

**EPISTALORY FORMS AND ITS IMPLICATIONS FOR THE
STORYLINE IN MEG CABOT'S *THE BOY IS BACK***

THESIS

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STATEMENT OF AUTHORSHIP

I state that the thesis entitled *Epistolary Forms and its Implications for the Storyline in Meg Cabot's The Boy is Back* 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. Hereby, if there is any objection or claim, I am the only person who is responsible for that.

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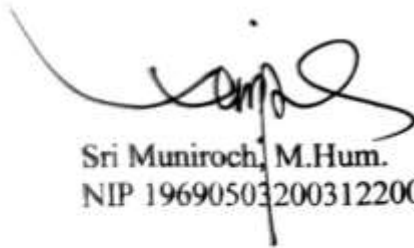
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This is to certify that Dzikirridhani Nuirji thesis entitled *Epistolary Forms and its Implications for the Storyline in Meg Cabot's The Boy is Back* has been approved for thesis examination at Faculty of Humanities, Universitas Islam Negeri Maulana Malik Ibrahim Malang, as one of the requirements for the degree of *Sarjana Sastra (S.S.)*.

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MOTTO

“Trials make you strong. Failure makes you humble. Challenges make you strive.

Life keeps you going and growing”

Kemi Sogunle

DEDICATION

This thesis is proudly dedicated to my beloved family: My mother, Nunuk, and my father, Muhammad Irijik. All parties who have contributed to this thesis I would like to thank you from the bottom of my heart, and I am grateful to have some amazing people who always love and support me.

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ABSTRACT

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Keywords: Epistolary forms, Storyline, Structuralism

Meg Cabot's novel *The Boy is Back* presents a romance story about Becky Flowers and Reed Stewart using modern epistolary formats. Epistolary format is a storytelling style using written communication. This study aims to analyze the epistolary formats used, analyze the storyline conveyed in the novel using Gustav Freytag's theory, and analyze the epistolary format in the storyline. This study uses structuralism with the concept of Freytag's pyramid. Structuralism is very appropriate to be used in this study because structural studies can be carried out by identifying, examining, and describing the functions and relationships between intrinsic elements that allow the completeness of intrinsic meaning in a literary work to be captured in its entirety. Meanwhile, Freytag's Pyramid is used to analyze the structure of the storyline through the stages of exposition, rising action, climax, falling action, and resolution or disaster. The results of the study show that the use of epistolary formats in *The Boy is Back* significantly makes the storyline clear and not confusing. It also supports the development of conflict, emotions, and relationships between characters through a chronological and orderly story structure.

البحث مستخلص

رسالة هامسون. أشكال الرسائل وتأثيراتها على حبكة قصة ميج كابوت "الصبي عا. (2025) نويرجي، دزيكيريداني.
المشرف. مالانج إبراهيم مالك مولانا نيجيري إسلام جامعة الإنسانية، والعلوم الآداب كلية الإنجليزي، الأدب قسم. بكالوريوس
هوم. م. مونيروش، سري

الأشكال الرسائلية، الحبكة القصصية، البنيوية: المفتاحية الكلمات

رواية ميج كابوت "الفتى عاد" تقدم قصة رومانسية عن بيكي فلاورز وريد ستيوارت باستخدام صيغ الرسائل الحديثة. صيغة الرسائل هي أسلوب سرد القصص باستخدام التواصل الكتابي. تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى تحليل صيغ الرسائل المستخدمة، وتحليل الحبكة التي تنقلها الرواية باستخدام نظرية غوستاف فرايتاغ، وتحليل صيغة الرسائل في الحبكة. تستخدم هذه الدراسة البنيوية مع مفهوم هرم فرايتاغ. البنيوية مناسبة جدًا للاستخدام في هذه الدراسة لأنه يمكن إجراء الدراسات البنيوية من خلال تحديد وفحص ووصف الوظائف والعلاقات بين العناصر الجوهرية التي تسمح بالنقاط اكتمال المعنى الجوهري في العمل الأدبي بكامله. وفي الوقت نفسه، يتم استخدام هرم فرايتاغ لتحليل بنية الحبكة من خلال مراحل العرض، والحدث الصاعد، والذروة، والحدث الهابط، والحل أو الكارثة. تُظهر نتائج الدراسة أن استخدام أسلوب الرسائل في رواية "عودة الصبي" يُضفي على حبكة القصة وضوحًا ووضوحًا ملحوظًا. كما يُسهم في تطوير الصراعات والمشاعر والعلاقات بين الشخصيات من خلال بنية قصصية مُرتبة زمنيًا.

ABSTRAK

Nuirji, Dzikirridhani. (2025). *Bentuk Surat dan Implikasinya terhadap Alur Cerita dalam The Boy is Back karya Meg Cabot*. Skripsi Sarjana. Jurusan Sastra Inggris, Fakultas Humaniora, Universitas Islam Negeri Maulana Malik Ibrahim Malang. Dosen Pembimbing: Sri Muniroch, M.Hum

Kata kunci :Format Epistolary, Alur Cerita, Strukturalisme.

Novel *The Boy is Back* karya Meg Cabot menyajikan cerita romansa tentang Becky Flowers dan Reed Stewart menggunakan format-format epistolary modern. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis format epistolary apa saja yang dipakai, menganalisis alur cerita yang disampaikan dalam novel menggunakan teori Gustav Freytag, dan menganalisis format epistolary pada alur cerita. Penelitian ini menggunakan strukturalisme dengan konsep piramida freytag. Strukturalisme sangat tepat digunakan dalam penelitian ini karena kajian struktural dapat dilakukan dengan cara mengidentifikasi, mengkaji, dan mendeskripsikan fungsi serta hubungan antar unsur intrinsik yang memungkinkan kelengkapan makna intrinsik dalam sebuah karya sastra dapat ditangkap secara utuh. Sedangkan Piramida Freytag digunakan untuk menganalisis struktur jalan cerita melalui tahapan eksposisi, aksi naik, klimaks, aksi turun, dan resolusi. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa penggunaan format-format epistolary dalam *The Boy is Back* secara signifikan membuat alur cerita jelas dan tidak membingungkan. Juga mendukung perkembangan konflik, emosi, serta hubungan antartokoh melalui struktur cerita yang kronologis dan teratur.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The researcher provides the explanation in the background of the study, research question, significance of the study, scope of limitation, and definition of key terms in this chapter.

A. Background of the Study

In this modern era, the development of digital technology has had a significant impact on various fields, including communications. With this advancement, almost all important activities can now be conducted digitally, including how people interact through communication media (Setiawan Wibowo et al., 2024:55). From smartphones to email-based communication, and much more, this technology has not only simplified daily life but also influenced various art forms, including literature. One form of literary work that is influenced by this development is the epistolary novel. Technological changes have had a major impact on the content and form of the epistolary novel (George, 2025:180). According to Gottlieb (2020:), fictional works that are composed as letters or other written documents are categorized as "epistolary novels." The term "epistolary" is derived from the Latinized Greek word for letter, with "epistle" serving as the noun form. Based on this explanation, epistolary novels contain where the characters in the story send letters to each other which are intended to create character development at a more intimate level.

However, as communication technology developed, the epistolary format adapted. Now, the letters in the novel have evolved into electronic letters such as emails, digital diaries, product reviews, and even short messages on social media. These changes were made by authors to adapt their works to the times, while maintaining readers' interest with a more modern and relevant format. Likewise what Meg Cabot did in her novel entitled *The Boy is Back*, which is the object of this research. This novel was published in October 2016 and appears to be a romcom (romance-comedy). The researcher chose *The Boy is Back* because it uses a modern epistolary format which are rarely found in conventional novels.

The story focuses on the tumultuous journey of Becky Flowers and Reed Stewart. Becky Flowers, a senior moving consultant who works hard to build her business to success, but she works even harder to forget Reed Stewart who was once in her life. Reed Stewart was her ex from high school and by chance, they finally have to meet because there is a problem after 10 years of not seeing each other. This novel uses epistolary format such as email, text messages, newspaper articles, journal entries, Facebook, product reviews, and advertisements.

Although Meg Cabot uses an epistolary format, Meg Cabot is able to give "life/soul" to every epistolary format written in the novel so that readers can feel the emotions. The uniqueness of this book stands out as it is written in electronic formats such as emails, text messages, newspaper articles, journal entries, Facebook posts, product reviews, and advertisements, giving a modern touch to the storyline. Storyline is a crucial component of literary works, it encompasses a series of events that form a cohesive narrative presented by characters within the

story (Pratiwi, 2022:10). From this explanation, this storyline is important because it can make the story interesting. So, this storyline describes a series of events in the story that are interconnected, so that readers are interested in knowing the development of the story until the end.

A captivating storyline has the ability to captivate the reader's attention and maintain their interest throughout the entire novel. The novel's writing uses an epistolary form, such as using electronic devices in the form of text messages and e-mail, which is a form that will not exist in novels as usual will attract readers to read the novel, especially if the reader is a reader who does not like the text format is just plain text in the form of a narrative like novels in general.

