

## Filial Piety and Moral Conflict in Malin Kundang: A Literary Analysis

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### Abstract

This study aims to analyze character development, conflict, and moral values in the Indonesian folklore drama Malin Kundang written by Wisran Hadi. Although the story is widely recognized as a traditional narrative about filial disobedience, there is still limited critical research that specifically examines how character transformation and conflict structure work together to construct moral meaning within the narrative. This study employed a qualitative descriptive approach focusing on characterization, conflict, thematic elements, and symbolism in the drama. The data were collected through close reading and textual analysis of dialogues, character actions, and important scenes, and were interpreted using theories of characterization, conflict, and folklore studies. The findings reveal that Malin Kundang undergoes significant character transformation, shifting from a hardworking and devoted son into an arrogant and ungrateful individual after achieving wealth and higher social status. The study also finds that both internal and external conflicts play important roles in shaping the narrative. Internally, Malin struggles between maintaining his identity and gaining social acceptance, while externally he confronts his mother and rejects his origins. These conflicts intensify the dramatic tension and ultimately lead to tragic consequences. In addition, symbolic elements such as the storm and the stone strengthen the representation of divine justice, guilt, and moral accountability. The story emphasizes themes of filial piety, humility, social responsibility, and the consequences of pride and disobedience. Malin Kundang functions not only as cultural heritage but also as a moral and educational narrative that remains relevant in contemporary society. The study highlights how folklore can effectively communicate ethical values through character development, conflict, and symbolism.

**Keywords:** Character Development; Conflict; Filial Piety; Morality; Folklore; Malin Kundang

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### Introduction

Traditional stories have long functioned as an important part of cultural life because they preserve collective memory, moral values, and social beliefs from one generation to another. Folklore, in particular, carries lessons about human behavior, responsibility, and relationships within society. Beyond entertainment, these narratives often serve educational purposes by teaching audiences about ethical conduct and social expectations. Recent literary and cultural studies explain that folklore continues to remain relevant because it reflects the values, fears, and ideals of the communities that produce it (Storey, 2021; Barker, 2021). Through repeated retelling and adaptation, traditional stories become cultural tools that shape social understanding and moral awareness.

Among the most popular Indonesian folktales is Malin Kundang, a narrative originating from Minangkabau culture in West Sumatra. The story has been adapted into various literary forms, including drama, prose, and oral performance, allowing it to remain widely recognized across generations. Wisran Hadi's dramatic adaptation presents the story not simply as a tale about disobedience but as a narrative deeply connected to issues of identity, ambition, pride, and morality. The drama follows the life of Malin, a young man from a poor family who leaves his village in search of success. After achieving wealth and higher social status, he distances himself from his origins and refuses to acknowledge his mother. His rejection ultimately leads to tragedy when he receives a curse and is transformed into stone.

The enduring popularity of Malin Kundang is closely related to its strong moral and cultural message. In Indonesian society, respect toward parents is regarded as a fundamental value closely connected to family harmony and social ethics. Traditional narratives often reinforce these values by presenting clear moral consequences for human actions (Rahman, 2019; Suryani, 2020). In this story,

Malin's punishment symbolizes the dangers of arrogance, ingratitude, and the rejection of familial responsibility. The transformation into stone is not only a dramatic ending but also a symbolic representation of permanent moral failure. Through this narrative structure, the story encourages audiences to value humility, gratitude, and respect toward family members.

At the same time, Malin Kundang reflects broader social issues related to ambition and identity. Malin initially appears as a hardworking and respectful son who hopes to improve his family's condition through determination and effort. However, after entering a higher social environment, his perspective changes significantly. His desire to gain recognition and acceptance causes him to reject the background that once shaped him. This transformation reflects the tension between personal ambition and moral obligation. Recent literary discussions highlight that many traditional narratives portray social mobility as both an opportunity and a source of moral conflict (Heryanto, 2018; Nugraha, 2022). Success in these stories often becomes dangerous when it leads individuals to abandon ethical principles and cultural values.

Character transformation in the story is closely connected to the development of conflict. Conflict functions not only as a narrative device but also as a way to reveal emotional struggle and moral tension. In Malin Kundang, internal conflict emerges through Malin's struggle between maintaining his original identity and preserving the social image he has created after becoming wealthy. External conflict appears in his confrontation with his mother and the social consequences of his rejection. Narrative scholars explain that conflict is essential in shaping character growth and thematic meaning because it exposes motivations, weaknesses, and emotional pressure (Abbott, 2021; Herman, 2017). The progression of conflict in Malin Kundang intensifies the emotional impact of the story and leads directly to its tragic resolution.

