



Analyzing Anna Foxx's Character Development in A.J Finn's *The Woman in the Window*

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
Received: 06 Aug 2025	Character development in literature refers to the ability to provide a character with personality, depth, and motivation that propels them through a story. As an individual gains knowledge from previous experiences, a person who has overcome difficulties and problems in life will be stronger and become a better person. The study explores Anna Fox's character development in <i>The Woman in the Window</i> . This research aims to describe the character development of Anna Fox in A.J. Finn's novel and to examine the causes and effects of her development.
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Keywords: Character development, Personality, Novel, Literature	The analysis uses a qualitative descriptive method, and the intrinsic approach is employed in this research. All data in this study collected <i>The Woman in the Window</i> by focusing on the main character of the story. The results of this study show three major aspects of Anna Fox's character development: coping with fear and anxiety, overcoming drug and alcohol dependence, and managing loneliness and panic attacks. The causes of Anna Fox's development are rooted in her friendship with Jane and Ethan Russell, as well as her experience of witnessing Jane Russell's murder. Finally, the effect of Anna's character development is that she is eventually able to live more normally and build genuine friendships, while others come to realize that she is not insane and apologize to her. In the end, Anna resumes her life as before by returning to her profession as a child psychologist.
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1. Introduction

Character development, in general, is a process of changing or growing the personality of a character (Jeffery-schwikkard et al., 2025). Character development in literature refers to the ability to provide a character with personality, depth, and motivation that propels them through a story. As an individual gains knowledge from

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previous experiences, a person who has overcome difficulties and problems in life will be stronger and become a better person. Every human being undoubtedly has a goal in life: to win or succeed. The human journey is not always straightforward when achieving a life purpose. People frequently encounter difficulties, obstacles, and even long-term issues that cause anxiety, pain, and depression. It is asserted that every person encounters challenges daily, resulting in numerous obstacles (Jean-berluce, 2024; Menzies et al., 2024). If a person gives up midway through life because they have to deal with problems and difficulties, they will lose everything and may even begin to consider ending their own life. As a result, they should attempt to resolve their issues or move forward as best they can. According to Hurlock (1973), nobody is born into the world as a positive person, because humans can be affected by various factors, and positivity can be developed gradually through interactions with others, social circumstances, nature, and personal or social experiences in their early lives. The human personality can evolve over time. Previous studies also highlight that character growth is shaped by internal conflicts, social environment, and traumatic encounters (Bennett, 2017; Palmer et al., 2019), which reinforces the idea that human development is continuous and dynamic.

In relation to the discussion above, writers engage readers in the plot by making the characters likable. Character development is one literary element that writers frequently emphasize, as it serves as a hook into a story's narrative and is essential to writing fiction (see Abiyir & Berikbolova, 2014; Nishihara & Miura, 2015; Rączaszek-Leonardi et al., 2022). Each character has inherent characteristics such as personality, image, and a backstory that make them relatable. The developmental arc of the story is shaped by the characters' motivations, which explain their actions and decisions. Literary scholars have shown that character development not only enhances plot progression but also deepens thematic interpretation and reader empathy (Forster, 2000; Santos et al., 2018). Thus, analyzing a character's development becomes a crucial entry point into understanding the moral, emotional, and psychological aspects of a literary work.

This novel, A.J. Finn's *The Woman in the Window*, tells the story of the main character, Anna Fox, a child psychologist who experiences severe anxiety about what is happening outside her home. Anna often stands behind the window and goes about her daily activities while spying on her neighbors using a camera. The camera that she uses serves as a silent witness to everything that occurs around her. However, one day Anna sees a shocking incident—a murder involving her new neighbor, Jane. Witnessing the scene, Anna rushes out of the house to help her neighbor. This novel is interesting to analyze because Anna Fox exhibits unique character traits and demonstrates significant character development that shapes her life story (Cf. Olan & Richmond, 2023). The conflicts she experiences provide readers with valuable moral lessons. While many prior studies on psychological-fiction novels focus on themes of trauma, hallucination, and memory (Jeffery-schwikkard et al., 2025; Kellogg & Torres, 2021), there remains limited research concerning how these psychological aspects contribute specifically to character development. Moreover, the protagonist in *The Woman in the Window* represents a complex female figure struggling with agoraphobia, trauma, and blurred perception—

elements that make her character development a compelling subject of academic inquiry. Therefore, studying this novel is important because it reveals how mental instability, external conflict, and self-confrontation drive the transformation of an individual—both psychologically and morally.

