

## THE ADVENTURE FORMULA IN *JUMANJI: WELCOME TO THE JUNGLE* (2017)

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### Abstract

The movie *Jumanji: Welcome to the Jungle* (2017) is one example of a popular literature that utilizes the classic Adventure Formula in the popular fiction genre. This research aims to identify and analyze the narrative structure of the film based on the main elements in the Adventure Formula as described in the study of Popular Literature. A qualitative approach is used in this research and also uses the narrative analysis method of plot, character, conflict, and setting. The results of the analysis show that the movie adopts a traditional adventure pattern that involves the main character undergoing a mission, facing dangerous obstacles, and experiencing personal transformation through the journey. Elements such as exotic settings, fast pacing, and group dynamics enhance the film's appeal to contemporary audiences. By referring to genre theory and the Popular Literature framework, this study shows how the movie *Jumanji: Welcome to the Jungle* represents the Adventure Formula with a modern and relevant approach for today's audience.

**Keywords:** Popular Fiction, Adventure Formula, Narrative, Genre, *Jumanji*, Film, Popular Literature

### INTRODUCTION

Popular literature is a form of literature that has wide appeal in society due to its ability to provide entertainment, suspense and emotional engagement for readers and audiences. One of the most popular genres in popular literature is adventure, which offers imaginative experiences through stories of travel, challenge and character transformation. The Adventure Formula has become a narrative pattern that is often used in various media, including movies, to create dynamic and easy-to-follow stories for a wide range of audiences.

The movie *Jumanji: Welcome to the Jungle* (2017) is one example of a popular film work that explicitly adopts the Adventure Formula. The movie tells the story of four teenagers who are accidentally trapped in the world of the video game Jumanji and must face various obstacles and solve puzzles to return to the real world. Set in a fantasy world full of dangers and characters that have undergone significant development, this movie shows how the elements of adventure are packaged in a modern and interesting way. In Popular Literature studies, the adventure genre has consistently identifiable narrative



traits. Joyce G. Saricks (2009) mentions that adventure stories are usually characterized by fast-paced plot, heroic characters, urgent conflicts, and settings that reinforce the sense of danger and exploration. Therefore, it is important to review how the narrative structure of *Jumanji: Welcome to the Jungle* conforms or deviates from the Adventure Formula that is well known in popular fiction studies.

This study aims to analyze the application of the Adventure Formula in the film *Jumanji: Welcome to the Jungle* (2017) by highlighting the narrative structure, characterization, and distinctive elements that distinguish the adventure genre from other popular genres. This analysis is expected to provide a deeper understanding of how the Adventure Formula is adapted in today's popular films, as well as its contribution to the development of literature and popular culture. Thus, this research not only enriches the study of popular literature, but also provides new insights into the dynamics of adventure narratives in the context of modern film.

## FINDING AND DISCUSSION

The study of popular fiction has developed into one of the most important fields in literary and cultural studies, mainly because of its ability to reflect society's values, trends and ideologies. According to John G. Cawelti (1976), popular fiction, especially formulaic ones such as adventure stories, have repetitive and recognizable narrative patterns, which are a source of enjoyment for readers. Cawelti mentions that adventure stories generally center on a protagonist who goes on a mission, faces extreme obstacles, and ultimately overcomes all challenges with courage and ingenuity.

Popular literature, as described by Joyce G. Saricks (2009) in *The Readers' Advisory Guide to Genre Fiction*, is a broad category that includes a variety of genres designed for mass entertainment and often follows certain conventions or "formulas" that are familiar to readers. These formulas do not limit creativity, but rather provide a framework that allows writers to innovate while still meeting audience expectations. Movies, as a form of popular media, often adapt and replicate this formula to appeal to a wide audience. The adventure genre is one of the main pillars of popular literature. Saricks (2009) also mentions this genre as a rich category, in which "true adventure" is often associated with nonfiction narratives, but the essence remains the journey, the challenge, and the adventure.

This research uses a qualitative approach with a narrative analysis method to examine the application of the Adventure Formula in the movie *Jumanji: Welcome to the Jungle* (2017). The qualitative approach was chosen because the main focus of the research is the interpretation of the story structure, characters, and genre elements in the film text as the object of cultural and narrative studies. This method allows researchers to explore the depth of meaning and patterns of story structure in accordance with the characteristics of the adventure genre in popular fiction.