Formats with epistolary forms in this novel appear on the first page until the end of the story so this builds the reader's curiosity to finish the novel. Because of its epistolary forms, this is the reason the researcher is interested in researching whether the storyline is clear or not. A good story is a story that has a structured storyline, so the researcher will examine the narrative style in the form of storytelling style which use the epistolary forms and storyline using Gustav Freytag's pyramid theory with Structuralism. Gustav Freytag theory is used to analyze the narrative structure or storyline in a novel. Freytag's Pyramid, which includes exposition, rising action, climax, falling action, and resolution, will help researcher understand how the storyline is built and developed in a novel. Meanwhile structuralism, structuralism helps researcher focus on intrinsic elements in literary works, especially how the plot is constructed and connected to each other.

These are explanations of relevant previous studies that analyze the topic of the storyline. *Plot Analysis in Charles Dickens' Great Expectations* by Arif Dwi Cahyono, Lailatul Musyarofah, Eka Fadilah (2023) focuses on how the plot in the novel is presented, including elements such as structure of plot, and types of plot. The result is this novel uses a chronological plot. Aryom Ertriary conducted a thesis entitled *Plot Analysis in Spongebob Movie: Sponge On The Run* (2021) using Gustav Fraytag theory and concluded that the film follows the stages of the plot and uses a progressive plot type. Karen Nurul Rizki conducted a thesis entitled *The Analysis of Plot in Dennis Lehane's Novel Shutter Island* (2020) using Gustav Freytag's theory and that the story packaged with a storyline that goes back and forth and there is a plot of the story twist. *Plot of Fitzgerald's The Great Gatsby* was conducted by Ni Gusti Ayu Widiyanti, I Nyoman Kardana, and AA Ngrh Dharma Prima Sugihantara (2021) use Kenney and Freytag's theory, shows how writing style captures emotions and plot structure from the character's point of view. *The Analysis of Plot in "Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs" Story by Vera Southgate and Disney "Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs" by Using Formalism Approach* by Luh Rista Hardiantini (2023) using Gustav Freytag's theory to see the differences in plot development and how the story and film present the stages in the plot structure.

These are also some explanations of relevant previous study that use the structuralism to analyze. *Analisis Struktural Novel Tempat Paling Sunyi karya Arafat* by Adi Supriyanto, Cutiana Windri Astuti, and Siti Munifah (2023) using structural theory to analyze the intrinsic elements and it contains a complete set of

intrinsic elements, including theme, characters and characterization, plot, setting, point of view, message, and language style. *Kajian Struktural Novel dan Bidadari Surga pun Cemburu Karya kh. Adrian Mafatihullah Kariem* by Dewi Naila Karimatus Sa'diyah, Cutiana Windri Astuti, Siti Munifah (2022) finds that intrinsic elements such as a mixed plot, main and supporting characters, settings, theme, third-person omniscient point of view, and simple language style are interconnected to form a unified story. *Structural Analysis in the Novel Renaissance by Kinoysan* by Nida Firdaus Albanjari, Akmaliah, Niqyatul Muna, Nurmeila Adawiah Mubarakah (2024) using structuralism theory with a descriptive qualitative method, it shows that the novel has a complete structure (themes of struggle and romance, a mixed forward–backward plot, complex characters, a modern socio-political setting, dual points of view, and religious moral messages) all of which interconnect to form a unified meaning of the story.

These are also some explanations of relevant previous study that use the epistolary forms to analyze. *Epistolary role in East African literary works on HIV/AIDS* by Aldin Mutembei (2016) employs Wolf Schmid's (2010) narratology theory and Rosenmeyer's (2003) epistolary analysis to examine five East African literary works on HIV/AIDS (*Confessions of an AIDS Victim*, *Orodha*, *Mateso Mwathirika wa UKIMWI*, *Sitaki Iwe Siri*, and *Yours Faithfully*, *Yogi*), revealing that letters play a central role in driving the plot, developing characters, creating suspense, and conveying social critiques related to HIV/AIDS. *Focalization Theory and the Epistolary Novel: A Narrative Analysis of The Color Purple* by Ping Zhou (2009) employs Gérard Genette's focalization theory and it shows that

the novel represents a modern epistolary form with internal focalization that effectively constructs narrative depth and a sense of realism.

This research or thesis has some similarities with those previous studies. In the first previous studies that analyzed the topic of the storyline, this research or thesis has similarities with those previous studies, namely that they both used Gustav Freytag's theory to analyze the plot or the storyline. In the second previous studies that use the structuralism to analyze, this research or thesis has similarities with those previous studies, namely that they both use structuralism to analyze intrinsic elements, one of which is plot. In the second previous studies that use the epistolary forms to analyze, this research or thesis has similarities with those previous studies, namely that they both use the epistolary forms to analyze using other theories without using structuralism. This research or thesis offers a new perspective that has never been used before by exploring what unconventional formats are used in the novel and by analyzing the impact or the implications of epistolary forms on the plot or the storyline in the novel using Structuralism.

B. Research Questions

Given the study's background and its focus, the research questions are as follow:

1. What are the epistolary forms used in the novel *The Boy is Back* by Meg Cabot?
2. How is the storyline conveyed in the novel *The Boy is Back* by Meg Cabot?
3. How does this epistolary forms implicate the storyline in the novel *The Boy is Back* by Meg Cabot?

C. Significance of the Study

Through this study, it is hoped that this research or thesis can provide information related to epistolary forms and its implication to the storyline, especially using structuralism with the concept of the Freytag pyramid model. In addition, this research is expected to increase insight, knowledge, and experience of reading novels with epistolary style in modern literary studies.

By applying the structuralism the researcher also hopes that this research or thesis can provide many benefits for many parties in the study of novels and literature, such as other researcher, lecturers, and most importantly readers, especially English literature students who want to develop their literary knowledge about the concept of the Freytag's Pyramid model in modern epistolary novels. Not only that, the researcher also hopes that the results of this study can help readers expand their knowledge about Gustav Freytag theory, make them more diverse, and serve as one of the alternative new topics in literary studies. Not only that, the researcher also hopes that the results of this study can help readers expand their knowledge about structuralism, make them more diverse, and serve as one of the alternative new topics in literary studies. In addition, it is hoped that this research can also provide new insights for the people about the impact of using the modern epistolary style on the storyline, whether the storyline can be understood or not. The researcher also hopes that this research can help other researchers who want to conduct research on epistolary style.

D. Scope and Limitation

The scope of this research is the epistolary style in Meg Cabot's novel *The Boy is Back*. This study focuses on identifying epistolary forms used in the novel. In addition, this research uses Freytag's Pyramid to analyze how the storyline is structured, including the stages of exposition, conflict, climax, and resolution. Not only that, this research also analyzes the storyline to determine the type of storyline. This research also discuss whether the use of this epistolary forms affects the development of the storyline. This research limits its focus only on epistolary forms, storylines, and how these epistolary forms affect the storyline without involving other aspects such as figures of speech, themes, style and foreign languages.

E. Definition of Key Term

1. Epistolary Forms: narrative mode that conveys a story through personal communication media, both traditional such as letters and modern such as emails, text messages, and other digital platforms (Bowers, 2009, in Löschnigg & Schuh, 2018).
2. Storyline: the sequence of main events and actions in a narrative that organize cause-and-effect relations, drive character development, and shape the progression of the plot (Purbo, Hidayat, & Wahyuni, 2022).
3. Structuralism: a theoretical approach that examines the relationships and functions of a text's constituent elements (e.g., plot, character, setting, point of view, language), emphasizing how these elements operate as an interrelated

system to produce meaning, rather than focusing on authorial intent or external context (Ratna, 2004).

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

This chapter, the researcher provides the explanation of the structuralism and the storyline which consist of structure of storyline (exposition, rising action, climax, falling action, and resolution or catastrophe) and three kinds of storyline that is flashback, progressive or linear, and non linear storyline. In addition, this chapter also provides the explanation of the epistolary style.

A. Structuralism

Etymologically, the word structure comes from the Latin word *structura*, which means shape or building (Ratna, 2009). Structuralism initially emerged as a school of thought derived from Russian Formalism, which later developed and spread worldwide, not only in the Western world but also to America and Indonesia. According to (Endraswara, 2003), structuralism is essentially a way of thinking about the world, primarily related to the perception and description of structures. In this view, literary works are assumed to be phenomena with interrelated structures. Structuralism is often understood as a “form.” Eagleton, (2006:92) adds that structuralism, as implied by the term itself, deals with structure and, more specifically, with examining the general rules that underlie how it works. From these perspectives, it can be said that structuralism refers to the combination of elements or forms that build a literary work, such as plot, theme, character, setting, point of view, and language style.

Nurgiyantoro (2013) argues that every literary text has a unique structure that marks its existence. This uniqueness is what distinguishes it from other texts and makes a text meaningful, logical, and easy to understand. Nurgiyantoro also emphasizes that the structure itself is intangible and invisible, yet its existence is crucial. Structure functions as a common thread that connects all these elements. As Ryan (2011) explains, to understand the meaning of structure in literary works, imagine the human body: the skeletal system is crucial for movement, even though it is invisible. Similarly, in literature, a literary work has an invisible structure that makes it coherent and function as a piece of literature.

