

Friendship as Emotional Resilience: Loss, Belonging, and Relational Recovery in Kate DiCamillo's *Raymie Nightingale*

Jayakrishnan R.¹ & Dr. Anitha A.²

¹Research Scholar, Department of English, Dr. M.G.R. Educational and Research Institute University, Maduravoyal, Chennai- 600 095, Tamilnadu, India.

²Professor & Head, Department of English, Dr. M.G.R. Educational and Research Institute University, Maduravoyal, Chennai- 600 095, Tamilnadu, India.

Abstract

Attachment, loss, and emotional resilience in Kate DiCamillo's *Raymie Nightingale* investigates how paternal abandonment disrupts Raymie's emotional security and how subsequent relationships contribute to her psychological recovery. The study employs qualitative textual analysis informed by John Bowlby's Attachment Theory, focusing on five concepts: attachment bond, separation anxiety, internal working models, alternative attachment figures, and emotional resilience. The loss of Raymie's father disrupts her primary attachment bond, producing separation anxiety, emotional insecurity, and a persistent desire for reunion. Her friendships with Louisiana Elefante and Beverly Tapinski function as alternative attachment relationships that provide security, trust, acceptance, and belonging. These relationships gradually influence Raymie's internal working models and enable her to reconstruct emotional security. The study argues that resilience is represented as a relational process rather than an individual achievement. It further establishes that friendship functions as a psychologically significant mechanism for recovery following attachment disruption.

Keywords: Attachment, Paternal Abandonment, Attachment Disruption, Emotional Resilience, Alternative Attachment Figures.

Introduction

Children's literature has evolved beyond the old idea of merely entertaining and teaching moral instruction to an important medium for looking at children's emotional and psychological experiences. Today's stories explore tangled stuff like loneliness, grieving, family changes, trying to figure out who you are, and how people get back up again, the audience can see the full, messy side of a child's inner world. Scholars also argues that children's books serve as an important site to understand how young readers interpret emotional, and then how they respond to in the everyday experiences, like home and social life (Nodelman; Hunt; Nikolajeva). Consequently, literary studies have increasingly adopted interdisciplinary approaches, integrating with psychology, childhood studies, and developmental theory, examine how emotions are shown and understood in these texts and the link between children's literature and psychology have getting increasingly scholarly attention. Stories do more

than simply reflect what children go through, that they also provide a framework for emotional growth, and for self-understanding (Coats; Reynolds; Trites). In fictional form, authors often show how child protagonists experience emotional hardship, then develop strategies to cope, and eventually build meaningful relationship with other people. Therefore, psychological approaches become especially valuable when scholars seek to examine not only the theme of "resilience," but the underlying psychological mechanism of how children respond when they face loss, and what those responses are doing that shape children's emotional responses. These methods help scholars move beyond only thematic interpretation and start examining the psychological processes underlying character development.

Among contemporary authors of children's literature, Kate DiCamillo occupies a distinctive position, she consistently explores to childhood emotions and complex interpersonal relationships. Her works consistently examine loneliness, longing,

belonging, friendship, and emotional healing. She doesn't portray childhood as an uncomplicated period of innocence. Instead, DiCamillo portrays children as people who can confront with complex emotional experiences and still show resilience and empathy. Her protagonists often encounter into moments of emotional vulnerability, then they must navigate complex emotional challenges before they arrive at a clearer sense of who they are, and how they connect to other people (Reynolds; Coats). Through those kinds of portrayals DiCamillo helps fuel current conversations about how children grow emotionally and how psychological well-being is shaped. Published in 2016, *Raymie Nightingale* follows a young girl, Raymie, after her father abandons the family to be with another woman. He leaves, and she is deeply affected, so she starts believing that winning the Little Miss Central Florida Tire competition will get her father's attention and, in the end, bring him back under the same roof. However, as the narrative progress, her emotional journal expands beyond the desire for reunion, and it turns into a process of emotional growth through her friendships with Louisiana Elefante and Beverly Tapinski. Together, the three girls confront their fears, their insecurities, and the emotional wounds they carry, while they build supportive and empathetic relationships. The novel offers a nuanced exploration at how children respond to loss, abandonment and the search for emotional security.

