MALE ROMANCE FORMULA IN FORREST GUMP MOVIE (1994)

Vidi Rutsyamsun¹, Lili Awaludin²

English Literature, Faculty of Adab and Humanities, UIN Sunan Gunung Djati Bandung, Indonesia

^{1,2} vrutsyamsun@gmail.com, liliawaludin@uinsgd.ac.id

Abstract

This journal investigates how Forrest Gump's portrayal of disability in romantic relationships. To investigate how the main character, Forrest Gump, and his partner, Jenny, encountered difficulties in forging a love relationship because of Forrest's disabilities, the researcher employed a qualitative technique with a narrative analytic method. The study sought to investigate how the movie deals with disability difficulties while presenting the ideal romance formula. The study also discovered that the Forrest Gump movie adheres to Janice Radway's ideal romance formula while adapting it to the disability setting. The individuals' personalities are given more depth by this extra complexity, which also advances the story as a whole. The Forrest Gump movie accurately, tenderly, and meaningfully shows romantic connections between individuals with impairments, according to the study. Forrest's intellectual impairment isn't the main focus of his persona; rather, it's only one facet of who he is. The movie demonstrates that Forrest is a loving, kind, and sympathetic individual who is able to develop lasting connections despite his impairment. Jenny's reaction to Forrest's impairment is honestly portrayed in the movie, and she first has second thoughts about dating him. She comes to see, nevertheless, that Forrest's impairment is only one aspect of him and does not characterize him as a person as their relationship progresses.

Keywords: disability, Forrest Gump, movie, relationship, romance formula

INTRODUCTION

Forrest Gump is a film that tells the story of a disability man who fights for his love and life. Forrest Gump was chosen as the research object because it is unique in the male character played by Tom Hanks who has limitations but is still passionate about fighting for his love. The unusual nature of this film's story piqued my interest. The researcher focused on how the complexities of romance depicted in this film are packaged differently due to individual situations. If we focus on the plot and portrayal of the characters in this film, we may only notice the love story between Forrest and Jenny. Though some interesting elements contribute to this film's emotional love story. Whereas most films depict the love story of two lovers who share common life problems

and obstacles, this film does something different and leaves the audience emotionally attached.

This film tells about a boy who has a disability and meets a girl when he was little. They grew up together and lived their own lives, until finally Forrest, who is the male character in this film, dared to confess his love to Jenny. Even though they had experienced rejection, in the end, they married and lived happily with one child. Until finally Jenny had to die because of the pain she experienced.

Forrest's flaws and limitations, as well as his struggles and sincerity in loving Jenny's character, demonstrate a high romance value. Because the male character is in an unfavorable situation to win Jenny's love, the value of romance in this film becomes very strong. This intriguing romance formula prompts researchers to consider the film *Forrest Gump*. This romance formula is fascinating to discuss. In a romance formula, a writer will usually only show a love story between two people. However, we can draw a lot of conclusions from this film's love story. This film contains social issues and a component that will appeal to anyone who sees it.

One of the literary subgenres in popular culture is romance. I found this in *The Oxford Dictionary of Literary Words* (Baldick, 2008). Romance is defined as a love story in which the central focus is on the development and satisfactory resoautution of the love relationship between the two main characters, written in such a way that the reader feels vicarious emotional participation in the courtship process. Romance is typically defined as the love, affection, and feelings shared by two couples who adore one another.

In Romance Fiction: A Guide to the Genre, Kristin Ramsdell (1987) defined romance as a love story where the development and satisfaction resolution of an affair between two main characters is the central focus. This type of romance is written to give the reader some level of vicarious emotional involvement in the courtship process. Romance is a literary genre that originated in the middle of the 12th century at the French aristocratic court and flourished in France and Germany from the middle of the 12th to the middle of the 13th century in the works of masters like Chrétien de Troyes and Gottfried von Strasberg, according to Britannica (2010). Even while love stories

and religious allegories occasionally appear, the primary topic is knightly or chivalrous exploits. The stories of Charlemagne and his knights, as well as Arthurian legends, serve as the basis for the majority of romance novels' plotlines.

