

## ANALYZING THE MULTI-NARRATIVE AND BIOPIC SLANTS IN JODI PICOULT'S *MY SISTER'S KEEPER*

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### Abstract

This research explores the connections between decision, mental health, and emotional well-being. The relationship between Anna and Sara Fitzgerald in Jodi Picoult's novel *My Sister's Keeper* presents a unique view of psychoanalytic themes. This analysis helps elucidate the psychological conflict of the protagonists, integrating Freudian theory with close readings of the text derived from both literary and psychoanalytic criticism. In the story of *My Sister's Keeper*, by Jodi Picoult, Kate's parents conceived a child through genetic engineering, to be a donor for their elder daughter Kate. Anna was that unlucky child who had endured numerous medical procedures to support Kate's battle against leukemia. In Jodi Picoult's *My Sister's Keeper*, the author provides insight into the inner lives of each family member like Sara's dedication to saving Kate's life, Brian's ethical consequences of choices, Jesse's struggles to face guilt and shame, and Anna's concern about the possession of her body. This novel *My Sister's Keeper* by Jodi Picoult, basically comprises fundamental questions about medical ethics, genetic engineering as well as human rights. Ultimately, *My Sister's Keeper* is a powerful exploration of human nature through its well-crafted characters, moral dilemmas, and several thought-provoking themes.

**Keywords:** Psychoanalytical, Values, Society, Prejudices, Freedom, Attention.

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## INTRODUCTION

Literature mirrors the norms, values, and attitudes of society. Literature invites readers to inhabit complex worlds filled with diverse characters, challenging us to be more empathetic, understanding, and accepting of the humanity and needs of others regardless of how different they may seem (Amjad et al., 2021; Ahmad et al., 2022; Ramzan et al., 2025, 2023). Through examining human complexities, literature invites the reader to encounter their own biases and prejudices. In the novel, *My Sister's Keeper*, by Jodi Picoult, a middle-class family's fights are a bit more complicated and interesting. Carrey's multi-narrative approach in the novel offers a rich tapestry of perspectives, leading readers to contemplate their moral compass. As the story sideways unfolds for the Fitzgerald family, through the eyes of different characters, the truth of the matter becomes more complicated the ways of us, of us humans, are so tangled, so complex. In *My Sister's Keeper*, for example, Jodi Picoult uses a unique narrative style in which multiple first-person perspectives are introduced. It gives us an intimate insight into each character's inner life through their thoughts, feelings, and motives. The narrative for Anna, for example, reveals her feigned mental health issues as a cry for freedom and attention. As the story unfolds between toggling narratives, readers gain a nuanced understanding of the emotional turmoil each family member is facing as they try to cope with Kate's illness.

“It's about a girl who is on the cusp of becoming someone...A girl who may not know what she wants right now, and she May not know who she is right now, but who deserves the chance to find out.” (MSK175)

The biographic approach enhances intimacy, immersing readers in the electrons that orbit the characters' dark nuclei. The art of moving from one narrator to another is Picoult's domain and she does so with finesse, deftly demonstrating the complications of feeling, lending the reader the ability to walk in the characters' shoes when experiencing their real-life scenarios. Individual characterization and the first-person narrative voice in *My Sister's Keeper* help to create an intimate bond between readers and the various characters, shedding light on a nuanced exploration of the character's inner worlds. By walking around in Sara's shoes, for example, readers can intimately appreciate her maternal devotion to Kate and the emotional complications that ensue. The narrative framework adds a layer of humanity to the characters, making them less plot devices and more relatable, multidimensional people. As the plot develops, the first person allows further insights into emotion from the reader, leading to an emotional investment that enriches the experience.

*My Sister's Keeper* by Jodi Picoult focuses on Anna's search for bodily autonomy. Following Kate's osteoporosis diagnosis, Anna went through various surgeries to help her sister's treatment. Even though Anna's parents weren't sure she should donate a kidney, Anna felt compelled to do so to save Kate's life. In an even greater turntable, Kate ultimately convinced Anna to fight for medical emancipation that would allow her to reclaim ownership of her own body. Anna felt emotionally overwhelmed with her love for Kate and her need to feel in control of her destiny, leading to severe emotional distress that derailed her mental health.

