

Vogler's Hero's Journey Representation in *Puss in Boots: The Last Wish* (2022) Film

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ABSTRAK

Penelitian ini meneliti bagaimana perjalanan pahlawan direpresentasikan melalui film animasi *Puss in Boots: The Last Wish* yang dirilis pada tahun 2022 menggunakan teori perjalanan pahlawan milik Christopher Vogler. Model dua belas tahap Vogler digunakan untuk menelusuri perkembangan karakter utama, Puss, dan mengaitkan setiap tahap dengan konflik yang dialami sepanjang perjalanan. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode kualitatif dan data yang diambil pada penelitian ini terdiri dari dialog dan adegan yang ditampilkan dari tokoh utama dalam film. Hasil dari penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa film *Puss in Boots: The Last Wish* merepresentasikan dan mengikuti teori perjalanan pahlawan dari Vogler melalui tokoh Puss. Dalam film tersebut, Puss telah menghadapi 10 tahapan dan melewati semuanya dengan perkembangan karakter yang menunjukkan transformasinya dari pribadi yang sombong dan individualis menjadi sosok yang bijaksana dan penuh penghargaan. Lebih lanjut, setiap tahapan perjalanan pahlawan tidak hanya menggambarkan transformasi pribadi Puss, tetapi juga memperlihatkan nilai-nilai tentang keberanian, persahabatan, dan penghargaan makna hidup sebagai pesan bagi para penonton.

Kata kunci: Film, perjalanan pahlawan, *Puss in Boots*, Christopher Vogler

ABSTRACT

This research examines how the hero's journey is represented through the animated *Puss in Boots: The Last Wish* film that was released in 2022, using Christopher Vogler's hero's journey theory. Vogler's twelve-stage model is used to trace the development of the main character, Puss, and relate each stage to the conflicts that he experienced throughout the journey. This study uses a qualitative method, and the data taken consist of dialogues and scenes of the film. The results of this study show that the *Puss in Boots: The Last Wish* film represents and follows Vogler's hero's journey through the character of Puss. In the film, Puss had faced ten stages and passed all of them with a character development that showed his transformation from an arrogant and individualistic person to a wise and appreciative figure. Each stage of the hero's journey not only illustrates Puss's transformation but also shows values about courage, friendship, and appreciation of the meaning of life as messages for the audience.

Keywords: Film, Hero's Journey, *Puss in Boots*, Christopher Vogler

A. INTRODUCTION

A hero is referred to as someone who comes to the rescue of others by sacrificing himself or herself and displays an image of justice, tranquility, and belief in goodness (Sha, 2020). The term is often associated with fictional stories in which the protagonist has strength, determination, and courage. The most important part of the hero's journey is related to what happens to the hero and what transformation the hero goes through (Lonescu, 2021). This makes the concept of the hero relevant in every era, as it is not only used to tell adventures but also to reflect universal themes such as the struggle against fear, the search for meaning, and sacrifice. Therefore, it is not uncommon for literary works such as novels and films to use the concept of the hero's journey.

Films not only serve to entertain but also to reflect the values and beliefs of the society; this reveals the strong relationship between film and literature. According to Klarer, films are included as literary works because they originate from narratives that influence and are influenced by literature and literary practices (Klarer, 2004). Thus, literary criticism can be used to analyze films, as films can be considered literature. Films have various genres, including animation.

Animation is the process of creating moving images by combining a series of them, which are then arranged in one frame to create a movement that has been manipulated, making its process of making different from live-action films (Bordwall, Thompson, & Smith 2019). Nowadays, films not only feature human protagonists; some have animals as their main characters.

Animals are often featured in animations as characters who live in human-dominated environments or have human traits to interact with each other in their environment. Animal or non-human representations in which they have human-like traits, characteristics, behaviors, and personalities are referred to as anthropomorphism. Films and stories often use this concept to create vivid characters that can be liked by the reader or audience (Airenti, 2018). Using animals as non-human subjects in an animated film enables the creation of animal characters that are relevant to humans.

DreamWorks Studio is an animation studio that has produced many popular animated films, one of them is *Puss in Boots*. It tells the story of Puss, an orange cat who has a love of adventure, with his trademark boots and sword. Puss lost eight out of his nine lives due to his disregard for safety. Consequently, Death began targeting the legendary Puss with the purpose of killing him as punishment for wasting his life. Puss planned to end his adventure, but he then found out a way to regain his nine lives, which made him get involved again in a big adventure, to find the mythical Wishing Star in the Black Forest to realize his wish.

Puss's journey to get the Wishing Star can be analyzed using Christopher Vogler's hero's journey theory. In one of his works, *The Writer's Journey*, he summarizes the theory of the hero's journey that has been developed by Joseph Campbell into twelve journey stages. Vogler said that the vast differences do not affect the hero's story, which will remain a journey. Leaving a safe home and traveling for some reason into a dangerous and unknown world, meeting friends or saviors who accompany the journey, enemies who get in the way, and finding something that is the reason for the journey (Vogler, 2007).