Another important element that strengthens the narrative is symbolism. Folklore frequently uses symbolic objects and events to communicate deeper moral and emotional meanings. In Malin Kundang, natural elements such as the sea, the storm, and the stone carry symbolic significance beyond their literal function in the story. The sea represents both opportunity and separation, while the storm reflects emotional chaos, guilt, and divine judgment. The stone symbolizes permanence, punishment, and moral accountability. Recent studies on symbolism in literary texts emphasize that symbolic elements help audiences connect physical events with broader ethical and cultural interpretations (Klarer, 2019; Wellek & Warren, 2021). These symbols make the story more memorable and strengthen its role as a moral narrative.

Although Malin Kundang is widely known as a traditional moral story, discussions of the narrative often remain limited to its surface lesson about filial disobedience. More detailed analysis of character transformation, conflict development, and symbolic meaning is still relatively limited, particularly in relation to how these elements work together to construct moral and cultural values. Previous studies frequently emphasize folklore as cultural heritage without fully examining the literary mechanisms that shape its emotional and ethical impact. As a result, a deeper literary analysis is needed to understand how characterization, conflict, and symbolism contribute to the narrative's enduring significance.

This study focuses on character development and conflict in Wisran Hadi's Malin Kundang to explore how the story constructs moral meaning through narrative progression and symbolic representation. The analysis is expected to contribute to literary and cultural studies by demonstrating how folklore functions not only as entertainment or oral tradition but also as a medium for ethical reflection and social education. In addition, the study highlights the continuing relevance of traditional narratives in addressing contemporary issues related to identity, ambition, family responsibility, and moral values.

## **Literature Review**

### *a. Folklore as Cultural and Moral Narrative*

Folklore is widely understood as a form of cultural expression that preserves collective values, traditions, and social beliefs within a community. Traditional stories are not merely imaginative narratives but also cultural texts that communicate ethical principles and social expectations across generations. Recent studies explain that folklore continues to function as an important medium for

transmitting moral education, cultural identity, and collective memory in modern society (Danandjaja, 2017; Storey, 2021). Through repeated retelling, folklore reinforces values related to family, responsibility, humility, and social harmony.

In many traditional narratives, moral lessons are presented through direct relationships between actions and consequences. Characters who follow social and ethical norms are rewarded, while those who violate them often face punishment. This narrative structure makes folklore effective as an educational tool because audiences can clearly understand the moral message conveyed in the story. In *Malin Kundang*, the punishment received by the protagonist reflects the importance of filial piety and respect toward parents. The story therefore functions not only as entertainment but also as a cultural mechanism for shaping social behavior and moral awareness.

### *b. Characterization and Character Development*

Characterization is one of the most important elements in literary analysis because it determines how readers understand the personalities, motivations, and transformations of characters within a narrative. According to recent literary studies, characterization is developed through dialogue, actions, emotional responses, and interactions with other characters (Bennett & Royle, 2016; Klarer, 2019). Through characterization, literary works are able to represent moral values, social attitudes, and psychological change.

Character development refers to the transformation experienced by characters throughout the story. Dynamic characters experience significant emotional, moral, or psychological changes as a result of conflict and experience, while static characters remain relatively unchanged (Mays, 2017). In traditional folklore, character development is often closely connected to moral consequences. Characters may transform positively through wisdom and humility or negatively through pride and greed.

In *Malin Kundang*, the protagonist experiences negative character development. At the beginning of the narrative, Malin is portrayed as hardworking, respectful, and devoted to his mother. However, after gaining wealth and higher social status, his personality changes significantly. He becomes arrogant, ashamed of his origins, and unwilling to acknowledge his mother. This transformation highlights how social ambition and pride can influence moral values and personal identity. In contrast, Malin's mother remains emotionally consistent throughout the story, representing patience, sacrifice, and unconditional love.

### *c. Conflict in Literary Narratives*

Conflict is a central component of narrative structure because it drives the progression of events and shapes character development. Recent narrative theories explain that conflict creates tension, reveals motivation, and strengthens thematic meaning within literary works (Herman, 2017; Abbott, 2021). Conflict may appear in internal or external forms. Internal conflict involves emotional and psychological struggle within a character, while external conflict occurs through confrontation with other individuals, society, or the environment.

