

The Representation of Literacy as Individualism in Greta Gerwig's *Little Women* (2019)

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Highlights

- Literacy can be expressed in a variety of ways, one of which is individualism.
- Jo March's depiction of literacy as individualism conveys significant effects on her attitude towards literacy, which then shapes her quirky personality and highlights her individualism.

ABSTRACT: Literacy practice describes how people interact with text or use written language according to their values. There are several ways to express literacy, one of which is literacy as individualism (William & Zenger, 2007, p. 127). It primarily focuses on individuals' uniqueness and how it alienates them from people in general. This theory is in line with Greta Gerwig's *Little Women* (2019), which features numerous events on literacy practices. The purpose of the study is to demonstrate how Jo March's individualism in Gerwig's *Little Women* (2019) is illustrated through literacy. The conceptual framework is based on the New Literacy Studies (NLS) perspective of literacy as a social practice as well as using Williams and Zenger's (2007, p. 127) theory of literacy as individualism. This study aims to illustrate how Jo March represents literacy as individualism. The study's conclusions ultimately show that Jo March's individualism can be reflected through literacy under her routines of reading books, writing short stories, composing a novel, and writing letters as well as receiving letters from her family in the film.

Keywords: new literacy studies; literacy practices; individualism

Introduction

"Women, they have minds and they have souls as well as just hearts, they have got ambition and they have got talent as well as beauty and I'm so sick of people saying that love is all a woman is fit for, I'm so sick of it. But I am so lonely." (Gerwig, 2019, p. 100).

The quote above is a memorable line from Jo March in *Little Women* (2019) which refers to her loneliness while pursuing her ambition as a professional author. This prominent line accentuates the discussion of the majority of films about authors or any type of creative writers. Instead of tying and unifying them to others, their writing act means setting them apart from their environment (Williams & Zenger, 2007, p. 165). Based on this viewpoint, literacy can reveal significant individual traits. This relates to the theory of literacy as individualism which refers to Williams and Zenger's (2007, p. 128) statement that literacy can also highlight the exclusivity of individuals and instead isolate them from most people.

Literacy practice refers to a wider understanding of what humans engage with it (Literacy & Al, 2010). Literacy which includes the act of writing and composing in the tradition of romantic individualism is an internal and solitary action that is driven by an inner intellectual rather than being a social act inspired by and propelled by social contact (William & Zenger, 2007, p. 128). According to this theory, literacy can appear in numerous forms, one of which is literacy as individualism. This theory comes into sight in Williams and Zenger's (2007, p.

127) *Popular Culture and Representation of Literacy* which stated that literacy as individualism can primarily focus on certain individuals' uniqueness. Also, their writing behaviour tends to separate them from their environment and most people. It will also highlight the author's odd, peculiar, and unexpected behaviours.

The discussion of literacy as individualism is in line with the film titled *Little Women* (2019). It is a film directed by Greta Gerwig based on the widely known 1868 novel of the same name written by Louisa May Alcott. The American coming-of-age period drama film, *Little Women* (2019), focuses on the life of five siblings named Meg, Jo, Beth, and Amy. Focusing on Josephine March, widely known as Jo, is an intelligent, strong-minded and independent woman who is predominantly characterised by her overflowing passion for her solitary act of writing. This prominent characterisation of Jo March conveys that literacy practice has been there in Jo's character and it is represented well by Gerwig on the big screen with her directing style.

Literacy which represents the individualism of an author can be seen in portraying the misunderstood eccentric playwright in *Barton Fink* (1991) or the dangerously obsessive killer named Jack Torrance in *The Shining* (1980). Instead of being a tool to help them connect with others, literacy instead isolates them, emphasises their individualism, and leads them towards the disposition of their personality. Whatever their characteristics, they are simply not like the rest of ordinary people, exactly like *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas* (1998), *Sylvia* (2003), and *Finding Neverland* (2004). But this does not mean that individualism possesses negative traits only. It is just as simple as they are being portrayed differently than the rest of the mainstream people.