Various previous studies have examined the application of the hero's journey framework in film analysis. Sari (2021) analyzed the stages of Joseph Campbell's hero's journey in the Disney film *Encanto*, focusing on Mirabel's struggle as the main character, and found that not all seventeen stages were fulfilled. Meanwhile, Maharani (2023) investigated the hero's journey of Grace in the film *Ready or Not* using Christopher Vogler's model, emphasizing character and characterization. In addition, Ramadhanty (2020) compared the heroine's journey of Merida in *Brave* (2012) and Moana in *Moana* (2016), also using Vogler's framework to examine similarities and differences between the two films. However, while these studies share a similar focus on the hero's journey in film, they differ in theoretical approach, object of study, and analytical scope. Unlike the previous research, the present study applies Vogler's hero's journey to a single film and incorporates not only character and characterization but also conflict to examine the protagonist's transformation.

Puss's journey shown in the film can be related to Christopher Vogler's hero's journey theory. The hero always passes through some dangerous obstacles first, after which he will get an achievement that will ascend him into being a figure called a hero (Vogler 2007). Puss's journey indicates the hero's journey because he faced death, which required him to find the Wishing Star. As he searched for the Wishing Star, Puss went through many troubles and challenges that can be analyzed using the hero's journey theory.

B. LITERATURE REVIEW

This section discusses theories and studies related to films. It begins by explaining the film as a literary work, character and characterization in films, followed by conflict in films, and the stages of the hero's journey. The purpose of the researchers' discussion about characterization and conflict in this study is to see the development of Puss's character, as displayed in the film *Puss in Boots: The Last Wish*, during his journey to make his wish come true.

1. Film as Literary Work

Film is a visual medium that tells stories through moving images and audiovisuals (Monahan and Barsam, 2021). Films exist not only as a source of entertainment but also to provide an influence that can improve the way people think through the issues presented in the film. In addition, people can find inspiration, ideas, and new views through films. Literary technique often parallels filmmaking. Films present visuals using camera angles, editing, effects, and sound. Meanwhile, literary works such as novels and poems present them through writing by explaining it. Although the forms and media that are used are different, films can still be analyzed with literary techniques because film criticism is closely related to textual analysis (Klarer, 2004). Even through moving images and audiovisuals, films can still convey textual similarities with literary works.

2. Character and Characterization

Character and characterization have differences that are important to understand. A character in a literary work is an individual, and characterization is the process of developing that individual (Gill, 1995). In literature, a character is an individual whom the audience understands as having specific emotional, rational, and moral qualities through their words and actions in a story or sensational work (Abrams, 1999). Characterization helps in defining the story in the character's own way (Hakim et al., 2023). According to Abrams (1999), characterization is categorized into two types: direct, which is an explanation through direct narration from the author that talks about the character's personality and characteristics, and indirect, which displays the character's characteristics through his or her speech, actions, and interactions with other characters without an explanation from the author.

3. Conflict

Conflict in a story is an important element that will make the story more interesting for the readers or viewers. Conflict is the main source of every story that exists, whether through the printed page, on stage, on the movie screen, or told. This element increases the intensity of the experience by challenging our minds with the various conflicts presented (Boggs and Petrie,

2008). Conflicts often occur between one character and another, usually due to misunderstandings or incompatibilities between them.

4. Hero's Journey Theory by Christopher Vogler

The hero's journey always has a pattern that seems to extend to multiple dimensions and depicts more than one reality. However, the vast differences do not affect the hero's story that will remain a journey. Leaving a safe home and traveling for some reason into a dangerous and unknown world, meeting friends or saviors who accompany the journey, enemies who get in the way, and ending up finding something that is the reason for the journey. Not all stories feature action involving physics, adventure, and dangerous scenes, but in any story, the stages of the hero's journey can be identified. The hero in a story is easy to recognize, every protagonist is the hero of a journey. However, some writers don't realize the hero's journey appears naturally in their stories (Vogler, 2007). There are 12 stages in the hero's journey theory by Vogler, The Ordinary World, Call to Adventure, Refusal of the Call, Meeting with the Mentor, The Crossing the First Threshold, Tests, Allies, Enemies, Approach to the Inmost Cave, The Ordeal, Reward, The Road Back, The Resurrection, Return with the Elixir.

C. METHOD

1. Research Design

This study uses a qualitative method and a structuralism approach. As Taylor and Renner stated, "Qualitative data consist of words and observations, not numbers. As with all data, analysis and interpretation are required to bring order and understanding" (2003, p. 1). Based on this statement, qualitative research centers on analysis using texts, not numbers. According to Dobie, "Structuralists are looking not for structures in a physical sense but for patterns that underlie human behavior, experience, and creation" (2011, p. 152). The researchers use structuralism as an approach because the hero's journey theory proposed by Vogler does not focus on physical structures or real objects, but rather on a pattern that underlies a person's behavior and experience, which refers to that person's change from an ordinary individual to a hero character. The researchers of this study try to describe the representation of the hero's journey in *Puss in Boots: The Last Wish* film and explain Puss's journey to become a hero. Consequently, this study focuses on Puss's journey, which shows the hero's journey as a social context for a person's behavior using a structuralism approach.