Existing scholarship on *Raymie Nightingale* has predominantly focused on themes such as friendship, resilience, identity formation, and gradual emotional development. Those studies provide valuable insights into the representation of childhood, but they remain focused on the outcomes of emotional development. However limited attention had been paid to the underlying psychological mechanism, which facilitate emotional development psychologically. Specifically, insufficient attention has been placed on how the father's absence, that is paternal abandonment, shapes Raymie's emotional development and why her friendship function feeling so psychologically significant after that loss, not just as a source of emotional support but as

something more. To address this research gap, this study employs John Bowlby's Attachment Theory as the main theoretical lens. Bowlby suggests that early emotional bonds between children and caregivers make a crucial role, because they shape psychological development and feelings of emotional safety (Bowlby). When those ties are disrupted, children may experience anxiety, insecurity, and psychological distress. Conversely, supportive interpersonal relationship can help with recovery and resilience (Ainsworth et al.; Cassidy; Bretherton). Therefore, Attachment Theory provides an appropriate theoretical framework for examining Raymie's emotional reactions to paternal abandonment, and for explaining the ways she seeks, and eventually constructs, other sources of emotional security.

This study aims to examine when attachment is disrupted from paternal abandonment, second to analyse Raymie's emotional reactions using the concept of Attachment Theory, and third to see how friendship, alternative attachment system, facilitate the development of emotional resilience. By integrating children's literature studies with developmental psychology, the article contends that Raymie's friendships with Louisiana Elefante and Beverly Tapinski are not only social connections. These relationship function as emotionally meaningful attachments that facilitate psychological healing and recovery, through a gradual process of psychological recovery. Through this interdisciplinary approach, the study also aims to contribute to the existing scholarship about Kate DiCamillo's fiction and the way childhood emotional development is represented in today's children's literature. It further demonstrates the continuous relevance of Attachment Theory is continuous to be relevant for literary studies, and it underscores how supportive interpersonal bonds can foster emotional resilience, especially after the experience of emotional loss and attachment disruption.

Literature review

The representation of childhood emotions has increasingly emerged, shown up as an important topic within children's literature. Contemporary scholars often argue that children's books function

as a cultural and psychological space where young readers encounter, and interpret, emotional experiences. Instead of treating childhood as a singular phase of innocence, contemporary children's literature consistently explores themes such as loneliness, fear, identity formation, belonging, and emotional resilience. Children's literature mediates these complex emotional realities through narratives that both mirror and shape how children think about themselves and about the world around them (Nodelman). Similarly, children's texts provide readers with opportunities to explore the emotional, and psychological, dimensions of everyday childhood experience (Hunt). Nikolajeva argues that contemporary children's literature increasingly foregrounds the emotional lives of young protagonists, so that psychological development becomes a key narrative focus (Nikolajeva). Taken together, these scholars highlight the importance of examining emotional growth as a core part of children's literary research.

Research on Childhood emotion, have paid limited attention to how family relationships shape children's psychological growth. Family relationships serve as the primary context where children develop emotional security, identity, and a sense of self worth. consequently, when the family context is disrupted, it can become a significant turning point in children's lives. Parents absence, separation, and even grief frequently appear in modern children's books because they create the conditions for protagonists to face complex emotional experience and then develop coping strategies (Reynolds; Coats). Erikson's developmental model also suggests that children's self perception is deeply tied to the stability of their interpersonal relationships with other people are during the early years (Erikson).

Kate DiCamillo's fiction has drawn considerable scholarly attention, primarily for its exploration of childhood, vulnerability, yet still portrays children's demonstrating psychological resilience. Many scholars have argued that loneliness, yearning, companionship, and emotional repair keep recur as central themes across her books. Contemporary Children's authors often challenge the idea of an idealised concepts of childhood and

instead portray emotional complexity, rather than emotional simplicity, and this tendency is particularly evident in DiCamillo's stories (Reynolds). Similarly, contemporary children's literature tends to present emotional change as a gradual and complex process, something that develops through interpersonal relationship and mutual support, not through a individual achievement or personal accomplishment (Coats). DiCamillo's main characters, often, experience emotionally isolated, uncertain, or grieving first, and only after that do they gradually establish bonds that facilitate emotional healing. Her fiction becomes a valuable framework to examine at how emotional hardship and psychological growth are closely interconnected.

Research on Raymie Nightingale has primarily focuses on friendship, empathy, resilience, and identity formation. Many scholars interpret the novel as a narrative of personal transformation, where friendship facilitate emotional development and develop a stronger sense of self. A recurring argument in existing scholarship is that the relationships between Raymie, Louisiana Elefante, and Beverly Tapinski play a significant role, because the three protagonists experience emotional vulnerability, and it becomes a foundation for mutual support and understanding. Other studies argue that friendship function as a source of hope and empowerment, so the characters can navigate emotional challenges and develop more self-confidence, even when things feel uneven. While these interpretations offer useful perspectives on the novel's central themes, they primarily emphasize the outcomes of emotional development, rather than the underlying psychological process and mechanisms that shape emotional development.