This study employs three main research focuses to examine the factors that influence Anna Fox's character development. The first concerns the portrayal of Anna Fox's character development. The second examines the causes of her character development. Finally, the third explores the effects of Anna Fox's character development.

2. Literature Review

a. Characters and Characterization

Kennedy and Gioia (2007) point out that a story's character is the author's constructed or imagined figure. In novels, a character undergoes various experiences that contribute to their development. The character's growth is influenced by the experiences and events they encounter. Novels, unlike short story collections, are generally longer works of fiction that contain more complex and dynamic characters, and often incorporate elements of real-life experiences into the narrative. In any well-written novel, the writer creates fictional characters by assigning them goals, presenting obstacles, and introducing conflict. Similarly, human characters within a story can undergo development and growth.

b. The Character Definition

According to Putri (2017), a character appears in a story through conversations, actions, or thoughts, and assumes a fictitious name as their identity. These characters also show how they talk to and interact with one another, and their origins are explained. Because fictional characters are clearly explained and portrayed, readers are more likely to recognize them than to identify real-life individuals. How people act, think, and feel makes up their character, and each person's life experience is different (see Suwastini et al., 2022). Every person on this planet goes through a variety of life experiences that influence their behaviour, movement, and responses. As a result, people's personalities differ, making them distinctive.

c. Type of Character

There are two kinds of characters in fiction: static and dynamic (developing) (Johnson & Arp, 2018). Characters who do not change throughout the story are referred to as static characters. From the beginning to the end of the narrative, the static character remains unchanged. In contrast, dynamic characters undergo changes for various reasons. Dynamic characters exhibit shifts in character traits, personality, and perspective. In other words, static characters continue to behave consistently without significant transformation, whereas dynamic characters eventually experience noticeable development or change.

According to Forster (2000), there are two kinds of characters in literature: flat and round. A flat character has little impact on the story, and can be described briefly in just a few sentences. For example, if we know from the beginning that a character is a hero, we can expect that he will remain heroic and continue helping others until the end of the story. In contrast, a round character plays a significant role in the narrative, contributing to change and driving the plot forward. Therefore, in a story where the protagonist transforms from a bad person into a good one or vice versa, the character is considered round. The researcher uses characterization as a tool to describe a character in a story or literary work. Through characterization, the researcher can more effectively illustrate and develop the characters in the narrative. In literature, characterization serves to construct and convey the personality, traits, and behaviors of a character.

The process of characterization that is carried out in a certain way can create characters in a fictional story that are uniquely tied to the person or figure in the story. According to Murphy (1972), characterization methods include personal description, character as seen by another, speech, past life, other people's conversations, reactions, direct comments, thoughts, and mannerisms. In direct characterization, the narrator, other characters, or the character themselves provide direct descriptions of the characters. The context-specific background of the plot and setting helps enhance the reader's comprehension. In contrast, indirect characterization shows how one character affects another and paints a picture of the characters through actions, interactions, and language use. In most movies, this form of characterization shows how the character behaves, thinks, and speaks in various situations.

d. Character Development

Character development is a literary technique or tool that allows the reader to connect with the characters in a story (Self-Publishing School, 2024). These characters are central to the plot, character structure, and themes. In a story, these elements aid the character's development over time. Character development refers to how an individual's behaviour and personality change or grow to reveal specific traits. The characters in the story can continuously develop or change, and various factors can influence this. According to Johnson & Arp (2018), a well-constructed narrative should meet several conditions, including character changes that are impacted by the circumstances and conditions experienced by the character, as well as personal feelings in the story, resulting in the story being dramatic and, at the same time, coherent. Generally, character changes in individuals do not happen spontaneously or in a linear fashion.

e. Conflict

Tension, stress, or pressure may occur in a literary work, which can emotionally connect readers to what is happening in the story. These conflicts often involve the problems, arguments, and resistance between the antagonist and protagonist characters. Beheshtifar and Zare (2013) state that conflict occurs when two or more people disagree on a problem of substantial importance within an organization and harbour emotional

antagonism toward one another. In addition, Fang and Hipel (2020) suggest that conflict is a narrative element that occurs within a major character. Human beings are easily drawn into this situation because all human social interactions have certain objectives, especially when two characters do not share the same agreement. In real life, this usually happens to most people worldwide because their individual goals are mutually exclusive; therefore, when one person feels that achieving their goal prevents another person's goal from being achieved, conflict arises.

f. Cause of Conflict

Pruitt and Kim (2004) state that the cause of conflict is generally rooted in the diversity of interests that clash with the interests of other parties involved. Additionally, they explain that conflict often begins with the personal interests of a particular individual. Thus, desires, interests, and other underestimated or overlooked factors can cause conflict, some of which may also lead to aggression. Some of the major contributing factors include scarce resources, adversity, faulty communication, perceived differences, and biological as well as environmental health factors.