1. Data and Data Source

The data in this study are in the form of Puss's dialogues and scenes in the film that are related to the concept of character and characterization and conflict, which show the stages of his journey to become a hero using Christopher Vogler's theory. Then, the data source in this research is the *Puss in Boots: The Last Wish* (2022) film, a DreamWorks animated film directed by Joel Crawford.

2. Research Instrument

The researchers use the human instrument in finding and analyzing the data. In qualitative research, human researchers have the main function of a tool that collects and analyzes data. This is because the qualitative research requires mastery of instrument adaptation is needed to

capture complex nuances and adjust to the environment (Ary et al., 2010). Therefore, the main instrument of this research is the researchers.

3. Data Collection Technique

The researchers have taken several steps in collecting the data for this research. First, the researchers watched the *Puss in Boots: The Last Wish* (2022) film several times to better understand each scene in the film. Second, the researchers screenshotted and wrote down the timestamps of the parts in *Puss in Boots: The Last Wish* (2022) film that show important scenes related to the hero's journey theory. Third, the researchers sorted the data and made sure that the data is relevant to Christopher Vogler's hero's journey theory.

5. Data Analysis

The researchers use Christopher Vogler's hero's journey theory to analyze Puss's journey as a hero in the *Puss in Boots: The Last Wish* (2022) film. In its process, the researchers analyze the data based on Taylor and Renner's (2003) analyzing qualitative data. First, the researchers tried to understand the data to be analyzed. The researchers' understanding affects the data analysis process, so the researchers balanced between repeated reading and understanding the contents of the data. Second, the researchers reviewed the research question and remained focused on identifying the answer to the key question. Third, the researchers selected and categorized the data in the form of dialogues and scenes that are relevant to the research question. The fourth, the researchers identified and marked the parts of the data that are related to the hero's journey. Lastly, the researchers connected and combined all of the findings related to the theory and uncovered the answer to the research question to reach conclusions.

D. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

In this section, the researchers present findings from *Puss in Boots: The Last Wish* and the character development of Puss in the film. It also shows how the hero's journey is represented in the *Puss in Boots: The Last Wish* film.

1. Stages of Vogler's Hero's Journey in *Puss in Boots: The Last Wish* (2022) Film

a. Ordinary World

Most stories begin by introducing the hero's everyday life before he is transported to a special world and begins his journey. The hero is shown to be at home, still—a place that is comfortable and safe—before finally stepping out of the ordinary world into a world full of mystical, absurd, and dangerous things (Vogler, 2007). At this stage, the hero's self before entering the special world and encountering the problem that makes him or her have to leave the comfortable place can be identified.

Puss : Welcome to my fiesta!
Make yourselves at home! Yeah!
Come on, eat!
Drink up! Ha, ha!

In the data above, Puss appears confident in the festive party that he organized at the governor's mansion while welcoming guests from the lower class. This scene shows the ordinary world stage because it shows the initial situation of the main character before the main conflict arises.

Puss : **People of Del Mar, accept these golden gifts from Puss in Boots!**
Party Goer : Play a song!
Puss : No, no, no, I couldn't
Little Boy : Sing, Puss! Sing!
Puss : I couldn't possibly—
Who is your favorite fearless hero?
Who is your favorite fearless hero?

The dialogue above occurs when Puss distributes the gold he got from the governor's mansion to the people of Del Mar and is then greeted by the people of Del Mar, who enthusiastically sing songs about him. This data depicts Puss's old world that is full of praise, recognition, and pleasure, but harbors arrogance that will be the starting point of his transformation.

Puss : Oh, hey, Governor. Uh...One second.
Governor : The outlaw Puss in Boots!
Puss : Welcome! Mi casa es su casa!
Governor : No, su casa es MI casa!
Arrest these filthy peasants—and bring me the head of Puss in Boots!
Puss : **Hey! This is a party! Where is the music?**

In the scene above, Puss and the community are recognized by the governor, who had just arrived at his house in the middle of the party. Puss shows a casual attitude in the face of the angry governor, treating the serious situation like it is a part of the party. The dialogue displays Puss, who is used to facing danger without fear, showing arrogance and overconfidence.

Party Goer : You awoke the sleeping giant of Del Mar!
Little Boy : Wheee! I'm flying!
Puss : **No, you are not flying! I will save you!**

The scene above shows the commotion caused by the giant of Del Mar, who was awakened from his sleep by Puss. Puss tried to save a child and other people from being captured by the giant of Del Mar with heroic actions, reinforcing his image as a hero who is always ready to save others. This reflex action reflects Puss's daily life, where he still lived in his old role as a proud hero who sees dangerous actions as part of his life.