The term "individualism" is often misunderstood as known as egoism or the tendency to exclusively think for oneself. In contrast to American individualism, this concept is significantly different. Individualism is a type of political and social philosophy that places a high value on personal freedom, self-control, and freedom from external pressure on oneself or others (Lukes, 2020). Other than that, individualism, according to Emerson (1999), is the belief that what is true for you in your own heart is true for all people and this is what genius reflects. As a result, one must have faith in others to act in their best interests and acknowledge that every one of us is accountable for our actions. Based on the theory above, Jo March's overall values and quality traits align with the concept of individualism. These characteristics can be seen in her attitude and character. She is portrayed as a woman with individualistic traits because she believes in her freedom, strives for her dream, sticks to her values and passion, and is responsible for the decision she makes eventually. Thus, the most effective framework to unveil Jo March's individualism is by employing New Literacy Studies specifically the theory of Literacy as Individualism by William and Zenger (2007, p. 127) as a tool to analyse Jo March's individualism.

The discipline of New Literacy Studies is preoccupied with literacy as a social activity to gain a thorough understanding of it (Street, 2003). It aims to comprehend the changing nature of literacy in the modern world. New Literacy Studies emphasises the importance of considering the social and cultural settings in which literacy practises occur, as well as recognising the intricacies of literacy practises in many situations. It emphasises that literacy

is both a cognitive and a social activity that is affected by the society and setting in which it occurs (Barton & Hamilton, 1998). Discussing New Literacy Studies cannot be separated from the term literacy practices and events. How people use written language in daily life is referred to as literacy practice. These behaviours cannot be simplified into behaviours that are observable since they encompass the values, attitudes, feelings, desirability, and social interactions of a person towards literacy (Barton & Hamilton, 1998). The terminology “literacy events” refers to the activities where literacy has a part frequently involving written text, integral to the activity, and there may be discourse about the text, according to Barton and Hamilton (1998) in their book *Local Literacies: Reading and Writing in One Community*.

Jo's literacy practices include her solitary act of writing when she is composing her novel and other activities that involve feeling and sentiment particularly when it comes to text. These behaviours can be observed through the literacy events illustrated in the film every time Jo March engages with text. Moreover, this study will examine Jo's individualism by using the theory of literacy practice as individualism by William and Zenger (2007, p. 127) in Greta Gerwig's *Little Women* (2019). There have been several previous studies that employed new literacy studies to evaluate literacy behaviours in literary work. The first previous study that employed NLS as guidance to analyse how literacy is depicted more as a danger and threat than strength and power is discussed in *The Representation of Literacy as Power and Danger in J.K. Rowling's Harry Potter and the Half-blood Prince* by Maghfiroh (2016). She concluded so because more characters deem literacy as a threat than as a strength or power in a noble way.

The next prior study conducted by Asmaradhani and Retnaningdyah (2018), literacy practices help women speak out against racial discrimination in their research article entitled *Women's Voice through Literacy Practices in Kathryn Stockett's "The Help"*. Besides, the previous research by Putri and Retnaningdyah (2018) discussing Matilda's literacy practice in Roald Dahl's *Matilda* concluded that literacy is fundamental to Matilda for three major reasons. It serves as escape, power, and pleasure.

Ultimately, Octavia's (2016) prior research on *The Representation of Literacy as Self-Improvement in Betty Smith's A Tree Grows in Brooklyn* (2016) analysed how literacy is depicted as a tool for self-improvement in *A Tree Grows in Brooklyn*. She argues literacy may take numerous forms and be utilised to accomplish an extent of goals, one of which is self-improvement through a literacy activity like reading a newspaper. Additionally, the portrayal of literacy as self-improvement and how reading activity alters Francie's identity were the result of the study.

Meanwhile, *Little Women* (2019) film adaptation has been widely studied in the academic sphere employing a variety of theoretical frameworks. Most of them were using the feminist approach. The first study conducted by Indriani (2021), utilising a feminist approach, is entitled *Independent Woman Portrayed in Jo March in Little Women Movie (2019): A Feminist Approach*. This study revealed the feminist values in Jo March's personality. Based on the discussion, results, and findings, she drew two conclusions. The first is the depiction of four different types of independence in Jo March's character, namely independence in society, education, economy, and workplace. Second, Jo March's character represents feminism by challenging the patriarchal system, emancipating women, and shattering stereotypes about

women. Also, prior research by Septiana (2020) has also explored the feminist quality of Jo March's character to the ideals of liberal feminism by discussing gender stereotypes and feminism. In addition, a research entitled *Overcoming Social Conflict in the Movie Little Women (2019): A Sociological Approach* examined by Setyabudi and Laili (2022) identified the kinds and useful purposes of social conflict in the film using a sociological perspective.

