM NEGERI MAULANA MALIK IBRAHIM
MALANG
2024**

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THESIS

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2024**

STATEMENT OF AUTHORSHIP

I state that the thesis entitled **MALORIE'S MOTHERHOOD DESCRIBED IN JOSH MALERMAN'S *BIRD BOX*** is my original work. I do not include any materials previously written or published by another person except those cited as references and written in the bibliography. If there is any objection or claim, I am the only person responsible for that.

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APPROVAL SHEET

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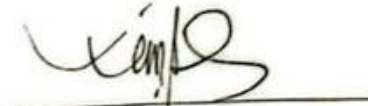
This is to certify that Puji Almas Syahira's thesis entitled **MALORIE'S MOTHERHOOD DESCRIBED IN JOSH MALERMAN'S *BIRD BOX*** has been approved by the Board of Examiners as one of the requirements for the degree of *Sarjana Sastra* (S.S.) in Department of English Literature.

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MOTTO

"Love looks not with the eyes, but with the mind."

(William Shakespeare)

DEDICATION

This research is a heartfelt tribute to my parents, who have provided unwavering support throughout the process and given immense love to their eldest child. I would also like to express my gratitude to the lecturers who have consistently imparted knowledge to me and to all my friends who have supported and guided me until the completion of my studies.

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ABSTRACT

Syahira, Puji Almas. (2024). Malorie's Motherhood is Described in Josh Malerman's *Bird Box*. Undergraduate Thesis. Department of English Literature, Faculty of Humanities, Universitas Islam Negeri Maulana Malik Ibrahim Malang.

Advisor: Dr. Siti Masitoh, M.Hum.

Keywords: *Bird Box Novel, Post-apocalyptic, Motherhood*

This study analyzes the detailed portrayal of motherhood in Josh Malerman's *Bird Box*, explicitly analyzing the character of Malorie using Teresa Heffernan's theory of motherhood. The researcher focuses on the main female character from *Bird Box* by Josh Malerman, formulating the research question: How are Malorie's motherhood aspects narrated in Josh Malerman's *Bird Box*? The researcher aims to analyze how the post-apocalyptic narrative depicts the main female characters in Malerman's novel, focusing on aspects of motherhood outlined by Teresa Heffernan. These aspects include maternal instinct, sacrifice, survival skills, emotional strain, relationships, moral dilemmas, role models, grief and loss, hope, and critique of society. This research uses the methodology of literary criticism, which involves thoroughly examining and analyzing literary works. The research utilizes narratology due to its systematic and thorough framework for analyzing the narrative elements of post-apocalyptic literature. This approach allows researchers to understand better the genre's distinct storytelling approaches and thematic explorations. The research results dissect the narrative elements that shape Malorie's character and her experiences as a mother in a world of danger by highlighting ten aspects of motherhood based on Teresa Heffernan. Further, through an examination of narrative elements, it becomes evident that Malorie's character undergoes a profound transformation, considering the multifaceted nature of her maternal role.

ABSTRAK

Syahira, Puji Almas. (2024). *Malorie's Motherhood is Described in Josh Malerman's Bird Box*. Skripsi. Jurusan Sastra Inggris, Fakultas Humaniora, Universitas Islam Negeri Maulana Malik Ibrahim Malang.

Dosen Pembimbing: Dr. Siti Masitoh, M.Hum.

Kata Kunci: *Novel Bird Box, Post-apokaliptik, Keibuan*

Penelitian ini menganalisis gambaran rinci tentang keibuan dalam *Bird Box* karya Josh Malerman, khususnya menganalisis karakter Malorie menggunakan teori keibuan Teresa Heffernan. Peneliti fokus pada tokoh utama wanita dari *Bird Box* karya Josh Malerman, dengan merumuskan pertanyaan penelitian: Bagaimana aspek keibuan Malorie dinarasikan dalam *Bird Box* karya Josh Malerman? Peneliti bertujuan untuk menganalisis bagaimana narasi pasca-apokaliptik menggambarkan tokoh utama perempuan dalam novel Malerman, dengan fokus pada aspek keibuan yang dituangkan oleh Teresa Heffernan. Aspek-aspek tersebut meliputi naluri keibuan, pengorbanan, keterampilan bertahan hidup, ketegangan emosional, hubungan, dilema moral, teladan, kesedihan dan kehilangan, harapan, dan kritik terhadap masyarakat. Penelitian ini menggunakan metodologi kritik sastra, yang melibatkan pemeriksaan dan analisis karya sastra secara menyeluruh. Penelitian ini menggunakan naratologi sebagai metodologi karena kerangkanya yang sistematis dan menyeluruh untuk menganalisis unsur-unsur naratif sastra pasca-apokaliptik. Pendekatan ini memungkinkan peneliti untuk memperoleh pemahaman yang lebih mendalam tentang pendekatan penceritaan dan eksplorasi tematik yang berbeda dari genre tersebut. Hasil penelitian membedah elemen narasi yang membentuk karakter Malorie dan pengalamannya sebagai seorang ibu di dunia yang penuh bahaya dengan menyoroti sepuluh aspek keibuan berdasarkan Teresa Heffernan. Lebih lanjut, melalui penelaahan terhadap unsur-unsur naratif, terlihat jelas bahwa karakter Malorie mengalami transformasi yang mendalam, mengingat peran keibuannya yang memiliki banyak segi.

مستخلص البحث

سيهيرا، بوجي الماس. (2024). أمومة مالوري موصوفة في صندوق الطيور لجوش مالرمان. أطروحة جامعية. قسم الأدب
دكتور. سيتي ماسيتوه، م. هوم: الإنجليزي، كلية العلوم الإنسانية، جامعة الإسلام نيجري مولانا مالك إبراهيم مالانج. المستشار

الكلمات المفتاحية: رواية صندوق الطير، ما بعد نهاية العالم، الأمومة

تتخلل هذه الدراسة التصوير التفصيلي للأمومة في كتاب "صندوق الطيور" لجوش مالرمان، وتحلل على وجه التحديد شخصية مالوري باستخدام نظرية الأمومة لتيريزا هيفرنان. يركز الباحث على الشخصية النسائية الرئيسية في رواية "صندوق الطائر" للمخرج جوش مالرمان، وصياغة سؤال البحث: كيف يتم سرد جوانب الأمومة لدى مالوري في رواية "صندوق الطيور" لجوش مالرمان؟ يهدف الباحث إلى تحليل كيفية تصوير رواية ما بعد نهاية العالم للشخصيات النسائية الرئيسية في رواية مالرمان، مع التركيز على جوانب الأمومة كما حددتها تيريزا هيفرنان. وتشمل هذه الجوانب غريزة الأمومة، والتضحية، ومهارات البقاء، والتوتر العاطفي، والعلاقات، والمعضلات الأخلاقية، والقنوة، والحزن والخسارة، والأمل، وانتقاد المجتمع. يستخدم هذا البحث منهج النقد الأدبي الذي يتضمن فحص وتحليل شامل للأعمال الأدبية. يستخدم البحث علم السرد كمنهجية بسبب إطاره المنهجي والشامل لتحليل العناصر السردية لأدب ما بعد نهاية العالم. يسمح هذا النهج للباحثين باكتساب فهم أكثر عمقاً لأساليب سرد القصص المتميزة والاستكشافات المواضيعية لهذا النوع. وتشريح نتائج البحث العناصر السردية التي تشكل شخصية مالوري وتجاربها كأم في عالم مليء بالمخاطر من خلال تسليط الضوء على عشرة جوانب للأمومة استناداً إلى تيريزا هيفرنان. علاوة على ذلك، ومن خلال فحص العناصر السردية، يصبح من الواضح أن شخصية مارولي تمر بتحول عميق، مع الأخذ في الاعتبار الطبيعة المتعددة الأوجه لدورها الأمومي

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This chapter contains the study's background, the study's problem, the study, the objective of the study, scope and limitation, the significance of the study, and the definition of key terms as guides in the implementation of this study.

A. Background of the Study

Throughout history, the means of conveying literature have evolved with advancements in communication technology. From ancient civilizations that etched stories onto clay tablets or chiseled them into stone to the invention of the printing press, which democratized access to books, to the digital age, where literature is readily accessible through electronic devices, the media of literature have transformed (Duff, 2014, p. 69). The written word remains a cornerstone of literary expression, but oral traditions, performance art, film, and digital media have expanded the boundaries of what literature can be. In today's interconnected world, literature takes on new dimensions as it engages with multimedia platforms, incorporating visuals, sound, and interactivity to create immersive narratives that challenge traditional notions of storytelling.

The novel is an exceptionally versatile and enduring genre among the diverse forms of literature. Novels are characterized by extended prose narratives, allowing in-depth exploration of characters, settings, and themes. The novel has a rich history,

with roots in ancient storytelling traditions, but it truly blossomed during the Enlightenment and the rise of the modern novel in the 18th century (Kuiper, 1995, p. 619). Novels come in various shapes and sizes, spanning numerous genres such as romance, mystery, science fiction, fantasy, and historical fiction. They allow readers to engage with intricate plotlines, complex characters, and thought-provoking ideas (Watt, 2001, p. 13). Novels can transport readers to different times and places, offering escape and insight into the human condition. One of the most captivating and thought-provoking subgenres within the novel is post-apocalyptic. This genre presents readers with a unique narrative landscape where the world as we know it has been transformed by catastrophic events. These events can take many forms, including natural disasters, nuclear warfare, pandemics, or fantastical scenarios involving alien invasions or supernatural forces (Kuiper, 1995, p. 622).

The post-apocalyptic narrative is one branch of the Narratology approach where Narratology theory serves as a foundational framework for analyzing narrative elements and storytelling techniques within literature (Ball & Boheemen, 2009, p. 22). This interdisciplinary field examines how narratives are structured, convey meaning, and engage readers. Narratology delves into elements such as plot, point of view, character development, narrative structure, and the relationship between the narrator and the reader (Buell, 2003, p. 228). One of the influential people who invented the Post-apocalyptic period was Teresa Heffernan. In her post-apocalyptic narrative approach in her book entitled "Post-Apocalyptic Culture:

Modernism, Postmodernism, and the Twentieth-Century Novel, "she invites readers to contemplate the fragility of civilization, the resilience of the human spirit and the ethical dilemmas that arise in times of crisis. It explores the boundaries of human adaptability as characters are thrust into extreme situations where survival often demands resourcefulness, cooperation, and sacrifice. These approaches delve into the core of our existential fears, challenging us to confront the prospect of a forever-changing world (Heffernan, 2008, p. 4).

Josh Malerman's (2014) *Bird Box* is a prominent work within the post-apocalyptic genre, known for its chilling and suspenseful narrative. Set in a world where an unseen and malevolent force drives people to madness and violence upon sight, the novel introduces us to its enigmatic protagonist, Malorie. She is a survivor in a world plunged into darkness, where survival hinges on avoiding looking at the unknown horrors that roam outside. As we delve deeper into the novel, we will understand Malorie's central role in *Bird Box* and her evolution from vulnerability to resilience.

For several compelling reasons, post-apocalyptic narratives are crucial in both real life and literature. Firstly, they serve as cautionary tales, reminding us of the potential consequences of our actions. By depicting dystopian futures resulting from environmental degradation, warfare, or societal collapse, these narratives compel us to reflect on the urgent need for responsible environmental stewardship and global cooperation to avert such catastrophic scenarios. In literature, post-apocalyptic

narratives offer a rich canvas for exploring complex human themes. They delve into the essence of human survival, resilience, and adaptability, inviting readers to ponder the depths of human nature and the moral dilemmas that may arise in extreme circumstances. This genre allows authors to dissect the core of our humanity, questioning the values, ethics, and societal structures we hold dear, thereby facilitating critical self-examination (Ball & Boheemen, 2009, p. 24).

