

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This chapter was conducted intentionally in serving the introduction of research which determined in the following content from research background, research question, research objective, research significances, and the definition of key terms.

1.1 Research Background

Detective fiction is commonly categorized as a form of popular literature because it is written for broad audiences and emphasizes readability, entertainment, and suspense. Unlike highly experimental literary works that often deal with abstract or philosophical issues, detective fiction generally presents clear narrative structures and engaging mysteries that are accessible to general readers. According to Priestman (2003), the distinction between “high” and “low” literature gradually weakened during the 1960s, allowing detective fiction to gain greater academic attention due to its cultural and literary significance.

As a genre, detective fiction typically introduces a crime that is subsequently investigated until the perpetrator is finally revealed (“Detective Story”) (Cawelti, 1969). The narrative usually follows a structured progression consisting of crime, investigation, and revelation, which encourages readers to participate actively in solving the mystery. This structure provides intellectual stimulation through puzzles, suspense, and logical problem-solving. As James (2011) explains, detective fiction offers readers “the mild intellectual challenge of a puzzle” while simultaneously reinforcing ideas of order and justice.

The origins of detective fiction are commonly traced to Edgar Allan Poe, particularly through his short story *The Murders in the Rue Morgue*, which established many of the conventions later associated with the genre (Most & Stowe, 1983). Detective fiction was further popularized by Arthur Conan Doyle through the character of Sherlock Holmes, whose investigative methods became highly influential in later detective narratives (James, 2011). The genre experienced significant development during the period known as the Golden Age of Detective Fiction between the two World Wars, when writers such as Agatha Christie produced works characterized by intricate plotting, misleading clues, and carefully structured revelations .

The popularity of detective fiction is closely connected to its interactive nature. Readers are encouraged to analyze clues, evaluate suspects, and distinguish between appearance and reality throughout the narrative (Spoo & Stern, 2025). According to Cawelti (Cawelti, 1969)

,detective fiction appeals particularly to readers who enjoy rational problem-solving and the belief that mysteries can ultimately be resolved through logical thinking. Suspense and uncertainty are therefore balanced by the expectation that hidden truths will eventually be uncovered through investigation and reasoning (Dechêne, 2018).

Detective fiction functions as a form of escapist literature that allows readers to experience tension, danger, and uncertainty within a controlled fictional environment (Matković, 2018). Through suspenseful narratives and eventual resolution, detective stories temporarily satisfy the human desire for both excitement and order (Latimer, 2025). This combination of familiarity, intellectual engagement, and narrative tension contributes to the enduring popularity of detective fiction within popular literature.

Narrative structure plays an essential role in shaping how a story is organized and understood by readers (Rimmon-Kenan, 1983). In literary studies, narrative structure refers not only to the sequence of events within a story but also to the arrangement and distribution of information throughout the narrative. Through narrative structure, authors determine how events are presented, which details are emphasized, and when certain information is revealed to the audience (Jahn, 2021). Consequently, narrative structure functions as a framework that organizes the relationship between events, characters, and perspectives within a literary text (Booth, 2008).

The organization of narrative structure significantly influences how readers interpret and understand a story (Miskimmin, 2013). Readers do not receive all information simultaneously; instead, they construct meaning gradually based on the information made available through the narrative. The arrangement of scenes, descriptions, dialogues, and perspectives shapes readers' assumptions, emotional responses, and expectations regarding the events of the story (Keen, 2003). As a result, narrative structure becomes an important mechanism through which authors can direct attention, create ambiguity, and influence interpretation (James, 2011). The same event may produce different meanings depending on how and when it is presented within the narrative.

One of the most important narrative devices used to create such misdirection is the red herring (Link, 2023). A red herring refers to a misleading clue, suspicious character, or deceptive event intentionally designed to divert attention away from the actual solution of the mystery. In detective fiction, red herrings function not only to surprise readers but also to sustain suspense by encouraging false assumptions regarding the identity of the perpetrator. Suspicious circumstances, hidden relationships, or exaggerated motives may lead readers toward incorrect interpretations that later prove inaccurate after the final revelation. Therefore,

red herrings become a central strategy through which detective fiction manipulates reader perception and controls the interpretive process throughout the narrative (Knight, 2007).

The use of red herrings demonstrates that detective fiction relies heavily on narrative manipulation and the strategic organization of information. Reader interpretation is shaped not only by the existence of clues, but also by how those clues are arranged, emphasized, or concealed within the narrative structure (Priestman, 2003). Through selective narration and restricted perspective, authors guide readers toward particular assumptions while simultaneously limiting their access to the complete truth. Consequently, understanding how misdirection is constructed becomes essential for analyzing the narrative mechanisms of detective fiction.

Crooked House by Agatha Christie, a novel that demonstrates how narrative arrangement and perspective control can systematically shape reader interpretation and construct red herrings throughout the story. First published in 1949, the novel is widely recognized for its complex mystery and its unconventional final revelation. Unlike many traditional detective stories that focus primarily on the logical investigation of evidence, *Crooked House* places significant emphasis on the psychological and narrative construction of suspicion. Through its carefully arranged narrative structure, the novel creates uncertainty regarding the identity of the murderer and continuously directs readers toward misleading interpretations.

