



VNU Journal of Foreign Studies

Journal homepage: <https://jfs.ulis.vnu.edu.vn/>

FOSTERING SELF-AWARENESS AND SELF-LOVE FOR MINDSET TRANSFORMATION AND PERSONAL GROWTH: INSIGHTS FROM THE HEALING JOURNEY OF A LITERATURE CHARACTER

Cao Quynh Trang¹, Van Thi Thanh Binh^{2,*}¹*Du học Viet Education and Training, No.34 May To, Ngo Quyen, Hai Phong, Vietnam*²*Faculty of Linguistics and Cultures of English-Speaking Countries,**VNU University of Languages and International Studies, No.2 Pham Van Dong, Cau Giay, Hanoi, Vietnam*

Received 16 July 2024

Revised 13 August 2024; Accepted 29 August 2024

Abstract: This paper investigates the educational function of literature via the development of self-love through the self-healing journey of Nora Seed in the novel “The Midnight Library” by Matt Haig. Using the Totally-Inclusive Self-love framework (Van & Whitehead, 2024), this study looks into the role of certain dimensions of self-love in guiding Nora toward joy and motivation to live despite facing others’ expectations and social norms. The findings indicate that Nora’s journey is motivated by several inner strengths, particularly self-awareness and Totally Inclusive Self-love. Furthermore, self-awareness plays a transformative role in her journey toward liberating herself from the negative impact of external factors, empowering her to discover her authentic aspirations, become resilient against these pressures, and have the courage to determine her own path. The results highlight the power of literary narratives in encouraging self-reflection and empowerment. Through Nora’s journey, readers are invited to reflect on their inner strengths and weakness as well as their attitude towards their own circumstance and apply the lessons learned from her narrative to their own journey toward personal growth and fulfillment.

Keywords: totally inclusive self-love, self-awareness, educational function of literature, character

* Corresponding author.

Email address: vanthithanhbinh@gmail.com

VUN BỒI SỰ THẤU HIỂU VÀ THƯƠNG YÊU BẢN THÂN ĐỂ THAY ĐỔI TÂM THỂ VÀ PHÁT TRIỂN BẢN THÂN: BÀI HỌC TỪ HÀNH TRÌNH TỰ CHỮA LÀNH CỦA MỘT NHÂN VẬT VĂN HỌC

Cao Quỳnh Trang¹, Văn Thị Thanh Bình²

¹Trung tâm Anh ngữ Du học Việt, Số 34 Máy Tơ, Ngõ Quyền, Hải Phòng, Việt Nam

²Khoa Ngôn ngữ và Văn hóa các nước nói tiếng Anh, Trường Đại học Ngoại ngữ, Đại học Quốc gia Hà Nội,
Số 2 Phạm Văn Đồng, Cầu Giấy, Hà Nội, Việt Nam

Nhận bài ngày 16 tháng 07 năm 2024

Chỉnh sửa ngày 13 tháng 08 năm 2024; Chấp nhận đăng ngày 29 tháng 08 năm 2024

Tóm tắt: Bài viết này tìm hiểu về chức năng giáo dục của văn học trên phương diện khuyến khích tình yêu bản thân thông qua hành trình chuyển hóa của Nora Seed trong tiểu thuyết “Thư viện lúc nửa đêm” của Matt Haig. Thông qua phân tích chi tiết tác phẩm, nghiên cứu này làm rõ vai trò của một số khía cạnh của tình yêu bản thân trong việc giúp Nora hướng tới niềm vui và động lực sống bất chấp việc phải đối mặt với những kỳ vọng của người khác và những chuẩn mực xã hội. Kết quả cho thấy rằng hành trình của Nora được thúc đẩy bởi một số sức mạnh tiềm tàng, đặc biệt là sự tự nhận thức và tình yêu bản thân bao hàm toàn thể. Hơn nữa, sự tự nhận thức đóng vai trò quyết định trong hành trình giải phóng bản thân khỏi những tác động bên ngoài, giúp nhân vật khám phá những khát vọng đích thực của mình, trở nên kiên cường trước áp lực và có can đảm để theo đuổi con đường của riêng mình. Nghiên cứu cho thấy tầm quan trọng từ hành trình của Nora trong việc tìm hiểu về vai trò giáo dục của văn học, vì nó thể hiện sức mạnh của văn học trong việc khuyến khích sự tự chiêm nghiệm và làm chủ bản thân. Thông qua cuộc hành trình của Nora, độc giả có thể suy ngẫm về sức mạnh tiềm tàng của bản thân và áp dụng những bài học rút ra từ câu chuyện của cô vào hành trình hướng tới sự phát triển và hoàn thiện cá nhân của chính họ.

Từ khóa: tình yêu bản thân bao hàm toàn thể, sự tự nhận thức, chức năng giáo dục của văn học, nhân vật

1. Introduction

According to Bazimaziki et al. (2019), literature can be seen as a mirror reflecting the complicated nature of human experience. In other words, it offers a platform for readers to gain a better understanding of their inner-self (Hernadi, 2002) as well as the world around them (Gabriel, 2021; Bazimaziki et al., 2019). “The Midnight Library”, written by Matt Haig, is a telling example of how literature can promote transformation in readers’ mindsets by guiding them through the journey of self-exploration alongside the protagonist. Published recently in 2020, this novel explores the themes of choices, regrets, and the pursuit of happiness, providing rich material for original interpretation and analysis. By looking into Nora Seed’s journey towards joy and motivation to live, this study promises to contribute to a deeper understanding of the role of literature in fostering self-love and self-discovery.

2. Aims and Objectives

This research aims to achieve several objectives centered around conducting a literary analysis of Nora's transformative journey in “The Midnight Library” by Matt Haig. Firstly, this

study aims to explore the role of certain dimensions of self-love in Nora's journey to find joy and motivation. Second, it seeks to specify the significance of self-awareness in enabling Nora to liberate herself from the expectations and social norms that were imposed on her.

1. What inner strengths allow Nora Seed to find joy and motivation to live?
2. What is the role of self-awareness in Nora Seed's path to break free from the influence of external factors?

3. Literature Review

3.1. Literature

In the field of literary studies, many scholars have proposed their own definition of the key term "literature". Although this is still a matter of great controversy, there are several essential features accepted among researchers that can be used to develop a more comprehensive understanding of this term.

First of all, one distinguishing characteristic of literature lies in the careful use of language. According to Meyer (1997), an important feature that establishes literature is the careful organization of language, covering features such as clever metaphors, mindfully chosen expressions, advanced sentence structure, rhyme, alliteration, and meter.

Furthermore, it is widely agreed among researchers that in order for something to qualify as literature, it is necessary that the written work in question possess a certain level of artistic value. While Stecker (1996) equates literature with a form of artistry, including novels, short stories, tales, dramas, and poems, Culler (1997) argues that literature has the ability to evoke emotions, provoke thoughts, and engage the audience in a meaningful aesthetic experience.

Lastly, literature can be distinguished by its cognitive values, particularly through the exploration of the human condition (Meyer, 1997). More specifically, literature deals extensively with the human experience, covering themes such as culture, identity, love, hate, life, and death (Hynes, 2020). As a result, through literary engagements, individuals can gain meaningful insights into a range of human situations, enhancing their empathy and comprehension of diverse viewpoints (Puolakka, 2022).