From the analysis, Puss's characterization in the ordinary world is shown through his action when he shared the gold he took from the governor's house, reflecting his personality as someone who likes to help others and get recognition and praise from others. Then, his fighting against the governor and his troops and the giant of Del Mar reflects his confidence, pride, and courage to save the people of Del Mar from danger. Puss displays confidence as well as arrogance by

believing that he can defeat his enemies easily, showing his brave nature of not being afraid of any danger because he has nine lives; he is not afraid of death.

In addition, there are two conflicts that arose at the ordinary stage, first, character vs character, where Puss must fight the governor and his troops for entering his mansion and taking his property without his permission. The second one is character vs supernatural, where Puss, who previously had to fight the troops and the governor, then had to fight the giant of Del Mar, who woke up from his sleep because he was disturbed by the commotion caused by Puss. Puss fighting the giant of Del Mar depicts a battle between a hero and a monster or mythological creature that is much stronger than him physically.

b. Call to Adventure

This stage is when the hero in the ordinary world, or in the safety of his home, begins to be challenged with a mission that must be undertaken. The hero is faced with a problem that requires him to venture into a mystical world, and it can be a message or messenger that calls the hero to solve the problem that occurred (Vogler, 2007).

Goldi Locks	: No! The map is being delivered tonight and we have one chance to steal it. Without it, we'll never find the Wishing Star
Puss	: The Wishing Star? It does exist!
Goldi Locks	: That star has one wish to grant
Puss	: One wish?
Goldi Locks	: Think of what that could mean for us!
Puss	: Nine Lives! Yes!
Baby Bear	: Well, I don't see why we needed to hire Puss in Boots in the first place
Goldi Locks	: Because nobody steals from Big Jack Horner!
Puss	: No! Not Jack Horner!

In the data above, Goldi intended to find Puss to hire him to steal the Wishing Star map from Big Jack Horner. However, Goldi and Three Bears Crime thought Puss was dead, not knowing that Puss was listening in to their conversation. Puss then got interested in the Wishing Star that could grant wishes and immediately thought of getting back his nine lives. At first, he was unsure about stealing the Wishing Star map from Jack Horner, but he needed the wish so badly that he decided to start his adventure to get the Wishing Star. This shows that Puss accepted the call to adventure because he knew that there is an opportunity to change his destiny, so he got the urge to pursue the Wishing Star

Puss's characterization at the call to adventure stage is shown through his action of quickly seizing the opportunity after understanding how important the Wishing Star is, seeing that the wish can be used as a solution to his problem. This indicates that Puss is open to adventure and shows his intelligence in survival instincts. Here, Puss also experienced a conflict, namely character vs self, where Puss must fight with his inner self in making a decision. Puss must steal the Wishing Star map from Jack Horner, who is known to be cruel and cunning, but he needs the map to guide him to the Wishing Star. Puss was hesitant at first to cross Jack Horner, but he needed his nine lives back, so he decided to risk stealing the map and start his adventure.

c. Meeting with the Mentor

On his journey, the hero will meet a mentor who will prepare him before facing unknown challenges by giving magical gifts or advice (Vogler, 2007). After getting the Call to Adventure,

the hero will be assisted by the mentor to go on with his adventure, but in the end, the hero must face the challenge alone.

Perrito : I brought you a sword
Puss : That's not a sword, that's a stick
Perrito : It's a stick-sword
Puss : Go home!
Perrito : My home is where my friends are

The dialogue above occurred when Puss was already at Jack Horner's house to steal the Wishing Star. When he was about to sneak into Jack Horner's house, Perrito, his friend, came with a stick sword, which immediately shocked Puss. Puss asked Perrito to go home, but Perrito thought that his home was wherever Puss was, so he refused to go home and chose to accompany Puss. Puss's meeting with Perrito shows the stage of meeting with the mentor, because Perrito is shown as Puss's mentor, who will provide support and guidance that will help him face the challenges that await him. Although not in the form of an older and wiser mentor, Perrito provides support through friendship and a positive outlook on life.

Puss's characterization at the meeting with the mentor stage is seen through his cynical attitude and unwillingness to accept help, because Puss thought that he could do it all by himself without the help of others. This shows that Puss maintained his sharp personality and belittled anything that he considered useless, including the help of others. His cynical nature and rejection of the help that Perrito wanted to give show that Puss is still in the early stages of his character's journey, where he still does not realize that he cannot always face everything alone. In the scene above, Puss experienced a character vs character conflict between him and Perrito. The conflict rose when Puss got surprised by Perrito's presence and refused to accept his help. Puss still believed that he could face everything on his own. Meanwhile, Perrito remained optimistic, staying by Puss's side even though he had been dismissed, which indirectly emphasizes the importance of togetherness. Puss was still stuck in his old nature of not needing help from others, while Perrito tried to show him that he does not have to go through his journey alone.

d. The Crossing the First Threshold

This is the stage when the hero finally faces the adventure and, for the first time, fully enters the special world that is very different from the ordinary world. The hero will encounter consequences after entering the special world during his journey, but agrees to face the problems that arise in the call of adventure. This is the starting point of the story or when the adventure truly begins (Vogler, 2007).