Another scholar, Teeuw (2015), in his book *Sastra dan Ilmu Sastra (Literature and Literary Studies)*, states that analyzing the structure of a literary work is essentially an effort to explicitly and systematically explain what happens during the process of reading and understanding literature. Likewise, Nurgiyantoro (2013) believes that structural analysis essentially aims to explain as accurately as possible the functions and interrelations of the elements in a literary work that together create a unified whole.

From these various perspectives, the writer concludes that structuralism in literary works is a study that analyzes the totality of elements that build a literary work (intrinsic elements), without involving external factors (extrinsic elements), serving as the thread that connects the work, making it meaningful, logical, and easier to understand. These intrinsic elements including theme, events, setting, characters, plot, point of view, and language style, work together to form a unified structure that makes the work meaningful and logical. This

interconnectedness serves as the thread that ties the work together, making it meaningful, logical, and easier to understand. Although extrinsic elements (such as cultural, religious, or educational backgrounds of the author) can also be used in literary studies, they are not the primary focus of structuralist analysis.

In structuralism, the intrinsic elements do not only include theme, events, setting, characters, plot, point of view, and language style, but also storytelling style. Storytelling style is considered part of the intrinsic elements because it is directly related to how the author conveys the story within the text to bring it to life. The interrelation of intrinsic elements, including the storytelling style (both in terms of language aspects and the patterns or techniques used by the author to express their ideas) and its relation to the theme and aesthetic aspects, also becomes the focus of analysis (Sarmianti, 2012:143). Meanwhile, (Nurgiyantoro (1995), quoting Abrams, states that “style is the manner of linguistic expression in prose, or how an author expresses what they wish to convey.” Furthermore, Nurgiyantoro defines style as a technique, namely "the technique of selecting linguistic expressions deemed capable of representing what is intended to be conveyed." Based on this understanding, the epistolary format in *"The Boy is Back"* can be seen as one of the techniques used by the author to convey the story.

Not only the epistolary format, but also the plot is crucial because it focuses on how the story is told and structured. Structuralism emphasizes the importance of text structure and how story elements form a coherent narrative (Keller, 2011). Drawing on the work of Ferdinand de Saussure, this theory views

plot as a system consisting of various components with complementary relationships (Horváth, 2019). In this context, plot analysis helps identify narrative patterns and how they contribute to the overall meaning of the story. Gustav Freytag's theory is particularly relevant to the study of plot and will be discussed in the following subsection.

B. The Storyline

In every story, there are five elements that make the storyline a whole and complete work. Gustav Freytag was the one who introduced the five elements. According to Freytag (1895:113), the plot as a narrative structure that divides the story into five parts, like five acts in a drama. These parts are: exposition (about the situation), rising action (through conflict), climax (or turning point), falling action; and resolution or catastrophe.



Figure 1. Freytag Pyramid
Source: www.blaze.tech

The first phase of Freitag's five-phase structure is known as the exposition. Exposition is an old habit of communicating in a prologue, where the storyline has been prepared in advance. Based on this explanation, in the past, playwrights often used prologues to convey important information needed by the audience in order to understand the action or events that will take place in the drama. The

exposition usually contains a general description such as characters, background of the story, the initial events of the story or how the characters start a story.

The second phase of Freitag's five-phase structure is known as the Rising Action. Rising action is when the action has begun, the interest has been awakened, the protagonists have revealed themselves, an impulse has been given to evolution, mood, and desire in a specific direction. Based on the explanation, rising action describes the moment in the story where the conflict begins to develop, the main characters show their nature, and the audience begins to get involved in the story. This is the part where the story becomes more complex and interesting, leading to the climax.

The third phase of Freitag's five-phase structure is known as the climax. The drama's climax is when the rising movement's outcomes emerge most definitively and forcefully; the poet must employ all the theatrical talent of his craft and all the beauty of poetry to bring this artistic creation's story to life. Based on the explanation, all the tension and conflict that has been built finally reaches the point where the protagonist defeats the antagonist, or maybe a decision that causes major consequences. In essence, this is the most intense and crucial moment in the story where everything that has been built reaches its peak. The climax is usually the peak of a big scene that is full of intensity and emotion. This is the most dramatic and important part of the story.

The fourth phase of Freitag's five-phase structure is known as falling action. The most challenging element of the play is called the return or the downward movement, these dangers are especially prevalent in strong plays

where the heroes serve as the directing force. Based on the explanation above, the most difficult part in a drama or story is the sequence of scenes in the Falling Action, or what is also called the return (the return of the story towards the resolution). This is the phase where the tension begins to subside after the climax. In this part too, in exciting or strong stories, where the main character is the most important and makes the story interesting, there is a rather difficult part. This part occurs after the peak of the story (climax), when all the exciting or strong things have happened. This is where the writer must be careful, because keeping the audience interested after all the exciting events can be a big challenge. The story may not be as intense or interesting as before, so the writer must work extra hard to keep the story strong until the end.

The fifth phase of Freytag's five-phase structure is known as resolution or catastrophe. In Freytag's Pyramid, there is indeed no term "Resolution" as we often find in modern story models. On the contrary, "Catastrophe" is the term used in this pyramid and usually catastrophe is used in dramas or classic stories that emphasize the tragic aspect of the story, where there is no "happy ending". But because this is a modern story, modern researchers usually tend to use "resolution". The story's resolution marks the conclusion, provide the reader with the resolution they have been waiting for, much like the story's protagonists' final lives (Al-Alami, 2016). Based on the explanation, resolution is an important part where all the elements that have been developed in the story are finally resolved, providing a satisfying closure for the reader. This is the moment where the fate of

the main character and the main conflict is resolved which can give the reader a final impression of how the story ends whether a happy ending or a sad ending.

The five storyline structures are called Freytag's pyramid. Freytag's pyramid is one of the oldest drama structures developed by Gustav in the mid-19th and 10th centuries. The structure divides the storyline into five interrelated parts. In addition to the storyline structure, storylines are classified into several kinds in order of time, quantity, and probability, but the researcher only focuses on classifying the storyline according to the order of events. There are three kinds of plots.

The first plot is flashback. Flashback is when an author can convey information about past events by using a flashback storyline, which shows action or incidents inconsequentially. It enables the writer or the author to start the story in the midst of a thrilling scene and then go back in time to set the scene (Pardede, 2020). Based on the explanation above, flashback is a way of telling a story where the author starts the story in the midst of intense action or conflict, then goes back in time to explain how the story got to that part of the conflict.

The second plot is progressive or linear. Progressive or linear is when action or events which are presented chronologically is a progressive plot. Usually, it begins with exposition, or introduction to the characters and setting, and conflict. The action picks up after that and builds to a climax (Pardede, 2020). Based on the explanation above, progressive plot is a way of telling a story in which events occur sequentially, starting from the introduction of the setting and characters, through the development of the conflict, until reaching the climax.

This is a common story structure used to ensure that the story develops logically and is easy to follow.

The third plot is non-linear. Non-linear is when a novel or story is told using a non-linear storyline, it is told out of chronological sequence (Deguzman, 2022). Based on the explanation above, a non-linear storyline is a storytelling technique in which the storyline is not delivered sequentially from beginning to end based on chronological order. In a story with a non-linear storyline, the story can jump to the past or future without following a clear time pattern. For example, in one part of the story, an event from the past may be shown, then in the next part it goes straight to a future event, without having to follow the sequence of events from the beginning to the end.

With the existence of various types of storylines, both linear, flashback, and nonlinear, it can provide freedom for writers or authors in composing and conveying stories. Each type of storyline has its own way of influencing the narrative structure whether it remains clear or messy. Thus, Freytag's Pyramid theory and various types of storylines can analyze narrative structures and understand how the storyline is built by the authors.

C. Epistolary Forms

Epistolary writing is defined by the use of letters and documents to tell a story, originating from the Latin term "epistola" meaning "letter." This format is the hallmark of epistolary writing. Altman (1982:7) argues that despite their diversity in content and style, epistolary writing shares a fundamental similarity rooted in the nature of letters, which shape meaning, both consciously and

unconsciously, for both writers and readers. According to Perry (1980), an epistolary novel is a fiction in which characters write letters to each other, often used to reflect on shared experiences. Based on this perspective, epistolary writing is defined by the interactive letters written by the characters within the epistolary work.

Epistolary novels are also known for building empathy in the reader through the intimate nature of letters. Letters provide direct access to the author's thoughts and feelings, creating a sense of "eavesdropping" on something personal, making them more engaging than traditional third-person narratives. Epistolary novels often depict protagonists experiencing suffering and isolation, which drives the plot. The letters serve as an expression of the characters' feelings and reflections, exploring their personal feelings. Writing letters becomes a therapeutic process for the characters to process painful emotions and memories. The story usually ends when the suffering subsides, signaling the resolution of the conflict and inner peace for the protagonist.