The romance genre (Lee & Myaeng, 2002) is one of the most popular, but in the context of popular movie, the genre is defined as "the most popular and least appreciated genre." The main reason is that the plot is simple and always ends happily. Of course, the romance genre depicts the romance of a woman and a man who strive to be together and unite their love despite many conflicts and problems that must be overcome, such as problems in a discordant family, friendship problems, and misunderstandings between the two.

According to Nugrahani (2014), qualitative research is defined as "a research that focuses on exploring the problem that was conducted in human or society that naturally happened without conducting any experiment, to make the interpretation and solve the problem." This method employs analysis, data collection, observation, and interviews to determine the meaning. The collection, analysis, and interpretation of data from interviews, participant observation, and document data in order to understand and describe meanings, relationships, and patterns are referred to as qualitative methods. Based on the explanation above, the researcher chose the qualitative description method to solve the problem because it focuses on analyzing and interpreting a document.

The writer employs a qualitative data analysis method in this study. The reason for conducting qualitative research is that the subject of the study is a literary work in the form of a film or dialogue. The writer could see each aspect of the text, such as intrinsic and extrinsic elements related to the human and societal problem, using this method. The referred problem is one that does not require any experiment to be conducted, but rather is determined by the dialogue. And the researcher will thoroughly analyze this dialogue or film clip so that the results obtained are easy to understand. The goal of qualitative research is not to find generalizations, but to comprehend the meaning of the problem through data collection and analysis (Stenius et al., 2017). This method is used to analyze a text or a phenomenon that occurred in society.

Using Radway (Radway, 1982) as a grand theory, narrative structure refers to the heroine's change from a solitary, asexual, and insecure adult development to a mature, sensual, married person who understands her potential and identity as a partner of a man and as a mother of a child. In his book, Radway describes the Cawelti formula as a narrative framework. He creates a narrative structure for an ideal romance based on the relationship between the hero and the heroine in light of his study of the Smithton women.

The researcher chooses the object of the movie as research to be examined in detail what formulas are presented to make this movie it becomes a romance genre based on the conflicts that occur in *Forrest Gump* (1994) movie. Furthermore, the researcher read some of the same research in the form of romance genres with various literary objects as supporters of this research. Furthermore, the researcher has not found a researcher who uses the subject of this film. The researcher will narrow the scope of this research by describing ideal romance formula supported by the conflicts in the film. This element can also help the plot of this film to develop. Based on the background and problem statement, the following research question can be formulated that how does male romance formula in *Forrest Gump* movie (1994).

FINDING AND DISCUSSION

Radway (1982) in his book "Reading Romance: Women, Patriarchy and Popular Liteature. He develops a narrative structure for the ideal love story based on the dynamic between the hero and the heroine. The heroine's transformation from a solitary, asexual, and insecure adult to a mature, sensual, married person who realizes her potential and identity as a partner of a man and as a mother of a child.

Researcher also refer to Cawelti (1976) Since romance is a fantasy of the all-sufficient nature of love, the majority of romantic formulas revolve on the surmounting of a particular set of psychological or societal boundaries. The "Cinderella formula" might be used to describe the formulaic plot of the poor girl who falls in love with a rich or aristocratic man. Alternatively there's the Pamela formula, where the lead character defeats the threat of pointless emotion to forge a lasting love connection. Another, more modern scenario is the career girl who chooses money or fame over

love, only to find that love is the only thing that can truly fulfill one.

Seeing from Cawelti's words about the "Cinderella Formula", where the heroine is a poor person and has to chase men who are more aristocratic. In the film Forrest Gump it is found that the role of the hero is a poor person and the heroine is an aristocrat. Therefore, the researcher considers that the Ideal Romance formula can also position the hero as someone who fights for his love. It's the same as what happened in the movie Aladdin. Where Aladdin who is a street kid tries to win the heart of Princess Jasmine where the heroine has a higher position. So in this study, the researcher takes Radway's narrative ideal romance from the point of view of the hero.

The hero's social identity is destroyed.

In the 1950s, Forrest Gump was born in the Alabama village of Greenbow. He had an IQ issue from an early age, which made it challenging for him to comprehend concepts that other children his age found simple. This, regrettably, made him a simple target for bullies at school. He was frequently teased by his peers, who would push him about and call him names. Forrest knew he didn't enjoy it even if he didn't understand why they were being so cruel to him. They made the decision to pull a terrible prank on Forrest one day when he was playing with his buddies. They instructed him to move as quickly as he could before they followed. But as soon as Forrest began to run, everyone turned around and left him standing in the center of the field by himself. Forrest never again allowed anyone to undermine him after that.