Puss : We step through as one. **Ready? One, two—AFTER YOU**
Puss : Dog? Still alive?
Kitty : **Let's go find out!**
Puss : Wait!

After Puss managed to steal the Wishing Star map from Jack Horner's house, he escaped with his old friend, Kitty, assisted by Perrito, by riding a horse to avoid the pursuit of Goldi and Jack Horner. Upon reaching the front of the entry gate to the Dark Forest, Puss kicked Perrito into the Dark Forest as a way of testing the waters. Then, Puss called out to Perrito to confirm

his condition, but there was no answer from Perrito. So, Kitty pulled Puss's hand and entered the Dark Forest with him after Perrito. At this point, Puss is fully entering a special world described as the Dark Forest, where the Wishing Star is kept, which reflects the stage of crossing the first threshold. After passing the many challenges that arose from the call to adventure, Puss finally confirmed that he is ready to embark on a journey that will change him, by entering the Dark Forest; this is the point of no return.

Puss's characterization at the stage of crossing the first threshold is shown through his cunning and cautious nature. Puss was initially brave when he was at the front of the Dark Forest's gate, but then he pushed Perrito to be the first person to enter the Dark Forest, showing that he was still afraid and preferred others to do something first before himself. In the scene above, Puss also experienced a character vs character conflict, that is, between him and Kitty. The conflict began when Puss showed his doubts, even though he hid them; rather than entering the Dark Forest together, Puss deliberately made Perrito the first one to enter and hoped that Kitty would be next. However, Kitty's more assertive and courageous nature made her draw Puss along with her into the Dark Forest. This illustrates the conflict between Kitty's courage and Puss's fear. Kitty was ready to face the adventure without hesitation, while Puss, with his fear, only dared to if he had his nine lives.

e. Tests, Allies, Enemies

At this stage, the hero will face new challenges and tests, make allies and enemies, and begin to learn the rules of the special world. After crossing the first threshold, the hero must prepare themselves to face trials and tribulations while testing their skills and strength (Vogler, 2007).

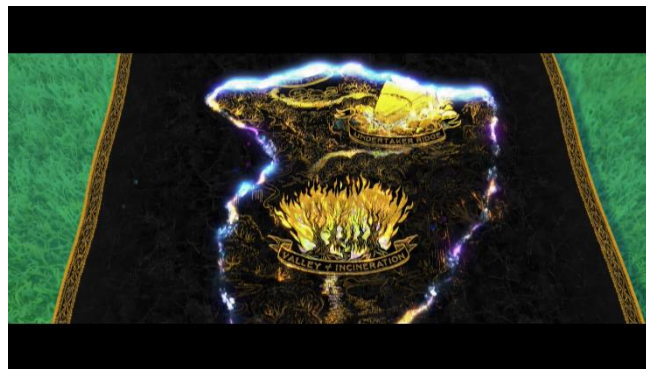


Figure 1. The Wishing Star Map (00:42:33)

In this scene, Puss had read the Wishing Star map after entering the Dark Forest, which turned out not to be scary, and he sees himself, Kitty, and Perrito on the map. However, the map and the circumstances depicted in it change according to its holder's heart; this happened to both Puss and Kitty when they tried to hold it. The roads that they traveled next were full of dangers because the map would show the way according to the hearts of Puss and Kitty, however, Perrito touched it, and he found a better path that is filled with beauty. Thus, Puss and Kitty asked Perrito to hold the map to facilitate the rest of their adventure. This data represents the stage of tests, because here, Puss began to face challenges in the special world, as seen from his struggle in finding a safe path to the Wishing Star.

Kitty : We don't have time for this!

Puss : Perro, I thought your path was supposed to be easy!

After letting Perrito hold the map, they ran to follow the map's directions. Suddenly, a pocket full of flowers sprang up, wanting to attack them. Puss and Kitty struggled, as the flowers that they cut only grew even more until they both got stuck among the flowers. Unlike them, Perrito was gentle and knew what to do, so he just sniffed the flowers and made it through. Finally, Perrito helped Puss and Kitty by teaching them how to conquer the bag full of flowers and continue their journey. This data represents the stage of allies as shown through Kitty and Perrito, who always help Puss through his tests.

Baby Bear : Oh, we're getting really close! I can smell two cats, a dog and...pie?

Jack Horner : Well, if it isn't the idiots who tried to steal from me!

Baby Bear : Hey, he remembers us!