Epistolary novels often depict protagonists experiencing isolation and suffering. According to Bray (2003:2), the epistolary format is particularly effective for exploring individual feelings and thoughts through written letters. As Perry (1980) notes, the primary themes in epistolary novels focus on loneliness and suffering, expressed through profound outpourings of consciousness. The story typically ends when the conflict is resolved, and the suffering subsides, as the protagonist finds inner peace through the therapeutic process of letter writing.

The epistolary format is a way of telling a story through personal communication media, whether traditional such as letters or modern such as text messages, email, and other digital platforms (Bowers, 2009, in Löschnigg & Schuh, 2018). A novel also requires a unique storytelling style from its author. The use of storytelling style in a literary work is crucial because it makes the story more vivid, emotional, and aesthetically appealing. In the novel *The Boy is Back*, Meg Cabot conveys her story using the epistolary format. Epistolary novels present the story through letters written from the perspective of each character, and the entire book can consist of letters from one or several characters. Some scholars argue that this format enhances the sense of realism because it reflects common forms of everyday communication. Letters from various characters can offer different perspectives without the intervention of an omniscient narrator. Furthermore, these letters often reveal the author's subjective thoughts, similar to psychological novels. Through this storytelling style, Meg Cabot is able to make readers feel as if they are directly involved in the story, as if peering into the lives of her characters. This format not only creates a more intimate and personal impression but also makes the storyline feel fresher, lighter, and easier to follow for modern people who are familiar with digital communication.

The storytelling style in a novel is the characteristic of the author, or in other words, the style is the author's identity. An author's style will never be the same when compared to other authors, because an author always presents ideas that are closely related to his personal taste and sensitivity to the world around him. Storytelling style is an author's typical way of telling a story. This

uniqueness is what differentiates an author's style from other authors (Hastuti, 2021:52). Storytelling style does not stand alone without techniques that play an important role in defining and shaping an author's storytelling style. These techniques also provide opportunities for skilled authors to create free and creative works, although they require precise writing. Its main strength lies in presenting diverse perspectives, both from one character and several characters.

With the existence of epistolary with such modern format, the format can affect the storyline to be messy or not when read. The formats in epistolary novels can affect how the storyline becomes clear or becomes unclear. With the epistolary forms used by the author in creating an epistolary novel, this makes the story from the perspective of a particular character and at a certain time, creating a "puzzle piece" effect on the storyline. Therefore, understanding the epistolary forms in this novel is crucial to examine how they influence the clarity, coherence, and overall development of the storyline, which will be analyzed in this research using Freytag's theory with objective criticism, namely Structuralism.

CHAPTER III

RESEARCH METHOD

The following chapter outlines the methodology employed in this study, covering aspects such as research design, data source, data collection, and data analysis.

A. Research Design

This study uses a literary criticism approach by applying structuralism with Freytag's Pyramid theory to analyze the storyline with an epistolary forms in Meg Cabot's novel *The Boy is Back*. This novel was chosen because of its modern epistolary formats such as email, text messages, articles, journal entries, facebook, product reviews, and advertisement, which are the focus of analysis in this study. The structuralism is very appropriate for this research because structural studies can be carried out by identifying, examining, and describing the functions and relationships between intrinsic elements which enable the completeness of the intrinsic meaning in a literary work to be captured in its entirety. Meanwhile, Freytag's Pyramid is used to analyze the structure of the storyline through the stages of exposition, rising action, climax, falling action, and resolution or catastrophe. The purpose of this reasearch is to examine how the use of this epistolary forms affects the clarity and structure of the storyline.

B. Data Source

In this research, the novel entitled *The Boy is Back* by Meg Cabot was used as a data source. The first edition of the novel, which has 368 pages, was published on October 18th, 2016 by HarperCollins Publishers in New York. This novel using hardfile. This novel was chosen because of its epistolary forms which is relevant to the focus of the research in analyzing the storyline.

C. Data Collection

This research involves several steps in data collection. The first step is the researcher read *The Boy is Back* to understand its contents thoroughly. The second step is the researcher highlight and take notes of all relevant parts, of the epistolary forms that relate to the storyline. The last step is the researcher categorize the identified data based on (a) the type of epistolary forms, (b) the stage of the storyline (exposition, rising action, climax, falling action, and resolution), and (c) how the format contributes to the plot development.

D. Data Analysis

The researcher identify what the epistolary forms are used in the novel. Next, using Freytag's Pyramid, the researcher map the storyline into its five stages: exposition, rising action, climax, falling action, and resolution/catastrophe. Then, the researcher analyze the type of storyline used, whether it is linear, non-linear, or flashback. Finally, the researcher analyze how the epistolary forms implicates the development and clarity of the storyline, evaluating whether this epistolary forms affects the storyline clearly or messy.

CHAPTER IV

FINDING AND ANALYSIS

This chapter presents the results of the analysis of the plot in the novel *The Boy is Back* by Meg Cabot and discusses the formulation of the problem that has been raised in the first chapter. This study focuses on how the plot is developed in a unique epistolary format, as well as how the epistolary forms in the novel affects the delivery of the plot. The novel is structured in the form of written communication, such as emails, text messages, news articles, etc, which provide a different approach to storytelling.

The data in this novel are analyzed through Freytag's theory. Freytag's theory includes five main structures: exposition, rising action, climax, falling action, and resolution. In addition, Structuralism is used to identify storytelling style in the presentation of the story. The results of the analysis are presented as follows.

A. The Epistolary Forms used in the Novel *The Boy is Back*

Meg Cabot's novel *The Boy is Back* employs an epistolary form, which refers to a narrative presented through various communications. This form is commonly used in literature to convey stories through documents or correspondences among characters. Unlike traditional narratives that rely on a third-person narrator, epistolary novels build the story through the characters' own written expressions. This sub-chapter identify what kind of the epistolary

forms used in *The Boy is Back*. The results of the analysis are presented as follows:

1. E-mail Form

*From: Nicole@MovingUp.com
Date: March 13 10:24:11 AM EST
To: Becky@MovingUp.com
Subject: Crime Report
Beck. Go to this link.
<http://www.bloomvilleherald.com/crimereport>*

*From: Becky@MovingUp.com
Date: March 13 10:26:15 AM EST
To: Nicole@MovingUp.com
Subject: Re: Crime Report
I don't have time right now, Nicole. I'm driving to my 11:00 consultation with Mrs. Blumenthal about her mother, remember?*

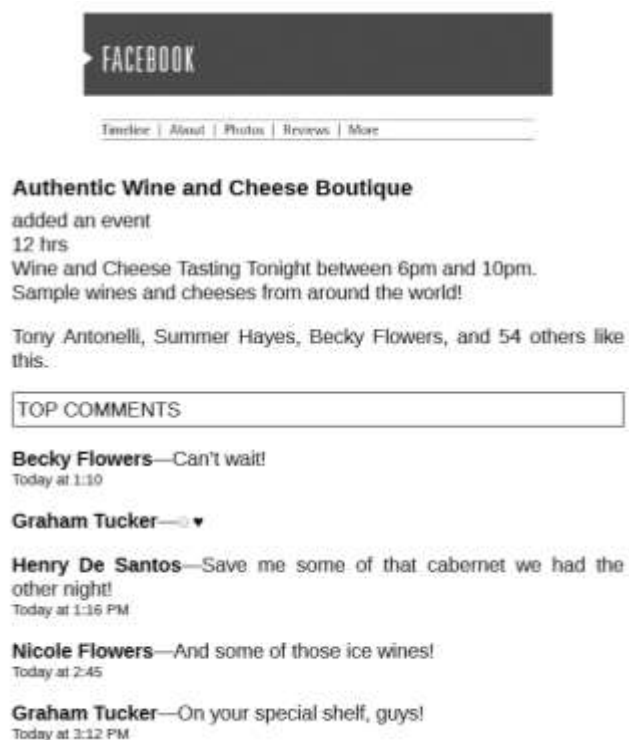
*BECKY FLOWERS, CSMM
Moving Up! Consulting LLC, President
Sent from my handheld device, please excuse typos (p.4)*

The quotation above demonstrates the format of an email, which is presented as a complete and structured form of written communication. Unlike text messages or instant chats, email in this novel is characterized by formal components such as "From," "To," "Date," and "Subject," which are always included in every message. These elements are not just technical details, but also serve as narrative devices that shape the way the story is told. For example, the "Subject" line provides a direct clue to the message's content, and when preceded by "Re:," it signals a reply to a previous email. This feature showing that the flow of the conversation in a way that resembles real-world email communication. Quantitatively, the novel contains 161 instances of email communication, which makes it the most frequently used epistolary form in the narrative. Many

important pieces of information (ranging from professional discussions, family matters, to crime reports) are transmitted through this form.