3.2. The Functions of Literature

Literature serves several essential functions in society. One of the primary functions of literature is to entertain readers. More specifically, entertainment in literature offers readers an opportunity to immerse themselves in narratives, experiencing both enjoyment and appreciation (Vorderer & Roth, 2011). Literature also plays many other roles, including cultural and language preservation (Ihueze, 2015), social critique and commentary (Coblenz, 2009), and emotional exploration (Oatley, 2017).

Besides the aforementioned functions, literature also has excellent educational value. Specifically, Gautam (2014) emphasized that literature is generally viewed as an invaluable source for understanding society and its values. This argument aligns with the assertion proposed by Gabriel (2021) and Bazimaziki et al. (2019) that literature depicts human experiences and the world, portraying the ways in which individuals navigate and cope with the challenges around them. Engaging with diverse literary works not only broadens knowledge of the human condition but also encourages self-reflection. According to Rakhmanina and Haimah (2021), literary works often probe into the complexities of human life, exploring a myriad of

issues and moral dilemmas that characterize human interactions. Put another way, it can serve as a medium for individuals to contemplate their beliefs and values (Hernadi, 2002). Therefore, learning to appreciate literature can significantly contribute to personal development and moral growth, fostering empathy, critical thinking, and a deeper understanding of the human experience (Culler, 1997).

3.3. Self-love

3.3.1. The Debate about Self-Love

Across history, scholars have held divergent perspectives regarding the significance of self-love. While certain researchers perceive self-love as important and essential (Solimar, 1987), others link it to negative characteristics such as narcissism, selfishness, and egocentricity, considering it a flaw or weakness (Orbanic, 2001; Patrick, 1982). The limited amount of extensive study on self-love and its defining factors (Vadjed Samiei, 2015) contributes to its enduring status as a highly debated concept.

Nevertheless, the positive impact of self-love on psychological well-being is undeniable. It plays a crucial role in preventing mental health conditions and resolving emotional imbalances (Solimar, 1987). Described as a vital requirement for overall well-being (Fromm, 1939), the absence of self-love can lead to conditions such as depression, anxiety, lack of authenticity, and regret (Irvani, 2007; Solimar, 1987). Given its significant benefits, self-love has been a matter of fascination for centuries and is currently gaining popularity among scholars (Henschke, 2022).

3.3.2. Towards a Definition of Self-Love

Multiple researchers have attempted to look into this concept and develop their own definitions of self-love. According to Orbanic (2001), self-love is a dynamic and holistic phenomenon, defined as “self-acceptance, valuing self and an unconditional positive regard toward self” (p.1). Similarly, Solimar (1987) also regarded self-acceptance as a fundamental component of self-love, arguing that self-love can be regarded as “an emotionally embodied experience of well-being, gladness, self-confident motivation and unconditional acceptance and validation of self, other, and life; it is an experience of greater inner potential and wholeness based on an expanded sense of self-identity” (p.115).

Also seeking to provide a more comprehensive definition of this concept, Van and Whitehead (2024) have divided this self-love into smaller dimensions, which can be summarized in the table below.

Table 1

Self-love and its Dimensions by Van and Whitehead (2024)

Self-love	
Definition	“Self-love means recognizing oneself, valuing oneself, nurturing oneself, protecting oneself, empowering oneself, thereby ensuring you are able to grow in a self-aware and contented state.” (Van & Whitehead, 2024, p.11)
Dimensions of Self-love	1. Self-awareness - “Being reflective, emotionally aware, recognizing one’s flow of emotions, feelings, patterns, tendencies, values.” (Van & Whitehead, 2024, p.12)

	<p>2. Self-validation & self-expression</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Accepting one's feelings, thoughts, and experiences as valid and legitimate. - Affirming one's internal experiences without seeking external approval or validation from others, consciously acknowledging the positive within oneself without the need to compare oneself to others. - Expressing individuality and conveying personal experiences, beliefs, and emotions to others. <p>Both of these dimensions can help boost one’s authenticity since they enable a person to “assert themselves in a liberating, self-actualizing way.” (Van & Whitehead, 2024, p.12)</p>
	<p>3. Self-care & self-protection</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Deliberately and proactively prioritizing and maintaining one's physical, mental, social, and financial well-being. - Actively employing actions, strategies, and behaviors to safeguard oneself from harm, danger, or threats to one’s physical, mental, social, and financial well-being.
	<p>4. Self-sufficiency & self-independence</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Accepting one’s strengths and weaknesses, meeting one's basic needs and requirements without relying heavily on external assistance or resources. - Being emotionally independent, not relying on others to fulfill one’s emotional needs.
	<p>5. Self-management & self-development</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Regulating and controlling one's own behavior, emotions, and actions in order to achieve personal goals, maintain well-being, and adapt to various situations effectively. - Actively seeking to enhance one's knowledge, skills, abilities, and overall well-being. <p>Upon reaching this stage, one can develop an unconditional love for others and a more comprehensive understanding of their struggles.</p>
<p>Impacts of self-love</p>	<p>Develop greater emotional intelligence Become emotionally resilient Acquiring higher empathy and good social skills Gaining emotional openness and emotional exposure Being willing to take risks</p>	

While sharing some similarities with previous studies by highlighting unconditional acceptance and validation of oneself, Van and Whitehead's (2024) definition of Self-love has succeeded in enhancing the comprehensiveness of this term by providing a structured range of dimensions that constitute Self-love.

Furthermore, their notable contribution lies in the introduction of Total Inclusivity, a novel concept that involves acknowledging, protecting, and nurturing all identities, regardless of “race, gender, sexual orientation, class, disability, age, religion, and language” (Van & Whitehead, 2024, p.13). This groundbreaking notion serves as the foundation for the development of Totally Inclusive Self-love, wherein individuals recognize, value, protect, and foster all aspects of themselves. Therefore, Totally Inclusive Self-love can be considered a “powerful antidote to toxicities in the human condition” (Van & Whitehead, 2024, p.14),

ultimately preventing negativity, self-loathing, arrogance, hatred, and violence. The philosophy underscores the idea that recognizing, valuing, and nurturing all aspects of oneself unconditionally leads to not only personal empowerment, optimal growth, and a contented state of self-awareness but also deeper and empowering connections with others.

4. Research Methodology

The methodology chosen for this study is textual analysis. This method involves examining the structure, context, and content of written texts in order to identify the underlying messages, themes, and patterns (Culler, 1997).

There are several reasons why textual analysis is the most appropriate approach for this study. First, it requires a thorough analysis of different components of the text (Carter et al., 2022), including the narrative structure, key ideas, and the rhetorical strategies that are employed (McKee, 2003). Therefore, throughout the process, researchers can closely follow the development of a character and identify critical moments of transformation (Jayakumar et al., 2022).

Second, this method enables researchers to identify the themes of the chosen narrative (Hébert, 2022), particularly those that are directly related to the chosen character. By exploring how these themes are developed throughout the story, they can gain a deeper insight into the underlying messages that the author wishes to convey through it.