Puss, Kitty, and Perrito made it through the bag full of flowers but had to move quickly because behind them was a group of enemies chasing them down with the same goal of getting the Wishing Star. Baby Bear could smell Puss from a distance as well as the smell of pie, which indicated that they were also being chased by Jack Horner and his troops. Jack Horner, who saw Goldilocks and the Bears, knew that they were also trying to steal the Wishing Star map, so Jack got rid of them and continued to pursue Puss, who was carrying the map. This put Puss and his Allies under great pressure, as they not only had to complete the adventure but also face threats coming from various directions. This confirms that the tests Puss faced are not only in the form of physical obstacles but also conflicts with other characters or enemies.

Puss's characterization at this stage is shown through his frustration and skepticism toward Perrito. However, he tried to trust Perrito by following his directions in order to get past the obstacles. This scene highlights the development of Puss from someone who is arrogant and always acts alone to having to learn to trust others. The frustration and skepticism shown in this scene is not only due to the path that he is on, but is also a reflection of Puss's struggle to accept that he cannot face everything alone. The conflict that Puss went through at this stage is character vs character between him and Perrito, which shows the difference in their perspectives in dealing with problems or challenges. Puss still had trouble accepting that he had to rely on others, especially on Perrito, whom he considers to have no significant influence. However, Perrito remained optimistic and did not take offense at Puss's words. This conflict not only shows the dispute but also reflects Puss's struggle in accepting change and trusting others.

f. Approach to The Inmost Cave

At this stage, the hero finally arrives at a dangerous place, and sometimes the object of his quest is hidden deep underground. Often, the enemy guards the place of the quest object from the hero. It is the most dangerous place in the special world: the deepest cave. When the hero crosses the threshold of the second big door, he has entered the most dangerous place and will prepare himself and devise a plan to avoid the enemy (Vogler, 2007).

Death : I was there to witness all of them. Each frivolous end. But you didn't even notice me. **Because Puss in Boots laughs in the face of death. Right?**

Death : But you're not laughing now

Puss : You are no bounty hunter! You are—

Death : **Death.** And I don't mean it metaphorically or rhetorically, or poetically or theoretically or in any other fancy way.

Death : **I'm Death straight-up. And I've come for you, Puss in Boots.**

The approach to the inmost cave stage is shown through Puss, who is trapped in the cave of lost souls. His previous encounter with Death made Puss frightened and realize that he must hurry to find the Wishing Star and make a request to regain his nine lives. This shows that Puss is in a dangerous and hidden place before he has to go to the climactic battle. Puss is more confident with the preparation to save himself on the next journey.

Puss's characterization undergoes a significant change at this stage, shown through his fragility and fear that he had never experienced before. Puss, for the first time, could no longer deny his fear. Puss used to laugh in the face of danger and thought that death could not get close to him, but now he flinched and could not hide his fear. This shows that he is no longer an adventurous figure who seeks pleasure or praise and is now just an individual faced with the consequences of his actions. At this moment, Puss realized that he is no longer a confident hero, but just a cat who is afraid of death and regrets his past. The conflict faced by Puss here is a character vs fate conflict between him and Death. The main conflict in this data is not just a physical fight, but also Puss's struggle against his own destiny, that is, his death. Death reminded Puss of how he had wasted his life, showing that all this time, Puss has been living with the belief that he is immortal. Puss did face Death as a real opponent; however, Death did not act as an ordinary enemy, but as something that could not be tricked or defeated easily. No matter how strong and powerful Puss is, he cannot avoid his destiny.

g. The Ordeal

The hero's fate reaches its lowest point, and he faces his greatest challenge or fear at this stage. The hero is between life and death in the battle against his enemy and is on the verge of destruction. This ordeal becomes a dark moment for the audience, seeing the suspense as the hero dies or appears to be dying in order to be reborn. The experiences from previous stages provided the cue to identify the hero's ultimate fate (Vogler, 2007).

Puss : **Fear me, if you dare**

Death : This is going to be fun

The stage of the ordeal, here, is shown through Puss's fight with Death, where Puss has to fight his biggest fear. Puss no longer runs away when he meets Death, this time, he is able to face him bravely without making a request to the Wishing Star.

Puss's characterization once again undergoes a big change at this point, shown through the transformation of his once arrogant and careless nature into a figure full of self-awareness and courage to fight against his fears. When confronted with Death, Puss should have felt scared and run away like before, but he no longer panics or runs away. He chose to face Death and was no longer obsessed with regaining his nine lives. He has now chosen to cherish his one remaining life. In addition to courage, this data also shows Puss's emotional growth and maturity. Puss's decision to fight against Death was not based on ego or arrogance and the want to be praised by others, but because he had changed into someone who is wiser and responsible for his life. The conflict that Puss went through in the ordeal stage is the character vs fate conflict between him and Death, who is the embodiment of death itself. Puss's decision to fight Death was not a

rejection of his fate, of being on the verge of death; rather, it was an act of facing his life with the full realization that he could not forever consider himself invincible. This is the point where Puss realizes that he is no longer someone who is arrogant, but someone who values his life.

h. Reward

After surviving death and overcoming his greatest fear, the hero obtains the prize that he sought. It could be a magic sword, a holy grail, a healing potion, great insight and knowledge, or something else that he sought after as the reason for his journey. It is at this stage that the hero celebrates his success while replenishing energy before the journey reaches its climax and completion.