Moreover, post-apocalyptic narratives in literature provide a platform for addressing contemporary societal issues, from political tensions to technological advancements. They allow readers to engage with these topics in a thought-provoking and allegorical manner. In real life, the popularity of post-apocalyptic narratives can serve as a wake-up call, encouraging people to take concrete actions to prevent the worst-case scenarios they depict. Drawing parallels between fiction and reality reminds us of the importance of addressing pressing global challenges and striving for a more sustainable, harmonious future (Heffernan, 2008, p. 10).

Many researchers have taken a post-apocalyptic approach or Bird Box research, which includes a discussion of relevant past research as it is essential to minimize duplication. Therefore, researchers must look for changes from previous research, which consists of previous research that used the same research object and previous research that used the same theory.

In using the same theory, several previous studies apply the same as this research like. Kataryna Więckowska (2022), in her title journal *Appositions: The*

Future in Solar Punk and Post-Apocalyptic Fiction, her journal explores future visions in solar punk and post-apocalyptic fiction, contrasting their views on progress, science, and individualism. It highlights the dystopian nature of post-apocalyptic stories and the optimism in solar punk narratives, aiming to transcend environmental pessimism for a livable future.

Aurelio Guerra and Gabriel Osuna (2020), in their journal title, Post-apocalyptic Violence in 21st-Century Mexican Fiction, where in their analysis focused on contemporary Mexican novels are essentially post-apocalyptic. However, critics often don't categorize them as such because they don't explicitly present a post-apocalyptic scenario. Instead, these novels depict present-day Mexican reality, including its political and social institutions.

David Paul and G. Alan (2023), in their journal-title A Postmodern Psychoanalytic Critique of Narrative Disruptions and Subversions in Dalit and Post-apocalyptic Narratives: A Comparative Study, their study aims to examine narrative disruptions and subversions in the context of Dalit and post-apocalyptic literature, employing a postmodern psychoanalytic technique.

Celestel Lacroix and Robert Westerfelhaus (2022), with their journal title An Emerging New American Mythos: Post-Apocalyptic Narratives as Expressions of Rupture, Rage, Resignation, and Regret, their study of the United States has its American monomyth emphasizing heroism and societal repair. This mythic structure appears in film noir, science fiction, and Westerns. In contrast, post-apocalyptic

myths, characterized by a somber tone, serve as outlets for emotions like anger and acceptance in response to perceived societal disruption. The authors explore these narratives in various media and suggest they can challenge the dominance of the traditional American monomyth without replacing it entirely.

There is also the use of the same research object; there are several previous studies that use the same research as this research, like Kai Tjoon Lim (2023) in his journal-title *Queering Sight: Visualizing the Transversal Other in Josh Malerman's Bird Box*, where in his journal discusses how the sense of sight can challenge rigid identity constructs, focusing on queer perspectives. It argues that sight has the potential to liberate individuals from visual objectification and critiques binary frameworks. The analysis centers on Josh Malerman's *Bird Box*, which explores the role of looking in queer contexts.

Iffah Hikmah (2021), in her journal titled *Anxiety Disorder in Josh Malerman's Bird Box*, examines anxiety experienced by the main character in the novel *Bird Box* by Josh Malerman and explores how she copes with it. Using a qualitative descriptive method and a psychoanalytic approach, the researcher identifies three types of anxiety (reality, neurotic, and moral) and three defense mechanisms (repression, regression, and rationalization) employed by the main character.

Rehan Syach Jihan and Adeline Grace M. Litaay (2023), with their journal title *A Study of Symbolism in Josh Malerman's Bird Box*, where in their journal explores

symbolism in Josh Malerman's *Bird Box*, a post-apocalyptic thriller. Using Frederick William Dillistone's theory, the study identifies and analyzes nine symbols, such as birds representing alarm and blindfold symbolizing protection.

Chairina Nasir, Aulia, and Zulfadli (2023), in their journal title *The Analysis of Social and Discourse Deixes in the 'Bird Box' Novel by Josh Malerman*, investigate social deixis and discourse deixis in the novel *Bird Box* by Josh Malerman. Using a qualitative approach and document analysis, the research applies Cruse's theory to identify types of deixis.

Laura R. Kremmel (2018), in her journal titled *Blind Survival: Disability and Horror in Josh Malerman's Bird Box*, where in her journal aims to highlight the tension between blindness as life-saving and monstrous. The main character still struggles with societal judgments about blindness when outside this supportive community. Ultimately, the novel suggests that overcoming ableist attitudes requires more than just horror; it demands a more profound societal change.

Kresna Dwijaya (2021), with his thesis titled *Human-Nature Relationship In Post-Apocalyptic Environment In Josh Malerman's Bird Box: An Ecocriticism Study*, examines the human-nature relationship in the novel *Bird Box*, set in a post-apocalyptic world where humans must wear blindfolds to survive creatures that drive them insane. The study uses ecocriticism to analyze how blindfolds symbolize human ignorance, leading to environmental pollution. Josh Malerman, the author, portrays nature as attacking humans to highlight real-life environmental destruction.

According to the explanation above, by using Teresa Heffernan's theory through the analysis of Malorie's character and her journey within the post-apocalyptic landscape and seeing the motherhood aspect, the researcher seeks to shed light on how post-apocalyptic narrative engages with Maternal instinct, Sacrifice, Survival Skill, Emotional strain, relationships, morals dilemma, role models, Grief and lost, Hope, and Critique of Society through motherhood aspect of Malorie, Where this will answer the research gap in this field of research. Furthermore, by using Teresa Heffernan's theory, the researcher aims to unravel the enduring appeal its ability of Malorie's character in Motherhood aspect: Maternal instinct, Sacrifice, Survival Skill, Emotional strain, relationships, moral dilemma, role models, Grief and loss, Hope, and Critique of Society in Josh Malerman's *Bird Box*.

B. Problem of the Study

Based on the background above, the problem related to the research can be formulated as follows: How are Malorie's Motherhood aspects narrated in Josh Malerman's *Bird Box*?

C. Significance of the Study

This research has two benefits: theoretical and practical. In a theoretical analysis of Malorie's character and her journey within the Teresa Heffernan Motherhood theory, the researcher seeks to shed light on how post-apocalyptic literature engages with themes of fear, survival, and hope. In practice, the results of this study are expected to contribute to further research in analyzing Josh Malerman's

Bird Box novel. Finally, this research is also expected to be useful for readers of Josh Malerman's *Bird Box* in understanding the Motherhood aspect of Malorie's character.

D. Scope and Limitation

To explain the analysis in this study, the researcher will offer scope and limitations. The researcher used the novel Josh Malerman's *Bird Box*, published in 2014. The writer only discusses the book from the post-apocalyptic narrative of the Main Character. The theory used in this study is Teresa Heffernan Motherhood aspect.

E. Definition of Key Terms

Narratology: Narratology examines how narrative structures our perception of cultural artifacts and the world around us. The study of narrative is critical since our ordering of time and space in narrative forms constitutes one of the primary ways we construct meaning in general (Ball & Boheemen, 2009, p. 22).

Post-Apocalyptic Narrative: Post-apocalyptic narrative is a literary or storytelling genre that explores the aftermath of a catastrophic event or disaster that has led to civilization's collapse. These narratives are characterized by settings where societal structures have crumbled, resources are scarce, and the survivors must navigate a world marked by chaos, danger, and uncertainty. Post-apocalyptic narratives often focus on survival, adaptation, the human condition, and the consequences of cataclysmic events (Heffernan, 2008, p. 6).

Motherhood: Motherhood refers to the mother's relationship with her child as a sociologic, physiologic, and emotional whole (Helene, 1973, p. 20). Motherhood is a communal affiliation. In biological motherhood, as in these other activities, a woman was not merely a producer and stabilizer of life; there, too, she was a transformer. Menstrual blood was believed to be transformed into the milk that flowed from the mother's breast.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE RELATED LITERATURE

This chapter contains information on the theory of Narratology, Post-apocalyptic narrative, and Teressa Heffernan Motherhood as guides for implementing this study.

A. Narratology Literary Criticism

The global narrative is constructed and comprises the narratives relayed by individuals. The concept of narrative has undergone a transformation in its interpretation over time, influenced by the evolution of its scholarly examination. The terms "story" and "narrative" may appear simplistic and inconsequential to some upon initial hearing. However, the notion is intricate. According to Herman and Vervaeck (2005, p. 5), drawing inspiration from Susan Onega and Jose Angel Garcia Landa's concept, narrative is the semiotic depiction of a sequence of meaningfully interconnected events.

The term "meaningful" in the context of a narrative refers to the presence of one or more discernible meanings within the narrative structure. This term is arguably the most straightforward and concise explanation for a novice learner to embark on the extensive field of narrative studies. This paradigm pertains to the structuralist approach to narrative. The relationship between narrative and structuralism is

Undoubtedly important. The examination of narrative commences with the foundational premise of structuralism, which posits that all phenomena can be seen as textual entities. The emergence of narratology as a theoretical framework for understanding narratives may be traced back to this juncture. However, it does not adhere entirely to the principles of structuralism.

The study of narrative holds significant importance due to its profound influence on human behavior and decision-making processes. Individuals perceive phenomena through the lens of a particular story, which then shapes and reinforces their belief systems. The role of narrative is undeniably significant in shaping the world. The presence of a narrative is contingent upon the existence of a message. The objective of comprehending narratology is to foster an appreciation for the notion that all elements inside a narrative are subject to the influence and manipulation of a narrator. Therefore, it is more prudent to subject-specific narratives to critical evaluation before their acceptance as valid sources of information or knowledge (Herman & Vervaeck, 2005, p. 8)

Furthermore, Eagleton (2008, p. 47) believes that criticism identifies a work's deficiencies or unexpressed elements. The researcher posits that criticism plays a crucial role in revealing previously undisclosed or obscured aspects inside various forms of written content. The presence of criticism is undeniably essential for the improvement and development of a more insightful and constructive interpretation and comprehension.

This exemplifies the extent to which a narrative can exhibit diversity. The various narratives present may reflect distinct realities. Nevertheless, it is typically the prevailing narrative that exerts influence over society. The prevailing discourse often ascribes this dominant narrative as the grand narrative. Numerous epic narratives exist on various subjects. Most serve as the origin of contemporary events (Herman & Vervaeck, 2005, p. 20). According to Herman and Vervaeck (2005, p. 15), Narratology theory encompasses a rich array of concepts that help scholars analyze and interpret narratives across various media:

- 1. Narrative Discourse vs. Story:** Narratology distinguishes between "narrative discourse" (the actual presentation of the story) and "story" (the events or content of the narrative). This differentiation is crucial for understanding how narratives are constructed and conveyed.
- 2. Narrative Elements:** Narratologists identify essential narrative elements, such as characters, plot, setting, and narrative voice, to analyze how they interact to create meaning within a narrative.
- 3. Narrative Time:** The concept of narrative time explores how time is manipulated in storytelling. This includes concepts like analepsis (flashbacks) and prolepsis (flash-forwards), which allow narratives to play with temporal sequences.
- 4. Narrative Focalization:** Focalization refers to the perspective through which a narrative is presented. Narratology distinguishes between various types of

focalization, including external focalization (third-person perspective) and internal focalization (first-person perspective).