The story centers on the murder of Aristide Leonides, the wealthy patriarch of the Leonides family, who dies after being poisoned in his own household. Following his death, suspicion emerges among the members of the family, each of whom possesses different motives, emotional tensions, and hidden conflicts (Christie, 2010). The investigation is narrated retrospectively by Charles Hayward, a close observer who is also emotionally connected to the family through his relationship with Sophia Leonides. As the narrator, Charles recounts the process of investigation while simultaneously interpreting the behavior of the family members, thereby shaping how readers perceive the unfolding mystery (Christie, 2010).

Throughout the narrative, suspicion repeatedly shifts from one character to another, creating an atmosphere of uncertainty and distrust. Particular attention is directed toward Brenda Leonides, the much younger wife of Aristide, and Laurence Brown, the children's tutor. Their secret romantic relationship, combined with their access to the victim and the apparent possibility of gaining benefits from Aristide's death, constructs a seemingly convincing motive for murder. The discovery of private letters between them further reinforces the impression that

they are responsible for the crime. As a result, both the characters within the story and the readers are encouraged to interpret Brenda and Laurence as the most probable suspects.

However, the novel ultimately reveals that these suspicions function primarily as misleading assumptions rather than genuine solutions to the mystery. In contrast to Brenda and Laurence, Josephine Leonides is initially portrayed as an eccentric but harmless child whose curiosity frequently places her near important events. Her presence in critical situations is interpreted merely as childish inquisitiveness rather than suspicious behavior. This narrative treatment effectively conceals her significance within the story and minimizes attention toward her actions. Consequently, the revelation that Josephine is the actual murderer emerges as both shocking and disruptive to the readers' earlier assumptions.

To examine how narrative manipulation operates in detective fiction, this research applies the narratological theory proposed by Gérard Genette (1988). Narratology is a branch of literary theory that focuses on the structure of narratives and the ways stories are organized and presented to readers (Link, 2023). Rather than concentrating solely on the content of a story, narratology analyzes the mechanisms through which narrative meaning is produced, including the arrangement of events, narrative perspective, and the regulation of information. Through narratological analysis, literary texts can be examined not only for what they tell, but also for how they tell it.

Among the various concepts developed by Genette (1988), this research specifically focuses on order and mood as important elements in understanding narrative structure. According to Genette (1988), order refers to the relationship between the chronological sequence of events in the story and the sequence in which those events are presented within the narrative. In many narratives, events are not always narrated in the exact order in which they occur chronologically. Authors may rearrange events through flashbacks, delayed explanations, or retrospective narration in order to create suspense, emphasize certain moments, or conceal important information. Therefore, order becomes a significant narrative strategy that influences how readers gradually construct their understanding of the story.

In detective fiction, the construction of red herrings is closely related to the interaction between narrative order and mood. These two narratological elements work together to regulate the distribution of information and shape reader interpretation throughout the narrative. Rather than functioning independently, order and mood create a structured system of misdirection in which readers are encouraged to form assumptions based on limited or selectively presented information. Through this interaction, the narrative controls both what readers know and how they interpret what they know.

The second concept used in this research is mood, which concerns the regulation of narrative perspective and distance. Mood explains how the narrative controls the amount of information accessible to readers and the position from which events are perceived (1988). Through perspective and focalization, the narrative determines what readers are allowed to see, know, or interpret throughout the story. Narrative distance also influences how closely readers are connected to characters, events, and emotions within the text. As a result, mood plays an important role in shaping reader perception and directing interpretation.

These concepts are highly relevant for analyzing detective fiction because the genre depends heavily on the strategic organization of information. In detective narratives, authors often manipulate chronology and perspective in order to maintain suspense and conceal the identity of the criminal. Through the manipulation of order, important events or facts may be delayed, fragmented, or revealed retrospectively, causing readers to interpret clues incompletely. At the same time, mood restricts reader knowledge by limiting perspective to certain characters or viewpoints, preventing readers from accessing the full truth until the final revelation.

The concept of order contributes to this process by manipulating the timing of information within the narrative (Genette, 1988). Important events, explanations, or clues are often delayed, fragmented, or revealed retrospectively so that readers cannot immediately understand their full significance. Certain details may appear insignificant when first introduced but later become crucial after the final revelation. Conversely, information presented earlier in the narrative may receive excessive emphasis, encouraging readers to consider it more important than it actually is. Through the rearrangement of chronology and narrative sequence, the story controls the pace at which readers construct meaning and evaluate possible solutions to the mystery. At the same time, mood regulates narrative perspective and determines the extent of reader access to information (Genette, 1988). Since readers perceive events through a restricted narrative viewpoint, their understanding of the story becomes dependent on the narrator's observations, interpretations, and assumptions.