Puss	: Pick it up
Puss	: I know I can never defeat you, <i>lobo</i> . But I will never stop fighting for this life
Death	: You're ruining this for me! I came here for an arrogant little legend who thought he was immortal. But I don't see him anymore.
Death	: Live your life, Puss in Boots. Live it well.

The reward stage is indicated by the part when Death recognized Puss's change and decided to let him live. Puss's development into a different person made Death choose not to take his life. The reward that Puss got is not in the form of a magic sword, holy grail, or healing potion, but the opportunity to live a life with full awareness and meaning; something that he had never realized before.

Puss's characterization in the reward stage can be seen through the change in his nature that became wiser and more appreciative of life. Puss knew he could not defeat Death; however, he was still confident enough to show his courage, not in the sense of challenging Death for the sake of his ego, but because he realized that his life is valuable after a long journey with his friends. Death also realized that Puss has changed into a different person, that he is no longer an arrogant creature who thinks that he is immortal, and is now someone who better understands the meaning of life. In this data, the character vs fate conflict between Puss and Death reaches its peak. The conflict between Puss and Death is resolved when Puss chose to keep fighting, not because he thinks he is immortal, but because he realized that his life is worth fighting for, although he had only one life left.

i. The Road Back

The hero will face the consequences of facing the dark forces of the ordeal before returning to the ordinary world. The hero realizes that the special world must be left behind and that there are still dangers, temptations, and trials ahead (Vogler, 2007).

Jack Horner : **The last wish, it's mine!**

After fighting Puss, who showed that he had changed, Death decided to let him live. However, the battle is not over yet, because now, the battle turns back to Jack Horner, who reappeared with a great ambition to seize the Wishing Star in order to control the entire world's magic. The road back stage is shown in the part where Puss and his friends must fight through the last obstacle before they can return to the ordinary world with the lessons and changes that

Puss has experienced throughout the journey, which is by fighting Jack Horner, to see how far he has progressed.

Puss's characterization at the road back stage is shown through his brave, selfless, and responsible nature. Puss's characterization at this stage illustrates true heroism where he not only fights the villain, but also rejects his own ego and chooses to return to the ordinary world with new lessons about friendship, the meaning of life, and the courage to face his destiny. The conflict that Puss went through here is character vs character between him and Jack Horner. It is shown through Puss having to face Jack Horner, who is ambitious to get his request granted by the Wishing Star to control the magic of the whole world without caring about others. In this sense, the conflict between Puss and Jack Horner represents the showdown between the evolved protagonist and the antagonist who remained trapped in his desires.

j. **Return with the Elixir**

The hero eventually returns to the ordinary world, but his journey means nothing unless he carries some elixir, treasure, or lesson from the special world. The elixir can be a magic potion, treasure, wisdom, love, or the experience and lesson that he gained from surviving in the special world. The hero begins a new life or gains changes that are influenced by his journey (Vogler, 2007).

Perrito : Where are we headed, anyways?

Puss : Off to find new adventures and to see some old friends

After all the fighting was over and the Wishing Star was destroyed, Puss, Kitty, and Perrito went home and returned to the ordinary world. They boarded a ship that they stole from the governor and sailed on a calm sea. Puss no longer goes on his own adventure; he will now do it with his friends, Kitty and Perrito. Return with the elixir is shown when Puss has returned to the ordinary world and completed his journey with the elixir in the form of a new understanding of the meaning of life and togetherness.

Puss's characterization in the return with the elixir stage reflects the great transformation that he underwent in his adventure. Puss is no longer a selfish and fame-centered person. He became wiser and more appreciative of life and togetherness. Puss chose to continue his life with his friends instead of traveling alone in search of fame. This shows that he has found his reason for living. Puss has developed into a much better person compared to how he was at the beginning of his journey. In addition, previous conflicts experienced by Puss have been resolved. This is shown when Puss has successfully fought Jack Horner and has a good relationship with Goldi and Bears, who were previously his enemies. Then, the conflict in this data is character vs character, which can be found in the scene where they travel to find new adventures and meet old friends.

Returning with the elixir is the final stage in the hero's journey, as seen in this data, where Puss no longer goes on his own adventure. Puss had become a wiser person at this point. He still wants to continue to go on adventures, but now with his friends, Kitty and Perrito, without fear of death after successfully completing his journey as a hero.