3. Method

The research employs a qualitative approach (Miles et al., 2014). The researchers collected data from *The Woman in the Window* by focusing on the main character of the story. Qualitative research is used because the data collected are contextual in the form of words or images, not numbers, especially to describe human activities, situations, conditions, and relationships. This intrinsic method was also used because the researchers used the theory of character development, which focuses on the character development of the story's main character, whose circumstances influence her development. The development of Anna's character occurs as a result of everything that happened in her life. The writer collected the data through several steps: (1) selecting *The Woman in the Window* as the object of analysis, (2) reading the novel to understand its content, and (3) identifying and classifying the data by taking notes of the characters' words in the story that show the development of Anna's character. Academic psychology is a discipline that examines literary works from a psychological point of view and has three possible meanings. Through character development theory, the writer examines, identifies, and classifies the necessary information. After that, the researchers draw conclusions based on the findings.

4. Results and Discussion

This section presents an analysis of the problems, divided into three sections: the portrayal of Anna Foxx's character in A.J. Finn's *The Woman in the Window*, as well as the causes and effects of Anna's character development.

4.1 The Portrayal of Anna Foxx's Character Development

A child psychologist named Anna Fox experienced Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) due to an accident that killed her husband and child; at that time, Anna was the one directing the car. Anna becomes acrophobic, where she feels extreme anxiety when she leaves a room/open place and in this story, she is very anxious and afraid when she leaves the house (see Silalahi & Saragih, 2021). A person's phobia can be attributed in large part to this factor. The event in question is terrifying and horrific, and it has a profound psychological impact. Additionally, Anna is a complete alcoholic; she may have had the accident in order to overcome her feelings of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). She even uses wine to get medicine from his doctor. Anna even became one of her friend's patients at a psychologist to overcome this mental illness. Anna feels responsible for her family's deaths. The following quotation explains the analysis.

Anna is unable to go outside because of her anxiety event. She can only look at the sky, which is unusually wide after that accident, and only sees the wide sky while lying with her injured family. After the accident, the sky becomes a bad memory for her, resulting in trauma to her, and she is afraid to look at it. Anna developed trauma and always remembers her family when she is in the outside world and the open space. She fears what is outside her home and worries about what is there. Once a week, visitor Bina, a yoga and gymnastics instructor, suggested that Anna open the window so that the warm weather outside would bring positive energy into the house. This time, Anna became sensitive, and a traumatic event emerged.

This claim reveals the trauma Anna experienced when it snowed. Because of the car accident, her family died in a snowy. Anna's encounter at the scene of the vehicle collision served as more evidence of her traumatic event. All of those quotations above show that Hutch Mansell exhibits toxic masculinity traits, specifically traumatic, which is depicted from the chosen date of Anna's personality banes on her confession, the narrator's description, and the utterances from someone else.

1. Getting Rid of Fear or Anxiety

Anna displays numerous antisocial, paranoid, and dissociative behaviours. For instance, Anna Fox is the story's main character. She has psychological problems after the car incident. She is frightened and anxious as a result of the accident. One of the effects of social anxiety, which makes sufferers feel constantly watched, is that they will continue to hide and try to keep information about them hidden. Similar to happiness to Anna, she did not want him to feel uncomfortable by opening the window and letting the wind and light into the house, which would make him feel overshadowed by the overly bright conditions. Anna watches her neighbours through her windows, and when she wants to see something or someone more clearly, she uses the high-powered zoom lens on her camera to focus on her subject. In this quote, Anna compares her neighbours to animals in nature; this comparison heightens the writer's appreciation of Anna's sense of isolation because of her anxiety. For about a year, Anna Foxx did not

leave her house. It is not easy for ordinary people, but it makes sense if they are apprehensive about leaving the house. It causes a person to feel afraid to go outside and stay lonely. This quotation shows Anna's anxiety. It also explains quite clearly the reason for leaving the house. The cause is a fear of being alone outside the house.

Throughout the story, Anna is finally able to cope with her fear and anxiety. In this explanation, Anna has dared to show that she is not afraid of tomorrow, and she has convinced herself to let go of her addictions and worries.