Theoretical Framework

John Bowlby's Attachment Theory

The bond between children and their primary caregivers has long been recognised as one of the most significant influences shaping psychological development. Building on earlier psychoanalytic perspectives and then by incorporating insights from developmental psychology and ethology, John Bowlby built Attachment Theory, to explain

how emotional ties form, are maintained, and their significance between children and those caregivers (Bowlby). He moved away from the traditional psychoanalytic assumption in psychoanalysis that attachment develops solely because biological needs are satisfied. Instead, Bowlby argued attachment is an innate behavioural system, a mechanism, that promotes survival by keeping children close to protective caregivers (Bowlby). From infancy, children instinctively seek steadiness, comfort and protection from attachment figures, and those first relationships shape later emotional, cognitive, and social development (Bretherton). Attachment Theory also suggests that the emotional safety established during childhood becomes the psychological foundation, on which people later interpersonal relationships across the lifespan. If caregivers respond in a consistent and responsive manner to a child's feelings and needs, then secure attachment relationships are more likely to develop. That helps children explore their surroundings with confidence, while maintaining an inner sense of psychological safety (Ainsworth et al.). On the other hand, when caregiving is inconsistent, neglectful, or repeatedly disrupted, it can lead to emotional insecurity, and that often contributes to problems with emotional regulation and interpersonal relationships (Cassidy). Overall, Attachment Theory provides a valuable theoretical framework for examining children literature that depict parental absence, abandonment, and emotional bereavement, and how the attachment disruption shapes subsequent emotional development. Unlike the theories that completely focuses on pathology, Bowlby's framework emphasizes vulnerability and alongside recovery. Even if attachment disruption results with emotional distress, supportive interpersonal links can still help a child bounce back, like a of resilience and psychological adjustment (Sroufe). And that focus on recovery makes Attachment Theory an extra suitable for studying contemporary children's literature, because the protagonists frequently navigate emotional hardship through supportive relationships, rather than solitary endurance.

Attachment Bond

The concept of the attachment bond is the central concept of Bowlby's theory. Bowlby defines attachment as an enduring emotional bond, one where a child seeks safety, comfort, and reassurance from a primary caregiver (Bowlby). Attachment extends beyond the fulfilment of physical needs, it also shapes to steer the child's emotional development, becoming central for emotional security and psychological stability. In Bowlby's view, attachment relationships provide children with a "secure base", so they can explore their environment while still maintaining confidence that emotional support will be there when it's needed (Bowlby). Ainsworth's research then supported this proposition, showing that children who are securely attached tend to have greater emotional confidence and social competence, they demonstrate greater adaptability, because they believe caregivers will respond in the right way during period of distress (Ainsworth et al.). In Children's literature, attachment bonds often shape children's behaviour, and their emotional responses. When characters have a strong attachment relationship, they interpret experiences through the sense of emotional security that provided by caregivers, but when attachments are disrupted, the same moments can result in anxiety or psychological conflict. When scholars understand attachment bonds, they can examine how children's relationships with caregiver shape narrative development and emotional responses, not just plot, but the emotional structure of the narrative.

Separation Anxiety

Bowlby's most influential contributions concerns the psychological consequences resulting from separation from attachment figures. Separation anxiety is the emotional distress children experience when they sense that important attachment bonds have been threatened, interrupted, or permanently lost (Bowlby). Bowlby argues that separation from caregivers can lead to emotional reactions including fear, sadness, anger, confusion and persistent efforts reestablish proximity to caregivers. Ainsworth and other attachment scholars demonstrate that separation that is prolonged or unexpected may have a

significant impact on children's ability to regulate emotions and their interpersonal relationships (Ainsworth et al.; Cassidy). Children who experience attachment disruption often become more sensitive to signs of rejection. They can also develop insecurity in interpersonal relationships, and they may experience persistent fears of abandonment. These responses are not confined in childhood, they often shape later expectations of interpersonal trust and emotional closeness (Bretherton). In children's literature, separation anxiety often functions as a major narrative trigger. Experiences of parental absence compel young protagonists toward emotional growth, but while they must face uncertainty and their own vulnerability. Attachment Theory provides a valuable framework for understanding how stories, portray children reacting to emotional loss and why those reactions are psychologically significant.