Picture 1. People were so strange about Forrest Gump's walk and the devices on his feet that they looked at him with strange looks. **Timestamp: 6:24**

Radway's theory of ideal romance formula (1982) can be used to examine the moment in Forrest Gump where people were so strange about Forrest Gump's walk and the devices on his feet. According to this idea, romance books and films often follow a formula or pattern where the hero's social identity is destroyed. Forrest Gump had to wear special gadgets on his feet to help him walk while he was growing up in Greenbow, Alabama. People would frequently stare and give him strange glances as a result of the equipment he was using to walk differently than other children his age. Forrest was perplexed as to why his gait caused people to regard him differently. He didn't want to be assessed just on the basis of how he looked because he knew that on the inside, he was just like everyone else.



Picture 2. When Forrest Gump wanted to enter his favorite school, the principal told his mother that Forrest Gump had a very low IQ. **Timestamp: 7:38**

Radway's theory of ideal romance formula (1982) can be used to examine the moment in Forrest Gump where the principal told his mother that Forrest Gump had a very low IQ. According to this idea, romance books and films often follow a formula or pattern where the hero's social identity is destroyed. In Greenbow, Alabama, Forrest Gump had always envisioned attending his favorite school. He adored the school's lovely environment, welcoming faculty, and rigorous curriculum. But, when he and his mother went to the principal to inquire about enrolling him, they received some discouraging information. The principal informed Forrest's mother that Forrest had an extremely low IQ after taking one look at his test results.

The aristocratic female responds ambiguously to the hero.

Forrest Gump had a childhood friend named Jenny. Jenny is a very close person to Forrest, they spent a lot of time together since childhood. During their relationship, Jenny often showed different attitudes like normal friends to Forrest, such as when they were playing and Jenny didn't want Forrest to come home, when Jenny suddenly came to Forrest's house to stay one night and when Jenny gave

Forrest shoes as a gift.



Picture 3. Since childhood, Jenny has shown her interest in Forrest, one night Jenny comes to Forrest's house and goes into her room so she can be with Forrest all night. **Timestamp: 19:50**

Radway's theory of ideal romance formula (1982) can be used to examine the moment in Forrest Gump where one night Jenny comes to Forrest's house and goes into her room so she can be with Forrest all night. According to this idea, romance books and films often follow a formula or pattern where the aristocratic female responds ambiguously to the hero. Forrest and Jenny had grown up together, and despite their numerous differences, they had a close relationship. Forrest had always been pleased to be around Jenny because she had shown an interest in him when they were children. Jenny uninvitedly arrived at Forrest's home one evening.



Picture 4. When playing after school, Jenny kept Forrest from coming home and wished she could be with him a little longer. **Timestamp: 15:11**

Radway's theory of ideal romance formula (1982) can be used to examine the moment in Forrest Gump where Jenny kept Forrest from coming home and wished she could be with him a little longer. According to this idea, romance books and films often follow a formula or pattern where the aristocratic female responds ambiguously to the hero. Jenny and Forrest Gump had been great friends since they were young. They frequently spent the afternoons having fun together and exploring the area surrounding their small town. Jenny had a realization while playing one day that she didn't want their time together to end. Jenny pleaded with Forrest to remain a little bit longer despite the fact that his mother had requested him to return home because it was getting late. She wished that she and her friend could stay together forever.

The hero responds to the heroine's behavior with anger or coldness.

Forrest Gump's character is very gentle and innocent, so he rarely shows his anger. Forrest tended to always give soft things to Jenny, the person he loved so much. But one night, when Forrest tried to express his love for Jenny,

and Jenny didn't give a clear answer about his love, Forrest felt that he was so worthless. At that time, Forrest chose to leave Jenny alone.