Finally, textual analysis can provide information about the broad context of where the story takes place, namely its setting, social context, and cultural background (Hébert, 2022). This contextual perspective can help researchers discover how these external forces contribute to shaping the character's experiences and decisions in the narrative, thereby unraveling the author's perception of the world embedded in the text (Tulaganova, 2022).

5. Scope of the Study

This study will focus on examining Nora Seed's journey in "The Midnight Library" by Matt Haig using Van and Whitehead's (2024) definition of Totally Inclusive Self-love. The selection of this framework by its comprehensive structure and direct relevance to the study's objectives. While their conceptualization encompasses multiple dimensions, for the sake of focus and depth within the scope of this paper, three key dimensions, *self-awareness*, *self-validation*, and *self-development*, and the concept of *Totally Inclusive Self-love* will be prioritized. By narrowing the scope in this manner, the study aims to offer a focused and thorough analysis of these critical aspects of self-love within the context of the novel.

6. Background Information

6.1. Matt Haig's Life and Career

Matt Haig, a British writer and journalist, is well-known for his contribution in various genres, including fiction and non-fiction for both children and adults. Haig's constant battles with anxiety and depression throughout his life have inspired him to explore themes such as mental health, resilience, and the human experience in his writing. His understanding of mental issues, as well as his humorous and optimistic approach to heavy topics, have made him a unique yet relatable author for readers of any age.

In 2020, Matt Haig released "The Midnight Library" a novel that has gained appreciation for its creative take on the topic of choices, regrets, and the search for the meaning

of life. The book follows Nora Seed as she navigates through a mysterious library between life and death, where she is given a chance to reconsider her past decisions and experience how her life could have turned out had she made different choices.

6.2. Plot summary of “The Midnight Library”

The Midnight Library revolves around Nora Seed, a 35-year-old woman from Bedford, England, who struggles to find fulfillment in her life. Despite her impressive achievements in academics, music, and sports during her younger years, her failure to realize these potential leads to a profound sense of regret and despair in the present.

After the sudden death of her beloved cat, Nora loses her job, gets into an argument with an old friend, and finds out that her only piano student has quit. When her elderly neighbor, Mr. Bannerjee, no longer needs her help to collect his medication, Nora feels like her existence is no longer needed. These unfortunate events, combined with an accumulated sense of worthlessness and regret, cause Nora to take her life.

However, instead of dying, Nora finds herself in The Midnight Library, where she is guided by the librarian, Mrs. Elm, to revisit her past decisions and explore different versions of herself. Each book she picks up from the shelves represents a path not taken in her original life. By traveling down these paths, Nora gains a deeper understanding of her own regrets and potential. Eventually, with a new mindset, she decides to return to her original life, this time ready to fully experience every possibility that awaits.

7. Analysis

7.1. The Initial Stage of Demotivation, Depression and Isolation

Nora Seed’s life at the beginning of the story can be described as unfulfilled and isolated. The 35-year-old woman’s constant struggles with depression make it impossible for her to properly take care of her own needs, let alone fulfill her responsibilities to other people. This detrimental state eventually causes Nora to lose a sense of motivation to actively interact with others or seek out opportunities to develop herself. As a result, Nora is left with a feeling of detachment from her own authentic desires and an inability to foster meaningful connections with her loved ones. These challenges collectively contribute to the absence of joy and motivation in her life at the outset of her journey.

7.1.1. Depression

Nora’s depression is clearly marked by unfulfilled potential, stemming from her inability to pursue the paths or make the choices that align with others’ expectations. As Nora absorbs the negative attitudes and pressures imposed upon her, she adopts a critical perspective of herself and her past decisions, impairing her ability to foster self-validation.

Dwelling in regrets

Contrary to her less-than-ideal current situation, Nora Seed's earlier years were brimmed with potential across various domains, spanning from physical activities to intellectual and creative pursuits. Yet, Nora's inability to realize her potential ultimately plunged her into a profound state of regret and despair.

Initially, the protagonist excelled in swimming and attained notable success under the guidance of her father - a former rugby coach. Nora qualified for the National Swimming Championships, broke records, and even had the potential for Olympic participation. However,

she later decided to back out of a swimming career due to the pressure she was facing, souring her relationship with her father, who criticized this decision by saying she had “thrown everything away” (Haig, 2020, p.15). Later in the story, her father’s sudden demise due to a heart attack only worsened her regret for causing him such disappointment.

Similarly, Nora expressed her great passion for music, contributing significantly to her brother's band, The Labyrinth, with her impressive talent as a performer and a songwriter. The Labyrinth managed to strike a deal with Universal, opening up the opportunity to produce albums and go on tours. Unfortunately, her panic attacks and engagement with her former lover - Dan, made it impossible for her to pursue this path. As a result, Nora fell out with her brother and her bandmate.

Before the current prevailing sense of loneliness, Nora used to be in a relationship with Dan and even got engaged with him. However, upon her mother’s death, Nora’s “grief fused with depression and anxiety” (Haig, 2020, p.47), causing her to break up with her fiancé only two days before the wedding in an attempt to regain some control in life. This decision later haunts her, causing a profound sense of regret as she blames herself for hurting Dan and ruining his life.

Furthermore, Nora’s grief and uncertainty made her unable to fulfill her promise to move to Australia with her best friend, Izzy, which later caused their friendship to wither. Overwhelmed by a sense of regret and despair, Nora was unable to leave Bedford, forfeiting the opportunity to use her degree in philosophy or pursue her desire to become a glaciologist.

The sharp contrast between Nora’s once-promising prospects and her bitter reality highlights the complex dilemma she’s facing. From the outset of the story, Nora contends with the weight of others' expectations on her shoulders and the pressure stemming from her perceived potential. However, as she diverges from the paths expected of her, she not only lacks support and empathy but also encounters hostility from those closest to her, whether through disappointment, criticism, or anger.

Internalizing others’ attitudes

The pressure exerted by those around Nora to conform to certain expectations, combined with their tendency to criticize rather than understand her choices, intensifies her feelings of guilt and regret. Internalizing this mindset, Nora dismisses her own emotions, becomes less accepting of herself, and develops a critical outlook on her past decisions.

To begin with, Nora's internal struggles are profoundly depicted through her failure to affirm her own feelings and emotional needs. Not only does she feel that “she didn’t deserve to be happy” (Haig, 2020, p.60) after failing her loved ones, Nora aligns herself with destructive metaphors, such as a black hole - “a dying star collapsing in on itself” (Haig, 2020, p.25). This metaphor symbolizes her deep sense of inadequacy and emptiness, highlighting a significant deficit in self-validation.

Moreover, Nora's self-critical narrative is evident in her perception of her life as “a cacophony of nonsense—a piece of music that could have gone in wonderful directions but now goes nowhere at all” (Haig, 2020, p.33), as well as the reflection of her own journey. The constant repetition of the word ‘every’ only emphasizes the fact that Nora only fixates on the opportunities she missed or the goals she didn't achieve while completely overlooking the possible valuable lessons of the steps she has taken.

To conclude, since most of the protagonist’s deepest regrets stem from her failure to satisfy others’ expectations, it is conceivable that Nora has developed a tendency to seek

external validation, equating it with her own fulfillment. Consequently, she feels a need to prioritize other's aspirations and feelings over her own. Ultimately, the fusion of guilt, regret, and poor self-validation became a great contributor to her current state of depression.