The following prior study is entitled *The Fight Against Gender Inequality in Greta Gerwig's Little Women Movie Script Revealed by The Women Characters* by Liebertus (2021). This research explores the gender inequality that the March family's female members faced and how they responded to it. In this study, there are two goals. To be the first to understand how the female characters feel about gender injustice. The second is how women confront gender inequality. She analyzes the data using a feminist approach, specifically liberal feminism theory. The study's findings indicate two things. The first one illustrates the gender discrimination that the March family's female characters deal with. Based on the research, it is concluded that women are expected to be delicate, feminine, and married. The March family's efforts to fight gender inequality are the second finding. It demonstrates that women are capable of being self-sufficient and earning a good livelihood without the help of men or marriage.

Little Women (2019) might be a well-known literary work that has been analysed numerous times using various disciplines to discuss it. However, there has not yet been any scholar that utilises New Literacy Studies (NLS) as a theoretical approach particularly using the theory of literacy as individualism by William and Zenger (2007, p. 127) in *Little Women (2019)*. As a result, this study assesses literacy events performed by Jo March in Greta Gerwig's *Little Women (2019)* by employing the New Literacy Studies (NLS) as a theoretical framework. The Author also utilises the theory of literacy as individualism by William and Zenger (2007, p. 127) as the main theory to reveal whether literacy represents Jo March's individualism. Furthermore, the writer will evaluate Jo's activities of engaging with text such as reading a book, writing a letter, and also composing her novel to analyse whether literacy can represent the individualism of Jo March.

Method

The research methodology in this study is through the processes of data sources, data collection methods, and data analysis. Since this study analyses the main character's individualism through literacy, the author will compile and scrutinise both literacy practice and events in the film by the guidance of New Literacy Studies (NLS). It views literacy as a social practice which is in line with the analysis of literacy as individualism in Gerwig's *Little Women (2019)*. It also gives a fresh perspective on literacy, one that considers all of its potential applications rather than just a set of reading and writing skills. Thus, the source of the data for this study is Gerwig's film adaptation of *Little Women*.

The steps to collect the data are started by closely watching the film *Little Women (2019)* several times, critically and closely reading the whole script in pdf version, and then collecting and subsequently classifying the data, including literacy-related activities performed by Jo March following the theory applied to data analysis in the main data as well as the literacy-related activity that highlights Jo March's individualism for limitation. Accordingly,

illustrations of the scenes or snapshots of the film scenes and quotations from the film taken from the script of Gerwig's *Little Women* (2019) related to literacy and individualism are identified and then examined.

The steps to analyse the data are as follows: the first step is to analyse Gerwig's *Little Women* (2019) depiction of Jo while she is doing literacy events. This can be done by thoroughly watching the film and closely reading the script in the form of a pdf to understand the film, and then correlating the main data with the chosen theory from the books or other journal articles. The second step is analysing Jo March's literacy events by using the theory of literacy practice as individualism by William and Zenger (2007, p. 127) with the New Literacy Studies conceptual framework in the discussion section to depict Jo March's literacy practice as individualism. The third step is answering the statement problem of whether literacy can represent Jo March's individualism and then concluding.

Findings

Literacy Events Depicted in the Film

In this part of the analysis, The Author will demonstrate how literacy can depict Jo March's individualism in Gerwig's *Little Women* (2019). Elicit from the theory proposed by Barton and Hamilton (1998) that literacy practice refers to what people do when engaging with literacy, or how people apply written language in their value system, Jo March illustrates how she performs literacy practice through her activities of engaging with a text. Her repetition of this activity is a literacy event that will be analysed further by The Author. Analysing Jo March Literacy events can be done by selecting the activity which is repetitively performed by Jo March every time she engages with texts.

Jo March is depicted as an intense, unstoppable, and full of spirits young lady who loves to write fiction. She often writes letters, short stories, and plays and is working on a novel. It is apparent from this narration from *Little Women* (2019)'s script when Jo March writes pieces of the story dedicated to her father:

Jo, in her and Meg's room, places a pretty cover page on top of the novel she has written. She lovingly writes "For Father," and hears: (Gerwig, 2019, p. 49).

