
Piper Bellinger as a Round Character in Tessa Bailey's *It Happened One Summer*

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Abstract

This study examines Piper Bellinger's character in Tessa Bailey's novel *It Happened One Summer* (2021), focusing on her development as a round character in the context of modern romance. The research applies Forster's idea of round characters and Freud's theory of the id, ego, and superego to conduct a qualitative analysis of her psychological and behavioral changes. Data were gathered through closed reading and the selection of specific passages that show conflict, decision-making, and self-improvement. The results show that Piper starts off acting based on instinct, showing emotional reliance and a desire for approval from others. However, after losing her comfortable urban lifestyle, she gains self-awareness, takes responsibility, and develops a stronger moral sense. This change indicates a move from acting on impulse to exercising careful decisions, highlighting her complexity as a round character. The study shows that Piper's growth comes from both internal psychological shifts and external life experiences, not just from a romantic relationship. By examining her development in relation to issues such as privilege, online presence, and emotional distance, this research adds to the field of literary psychology by showing how contemporary romance stories portray personal identity and moral maturation.

Keywords: round character, psychoanalytic characterization, contemporary romance, identity development, literary psychology.

INTRODUCTION

Literary characters serve as tools for examining complex psychological dimensions and how individuals negotiate social identities and undergo personal transformation. Effective characterization goes beyond describing a character's appearance or dialogue; it entails showing the evolution of a character's inner world in response to experiences, struggles, and growth. By tracing these developments, authors create more genuine and believable characters in their works. Abrams and Harpham (2015) emphasize that characters are revealed through their actions and emotions, which enables readers to access their inner thoughts and feelings. Characterization thus provides a means to analyze how narratives depict human development and change.

Forster distinguishes between flat and round characters, noting that round characters possess depth and experience significant changes throughout a narrative. Such characters reflect real individuals by exhibiting internal conflicts, emotional challenges, and evolving perspectives. This concept remains central in contemporary fiction, in which protagonists are formed by current societal influences, including consumer culture, popularity, and the demands of maintaining an online presence. These contemporary factors bring new dimensions to character development that warrant scholarly attention.

Psychoanalytic theory gives a basis for analyzing this complexity. Freud's model of the mind, comprising the id, ego, and superego, conceptualizes behavior as the result of interactions among basic desires, rational thought, and moral regulation (Freud, 2010). Applied to literary characters, this model explains how shifts in a character's internal states correspond with narrative developments. Psychoanalysis thus enables a deeper investigation of the motivations underlying character transformation, surpassing superficial analysis.

Existing scholarship has primarily employed character analysis and psychoanalytic approaches to examine classic novels, showing how psychological and circumstantial factors shape character development. In contrast, contemporary romance fiction, particularly narratives featuring protagonists who benefit from wealth and social media influence, remains underexplored. Addressing this gap demands examining contemporary texts that reflect current modes of self-presentation and the role of emotion in interpersonal relationships.

This study confronts this gap through analyzing Piper Bellinger, the protagonist of Tessa Bailey's "It Happened One Summer" (2021). Initially depicted as a wealthy socialite seeking external validation, Piper is forced to relocate, disrupting her established lifestyle. This narration serves as the catalyst for her personal development. Over the course of the story, Piper transitions from acting on impulsive desires to cultivating a more sophisticated moral awareness and deeper emotional experiences, thereby displaying notable character transformation.

This article examines Piper Bellinger's development as a round character through the application of Forster's concept of roundness and Freud's psychoanalytic framework, with particular attention to her psychological and behavioral evolution. The analysis shows that Piper's growth is characterized by a transition from instinct-driven actions to greater self-reflection and heightened moral responsibility.

THEORETICAL REVIEW

Character development remains central to literary analysis because it illustrates how narratives create depth and enable characters' personal transformation. Most studies investigate character change by examining both internal motivations and external circumstances. Foster argues that the distinction between flat and round characters remains influential (Forster, 1927). He defines round characters as complex individuals who undergo significant transformations throughout the narrative (Davis, 2011; Ellis, 2019). Such characters exhibit a broad spectrum of emotions, engage in introspection, and modify their behavior, thereby enhancing their realism compared to static characters.

Recent research shows that integrating characterization theory with psychology yields valuable insights. Padmawati et al. (2019) analyzed Elizabeth Bennet and Mr. Darcy. Their study shows that in *Pride and Prejudice*, Darcy's character develops through complex, layered processes. Psychoanalytic concepts reveal how psychological and sociological factors shape his personality and behavior. Their findings indicate that internal conflicts and emotional judgments greatly influence character development. Similarly, Az-Zahra and Saktiningrum (2019) examined Anne Shirley in *Anne of Green Gables*. Their research suggests that Anne's transformation from a timid orphan to a confident young person is shaped by both her own drive and encouragement from those around her. Taken together, these studies highlight that character development is influenced by both personal determination and the environment in which the character develops (Castano et al., 2021).