Jodi Picoult, *My Sister's Keeper*, because I'm intrigued by the psychological aspect of the story. The novel's portrait of the protagonist's relentless ambition strikes a chord. “The process of changing patterns in his life brings physical difficulty and psychological torture” (Zubair, 2021). The author writes on a personal note that what attracts her to the book, which portrays Anna and Sara's struggles with mental health,

causes her to worry about what that could mean for her own family. The author's emphasis on Sara and Anna makes complete sense, however, with Sara's kaleidoscopic nature providing ample material for dissection. Additionally, *My Sister's Keeper* provides a lens through which to view other urgent US social problems, such as eugenics. According to the critical theory, family is an important aspect of human growth that determines his or her identity and relationships (Khanam et al., 2022). These family experiences, particularly around who we are and how we are understood or responded to, have what is referred to as an unconscious-based impact.

The author performs a thorough literature review, integrating and differentiating the publications that describe studies pertinent to the research question. Somewhat surprisingly, students have given little attention to this academic field. The only notable exception is a 2001 study by Francisca Theny Englina from Petra Christian University, which interrogates Jim's mental unease in Joseph Conrad's *Lord Jim*. In Englina's original research, he offers what he hopes is a painstaking analysis of Jim's mental well-being, analyzing the interaction of internal conflict with external influences to shed light on his psychological nuances. This integrated method enables a deeper understanding of the complexities of Jim's character.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Noteworthy literary analyses include: "Literature and Psychoanalysis" and "Freudian Psychoanalysis beyond the Id, Ego, and Superego. Nur Afifah (2004) did a psychological analysis of Ashley Patterson in Sydney Sheldon: *Tell Me Your Dreams*. Her research work followed psychological analysis and the building up of multi-personality disorder (MPD), relating closely to this book's theme. The first one, Ashley Patterson's personality type, is based on her response to the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator and the Big Five Inventory; the second one, psychological characteristics of heroes, is based on characteristics of Scott Pilgrim, a character used in the film as a representative of the main characters. It indicates that the novel is a mirror of Ashley's emotional heart. Ashley exemplifies the trauma, stress, emotion, and anxiety undergone by the individual with MPD, and serves as a case study. It shows the mind of the character and offers a glimpse into how MPD works.

Psychological themes in literature have also been studied by Petra Christian University students. In 2001, Francisca Theny Englina focused on Jim's psychological problems in Joseph Conrad's *Lord Jim*. Analysis of Jim's mental health problems, that made him unable to become the perfect hero he strived to be, and possible treatments. The best example of this in literature is *Lord Jim* with him showing how a protagonist has a mental illness and how it can affect your goals and aspirations.

In this passage, a close analysis of Jim's mental health issues further illuminates the reasons behind these behaviors as well as potential solutions. The research is placed in a literary and psychological analysis literate framework touching a variety of themes e.g. anxiety; unconscious mind; etc. This is evidence that although Jim is flawed, he is courageous and willing to sacrifice himself for the things he believes in. Meliana Triawati reprises the subject, but now the novel's protagonists: are Mikage Sakurai, Yuichi Tanabe, and his mother, Eriko. Her analysis will examine their complexities, their ever-changing dynamic that propels the narrative forward.

## RESEARCH SIGNIFICANCE

This study intends to contribute to the existing corpus of theoretical and practical insights within literature studies, enabling the advancement of psychological literary

criticism. Its implications will be useful to scholars interested in both of these perspectives, and it will be an excellent springboard for future enterprise and discovery.

## RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

- To analyze the psychological dynamics between Sara and Anna in *My Sister's Keeper*, delving into their subconscious motivations, desires, and conflicts.
- To understand the underlying forces that drive their psychological distress and transformation.
- To use Freudian Psychoanalytic Theory Signs-Ideas, an analysis of Sara and Anna's unconscious thoughts, and ideas and explains how those unconscious thoughts, desires, and conflict drive Sara and Anna's behaviors, feelings, and relationships in *My Sister's Keeper*.

## RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- I. How does Anna's role as a donor impact her own life and her sense of identity?
- II. How is it ethically right to prioritize one child's life over another?
- III. How does Sara's unwavering dedication to saving Kate's life affect her relationship with other family members?
- IV. How does the character of Kate illustrate the complexities of living with a serious illness?
- V. How does the novel portray the complexities of the relationship between family members?

## THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

A study carried out in 2007 by Chris Andre Susanto from Petra Christian University honed in on the psyche of the captain. His analysis found a complex figure tormented by obsessions, fears, and a disconnect from reality. Whereas the latter, Strindberg's "The Father," remains a landmark piece of theatre in the naturalistic tradition with a profound impact on literary canon. Psychoanalysis teaches that people often do not realize how the world around them is affecting their emotional world. Unhappiness can show up as unhealthy habits, toxic relationships, and mood disturbances. In Sigmund Freud's watershed essay *An Outline of Psychoanalysis* (1949), the auteur distilled the axioms of psychoanalytic thought. So, Freud identifies three driving forces in the human mind: the id, ego, and superego. The id, which is the unconscious in psychoanalysis, is made up of the innate impulses and desires that are existent from birth. While the id is the unconscious part of the mind, the ego is its conscious part, containing external stimuli, regulating the id, and mediating with the outside world. The very nature of the ego is to react to stimuli, pursue pleasure, and avert pain.

## RESEARCH METHOD

For this analysis, a systematic approach has been adopted to produce a robust academic result. Therefore, this part of the thesis introduces the research design, methods of data collection, methods of analysis, and a glossary of important terms.

## RESEARCH DESIGN

This investigation intends to perform a deep scrutiny of literary institutions with the inquiry of literature being the utilization of literary criticism for text as well as a general idea scrutiny. Literary criticism ranges from short book reviews to expansive theoretical interpretations (Crews, 2013). This is a practice born of collective literary engagement, a pedagogical approach to making sense of literature. Critics may evaluate the work and its merit, detail their reading of the text, or share historical or biographical background,

ultimately increasing the audience's knowledge of the text. (Hale, 2014; Li & Akram, 2023, 2024; Ramzan et al., 2020, 2021)

Furthermore, using Freudian analysis, this paper will explore how the id, ego, and superego influence Anna and Sara's character in Jodi Picoult's *My Sister's Keeper*. The author builds Anna and Sara's dilemma page by page using a non-linear narrative. In illustrating the different workings of the id, ego, and superego in the characters' struggles, the author focuses on these two integral figures, as they dictate much of what is pursued in real life from the dynamic of the story. This study is divided into three sections focusing on Anna's and Sara's id, ego, and superego respectively.

In literary criticism, which includes the study of the text and several themes of ideas. Literary criticism can take many forms, anything from simply a short book review to a longer theoretical paper (Crews, 2013). This practice comes from literary analysis as a community of practice and is a tool for interpreting literature. Critics can appraise the worth of a work, elucidate their interpretation, or give historical or biographical context, eventually deepening readers' comprehension of the text (Hale, 2014). This section details the author's observations regarding Anna and Sara Fitzgerald regarding the psychological components of *My Sister's Keeper*. This research seeks to offer a functional frame to scrutinize literary works.

The main objectives of the study are clearly stated and provide a clear road-map for when designing the research plan. Based on Jodi Picoult's *Sister's Keeper*, this study uses psychoanalytic theory to explore the novel. The author also explores the psychological toll of Anna's relationships with friends and family. The analysis is based on Sigmund Freud's theory of personality, which breaks down ideas into three categories: id, ego, and superego. Psychological interpretation, a literary criticism, is used to discuss the unconscious drive, the ego, and the superego. This exploration brushes against extinct identities, professions, and languages. Considering this discussion, the author holds that literary research that has been termed "psychological" is pertinent to this inquiry.

## **TEXTUAL ANALYSIS**

The novel we are using as the source of our research is Jodi Picoult's *My Sister's Keeper*. The analysis draws on the language, dialogue, and narrative devices employed by the characters and author in the book passages. *My Sister's Keeper*, published in 2004 by Atria Books, is 500 pages long, divided into 55 chapters. Its methodology is to read everything carefully, often more than once to ensure full comprehension. After achieving a solid theoretical basis, the next stage of data collection revolves around character actions. Important data is highlighted to ensure vital information is not lost. You may repeat this iterative data collection process until sufficient and relevant data is collected. This research shall explore the characters and events in Jodi Picoult's *My Sister's Keeper* to discuss the effects of the id, ego, and superego on Anna and Sara's personalities. Using a non-linear structure, with the narrative unfolding gradually page by page, the author unearths the complexities surrounding Anna and Sara. To shed light on the id, ego, and superego manifested in the characters' struggles, the author deliberately concentrates on the two previously discussed major characters, whose arcs are crucial to the plot's thematic nexus. This study is divided into three parts, analyzing Anna and Sara's id, ego, and superego respectively.