7.1.2. Demotivation

One of the most detrimental consequences of Nora Seed's depression is her lack of motivation. Unable to escape the feelings of guilt and inadequacy, Nora believes that "a life of drizzle and depression in her hometown was her punishment, and she hadn't the will or clarity or, hell, the energy to do anything" (Haig, 2020, p.60). This implies a profound sense of hopelessness and resignation, where Nora feels trapped in her current state with no perceived means of escape. This state of demotivation is clearly demonstrated through her poor self-development and her tendency to compare herself with others.

Poor self-development

Self-development, according to the chosen definition of self-love, is the ability to actively seek to enhance one's knowledge, skills, abilities, and overall well-being. Nora shows a serious stagnation in this domain, particularly through her conversation with Neil, her boss at The String Theory, a musical equipment shop where Nora has worked for twelve years.

While confronting Nora about her career choice, Neil tries to persuade her to explore her potential by highlighting her strengths, only to be responded with her dismissive attitude. She corrects Neil's statement about teaching piano, saying she teaches only one person, implying it's not significant. She dismisses her degree in Philosophy and undermines the value of her education. Finally, when Neil brings up her involvement in a band with her brother, Nora downplays its potential success by saying they "weren't really going anywhere" (Haig, 2020, p.22). In general, Nora's reactions reveal a hesitancy to acknowledge and appreciate her own knowledge, skills, and abilities, leading to a lack of initiative in pursuing opportunities for personal growth and development.

Moreover, Nora also shows a reluctance to take proactive steps to improve her well-being. Despite her obvious and prolonged dissatisfaction in her current job, she chooses to suppress her true emotions and put on a facade in front of her boss, saying that she's "happy here" (Haig, 2020, p.22). As the confrontation gets more heated, Nora's unwillingness to seek changes to enhance her well-being becomes clearer.

"You are a good person. You worry about the world. the homeless, the environment.

I need a job.

You need freedom.

I don't want freedom." (Haig, 2020, p.23)

Nora's response indicates her unwillingness to step out of her comfort zone and embrace opportunities for change or growth, suggesting that she prefers the familiarity and security of her current circumstances, even if they are not fulfilling or motivating. This eventually results in the deterioration of her emotional and mental well-being, thus negatively affecting her ability to foster self-development.

Tendency to compare herself to others

Nora's demotivation is exacerbated when she compares her life journey with common social norms and the seemingly fulfilling lives of other people on social media.

Besides the expectations of people around her, Nora also faced the significant pressure of social norms, influencing her perceptions of success and fulfillment in various aspects of her

life. One notable area where these norms manifest is in her career path, which can be illustrated through a remark by Neil: “I feel like you are made for better things. You’re in your late thirties” (Haig, 2020, p. 21)

While Neil's comment may be intended to motivate Nora to explore her potential, it also carries an implicit judgment of her current career status. The phrase "made for better things" suggests that Nora is perceived as falling short of social expectations for someone in her late thirties, implying that there is pressure to attain higher levels of professional achievement within a specific timeframe.

Additionally, regarding her love life, her conversation with an acquaintance emphasizes the widespread expectation of settling down, getting married, and having children as essential components of a fulfilling life.

“Got anyone, then? Bloke? Kids?”

Nora shook her head. Wishing it would fall off. Her own head. Onto the floor. So she never had to have conversation with a stranger ever again.

‘Well, don’t hang about. Tick-tock tick-tock.’

‘I’m thirty-five. And I’m not sure I want—’

‘Me and Jake were like rabbits but we got there. Two little terrors. But worth it, y’know? I just feel complete.’ (Haig, 2020, p. 28)

The phrase "don't hang about. Tick-tock tick-tock" reinforces the notion that there is a deadline for achieving these milestones. The acquaintance's anecdote about her own family life, emphasizing the sense of completeness and satisfaction derived from having children, contrasts with Nora's ambivalence and reluctance to attain these traditional markers of fulfillment.

Finally, Nora’s interactions on social media also contribute to her overall state of demotivation. Her experience on social platforms serves as a stark reminder of her perceived failures compared to others, reinforcing the belief that “everyone had worked out how to live, except her” (Haig, 2020, p.32).

To conclude, Nora's tendency to compare herself to others likely contributes to her demotivation by fostering feelings of inadequacy, envy, and hopelessness. As a result, Nora may struggle to find motivation or purpose in her own life, feeling overwhelmed by the perceived gap between where she is and where she believes she should be.

7.1.3. Isolation

In addition to depression and demotivation, the protagonist's lack of fulfillment in the initial stage is also influenced by her poor connections. Nora's disconnect with herself is evident in her reliance on external sources for happiness and her poor self-awareness about her own authentic desires. This situation extends to her relationships with family, friends, and community, where strained connections exacerbate her feelings of isolation and loneliness.

Poor connection with herself

Nora’s struggle to connect with herself may stem from her tendency to look outward for happiness and her limited understanding of her own desires and aspirations.

Firstly, Nora demonstrates a tendency to divert her attention outwards instead of focusing on her own life, shown through her habit of “scrolling through other people’s happy lives, waiting for something to happen” (Haig, 2020, p.17). This suggests her reliance on external sources for emotional satisfaction rather than seeking it internally.

Moreover, after spending years of her youth trying and failing to fulfill others' expectations, Nora finds herself disconnected from her authenticity, which is shown in the quote: "Whole hours passed by. She wanted to have a purpose, something to give her a reason to exist. But she had nothing" (Haig, 2020, p.30). Despite her intense longing for purpose and meaning in life, Nora's poor self-awareness causes her to lose a sense of direction, leaving her feeling adrift and uncertain about her own aspirations.

Poor connection with others

Nora's sense of isolation extends beyond her loss of connection with her authentic self to encompass her relationships with family, friends, and community.

Previously, Nora's relationships with her family and friends were strained. She faced criticism from her mother and pressure from her father, resulting in a lack of understanding and support. Her once close relationships with Joe and Izzy have become distant, with resentment stemming from Nora's past choices. Additionally, the absence of a long-term romantic partner only worsens her feelings of loneliness. Collectively, these challenges highlight the notable absence of a vital support system in her life.

Nora's disappointment is also present in the digital sphere, where she finds herself isolated and disconnected. She encounters "no messages, no comments, no new followers, no friend requests" (Haig, 2020, p.32) on her social media platforms, emphasizing her detachment from others. The comparison of herself to the "antimatter" exacerbates her feelings of invisibility and irrelevance compared to others. Furthermore, the mention of "added self-pity" suggests that Nora not only feels isolated but also experiences profound sadness and self-pity regarding her lack of social connection.

Overall, at the start of the story, Nora's life is described as a state of depression, demotivation, and isolation. Her internal struggles with self-awareness, self-acceptance, and self-development are especially striking, causing her to feel a deep sense of inadequacy and encounter difficulty in recognizing her own value and potential. This inner turmoil affects her ability to fully accept herself and nurture meaningful relationships with others. Nora's initial situation provides a detailed and complex view of her emotional challenges, laying the groundwork for her journey of self-discovery and transformation.