Other studies have explored how character changes result from interpersonal interactions. Anissa and Veniranda (2017) examined Maleficent's transformation, demonstrating that interpersonal attachment can alter a character's moral perspective, resulting in a shift from revenge to mercy. Their research suggests that character growth is complex, emerging from both internal conflicts and social engagements. Together, these studies propose that literary characters evolve through the interplay of internal struggles, external changes, and emotional relationships.

Psychoanalytic theory, especially Freud's structural model of the mind, deepens understanding of character development. Freud claims that human behavior results from the id, ego, and superego. The id represents basic desires and instincts. The ego mediates

between the id and reality. The superego embodies internalized moral standards. In literary analysis, this framework helps examine characters beyond their actions, focusing on the psychological conflicts that drive their behavior. Applications of Freud's theory show that shifts in the balance among these mental components often track the narrative. These shifts illustrate how characters transition from impulsive actions to greater self-control and ethical awareness.

Most existing studies focus on classical or young adult literature and inadequately examine contemporary romance fiction, despite its contributions. Exploring protagonists whose identities are shaped by contemporary factors, such as material privilege and social media visibility, is studied by only a few. This study examines how Piper Bellinger navigates public image, emotional detachment, and digital validation, specifically focusing on her development as a round character. This study explores character transformation within a contemporary romance framework, with particular attention to how modern influences shape the protagonist's identity, in contrast to earlier research that discusses psychological development in traditional literary contexts.

Forster's idea of round characters, backed by Freud's theory of the mind, serves as the primary foundation for this study, which examines the role of Piper Bellinger, who develops into a complex individual capable of surprising behavior and developing empathy. This concept is fundamental to understanding how Piper goes from boring to an emotionally rich person. To augment this literary analysis, Freud's psychoanalytic theory is employed to interpret and explain these changes. Freud characterizes personality as the result of interactions between the id, ego, and superego. It represents basic, instinct-driven desires and the need for immediate satisfaction. On the other hand, the subordinate manages these desires through reason and interaction with the real world. Finally, the characterization representation reflects internalized moral rules shaped by societal norms in literary criticism.

Freud's framework applies to Piper Bellinger, proving the psychological processes that lead to her transformation. Piper's early actions suggest that her drive stems from basic desires for attention and is driven by emotion, whereas her later responses indicate an increased capacity to control her actions and a better understanding of right and wrong. This study treats these stages as independent events and examines Piper's growth as a synthesis of Forster's ideas about balanced characters and Freud's influence on character development. This provides a more comprehensive understanding of how external displacement and internal changes contribute to character development in contemporary romance settings.

This study uses a qualitative literary analysis to examine Piper Bellinger's characterization in Tessa Bailey's "It Happened One Summer" (2021). The research adopts a textual interpretive approach, focusing on narrative passages that depict Piper's thoughts, dialogue, and actions in order to trace her development as a round character. The primary data consist of selected excerpts from the novel that illustrate significant changes in Piper's behavior and psychological orientation. Data were collected through close reading and purposive sampling, with passages selected for their relevance to moments of character conflict, decision-making, and transformation. These excerpts were then coded thematically according to Forster's concept of round characters and Freud's structural model of the psyche.

Forster's framework functions as the primary analytical foundation for identifying Piper's complexity and progression across the narrative, while Freud's concepts of id, ego, and superego provide a supporting lens for interpreting the cognitive dynamics underlying this development. The analysis proceeded in three stages, which firstly involved identifying Piper's initial characterization. After that, examine narrative shifts that indicate emotional

or behavioral change. These shifts are then interpreted through psychoanalytic categories to explain how internal conflict contributes to her transformation.

To enhance analytical thoroughness, interpretations were grounded in direct textual evidence and cross-checked across multiple narrative contexts to secure consistency. Rather than treating cognitive elements as isolated stages, the study views Piper's characterization as a dynamic process shaped by the interaction between internal motivation and external circumstances. This methodological approach enables a focused examination of how Piper Bellinger is constructed as a round character, integrating literary and psychological perspectives to deliver a nuanced account of contemporary character development.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This study argues that Piper Bellinger is a well-developed character whose growth is evident in her thoughts and actions throughout the story. At the beginning of **It Happened One Summer**, Piper is shown as a character who is primarily motivated by seeking approval from others, enjoying a comfortable lifestyle, and relying emotionally on others. Her identity is strongly linked to social recognition, wealth, and romantic interest, reflecting a lifestyle driven by immediate gratification. In Forster's view, such a character might seem limited and straightforward at first. However, as the story progresses, Piper shows growing emotional depth, self-awareness, and flexibility, which proves she is a well-rounded and complex character.