Internal Working Models

Bowlby's most influential theoretical contributions include the concept of internal working models, which are cognitive and emotional representations, they developed through repeated interactions with attachment figures and over time they shape how children perceive themselves, others and interpersonal relationships (Bowlby). When attachment experiences are positive, the child tends to think of themselves as worth of care, and others as trustworthy sources of support. On the other hand, if attachment is disrupted, it can lead to negative assumptions about acceptance, belonging, and emotional security (Bretherton). These internal working models affect more than just emotional experiences. They also shape behaviour, because children tend to interpret new relationships through the expectations that were already formed through earlier attachment experiences, from those attachment experiences (Cassidy). Insecure attachment may lead to self-doubt, fear of rejection, emotional withdrawal, or sometimes an excessive dependence on others. In literary criticism, internal working models also offer a useful interpretative lens for examining children's motivations and emotional behaviour. Instead of treating a character's choices as isolated responses, researchers can examine how earlier attachment experiences, even when implicitly

represented, shapes the character's decision-making and shapes interpersonal connections throughout the narrative.

Alternative Attachment Figures

Although Bowlby emphasises the importance of primary caregivers are, Attachment Theory acknowledges that children may form emotionally meaningful bonds with individuals other than their parents, especially when the original attachment bond is disrupted (Bowlby). These alternative attachment figures may include relatives, teachers, mentors, siblings, or close friends, people who offer emotional security, guidance, and reassurance during stretches of hardship. Subsequent attachment researchers argue that these replacement-style relationships end up mattering a lot for psychological adaptation after attachment disruption (Sroufe; Cassidy). In other words, these alternative attachment figures do not "take the place" of the first caregiver; they facilitate the child restore emotional security, by providing predictable emotional support, and by confirming the child's sense of belonging and valued. Over time, the bond often reduces emotional distress, while at the same time it fosters healthier expectations in relationships with other people. This concept is particularly valuable for literary studies because children's fiction often portrays supportive friendships that emerge once family relationships become unstable. When scholars interpret these relationships through Attachment Theory, friendship may be understood not only as being together, but as a psychologically significant process that supports psychological growth.

Emotional Resilience

Emotional resilience is the capacity to adapt positively even when someone faces adversity, loss, or psychological distress. Contemporary, attachment scholars emphasize resilience should not be understood simply as, the absence of emotional distress, instead it is rather the ability to recover and continue to develop through helpful interpersonal relationships (Cassidy; Sroufe). In Attachment Theory, resilience is primarily understood through secure emotional ties that provide opportunities to process painful

experiences while they rebuild emotional security. When relationships are supportive, children are more likely to reframe earlier events, develop more positive self-perceptions, and develop stronger, more secure expectations about others (Bretherton). Resilience is understood as evolving developmental pathway rather than a stable personal trait. The concept of emotional resilience has become increasingly significant in children's literature, since many stories present young protagonists experiencing loss, abandonment, and emotional uncertainty. Attachment Theory argues that resilience develops via meaningful emotional bonds, not through solitary individual effort. That viewpoint seems especially fitting for analyzing stories where children get through hardship by forming supportive interpersonal connections, in a way that matters.

This study uses five linked notions: attachment bond, separation anxiety, internal working models, alternative attachment figures, and emotional resilience to see how Raymie's psychological development unfolds across *Raymie Nightingale*. These ideas give a broader map for understanding how attachment disruption shapes childhood emotional experiences and how supportive relationships can help with healing, and even more, build up resilience.

Analysis and Discussion

Raymie's Father as the Primary Attachment Figure

John Bowlby's Attachment Theory suggests that the emotional bond formed between a child and a primary caregiver provides the foundation for psychological security, and it shapes later emotional and social growth (Bowlby). Young children tend to seek protection, warmth, and reassurance from these attachment figures, which function as a secure foundation, a secure base, that enables them to explore their environment (Ainsworth et al.). When the attachment is disrupted, the child may experience emotional insecurity, and anxiety, and a persistent desire to restore the disrupted relationship (Cassidy). In *Raymie Nightingale*, Raymie's father functions as her primary attachment figure. Even though he is physically absent for most of the story, his

emotional presence remains psychologically present, shaping her perceptions, choices, and expectations, so that he functions as the psychological center of her emotional world. At the beginning of the novel, the novel depicts Raymie's determination to learn baton twirling and participate in the Little Miss Central Florida Tire contest, as she believes that winning will convince her father to return home (DiCamillo). Her motivation is not achieving recognition, but rather an urgent desire to restore the disrupted attachment bond. Bowlby argues that when attachment is lost, children often engage in behaviours that seek to restore proximity to the absent caregiver, which indicates that the attachment system remains active even after separation (Bowlby). Raymie's persistent belief that her own achievement can restore her disrupted family relationship is an illustration of attachment-driven behaviour, and this reflects attachment-driven behaviour.