7.2. The Stage of Self-Exploration and Enlightenment

Having the opportunity to undo her regrets and explore various possibilities, Nora's journey in the Midnight Library presents an opportunity for introspection and growth, providing her with a safe space to experiment with different identities. Through her experiences in alternate lives, Nora starts challenging her past assumptions and reevaluating her priorities. Each new existence offers valuable lessons, allowing Nora to confront her fears, rediscover her passions, and ultimately find joy and motivation in life. This analysis will look into the diverse paths explored by Nora Seed and the transformative lessons they provide her.

7.2.1. Moving Towards Authenticity

In some of Nora's first alternate lives in "The Midnight Library," she had a chance to explore her potential to achieve greatness and re-evaluate her priorities. Upon realizing that living other people's dreams cannot bring her inner fulfillment, Nora gradually learns to affirm her choices and develops an appreciation for the uniqueness of her journey. With an increased sense of self-awareness and self-validation, Nora regains some connection with herself, taking her first steps away from the expectations of others and toward her own aspirations.

Learning to prioritize herself

Nora's very first step on a journey toward her true self is reevaluating her priorities. Rather than adhering to the expectations of others or striving to fulfill their dreams, she begins to understand that seeking validation from external sources does not equate to genuine fulfillment. This pivotal lesson becomes evident as Nora explores the life where she married Dan and the one where she pursued a swimming career. Through these experiences, she discovers the importance of aligning her actions with her own desires and aspirations rather than conforming to societal expectations or seeking validation from others.

The first regret Nora chooses to undo, also one of her greatest regrets, is "being cruel to Dan", "breaking up with Dan" and "not living in a country pub with Dan" (Haig, 2020, p.46). This choice shows that at the beginning of her self-exploration journey, Nora still has an intense desire to fulfill others' expectations and conform to the social norms of settling down despite her uncertainty about marriage and the prospect of motherhood.

In this alternate reality, Nora soon realizes that her married life falls short of the ideal she had envisioned. As she spends more time interacting with her husband, Nora finds herself reflecting on their relationship, revisiting moments where she overlooked warning signs or suppressed her true emotions so as not to hurt his feelings. Not only does Nora realize that Dan had "never been supportive of her music career" (Haig, 2020, p.57), but she also comes to the bitter realization that he treated her passion with a "shruggish indifference" and was never willing to accompany her in the pursuit of her aspirations, despite how Nora had "tried to make his dream of a pub in the Oxfordshire countryside become her dream as well" (Haig, 2020, p.63).

The protagonist's disappointment reaches a climax when she discovers Dan's serious issues with alcoholism and his affair with another woman. However, unlike before, instead of keeping her feelings to herself, Nora confronts these issues head-on, vocalizing her grievances to her husband.

"You wanted me and you wanted this and yet you've been unfaithful and you drink like a fish and I think you only appreciate me when you don't have me. What about my dreams?" (Haig, 2020, p.65).

This pivotal moment in Nora's journey signifies a significant change in her mindset, as she courageously vocalizes her true emotions and demands genuine appreciation and respect in their relationship. This shift in attitude signals her growing sense of self-validation, signaling her progression toward embracing her authentic self.

Similarly, in the alternate reality where Nora chooses to pursue swimming to earn her father's approval, she undergoes a profound shift in her perspective of sacrificing her own happiness to meet others' expectations. Initially, this life appears idyllic, marked by Nora's physical well-being, fame, and financial success. To her surprise, her father is still alive, and she maintains a close relationship with her brother, Joe. However, beneath these outward achievements lies a series of compromises. Her mother's alcoholism worsens following her father's infidelity, and both Nora and Joe neglect spending time with their mother during her final months due to their demanding schedules. Consequently, Nora's mother passed away much earlier than in her original life.

Immersed in her athletic pursuits, Nora realizes that she has sacrificed "her own relationships, her own love of music, her own dreams beyond anything that didn't involve a medal, her own life" (Haig, 2020, p.100) —all for the sake of pleasing her father. She

empathizes with this version of herself, who never had the opportunity to fully explore her interests in music, literature, or philosophy. Ultimately, she concludes that sacrificing her own happiness to earn fleeting validation from her parents is pointless. This realization prompts Nora to reassess her priorities and reclaim agency over her own sense of fulfillment.

Learning to embrace the uniqueness of her own journey

With a growing recognition of her authentic aspirations and desires, Nora gradually gravitates towards the journeys where she pursues her passion. In the life where she remains in The Labyrinth and becomes a rockstar, Nora gains valuable insights into the complexities of success and the inevitable compromises it entails. This experience fosters Nora's acceptance of the distinctiveness of her own journey and liberates her from the trap of comparing herself to others.

In this alternate life, Nora experiences an overwhelming level of success, fulfilling her passion for music and gaining fame, wealth, and global recognition. Standing under the blinding lights on stage in front of millions of adoring fans, Nora realizes that “she was capable of a lot more than she had known” (Haig, 2020, p.156). This affirmation signals a significant improvement in her self-awareness and self-validation since Nora has discovered a reservoir of untapped potential within herself and recognized her capacity for immense achievement.

However, along with success come numerous challenges: dealing with stalkers, navigating through bad management, facing fake feuds, enduring court cases, battling copyright issues, managing complicated relationships, and overworking herself. The most devastating blow is the loss of her brother due to an overdose.

Through these trials, Nora learns a profound lesson about the nature of decision-making and compromise. She acknowledges that every path in life comes with its own set of challenges and opportunities, that “sadness is intrinsically part of the fabric of happiness” (Haig, 2020, p.174), and there are no easy routes. Nora's realization prompts her to embrace the uniqueness of her own journey, recognizing that comparing herself to other people or other versions of herself only fosters discontent and demotivates herself.

Overall, in these alternate lives, she learns invaluable lessons, discovering that external validation, such as the approval of others, material wealth, or fame, does not always equate to inner fulfillment. Moreover, she realizes the futility and detriment of comparing herself to others and recognizes that every life harbors its own share of challenges and triumphs. In other words, Nora's experiences enable her to realize her own potential, fostering an increasing sense of self-awareness and self-validation. In the end, Nora's journey brings her to a better understanding of herself and a renewed appreciation for the authenticity of her own path.

7.2.2. Accepting Life's Unpredictability

During Nora's journey through different realities, she gains a more comprehensive understanding of regrets' delusionary root causes and its detrimental effects. Realizing that sometimes remorse is only based on subjective judgments, Nora learns to cope with her regrets and adopts a more forgiving and nurturing perception of herself. By accepting the inherent uncertainties in life, the protagonist finds it easier to overcome guilt, thus becoming more willing to take risks and experience life to the fullest. In other words, through reflection and heightened self-awareness, Nora learns to nurture her self-validation and self-development.

Learning to overcome regrets

As mentioned in the first stage, Nora's inability to let go of her past regrets sucks her life force and greatly contributes to her depression. In the alternate life where Nora keeps her cat indoors, she gains eye-opening insights about the true nature of her regrets, thus learning the importance of releasing the emotional baggage that hinders her progress and prevents her from embracing the present moment.

In her root life, the death of her cat - Voltaire, was one of the factors pushing Nora to her breaking point. She regrets not having kept the cat indoors and assumes that he died from getting hit by a car, blaming herself for being an irresponsible owner.