In folklore narratives, conflict is frequently connected to moral or cultural tension. Characters often struggle between personal desire and social obligation, creating situations that test their values and identity. In *Malin Kundang*, internal conflict appears when Malin attempts to separate himself from his past identity after becoming wealthy. He experiences tension between his social ambition and his moral responsibility toward his mother. External conflict emerges through the confrontation between Malin and his mother after he publicly rejects her.

The escalation of conflict in the story contributes significantly to the tragic ending. The inability to resolve the conflict peacefully reinforces the narrative's moral lesson regarding pride and disobedience. Recent studies in literary criticism emphasize that tragic conflict often functions as a warning against destructive behavior and moral imbalance (Tyson, 2015; Eagleton, 2011). Through conflict, *Malin Kundang* demonstrates how personal choices and emotional tension can lead to irreversible consequences.

*d. Symbolism and Moral Meaning*

Symbolism plays an important role in literary narratives because it allows abstract ideas and emotional experiences to be communicated through concrete objects, settings, and events. Literary scholars explain that symbols help deepen thematic interpretation by connecting physical elements with broader cultural and psychological meanings (Wellek & Warren, 2021). In folklore, symbolism is especially important because it strengthens moral messages and makes stories more memorable for audiences.

Several symbolic elements in *Malin Kundang* contribute directly to the narrative's moral meaning. The sea symbolizes both opportunity and separation, reflecting Malin's journey toward success and his growing distance from his family. The storm represents emotional chaos, guilt, and divine judgment, appearing at the climax of the story when moral tension reaches its peak. Meanwhile, the stone symbolizes permanence, punishment, and moral accountability. Malin's transformation into stone emphasizes that the consequences of arrogance and disobedience are lasting and irreversible.

Recent studies on symbolism in folklore suggest that natural elements are often used to represent spiritual or ethical concepts because they are easily understood within traditional cultural contexts (Rahman, 2020; Nugraha, 2022). In *Malin Kundang*, symbolic elements strengthen the emotional impact of the narrative and reinforce its role as a moral lesson for society.

*e. Previous Studies on Folklore and Moral Education*

Previous studies on Indonesian folklore frequently highlight its role in preserving cultural identity and promoting moral education. Researchers explain that traditional narratives remain relevant because they contain ethical values that continue to resonate with contemporary society (Heryanto, 2018; Suryani, 2020). Folklore is often used in educational settings to teach respect, responsibility, honesty, and social awareness to younger generations.

Several studies have also discussed *Malin Kundang* as a representation of filial disobedience and moral consequence. However, many of these studies focus mainly on the surface moral lesson without examining how characterization, conflict, and symbolism interact structurally to construct meaning. Other studies tend to discuss folklore from anthropological or cultural perspectives rather than through detailed literary analysis.

Therefore, this study seeks to provide a more integrated discussion of character development, conflict, and symbolism in *Malin Kundang*. By examining these literary elements together, the study aims to deepen understanding of how folklore communicates moral and cultural values through narrative structure and character transformation.

## **Methodology**

This study employed a qualitative descriptive approach to analyze character development, conflict, and moral values in Wisran Hadi's drama *Malin Kundang*. A qualitative design was selected because the study focuses on interpreting meanings, narrative structure, character transformation, and symbolic elements rather than producing statistical findings. This approach allows a deeper understanding of how literary elements construct moral and cultural messages within the narrative. The primary data source of this study was the drama script of *Malin Kundang* written by Wisran Hadi. The data included dialogues, character actions, narrative events, and symbolic elements related to themes of filial piety, pride, conflict, identity, and moral consequence. Particular attention was given to scenes that illustrate the transformation of the protagonist and the progression of internal and external conflicts. Secondary data were obtained from books, journal articles, and previous studies related to literary criticism, folklore studies, characterization, conflict theory, and symbolism. These supporting sources were used to strengthen the interpretation and theoretical foundation of the study.

Data collection was conducted through close reading and systematic note-taking. The researcher read the drama script repeatedly to gain a comprehensive understanding of the storyline, character relationships, thematic patterns, and symbolic representations. During the reading process, important dialogues, scenes, and narrative events were identified and recorded. Notes were then classified based on themes such as character transformation, filial piety, pride, social ambition, internal conflict, external conflict, and moral consequence. The data analysis followed several stages of thematic analysis. First, data familiarization was conducted by reviewing the script and collected notes repeatedly to identify

recurring narrative patterns and thematic elements. Second, initial coding was carried out by labeling relevant dialogues, actions, and events connected to the major themes of the study. Third, categorization was performed by grouping similar codes into broader thematic categories such as moral conflict, identity transformation, and symbolic punishment. Fourth, theme development was conducted to identify relationships among the categories and examine how character development and conflict contribute to the construction of moral meaning. Fifth, interpretation was carried out by connecting the findings with relevant literary theories, especially theories of characterization, conflict, folklore, and symbolism. Finally, conclusions were drawn by synthesizing the findings into coherent explanations regarding the moral and cultural significance of the narrative.