Instead of accepting her father's departure as permanent, Raymie constructs an emotional narrative where she still believes that she can influence his return. This reflects Bretherton's observation about how attachment relationships remain psychologically significant, shaping children's emotional expectations and their behavioural responses (Bretherton). Raymie's longing cannot be understood simply as childlike behaviour or denial; rather, it reflects the continuing psychological impact of a disrupted attachment bond still shaping her perception of reality. Furthermore, her father's abandonment disrupts Raymie's sense of emotional security. Bowlby argues that attachment figures provide children with a sense of security that lets them manage distress and then explore their environment with greater confidence (Bowlby). When that secure base is disrupted, children may experience uncertainty about their sense of self and the reliability and significance of interpersonal relationships (Ainsworth et al.). Thus Raymie's emotional attachment toward her father functions as this central psychological factor that shapes the subsequent narrative development.

Attachment Disruption and Separation Anxiety

One of the central concepts in Attachment Theory is separation anxiety, which Bowlby defines as the emotional distress children feel when they get separated from their primary attachment people (Bowlby). Following such disruption, children may experience emotions such as sadness, confusion, fear, anger, alongside a persistent expectation the relationship can be restored and the attachment figure will return (Cassidy). In Raymie Nightingale, Raymie's emotional reactions correspond with these patterns, showing the psychological effects that follow paternal abandonment. Raymie continues to interpret her experiences as if her father may return. Instead of accepting the loss, she remains psychologically focused on restoring the disrupted relationship (DiCamillo). When she joins the beauty pageant, she continues to focus on her father's return, and when she repeatedly expects that he could come back at any time. All of that suggests separation anxiety is not limited to physical separation, it's also a steady emotional state that persists as an underlying emotional state. Bowlby argues that when attachment is disrupted, it can generate behaviors meant to regain emotional security, even when reunion appears unlikely or uncertain (Bowlby).

Separation anxiety In Raymie's case, separation anxiety makes emotional regulation becomes more difficult. Attachment scholars argue that caregivers help children regulate and manage emotional experiences through consistent reassurance and responsive caregiving (Ainsworth et al.). However, when that emotional security is disrupted, children often may experience greater difficulty regulating fear and uncertainty (Cassidy). In Raymie's case, the fluctuating emotions, the episodes of self-doubt, and the occasional emotional withdrawal reflect these psychological consequences. Furthermore, Raymie's early hesitation about forming close relationships with others indicates a broader impact of attachment disruption. Bretherton suggests that insecure attachment often leads children to approach new relationships with caution, because earlier experiences shape their expectations of trust and emotional availability (Bretherton). Thus, Raymie's

initial interactions with Louisiana and Beverly they reveal more than social awkwardness or hesitation. They can instead be understood as emotional consequences from disrupted attachment, with caution functioning as a visible manifestation, and separation anxiety spreading beyond the absent attachment figure to influence subsequent interpersonal relationships.

Internal Working Models and Emotional Insecurity

Bowlby's internal working models explain how children develop mental representations of themselves and others, based on repeated attachment experiences (Bowlby). These emotional and cognitive frameworks shape Children's expectations of acceptance, trust, and interpersonal security, overtime (Bretherton). Children with secure attachment develop a positive sense of self and develop greater confidence in other people being reliable. However, when attachment is disrupted, it often leads to insecurity, self doubt, and fear of rejection (Cassidy). After her father's abandonment, Raymie begins to question her own worth and significance. Instead of thinking the separation is solely the result of adult choices, she assumes responsibility, as if she must restore the relationship and restore the relationship herself (DiCamillo). This reflects an insecure internal working model, in which children tend to believe that if they change their own behaviour, then the disrupted attachment relationship can be repaired. Mikulincer and Shaver suggest that insecure attachment often may lead children to interpret relationship difficulties as evidence that of their own adequacy, which then reinforces those negative self beliefs (Mikulincer and Shaver). Raymie's emotional uncertainty also is evident in how she interacts with others. At first, she approaches unfamiliar relationships cautiously, she is uncertain new emotional bonds are safe or even trustworthy. This corresponds with Bowlby's point that internal working models affect not only emotional responses, but expectations about expectations of future relationships (Bowlby). Over the course of the novel, Raymie's slow gradual development trusting Louisiana and Beverly demonstrates that

internal working models are not simply fixed in place they can remain adaptable.