However, in this alternate reality, Nora comes to a realization: the cat's death wasn't caused by her decision to let him outside. Regardless of whether she kept the cat indoors or not, his demise was inevitable due to an underlying health condition. This revelation leads Nora to understand that she isn't a negligent cat owner and that she cared for her pet as well as anyone else would have.

The key lesson Nora learns is that "sometimes regrets are not based on facts at all" (Haig, 2020, p.73) but rather are shaped by subjective perceptions. Upon this realization, Nora is prompted to reconsider the validity and significance of her own regrets. This insight encourages both Nora and the readers to reflect on the role of perspective and interpretation in shaping emotional experiences. It underscores the importance of self-awareness and an insightful attitude in overcoming regrets and moving forward in life.

Moreover, after a brief visit to this life, Nora discovers that the only way to truly learn and resolve her regrets is to live through the experiences herself. Mrs. Elm's advice: "The only way to learn is to live" (Haig, 2020, p.74), emphasizes the idea that understanding certain lessons in life requires more than passive observation. In other words, it highlights the importance of actively engaging with life, taking risks, making choices, and confronting challenges, because each experience, whether positive or negative, contributes to personal growth and self-discovery.

Learning to let go of control

In the reality that Nora chooses to move to Australia with her best friend, Izzy, Nora once again has to go through unexpected emotional turmoil and challenges. However, these hardships are essential in prompting her to accept the inherent uncertainties in life.

In this parallel universe, Izzy tragically passes away in a car accident on her way to Nora's birthday party not long after they move to Australia. This horrific event sends Nora into spiraling depression, preventing her from returning to her hometown since she is too deep in grief.

Mrs. Elm's wise observation: "It was a good choice. It just wasn't a desired outcome" (Haig, 2020, p.87) is a powerful reminder of life's unpredictability, suggesting that even the most well-intentioned and thoughtful decision can result in unexpected or undesirable outcomes due to situations beyond one's control. By adopting this viewpoint, Nora learns to focus on making choices that align with her values and desires rather than stressing about controlling the results, which in turn helps to relieve her feelings of guilt and self-criticism. By encouraging her to make authentic choices, take risks, and experience life to the fullest, these experiences prepare for Nora's upcoming journey of self-development and personal growth.

7.2.3. Seeking the Motivation to Live

Toward the end of her journey, Nora eventually regains a connection with herself, not only realizing her will to live but also reconnecting with her core value - kindness. By adhering to this value, Nora realizes that her journey is not just about finding happiness or fulfillment in isolation but also about nurturing relationships and compassion towards others. In essence, the development of Totally Inclusive Self-love fostered by a more insightful self-awareness plays a vital role in Nora's journey toward joy and motivation to live.

Finding connection with herself

Throughout the narrative, Nora Seed grapples with existential questions about the meaning of her life and her will to live. In one alternate reality, where Nora embarks on a career as a glaciologist in the Arctic, she undergoes a profound transformation, finding answers to these existential queries.

In this fifth life, Nora confronts the harsh realities of living and working in extreme conditions, where she faces challenges such as freezing temperatures and encounters with polar bears while fulfilling her role as a spotter for climate-tracking fieldwork. Through solitude amidst the vast expanses of nature, Nora undergoes a profound introspection. Initially, she attributes her feelings of loneliness and isolation in her root life to a lack of human connection. However, Nora's experiences in the Arctic lead her to a transformative realization: true solitude offers a unique opportunity for connection, fostering a deep bond between herself and the natural world. This realization prompts Nora to reevaluate the meaning of life, shifting her focus away from "the expectation to achieve" (Haig, 2020, p.135) towards the simple yet profound act of being present and bearing witness to the beauty of the world around her.

After surviving a dangerous encounter with a polar bear, Nora's perspective changes dramatically. In this desperate situation, she not only regains her desire to live but also develops a new sense of purpose and meaning in her life. The experience of working as a glaciologist and reconnecting with nature in this life has sparked a desire within her, urging Nora to make a positive contribution to the greater good, no matter how small it might be.

Focusing on her core values

Having been equipped with a willingness to take risks and experience life, Nora continues to explore the Midnight Library's countless possibilities, gaining a profound insight into the infinite potential that exists within every single life.

"She had been a rock star, an Olympian, a music teacher, a primary school teacher, a professor, a CEO, a PA, a chef, a glaciologist, a climatologist, an acrobat, a tree-planter, an audit manager, ..." (Haig, 2020, p.204)

However, despite experiencing countless variations of existence, navigating through hundreds of alternate realities, and addressing numerous regrets, she finds herself continually grappling with a pervasive sense of emptiness and dissatisfaction. The number of alternate lives she visits eventually causes Nora to lose direction and "lose any sense of who she was" (Haig, 2020, p.206). In response to this existential crisis, Mrs. Elm advises Nora to reconnect with her core values. It's through this reflection that Nora realizes the anchoring force of kindness, which is total inclusivity, serving as a beacon of stability amid uncertainty and despair.

Finding connection with others

In the final life she tries on in the Midnight Library, Nora experiences a conventionally fulfilling life filled with material success and external validation. However, she ultimately realizes that true fulfillment comes from the substances of love, care, and kindness in genuine

connections.

In this seemingly perfect life, Nora is married to Ash - a kind surgeon, and has a daughter named Molly. Besides her happy family life, Nora also achieves considerable success in her philosophical career. Immersed in Ash and Molly's love and care, Nora learns that without love, even the most glamorous and successful life is empty and meaningless. This realization marks a turning point in Nora's journey as she begins to prioritize genuine connections and empathy over superficial achievements.

“You could eat in the finest restaurants, you could partake in every sensual pleasure, you could sing on stage in São Paulo to twenty thousand people, you could soak up whole thunderstorms of applause, you could travel to the ends of the Earth, you could be followed by millions on the internet, you could win Olympic medals, but this was all meaningless without love.” (Haig, 2020, p.234)

The emphasis on love as the essential ingredient for a meaningful life highlights its transformative power to imbue existence with purpose, joy, and richness. Ultimately, this fundamental realization underscores the importance of emotional bonds and human connections in shaping a truly fulfilling and meaningful life for Nora. By aligning her choices with her core value, kindness, she has found a life in which she feels a sense of investment, love, and commitment to her family.

However, there comes a plot twist when Nora revisits her hometown - Bedford - and finds out the lives of those she has helped in her root life have taken a turn for the worse. Without her help to pick up his medicine, Mr. Banerjee ends up in a care facility instead of staying in his cherished home. Without Nora to inspire his passion for music during piano lessons, Leo, her only student in her root life, goes down a dangerous path and commits crimes on a regular basis. Remembering Mrs. Elm's advice: “Never underestimate the big importance of small things” (Haig, 2020, p.240), Nora realizes that the smallest things she once talked about with a dismissive attitude have a significant influence on other people's lives, which fills her heart with uncannily warm and soothing contentment. This gradually transitioned her towards a state of Totally Inclusive Self-love, where she directs to others the same love as she gives herself. This transition marks a vital moment in her journey, as her mindset shifts from focusing solely on her own happiness and fulfillment to fostering empathy and compassion for others.

7.3. The Awakening of Self-Love and Empowerment

Nora's newfound self-awareness profoundly influences her life after leaving the Midnight Library, sparking significant changes in her behavior, mindset, and interactions with others.