5. Narrative Genres: Narratology considers how different narrative forms and genres employ specific conventions and structures to convey themes and messages.

6. Narrative Functions: Building on Vladimir Propp's work, narratology identifies recurring narrative functions or roles, such as the hero, the antagonist, and the helper, which play essential roles in shaping the narrative's progression.

Narrative study is paramount in understanding the intricate web of human experience and societal influence. As Herman and Vervaeck highlight, narratives are not merely stories but semiotic representations of interconnected events imbued with meaning. The structuralist approach to narratology elucidates how these narratives shape and reflect our reality, emphasizing the importance of critical evaluation. By dissecting elements like narrative discourse, time, focalization, and genres, narratology provides a comprehensive framework for interpreting diverse narratives.

This critical perspective fosters a deeper appreciation for the power of narrative in shaping beliefs and behaviors, urging scholars and readers alike to scrutinize the underlying messages and ideologies within any given narrative. The dynamic interplay of narrative structures and functions underscores the necessity of narrative criticism, as posited by Eagleton, to uncover obscured aspects and enhance our understanding of the world. Ultimately, recognizing the diversity and dominance of certain narratives compels us to critically engage with the stories that shape our

collective consciousness, ensuring a more informed and nuanced interpretation of the human condition.

B. Post-Apocalyptic Literature

Post-apocalyptic has emerged as a prominent and compelling subgenre within speculative fiction (Yeates, 2021, p. 18). These narratives depict worlds that have suffered catastrophic events, leading to the collapse of civilization as we know it. From nuclear war and pandemics to environmental disasters and technological upheaval, post-apocalyptic fiction serves as a mirror reflecting our collective fears, anxieties, and hopes. While post-apocalyptic narratives have a long and varied history in literature, their modern incarnation owes much to the anxieties and uncertainties of the 20th century (Yeates, 2021, p. 26). The devastation caused by World War I and the looming threat of nuclear conflict during the Cold War era laid the groundwork for the genre's emergence and evolution.

According to McHale and Platt (2016, p. 173), Post-apocalyptic narratives have long captivated audiences with their exploration of humanity's struggle to survive and adapt in the aftermath of cataclysmic events. Within this genre, several distinct branches exist, each offering a unique lens through which to examine the human condition amidst chaos. the diverse branches of post-apocalyptic narratives, including post-apocalyptic society, Survival Stories, Dystopian Futures, Environmental Apocalypse, Zombie Apocalypse, Science Fiction and Futuristic Settings, Apocalyptic Romance, Quest for a Cure or Solution," and "Economic and

Political Collapse." These subgenres provide compelling storytelling opportunities and shed light on various facets of human resilience, adaptability, and societal response to existential threats (McHale & Platt, 2016, p. 189). The post-apocalyptic narratives offer a rich tapestry of storytelling possibilities, exploring human nature, survival, adaptation, and societal response to existential threats.

Besides defining the branch of post-apocalyptic, so as not to move away from the scope and limitations, the researchers focused on the post-apocalyptic narrative branch driven by motherhood elements. The concept of motherhood is one of the most enduring and influential themes in literature and human culture. It represents nurturing, caregiving, and the perpetuation of the human race. However, when placed in the context of a post-apocalyptic narrative term, the traditional roles and expectations surrounding motherhood undergo a profound transformation. In a world characterized by environmental devastation, societal collapse, and resource scarcity, mothers face unprecedented challenges, and their roles become even more complex.

According to Hicks (2016, p. 10), in a post-apocalyptic narrative term, the very essence of motherhood is redefined. The conventional image of a mother as a gentle, nurturing figure is juxtaposed with the harsh realities of survival. Mothers in this setting are thrust into a world where resources are scarce, danger lurks around every corner, and the primary objective is simply staying alive. In this new paradigm, the maternal instinct to protect and provide for one's children takes on a primal urgency.

“One of the most striking aspects of motherhood in a post-apocalyptic is the adaptability and resilience displayed by mothers” (Hicks, 2016, p. 28). They must become resourceful and creative to ensure their children's survival. Whether foraging for food in a desolate landscape, fashioning makeshift shelters from debris, or defending their offspring against threats, these mothers embody a level of determination and strength that transcends societal norms.

The challenges faced by mothers in a post-apocalyptic world are myriad. Resource scarcity often leads to difficult food and water rationing decisions, where mothers must balance their needs with their children's. Safety concerns are constant, as marauders and hostile forces may pose a threat at any moment. The psychological toll of living in a world devoid of the comforts and security of the past can be overwhelming. Yet, these challenges also highlight maternal love's indomitable spirit.

According to Hicks (2016, p. 33), Maternal relationships in post-apocalyptic transform as well. The environment and circumstances often force mothers and their children into a symbiotic bond of dependence. The mother becomes not only a provider but also a protector, a teacher, and a source of emotional support. In some cases, the traditional boundaries of age and authority blur as children may take on adult responsibilities at a young age.

As our world faces challenges and uncertainties, post-apocalyptic narratives remind us of our fragility, resilience, and capacity to confront the unknown. Whether as cautionary tales or as vehicles for hope and redemption, these stories invite us to ponder the many facets of our existence in a world that may one day confront its

apocalypse. In post-apocalyptic fiction, the end of one world often marks the beginning of another world where the strengths and weaknesses of humanity are laid bare, offering both warnings and glimpses of hope for the future (Yeates, 2021, p. 38).

C. Teresa Heffernan's *Motherhood*

Post-apocalyptic narratives have long served as a lens through which authors explore the complexities of motherhood amidst the backdrop of a world in turmoil. Teresa Heffernan's (2008, p. 4) perspective on motherhood in literature delves into the profound maternal instincts, sacrifices, and survival skills that women, as mothers, must employ to protect and nurture their children in a world shattered by catastrophe, offers a valuable framework for analyzing the portrayal of mothers in post-apocalyptic narrative and divide into the ten elements such as maternal instinct, sacrifice, survival skills, emotional strain, relationships, moral dilemmas, role models, grief and loss, hope, and critique of society.

1. Maternal Instinct: The Unbreakable Bond

Teresa Heffernan's motherhood theory posits that maternal instinct is not merely an innate biological impulse but a potent, dynamic force that can shape narratives and character development, particularly in post-apocalyptic fiction. In these grim and desolate settings, the depiction of a mother's instinctive drive to protect her child underscores a powerful and unbreakable bond, starkly contrasting the surrounding chaos. The portrayal of maternal instinct in such narratives becomes a

beacon of hope and humanity, highlighting mothers' relentless dedication and sacrifice to ensure their children's survival and well-being. This depiction often serves as a poignant reminder of the enduring nature of love and care, even amidst the collapse of civilization (Heffernan, 2008, p. 29).

In these narratives, authors craft scenarios where mothers must go to extraordinary lengths to safeguard their children, often navigating treacherous environments and facing impossible odds. This unwavering commitment displays survival and a profound expression of the intrinsic connection between mother and child. The intensity of maternal instinct depicted in these stories illuminates the fundamental human capacity for resilience and tenacity. Whether it's scavenging for food, finding safe havens, or confronting threats head-on, mothers in post-apocalyptic worlds exemplify the lengths to which one will go to protect their offspring, reinforcing the theme that maternal instinct is an indomitable force.

The portrayal of maternal instinct in post-apocalyptic narratives often transcends mere survival, delving into deeper emotional and psychological realms. These stories explore how the bond between mother and child can provide emotional sustenance and a sense of purpose, anchoring the characters amidst widespread despair. Heffernan's theory highlights that this bond is about protecting and nurturing hope and fostering a sense of continuity in a fragmented world. The maternal instinct becomes a crucial element in these narratives, symbolizing the enduring power of love and the unyielding spirit of humanity that persists even in the bleakest circumstances.

2. Sacrifice: The High Cost of Motherhood

Post-apocalyptic narratives often serve as fertile ground for exploring the theme of sacrifice, mainly through the lens of motherhood. Teresa Heffernan's theory on motherhood as sacrifice illuminates this phenomenon, showcasing the myriad ways in which mothers navigate perilous landscapes to ensure the survival and well-being of their children. In these harsh and unforgiving worlds, mothers are often portrayed as the ultimate guardians, grappling with the moral complexities of their decisions as they strive to protect their offspring from the ravages of a dystopian reality.

This aspect lies in the notion that motherhood entails a constant negotiation of sacrifice, wherein mothers must reconcile their needs and desires with the imperative to safeguard their children. This negotiation plays out in various forms, from the physical risks mothers undertake to secure vital resources to the ethical dilemmas they confront when faced with difficult choices (Heffernan, 2008, p. 32). In post-apocalyptic fiction, mothers are frequently thrust into situations where survival demands uncompromising sacrifice, whether risking their safety to scavenge for food or agonizing decisions that challenge their moral compass.

Through the portrayal of maternal sacrifice, post-apocalyptic narratives shed light on the resilience and strength inherent in motherhood. Despite the grim realities they confront, mothers in these stories emerge as beacons of hope, their unwavering commitment to their children serving as a powerful testament to the enduring bonds of love and sacrifice. As they navigate the precarious terrain of a world in chaos,

these mothers embody Heffernan's vision of motherhood as a transformative force, where sacrifice becomes not only a necessity but also a profound expression of maternal devotion in the face of adversity.

3. Survival Skills: Adaptation and Resilience

The traditional nurturing roles of mothers are redefined against the backdrop of an unforgiving world where survival demands more than just maternal instincts. In this paradigm, mothers must evolve into multi-faceted beings, mastering scavenging techniques to provide for their families amidst scarcity. They become adept at navigating danger, honing self-defense skills to protect their loved ones from human and environmental threats.

Resourcefulness emerges as a cornerstone of maternal survival in motherhood. Mothers in post-apocalyptic settings stretch limited resources to sustain their families, often devising ingenious solutions to seemingly insurmountable challenges (Heffernan, 2008, p. 44). Whether repurposing found objects for practical use or cultivating survivalist knowledge, these women exemplify resilience in adversity. Their resourcefulness ensures immediate survival and lays the groundwork for future resilience, passing down invaluable skills to the next generation.

Heffernan's exploration underscores the transformative nature of motherhood in the post-apocalyptic narrative. Beyond the conventional nurturing role, mothers become pillars of strength, embodying the epitome of survival in a world stripped of its former comforts. Through their adaptation and resilience, they redefine the

boundaries of maternal instinct, forging a new archetype of motherhood that transcends traditional norms and empowers women to thrive amidst chaos.

4. Emotional Strain: Balancing Love and Despair

As societal structures crumble and resources dwindle, mothers are constantly afraid, grieving for the world that once was and grappling with the harsh reality of their new existence. The burden of ensuring the survival of their children weighs heavily on their shoulders as they navigate a world fraught with danger and uncertainty.

Amidst the chaos and despair, these mothers must also fulfill the role of emotional anchor for their children. They provide comfort and stability in a world that offers little of either. Despite their emotional turmoil, they shield their children from the full extent of the horrors surrounding them, striving to create a sense of normalcy amidst the chaos. Their resilience in the face of adversity is a testament to the strength of maternal love and the lengths to which mothers will go to protect their offspring.

The emotional strain on these mothers is palpable, where the constant threat of danger, the loss of loved ones, and the sheer weight of responsibility take a toll on their mental and emotional well-being. They must navigate their grief and trauma while simultaneously shouldering the burdens of their children. In this way, the emotional strain experienced by mothers in post-apocalyptic settings serves as a

powerful commentary on the enduring strength and resilience of the maternal instinct in the face of unimaginable adversity (Heffernan, 2008, p.68).