2. Getting Rid of Addiction to Alcohol and Drug

Alcohol and drugs are a signal of anxiety or traumatic disorder because people with it usually have bad emotions or want to reduce the problems that they have. Some people may be successful that way, but others will be affected negatively. Anna compares herself to her neighbour (Dr Miller) when it comes to drinking. Anna is a heavy drinker and substance abuser. Anna drinks to uplift her mood and feel more relaxed, energized, and happier, although she is alone and never communicates with others. Anna is terrified when someone sends her a picture while she is sleeping. She is in a state of panic and has no idea what to do. She only drinks to relax, but it can make her feel even more anxious. It demonstrates that alcohol has a short-term effect when panic sets in. Alcohol may act as her coping mechanism for dealing with stress, anxiety and other mental conditions. However, this is a temporary solution, and as the effect of alcohol wears off, she may feel worse due to withdrawal agoraphobia and change her personality. Anna tries to reduce her illness by consuming the drugs, but the fact that it makes her body experience negative side effects. She also drinks alcohol, which symbolizes an escape, and feels she will be fine—one more glass before bed. Grasping the bottle by its throat, I turn to the window, toward three ghosts haunting the sidewalk, and hoist it in a toast. Anna Fox will consume alcohol before going to bed. It implies that Anna Fox is addicted to alcohol. Sometimes, alcohol makes her experience such hallucinations.

The statement above shows that Anna Foxx is a drug addict who consumes the pill before doing her activities. She uses drugs to relax and communicates with the outside world via an online site. The quotation states that Anna Foxx consumes drugs and the side effects on her physical body. When Anna Foxx consumes a drug, side effects appear in her and her patient, but they are different; Anna experiences fear of being in an open space while her patient can go outside. Drugs also change her body, her mind, and her character. Abuse of alcohol or other substances intensifies the consequences of anxiety. The individual becomes more addicted to alcohol or drugs, and their physical and psychological anxiety symptoms worsen, forcing them to use more substances in order to maintain their regular level of functioning. In the end, this leads to a cycle of substance abuse that creates a tolerance to the drug and, eventually, physical dependence and

addiction. Here, it is shown that Anna finally stops drinking due to reconvening with Doctor Julian Fielding. Anna admits that her addiction to drinking alcohol cannot help her escape from her trauma.

3. Coping with Loneliness

Anna, who has a post-traumatic disorder with agoraphobia (fear of open spaces), never goes outside or communicates with her neighbour; she just investigates her neighbour from the window in her husband's library. The writer implies that the window is a symbol; it symbolizes the world to Anna.

The previous quote describes Anna's loneliness; she is never distracted or disturbed by her neighbour's music, which could distract and bore others hearing the same theme. Moreover, the music or the genre is disliked and unwelcome. With her misery, Anna wants to try to have friends so she does not feel lonely at home due to the anxiety she suffers, which causes Anna not to be able to leave the room. This explanation is the dialogue in which he first meets Khate, who he thought was Jane Russell. She tries to make them scurry away by threatening them through the intercom and banging her window pane. After all that Anna has been through, she can finally cope with her loneliness. The final chapter of the book shows a happy ending. The tone in this section is optimistic. The writer indicates that Anna has come to terms with the deaths of Ed and Olivia. In addition, she has ended her alcoholism. The narrative's conflict that revolves around Anna's condition is resolved when she can finally step outside onto the snow cover of her roof. The author shows that there is hope for Anna.

4. Coping with Panic attack

The panic attack occurs because of the sadness that Anna Foxx had experienced in her past life. Fast breathing, shortness of breath, trembling, numbness, loss of control, and imminent danger are classified as panic physical symptoms of a panic attack. Anna sees her best friend Katie (whom she mistakenly identified as Jane Russell) fighting with someone at Russell's home. Katie's neighbour, Anna, is powerless to intervene while Katie is in danger. She observed Katie hanging in her home's window with a bloody chest wound. She is a frightening sight to behold. She truly wants to support Katie, but she suffers from agoraphobia. She tries to phone the police in her desperation but fears it will be too late to save Katie. She tries to force herself to leave the house, but she is unable to move to the open area. The following quotation demonstrates every piece of the evidence mentioned above. Anna makes a valiant effort to leave her house. To help Katie, she went into her kitchen through the side door. She grabs her umbrella and stands in the middle of her home's park, blocking her view of the area outside. She understands that Russell's home lacks a door leading to the park. To enter Russell's home, she must first go to the street. She is in a panic and stressed. She sincerely desires to assist her best friend (Katie).