In the example above, Nicole sends Becky an email about a local crime report. Becky's reply is short because she is busy with her job. This simple exchange shows that email acts as a bridge between two things: on one hand, Nicole shares public news from the local newspaper; on the other hand, Becky reacts to it in a personal and limited way. Therefore, email connects public information with the characters' private lives and often used when characters share formal or detailed information that requires documentation, unlike text messages that are more spontaneous. The email form reflecting how each character communicates and responds within a professional or personal context.

2. Facebook Form



Facebook

[Timeline](#) | [About](#) | [Photos](#) | [Reviews](#) | [More](#)

Authentic Wine and Cheese Boutique
added an event
12 hrs
Wine and Cheese Tasting Tonight between 6pm and 10pm.
Sample wines and cheeses from around the world!

Tony Antonelli, Summer Hayes, Becky Flowers, and 54 others like this.

TOP COMMENTS

Becky Flowers—Can't wait!
Today at 1:10

Graham Tucker—❤

Henry De Santos—Save me some of that cabernet we had the other night!
Today at 1:16 PM

Nicole Flowers—And some of those ice wines!
Today at 2:45

Graham Tucker—On your special shelf, guys!
Today at 3:12 PM

Figure 1. Facebook Form

Source: *The Boy is Back* (p.37)

The picture above demonstrates the format of a Facebook post, which is presented as a digital and interactive form of written communication. Unlike structured and formal emails, the novel's Facebook posts feature informal and spontaneous interactions between characters. This format is characterized by recognizable features such as profile names, timestamps, comments, likes, and reactions. These elements reflect the modern way people communicate and share information in public or semi-public spaces. There are four Facebook post formats in the novel.

The example above includes complete elements such as event details, likes, and several comments, demonstrating the social dynamics between the characters. In the image, The Authentic Wine and Cheese Boutique announces an upcoming wine and cheese tasting, and characters such as Becky, Henry, Nicole, and Graham leave casual comments in response. Their brief comments convey enthusiasm, friendliness, and familiarity. Through this format, the characters' personalities and relationships are revealed through their online interactions, rather than through direct narrative. This format serves as one of the novel's distinctive narrative strategies, depicting modern social connections and communication.

3. Text Messages Form



Figure 2. Text Messages Form

Source: *The Boy is Back* (p.279)

The image above depicts the Chat App format, used as a modern form of instant communication in *The Boy is Back*. This format mimics real-time messaging apps where characters send and receive short, direct messages. Recognizable features include the chat title, participant names, timestamps, and message bubbles that visually separate each speaker. This format conveys emotional tone through brevity. For example, Leeanne's repeated "(No reply)" indicates her silence or hesitation, while Becky's final message, "Just kill me. Please. I beg you," conveys frustration and urgency with humor and exaggeration. There are six examples of the Chat App format in the novel.

The examples above demonstrate the dynamics of interactions between characters. The structure also reflects modern communication habits, where responses are quick and informal. The use of the chat format enhances the novel's authenticity and reflects everyday communication patterns. This format supports character development and emotional expression by visually replicating real-world digital interactions.

4. Newspaper Articles



Figure 3. Newspaper Articles

Source: The Boy is Back (p. 3)

The format above illustrates the format of a newspaper article, which mimics the style of real-world publications. This format incorporates journalistic elements such as a clear headline, deadline, publication details (date, volume, and

price), and a report structure that includes location, resident names, events, and police actions. The novel contains seven newspaper articles, each reporting a different incident occurring in the fictional town of Bloomville.

The articles shown above present several local crime reports, ranging from minor riots to a major case involving Judge Richard P. Stewart and his wife. This format written in an objective and detached tone typical of journalism. This newspaper article format serves as an informative medium, conveying the story's events realistically and objectively. This format builds the fictional world of Bloomville through factual writing. It also serves as an informative medium, connecting the characters' personal lives with the public sphere. This enriches the narrative structure by combining fiction with journalistic writing, thus enhancing the story's realism.

5. Journal Entries

Blessings Journal
of
BECKY FLOWERS

Today I feel blessed because:

My business is going well.
I have my health.
I have a great mom, sister, and boyfriend.

No. You know what?
All of the above is lies.
Not that I'm not grateful for them. I am. I know how lucky I am. I have an amazing life, and so much to feel thankful for.
But I'm not going to pretend things are going 100 percent great when they're not. Yeah, things are going 100 percent better for me than they are for some other people—Judge Stewart and his wife, for instance—but it was really hard to remember that this evening at the wine and cheese tasting when that troll Summer Hayes came up to me and asked, right in front of Graham, "So Becky, did you hear about Reed Stewart? He's coming back, you know."
It's been ten years. Ten years! I've been in so many other relationships since Reed and I went out (well, okay—three, including Graham).

Figure 4. Journal Entries

Source: *The Boy is Back* (p. 57)

The format above depicts a personal journal entry, which serves as a medium for Becky Flowers to express her personal thoughts and emotions. This journal resembles a self-reflection or gratitude journal, often beginning with statements such as "Today I feel blessed because." This journal takes on a highly personal tone and differs from other formats in the novel.

In this journal, Becky initially notes her gratitude for her health, career, and family relationships, but quickly contradicts herself by admitting that these statements are lies. This shift from gratitude to honesty reveals Becky's inner conflict. It shows that there is a direct access to Becky's unfiltered feelings, not shared with other characters in the story. There are four "Becky Flowers' Blessing Journal" entries throughout the novel.

Each entry explores Becky's attempt to process her emotions privately, away from social interaction. The language is highly emotional, giving an insight into her inner struggles and personal growth. This format plays a crucial role in establishing character depth. It presents self-reflection, rather than dialogue, presenting Becky's candid and personal voice. This format also provides deeper access to Becky's inner perspective.

Meg Cabot's *The Boy Is Back* combines various epistolary forms (emails, Facebook posts, text messages, newspaper articles, and journal entries). Each form serves a different function: emails convey structured, formal, or semi-formal communication; Facebook posts and text messages depict social interactions and spontaneous conversations; newspaper articles convey factual information; and

journal entries reveal introspection and confession from Becky Flowers' personal perspective. These forms represent communication in modern digital life.

B. The Storyline Conveyed in the Novel *The Boy is Back*

This sub-chapter explains how the storyline is structured using Freytag's Pyramid and identifies the type of plot applied in the novel. Although *The Boy is Back* begins with an event that immediately triggers conflict and tension, the overall storyline still follows the five structural stages of Freytag's Pyramid: exposition, rising action, climax, falling action, and resolution. The story is told through written communication such as emails, text messages, journal entries, and social media posts. In analyzing the storyline of *The Boy is Back*, the researcher found that the story does not open with a exposition, but rather with a scene where exposition and rising action appear as a blended stage that marks the beginning of the story's development.

1. Exposition and Rising Action

Exposition is an old habit of communicating in a prologue, where the storyline has been prepared in advance. The exposition contains a general description such as characters, background of the story, the initial events of the story or how the characters start a story. Meanwhile, rising action is the stage in a story where the main conflict begins to appear and gradually increases the tension that leads to the climax. In this phase, the events start to connect logically, showing how the problems develop and affect the characters.

In *The Boy is Back* by Meg Cabot, these two stages appear together rather than separately. The novel opens directly with an event that creates conflict while also introducing the characters, background of the story, and setting. As a result, there is a background information and conflict at the same time. The novel opens with a short report from The Bloomville Herald entitled “Crime Report,” which immediately introduces the conflict and the main setting of the story:



Figure 5. Newspaper Articles

Source: *The Boy is Back* (p. 3)

This newspaper which appears at the beginning of the novel, exhibits a mix of exposition and rising action. The beginning of the report serves as exposition because it introduces the narrative in the form of a police report, sources of information, and the setting of the town of Bloomville, Indiana (a small

town in the American Midwest). The rising action begins when the report involves Judge Richard P. Stewart and his wife committing an unusual act by attempting to pay for food with stamps, which then leads to their arrest. This incident marks the beginning of the conflict and sets the stage for the development of the rest of the plot. Following the newspaper articles, the story shifts to an email conversation between Becky Flowers and her sister, Nicole Flowers, which introduces the main character, Becky Flowers and her private life. Nicole sends her a link to the news article about the Stewarts' arrest, knowing that Becky once dated their son, Reed Stewart. This seemingly light exchange effectively introduces Becky's character and her unresolved emotional tension connected to her past relationship:

*From: Nicole@MovingUp.com
 Date: March 13 10:24:11 AM EST
 To: Becky@MovingUp.com
 Subject: Crime Report
 Beck. Go to this link.
<http://www.bloomvilleherald.com/crimereport>*

*From: Becky@MovingUp.com
 Date: March 13 10:26:15 AM EST
 To: Nicole@MovingUp.com
 Subject: Re: Crime Report
 I don't have time right now, Nicole. I'm driving to my 11:00 consultation with Mrs. Blumenthal about her mother, remember?*

*BECKY FLOWERS, CSMM
 Moving Up! Consulting LLC, President
 Sent from my handheld device, please excuse typos*

Nicole F (10:28 AM)

"You HAVE to go to that link right now. It's about Reed Stewart. . . ."