5. Relationships: Bonds in a Broken World

Mothers embody a multifaceted role as central figures in these narratives, as guardians of physical safety and emotional bedrocks for their offspring. Heffernan's insights illuminate how, amidst the chaos and uncertainty of a dystopian world, maternal instinct is a powerful force, shaping the dynamics of relationships and driving characters to extraordinary lengths to protect their loved ones.

Heffernan's theory underscores the significance of the mother-child bond as a source of resilience and hope in the face of adversity. In post-apocalyptic landscapes characterized by scarcity and danger, mothers often navigate a precarious balance between shielding their children from harm and preparing them for the harsh realities of their environment. This duality of protection and preparation reflects Heffernan's notion of "*intensive mothering*," wherein mothers are not only providers of physical care but also architects of their children's moral and emotional development. Through their actions and sacrifices, mothers in these narratives embody Heffernan's conception of maternal love as a transformative force capable of transcending even the bleakest of circumstances (Heffernan, 2008, p. 70).

Moreover, Heffernan invites critical reflection on the gendered dimensions of caregiving within post-apocalyptic narratives. In societies stripped of conventional structures and hierarchies, the role of mothers often becomes amplified, placing them

at the forefront of familial and communal survival. However, this heightened responsibility also exposes them to heightened risks and vulnerabilities as they navigate the intersecting challenges of motherhood, leadership, and self-preservation. By examining mothers' experiences in post-apocalyptic settings through Heffernan's lens, we gain insight into the complex interplay between gender, power, and resilience in the face of societal collapse.

6. Moral Dilemmas: Ethical Choices in Desperate Times

Mothers in post-apocalyptic narratives often find themselves at the heart of moral quandaries, navigating a landscape where survival hinges on difficult decisions. These women face emphasizing their role as protectors and providers in a world stripped bare by catastrophe. Whether it's rationing dwindling supplies to ensure their children's survival or weighing the risks of forming alliances with other survivors, these mothers are constantly forced to confront the ethical implications of their actions (Heffernan, 2008, p. 102).

Resource allocation becomes a poignant moral dilemma for these maternal figures. In a world where scarcity reigns supreme, mothers must grapple with the agonizing choice of distributing limited resources among their loved ones. Teresa Heffernan's insights shed light on the profound psychological toll this responsibility takes as mothers wrestle with feelings of guilt and inadequacy in the face of impossible decisions. Moreover, the portrayal of mothers in post-apocalyptic narratives underscores the societal expectations placed upon them, as they are

expected to safeguard their families and uphold a semblance of morality in an increasingly chaotic world.

Acts of violence present another moral dilemma for mothers in post-apocalyptic settings. Teresa Heffernan's examination of motherhood theory highlights the inherent tension between protection and harm as these women navigate the fine line between defending their families and compromising their moral integrity. Whether it's resorting to violence as a means of self-defense or grappling with the aftermath of such actions, mothers in these narratives are confronted with the stark reality of survival at any cost. Moral dilemma offers a nuanced understanding of maternal figures' moral dilemmas in post-apocalyptic tales, shedding light on the profound sacrifices and ethical complexities inherent in their struggles to safeguard their families amidst the ruins of civilization.

7. Role Models: Shaping the Future

Beyond merely providing care and nurturing, mothers are seen as the primary influencers shaping their children's values, aspirations, and perceptions of the world. In times of turmoil and uncertainty, such as periods marked by societal upheaval or environmental disasters, the role of maternal figures becomes even more significant. They offer a beacon of hope amidst chaos, instilling in their offspring a sense of resilience and determination to navigate adversity.

Mothers emerge as agents of continuity, bridging the gap between past, present, and future generations. Their guidance and wisdom serve as a stabilizing

force, grounding children in a rapidly changing world. By embodying virtues like compassion, strength, and perseverance, maternal role models not only shape the individual trajectories of their offspring but also contribute to the fabric of society at large. Their influence extends beyond the confines of the familial unit, resonating in communities and beyond as a source of inspiration and collective strength.

Teresa Heffernan's perspective underscores motherhood's transformative power in shaping personal identities and societal norms. Mothers embody a lineage of resilience, passing down genetic material and a legacy of strength and adaptability. In times of crisis, their nurturing presence offers solace and guidance, reminding us of the enduring capacity for hope and renewal. Thus, the role of maternal role models transcends the boundaries of biology, embodying an archetype of nurturing leadership essential for navigating the complexities of the human experience (Heffernan, 2008, p. 113).

8. Grief and Loss: The Weight of Absence

In post-apocalyptic narratives, the specter of grief and loss looms large, particularly for mothers who must navigate the shattered remnants of society while grappling with the absence of their loved ones. Central to Heffernan's perspective is the idea that motherhood encompasses not only the nurturing and protection of offspring but also the emotional labor of managing the uncertainties and traumas of an unpredictable world. In the aftermath of the apocalypse, this emotional burden becomes even more pronounced as mothers mourn not only the loss of individual

loved ones but also the collapse of familiar structures and routines that once provided stability and security.

As mothers confront the harsh realities of post-apocalyptic existence, they are forced to confront their vulnerabilities and limitations in the face of overwhelming grief. Heffernan's framework suggests that this reckoning with loss involves a complex interplay of emotions, ranging from profound sadness and despair to moments of resilience and determination. Moreover, the absence of traditional support systems and social norms further complicates the grieving process, leaving mothers to navigate their grief mainly on their terms. In this sense, Heffernan's theory underscores the importance of acknowledging the agency and resilience of mothers in the face of adversity as they draw upon their maternal instincts to forge new connections and rebuild their shattered lives amidst the wreckage of the old world.

In post-apocalyptic fiction, Heffernan's insights into motherhood offer a poignant lens to explore the themes of grief and loss. By centering on mothers' experiences, these narratives not only illuminate the profound emotional impact of cataclysmic events but also celebrate the resilience and strength of maternal bonds in the face of unimaginable adversity. In a world where the future is uncertain and the past is still a distant memory, through mothers' enduring love and determination, hope continues to flicker amidst the darkness, reminding us that even in the bleakest of times, the human spirit endures (Heffernan, 2008, p. 124).

9. Hope: Nurturing the Future

In these bleak landscapes, where the remnants of civilization hang by a thread, mothers emerge as beacons of optimism, tirelessly working to carve out a path to a brighter tomorrow for their offspring. Their unwavering commitment to nurturing and protecting their children reflects a profound belief in the resilience of the human spirit, even in the face of seemingly insurmountable challenges.

Heffernan's exploration delves into the complexities of maternal hope within these narratives, highlighting how mothers navigate the tension between despair and possibility. Despite the grim realities of their existence, these women refuse to succumb to despair, instead channeling their energies into fostering a sense of hope within their families and communities. Their acts of selflessness and sacrifice underscore the transformative power of maternal love, serving as a potent reminder that even amidst the chaos of a post-apocalyptic world, the bonds of family and the promise of a better future endure (Heffernan, 2008, p. 131).

The portrayal of motherhood in post-apocalyptic narratives is a testament to the enduring strength of the human spirit. In the face of devastation and uncertainty, mothers become agents of hope, weaving a narrative of resilience and possibility for future generations. Their unwavering determination to safeguard their children's well-being is a powerful symbol of hope, reminding readers of the enduring capacity for compassion and renewal, even in the darkest times.

10. Critique of Society: Motherhood as a Mirror

Post-apocalyptic fiction frequently serves as a potent lens to scrutinize societal structures and norms, exposing their fragility and flaws. Within these narratives, the portrayal of motherhood emerges as a pivotal element, offering a nuanced critique of prevailing ideologies. These narratives illuminate the multifaceted roles and expectations imposed upon mothers, revealing how they navigate through the wreckage of civilization while embodying societal ideals and confronting entrenched inequalities.

Mothers often serve as poignant symbols of resilience and sacrifice in these fictional worlds ravaged by a catastrophe. Yet, their experiences also underscore the pervasive inequalities and injustices ingrained within society—the complexities of motherhood within these narratives highlight how societal expectations shape and constrain maternal roles. Through characters grappling with the challenges of nurturing and protecting their offspring amidst chaos, these stories interrogate the gendered dynamics and power structures that underpin traditional notions of motherhood (Heffernan, 2008, p. 135).

Furthermore, the depiction of motherhood in post-apocalyptic fiction invites readers to contemplate alternative modes of caregiving and kinship, challenging conventional family structures and societal norms. Heffernan's critical lens encourages an exploration of how these narratives subvert or reinforce traditional gender roles, offering insights into the potential for transformative change amidst societal collapse. By engaging with the intersection of motherhood and societal

critique in post-apocalyptic fiction, audiences are prompted to reflect on the enduring power dynamics and inequalities that shape both fictional worlds and our own.

Teresa Heffernan's *Motherhood* in post-apocalyptic narratives is a rich and multifaceted theme, offering a nuanced exploration of maternal instinct, sacrifice, survival skills, emotional strain, relationships, moral dilemmas, role models, grief and loss, hope, and critique of society. These narratives reveal mothers' profound strength and resilience in the face of catastrophic events, emphasizing their pivotal role in shaping the future and preserving humanity's spirit. By delving into the complexities of motherhood within the backdrop of a world in turmoil, post-apocalyptic fiction sheds light on the enduring power of maternal love and the timeless struggle for survival and hope in the face of the unknown.

CHAPTER III

RESEARCH METHOD

In this chapter, the researcher will explain the information about research design, data source, data collection, and data analysis used to conduct this research.

A. Research Design

This research is categorized as literary criticism because this is a research method that focuses on the analysis of literary works. The research uses narratology literary criticism as an approach because narratology provides a systematic and comprehensive framework for examining the narrative aspects of post-apocalyptic literature, enabling researchers to gain deeper insights into the genre's unique storytelling techniques and thematic explorations. The researcher's theory is the Motherhood proposed by Teresa Heffernan, which will be applied to the female character of Malorie in Josh Malerman's *Bird Box*. This research is applied to understand Motherhood aspects in Malorie's character through focus and novel ideas.

B. Data Source

Bird Box, written by Josh Malerman, was released in 2014 and has 273 pages, with Harper Voyager as the publication. *Bird Box* is considered a post-apocalyptic literature because it is set in a world that has experienced a catastrophic event that has led to the collapse of society and the breakdown of normal life. This apocalyptic

scenario, focusing on survival in a radically altered world, is a hallmark of post-apocalyptic literature.

C. Data Collection

In collecting data in this research, the first step is reading the novel as a whole; after reading the novel as a whole, the researcher reads the novel repeatedly along with note-taking to separate which data will be studied. After that, the researcher reduced the data to prevent the data from leaking, which had been recorded in the note-taking. The last thing is to clarify the data, where after reducing the selected data, the researcher divides which data has been included in the research study being conducted.

D. Data Analysis

There are several ways that the researcher must analyze the data. Firstly, the background of literary works will be analyzed to deeply understand post-apocalyptic literature and reach a deeper understanding of the novel's content through Josh Malerman's *Bird Box*. Data will be classified as the next step. Then, after conducting a deeper understanding of the novel's content, the researcher summed up the group data. According to Teresa Heffernan's motherhood theory, the final step is for researchers to conclude through the female main character Malorie in Josh Malerman's *Bird Box*.

CHAPTER IV

FINDING AND DISCUSSION

This chapter discusses Malorie's Motherhood aspect and the ways of narrating Malorie's Motherhood based on what the researcher has formulated in the research question.