The main object of this research is the movie *Jumanji: Welcome to the Jungle* (directed by Jake Kasdan, released in 2017), which is analyzed as a visual narrative text. This movie was chosen because it is one of the contemporary examples of the application of the classic Adventure Formula in the form of popular entertainment. Data was collected through tracing key scenes in the movie relevant to the elements of the adventure formula. In addition, researchers also observed dialogue, setting visualization, characterization, and plot structure to support the analysis. Literature study of theoretical sources such as genre theory from Joyce G. Saricks (2009), narrative theory from Tzvetan Todorov (1977), and adaptation theory from Linda Hutcheon (2006) were also used as conceptual references. The analysis is done by identifying the main elements of the adventure formula such as The main character and the mission, Challenges or obstacles faced, Exotic or dangerous setting, Character development during the journey and Plot structure (beginning, conflict, climax, resolution).

The identification results were then compared with the theoretical framework of the adventure genre in popular fiction, particularly as described by Saricks (2009) and Cawelti (1976). The research also considers contemporary aspects of media adaptation and how the movie adapts the classic formula to modern audiences.

The movie *Jumanji: Welcome to the Jungle* (2017) is a fantasy adventure comedy film that adapts the classic Adventure Formula into a modern context set in the world of video games. The movie tells the story of four high school teenagers who are accidentally sucked into the Jumanji video game and transformed into adult avatars of their choosing, each with its unique skills and weaknesses. This study examines the extent to which the movie *Jumanji: Welcome to the Jungle* (2017) applies the “adventure formula” of narrative elements typical of the adventure genre as formulated by Cawelti (1976) and Saricks (2009). The analysis is directed at five main aspects: plot structure, character and

transformation, exotic setting/visualization, group dynamics, and adaptation of the classic adventure formula in the context of contemporary audiences.

### **Plot Structure: Mission, Conflict, and Resolution**

According to Cawelti (1976), adventure stories always center on “a hero who goes on a mission, faces obstacle after obstacle, and finally achieves a moral or physical goal.” In the movie *Jumanji: Welcome to the Jungle*, the main mission is to “return the jaguar jewel to its statue” so that the essence of *Jumanji* is stopped and the players (avatars) can return to the real world.

#### **1) Conflict Recognition & Triggers**

In the first 14 minutes, four teenagers (Spencer, Fridge, Martha, and Bethany) are sucked into the *Jumanji* video game console. When they wake up in the avatar world of Dr. Smolder Bravestone, Franklin “Mouse” Finbar, Professor Sheldon Oberon, and Ruby Roundhouse, the audience is immediately treated to a digital “time-stamp” (“24:00 remaining,” etc.) that creates urgency from the start (Saricks, 2009). This moment aligns with the adventure formula, wherein the protagonist is abruptly placed in peril and must undertake a mission to ensure survival.

#### **2) A Series of Tiered Obstacles**

Physical Obstacles consist of Van Pelt hunters, wild animals (crocodiles, lions, giant spiders), volcanic eruptions, and steep inclines. Each obstacle was designed to test the avatar's physical abilities and force the team to complement each other (Saricks, 2009). While meta/Puzzles determine who holds the “ruby jaguar” because Bethany's shooting avatar (“Ruby Roundhouse”) is different from the original character presents an internal conflict. Spencer, the original player, had to adjust his strategy based on the strengths and weaknesses of the other avatars (Saricks, 2009; Cawelti, 1976).

#### **3) Climax and Resolution**

The climax occurs at the top of *Jumanji* Volcano, when Van Pelt nearly grabs the “ruby jaguar” and forces Bravestone et al. to jump into the lava flow. Resolution is reached when Spencer (Dr. Bravestone) manages to drag Van Pelt into the fray, stop him, and then place the gem back in the statue: the earthquake stops, the animals disappear, and the portal opens again (Todorov, 1977). The emphasis on “the hero's return to the home world after

completing the mission” is consistent with classical patterns (Cawelti, 1976; Saricks, 2009).

### **Hero's Journey Pattern and Adventure Formula**

The movie *Jumanji: Welcome to the Jungle* (2017) clearly applies the classic adventure formula that has long been a hallmark in popular literature and film. Based on the analysis, the film features a narrative structure that follows the “Hero's Journey” pattern and the adventure formula theory as described by John G. Cawelti and Joyce G. Saricks, namely: there is a main character who gets a mission, faces a series of obstacles, undergoes character transformation, and finally returns to the world of origin after the mission is completed.