Anna also perceives the outside as extremely dark, like her home's hallway. The word "dark" in this scene illustrates how naive Anna is to the world around her; she believes something might threaten her. She is unable to move after her mental rage. Another piece of evidence is that Anna fears being in open spaces when she tries to leave her house and help Jane Russell across her house. It shows that Anna is accommodating. It is also depicted Ethan as a victim of his parent's strife. Ethan accepts her offer and gives Anna his phone number so she can call him whenever she needs his aid.

4.2 The Causes of Anna Foxx's Character Development

There are two causes of Anna Foxx's character development in the story. They are Anna's friendship with Jane and Ethan Russell, and Anna witnesses Jane's murder.

1. Anna's Conflict inside Friendship with Jane (Katie) and Ethan Russell

When Ethan first visits Anna, he brings a candle from his mother. When Anna meets the woman, she believes is Jane Russell (Ethan's mother), Jane seems to confirm Anna's belief that Alistair Russell (Ethan's father) is controlling and does not trust people easily. Anna and Jane became instant friends after spending an evening together playing checkers and drinking wine. Jane is Ethan Russell's biological mother. Fortunately, a woman arrives to save her. She helps bring her back to her home and gives her first aid. Anna initiates a conversation with her. Anna explains her condition to Jane, who understands her encounter and is sympathetic to her. It shows the toll that relocating to a new town can have on individuals. Anna, on the other hand, is sympathetic to Ethan's situation.

2. Witnessing Jane Russell's Murder

Though Anna remembers Katie identifying as Jane Russell, it is Anna who first assumes that the stranger must be her new neighbour and calls her Jane Russell. Anna witnesses Jane's (Katie) murder through the windows of Russell's house, which is critical to her interpretation of the events as the actual stabbing and perpetrator is hidden from her view. The killer is never shown, but Anna assumes, based on her interactions with Ethan and Alistair Russell, that Alistair is the perpetrator.

4.3 The Effects of Anna Foxx's Character Development

The story shows two effects of Anna Foxx's character development: being able to live normally and making friends.

1. Anna Lives a Normally life

It is satirical that Anna's habit of prying on her neighbours has been useful in solving the murder. At the end of the story, Anna again feels the need to breathe open air without any feelings of panic.

2. Able to Make Genuine Friend

Anna attempts to make an internet friend through the Agora website. She becomes well-known on the Agora website due to her work as a child psychologist. Through the website, she assists many friends experiencing the same issues as her. Anna is an excellent psychologist. Her world, however, becomes very dark after the tragedy in her family. She misses her life as a psychological doctor terribly, but she has no control over her agoraphobia. Six weeks after the incident, Anna pries on her neighbours in the snow. The writer indicates that she continues to watch her neighbours from her window. Anna also has a new hobby, reading books. As she watches her neighbours, she states that the Russell house is up for sale. The couple had moved after Ethan's incident. The writer highlights the anti-climax of the plot; Anna stops drinking and follows her medication, the detectives are apologetic for failing to believe her initially, and Anna re-joins "Agora" to assist other patients. In the last chapter, Anna returns to normal life and forgets and forgives her past of drugs and alcohol. Now, she has decided to move and leave her old house and resume her work as a child psychologist.

5. Conclusion

The analysis shows that Anna Fox experiences significant character development in A.J. Finn's *The Woman in the Window*. This can be seen from the fact that she successfully copes with her traumatic experiences, overcomes her fear and anxiety, and gradually abandons her dependence on drugs and alcohol, as well as managing her loneliness and panic attacks. This explanation proves that character development does occur. It also shows that Anna's character development is influenced by her friendship with Jane and Ethan Russell, and is further intensified after witnessing Jane Russell's murder. Anna becomes more willing to acknowledge her pain and open herself to others, attempting to heal her trauma by sharing what she witnessed with the people around her. However, based on the testimony she gives and the report she files concerning Jane's murder, people assume her claims are false because she cannot provide evidence at first. In addition, Anna suffers from mental health issues and engages in heavy drinking and drug use, causing people around her to believe she is delusional or imagining things (see Jean-berluce, 2024). Anna later proves that she is telling the truth by finding evidence of what happened. Last but not least, the effect of Anna's character development is that she is eventually able to live more normally and build genuine friendships, while others come to realize that she is not insane and apologize to her. In the end, Anna resumes her life as before by returning to her profession as a child psychologist.

Conflict of interest

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest in this research.

Authors' contribution

The authors made substantial contributions to the conception and design of the study. The authors took responsibility for data analysis, interpretation and discussion of results. The authors read and approved the final manuscript.

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