The interaction between order and mood consequently produces incomplete and often misleading interpretations. Because information is revealed gradually and filtered through restricted perspectives, readers are encouraged to form conclusions based on partial understanding. Suspicious characters may appear guilty due to the emphasis placed on their actions. This process demonstrates that red herrings are not merely isolated false clues inserted into the story. Instead, they emerge from a broader narrative strategy involving the careful arrangement of chronology, perspective, and information distribution. Consequently,

misdirection in detective fiction is structurally embedded within the narrative itself, making reader misunderstanding an intentional and essential part of the reading experience

Despite the extensive discussion of detective fiction and narrative theory, previous studies on *Crooked House* have generally focused on different aspects of the novel without specifically examining how narrative structure constructs red herrings. Existing research tends to analyze literary elements separately, such as characterization, conflict, psychological conditions, and linguistic features, rather than investigating how these elements interact within the narrative structure to manipulate reader interpretation.

Several previous researchers have examined the novel from various perspectives. Midianti analyzes characterization and conflict in *Crooked House*, focusing on internal and external conflicts experienced by the characters as well as the distinction between flat and round characters. Several previous studies have examined different aspects of *Crooked House* and detective fiction. Midianti (2017), in “*Character and Conflict in Agatha Christie’s Crooked House*,” analyzes the characterization and conflict structure in the novel using a qualitative descriptive method. The study identifies both internal and external conflicts and classifies characters into flat and round types, showing how character dynamics contribute to narrative tension.

Similarly, Suastika (2015), in “*Agatha Christie’s Characterization Analysis through Sophia in the Novel Crooked House*,” examines the character of Sophia using the concepts of “telling” and “showing.” The study finds that characterization is constructed through both narrative description and character actions, highlighting how readers interpret personality through textual cues.

From a psychological perspective, Dewi (2006), in “*Josephine Leonide’s Neurosis in Agatha Christie’s Crooked House*,” explores the psychological condition of Josephine, arguing that her behavior reflects neurosis shaped by emotional disturbance and family dynamics. Likewise, Mapeaty (2013), in “*Josephine’s Deviant Behaviors in Agatha Christie’s Crooked House: A Psychoanalytical Study*,” analyzes Josephine’s deviant actions using psychoanalytic theory, emphasizing how psychological instability contributes to the narrative conflict.

In addition, Musyarofah (2015), in “*Explicitation in the Translation of Noun Phrases in Agatha Christie’s Crooked House*,” investigates linguistic aspects of the novel, particularly how meaning is clarified in translation. The study demonstrates how structural changes in language can affect interpretation, indicating that meaning in the novel is closely tied to how information is presented.

Several previous studies have explored related issues of narrative structure and reader interpretation. “*Focalization on Two Detective Stories (‘The Final Problem’ by Doyle and Moriarty the Patriot by Takeuchi & Miyoshi)*” by Hanifah (2025) analyzes how focalization shapes reader interpretation using Genette’s framework. Similarly, “*Guilt of Mystery Narrative in And Then There Were None*” by Sari (2024) examines the role of narrative perspective in constructing mystery, while “*Hard-Boiled Detective Formula in Rush Hour 2*” by Hidayatullah (2021) discusses genre patterns using formula theory. However, these studies tend to examine narrative elements separately, without fully addressing how structural organization systematically produces misdirection.

1.2 Research Problems

This research is aimed to provide a clear interest in projecting the aim. However, the research question is constructed in order to justify the interest as regarded down below:

1. How are the mood and order formed in *Crooked House* by Agatha Christie?
2. How does the interplay of mood and order shape the narrative structure and constructing red herrings in *Crooked House* by Agatha Christie?

1.3 Research Objective

By doing so, this research has objective aim in preserving the notion of result in this work of research as follows:

1. To analyze the order and mood formed in *Crooked House* by Agatha Christie.
2. To analyze the interplay of mood and order shape the narrative structure and generate red herrings in *Crooked House* by Agatha Christie.

1.4 Research Significance

This research contributes both theoretically and practically.

Theoretically, this study contributes to narratology by integrating the concepts of mood and order proposed by Gérard Genette with the theory of detective fiction formulated by John G. Cawelti. It offers a more comprehensive understanding of how narrative structure functions in constructing misdirection within popular literature.

Practically, this research provides a framework for analyzing detective fiction through a narratological approach. It may serve as a reference for students and researchers interested in narrative technique, genre analysis, and the study of mystery fiction.

1.5 Definition of Key Terms

As for this study, the researcher would analyze the mood and order, also the red herring in Agatha Christie's novel entitled *Crooked House*. The researcher also will use some terms that had their own definition to avoid some misunderstanding for the reader. At this chapter it will be based on its key meaning and the definition in this research are:

1. **Narrative Structure:** refers to the organization of events and narrative discourse that shapes how meaning is constructed within literary text.
2. **Mood:** refers to the regulation of narrative information through focalization and distance, determining how events are perceived, based on Gerard Genette's narratological framework.
3. **Order:** denotes the relationship between the chronological sequence of events in the story and their arrangement in the narrative discourse.
4. **Red Herring:** a *red herring* is a deliberate narrative strategy designed to mislead readers through false clues or deceptive emphasis, as conceptualized by John G. Cawelti.