Picture 5. Shortly after Forrest declared his love for Jenny and Forrest did not immediately get an answer, Forrest felt worthless and chose to remain silent leaving Jenny alone. **Timestamp: 1:49:33**

Radway's theory of ideal romance formula (1982) can be used to examine the moment in Forrest Gump when Forrest felt worthless and chose to remain silent leaving Jenny alone. According to this idea, romance books and films often follow a formula or pattern where the hero responds to the heroine's behavior with anger or coldness. Since the first time he spotted Jenny on the school bus all those years ago, Forrest has always known that he is in love with her. He had made numerous attempts to express his feelings to her, but the words had never quite managed to come out perfectly. One day, he finally summoned the nerve to tell her he loved her. For a brief minute, Forrest wondered if Jenny might be feeling the same way as him as she did as she listened to his confession with a dejected smile. Jenny then turned her head aside and informed Forrest that she was unable to respond to his suggestion. Forrest was in shock. Never in his life has he felt so hurt and lost. He had

always believed that Jenny was the one for him and that their relationship was destined.

The heroine retaliates by punishing the hero.

As a person who has a very low IQ and other limitations, Forrest Gump does not have the same character as people in general, he tends to be innocent and do things based on what he believes. This often made Jenny angry, moments like when Forrest hit Billy, Wesley, and when Forrest beat up the audience who tried to seduce Jenny, making Jenny feel annoyed and scold Forrest.



Picture 6. Jenny scolds Forrest for his innocence when he hits Billy on the sidelines where Jenny and Billy are having a date in the car. **Timestamp 26:26**

Radway's theory of ideal romance formula (1982) can be used to examine the moment in Forrest Gump where Jenny scolds Forrest for his innocence when he hits Billy on the sidelines where Jenny and Billy are having a date in the car. According to this idea, romance books and films often follow a formula or pattern where the heroine retaliates by punishing the hero. Forrest had always been a straightforward individual with a kind heart and a neutral mentality. But

occasionally, as it happened that evening when he came across Jenny and Billy in the car, his naivety put him into difficulty. Forrest was initially unaware of what was happening. On his run, he had passed Jenny's car, which was parked by the side of the road. He had moved closer to have a better look out of curiosity when he had noticed Jenny and Billy kissing and holding hands in the backseat. Forrest had been shocked by the scene.

The hero and heroine are physically and/or emotionally separated.

The bond between Forrest and Jenny was never smooth. They had grown up together and had become inseparable over time. But, life had a way of interfering with their love. When Jenny got the chance to follow her dream of becoming a well-known singer, she had to leave Forrest behind. Though it was a challenging choice, she knew she had to make it. On the other hand, Forrest had other responsibilities. He had enlisted in the military and been assigned to the Vietnam War. Forrest through a terrifying ordeal and witnessed things that nobody ought to ever have to. But throughout it all, he never forgot about Jenny. He thought of her frequently and dreamed of the day he would see her again.



Picture 7. Forrest Gump told Jenny that he would be sent to Vietnam to take part in

the war as his duty in the army. **Timestamp 39:28**

Radway's theory of ideal romance formula (1982) can be used to examine the

moment in Forrest Gump where Forrest teels Jenny he is going to Vietnam. According to

this idea, romance books and films often follow a formula or pattern where the heroine

and hero are physically and/or emotionally separated. Forrest had always found solace

and strength in his friendship with Jenny. She was the only one who had the capacity to

genuinely comprehend him and accept him as he was. She was obviously disturbed

when he told her about his deployment and worried for his security. She was aware of

the dangers of the Vietnam War and that Forrest would be risking his life. Forrest held

Jenny near to his heart the entire time he was serving in Vietnam. She was on his mind a

lot, and whenever he could, he would even send her letters and packages.

The heroine treats the hero tenderly.

The bond between Forrest and Jenny was genuinely special. They always managed

to communicate and express their affection for one another in spite of all the

difficulties they encountered. Jenny was always extremely vocal about how she felt

about Forrest. She was never reluctant to express her love for him or to give him

compliments on his appearance. Jenny made sure Forrest knew how attractive he

looked as they were spending the night in the White House. But Jenny's love for Forrest

wasn't merely expressed via words. She hugged him fiercely whenever she saw him

and held his hand when they were seated together. She was usually quite physical with

him. While they were sitting on the edge of the lake and gazing out at the tranquil

waters, it was one of their most private moments together. That was a small, yet

significant, event that revealed their strong bond.