Writing activity cannot be separated from Jo March. She loves writing and the film demonstrates it apparently since it is emphasised in the first twenty minutes of *Little Women* (2019). Thus, such a depiction like having her fingers stained with ink is a familiar illustration in the film. Also being alone in a tough moment in life by pursuing her ambition to leave the countryside and making an impactful decision by going to New York is as well experienced by Jo March.



Fig. 1. Jo March's fingers are stained with ink because of writing (Gerwig, 2020, 0:02:19).

Jo March seeks a better career by working as a governess and writing a short story in a newspaper for getting extra money. Being alone in the attic while rereading and revising her writings has also emerged as a distinguishing trait that feeds her uniqueness of being an individual who has a strong will. Someone who has a strong will and is a free thinker and also responsible for their decision is the prominent quality of a true individualist.

For the writer in the attic: Because you enjoyed the play so much tonight, I wanted you to have this. – Jo opens the book and almost greedily she begins to read, reciting the words to herself (Gerwig, 2019, p. 19).

Individualism is the act of being self-reliant and independent. Emerson (1999) defined individualism as the notion of what is true for one person in their heart is true for all people, and this is what brilliance represents. Therefore, one must have confidence in themselves and also people to act in their best interests and accept that each of us is responsible for our own actions. Jo March's character inevitably represents the value of individualism particularly observed from her characterisation in the film. A crucial aspect of individuality is personal accountability.

Individualists acknowledge personal responsibility for their acts. While some people deal with pride, others might also fail and there is nothing wrong with it. People handle problems or challenges in a variety of ways. Others find them to be intimidating, while some handle them with the confidence that they can find solutions. Jo March has consistently represented the quality of a true individualist through her actions. She refused Laurie's proposal and decided to go for her ambition and principles. She is certain that marriage is not for her and rejecting Laurie's proposal is the equitable decision she could make. It can be seen in one of Jo's dialogues below:

I can't say "Yes" truly so I won't say it at all. You'll see that I'm right, eventually, and you'll thank me for it. (Gerwig, 2019, p. 97).

Until the very last moment, her deepest heart never regrets this decision of turning down Laurie's proposal. Perhaps at one moment in life, she thinks that maybe she should not abruptly reject it but then when Marmee asked her whether she loves Laurie, Jo could not answer it. Her hesitation and body language have said that she never actually loves and has romantic feelings for Laurie.

Literacy as individualism

Williams and Zenger (2007, p. 128) claim that literacy as individualism can be scrutinised by focusing on an individual's uniqueness and when the act of literacy alienates them from society. In this section of the discussion, it will be shown how the activities carried out by the main character during her process of writing, reading, and creating her novel represent her individualism. Whether in the book or film, Jo March has always been distinguished for her idealistic mind and strong will of being a woman who possesses a quality such as rational thinking and perseverance in what she believes.



Fig. 2. One of the scenes where Jo March is writing alone (Gerwig, 2020, 0:18:13).

Jo March writes stories for her closest people and also for her own satisfaction. Often when she writes a story or a play, she will be performing that play along with her sisters. Her entire family has always trusted Jo in terms of being responsible for writing, specifically the play's script. Thus, she grows with this recognition, compliment and appraisal that she is a brilliant writer. This is reinforced by Beth's dialogue below:

BETH (marvelling at the pages) I don't see how you can write such splendid things, Jo! You're a regular Shakespeare. (Gerwig, 2019, p. 29).

This quality is common for illustrating a writer in a film with the theme of "Author" particularly in terms of romanticising individualism values. They must be eccentric, unique, odd, distant from the society they lived in and also have idiosyncratic minds.

Every time Jo writes or composes a story, she does it alone without the presence of someone else. When she composes anything including a story, novel or letter, she often does it alone in the attic without any disturbance from her three other sisters, Meg, Beth, and Amy. Though her home is illustrated as not that big with full of family members who seem impossible to be quiet to create a conducive environment for her to write, she is often depicted to have herself alone when it comes to writing.

It strengthens the discussion of the correlation between literacy and individualism and whether literacy can represent someone's individualism. The way Jo March has always been portrayed as an enthusiastic and unconquerable character who truly cares for her freedom through her writing emphasises her individualism under the activity of her literacy practice. It

can be seen that every time she has a really good time while doing her activity as a young lady who attends parties, goes to movie night, and theatres while spending time with her sister or Laurie, she constantly has the time exclusively for herself alone in her room to check on her writing because she values them more than anything.



