Chapter I
Introduction

Chapter I introduces the foundation of this research. It presents the background of the study, identifies the research problems, explains the study's limitations, formulates the research questions and objectives, and discusses the study's theoretical and practical significance. Together, these sections provide readers with a clear understanding of the purpose, scope, and direction of the research.

1.1 Background of the Study

Literature often mirrors human experiences and emotions through an organized sequence of events. A story usually begins in balance, faces disruption, and moves toward a resolution, reflecting the changes its characters undergo. Understanding this structure helps reveal how specific elements such as recurring motifs guide both character development and narrative movement. One novel that demonstrates such a dynamic structure is “The Alchemist” (1993) by Paulo Coelho.

In literary studies, structural analysis provides a systematic way to understand how meaning is produced through the arrangement of narrative elements. Rather than focusing solely on characters or themes, structuralism views the text as a system in which every part functions to maintain overall coherence (Anam et al., 2024). Tzvetan Todorov, one of the key figures of structural narratology, proposed that every story follows a logical sequence of balance, disruption, and restoration. His theory allows the writer to examine how narrative rhythm reflects human experience in an organized pattern.

The novel recounts the spiritual and physical journey of Santiago, a young shepherd from Andalusia, who dreams of a treasure buried near the Egyptian pyramids. Paulo Coelho, the author of "The Alchemist", is widely recognized as a contemporary writer who consistently explores universal themes such as destiny, faith, self-discovery, and the pursuit of dreams (Sabir & Akmal, 2025). His works, translated into dozens of languages, have inspired readers across cultures through their blend of simplicity and spiritual depth. In "The Alchemist", these recurring ideas are embodied in Santiago's journey, where he experiences cycles of discovery, loss, and renewal (Wu & Wang, 2022). A distinct pattern appears throughout the novel: each time Santiago nears fulfillment of his goal, he faces solitude. After being robbed in Tangier, he works in isolation in a crystal shop, and later he crosses the desert largely on his own. These instances of loneliness serve not merely as emotional states but as narrative signposts marking transitions between major phases of the story. In the journey toward achieving one's dream, solitude often becomes inevitable. To realize a deeply personal vision, a person must detach from comfort, face uncertainty, and reflect inwardly. This necessity of solitude symbolizes independence, spiritual growth, and transformation. "The Alchemist" portrays Santiago's solitude not as a punishment but as a process of self-discovery.

"The Alchemist" has achieved global recognition not only as a work of inspiration but also as a modern fable rich in symbolic structure. It has been translated into more than eighty languages, making it one of the most translated literary works in history. It is a universal narrative about pursuing dreams and

listening to one's heart, making it a valuable text for structural analysis because it presents a clear pattern of progression from conflict to transformation.

The writer chooses to focus on solitude because it represents both an emotional and structural force within the narrative. While many readers interpret Santiago's loneliness as a spiritual trial, this study views it as a narrative function that determines the story's movement. Through solitude, Coelho organizes the story's transitions and highlights his protagonist's inner transformation.

The writer is particularly interested in this recurring pattern of solitude because it functions as a structural force rather than merely a thematic one. Santiago's moments of isolation correspond directly with turning points in the plot, creating a rhythm that moves the story forward. This structural rhythm reveals how solitude serves as a mechanism linking equilibrium, disruption, and restoration.

To analyze this rhythm, the writer applies Tzvetan Todorov's narrative theory, which conceives of a story as a structured movement from an initial equilibrium through disruption to a new equilibrium. According to Todorov (1971), every complete narrative begins in stability, is disrupted by conflict, and ends with a transformed stability that incorporates change. By using this model, the writer aims to reveal how solitude functions as a narrative mechanism that organizes the novel's structure and transformation.

To avoid confusion about the main concepts of this study and to strengthen the connection among the title, background, and research questions, several key terms need to be explained clearly.

In this study, the term “solitude” does not mean loneliness or social isolation. Solitude is understood as a meaningful condition of being alone that allows individuals to reflect, become more self-aware, and experience internal change, unlike loneliness, which is often linked to negative feelings such as sadness or exclusion. Solitude can be a positive, constructive state. In literary works, solitude often appears when characters face their inner conflicts, rethink their goals, or grow personally. Therefore, solitude in this research is not treated only as an emotional experience but as an important moment in the narrative that has a structural role.