Saksama: Jurnal Sastra
Vol. 2 No. 1 Edisi Juni 2023
DOI. 10.15575/sksm.v2i1.24837

106

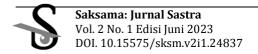


Picture 8. On the night when Forrest and Jenny are walking around the White House, Jenny compliments Forrest on his good looks in a soldier's uniform. **Timestamp 1:10:22**

Radway's theory of ideal romance formula (1982) can be used to examine the moment in Forrest Gump where Jenny complimented Forrest handsome. According to this idea, romance books and films often follow a formula or pattern where the heroine responds warmly to the hero's act of tenderness. Jenny couldn't help but be pleased of Forrest as they passed through the revered hallways of the White House because he was dapper in his sharp American military outfit. She was impressed by how the uniform displayed his strong shoulders and chiseled features because it fit him so well. Although she had always thought Forrest was gorgeous, at that precise moment, she was overcome by a deep adoration and love for him. Jenny couldn't help but gush over Forrest's attractiveness. In response to Jenny's remarks, Forrest reddened while experiencing a rush of pride and joy.

The hero responds warmly to the heroine's act oftenderness.

Forrest showed Jenny his love and dedication in a variety of ways as their relationship progressed. He gave Jenny a sweet surprise complete with chocolates,



flowers, and a passionate moonlight dance. Jenny was moved by Forrest's straightforward and sincere affection and became aware of her own feelings for him. Despite Jenny pushing him away, Forrest's love for her was unwavering, and he never gave up on her. In the end, their love was the only thing that remained consistent in their life, and it gave them both a sense of tranquility and happiness they had never experienced before.



Picture 9. Forrest Gump put sweet words on Jenny and said that he would not hurt Jenny. **Timestamp 1:09:57**

Radway's theory of ideal romance formula (1982) can be used to examine the moment in Forrest Gump where Forrest put sweet words on Jenny and said that he would not hurt Jenny. According to this idea, romance books and films often follow a formula or pattern where the hero treats the heroine tenderly. After a protracted separation, Forrest Gump and Jenny were at last reconciled. They had walked about all day, taking in the sights and reminiscing about earlier times. Forrest experienced awe and astonishment as they toured the White House, but he also felt uneasy and anxious. He didn't want to disrupt anything, particularly his friendship with Jenny. Forrest reflected on his love for Jenny and how much she meant to him as they

continued their stroll. He understood how fortunate he had been to meet someone like her—someone who loved him no matter what. And he was aware that he would go to any lengths to maintain her security and happiness.

The heroine proposes/openly declares her love for/demonstrates her unwavering commitment to the hero with a supreme act of tenderness.

Throughout history, romance has been examined in literature, movies, music, and other forms of art. That is a feeling that all individuals, regardless of their culture or upbringing, can relate to. There is a structure that most romantic stories follow, where one of the roles played by either the guy or the woman is to declare their love for one another. This technique is frequently used in well-known films and television programs where the male protagonist must win the female protagonist's love, or vice versa. The two protagonists eventually get together in a pleasant and romantic climax, even though the process can be drawn out and difficult and full of difficulties.



Picture 10. Jenny expressed her desire to marry Forrest Gump after the various difficulties they faced, they finally lived together. **Timestamp: 2:04:38**

Radway's theory of ideal romance formula (1982) can be used to examine the moment in Forrest Gump where Jenny expressed her desire to marry Forrest Gump. According to this idea, romance books and films often follow a formula or pattern where the heroine proposes/openly declares her love for/demonstrates her unwavering commitment to the hero with a supreme act of tenderness. Forrest Gump, which depicts the tale of an average man with a low IQ who embarks on an astonishing journey throughout his life, is one such movie that adheres to this format. In the course of the film, Jenny, the love of his life who battles her own demons and fears, subtly rejects Forrest. Forrest still loves and cares for Jenny despite the rejection, always being there for her when she needs him. The two finally accept each other and live together after Jenny finally admits her genuine love for Forrest at the movie's conclusion.

The hero responds sexually and emotionally.

The story of Forrest Gump is one of personal development and self- discovery in addition to love. We watch Forrest change from a straightforward, innocent man to a wise and experienced one throughout the entire movie. His connection with Jenny, the love of his life, serves as an example of this metamorphosis. When Jenny says that she wants to get married, Forrest answers very emphatically that he wants to live with her instead. With this statement, Forrest demonstrates how he has changed and matured from the impressionable young man we initially met to a man who is more cognizant of his own needs and preferences in a relationship.