A. Malorie's Motherhood Aspect

Josh Malerman's *Bird Box* immerses readers in a harrowing post-apocalyptic world where survival is a constant struggle, and facing the unknown could lead to madness or death. At the heart of this story is the character of Marjorie Hayes, affectionately known as Malorie, a reality where survival hinges on navigating a world shrouded in danger and uncertainty; this relates with Teresa Heffernan Motherhood theory, the story navigates the multifaceted terrain of motherhood in a post-apocalyptic world who embodies *Maternal instinct, Sacrifice, Survival Skill, Emotional strain, relationships, morals dilemma, role models, Grief and lost, Hope, and Critique of Society* (Heffernan, 2008).

1. Maternal Instinct

Maternal instinct illustrates the powerful and unbreakable bond between a mother and her child. Authors often depict mothers going to great lengths to ensure their children's safety and well-being, even in dire circumstances (Heffernan, 2008, p. 29).

The character of Malorie stands as a powerful testament to the unwavering maternal instinct that drives mothers to prioritize the safety and well-being of their children above all else, even in the face of unimaginable horrors. Malorie's journey as a mother is characterized by her unyielding commitment to protecting her children, Boy and Girl.

From here, she rows as the person she was when she had the children alone. Four years. Training them. Raising them and keeping them safe from an outside world that must have grown more dangerous each day (p. 219).

Malorie's journey as a mother in a post-apocalyptic world is a testament to the enduring strength of maternal instincts. The quote reflects her unwavering commitment to her children's safety, growth, and well-being. When she mentions rowing "*as the person she was,*" it signifies her role as a caregiver and protector. Her determination to maintain this role, despite the ever-increasing dangers of the outside world, illustrates the depth of her maternal instincts.

The motherhood in Malorie's character is multifaceted. On the one hand, it portrays motherhood's nurturing and protective aspects, where Malorie dedicates herself to raising her children in a hostile environment. She provides them with essential life skills and, most importantly, love and guidance in a world devoid of conventional safety. On the other hand, the quote also alludes to Malorie's transformation as a mother. The phrase "*the person she was*" suggests that motherhood has altered her identity. She is no longer the person she was before the apocalypse; she has evolved into a maternal figure who prioritizes her children's well-being above all else.

On her knees, Malorie hugs her children and cries hot tears that are better than any laughter she's ever felt. Relief (p. 225).

In this particular moment, Malorie's actions and emotions reveal the depth of her maternal instincts. Her tears of relief symbolize the immense stress and anxiety she must have endured while navigating a dangerous world with her children. The post-apocalyptic setting in *Bird Box* is filled with threats that could easily harm or take the lives of her loved ones. Malorie's maternal instinct compels her to do everything she can to shield her children from these dangers.

The act of hugging her children on her knees is significant as well. It signifies her protective embrace and willingness to be vulnerable for the sake of her children. In this vulnerable position, Malorie finds solace and connection with her children, emphasizing maternal love as a source of strength and resilience in the face of adversity.

The contrast between the tears of relief and laughter further underscores the aspect of maternal instinct. While laughter typically represents joy and happiness, Malorie's tears are "*better than any laughter she's ever felt.*" This suggests that, in the context of their challenging circumstances, the relief she experiences by ensuring her children's safety surpasses any joy she might have felt in more ordinary times. It highlights the transformative power of motherhood and the depth of emotions a mother can experience when protecting her offspring.

In *Bird Box*, Josh Malerman masterfully portrays the character of Malorie Hayes as a mother who places the safety and well-being of her children above all

else. It vividly portrays the powerful and unbreakable bond between a mother and her child, showcasing the lengths mothers are willing to go to ensure their children's safety and well-being, even in the most dire circumstances. Malorie's character is a compelling example of motherhood's strength, resilience, and transformative nature in adversity.

2. *Sacrifice*

The sacrifices mothers make for the sake of their children's survival. These sacrifices range from physical risks to moral compromises (Heffernan, 2008, p. 32). In Josh Malerman's *Bird Box*, Malorie is confronted with the agonizing reality that mothers often face in post-apocalyptic narratives: the need to make difficult choices to ensure their children's survival. In a world where unseen creatures drive people to madness and violence upon sight, Malorie's journey as a mother is fraught with morally complex decisions and sacrifices that underscore her unwavering commitment to her children's well-being.

"The children have never seen the world outside their home. Not even through the windows. And Malorie hasn't looked in more than four years. Four years."
(p. 7).

The quote from *Bird Box*, where it's mentioned that highlights the sacrifices that mothers make for the sake of their children's survival in a post-apocalyptic world. This aspect underscores the lengths mothers are willing to go to protect their children, even if it means keeping them isolated from the outside world.

In the context of *Bird Box*, the world outside is depicted as incredibly dangerous due to the presence of mysterious and deadly creatures. Malorie's decision to keep her children sheltered from this dangerous world speaks to her unwavering commitment to their safety. She sacrifices their exposure to the outside world, denying them the opportunity to experience the beauty and wonder of nature in exchange for their survival.

Furthermore, Malorie's choice to avoid looking outside for more than four years showcases the sacrifices she makes as a mother. She must endure a state of perpetual blindness, robbing herself of the visual experiences that others take for granted. This sacrifice is not only physical but also psychological, as it symbolizes her commitment to protecting her children from the horrors that lie beyond their homes.

"In a world where you can't open your eyes, isn't a blindfold all you could ever hope for?" (p. 79).

The quote from *Bird Box*, which questions whether a blindfold is all one could hope for in a world where opening your eyes is dangerous, provides a thought-provoking perspective on the sacrifices mothers make for the sake of their children's survival in Motherhood aspect. This quote underscores the extraordinary measures mothers like Malorie are willing to take to protect their children, including the physical and psychological sacrifices they endure.

The blindfold becomes a symbol of both protection and sacrifice. Mothers, including Malorie, must blindfold themselves and their children to shield them from

the dangerous reality. Covering their eyes represents mothers' extreme physical measures to ensure their children's safety. It's a sacrifice that limits their ability to navigate their environment and traditionally experience the world.

However, the blindfold also carries a deeper symbolic meaning. It symbolizes mothers' moral and psychological sacrifices for their children's survival. In a world where trust and safety are scarce, the blindfold becomes a metaphor for the necessary precautions and boundaries mothers must establish to protect their children. They may have to keep secrets, shelter their children from harsh truths, or make difficult decisions that compromise their principles.

The quote highlights the tension between the desire for safety and the longing for an everyday life. Like other mothers in similar situations, Malorie must grapple with the emotional toll of denying her children the opportunity to see and experience the world freely. This internal struggle represents mothers' moral and emotional sacrifices as they prioritize their children's safety over their desire for a more typical life.

3. Survival Skill

Survival skills are a critical aspect of maternal roles in motherhood. Mothers must adapt to the harsh realities of their new world, acquiring skills such as scavenging, self-defense, and resourcefulness to ensure their family's survival (Heffernan, 2008, p. 44).

Josh Malerman's novel *Bird Box* offers a compelling depiction of Malorie as a mother who must rapidly adapt to a world ravaged by unseen creatures that drive people to madness and violence upon sight. As she navigates this challenging environment, Malorie develops and hones crucial survival skills to safeguard her children, Boy and Girl.

The children must listen. Malorie cannot stave off the visions of hands emerging from the darkness, clutching the heads of the children, deliberately untying that which protects them. Breathing hard and sweating, Malorie prays a person can hear all the way to safety (p. 20).

In this context, Malorie's character embodies the challenges and adaptations that mothers must make to ensure their family's survival, especially when faced with the unknown dangers of their new world.

Malorie's need for the children to use their hearing to detect potential environmental threats speaks to the resourcefulness mothers like her must cultivate. In a world where sight is perilous, Malorie relies on her children's keen sense of hearing as a survival skill. This adaptation to their environment is essential for their safety and illustrates the lengths mothers are willing to go to protect their families.

The river as both a theater and a grave is a powerful metaphor for the duality of motherhood aspect. On one hand, it symbolizes the potential for connection and communication as Malorie paddles down the river, hoping her children can hear the sounds of the living world. On the other hand, it represents the constant danger and the potential for tragedy that mothers face. The river's dual nature reflects the delicate

balance mothers must strike between fostering a sense of normalcy and protecting their children from harm.

Malorie's fear of hands emerging from the darkness and untying what protects her children highlights the ever-present threat in their world. This fear is a driving force behind her determination to instill survival skills in her children. She understands that, as a mother, she must prepare them for the harsh realities, even if it means exposing them to the fear and danger lurking in the shadows.

We left because some people wait for news and others make their own (p. 79).

The quote highlights a fundamental divide in the motherhood aspect: those who wait for news and those who take proactive measures to ensure their safety. Malorie, as a mother, falls into the latter category. She understands that waiting for information or rescue is not a viable option in a world where danger lurks around every corner. Instead, she takes the initiative to protect her children and make decisions that prioritize their survival.

As a mother, Malorie must acquire and employ various survival skills. Scavenging for essential supplies, including food, water, and shelter, is a critical skill that mothers like her must master. The need for resourcefulness becomes even more pronounced when traditional sources of sustenance are scarce or inaccessible. Malorie's character embodies this necessity, demonstrating her ability to adapt to the harsh realities of her new world by finding the means to provide for her family.

Furthermore, the quote suggests a degree of assertiveness and independence on Malorie's part. She does not wait passively for rescue or rely on others to decide

for her family's safety. Instead, she takes charge and makes choices based on her assessment of the situation and maternal instincts. This proactive approach is a hallmark of maternal solid figures in post-apocalyptic stories.

It's better to face madness with a plan than to sit still and let it take you in pieces
(p. 219).

The quote highlights the stark choice between taking action and being passive in the face of madness or chaos. In a world where conventional safety and order have collapsed, mothers like Malorie take the initiative to develop and execute plans that maximize their family's chances of survival. Waiting passively or succumbing to the chaos is not an option.

Malorie may have learned to wield weapons, employ strategies for evasion, and use her environment to outwit potential dangers. This proactive approach to self-defense aligns with the quote's emphasis on facing madness with a plan.

Resourcefulness, as highlighted in the quote, is crucial. Mothers must adapt to new circumstances, improvise when necessary, and maximize limited resources. This skill is precious when traditional sources of support and infrastructure have crumbled.

Furthermore, strategic planning plays a pivotal role. Mothers must anticipate risks, formulate contingency plans, and prioritize their family's safety. Malorie's character likely embodies this aspect by making calculated choices that align with her maternal instincts.

The quote suggests that having a plan provides a sense of control and purpose in a chaotic world. Mothers must not only navigate the physical challenges but also

maintain their mental resilience and the well-being of their children. Having a plan can instill a sense of hope and determination.

4. *Emotional Strain*

The emotional strain experienced by mothers in post-apocalyptic fiction. These women must grapple with the constant fear, grief, and despair that permeate their lives while simultaneously providing emotional support and stability for their children (Heffernan, 2008, p.68). Malorie Hayes is a mother facing the emotional challenges of motherhood amid a devastating apocalypse.

Malorie looks at the drapes. She begins to cry. She wants to yell at someone. She wants to plead with anyone who might listen. This is unfair she would say. This is cruel (p.7).

Malorie's tears and her desire to yell or plead with someone highlight the intense emotional toll that the post-apocalyptic world has taken on her. The drapes likely symbolize the isolation and confinement she and her children are subjected to in their efforts to avoid the mysterious and deadly creatures outside. This confinement represents the suffocating nature of their existence and the despair that comes with it.