The term “narrative mechanism” refers to how certain elements function to advance a story. In this research, solitude is examined as an active element that shapes the narrative's progression, rather than as a passive theme. As a narrative mechanism, solitude plays a role in creating change, marking transitions and supporting transformation within the plot. In this way, solitude connects one part of the story to another and helps the narrative develop in an organized manner.

This study also uses the concept of the “narrative cycle”, which comes from structural narratology. This concept explains narrative development as a movement from an initial equilibrium to disruption, followed by recognition, attempts to resolve the problem, and the formation of a new equilibrium. By applying this model, the study examines how moments of solitude often appear at key transitional stages in the story. Solitude is therefore not accidental, but structurally placed within the narrative.

By clarifying these key terms, this study places solitude as an important narrative mechanism within the narrative cycle of “The Alchemist”. This explanation helps ensure that the background, research questions, and objectives are clearly connected and emphasizes the role of solitude in shaping the novel's progression.

1.2 Identification of the Problems

Based on the background above, several problems can be identified in Paulo Coelho’s “The Alchemist”. The novel presents recurring experiences of solitude throughout Santiago’s pursuit of his dream. These moments of isolation are not only emotional experiences but also narrative signals marking changes in the story’s structure. The repetition of solitude each time Santiago approaches success suggests that this motif serves as a structural mechanism linking one stage of the narrative to another.

This observation suggests that the novel's development can be better understood through a structural approach that focuses on the organization of its plot rather than on its philosophical or moral aspects. The main problem of this research lies in analyzing how solitude functions as a narrative mechanism that drives the story's transformation from equilibrium to disruption and back to a new equilibrium.

1.3 Limitation of the Study

This study is limited to analyzing the intrinsic elements of “The Alchemist”, specifically focusing on its plot structure and the motif of solitude. Other literary

aspects such as language style and philosophical meaning are considered beyond the scope of this research. Although psychological theory is referred to in Chapter II to provide a conceptual foundation for understanding solitude, this study does not conduct a psychological interpretation of the characters; rather, solitude is examined as a narrative mechanism within Todorov's structural framework.

1.4 Research Questions

Based on the identification and limitation above, this study addresses the following questions:

1. How is the Narrative Structure of Todorov's Narrative Cycle manifested in Paulo Coelho's "The Alchemist"?
2. How does the Narrative Structure of the Narrative Cycle in Coelho's "The Alchemist" portray the motif of Solitude?

1.5 Objectives of the Study

Based on the research questions stated above, this study is designed to achieve the following objectives:

1. To describe and analyze the Narrative Structure of the Narrative Cycle in Paulo Coelho's "The Alchemist".

   This objective involves examining how the novel organizes its storyline through recurring patterns of equilibrium, disruption, and renewed equilibrium. By identifying these cyclical movements, the study seeks to reveal how the narrative is constructed and how Santiago's journey follows a structural rhythm

that shapes the plot's overall progression. This analysis aims to provide a clearer understanding of the novel not only as a spiritual quest but as a systematically arranged narrative.

2. To examine how the Narrative Structure of the Narrative Cycle in Paulo Coelho's "The Alchemist" portrays the motif of solitude**.**

This objective focuses on investigating the role of solitude as an integral element within the narrative cycle. It aims to explain how moments of solitude function as transitional phases that move the story from one structural stage to another. By analyzing key moments when Santiago encounters solitude, the study seeks to show how Coelho embeds solitude within the plot's architecture, making it a narrative mechanism that drives change, shapes the protagonist's development, and reinforces the story's cyclical pattern.

1.6 Significance of the Study

1.6.1 Theoretical Significance

Theoretically, this study contributes to literary structural analysis by applying Todorov's narrative theory to a modern text. It provides insight into how a recurring motif, specifically solitude, can maintain internal coherence and narrative balance.

1.6.2 Practical Significance

In practical terms, the findings of this study are expected to serve as a reference for students, scholars, and readers who wish to analyze fiction through its narrative structure. It also helps readers appreciate how structural

elements shape emotional and thematic progression in literature. Furthermore, this study provides insights for critics and writers regarding how motifs can operate as organizing principles that sustain narrative unity and transformation.