Friendship as Alternative Attachment Figures

Attachment Theory focuses on primary caregivers, Bowlby recognises that other emotionally meaningful connections can provide a source of emotional security when the original attachment bonds are disrupted (Bowlby). Subsequent attachment scholars push this idea further, by saying that stable friendships often function as protective relationships, they facilitate emotional adjustment after childhood adversity. Sroufe and Cassidy emphasise the protective role of supportive relationships in facilitating emotional adjustment. In *Raymie Nightingale*, Raymie's bonds with Louisiana Elefante and Beverly Tapinski demonstrate how the formation of alternative attachment relationships can happen in practice. The three girls are introduced as experiencing emotional distress, with considerable uncertainty (DiCamillo). Their shared vulnerability gradually builds a relational environment in which trust becomes possible, and then emotional openness becomes less threatening and this contrasts with Raymie's connection with her absent father. These friendships are not based on dependence, but instead they grow through mutual understanding. Louisiana, with her careful attunement, helps Raymie establish a relationship with someone who understands emotional loss. Meanwhile Beverly provides with practical support, emotional affirmation, and protection during moment of crisis (DiCamillo). Ainsworth argues that attachment ties are marked by emotional availability, responsive caregiving, and consistent support rather than the biological link alone (Ainsworth et al.). From this perspective, Raymie's friendships perform several psychological functions associated with secure attachment. They bring reassurance when she is upset they nudge her toward emotional saying it out loud, and they form a dependable social setting, through which Raymie starts rebuilding her own sense of emotional capability. Thus, in *Raymie Nightingale* friendship functions as more than casual companionship thing but it acts like a compensatory attachment framework, letting Raymie reconstruct emotional safety after the

disruption of her main attachment relationship. This study extends previous literary interpretations of friendship, because it demonstrates the significance of friendship extends beyond its thematic significance but also psychological in a functional way, within Raymie's emotional development.

Emotional Resilience and Psychological Recovery

In the later stages of Raymie's emotional journey, resilience gradually emerges, rather than emerging independently but through her everyday supportive relationships, gradually and unobtrusively. Contemporary attachment researchers state that resilience does not imply the absence of emotional pain or distress but rather involves the capacity to adapt constructively even when there's adversity and loss (Cassidy; Sroufe). Throughout the novel, Raymie gradually shifts her emotional reliance gradually away from that of getting back the old bond that was gone and toward building meaningful relationships with the people who remain present in her life. Although the emotional impact from her father's abandonment does not disappear entirely, Raymie demonstrates greater confidence, empathy, emotional regulation, and willingness to trust others (DiCamillo). The friendships she develops enable her to recognise that emotional security need not depend solely on restoring by restoring the original attachment relationship, but it can also be rebuilt, through alternative relational pathways, through relationships with others. Bowlby framework suggests that, supportive relationships facilitate psychological adjustment happen, because they enable individuals to develop more adaptive emotional expectations, and foster resilience after attachment disruption (Bowlby). Raymie's change represents a illustration of this developmental process.

The novel portrays resilience as primarily interpersonal rather than as an individual achievement. Raymie Nightingale undergoes emotional recovery because she receives acceptance, trust, and that mutual care from her friends and because of those relationships she can reframe her father's abandonment, without allowing the experience to define her emotional identity. Ultimately the novel suggests that healing

from an attachment disruption depends less on restoring what was lost and more on building new forms of emotional security. From the perspective of Attachment theory, Raymie's path shows that childhood resilience develops through rebuilding secure interpersonal relationships. Friendship is then the psychologically significant mechanism through which the effects of attachment disruption are transformed into emotional growth, greater self-understanding, and renewed emotional stability. This interpretation not only extends existing interpretations in the novel, while highlighting how Bowlby's framework helps explain how contemporary children's literature portrays recovery following parental abandonment.