Another study on *Tomb Raider* (2018) by Roar Uthaug shows that the adventure genre generally follows four main stages based on Joseph Campbell's Hero's Journey concept: departure, initiation, return, and the obstacles and triumphs at the core of the adventure formula. In *Jumanji: Welcome to the Jungle*, this pattern is also very visible:

- a) Departure: Four teenagers are sucked into the world of *Jumanji*, marking an unexpected “call of adventure”.
- b) Initiation: They face various physical obstacles (wild animals, traps, enemies) and puzzles that test individual and group cooperation and skills.
- c) Return: After successfully returning the jewel to the jaguar statue, they returned to the real world, bringing about a significant change in character

### **Character and Transformation**

One of the main strengths in the application of the adventure formula in *Jumanji: Welcome to the Jungle* is the character transformation that is not only physical, but also psychological and emotional. All four main characters undergo significant changes during their journey in the world of *Jumanji*. Spencer, who was initially shy and dependent on Fridge, transforms into a brave and strategic leader as Dr. Bravestone. The introverted Martha becomes more confident and able to express herself through Ruby Roundhouse. The narcissistic and self-centered Bethany learns to be caring and compassionate, especially when it comes to sacrificing one “life” to save a friend. Meanwhile, Fridge learns to trust others and value cooperation.

Another strength of the film lies in its emphasis on group dynamics. Each character has unique and complementary weaknesses, so cooperation is the key to completing the mission. This is in line with Saricks' (2009) findings that adventure genres often feature

groups with strong dynamics, where internal and external conflicts drive character development. Another reference to the movie *Tomb Raider* also highlights the importance of the role of groups or individuals in facing danger and achieving victory. This transformation is in line with Cawelti's (1976) view, which states that characters in adventure stories often undergo significant changes related to moral values, courage, or self-understanding. Saricks (2009) also asserts that the transformative element is the main attraction in the adventure genre, as the audience not only enjoys the external journey, but also the inner growth of the characters.

### **Group Dynamics and Character Transformation**

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Unlike classic adventure stories that often feature a single hero, *Jumanji: Welcome to the Jungle* emphasizes group dynamics as the main force in conflict resolution. The four characters must work together, understand each other's roles, and learn to complement each other. This element of cooperation and interdependence makes the movie more relevant to contemporary values, such as collaboration, empathy, and the importance of communication in solving problems. This approach is a development from the classic formula that emphasizes the role of the individual, where the film shows that success in adventure is not only determined by personal strength or courage, but also by team solidarity. This approach renders the film more relatable to younger audiences immersed in cultures of collaboration and digital interconnectivity.

### **Adapting the Adventure Formula for Modern Audiences**

The film is a modern adaptation of the classic adventure formula packed with contemporary elements such as video game worlds, avatars, and humor relevant to the millennial and Gen Z generations. The use of the concept of "lives" and "special abilities" of each character reinforces the impression that the movie not only borrows the narrative

structure of a traditional adventure, but also combines it with interactive elements known in the digital world.

This shows that while the basic structure of the adventure formula still remains (mission, obstacles, transformation, return home), the presentation approach has been adapted to suit the expectations and lifestyles of today's audiences. Linda Hutcheon (2006) mentions that adaptation is not just a process of repetition, but also a contextual transformation-and the movie *Jumanji* proved this successfully.

## CONCLUSION

This research shows that the movie *Jumanji: Welcome to the Jungle* (2017) explicitly applies the classic adventure formula known in Popular Literature studies. The movie also features a clear narrative structure, starting from the main mission, a series of obstacles that must be faced, to significant character transformations during the journey. Elements such as the exotic setting, the fast pace of the story, and the group dynamics further strengthen the appeal of this movie in the eyes of modern audiences. The application of the adventure formula in this movie not only follows the conventional pattern as outlined by Cawelti (1976) and Saricks (2009), but also makes adaptations by incorporating contemporary elements, such as the world of video games and avatar identity, so that it remains relevant to today's audiences. Thus, *Jumanji: Welcome to the Jungle* demonstrates that popular fiction formulas can evolve while preserving their core elements, contributing meaningfully to the development of contemporary adventure narratives

The film's strength lies in its ability to adapt the adventure formula into a modern context that is close to the digital culture of the younger generation, such as the world of video games and the use of avatars. In addition, the emphasis on group dynamics and collaboration shows that adventure narratives are no longer individualistic, but emphasize collective values and solidarity. With an innovative approach while remaining grounded in genre conventions, *Jumanji: Welcome to the Jungle* is proof that the adventure formula is still relevant and capable of continuing to develop in contemporary popular culture discourse. This study is expected to contribute to a broader understanding of how popular literary formulas work in the medium of film and how they adapt to the values and tastes of today's audiences.

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