The feelings of unfairness and cruelty expressed in the quote reflect the profound sense of injustice that many maternal figures Motherhood aspect grapple with. They are forced to confront the stark reality that their children are growing up in a world vastly different from the one they knew. This sense of loss and the inability to shield their children from the harshness of their environment contribute to the emotional strain that mothers experience.

The emotional burden carried by maternal characters like Malorie is twofold. On the one hand, they must manage their fear, grief, and despair stemming from the world's collapse and the constant threat outside. On the other hand, they must provide emotional support and stability for their children, shielding them from the full extent of the horrors they face. This duality is a central aspect of motherhood in post-apocalyptic fiction.

Mothers must find a delicate balance between acknowledging their emotions and maintaining a facade of strength and optimism for their children's sake. Malorie's desire to yell or plead with someone reflects a need for emotional release, a cry for understanding and empathy in a world where vulnerability is often perceived as weakness.

“‘This,’ Malorie says, placing a bloodied hand on the Girl’s head, ‘this is Olympia.’ The Girl looks at Malorie quickly. She blushes. She smiles. She likes it. ‘And this,’ Malorie says, pressing the Boy to her body, ‘is Tom.’ He grins, shy and happy.” (p.224).

This quote encapsulates the delicate balance between the turmoil and the moments of connection that maternal figures like Malorie navigate as they grapple with the constant fear, grief, and despair in their lives while striving to provide emotional support and stability for their children.

Introducing children with affectionate names like Olympia and Tom signifies Malorie's enduring commitment to motherhood in adversity. It is a testament to her determination to create a sense of normalcy and love for her children, even in the

most abnormal and dangerous circumstances. This act exemplifies the maternal characters' emotional strength and resilience in motherhood.

However, beneath the surface of this heartwarming scene lies the emotional strain that permeates Malorie's life. The bloodied hand on the Girl's head serves as a stark reminder of the dangers and violence that they encounter in their post-apocalyptic journey. It represents the constant fear and grief that weigh on Malorie as a mother, knowing that her children are exposed to peril at any moment.

The emotional strain of motherhood in a post-apocalyptic world is multifaceted. Mothers must manage their fears and anxieties while providing their children with a sense of security and stability. This dual burden can lead to moments of vulnerability and despair, as maternal figures must grapple with their emotional turmoil while masking it to reassure their children.

5. Relationships

In post-apocalyptic, we often explore the dynamics of familial and Motherhood relationships. Mothers are not only protectors but also nurturers and emotional anchors for their children (Heffernan, 2008, p. 70). Malorie's journey as a mother is marked by the profound transformation of her relationships with her children, Boy and Girl.

Your baby is smarter than you think. It used to worry her. But today, in the boat, using the children's ears as guides, she clings to it, hoping the children are as prepared as anybody can be for what may come, farther along the river. Yes, she hopes they are smarter than what may lay ahead (p. 73).

The quote underscores the unique bond between Malorie and her children. Despite the challenging circumstances of their world, she recognizes the intelligence of her baby and places trust in the children's abilities. This trust reflects the central role that maternal figures often play in post-apocalyptic stories as they believe in and nurture their children's potential, even in the face of adversity.

Malorie's hope that the children are as prepared as anyone can be for what may come underscores her role as a protector. In the aspect of motherhood, mothers like Malorie must teach their children practical survival skills and provide emotional support and guidance. They are responsible for preparing their children for the unknown challenges that lie ahead, both physically and emotionally.

The quote also reveals Malorie's vulnerability as a mother. She clings to the hope that her children are more intelligent and prepared than what may lay ahead, expressing the profound fear and concern that mothers in post-apocalyptic narratives often grapple with. The emotional anchor aspect of motherhood comes into play as mothers like Malorie must maintain a facade of strength and optimism to comfort their children, even when they are riddled with uncertainty and fear.

Her tears flow freely, softly, as she thinks of her housemates working together to bring water from the well, sleeping on the living room floor, discussing the new world. She sees Shannon, laughing, finding shapes and figures in the clouds, curious with warmth and kindness, dotting on Malorie. She thinks of Tom (p.225).

Based on the quote it shows Malorie's tears flowing softly, revealing the depth of her emotional connection with her housemates. In a world filled with danger and uncertainty, these connections become lifelines for emotional support. Malorie's role

as an emotional anchor is exemplified as she reminisces about the warmth, kindness, and camaraderie she shared with her housemates, particularly Shannon.

The memory of Shannon laughing and finding shapes and figures in the clouds highlights the sense of normalcy and humanity that mothers strive to maintain amid chaos. Shannon's curiosity, warmth, and kindness provide a glimpse into the nurturing and supportive environment that Malorie, as a mother, likely sought to create for her children. Shannon's dotting on Malorie underscores the importance of mutual support and emotional bonds among survivors in a post-apocalyptic setting.

Malorie's recollection of Tom's constant problem-solving and always-trying attitude underscores the dynamics of leadership and mutual reliance that often characterize familial and motherhood relationships in post-apocalyptic narratives. Mothers like Malorie often rely on their resourcefulness and determination to guide their families and provide stability in an upside-down world. Tom's role as a problem-solver and his continuous efforts reflect the collective resilience of the group, with Malorie serving as a maternal figure who helps foster this resilience.

6. *Morals Dilemma*

Motherhood in post-apocalyptic times grapples with moral dilemmas as they strive to protect their families. These dilemmas may involve difficult decisions related to resource allocation, cooperation with others, or even acts of violence (Heffernan, 2008, p. 102).

The dire circumstances and constant threats in such settings frequently force them to make ethically challenging decisions that test their sense of morality. Malorie Hayes, the central character in *Bird Box*, is no exception, and her journey as a mother is marked by morally ambiguous choices that reflect the harsh realities of their post-apocalyptic world.

How can she expect her children to dream as big as the stars if they can't lift their heads to gaze upon them? (p. 80).

Malorie's question underscores the profound dilemma maternal figures face in motherhood. On one hand, mothers like her are driven to ensure the safety and well-being of their children in a world fraught with danger. This often requires strict measures and sacrifices, such as the blindfolds used to shield the children from the mysterious creatures outside. While necessary for survival, these measures limit the children's experiences and perspectives.

The moral dilemmas in motherhood become evident when Malorie questions whether her children can dream as big as the stars. In the post-apocalyptic world of *Bird Box*, children are deprived of the ability to explore the world freely and experience its wonders. While this deprivation is a necessary safeguard, it raises ethical questions about the potential long-term consequences for the children's development and aspirations.

Mothers in post-apocalyptic fiction must grapple with the tension between protecting their children and allowing them to experience the fullness of life. These dilemmas may involve difficult decisions related to resource allocation, cooperation

with others, or even acts of violence when necessary for survival. Malorie's decision to limit her children's exposure to the outside world in the name of safety exemplifies the moral complexities of motherhood in such settings.

Furthermore, the quote reflects the desire of maternal figures to balance safety with nurturing their children's hopes and dreams. Malorie's concern for her children's ability to dream big highlights her internal struggle. It underscores her yearning to provide a sense of normalcy and optimism for her children while acknowledging the harsh realities of their existence.

It is difficult, Malorie knows, not to be swept up in Tom's energy. If it were Don about to leave, she might have less faith in his returning with seeing Eye dogs. But Tom has an energy about him. When he says he's going to do something, it feels like it's already done. Malorie watches from the couch. Both With Child and At Last . . . a Baby! talk about the "stress link" between mother and child. Malorie doesn't want her baby to feel the anxiety she feels now, watching Tom prepare to leave the house (p. 84).

Malorie's observation of Tom's energetic and determined nature, touches upon the moral dilemmas that mothers in post-apocalyptic settings often face. In this context, Malorie's inner turmoil reflects the challenging decisions she must make as a mother to protect her family while also considering the potential impact of her emotions on her unborn child. Tom's energy and determination stand out as he prepares to leave the house, likely on a dangerous mission to secure Seeing Eye dogs. Malorie's faith in Tom's ability to accomplish his goal reflects her trust in him as a protector and provider for their group. In a world filled with uncertainty and peril, mothers like Malorie must rely on individuals with these qualities to ensure the safety and survival of their families.

However, Malorie's observation of Tom's energy also raises questions about the emotional strain of motherhood. The reference to the "*stress link*" between mother and child highlights the unique bond between a mother and her unborn baby. Mothers often grapple with the fear that their emotions, particularly anxiety and stress, may have adverse effects on their unborn children. This concern underscores the moral dilemma of balancing personal emotions with the well-being of one's family.

Malorie's reluctance to let her anxiety affect her unborn baby reveals her maternal instincts and the depth of her commitment to protecting her child. She understands the potential consequences of her emotional state and strives to shield her baby from unnecessary stress, even in the face of the uncertain world they inhabit.

The quote reflects the complex nature of motherhood in post-apocalyptic fiction, where mothers must navigate the dual roles of protector and nurturer. While they make difficult decisions to safeguard their families, they are also acutely aware of the emotional impact their choices and feelings may have on their children.

7. *Role Models*

Mothers often serve as role models for their children, imparting values, skills, and a sense of hope for the future (Heffernan, 2008, p. 113). Josh Malerman's *Bird Box* offers a compelling portrayal of Malorie Hayes as a mother who must navigate a world fraught with danger while simultaneously shaping the moral compass of her children, Boy and Girl.

Malorie watches them close their eyes, then she does the same. In her private darkness, her heart beats louder. "Good" (p.87).

Malorie's decision to close her eyes alongside her children symbolizes her role as a mother and the values she seeks to instill in them. By joining her children in this act, she reinforces that they are together, facing the unknown and the world's dangers as a family. Mothers often impart this sense of unity and collective strength to their children, especially in post-apocalyptic narratives where survival hinges on cooperation and mutual support.

Furthermore, Malorie's heart beating louder in her private darkness suggests her vulnerability and fear, which she conceals from her children. Motherhood often bears the burden of managing their emotions and projecting a sense of calm and security for their children. This role modeling of emotional resilience is essential for the children's psychological well-being and ability to cope with their challenges.

The word "*Good*" uttered by Malorie carries layers of meaning. On one level, it represents her approval of her children's actions, indicating that they follow the rules and stay safe by keeping their eyes closed. However, it also reflects a more profound message of reassurance and encouragement. Malorie's affirmation communicates to her children that they are doing the right thing, are solid and capable, and can rely on her for guidance and support.

In a broader sense, Malorie's role as a role model extends to her children's understanding of the world and their place in it. By navigating the post-apocalyptic landscape with determination and resolve, Malorie demonstrates to her children the

importance of adaptability and the will to survive. Her actions teach them that even in the darkest times, there is hope and the potential for a better future.

8. *Grief and Lost*

Grief and loss are palpable Motherhood aspects in post-apocalyptic fiction, as mothers confront the absence of loved ones and the emotional toll of a shattered world (Heffernan, 2008, p. 124). These experiences serve as crucibles that shape their characters and profoundly influence their decisions. In Josh Malerman's *Bird Box*, Malorie Hayes is a prime example of a mother who endures unimaginable losses and the ever-present fear of losing her children, Boy and Girl.

Malorie knows that four years can easily become eight. Eight will quickly become twelve. And then the children will be adults. Adults who have never seen the sky. Never looked out a window. What would twelve years of living like veal do to their minds? Is there a point, Malorie wonders, where the clouds in the sky become unreal, and the only place they'll ever feel at home is behind the black cloth of their blindfolds? (p. 8).