Fig.3. Jo is alone in the attic every time she engages with her writings (Gerwig, 2020, 0:17:55).

Another prominent depiction of Jo March when she performs literacy events is when she is composing her novel entitled *Little Women*. She goes day and night focusing on writing on a pile of papers to compose the novel about her life. Since Mr Dashwood has accepted her draft with some changes, Jo needs to make the main character married at the end. The whole portrayal of Jo when she writes her novel and realises Mr Dashwood accepts her story, which is eventually published as a printed novel, enhances her individuality even more. It can be inferred from this narration below taken from the Script of *Little Women* (2019):

Jo starts awake - she looks around the room: she's all alone, and everyone is truly gone. She lights a candle. She goes to the drawer where she keeps her writing, and pulls out the stack. Jo makes her way up to the attic, and sits in her old writing chair, looking at the story. She takes a fresh sheet of paper and starts writing. She writes all night, and into the next day, piling up page after page. She spreads them out in the attic, like a quilt, building outwards. Candles are lit and re-lit, and the sun rises and sets (Gerwig, 2019, p. 106).

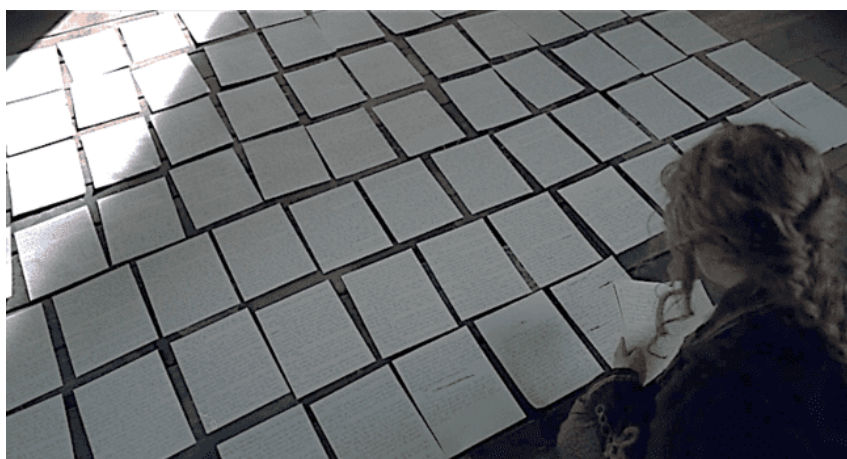


fig.4 Jo composes her novel alone in the attic (Gerwig, 2020, 1:53:17).

The scene above demonstrates that when Jo awakes, writing is among the first thoughts that come to her. Then she starts writing her novel as she eventually finds an epiphany about what kind of story and plot she should write. At this very moment, it appears as though she is writing with fingers that have a soul of their own. Moreover, the process of composing and creating the novel until those words are written out on paper is done all alone by Jo March. This is just like what William and Zenger (2007, p. 128-129) said about the exclusivity of an individual when they performed a literacy practice that pointed up individualism, it always is starting with the isolation of an author from their world. The sentiments that they have put in her writings reveal how authors are fond of their works.

It applies also to Jo March when she performs literacy practice. In the film, she takes minutes, hours, and even days of isolating herself from crowds. She can write for days at a time without being easily distracted by her surroundings. Jo March creates such a profound sense as if her soul was at its zenith while she was writing. This demonstrates how she always involves her heart, thoughts, and sentiments in her work. It can be seen from this narration from the film:

Marmee brings her some food and then leaves her alone. Jo nods off for a second then keeps writing. She revises, she scratches out, and she changes orders. She falls asleep on her blanket of papers (Gerwig, 2019, p. 106).

Jo March's literacy serves as a further example of her individualism when she leaves New York immediately after she receives a letter from her family that Beth's condition is getting weakened. After all the things she pursues and builds in New York for her career, she does not think twice to leave all of those to come home knowing that her sister needs her. Jo March has always had this quality of a true individual who sticks to her decision and is responsible for whatever comes ahead.