7.3.1. Recognizing Potential Within Herself

One key aspect of Nora's transformation is her recognition of the potential within herself. Through her experiences in the Midnight Library, Nora comes to understand that she possesses the capability to lead diverse and fulfilling lives.

As Nora reflects on the multiple lives she experienced, she realizes while she "might not have felt everything she had felt in those lives, she had the capability" (Haig, 2020, p. 253). This discovery becomes a source of empowerment, as she realizes that her life is not restricted by her past decisions or the paths not taken. Instead, she sees her life as a canvas of limitless possibilities, each with its own set of challenges and pleasures. This perspective provides her with a sense of optimism and purpose, motivating her effort of self-development and personal

fulfillment.

Furthermore, Nora's new attitude enables her to view her past decisions and experiences in a more positive light. Rather than focusing on wasted possibilities or perceived mistakes, she expresses gratitude for her original life, acknowledging even the most seemingly insignificant aspects, such as the presence of her loved ones and the little yet positive impacts she has had on others.

7.3.2. Being Fully Present and Engaged in the Current Moment

Nora also demonstrates a profound shift in perspective and her newfound appreciation for life's inherent beauty and complexity.

First, Nora highlights the value of being fully present, appreciating the richness of each experience, and cherishing life's simple pleasures, such as the flavor of a drink or the melody of a song. This perspective reflects her newfound realization that every moment, no matter how ordinary, has the possibility for joy and fulfillment.

Furthermore, Nora faces the reality that suffering, sorrow, and loneliness are inevitable in life and recognizes that these emotions are no less important than happiness in the human experience.

“Will my life be miraculously free from pain, despair, grief, heartbreak, hardship, loneliness, depression? No.

But do I want to live?

Yes. Yes.

A thousand times, yes” (Haig, 2020, p.261)

Her root life is still unchanged, with “the same electric piano and books,” “the same sad absence of a feline and lack of a job,” and “the same unknowability about her life ahead” (Haig, 2020, p.268); she reaffirms her desire to live nevertheless, expressing a resounding affirmation of life's value and her commitment to embracing it wholeheartedly.

7.3.3. Embracing Connections

Waking up in the hospital after the failed suicidal attempt, Nora reconciles with her brother and reconnects with her best friend, putting aside all of the conflicts and resentment in the past. These interactions highlight the value of love and companionship in overcoming challenges and finding meaning in life.

In essence, this attitude signifies Nora's profound shift in perspective as she learns to prioritize love, kindness, and genuine human connections above external markers of success or the pursuit of escaping regrets. It encapsulates the central theme of the novel, emphasizing the transformative power of love and compassion in shaping one's journey toward fulfillment and inner peace.

8. Results and Discussion

8.1. Inner Strengths That Allow Nora Seed to Find Joy and Motivation

Throughout Nora's quest for fulfillment, Totally Inclusive Self-love in general, and self-awareness in particular, emerge as vital inner strengths for various reasons. Firstly, regarding self-awareness, this inner strength facilitates Nora's reconnection with her authentic self, encompassing her emotions, passions, aspirations, and core values. Visible in every lesson Nora has learned in her journey, self-awareness serves as a foundation for other dimensions to

develop. In other words, only by having a clear and consistent sense of personal identity can Nora truly validate her potential, abilities, choices and empower herself to step beyond her comfort zone with confidence. This discovery correlates with previous research conducted by Campell et al. (1996) and Crocetti et al. (2015), highlighting the role of self-awareness as a source of empowerment. In essence, through thorough reflection and a profound understanding of herself, Nora discovers both her motivation to live and her life's purpose.

Besides, Total Inclusive Self-love proves to be essential in enriching Nora's life with joy and meaning. It is a decisive factor in Nora's final decision to return to her root life. More specifically, despite the allure of alternate lives where she may have achieved certain goals or aspirations, Nora ultimately values the authenticity and depth of her relationships above all else, as these connections hold a foundational significance in her identity and sense of belonging. Therefore, it can be argued that Totally Inclusive Self-love not only empowers Nora to adhere to her core values but also extends her love and appreciation to others. This can in turn create a positive cycle of kindness and compassion, in which one can support and be supported (Cosley et al., 2010). This difference is the decisive factor that makes her original life, though imperfect, profoundly meaningful and worth living.

8.2. The Role of Self-Awareness in Nora Seed's Path to Break Free From the Influence of External Factors

In Nora's journey, self-awareness plays a transformative role. It enables her to regain her authenticity, develop resilience against external pressures, and have the courage to pursue her own path.

To begin with, Self-awareness serves as a crucial element in Nora Seed's journey, allowing her to break free from external influences and reconnect with her authenticity. To be specific, being reflective and having a clear sense of herself enable Nora to dictate her values, aspirations, and purpose.

Furthermore, self-awareness equips Nora with resilience against external pressures and influences. This result has been confirmed by previous studies, in which self-awareness is considered crucial in developing certain psychological resources, including resilience and willpower (Reivich & Shatte, 2002; McGonigal, 2013; Goleman, 1995). Therefore, with a heightened sense of self-awareness, she becomes more immune to the weight of societal expectations. Gradually, Nora learns to embrace her identity and accept the imperfections of her life with grace, which, according to Xiang et al. (2022), can become a great source of motivation and liberation in the long term. As a result, she slowly gravitates towards prioritizing her needs instead of sacrificing them for the sake of others.

Finally, self-awareness enables Nora to define her own path and make decisions that align with her authentic feelings and values. As proven by Levey et al. (2019) and Posavac and Posavac (2020), people's beliefs about themselves can greatly influence their thoughts and actions. Sharing the same notion, Xiang et al. (2022) specifically emphasized the idea that acknowledging one's limitations is a foundational step toward overcoming them. On that account, as Nora is equipped with a deep understanding of her strengths, weaknesses, values, and potential, she can confidently develop herself and pursue her own fulfillment without being pressured by external expectations.

8.3. Educational Potential of Nora Seed's Narrative

Aligning with previous research, Nora's journey in "The Midnight Library" vividly illustrates literature's educational potential both as a learning tool for readers to understand the

human experience in contemporary society and as a medium for self-reflection (Hernadi, 2002).

Exploring the themes of choices and regrets and seeking answers to existential questions such as the meaning and purpose of life, Nora's narrative fosters a deeper comprehension of human experiences from diverse viewpoints, which confirms the findings of Gabriel (2021). Moreover, by depicting how Nora copes with external factors such as her loved ones' expectations and social norms, "The Midnight Library" also serves as a simulation of modern society, allowing readers to gain insights into its values and conventions, which aligns with the conclusions of Gautam (2014) and Bazimaziki et al (2019).

Moreover, Nora's journey serves as a rich source of insight and reflection for readers, offering valuable lessons that resonate with their own experiences. By looking into common struggles in modern society, such as depression, demotivation, and isolation, this narrative allows a wide range of readers to connect deeply with the protagonist's challenges and dilemmas. As a result, it fosters readers' empathy and understanding, which echoes the findings of Culler (1997). A lot of readers, at various levels of relatability, can extract meaningful lessons from Nora's journey that are applicable to their lives and embark on their own paths of self-reflection so as to strengthen their self-awareness, and develop themselves into the best version possible.