Malorie's realization that four years can quickly become eight and then twelve underscores the relentless passage of time in their confined existence. This passage of time is marked by the absence of specific fundamental experiences for her children, such as seeing the sky or looking out of a window. It reminds me of the profound losses that mothers like Malorie endure in the post-apocalyptic world.

The motherhood aspect of grief and loss is central to Malorie's character, where she mourns not only for the world that has been destroyed but also for the childhood her children are denied. The idea that they may grow into adulthood without ever experiencing the simple pleasures of looking at the sky or feeling the

sun's warmth on their faces is a poignant reflection of mothers' sacrifices to protect their families.

Malorie's concern about what twelve years of living like a veal might do to her children's minds underscores the emotional toll of their confinement. The term "veal" conjures the image of animals raised in captivity, deprived of the freedom to roam and experience the world beyond their enclosures. Malorie worries about the potential psychological impact of such confinement on her children, a fear shared by many mothers in post-apocalyptic literature.

You can smell it, too. Death. Dying. Decay. The sky is falling, the sky is dying, the sky is dead (p.190).

In this context, the quote is a stark reminder of the emotional toll that mothers like Malorie endure as they confront the absence of loved ones and the desolation of a shattered world. The sensory description of the smell of death, dying, and decay serves as a visceral representation of the grim reality that surrounds Malorie and her children. In a world where the aftermath of a global catastrophe taints the very air they breathe, mothers must navigate an environment saturated with reminders of loss and suffering.

Motherhood in this context is marked by the heavy burden of grief and mourning, with Malorie and other maternal figures in the narrative grappling not only with the loss of the world as they knew it but also with the absence of loved ones who may have perished. The smell of death serves as a constant reminder of the toll that the apocalypse has taken on their lives.

Furthermore, mothers like Malorie are responsible for providing emotional support and stability for their children in a world of uncertainty and danger. They must shield their children from the harsh realities of their environment while simultaneously dealing with their grief and trauma. This dual role reflects maternal figures' resilience and strength as they navigate the emotional complexities of their new reality.

9. *Hope*

Despite the bleakness of their circumstances, mothers in post-apocalyptic narratives often embody the spirit of hope. They strive to create a better future for their children, nurturing the seeds of optimism amidst the ruins of the past (Heffernan, 2008, p. 131).

They inspire hope in their children and believe that a better future is possible despite seemingly insurmountable challenges. Josh Malerman's *Bird Box* masterfully portrays Malorie Hayes as a mother who carries the torch of hope in a world shrouded in terror.

Only a box of birds, Malorie thinks. Yet, it does feel like progress (p. 103).

Malorie thought it felt like progress encapsulates small steps toward a brighter future worth celebrating. In a world marked by loss and despair, mothers must find and create moments of hope to keep their spirits and those of their children alive. Malorie recognizes that the box of birds represents a step forward, a reminder that life endures despite the chaos and danger surrounding them.

The hope in motherhood extends beyond mere survival. Mothers like Malorie nurture the emotional well-being of their children by instilling a sense of optimism and possibility. They impart resilience, adaptability, and the belief in a better tomorrow. In doing so, they provide their children with a psychological anchor in a world that has lost its bearings.

Nurturing hope becomes a form of resistance against the despair of the post-apocalyptic world. It is a testament to the strength and determination of maternal figures who refuse to succumb to hopelessness. Malorie's acknowledgment of progress, even as a box of birds, reflects the power of optimism to propel them forward.

Furthermore, the idea of progress in *Bird Box* underscores the importance of community and the connections that mothers forge with others. Malorie's journey is not solitary; she relies on the support and cooperation of those around her. This collaborative spirit is a testament to the resilience and hope of humanity, even in the face of seemingly insurmountable challenges.

It's as if this whole place knows to give Malorie and her children a moment to themselves. As if everyone and everything understands that, at last, they are safe. Safer. Now, here, hugging the children, it feels to Malorie like the house and the river are just two mythical locations, lost somewhere in all that infinity. But here, she knows, they are not entirely as lost or alone (p. 225).

The passage begins by describing the place, seemingly giving Malorie and her children a moment to themselves, as if the environment recognizes the need for respite and safety. This highlights the theme of resilience, the enduring bond between

mothers and their children, and the idea that moments of peace and security can be found even in the darkest of times.

At this moment, Malorie's feeling that they are safe, or at least safer, is a testament to her role as a protector and nurturer. Mothers in post-apocalyptic often shoulder the responsibility of ensuring their children's safety and well-being. This responsibility is compounded by the constant threats and dangers of their world. *Malorie's* relief at this moment reflects her deep connection and love for her children and her determination to create a sense of security for them.

The reference to the house and the river as mythical locations lost in infinity underscores the idea of escape and sanctuary. In the post-apocalyptic world of *Bird Box*, safe havens are rare, and mothers like Malorie must seize every opportunity to provide a semblance of normalcy and protection for their children. The house and the river represent moments of respite and fleeting security in an uncertain world.

Malorie's feeling of not being entirely lost or alone at this moment is a poignant reflection of the power of motherhood to provide emotional support and connection in the face of isolation. Despite their challenges, mothers like Malorie create a sense of belonging and togetherness for their children. This connection becomes a source of strength and hope, allowing them to navigate the post-apocalyptic with resilience and determination.

10. *Critique of Society*

Post-apocalyptic fiction frequently critiques societal structures and norms, and the portrayal of motherhood within these narratives often reflects broader critiques. Mothers symbolize their respective societies' values, expectations, and inequalities (Heffernan, 2008, p. 135).

Josh Malerman's *Bird Box* deftly explores this theme through the character of Malorie Hayes, a mother who navigates a post-apocalyptic world while reflecting on the societal failures that brought about their dire circumstances.

The moment between deciding to open your eyes and then actually doing it is as scary a thing as there is in the new world (p. 102).

This quote highlights the vulnerability that mothers face in the post-motherhood aspect. They bear the responsibility of not only protecting themselves but also their children. Opening their eyes represents a calculated risk, a moment where their choices can have life-altering consequences. Mothers become the primary guardians of their children's safety, and this heightened sense of responsibility adds to their fear and the weight of their decisions.

Furthermore, the quote can be interpreted as a broader critique of societal structures and norms. In post-apocalyptic narratives, societal norms and structures have often collapsed or transformed, leaving behind a harsh and unforgiving world. Mothers, as symbols of nurturance and protection, are tasked with adapting to these new realities.

The fear of opening one's eyes can be seen as a commentary on mothers' inherent vulnerabilities within these societies. The breakdown of societal structures can lead to heightened dangers and inequalities, with mothers often bearing the brunt of these challenges. They must contend with external threats and the internal struggles of balancing their roles as protectors and providers.

One day, the pain your mother and the pain every mother speaks of will come to you in the same form: childbirth. Only a woman can experience it and because of this all women are bonded (p. 125).

The statement that the pain of childbirth is something that only women can experience underscores the physical and emotional challenges that mothers face in the motherhood aspect. While childbirth is a universal and natural process, it takes on added significance in a world where survival and the continuation of the human race are paramount. Mothers are not only responsible for the well-being of their children but also for the very future of humanity.

The idea that the experience of childbirth bonds all women highlights the shared strength and resilience of maternal figures in the face of adversity. In post-apocalyptic narratives, societal structures and norms may break down, and traditional roles and expectations may be upended. However, the bond among women remains a powerful force, transcending the challenges of their new reality.

This quote can be seen as a critique of societal gender roles and inequalities. The roles and expectations placed on women are often redefined in the aspect of motherhood. Mothers like Malorie are thrust into roles as protectors, providers, and

leaders in their communities. The shared childbirth experience unifies women, reminding them of their collective strength and resilience.

Furthermore, the quote emphasizes that motherhood is not solely about giving birth but nurturing and protecting the next generation. In a world where the safety and survival of children are at stake, mothers must navigate complex moral and ethical dilemmas. They become symbols of the sacrifices and moral compromises required to pursue the greater good.

The shared bond among women due to childbirth is also a source of solidarity and support. In the face of danger and uncertainty, maternal figures like Malorie often find strength in their relationships with other women. These connections become lifelines, enabling them to share knowledge, resources, and emotional support.

B. The Narrative way of presenting Malorie's Motherhood

Malorie's Motherhood Teresa Heffenan in Josh Malerman's *Bird Box* through a Motherhood Teresa Heffenan (2008), with a focus on narrative elements, allows us to delve into the complexities and nuances of her character and role as a mother in a post-apocalyptic world. By examining plot structure, characterization, point of view, and theme development, we can better understand how Malorie's motherhood is narrated and its significance in the novel.

1. Plot Structure

In the *Bird Box*, Malorie's transition into motherhood is a turbulent and anxiety-inducing experience. Simultaneously with the discovery of her pregnancy, a

mystery phenomenon emerges, causing society to descend into chaos as individuals fall to madness and violence upon viewing it. Malorie struggles with the burden of imminent pregnancy amidst the backdrop of this intensifying crisis, uncertain of the type of world she is introducing her child to. The imminent danger outside her door highlights the uncertain and delicate state of her circumstances, compelling her to face the terrible truths of being a mother in a world on the verge of collapse.

As the story transitions to the current timeframe, Malorie's duty as a mother becomes increasingly frantic and urgent. With her two children, a Boy and a Girl, she bravely guides them through a dangerous terrain, blindfolded, to protect them from the terrifying dangers outside their limited perception. Each movement they make is complex, and every noise is a possible menace. Malorie's unwavering dedication to her children is evident, compelling her to go to great lengths to guarantee their safety in a world where even a momentary glance of the outside can bring disaster.

The narrative intensifies as Malorie struggles with the persistent danger to her children's life. Each move she takes is imbued with the innate impulse to safeguard them at whatever expense, even as she grapples with uncertainties and anxieties regarding their future. The maternal tie serves as a vital connection for Malorie, providing her with direction and stability amidst the tumultuous circumstances that envelop them. Her unwavering tenacity in the face of insurmountable challenges is a monument to her strong maternal instinct, which propels her through even the most difficult circumstances.

Malorie's journey is characterized by the poignant juxtaposition between her children's innocence and their society's harsh realities. Malorie is aware that she cannot indefinitely shield them from the horrors that lie beyond their grasp in their blindness. The fundamental subject of her story is the challenge she faces in balancing the imperative to protect her loved ones with her longing to provide them with a sense of normality. This theme underscores the intricate relationship between love, selflessness, and resilience amid overwhelming challenges.

Malorie's experience of motherhood in *Bird Box* demonstrates the power of maternal instinct and the extreme measures a mother will take to safeguard her offspring. As she traverses the dangerous landscape of a chaotic world, her steadfast affection for Boy and Girl is her guiding beacon and most formidable source of resilience, propelling her onward over seemingly insurmountable obstacles.

2. Settings

In *Bird Box*, the settings play a crucial role in shaping Malorie's experience of motherhood and the challenges she faces in protecting her children. The novel takes place in a world thrown into disorder by an enigmatic event that causes individuals to become insane and violent as soon as they see it. The post-apocalyptic landscape is defined by its desolate and dangerous nature, where deserted streets and deteriorating structures stand as eerie remnants of the past world. Malorie's attempt to cross this dangerous terrain while blindfolded, accompanied by her two children, highlights the seriousness of the obstacles she faces as a mother in a chaotic world.

Malorie's residence is a refuge and confinement in this desolate environment, providing a secure haven amidst the tumultuous external surroundings. Within the boundaries of her house, her children find a sense of normality and safety, protected from the terrifying things that exist just outside their front door. However, even in the secure confines of her residence, Malorie is keenly conscious of the constant danger outside, compelling her to stay watchful and ready to protect her family at any moment.