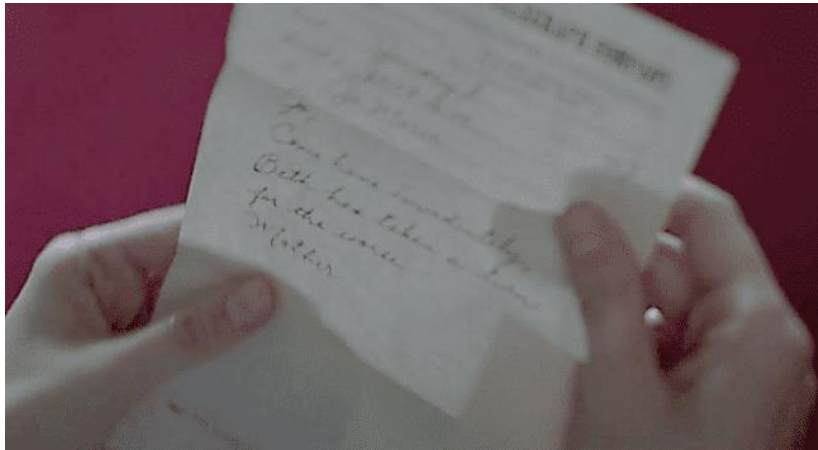


Fig.5 Jo received a letter from her family (Gerwig, 2020, 0:24:48).

In the scene above, she received a letter from Marmee saying that she should immediately go home because her younger sister, Beth, is sick due to scarlet fever. As a responsible sibling who cares for her sister, Jo leaves everything behind in New York and decides to take care of her younger sister, Beth. As a person who values memories of their childhood, Jo takes care of Beth by reading her a story because Beth loves it. What makes it different this time is that she is not reading her own story and it makes Beth wonder why she seems so down and loses her fierce in her eyes, particularly for her passion for writing.

As stated by Emerson (1999) that individualists accept personal accountability for their actions, this implication shows while some people struggle with pride, others may fail, and there is nothing wrong with it either. Jo March has also experienced this struggle and she expresses this difficulty by writing a story. This crisis is felt as well by Jo March. In the scene where Jo and Beth are on the seashore, Beth notices that Jo has lost her confidence in her writing. It can be inferred from this dialogue between these two sisters:

- Beth* : (nods, then) I love to listen to you read, Jo, but I love it even better when you read the stories you've written.
- Jo* : (self-conscious) I don't have any new stories.
- Beth* : Why not?
- Jo* : Haven't written any.
- Beth* : You have a pencil and paper. Sit here and write me something.
- Jo* : Uhh. I can't, I don't think I can anymore. (Gerwig, 2019, p. 72).

Jo keeps engaging with books and story even though it is not her own writings. Friedrich's blunt criticism truly affects her until she feels like no one wants to hear or even read her story. Beth notices Jo's tough time of struggling with her loss of confidence by simply saying that Jo should write to her and to someone else who still cares to read or hear Jo's story. Another manifestation of Jo March's individualism through literacy practice is when she composes a letter for her childhood friend, Theodore Laurence or Laurie.



Fig.6 Jo March writes a letter for Laurie (Gerwig, 2020, 1:45:06).

In the scene above, Jo writes Laurie a letter in which she expresses her guilt about turning down Laurie's proposal at that time. She expresses that because she was young and naive, she was unable to make a wise decision that would benefit them both. Unfortunately, before the letter even reaches Laurie, Jo finds out that Laurie has proposed to Amy, Jo's youngest sister. It makes Jo act very quickly and takes back the letter she puts in the letterbox which Laurie made for her. She hides the fact that she wants to confront that by writing Laurie a letter. She writes it alone without noticing anybody until the very end of the film. She tore the letter into pieces and threw it into the lake. Things move so swiftly until she eventually realises that her decision back then to reject Laurie's proposal was right when she sees the brightest smile on Amy's face.

Based on the description of the scene above, Jo values writing so much that she made a prompt decision about her decision to give Laurie a chance through a letter. She has not discussed this with anybody but herself. Even after knowing that her initial move of making up with Laurie has completely failed because he has proposed to another girl. She faces this unforeseen event alone and gets back up so quickly because after this event she can eventually compose her first published novel entitled *Little Women*. Instead of mourning and taking this as betrayal, she transforms her energy to write and continue her career in New York by being an author. Besides, everyone gets the happy ending they deserve and Jo March makes Aunt March's big house a school and be their best teacher. This constant portrayal of her being so confident about whatever comes next after the crisis demonstrates that she is a woman who possesses individualist values which can be represented by the literacy events she performed.