Findings

This study shows that Raymie Nightingale offers a nuanced representation of children's emotional development, particularly in relation to the consequences of attachment disruption, and how emotional security is rebuilt gradually, through alternative interpersonal relationships. It draws on Bowlby's Attachment Theory as its primary theoretical framework, so it extends interpretations beyond conventional discussions about friendship, resilience, and provides a more psychologically grounded reading of Raymie's emotional trajectory. The results identify five interconnected dimensions of attachment and emotional development, and together they illuminate Raymie's emotional trajectory. The first finding establishes that paternal abandonment is the central psychological conflict shaping Raymie's emotional development. Previous criticism treats the father's departure as a catalyst for personal growth. But this study argues it function more significantly as the disruption of Raymie's primary attachment relationship (Bowlby; Bretherton). Her ongoing wish to reunite with her father cannot be understood merely as an emotional response to family separation. Rather, it represents attachment seeking behaviour, following the disruption of emotional security. Raymie's choices can be more fully understood when interpreted within developmental psychology, rather than just reading them as isolated narrative events of childhood longing.

The second finding shows that Raymie's emotional responses match the hallmarks of separation anxiety in Attachment Theory. The sense of uncertainty, emotional vulnerability, and a steady hope for reunion, which points to the attachment behavioural system staying turned on after the paternal abandonment (Bowlby; Cassidy). Instead of treating the distress like it's just some separate psychological thing, the novel makes separation anxiety look like a useful response when attachment bonds get disrupted. This finding adds to children's literature scholarship by showing that Raymie's emotional instability seems to grow out of attachment-related insecurity, not because she's individually or emotionally weak. The third finding, in contrast, indicates that paternal abandonment has a strong effect on Raymie's internal working models, which then influences how she views herself and what she expects from other people. The analysis suggests that Raymie's early uncertainty, self-doubt, and careful, almost cautious approach to others line up with Bowlby's idea that early attachment experiences shape children's mental and emotional pictures of relationships (Bowlby; Bretherton; Mikulincer and Shaver). The study also suggests those internal working models are not stuck, they stay developmentally flexible rather than being psychologically fixed. As Raymie develops emotionally supportive relationships, her perceptions of trust, belonging, and interpersonal security gradually begin to change.

The fourth finding establishes that friendship functions as an alternative attachment system within the narrative. While earlier studies have recognised the significance of how Raymie's relationship with Louisiana Elefante and Beverly Tapinski, they have primarily interpreted those friendships as sources of companionship, empathy, or emotional support. This study demonstrates, by arguing these relationships perform psychological functions associated with secure attachment, including emotional availability, relational consistency, affective validation, and interpersonal reassurance (Ainsworth et al.; Cassidy; Sroufe). Friendship is not only a thematic component in the novel but the central mechanism by which disrupted emotional security is gradually reconstructed over time. The final finding shows

that emotional resilience in Raymie Nightingale emerges through relational reconstruction, not from individual self-reliance. Contemporary attachment research emphasises that resilience grows through supportive interpersonal relationships that enable children to reinterpret experiences of adversity while still acknowledging the emotional significance of those experiences (Cassidy; Sroufe). The novel doesn't portray Raymie recovering through restoration of the paternal relationship. Instead, resilience develops through new emotional connections are established, providing security, acceptance, and belonging. This challenges readings of resilience as an exclusively individual progress, and it advances a more relational view of how childhood psychological recovery unfolds.

These findings show that Raymie Nightingale presents childhood resilience as a dynamic process rooted in attachment relationships. By integrating Attachment Theory together with contemporary children's literature, it contributes to current interdisciplinary conversations about childhood emotional development, parental abandonment and the psychological significance of friendship. It extends previous scholarship by demonstrating that alternative attachment figures can play a central role in reconstructing emotional security after attachment disruption, which in turn offers a further critical perspective of how Kate DiCamillo portrays resilience.

Conclusion

This study has analysed Kate DiCamillo's Raymie Nightingale through the theoretical framework of John Bowlby used in Attachment Theory to examine what happens psychologically when a father leaves the psychological consequences of paternal abandonment and how emotional resilience is reconstructed during childhood. Previous scholarship has primarily examined the novel through friendship, hope, identity formation, and emotional growth. However, this study suggests that these themes can be understood more when they are interpreted as manifestations of attachment disruption, followed by emotional reconstruction. When Raymie's emotional experiences is examined through Bowlby's framework, the novel reveals resilience not as an

inherit individual trait, but as a developmental process, shaped by relationships and by the sense of emotional security. The analysis also demonstrated that Raymie's father functions as her primary attachment figure. His unexpected departure, therefore it disrupts her sense of emotional security. The attachment disruption is reflected in emotional reactions that correspond with Bowlby's concept of separation anxiety and insecure internal working models.