Picture 11. Forrest responds to Jenny's desire to marry with a very definite answer that Forrest really wants to live together with Jenny. **Timestamp: 2:04:45**

Radway's theory of ideal romance formula (1982) can be used to examine the moment in Forrest Gump where Forrest responds to Jenny's desire to marry with a very definite answer that Forrest really wants to live together with Jenny. According to this idea, romance books and films often follow a formula or pattern where the hero responds sexually and emotionally. Forrest's reply also demonstrates how his affection for Jenny has grown stronger over time. He understands that cohabitation may be just as meaningful and rewarding as marriage and that it is not always necessary to get married in order to show someone you care about them. Ultimately, Forrest's response to Jenny's marriage proposal reveals the richness and complexity of his persona as well as the ways in which his life experiences have influenced his perspective on romance and sex.

The hero's identity is restored.

The journey of two people who come from diverse origins and encounter countless difficulties and problems in their unique lives is portrayed in the movie Forrest Gump. Despite these challenges, Forrest and Jenny's love for one another

never wavers, and they eventually locate one another and decide to live together. Despite these difficulties, Forrest and Jenny's love for one another provides constant solace and strength. They provide each other a sense of security and grounding, and their bond acts as a ray of hope for the entire movie.



Picture 12. After facing various difficulties and obstacles in their respective lives, Forrest and Jenny finally managed to get through it all and live together. **Timestamp 2:07:06**

Radway's theory of ideal romance formula (1982) can be used to examine the moment in Forrest Gump where they live happily together. According to this idea, romance books and films often follow a formula or pattern the heroine's identity is restored. Forrest and Jenny finally reunite and move in together after spending years apart and going through their separate hardships. All they have gone through has culminated in this moment, which stands for the victory of love over hardship. Their journey to cohabitation is proof of the strength of tenacity and the depth of their love for one another. It demonstrates that their love will persist despite any challenges they encounter since they will always find a way to reconnect.

CONCLUSION

Based on the analysis of the romance formula contained in Forrest Gump (1994), a

unique representation of romance that questions preconceived ideas about physical

ability and disability can be seen in the movie Forrest Gump. Forrest's character serves

as an example of how one may love and be loved despite physical limits. Forrest's love

for Jenny is unwaveringly committed to her and is one of the most moving aspects of

the movie despite his intellectual impairment.

The movie also adheres to Janice Radway's ideal romance concept.

1) The hero's social identity is destroyed.

2) The aristocratic female responds ambiguously to the hero.

3) The hero responds to the heroine's behavior with anger or coldness.

4) The heroine retaliates by punishing the hero.

5) The hero and heroine are physically and/or emotionally separated.

6) The heroine treats the hero tenderly.

7) The hero responds warmly to the heroine's act of tenderness.

8) The heroine proposes/openly declares her love for/demonstrates her unwavering

commitment to the hero with a supreme act of tenderness.

9) The hero responds sexually and emotionally.

10) The hero's identity is restored.

REFERENCES

Baldick, C. (2018). Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms (3rd Editio). Oxford University

Press.

Lee, Y. B., & Myaeng, S. H. (2022). Text genre classification with genre-revealing and subject-revealing features. *In Proceedings of the 25th Annual International ACM SIGIR Conference on Research and Development in Information Retrieval*, 145–150.

Myers, R. (2018). The twelve who survive (Vol. 29). Routledge.

Saksama: Jurnal Sastra
Vol. 2 No. 1 Edisi Juni 2023
DOI. 10.15575/sksm.v2i1.24837

113

- Nugrahani, F. (2018). *Metode Penelitian Kualitatif dalam bidang pendidikan bahasa*. Janice A. Radway. (2019). *Reading the Romance. Women, Patriarchy and Popular Literature.* The University of North Carolina Press.
- John G. Cawelti. (2017). *Adventure, Mystery, and Romance*. The University of Chicago Paperback edition.
- Ramsdell, K. (2020). *Romance Fiction: A Guide to the Genre*. Liblaries Unlimited, Inc. Stenius, K., Mäkelä, K., Miovský, M., & Gabrhelík, R. (2017). How to Write Publishable Qualitative Research. In *Publishing Addiction Science: A Guide for the Perplexed* (pp. 155–172). Ubiquity Press. https://doi.org/10.5334/bbd.h