2. **Discussion**

The journey that Puss went through follows the stages in the hero's journey theory proposed by Christopher Vogler. Vogler explained that heroes always have to pass through dangerous

obstacles by going through several stages before achieving their goals. Puss had passed the stages in Vogler's hero's journey theory, so he can be said to be a hero. Puss can also be considered a hero because of the changes and development of his character from the beginning to the end of the story. Although there are some stages that Puss did not go through, the hero's journey that is passed by Puss can still be seen. In the process of analyzing the application of the twelve stages of the hero's journey according to Vogler in the film, it was found that there were two stages that Puss did not go through in the *Puss in Boots: The Last Wish* film. First, the refusal of the call stage, which is the stage where the hero rejects the call to adventure because the hero is scared and hesitates to continue the journey (Vogler, 2007). In the *Puss in Boots: The Last Wish* film, the main character, Puss, did not go through this stage because he did not reject the call to adventure. Even though he was in conflict with himself in making the decision, Puss quickly chose to continue his journey as a hero.

The second stage that Puss did not go through is called the resurrection stage, where the hero is reborn from death, symbolizing cleansing or purification (Vogler, 2007). In the *Puss in Boots: The Last Wish* film, the resurrection stage did not appear explicitly as a resurrection after facing death or the final crisis that destroyed him, so that he can be reborn as a new figure. Puss's transformation is gradual and emotional, especially in the ordeal stage and the reward stage, as he fought Death and realized that the life he has is meaningful. Puss did not experience a total loss that made him die, instead, he continued to live with his old identity, but with new understanding and lessons.

The three previous studies share a similar focus on analyzing the hero's journey of a main character but differ in theoretical approach, research scope, and analytical elements. Sari (2021) examined Mirabel's journey in *Encanto* using Joseph Campbell's theory and found eleven of the seventeen stages, while also analyzing character archetypes. Maharani (2023) used Christopher Vogler's model to analyze Grace in *Ready or Not*, finding eleven stages and focusing only on character and characterization. Meanwhile, Ramadhanty (2020) compared the heroine's journey in *Brave* and *Moana* using Vogler's framework and found that Merida experienced nine stages and Moana ten, both lacking the road back and resurrection stages. In contrast, the present research also uses Vogler's theory but focuses on one film, *Puss in Boots: The Last Wish*, analyzing not only character and characterization but also the conflicts Puss faces, and identifying ten of Vogler's eleven stages, with the resurrection stage absent, just as in the other studies.

Puss in Boots: The Last Wish shows a story with a complex narrative and is not just an action-packed adventure film. Through Christopher Vogler's hero's journey theory, as well as the character and characterization approach, and the conflicts that Puss went through, this research can uncover the main character's changes that are not only shown from heroic actions, but also from internal processes filled with emotional turmoil and values that he learned along the way. In addition, this research shows the human side in anthropomorphic animal characters in animation, which aims to facilitate the representation of emotional journeys that are relevant to human dynamics, as well as the importance of cooperation and courage in facing life's limitations.

D. CONCLUSION

The *Puss in Boots: The Last Wish* film not only features the actions and adventure of Puss, but also dives into deeper themes about the meaning of life, true courage, and the importance of

relationships with others. Its narrative is in line with the hero's journey theory, especially as it relates to Puss's character development throughout the film. Puss's journey in the *Puss in Boots: The Last Wish* film is clearly represented through the stages of the hero's journey, which describes an in-depth character development throughout its stages.

Puss's journey started from the ordinary world, where he lived in fame and pride as a hero without realizing that his life was on the verge of ending. When he heard about the Wishing Star, he went through the call to adventure and began his journey. Then, meeting with the mentor is displayed through the presence of Perrito, who became Puss's guiding figure by showing sincerity and friendship to him. Puss then went through the crossing of the first threshold when he decided to enter the Dark Forest, marking the starting point of a change that he cannot avoid. On his journey, Puss faced the tests, allies, and enemies stage, along with Kitty and Perrito, who tested his character. The approach to the inmost cave stage is seen when Puss must face his deepest fears, which then led to the ordeal where he directly faced Death and chose to fight not because of ego, but because of courage and self-awareness. Puss achieved the reward after, which is a new understanding of the importance of life and togetherness. The road back is depicted in his attempt to stop Jack Horner in order to protect his friends, which ended with the return with the elixir when he returned to the ordinary world with Kitty and Perrito with a new understanding and lessons. Thus, the film effectively represents the structure of the hero's journey and emphasizes the transformation of the main character.

Puss's journey highlights the discovery of the true meaning of courage and life. Puss, who is shown as a character filled with pride and fear of death at the beginning of the story, got trapped in a selfish quest to regain the lives that he lost. However, along the way, he learned that a valuable life is not measured by its quantity, but rather by relationships, friendships, and the courage to face one's deepest fears. Puss finally chose to live the only life he has left meaningfully with his friends, marking his successful transformation as a hero. Puss not only survived but also returned with a new outlook on life, signaling the end of his journey and the fulfillment of his wishes.

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