Discussion

Based on the findings above, Literacy Events in the film depicted by Jo March in Gerwig's *Little Women* (2019) include literacy-related activities like writing, composing, reciting, and reading. This is evidenced by Jo March's fingers that are stained with ink, writing a letter for her father, as well as receiving a letter whether from Friedrich Bhaer or her family. The author then examined Jo March's individualism as reflected through these literacy events, so that the next research question of problem number two on how literacy events reveal Jo March's individualism in Gerwig's *Little Women* (2019) is portrayed by Jo March's isolation while writing or composing her novel and other works she sent to the newspaper or Mr Dashwood.

Jo also tends to decide, act, and perform alone including writing a letter of regret to Laurie and fixing her goals of writing a long volume of a novel alone in the attic. This again aligns with some of the previous studies covering this scope of literacy in different outcomes

other than individualism. A prior study by Noviyanty (2021) examined the character of Neil from the film *Dead Poets Society (1989)*, depicting literacy as a means to salvation for Neil Perry through his activity of reading and writing poetry, particularly in the dead poet society club secretly.

The representation of literacy can manifest in various ways, not only as salvation to a certain character but also as a power to others. Just like the findings in a prior study conducted by Adyanti (2016) entitled *The Representations of Literacy as Power in Markus Zusak's The Book Thief* examined how reading and writing portrayed the characters' concepts of power. In its analysis, she evaluated Markus Zusak's *The Book Thief* following the New Literacy Study (NLS) concept. This research exemplified how literacy-related events in *The Book Thief* are portrayed as strength in many facets of a character's life as well as how texts can offer a variety of representations of power interactions by different characters.

This then demonstrates the claim that literacy does manifest in various forms where specifically, in this discussion part, is the representation of literacy as individualism in the character of Jo March in *Little Women (2019)*. The data in the findings section exposes that Jo March casually performed an action called being literate. From having a moment of realisation that marriage is not for her, evidenced by turning down Laurie's proposal, pursuing her ambitious career path in New York working as a teacher and still following her writing careers such as continuously sending her works to the newspaper as well as submitting her novel to Mr Dashwood despite of harsh criticism and various rejection she experienced.

Consequently, it eventually shows Jo March's values of individualism are shaped by the literacy practice throughout her entire life. Being exposed to books and stories until she can make her piece of work shows that the portrayal of an Author in a film which highlights certain ideologies is not the first time applied in a film. This portrayal in the film also correlates with the previous study done by Stehnová (2021) entitled *Greta Gerwig's Movie Adaptation Little Women and Its Relevance to the Current Society*. This thesis analysed the elements of the adaptation that contribute to the film's modernity and centred on the subject of the story's applicability to today's audience. This thesis argues that both Greta Gerwig and Louisa May Alcott produced works of art that supported women's independence. Since most of the speeches in the film are drawn from Louis May Alcott's book, it further demonstrates how ahead of its time the author's work was. Gerwig just changed the pacing; she did not modify the dialogue's content or structure. By using these techniques, Gerwig was able to give the historical novel adaptation a contemporary spin with a theme that is suitable to today's culture. As a result, using the theory of Literacy as Individualism by William and Zenger (2007, p. 127) even though it has a distinct focus compared to the other prior studies using New Literacy Studies (NLS) it can be concluded that Jo March's individualism can be revealed by examining the literacy events in the film.

Conclusion

Literacy can be expressed in a variety of ways, one of which is individualism. However, this study has focused only on the form of literacy as individualism performed by the main character in *Little Women (2019)*. Based on the analysis above, Jo March has consistently possessed the quality of an individualist particularly when she performs literacy practice. It can be seen

through her perseverance every time she writes and having herself alone while doing so. Other than that, always responsible for the decisions she makes and sticks to that also highlights her individualism even more. Turning down Laurie's proposal and showing how her assertiveness towards Laurie is blatant proof of this statement.

Moreover, the representation of Literacy as individualism is carried out by Jo March through her actions like reading and composing text. Literacy as individualism manifests in Jo's habit of reading books, writing short stories, composing a novel, and writing letters as well as receiving letters from her family in the film. Those habits of engaging with books, letters, and her writings shape her individualism and are represented by literacy events. Eventually, it can be concluded that Jo March's individualism can be represented through literacy. However, this study is far from perfect and the findings in this study cannot be generalised since it only highlights the representation of literacy as individualism performed by the main character.

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