Malorie encounters the harsh reality of the outer world as she leaves her house to find supplies or a safe place. The streets are filled with danger and uncertainty, with potential threats hiding at every corner and the unknown posing a constant threat. Malorie's existence, in which they are blindfolded, constantly reminds them of the precariousness of their condition. This intensifies the suspense and uncertainty of their trip across the harsh countryside.

Malorie and her children find consolation in the natural world but face enormous challenges. The birdsong provides a brief and valuable break from the cacophony, indicating the possibility of danger and offering essential guidance for navigation in their state of being unable to see. However, the forest also has hidden dangers, such as stalking animals and steep terrain, which challenge Malorie's resourcefulness and determination as she works to protect her children.

The scenery provides a vibrant backdrop that challenges Malorie's maternal instincts throughout the story. Malorie's experience of motherhood is shaped by the challenges and dangers she faces in different settings, such as the lonely streets of the

outside world, her home, and the wilderness. These settings underscore the sacrifices she must make to protect her children in a world consumed by darkness.

3. Narrative Voice

The narrative voice in *Bird Box* develops a tone that reflects the stress and uncertainty experienced by Malorie as she navigates parenting in a post-apocalyptic setting. The story's voice uses detailed writing and reflective storytelling to lead readers through the complex world that Malorie lives in. It vividly portrays the obstacles she encounters as she tries to shield her children from the threats outside their limited understanding.

As Malorie traverses the dangerous landscape of this unfamiliar realm, the narrative voice provides a glimpse into her innermost thoughts and feelings, enabling readers to sympathize with her challenges and victories. As time passes, the voice effectively portrays the constant worry and uncertainty that characterize Malorie's life, fully engaging readers in the intense tension of her experience as a mother.

The narrative voice demonstrates a profound empathy for Malorie's situation as a mother. The voice in the text provides readers with a close and personal depiction of the author's experiences, allowing them to empathize with her worries, uncertainties, and times of deep understanding. The film *Bird Box* examines the intricacies of motherhood, delving into the profound sacrifices and unyielding perseverance that shape the character of Malorie.

Within the work, the narrative voice is a guiding force, directing readers through Malorie's journey's various peaks and valleys with a palpable feeling of urgency and intensity. The voice is a constant companion, providing insight into the complexities of her mother instincts and the depth of her love for her children, whether she is struggling with the moral challenges of survival or seeking moments of comfort amid chaos.

Malorie's story is brought to life and deeply resonates with readers through the narrative voice. *Bird Box* entices readers with its vivid writing and subtle exploration of motherhood, prompting them to delve into a narrative of resilience, selflessness, and the unwavering strength of a mother's love amid inconceivable challenges.

4. Characterization

Malorie's portrayal as a mother in *Bird Box* is intricate and profound, presenting her as a symbol of everlasting fortitude and adaptability in the middle of a chaotic and devastated world. From the beginning, she is shown as a woman struggling with the uncertainty of upcoming childbirth amidst a rapidly declining society. The user initially experiences anxiety and apprehension when considering the idea of having a kid in a world characterized by instability. However, this contrasts sharply with her later unwavering commitment to safeguard her children at whatever expense.

Throughout the story, Malorie undergoes a significant and deep-seated change in her emotions and mindset as she navigates the challenges and experiences of

parenthood. The transformation from a nervous pregnant mother to a forceful guardian demonstrates her ability to adjust and her inherent resilience. Malorie uncovers an unexplored capacity for love and resilience inside herself as she confronts challenges, driving her to persevere against seemingly impossible circumstances.

Malorie's character is defined by her unwavering dedication to her children, Boy and Girl, whose well-being becomes her only concern in a world plagued by turmoil and hopelessness. Her strong sense of protection and ability to find solutions are apparent in every choice she takes, as she confidently maneuvers through the dangerous environment of their blindfolded existence with an unwavering determination rooted in her motherly instinct. Her maternal relationship with her children is a guiding light amid despair, giving her a strong sense of direction even in the most hopeless circumstances.

The character of Malorie provides the reader with a profound examination of the intricacies of parenthood when confronted with challenges. Her path exemplifies the unwavering strength of a mother's love and the inherent sacrifices and struggles of the role. Despite the numerous hazards that encircle them, Malorie's steadfast commitment to her children is a motivating force, highlighting the power and durability inherent in familial connections.

Malorie features a character that exhibits exceptional mother instincts, pushing herself to unusual measures and testing the boundaries of her bravery and will. The transformation she undergoes, from a woman plagued by uncertainty and

apprehension to a mother who is determined to save her offspring at whatever cost, epitomizes the fundamental nature of motherhood in its most unadulterated state voyage characterized by affection, selflessness, and steadfast commitment amid hardship.

5. Point of View

Using a third-person limited narrative perspective in *Bird Box*, specifically emphasizing Malorie's viewpoint, offers readers a profoundly fascinating encounter with the intricacies of parenting inside a society devastated by an apocalypse. Using a narrative perspective, viewers are given a close and personal view into Malorie's inner thoughts, feelings, and challenges as she tries to survive in a dangerous environment with her children. The persistent danger of the unfamiliar external environment and the imperative need for a life devoid of sight are evident, captivating readers with the suspense and immediacy of Malorie's predicament.

The reader can observe and understand Malorie's psychological struggles and ethical issues as a mother. Malorie's path is complex as she faces difficult choices about whom to trust in a dangerous environment. She must balance protecting her children and enabling them to develop and learn. The third-person limited perspective gives readers insight into her most intimate thoughts and concerns, enabling a more profound comprehension of the sacrifices she must endure in pursuing parenthood.

Throughout the story, Malorie's innate motherly instincts are repeatedly tested, forcing her to face the harsh truths of a chaotic world. Throughout instances of

both success and sorrow, the reader accompanies Malorie on her voyage of self-exploration and metamorphosis as a parent. The intricate depiction of her character through the third-person limited perspective enables a profound examination of the intricacies of parenthood when confronted with challenges.

Malorie's perspective allows readers to confront and wrestle with profound inquiries about love, sacrifice, and resilience, even under the most desperate and challenging situations. Her unwavering dedication to her children is evident in every choice, emphasizing the deep connection between mother and child, even in the most challenging circumstances. Using the third-person limited point of view effectively communicates the intensity of Malorie's emotions and the strength of her maternal instincts, resulting in a solid emotional connection between readers and her story, which persists until the conclusion.

6. Theme Development

The theme of motherhood in *Bird Box* is significant and pervasive, intricately woven into the narrative's fabric. Malorie's responsibility as a mother goes beyond just providing physical safety. It includes the mental support and strength needed to negotiate the challenging environment of a post-apocalyptic world. The novel explores the profound sacrifices and ethical compromises mothers must make to protect their children's safety and welfare amid upheaval and uncertainty.

The concept of motherhood in *Bird Box* is inextricably intertwined with broader themes of survival, apprehension, and the enigmatic. Malorie's experience as

a mother parallels humanity's fight for survival against daunting obstacles, with her blindfolded life representing the sacrifices and difficulties that come with maternal duty. She is motivated by a solid resolve to shield her children from the perils outside of their limited understanding, emphasizing the deep connection between a mother and her child in the middle of a chaotic and broken world.

Teresa Heffernan thoroughly examines the portrayal of motherhood in *Bird Box* through several narrative components, including plot structure, characterization, point of view, and theme development. This analysis provides a comprehensive insight into Malorie's experience as a mother in the story. The novel's dual temporal structure allows for a significant transformation in Malorie's character, as her experiences and choices as a mother are intimately integrated into the story. The third-person limited point of view grants readers great insight into Malorie's thoughts and feelings, enabling a more profound examination of the intricacies of mother instinct when confronted with hardship.

Malorie's experience of motherhood provides a perspective from which more significant concepts of survival and dread are explored. Her steadfast grit and tenacity amid unthinkable obstacles indicate the enduring influence of parental affection and resolve in a world of unpredictability. *Bird Box* uses Malorie's character to explore the profound contemplation of the sacrifices and victories of motherhood in challenging situations, serving as a reminder of the unwavering determination of maternal figures amid challenges.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

In this chapter, the researcher concludes and provides recommendations based on the findings and analyses conducted throughout this research study.

A. Conclusion

In conclusion, the study of Malorie's motherhood narrative in Josh Malerman's *Bird Box* has illuminated several critical aspects of motherhood based on Teresa Heffernan (2008). Through a comprehensive motherhood theory, the researcher has dissected the narrative elements that shape Malorie's character and her experiences as a mother in a world fraught with danger and uncertainty. *Maternal Instinct* emerges as a central theme, driving Malorie to become a fiercely protective and resourceful mother in the face of external threats. *Sacrifice* is a recurring motif as she navigates moral dilemmas and makes difficult choices to ensure her children's survival, exemplifying the depth of her emotional strain. *Survival skills* become paramount, highlighting her adaptability and resilience in a hostile environment.

Furthermore, Malorie's relationships with her children and others in the narrative underscore the emotional complexities of motherhood in a post-apocalyptic world. She serves as a *Role model*, imparting values and hope to her children, who have never seen the outside world. *Grief and loss* permeate her.

Journey, reflecting the emotional toll of a shattered world and the absence of loved ones. Despite the bleakness of their circumstances, hope persists as Malorie nurtures optimism and creates moments of *Hope*. Additionally, her experiences offer a poignant *Critique of Societal* structures and norms, particularly regarding gender roles and inequalities. In essence, Malorie's motherhood narrative in *Bird Box* embodies a rich tapestry of themes and theories, profoundly exploring maternal roles in post-apocalyptic fiction.

Through examining narrative elements, it becomes evident that Malorie's character undergoes a profound transformation. The dual timeline plot structure allows us to witness her journey from a place of uncertainty and fear in the past to a position of unwavering determination and resilience in the present, emphasizing the multifaceted nature of her maternal role. The third-person limited point of view immerses readers in Malorie's world, where her struggles, choices, and moral dilemmas as a mother become palpable. Furthermore, the central theme of motherhood is intricately woven into the broader themes of survival and fear, showcasing how Malorie's motherhood journey is a microcosm of humanity's battle for existence in a chaotic and unpredictable world. In conclusion, this analysis illuminates how Malorie's motherhood is a testament to the enduring strength and resilience of maternal figures in the face of unimaginable challenges, enriching the narrative of *Bird Box* with depth and complexity.

B. Suggestion

Further research on Teresa Heffernan's *Motherhood* in post-apocalyptic narratives, focusing on characters like *Malorie* from *Bird Box*, can provide valuable insights into the complexities of motherhood in extreme circumstances. Exploring how maternal figures adapt and make decisions to ensure the safety and well-being of their children in different post-apocalyptic settings, whether in literature or other forms of media, could yield a deeper understanding of the universal and culturally specific aspects of motherhood in crises. This research could also delve into the portrayal of maternal instincts across different cultures and how social norms and expectations shape them.

Another avenue for further research could involve mothers' emotional strain and relationships in post-apocalyptic fiction. Investigating how mothers' emotional experiences impact their relationships with their children and others in their communities can provide insights into the psychological toll of motherhood in such contexts. Moreover, exploring the themes of grief, loss, and hope in post-apocalyptic narratives can lead to a better understanding of how mothers cope with trauma and navigate their roles as emotional anchors for their families. Lastly, further studies could expand on the critique of society within these narratives, examining how gender roles, power dynamics, and societal norms are deconstructed and reconstructed in post-apocalyptic worlds and how they reflect and critique real-world societal issues.

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