Becky F (10:30 AM)

"Why would I want to read something about a guy I broke up with ten years ago, and haven't thought of since?" (p. 4)

This short conversation blends exposition and rising action. Exposition is contained in the technical information of the email such as the sender, recipient, time, and the context of Becky's work at Moving Up! Consulting, which serves to introduce the characters, relationships between characters, and daily situations before the conflict develops further. Rising action appears when Nicole urges Becky to open the Crime Report link and explicitly mentions the name Reed Stewart, Becky Flowers' ex. The mention of this name connects the previous crime report with Becky's past as the main character, so that the conflict is no longer general or social, but begins to become a personal conflict that encourages the development of the next storyline.

The next message adds more intensity to the conflict by exposing Becky's denial and emotional vulnerability when Nicole continues to bring up Reed and reminds Becky about their prom photo:

Nicole F (10:31 AM)

Oh, right.

You don't think about Reed Stewart at all. That's why you still have your prom photo with him on the bulletin board above the treadmill, and every time Reed is in a tournament, you record it.

Becky F (10:32 AM)

I happen to be at my ideal weight in that photo and am using it for inspiration.

And I record EVERY golf tournament (p. 5).

This conversation develops the rising action by revealing Becky's emotional state. This dialogue serves as indirect characterization that reveals Becky's personality and emotional state. Becky tries to justify her behavior with

logical reasons and humor, while her responses indirectly reveal her emotional connection to the past. This moment strengthens the internal conflict, showing the contrast between Becky's spoken words and her actual feelings. Her defensive reply shows that she is still attached to Reed, and her attempt to rationalize it adds depth to her internal struggle. The conflict is not open yet, but it shows that the emotional tension that will later explode into the main conflict.

Through that conversations, the author gradually increases the tension and provides insight into Becky's state of mind. As Becky learns more about the news, her curiosity grows. Although she initially refuses to read about Reed, she becomes concerned about his parents, who were kind to her in the past. After some hesitation, Becky finally opens the link and reads about the public scandal involving Reed's family. The spread of this news in Bloomville eventually motivates Reed to return to his hometown, which becomes a crucial event that connects the characters again after ten years. This decision marks the transition from background conflict to an active sequence of events that moves the plot forward. Later, Becky writes in her Journal of Blessings about her prom night with Reed:

How he asked me to prom... in a golf cart... decorated with purple and white streamers... until the golf cart ended up in the country club's pool, with both of us still inside... and Reed's father disowned him on the spot... he was going to move to California to live with his uncle, a professor of psychology, and become a professional golfer (p. 60-63).

This Journal of Blessings enriches the exposition by providing background information about Becky and Reed's past. It also deepens the rising action because it explains the root of the current tension, Reed's conflict with his father and Becky's emotional wound. This part also recalls a significant event from the

past that serves as the foundation for the current conflict. The memory connects the past with the present conflict. The prom night becomes the turning point in both Becky's and Reed's lives. It caused Reed's conflict with his father and indirectly shaped the strained relationship between the two. This flashback provides context for the present events and shows the origin of the tension between the characters. From this journal, it also shows exposition by providing Reed Stewart's job as a professional golfer. At the end of her journal entry, Becky writes:

Falling in love with him was the biggest mistake I ever made in my life. I still hate myself sometimes for it... I have a wonderful boyfriend... I'm over Reed Stewart. I am over Reed Stewart. I AM GRATEFUL FOR BEING OVER REED STEWART (p. 67).

This repetition reflects Becky's internal conflict and emotional instability. Although she tries to appear strong, her words indicate guilt and regret. This part emphasizes Becky's effort to convince herself that she has moved on. This part also indicates unresolved emotions that continue to influence her decisions and reactions in the present timeline. It shows how the past event continues to shape the rising action through psychological tension. The internal conflict reaches a deeper emotional level here, continuing the development of the rising action.

Meanwhile, Reed's perspective introduces his conflicts. :

*From: Reed Stewart@reedstewart.com
Date: March 13 9:07:21 PM PST
To: Lyle Stewart@FountainHill.org
Subject: Richard and Connie*

I know I said I'd never go back there unless Dad begged me, and I meant it... My true motivation for going there is Becky, because I've found out she finally has a serious boyfriend... And why would she even want to be with me anyway, after what I did?... So the first one I'm going to make is that I'm going to go back to Bloomville... (p.70).

This email strengthens the rising action by showing his guilt and lingering feelings toward Becky. Reed also must deal with his family's legal and social problems. These Reed's conflicts interact to create a structured sequence of events that strengthen the rising action and prepare for the story's climax. The decision to return to Bloomville marks a significant moment that connects all narrative threads introduced earlier in the exposition. So, this part of the story highlights how the sequence of events is organized to build tension and meaning. Each event is related to another, creating a continuous flow that connects Becky's and Reed's emotional state, Reed's return, and Reed family's external problem.

Overall, the exposition and rising action in *The Boy is Back* are tightly connected. The exposition introduces the main characters, setting, and background, while the rising action begins almost immediately through emotional and social tension. This method allows the tension to develop naturally, leading the story toward its highest point of conflict and emotional confrontation between the main characters.

The blend of exposition and rising action effectively prepares the story for the upcoming climax. As Reed returns to Bloomville and Becky struggles with her emotions, the story moves from background tension to direct confrontation. The next section, therefore, discusses the climax, where both characters must finally face the consequences of their unresolved past and emotional conflict.

2. Climax

The climax is the important moment of the plot where the conflict reaches its highest intensity and the outcome of the rising action becomes clear. It is the

decisive stage in which the main character faces the most critical moment of choice, and the emotional and structural tension to its peak. In *The Boy Is Back*, this stage occurs when Reed returns to Bloomville and unexpectedly meets Becky after ten years. The meeting and the events that follow reveal both characters' internal struggles and emotional tension that have been building since the beginning of the novel.

The climax begins shortly after Reed's parents are released from custody by his brother, Trimble Stewart. Following this event, Reed, Trimble, and their other brother, Marshall, decide that their parents must move to another city. This decision creates a need for a moving consultant, and the only available professional in Bloomville is Becky Flowers. Carly, Marshall's wife, contacts Becky to help the Stewarts relocate to a new home. Carly also arranges an appointment in the Kroger parking lot to discuss the family's legal and moving matters. Unbeknownst to Becky and Reed, Carly's arrangement becomes a moment that reunites them after years of separation.

Their unexpected meeting in the parking lot becomes the central moment of important emotional. Although Becky tries to remain professional, her reaction shows discomfort and inner conflict. Reed, on the other hand, also shows hesitation and regret. This meeting serves as the pivot of the story (a scene that connects the external conflict involving the Stewart family with Becky's personal and emotional conflict). It reveals how two separate lines of tension (Reed's family issues and Becky's unresolved feelings) merge at a single point of crisis.

After the encounter, Reed sends Becky an emotional email expressing his gratitude and regret:

*From: Reed Stewart@reedstewart.com
Date: March 15 5:06:10 PM EST
To: Becky@MovingUp.com
Subject: You*

*Dear Becky,
It seems inadequate to say "it's been a long time," but in this case, it's fitting.
Thanks so much for agreeing to help my parents.*

I can't think of that night—the way I failed you—without breaking out into a cold sweat.

... But maybe I could take you out for coffee or a drink while I'm here, just for old times' sake?

*Let me know.
Yours, always, Reed (p. 164-165).*

This email becomes a key textual element in the climax because it exposes Reed's emotional honesty and the weight of his past mistakes. Through this email, there's a shift in Reed's character (from avoidance and denial to accountability and openness). The email functions as the culmination of the emotional tension built in the rising action. It also initiates the central dilemma that defines the climax: whether Becky will maintain her emotional distance or allow her past feelings to resurface.

Becky's reaction to the message shows her attempt to suppress her emotions. She chooses to maintain professionalism, refusing Reed's invitation. However, her internal struggle is shown through a private message she writes later:

Becky Flowers

12:45

I still love him, now more than ever.

And it's killing me!

He is killing me. Every time he says my name, or looks my way, every time he laughs, even if he's only telling one of his stupid jokes about his parents idiotic World's Greatest Grandparents mugs, he is taking my heart, pulling it from my chest, crumpling it into a little ball, and stuffing it into his pocket, as casually as if it were a napkin he'd used to wipe his mouth.

... AND I HAVE A BOYFRIEND. WHO ISN'T HIM (p. 271-272).

This confession marks the most intense moment of Becky's internal conflict. Her professional life, personal values, and emotional reality collide, leaving her torn between rational choice and emotional truth. This part represents the the external side concerning the Stewart family's issues and the internal side focusing on Becky's emotional transformation. The two sides of tension reach their highest point simultaneously, which fulfills Freytag's concept of climax as the convergence of opposing forces before resolution

Becky's realization that she is still emotionally tied to Reed leads to the next major event: her decision to end her relationship with Graham. She writes an email to him, stating that she needs time for herself and can no longer continue their romantic relationship:

*From: Becky@MovingUp.com
Date: March 17 2:35:19 AM EST
To: Graham Tucker@AuthenticWineCheeseBoutique.com
Subject: You*

Hi, Graham. I'm sorry I've been so distant lately. Like Nicole said, this new job really has got me burning the candle at both ends.