## **Result**

The analysis of Malin Kundang reveals that character development, conflict, and symbolism are closely interconnected in constructing the narrative's moral and cultural meaning. The story uses the transformation of the main character and the escalation of conflict to communicate themes related to filial piety, pride, identity, and moral consequence. These elements work together to strengthen the emotional impact of the narrative and reinforce its ethical message. To present the findings more systematically, the results are divided into four major themes.

### **1. Character Transformation from Devotion to Arrogance**

The findings show that Malin Kundang undergoes significant character development throughout the narrative. At the beginning of the story, he is portrayed as a hardworking, respectful, and devoted son who genuinely cares about his mother and wishes to improve their difficult economic condition. His early characterization reflects positive moral qualities such as responsibility, humility, and determination. Several dialogues and actions demonstrate his close emotional relationship with his mother and his desire to create a better future for both of them. However, this characterization gradually changes after Malin achieves wealth and higher social status. His success transforms not only his social position but also his attitude and sense of identity. Upon returning to his hometown, Malin becomes ashamed of his humble origins and refuses to acknowledge his mother in public. His fear of losing social respect causes him to prioritize status and appearance over family loyalty and gratitude.

This transformation marks a clear shift from humility to arrogance. The findings indicate that Malin's development is influenced by his desire for social acceptance and recognition. Instead of using his success to support his family and maintain his values, he distances himself from his past identity. His rejection of his mother becomes the climax of his moral decline, showing that social ambition can negatively affect personal values when it is not balanced with ethical responsibility. In contrast, Malin's mother remains a stable character throughout the narrative. She consistently represents patience, sacrifice, unconditional love, and moral integrity. Despite being rejected and humiliated, she continues to care for her son emotionally. The contrast between Malin's transformation and his mother's consistency strengthens the moral structure of the story and emphasizes the ethical difference between pride and humility.

### **2. Internal Conflict and Identity Struggle**

The analysis also reveals that internal conflict plays an important role in shaping Malin's character transformation. Internally, Malin experiences tension between his original identity as a poor villager and his new identity as a wealthy and respected man. This conflict emerges after he becomes socially successful and begins interacting with people from a higher social class. Malin's internal struggle is reflected in his fear of being associated with poverty and his growing discomfort with his past life. He attempts to create a new social identity that separates him from his origins. This emotional tension becomes more visible when he returns to his hometown and encounters his mother. Rather than feeling pride or gratitude, he becomes anxious that acknowledging her will damage his social image and status.

The findings suggest that Malin's internal conflict is closely related to identity and social pressure. His desire to maintain public respect causes him to suppress emotional attachment and moral responsibility. This struggle demonstrates how personal ambition and social recognition can create psychological conflict, particularly when individuals attempt to reject parts of their identity in order to fit into a different social environment. Although the story does not explore Malin's psychological condition in great detail, his actions indicate that he is influenced by fear, shame, and social insecurity.

His internal conflict ultimately contributes to his external actions, especially his decision to deny his mother publicly. The narrative therefore shows that unresolved internal conflict can lead to destructive moral choices.

### **3. External Conflict and Moral Consequence**

The results further show that external conflict forms the dramatic core of the narrative. The most significant external conflict occurs between Malin and his mother after he returns to his village. This confrontation develops when his mother approaches him with affection and pride, while Malin responds with rejection and denial. The public nature of this rejection intensifies the emotional tension of the scene. Malin not only refuses to acknowledge his mother but also treats her with disrespect in front of others. This conflict reflects a clash between moral obligation and personal ambition. His mother represents familial loyalty and emotional connection, while Malin represents pride, social ambition, and the rejection of traditional values.

The external conflict escalates further after Malin's mother expresses deep emotional pain and calls for divine justice. The resulting storm and destruction of Malin's ship symbolize the climax of the narrative conflict. These events are not presented as accidental but as direct consequences of Malin's actions and moral failure. The transformation of Malin into stone serves as the final resolution of the conflict. This punishment reinforces the connection between behavior and consequence, emphasizing that arrogance and disobedience lead to irreversible outcomes. Unlike modern narratives that may provide reconciliation or redemption, Malin Kundang presents a clear moral resolution in which wrongdoing receives direct punishment. This structure strengthens the story's educational and ethical purpose.