Piper's early behavior shows clear signs of being driven by her id, especially when she reacts impulsively to feelings of rejection and seeks attention. Her response to romantic embarrassment, such as hosting a wild party and causing disturbances, reflects a desire for entertainment and attention. She ignores the consequences. These actions reflect Freud's pleasure principle from a psychoanalytic viewpoint, in which instinctual desires take precedence over rational thinking. This stage in Piper's development shows that she lacks emotional maturity and has unresolved needs for validation. It indicates her reliance on others' approval serves as a way to cope with a deeper emotional emptiness.

Nevertheless, Piper's mandatory move to Westport creates a significant break in her usual routine. Taken away from her usual setting marked by privilege and online praise, she now faces real-life difficulties and complex relationships that require her to take on more duties. This movement marks the beginning of her psychological adjustment. Piper gradually shifts away from old ways, demonstrating adjustments influenced by her ego, and develops the ability to handle reality through hard work, self-control, and actively interacting with her surroundings. Her increasing readiness to take part in work, community activities, and family duties indicates a shift from passive to active involvement.

Above all, Piper's development extends beyond specific situations to encompass meaningful character growth as the story progresses. She reflects on her previous actions, recognizing their shortcomings. Feelings of guilt, gratitude, and a sense of commitment in relationships become clearer, indicating that the superego is beginning to exert influence. These changes are visible in her increased care for others and her willingness to take responsibility. They also portray how she reconsiders what truly counts as a meaningful achievement. Piper starts to place more importance on emotional connections and the impact of personal efforts rather than seeking approval through being seen. This moral shift shows how Forster's idea of roundness applies, as Piper's character becomes more complex through his inner struggles and understanding of right and wrong.

Piper's romantic connections also contribute to this change. As her attachment develops, it becomes important to show reciprocity and emotional support. Her previous experiences, which focused on her image and status, were distinct. A recent study found that

interpersonal interaction can stimulate character development, a finding reinforced by this relational change.

However, Piper doesn't just grow up because of romance either. It arises from the exchange between environmental change, psychological resistance, and self-reflection. Her changes reveal a process that involves both internal restructuring and external displacement to such an extent. In particular, Piper's illustration reflects modern anxieties about identity development in digitally generated environments. Her fixation on social media presence previously reflects heightened self-worth in modern times. Piper's changes toward thrustworthiness underscore broader cultural issues concerning celebrity status, fulfillment, and emotional maturity. The novel presents Piper's changes as a personal and cultural interaction through this view.

This research utilizes both Forster's narrative framework and Freud's psychoanalytic model to demonstrate how Piper underlies behavioral changes and psychological realignment. She's a person of three dimensions, her evolution from instinctive behaviour to reflective morality. Piper doesn't simply abandon her past; she rewrites her desires, values, and relationships based on actual experiences.

CONCLUSION

In this study, Forster's idea of round characters and Freud's psychoanalytic theory are used to analyze the portrayal of Piper Bellinger in Tessie Bailey's *It Happened One Summer*. The analysis reveals that Piper is portrayed as a character who undergoes significant changes in psychology and morality. At first, Piper feels motivated and secure, with a strong desire to please others in general, but gradually shifts her mindset through experiences away from home, assumes greater responsibilities at home, and explores meaningful relationships. Her shift from relying on instinct to greater self-awareness is mirrored in modern romantic narratives, which depict personal growth as shaped by both external factors and internal turmoil.

This article explores the self-realization of contemporary main characters in situations marked by advantage, public attention, and a lack of emotional connectivity, drawing on both literature and psychoanalysis to expand the field of literary psychology. By changing her perspective, Piper demonstrates that character development in modern fiction extends beyond romantic love plots and encompasses more profound changes in moral beliefs and character metamorphosis. It not only aligns with Forster's belief that well-developed characters become more complex over time, but also shows how Freudian theory can model the psychological factors that trigger such changes. Moreover,

The study has several limitations, despite the significant contributions. Because the analysis focuses on a single, everyday person from 'any modern romance novel,' the results cannot be readily generalized to other situations or characters. Freud's structural model is the primary basis for the psychoanalytic interpretation, and other psychological theories are not considered equally important. Moreover, the study focuses primarily on the characters' development within the narrative, rather than on the storytelling process, the author's intentions, or readers' reactions, which can shape how character development is approached.

A more extensive discussion of modern romance novels could extend this research and reveal deeper psychological growth trends within the genre. Additionally, there are currently no official guidelines for ending romantic fiction. To better understand how contemporary characters cope with fame, gender roles, and broader emotional vulnerability, further research may draw on additional theoretical perspectives, such as feminist criticism, trauma theory, or research on digital identity. Furthermore, examining secondary characters and their relationships in contemporary literature can provide a more

comprehensive understanding of how personal development shapes the setting. Future studies can also explore how changing cultural contexts affect the representation of identity, personal development, and emotional resilience in literature.

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