... I really do need to take some time off to get to know me better, and I wouldn't dream of asking you to wait, since I know you want to start a family, and that's not a plan you should put on hold.

... I hope you understand and that we can still be friends. I wish you the best.

*Becky
Becky Flowers, CSMM
Moving Up! Consulting LLC, President*

Sent from my handheld device, please excuse typos (p. 276-277)

This message signals Becky's decisive action and functions as the moment when the relationship between the characters begins to improve after a major conflict of the entire plot. While the earlier parts of the novel show Becky's denial and hesitation, this moment represents acceptance of reality. Becky's decision resolves the inner contradiction that has driven the story's emotional progression. She acknowledges her true feelings and chooses honesty, even though it leads to temporary loss and pain. In the structure of Freytag's Pyramid, this act of decision is the moment that determines the direction of the falling action.

At this stage, the tension between past and present, emotion and logic, has reached its highest point. Reed and Becky's emotional journey, these two important characters begin to open up and be honest with each other about their feelings and weaknesses. They stop blaming each other and begin to understand each other. Both characters are forced to confront their history and decide what kind of relationship they want to rebuild.

In summary, the climax in *The Boy Is Back* becoming the most tense moment in Becky and Reed relationship (arguments, misunderstandings, and heightened emotions). The meeting at the Kroger parking lot, Reed's letter of apology, Becky's inner confession, and her decision to end her current relationship all form a sequence of events that define the highest point of dramatic tension. This stage illustrates the balance between the character's actual actions and what the character feels inside (thoughts, feelings, changes in attitude). The story transitions from uncertainty toward clarity, preparing the narrative for the falling action that follows.

3. Falling action

In Freytag's pyramid, the falling action is the stage where the story starts moving toward resolution after the climax. It is the moment when the "knots of conflict" begin to unravel. The tension that once dominated the story slowly fades, giving space for understanding, forgiveness, and closure. In *The Boy is Back*, this stage appears after Becky ends her relationship with Graham and begins to face her unresolved past with Reed. Her breakup marks not only an emotional release but also her readiness to reconcile with her former lover.

The falling action mainly focuses on the relationship recovery between Becky and Reed. Their relationship, which was once broken by miscommunication and misunderstanding, starts to heal. This change is first shown when Reed spends the night at Becky's house, an act symbolizing renewed closeness and trust. After that, Becky immediately contacts her friend Leeanne, expressing her happiness and revealing something unexpected that Reed had kept all of her letters, emails, and texts.

Leeanne Matsumori created chat "Reed Stewart"

Becky Flowers

09:09

Leeanne, I'm so happy. I've never been happier in my life. He saved all my letters. And my emails. And my texts.

Leeanne Matsumori

09:09

He saved them? Why didn't he answer them?

Becky Flowers

09:10

He couldn't. He didn't know what to say. He knew we couldn't be together, since he couldn't live in Indiana. But he didn't want to ask me to move out to California, since he knew how excited I was about going to school. And he didn't feel as if it was fair to ask me to wait for him (which he was right about—it wouldn't have been). So he just freaked out and did nothing. And then the longer he did nothing, the less he knew what to say. And then he figured I'd probably just forgotten about him.

Leeanne Matsumori

09:10

Oh, wow, you guys are perfect for each other. You do the same thing to him and his entire family (p. 331-332).

This short conversation becomes a key moment that explains the emotional foundation of the falling action. Becky's discovery that Reed had preserved every message she ever sent shows that his love for her never truly disappeared. For Becky, this is a deeply touching realization because it clears up the misunderstanding that separated them years ago. Reed's silence was not caused by indifference, but by confusion and guilt. He could not ask Becky to move to California or to wait for him, so he chose silence, the decision to remain silent kept them apart for years without a chance to repair the damaged relationship.

This moment is crucial because it changes Becky's perception of Reed and understand both sides of the conflict without through dramatic confrontation. The story then continues with Reed revealing his plan to return to Bloomville and build a life with Becky. In a conversation with his brother, Marshall, Reed discusses his decision to buy the old elementary school and turn it into a junior golf academy.

Reed

9:44 AM

... I want to buy the old elementary school... I plan to make my classes free, because more people should play golf. It's accessible to everyone..

Marshall

9:45 AM

You're high on something.

Does this mean you're moving back to Bloomville?

Reed

9:45 AM

Well, not for the whole year. That would be ridiculous... My girlfriend has a business and family here. She's not going to abandon them.

And I have family here, too. I may as well start a business, too (p. 336-337).

Reed's plan to move back and invest in Bloomville represents a major shift in his character. Earlier in the novel, he was portrayed as someone who avoided his hometown and his responsibilities. Now, he chooses to reconnect with his family, his community, and Becky. This stage shows character development that supports the story's movement toward resolution. The external actions (Reed's decision to stay, buy property, and build a career in Bloomville) mirror his internal transformation from avoidance to commitment. The tone of the story also becomes more peaceful and affectionate. The dialogue between Becky and Reed begins to show emotional balance and mutual understanding, contrasting sharply with the tension and confusion of earlier scenes.

Reed 7:36 PM

"Too good, too excellent a creature! I have loved none but you."

Becky 7:36 PM

Same. <3 (p. 351).

This brief exchange captures the essence of the falling action: simplicity, sincerity, and calm resolution. The conflict no longer dominates their relationship; instead, love and acceptance take its place. This phase, therefore, functions as the emotional descent from the story's climax.

In this case, the falling action balances the tension created in the climax by reorganizing relationships and reaffirming harmony between characters. The miscommunication that served as the structural cause of conflict is now

systematically resolved through dialogue and shared understanding. Every scene in this phase contributes to the narrative balance. Becky's discovery of the saved messages, Reed's confession, and his decision to return to Bloomville are all structural elements that function to restore order. None of them stand alone (they interconnect to show how the story moves from chaos to stability).

Overall, the falling action in *The Boy is Back* fulfills both Freytag's structural stage. It marks the stage where conflicts lose their power, emotional distance turns into closeness, and characters begin to rebuild their lives. The phase emphasizes that love and understanding, once obstructed by pride and silence, can be restored through honest communication. It effectively prepares the narrative for the resolution, closing the emotional arc in a calm yet meaningful way.

4. Resolution

The resolution is the stage in Freytag's pyramid where the story reaches its conclusion and all major conflicts are settled. According to (Al-Alami, 2016), the resolution provides readers with the ending they have been waiting for, offering a sense of closure that completes the characters' journeys. This part unites all the narrative elements (characters, themes, and conflicts) into a coherent whole. It allows readers to understand the final state of the story's world after all the tensions have been resolved, whether the ending is happy or tragic.

In *The Boy is Back*, the resolution begins when Becky helps Reed's parents move to Florida. This seemingly simple event has deeper symbolic meaning. On the surface, it resolves the practical issue of Reed's parents' relocation, which had been one of the story's ongoing concerns. On a deeper

level, however, it also represents the emotional resolution of Reed's relationship with his family. By helping his parents transition peacefully, Reed symbolically fulfills his role as a responsible son and releases the burden of guilt and distance that previously defined his character. This action clears the emotional space for him to start a new life with Becky. At the same time, Becky and Reed's romantic relationship officially reaches stability. The emotional closure of the novel is clearly expressed through Becky's journal entry:

Today I feel blessed because:

- *I get to do what I love for a living. How many people can say that?*
- *And I have a boyfriend who takes my breath away—maybe not every single second of the day, but for enough of them to make up for the times during which I want to kill him.*

And I'll never stop being thankful to his crazy parents for giving birth to him, and for bringing him back to me (p. 354).

This passage encapsulates Becky's emotional maturity and acceptance. Through humor and affection, she expresses both realism and gratitude. The tone of her writing signals that she has overcome her previous doubts and emotional instability. Becky has reached a point of balance where she can love Reed genuinely, acknowledging both his strengths and his flaws. This marks the resolution of her internal conflict, as she has moved from emotional confusion to contentment and peace.

The same process occurs in Reed's character arc. Throughout the novel, Reed struggled with feelings of guilt, avoidance, and a strained family relationship. However, by the end of the story, he achieves reconciliation both with his family and with himself. His personal resolution is captured in the final

email he writes to his uncle, Lyle Stewart, which also serves as the novel's closing passage:

*From: Reed Stewart@reedstewart.com
Date: March 25 4:52:43 PM EST
To: Lyle Stewart@FountainHill.org
Subject: Congratulations*

Dear Uncle Lyle,

There's definitely going to be a wedding... I know now that mine won't lead to a dark and gloomy basement, but a garden as light-filled and sunny as yours, and bursting with Becky Flowers.