### **4. Symbolism and the Representation of Moral Values**

The findings also reveal that symbolism plays an important role in strengthening the narrative's moral meaning. Several natural and physical elements in the story function symbolically to represent emotional, spiritual, and ethical concepts. One important symbol is the sea, which represents opportunity, ambition, and separation. The sea allows Malin to pursue success and leave poverty behind, but it also creates distance between him and his family. His journey across the sea symbolizes social mobility and the desire for a different life.

Another significant symbol is the storm that appears after Malin rejects his mother. The storm represents emotional chaos, guilt, divine judgment, and the collapse of moral balance. It marks the moment when Malin's actions reach their consequences and reflects the intensity of both external and internal conflict. The stone is the strongest symbol in the narrative. Malin's transformation into stone symbolizes permanence, punishment, and moral accountability. The stone functions as a reminder that actions have lasting consequences and that moral failure cannot easily be erased. Through this symbol, the story emphasizes the importance of humility, gratitude, and respect toward parents. The findings also indicate that symbolic elements help make the moral message more memorable and emotionally powerful for audiences. Rather than explaining moral lessons directly, the narrative communicates them through dramatic events and symbolic transformation. This strengthens the story's effectiveness as both literary narrative and cultural instruction.

## **Discussion**

The results of this study indicate that Malin Kundang constructs its moral message through the interaction of character transformation, conflict, and symbolic representation. The narrative does not simply present a story about disobedience but also portrays how ambition, identity, and social pressure can influence human behavior and moral judgment. Through the tragic experience of the protagonist, the story communicates cultural values related to gratitude, humility, filial piety, and social responsibility. These findings become more meaningful when examined alongside recent studies in folklore, literary studies, and moral education that discuss the continuing significance of traditional narratives in modern society.

One of the most significant findings concerns the transformation of Malin Kundang's character. At the beginning of the story, Malin is described as a respectful and hardworking young man who wishes to improve his family's condition. However, after achieving wealth and entering a higher social environment, he gradually changes into someone arrogant and ashamed of his background. This transformation reflects how social ambition can alter personal identity and moral values. Recent studies

explain that many folklore narratives use character transformation to illustrate the consequences of excessive pride and the loss of ethical awareness (Siregar, 2021; Amelia, 2020). In this context, Malin's development represents more than individual failure because it also reflects broader cultural concerns about social mobility and moral decline.

The findings further reveal that Malin's behavior is strongly influenced by his desire for social recognition. His rejection of his mother occurs because he fears being associated with poverty and lower social status. This supports recent discussions suggesting that identity is often shaped by social expectations and the need to maintain public image (Nugroho, 2022; Firmansyah, 2019). Malin attempts to construct a new identity that separates him from his past life, showing that acceptance within a higher social class becomes more important to him than emotional loyalty and gratitude. The narrative therefore reflects how social pressure can encourage individuals to distance themselves from their origins in order to gain approval and status.

Another important aspect of the findings is the role of conflict in strengthening the moral structure of the story. Both internal and external conflicts contribute significantly to the development of the narrative. Internally, Malin struggles with his sense of identity and his fear of social humiliation. Externally, the confrontation between Malin and his mother becomes the emotional climax of the story. Recent literary studies emphasize that conflict in folklore often functions as a moral testing process through which characters reveal their values, weaknesses, and motivations (Pramudita, 2021; Hasanah, 2020). In *Malin Kundang*, conflict does not exist merely to create dramatic tension but also to demonstrate the consequences of moral failure and emotional neglect.

The tragic resolution of the story also reinforces the relationship between behavior and consequence. Malin's punishment symbolizes the idea that actions have irreversible effects, particularly when individuals violate important cultural and ethical values. Recent studies on traditional narratives explain that punishment in folklore frequently serves as a cultural mechanism for maintaining social order and teaching moral discipline (Utami, 2018; Ardiansyah, 2023). The transformation into stone therefore functions as both physical punishment and symbolic representation of guilt, shame, and permanent consequence. Through this ending, the narrative emphasizes that wealth and social status cannot protect individuals from the consequences of unethical behavior.