## **MY SISTER'S KEEPER AND FREUD'S PSYCHOANALYSIS**

The characters from Jodi Picoult's *My Sister's Keeper* struggle with anxiety, mental health, and social interaction fears. The author's data analysis also focuses on protagonists and

antagonists whose turbulent inner lives meet the criteria for Freudian psychoanalytic inquiry. The characters' traumatic and grief-stricken fates provide ideal subjects for elucidating the psychoanalytic theories.

## **EVALUATION OF ANNA AND SARA'S ID EGO SUPEREGO CHALLENGES**

Jodi Picoult's *My Sister's Keeper* is packed with symbolism. The cover of the book illustrates a family unit and is symbolic of the longing for this family bond that the characters display toward each other in the story. It is assumed that the characters must pursue this desire actively, which belies the importance of relationships in the story.

The main character Anna grows into a capable, confident young woman. Through it all, she becomes a dignified, graceful, courageous woman. Anna frequently resents the emotional weight her mother, Sara, places on her sister, Kate, that she isn't able to give to her. Anna, wanting her maternal love and attention, desires this validation. In addition, the novel also draws out the tensions of family relations in families where dynamics are challenging, especially between Sara, Anna, and Kate. Kate's care is constant, and that prompts a distance between Anna and her mother. The Id of Anna starts developing when she begins to prioritize Kate over her needs, demonstrating her self-sacrificial tendency. Though Anna wishes for more attention, she likes it when Sara occasionally praises her like when she helps make dinner because her ego thrives on praise. The novel examines the complexities of family relationships, love, and sacrifice, provocatively questioning the nature of motherly love and the impact of prioritizing one child's needs over another.

## **COMPARISON OF THE EGOS OF ANNA AND SARA**

Anna is creating a nice environment in her idealized world as a way of coping. Born of a medical emergency, Anna was who had a pivotal role to play in her sibling's life. What makes it all work is how well she builds her character around the unique interactions between her and her family, the idea of self-made people, and how much of who we all are is influenced by the people around us. This story is about ego, and how our personal stories can interfere with relationships, even in the best of circumstances. The nature of Sara and Anna in the story is a marker of their dynamic, with physical distance mirroring the disintegration of their friendship. The narrative explores how ego-shattering it is for people who dare to be human. Anna is pursued, and her ego expands greatly. Based on her own experiences, she goes to a pawn shop, where she meets a strange man who looks a bit different. As Anna considers selling a beloved locket, she is hit with the realization that she isn't the first person to stand at that counter, ready to part with a treasured possession. The locket, which symbolizes Anna's past, has sentimental value. Those words, delivered by her father when she was six, refer to the possibility of survival by donating bone marrow. It captures Anna's importance in her sibling's life and vice versa. When Anna looks at the locket, sitting on the counter, she feels a stinging on her neck. The owner the locket through a loop, his strange eyes almost seeming normal for a minute. He gives Anna \$20, which she thinks is shockingly small. It is not until after an awkward pause that Anna accepts, half-hearted, her palm still curling about the locket as though allowing it to slip from her grasp would somehow cause it to disappear. As she passes the locket, Anna's face gets all pink, and the owner now looks at her. He provides some advice, advising that she should just say the locket was lost. It is precisely this kind of ego of Anna that one sees in this encounter, one that clings to the locket, unwilling to let go. "Sometimes to get what you want the most, you have to do what you want the least." (MSK 186)

Sara admires Anna's nerve s when she does ask her mom for something. Sara then declares that she will never love Anna again, which makes their sibling rivalry all the more obvious. Their clashing egos frequently cause them to clash. For Sara to see what is happening, she needs Anna to be there. Sara tells Anna that Kate will make it, and Anna thinks that Kate is hardly ever alone, with their parents doing their best to create a foundation of normalcy in her life.