Love,

*Your Favorite Nephew,
Reed (p. 355)*

Reed's email reflects a complete transformation in his attitude toward life, family, and love. The imagery he uses symbolizes hope, renewal, and the future he envisions with Becky. His gratitude to his uncle and his declaration of love suggest that he has embraced stability and emotional openness, qualities that contrast sharply with the emotional detachment he displayed earlier in the story.

Overall, the resolution in *The Boy is Back* fulfills its narrative and structural purpose. It does not simply show that Becky and Reed end up together; it illustrates emotional growth, acceptance, and renewal. The conflicts (both internal and external) are completely resolved. Becky achieves emotional peace, while Reed finds redemption and purpose. The family tension that once created distance is replaced by unity and warmth. Thus, *The Boy is Back* closes not just with a happy ending, but with a structurally and emotionally complete resolution that restores balance to both the characters' lives and the story's world.

Based on the overall analysis of the plot structure in Meg Cabot's *The Boy Is Back*, it can be concluded that the novel utilizes a linear plot with one brief flashback. Flashback is when an author can convey information about past events by using a flashback storyline, which shows action or incidents inconsequentially. It enables the writer or the author to start the story in the midst of a thrilling scene and then go back in time to set the scene (Pardede, 2020). The story progresses largely chronologically, from Reed's return to Bloomville, his reunion with Becky, the re-emergence of past conflicts, and the resolution of their relationship. The only flashbacks appear through Becky's journal, which serve to provide background to their past relationship. This flashback serve as brief interludes that deepen the story's context without disrupting the main timeline. Thus, the novel maintains a forward-moving plot.

This plot pattern demonstrates how Meg Cabot adapts the story's structure to its epistolary forms. This relationship between the epistolary forms and plot development is important for further analysis in the next subchapter, which examines the implications of the epistolary format for the plot development in *The Boy Is Back*.

C. The Implications of an Epistolary Forms on the Storyline in *The Boy is Back*

The epistolary forms in *The Boy Is Back* plays an important role in shaping how the storyline is presented and perceived. The story is constructed through various modern communication media which form the structure of the novel. These formats carries specific narrative functions and contributes to the story's

development. Therefore, it becomes important to examine how this epistolary forms interacts with the storyline, whether it helps the plot become more structured and connected and logical or makes it appear disconnected and difficult to follow. This section discusses how Meg Cabot's use of the epistolary form affects the clarity, coherence, and flow of the storyline.

The different storylines are presented in the epistolary format, where each format has a different topic and the conversations are made separately. Also, In this novel, there is no long descriptive narrations explaining the setting, emotions, or gestures of the characters. Therefore, the author presents a conversation between two characters through (for example) text messages, then the next section is an email from someone or vice versa. The researcher chose this text message format, followed by the email format because it is a short conversation and suitable as an example. This can be seen in this conversation:

Mom *5:45 PM*

Becky, Nicole just told me about the Stewarts! Bloomville hasn't been on the news in years. Not since that tornado over by the mall. And the Dumbbell Killer, of course.

Becky *5:45 PM*

Mom, where are you?

Mom *5:46 PM*

I'm at the park. I'd call but there's such terrible reception here. I could barely hear Nicole when she called to tell me Jackie Monroe from Channel 4 was talking about the judge. Can you imagine? Jackie was talking about OUR town!

Becky *5:46 PM*

Mom, it's going to get dark soon. Why are you at the park?

Mom *5:46 PM*

Sunset tonight isn't until after 7. And I found so many wonderful sticks here the other day when I was helping the Girl Scouts clean up after that storm (p. 28-29).

From the conversation above, it can be seen that it is a conversation between two characters, Becky Flowers and her mother. Then in the next part is an e-mail from Trimble Stewart to Carly Stewart, Marshall Stewart, and Reed Stewart.

From: Trimble Stewart-Antonelli@Stewart&Stewart.com

Date: March 13 7:06:26 PM EST

To: Carly Stewart@StewartRealty.com; Marshall Stewart@StewartRealty.com; Reed Stewart@reedstewart.com

Subject: Our Parents

Dear Marshall, Reed, and Carly (I am including you, Carly, because I know Marshall tells you everything anyway, and of course I'm including my own spouse, Tony): I have bailed Mom and Dad out of jail. No need to thank or repay me. As their eldest child (and executor of their Will) it was my obligation.

I'm writing to let you know, however, that this is the last time I will have anything to do with our parents. Their recent behavior is not only embarrassing, it is jeopardizing both my standing as an officer of the court, and Tony's standing in the community as a well-known restaurateur (for those of you who don't know, he's starting a sister restaurant to Antonelli's next month in Dearborn which he plans to call Antonelli's II).

I'm not sure if any of you are aware of the extent to which Mom and Dad have gone downhill. I found out this afternoon when I asked them to reimburse me for their bond (\$1600.00), and they informed me that they have no money. Not no money saved for retirement. They have NO MONEY AT ALL (p.32).

From the two conversations above, Becky's conversation with her mother, and Trimble Stewart's e-mail to her siblings are formats that are broken down into small parts. In addition, with a format that is broken down into small parts, the storyline in this novel remains linear because the events are presented chronologically day by day, hour by hour, minute by minute. This can be seen from the date and time in the format.

Also, in this novel, there is no long descriptive narrations explaining the setting, emotions, or gestures of the characters. Because of that, makes the storytelling faster and more straightforward. The information appears in short

pieces that go directly to the point that can make the story through quick conversations that happen from minute to minute. However, because there is no narrator explaining what the characters feel or what the situation looks like, readers need to interpret things on their own by paying attention to tone, word choice, and how the characters respond to each other. From the conversation above, shows that events are presented directly through the characters' messages without any additional narrative explanation. Through this format and the conversation, it shows that situation appears only from what the characters say. The timestamps such as "5:45 PM" and "5:46 PM" help keep the events in order and prevent confusion even though the format is short and fragmented. Thus, the storyline remains clear because the flow of time is organized very precisely.

Additionally, each format has a distinct style, tone, and function in building the story. For example, text messages are used to show spontaneous and humorous conversations between characters; emails often contain semi-formal and formal explanations; while journal entries or personal notes are used to reveal the characters' innermost feelings and thoughts. Researcher can also understand how each format contributes to the development of the plot and the relationships between the characters. For example, a change in tone in an email between Becky Flowers and Reed Stewart can indicate a change in their emotions or the dynamics of their relationship. This shows that each format is chosen for a specific purpose, depending on what the story needs at that moment.

The epistolary format makes the storyline neater and more organized. Because sometimes, there are other epistolary novels whose storylines are made to

go back and forth. Readers also have to adapt to this type of novel, especially if the reader is a reader in their life who is a reader who is not in the know or who is not up to date with the times. However, Meg Cabot avoids the risk of confusing the storyline by providing timestamps in the format, the difference in tone by each character when the character uses a certain format. In other words, the storyline delivered in the modern epistolary format remains neat and clear.

Overall, the epistolary form helps the story organized because each part is presented in small sections that are easy to follow. The dates and the timestamps keep the plot clear and moving in the correct order. In addition, using different formats can see different tones and perspectives from each other character. In this way, the epistolary structures becomes an important element that keeps the storyline clear, organized, and more engaging to read.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

This chapter presents the conclusions drawn from the findings and discussions in the previous chapters. Meanwhile, the suggestions are intended to provide guidance and recommendations for readers and future researchers.

A. Conclusion

Based on the analysis above, *The Boy is Back* concludes that the epistolary structure is the primary mode of presentation in the novel. Five different formats are used in the novel: text messages, Facebook posts, emails, Becky Flowers' journal entries, and newspaper articles. Each format serves a different function: text messages and Facebook posts depict spontaneous interactions between characters; Becky Flowers' journal entries depict introspection and confession from Becky Flowers' personal perspective; emails depict formal, structured, or semi-formal communication; and newspaper articles describe or convey current information or news in Bloomville. The novel's unique storytelling style stems from these formats.

The Boy is Back's plot follows a chronological sequence, or sequence, using Freytag's Pyramid, beginning with an opening event that combines exposition and rising action. The climax then occurs with Becky Flowers and Reed Stewart, who have unresolved pasts they must confront. The falling action then depicts the reconciliation and emotional development of Becky Flowers and Reed Stewart. The story then ends with a resolution in which the characters'

personal and family relationships stabilize. This novel only has one brief flashback, which serves to reinforce the background of Becky Flowers and Reed Stewart without disrupting the flow of the story.

Therefore, the epistolary format helps the story organized because each part is presented in small sections that are easy to follow because each format has clear time and date stamps, keeping the flow clear and organized. Also, the different styles and tones used by each character in each format. Thus, epistolary is not just a storytelling style, but a crucial part of keeping the plot enjoyable, clear, and engaging.

B. Suggestion

The researcher hopes that this study will be useful for future researchers interested in analyzing epistolary formats and plot structures in modern novels, not only future researchers but also readers. For those studying epistolary or digital formats such as the novel *The Boy is Back*, this study can serve as a reference. Future researchers can explore other aspects such as themes, character development, or moral messages in the novel that are not the focus of this study. The researcher is also very open to receiving input and suggestions to improve future research.

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