The discussion of filial piety is also central to understanding the story's moral significance. The narrative strongly emphasizes respect toward parents as one of the most important social and ethical values within Indonesian culture. Malin's mother consistently represents patience, sacrifice, and unconditional love, even after experiencing rejection and humiliation. Her character contrasts sharply with Malin's moral decline, highlighting the ethical difference between humility and arrogance. This finding is consistent with recent studies on folklore and moral education that identify family relationships as a major source of ethical teaching in traditional narratives (Puspitasari, 2022; Yusri, 2021). Through this contrast, the story encourages audiences to value gratitude, emotional responsibility, and family loyalty regardless of social achievement.

In addition to characterization and conflict, symbolic elements also contribute significantly to the construction of meaning in the story. The sea, the storm, and the stone function as symbolic representations of ambition, emotional turmoil, judgment, and consequence. Recent studies on symbolism in folklore suggest that natural elements are commonly used to express abstract moral and psychological ideas because they create strong emotional associations for audiences (Halimah, 2020; Kusuma, 2022). In *Malin Kundang*, the sea symbolizes opportunity and separation, reflecting Malin's journey away from his family and cultural roots. The storm represents chaos and divine punishment, while the stone symbolizes permanence and moral accountability. These symbolic elements strengthen the emotional intensity of the narrative and make the moral lesson more memorable.

The relevance of *Malin Kundang* in contemporary society is another important point highlighted by the findings. Although the story originates from traditional culture, its themes remain closely connected to modern social realities. Issues such as social mobility, identity performance, ambition, and family responsibility continue to influence human relationships today. Recent cultural studies explain that folklore remains important because traditional narratives often address universal human experiences that continue across generations (Fadhilah, 2021; Ramdani, 2020). Malin's rejection of his origins can therefore be interpreted as a reflection of modern social behavior in which individuals

sometimes prioritize reputation, prestige, and social acceptance over emotional connection and ethical values.

The findings of this study also provide implications for literary and educational contexts. From a literary perspective, the study demonstrates that folklore can function as a complex narrative form capable of exploring psychological conflict, cultural identity, and moral consequence through characterization and symbolism. From an educational perspective, Malin Kundang can be used as an effective medium for teaching moral values, cultural awareness, and critical thinking. Students can learn how narratives communicate ethical lessons through conflict and character development while also reflecting on the relevance of those lessons in everyday life.

Despite these contributions, several limitations remain within this study. The analysis focuses only on one version of Malin Kundang, limiting broader comparison with other folklore narratives or adaptations of the story. In addition, the interpretation relies mainly on textual analysis, which may be influenced by the researcher's perspective. The study also concentrates primarily on character development, conflict, and symbolism without discussing other possible aspects such as gender representation or audience reception. Future studies are recommended to examine different versions of the story or explore how contemporary audiences interpret the narrative's moral values in relation to modern cultural and social conditions.

### Conclusion

This study concludes that Malin Kundang presents a strong moral and cultural narrative through the interaction of character development, conflict, and symbolism. The transformation of Malin from a respectful and hardworking son into an arrogant and ungrateful individual demonstrates how social ambition and the desire for recognition can influence personal identity and moral values. His character development reflects the dangers of prioritizing status and public image over gratitude, humility, and family responsibility. The study also reveals that both internal and external conflicts play important roles in shaping the narrative's emotional and ethical meaning. Internal conflict appears through Malin's struggle with identity and social acceptance, while external conflict emerges through his confrontation with his mother. These conflicts intensify the dramatic tension of the story and ultimately lead to tragic consequences. The punishment received by Malin reinforces the connection between human actions and moral accountability, emphasizing that disrespect and arrogance result in irreversible outcomes.

In addition, symbolic elements such as the sea, the storm, and the stone strengthen the representation of ambition, emotional turmoil, divine judgment, and permanent consequence. These symbols deepen the narrative meaning and help communicate moral lessons in a memorable and emotionally powerful way. Through characterization, conflict, and symbolism, the story effectively teaches values related to filial piety, humility, gratitude, and social responsibility. The findings also demonstrate that Malin Kundang remains relevant in contemporary society because its themes continue to reflect modern social realities related to identity, social mobility, family relationships, and moral behavior. As a result, the story functions not only as cultural heritage but also as an important educational narrative that encourages ethical reflection and cultural awareness. However, this study is limited to the analysis of one literary adaptation of Malin Kundang and focuses mainly on character development, conflict, and symbolism. Future research is recommended to compare different versions of the story, examine audience responses, or explore additional perspectives such as gender representation and cultural adaptation. Further studies may also investigate the use of folklore in educational contexts to strengthen moral education and cultural literacy among students.

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