We next meet Vern Stackhouse, a family friend who works in law enforcement with Anna's dad. Vern's bumbling manner is almost tangible as he tries to break the news gently. He hands Sara legal paperwork, leaving Anna shocked and wondering whether she can sue. Anna's father's job, which often involves dealing with emergencies, adds another layer to the family dynamics. Jesse explains that when Kate's diagnosis went off, her father's pager, as well, which leads to a very tense conversation between Sara and Anna's pop.

As the situation escalates, Anna's mother tells her to dispose of Vern, and Anna's father demands that Sara and Anna wake up. Anna begins a tense and emotionally charged conversation, wanting the chance to explain herself. Anna's father, hands warm and firm, clutches her shoulders. When he leans down, Anna smells smoke, a token of his courage for challenging danger headfirst. Anna's shame is less because of her father's actions than because he has stepped into an inferno ignited by others. Feel the rage echoing in Brian's voice, Anna's eyes open wider in shock. Though she expected this course of events, Anna's determination starts to falter. Wiping her eyes with the back of her hand, Anna raises her chin defiantly and says, "Father, I can't. It is the things you cannot see coming towards you that are strong enough to kill you" (MSK198)

Sara's response is immediate and visceral, her voice breaking with emotion. "Anna, dear God, do you know what the consequences would be?" Anna is not ready for her mother's wildfire lunge, and Sara's palm connects with Anna's cheek, a jolt that stumbles her. How will Anna forget what Sara has inflicted on her, what presence she has become in her life, a constant feeling of shame, and doubt? Those five fingers will stay in memory, a testament to the love that can't be ignored a powerful reminder of the emotions that have played out. "The bottom line is that we never fall for the people we're supposed to." (Jodi Picoult)

## **PROBLEMS OF ANNA'S SUPEREGO VS. KATE'S SUPEREGO**

When their sibling arrived, the relationship between Anna and Kate deepened. They spent time laughing, telling stories, and supporting each other, which solidified a strong bond between them. As they grew, their ids did take hold at times, although their egos were somewhat satiated. Anna grew up to be a more independent young woman than Kate. Ironically, Kate got more attention and affection, which Anna sometimes resented. Anna wanted her mother's approval and love but it wasn't to the extreme that it was with Kate.

" I wondered what happened when you offered yourself to someone, And they opened you, only to discover you were not the gift they expected, And they had to smile and nod and say thank you all the same." (MSK231)

Kate received an abundance of love and affection truly -- no doubt that whatever space she was in was filled with universal love, but truthfully, even more than if she were healthy. Unlike them, Anna felt ignored and undervalued. Now Kate could not help but wonder if anyone would care about her had she not given a kidney to save Kate's life. Anna decides to reach out for legal advice rather than medical, a measure of her mental health at this moment in time. On the other hand, her superego constantly reminds her of her human

condition, sowing feelings of guilt and self-doubt. As she struggles, Anna understands that her actions are unacceptable: when Kate says that Anna has to fight, fight, and hide to survive, Anna knows that she is right. This internal struggle mirrors the conflict between Anna's id and superego. In the end, Anna's superego wins out, and she learns to accept Kate's safety. It describes the loss as a catalyst for Anna to grow up, to take back the name that is hers as a young woman, a daughter. Anna achieves resolution and redemption through this transformative experience.

## CONCLUSION

To pen it off, Anna and Sara have a unique psychological dynamic, shaped by their Id, Ego, and Superego. And when they must choose between these competing forces, this tension creates extreme stress. Anna's Id is motivated by seeking pleasure, which makes it difficult to rationalize giving up a kidney for her sister. Ultimately, she ends up suing her mother, Sara, for medical emancipation, led by her ego and reality principle. Motivations behind this decision involve Anna's desire to feel in control of her body and a resounding aversion to suffering. Anna's Superego: As Kate's health deteriorates, Anna feels guilty and torn. Sara says that Anna's actions are both morally wrong and possibly will take Kate's life. The book explores the complexities of humanity, showing how instincts to nurture, the effect of genetic manipulation, and a need for control can all impact choices. This psychoanalytical exploration of Anna and Sara's characters shows how prevalent conscious and unconscious aspects are crucial to the masters of human personality, behavior, and cognition. This approach helps authors write more complex personalities in their literary works.

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