9. Conclusion

This paper explores Nora Seed's transformative journey toward joy and motivation, thus revealing the educational potential of her story. It is concluded that self-awareness and Totally Inclusive Self-love are the two most essential inner strengths in her transformative journey, with self-awareness playing a transformative role in liberating the main character from the constraints of external influences.

Not only contributing to the limited existing studies on "The Midnight Library," this research also offers implications in education. Nora Seed's journey in "The Midnight Library" holds significant educational potential. Through Nora's experiences and struggles, readers can learn about the human experience in modern society and acquire valuable lessons that are applicable to their own lives.

However, it is crucial to recognize the limitations of this research. While focusing on the protagonist's journey and analyzing the evolution of her perspective, this study may have overlooked the impact of other characters, particularly Mrs. Elm, who serves as a crucial figure in Nora's transformative journey as a companion, friend, and guide. Additionally, due to the constrained scope of this article, this study has only scratched the surface of several dimensions of Self-love. Future research could broaden its scope to offer a more thorough understanding of the character's psyche and development.

References

- Bazimaziki, G., Mukadisi, F., & Twahirwa, J. B. (2019). Acquired human violence and Taught Humanhood in South African fiction: A perspectivism of the protagonists in Alex la Guma's *A Walk in the Night* and Peter Abrahams' *Mine Boy*. *Asian Journal of Language, Literature and Culture Studies*, 2(2), 1-5.
- Campbell, J. D., Trapnell, P. D., Heine, S. J., Katz, I. M., Lavallee, L. F., & Lehman, D. R. (1996). Self-concept clarity: Measurement, personality correlates, and cultural boundaries. *Journal of personality and social psychology*, 70(1), 141.
- Carter, J., Clarke, M. T., Halpern, F., Mason, D., Nicol, J., & Vanek, M. (2022). Too Close for Context: Where Students Get Stuck When Close Reading. *Pedagogy*, 22(3), 349-371.

- Coblenz, M. (2009). Not for Entertainment Only: Fair use and fiction as social commentary. *UCLA Entertainment Law Review*, 16(2). <https://doi.org/10.5070/lr8162027127>
- Cosley, B. J., McCoy, S. K., Saslow, L. R., & Epel, E. S. (2010). Is compassion for others stress buffering? Consequences of compassion and social support for physiological reactivity to stress. *Journal of experimental social psychology*, 46(5), 816-823.
- Crocetti, E., Rubini, M., Branje, S., Koot, H. M., & Meeus, W. (2016). Self-concept clarity in adolescents and parents: A six-wave longitudinal and multi-informant study on development and intergenerational transmission. *Journal of personality*, 84(5), 580-593.
- Culler, J. (1997). *Literary Theory: A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford University Press.
- Fromm, E. (2013). *The art of loving*. Open Road Media.
- Gabriel, B. (2021). Exploring the function of literature in the light of Mandela's Long Walk to freedom. *International Journal of English Literature and Social Sciences*, 6(1), 185-189. <https://doi.org/10.22161/ijels.61.21>
- Gautam, S. (2014). Can Literature be used as a Source on Changing Social Scenario. In *the 6th National Conference on Innovative Approaches in Management, Law and Social Sciences for Sustainable Growth and Development at Manav Bharti University, Solan, Himachal Pradesh*.
- Goleman, D. (1995). *Emotional intelligence*. New York: Bantam Books.
- Haig, M. (2020). *The Midnight Library*. Penguin.
- Hébert, L. (2022). *Introduction to Literary Analysis: A Complete Methodology*. Routledge.
- Henschke, E., (2022). *Reconsidering self-love: Development of a model and a questionnaire for measuring a controversial construct* (Doctoral Dissertation). University of Chemnitz.
- Hernadi, P. (2002). Why is literature: A coevolutionary perspective on imaginative worldmaking. *Poetics today*, 23(1), 21-42.
- Hynes, S. (2020). *On war and writing*. University of Chicago Press.
- Ihueze, O. (2015). Folklore in literature: A tool for culture preservation and entertainment. *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science Invention*, 4(4), 57-61.
- Irvani, S. (2007). *Authentic self-love as a healing phenomenon in systemic, relational psychotherapy*. ProQuest.
- Jayakumar, A., Rao, V., Kumar, A. R., Banerjee, P., & Ravish, R. (2022). Analyzing the development of complex social systems of characters in a work of literary fiction. In *2022 3rd International Conference for Emerging Technology (INCET)* (pp. 1-7). IEEE.
- Levey, E. K., Garandeau, C. F., Meeus, W., & Branje, S. (2019). The longitudinal role of self-concept clarity and best friend delinquency in adolescent delinquent behavior. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*, 48, 1068-1081.
- McGonigal, K. (2013). *The willpower instinct: How self-control works, why it matters, and what you can do to get more of it*. Penguin.
- McKee, A. (2003). *Textual analysis: a beginner's guide*. Sage Publications.
- Meyer, J. (1997). What Is Literature? A Definition Based on Prototypes. *Work Papers of the Summer Institute of Linguistics, University of North Dakota Session*, 41(1), 1-10. <https://doi.org/10.31356/silwp.vol41.03>
- Oatley, K. (2017). Art as emotional exploration. *Behavioral and Brain Sciences*, 40, 37-38.
- Orbanic, S. D. (2001). *A phenomenological study of self-love in women's experiences healing from bulimia*. University of Connecticut.
- Patrick, D. R. (1982). *Self-love: Toward a conceptual and operational definition*. Northwestern University.
- Posavac, S. S., & Posavac, H. D. (2020). Adult separation anxiety disorder symptomology as a risk factor for thin-ideal internalization: The role of self-concept clarity. *Psychological reports*, 123(3), 674-686.
- Puolakka, K. (2022). Learning from literary experience. *Journal of Aesthetic Education*, 56(1), 56-73.
- Rakhmanina, L., Melati, M., & Haimah, H. (2021). Analysis of Educational Values in Tere Liye's 'Hujan' Novel as Literary Teaching Materials in High School. *Edu-Ling: Journal of English Education and Linguistics*, 5(1), 65-72.
- Reivich, K., & Shatté, A. (2002). *The resilience factor: 7 essential skills for overcoming life's inevitable obstacles*. Broadway books.

- Solimar, V. (1987). *The nature and experience of self-love*. ProQuest Information & Learning.
- Stecker, R. (1996). What is literature? *Revue Internationale de Philosophie*, 50(198), 681–694.
- Tulaganova, S. P. (2022). Artistic structure of the text. *The American Journal of Social Science and Education Innovations*, 4(12), 5-11.
- Vadjed Samiei, M. (2015). *An exploration of the concepts of self-love and inner peace and their interrelationships*. ProQuest.
- Van, B. T., & Whitehead, S. (2024). *Self-Love for Women: Overcoming Toxic Femininity and Suffering*. Acorn Books.
- Vorderer, P., & Roth, F. S. (2011). How do we entertain ourselves with literary texts?. *Scientific Study of Literature*, 1(1), 136-143.
- Xiang, G., Li, Q., Du, X., Liu, X., Liu, Y., & Chen, H. (2022). Knowing who you are: neural correlates of self-concept clarity and happiness. *Neuroscience*, 490, 264-274.