One of the study's key contributions is that the study reconceptualises friendship, not as just a conventional narrative device of representing companionship or providing emotional support. Rather, friendship is conceptualised as an alternative attachment system, with psychologically significant functions beyond conventional understandings of companionship. The connections Raymie forms with Louisiana Elefante and Beverly, perform several psychological functions that are associated with secure attachment. Attachment Theory has been widely applied in psychology and in studies of childhood. However, its systematic application to contemporary children's fiction remains comparatively, unexplored. By integrating Bowlby's framework with alongside close textual analysis, this study demonstrates how psychological theories can work as interpretive tools for the emotional complexity within children's literature. These interdisciplinary approaches contribute to literary criticism because they help reveal the psychological mechanisms underlying character development, rather than remaining limited to thematic description.

In conclusion, Raymie Nightingale shows that emotional resilience is not an immediate response to adversity, nor is it simply the outcome of individual determination alone. Rather, the novel suggests resilience is a gradual and ongoing process of psychological reconstruction, that is facilitated by meaningful relationships. Those connections contribute to the restoration of emotional security after the attachment disruption. Drawing on Bowlby's Attachment Theory, this study has argued that friendship functions as an alternative attachment system, one that supports Raymie's movement from feelings of insecurity

toward psychological resilience. By offering a conceptually grounded reading of attachment, loss, and recovery, the study contributes to contemporary discussions in children's literature scholarship and demonstrates the continuing relevance of Attachment Theory for literary studies of children's emotional experiences.

References

1. Ainsworth, Mary D. S., et al. *Patterns of Attachment: A Psychological Study of the Strange Situation*. Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 1978.
2. Bettelheim, Bruno. *The Uses of Enchantment: The Meaning and Importance of Fairy Tales*. Vintage Books, 2010.
3. Bowlby, John. *Attachment and Loss. Vol. 1: Attachment*. 2nd ed., Basic Books, 1982.
4. *Attachment and Loss. Vol. 2: Separation: Anxiety and Anger*. Basic Books, 1973.
5. *Attachment and Loss. Vol. 3: Loss: Sadness and Depression*. Basic Books, 1980.
6. Bretherton, Inge. "The Origins of Attachment Theory: John Bowlby and Mary Ainsworth." *Developmental Psychology*, vol. 28, no. 5, 1992, pp. 759-775.
7. Cassidy, Jude. "The Nature of the Child's Ties." *Handbook of Attachment: Theory, Research, and Clinical Applications*, edited by Jude Cassidy and Phillip R. Shaver, 3rd ed., Guilford Press, 2016, pp. 3-24.
8. Cassidy, Jude, and Phillip R. Shaver, editors. *Handbook of Attachment: Theory, Research, and Clinical Applications*. 3rd ed., Guilford Press, 2016.
9. Coats, Karen. *The Bloomsbury Introduction to Children's and Young Adult Literature*. Bloomsbury Academic, 2017.
10. DiCamillo, Kate. *Raymie Nightingale*. Candlewick Press, 2016.
11. Erikson, Erik H. *Identity: Youth and Crisis*. W. W. Norton, 1968.
12. Hunt, Peter. *Understanding Children's Literature*. 2nd ed., Routledge, 2005.
13. Mikulincer, Mario, and Phillip R. Shaver. *Attachment in Adulthood: Structure, Dynamics, and Change*. 2nd ed., Guilford Press, 2016.
14. Nikolajeva, Maria. *Power, Voice and Subjectivity in Literature for Young Readers*. Routledge, 2010.
15. Nodelman, Perry. *The Hidden Adult: Defining Children's Literature*. Johns Hopkins UP, 2008.
16. Reynolds, Kimberley. *Children's Literature: A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford UP, 2011.
17. Sroufe, L. Alan. "Attachment and Development: A Prospective, Longitudinal Study from Birth to Adulthood." *Attachment & Human Development*, vol. 7, no. 4, 2005, pp. 349-367.
18. Trites, Roberta Seelinger. *Disturbing the Universe: Power and Repression in Adolescent Literature*. University of Iowa Press, 2000.
19. Waters, Everett, and E. Mark Cummings. "A Secure Base from Which to Explore Close Relationships." *Child Development*, vol. 71, no. 1, 2000, pp. 164-172.
20. Winnicott, D. W. *Playing and Reality*. Routledge, 1971.
21. Zipes, Jack. *Sticks and Stones: The Troublesome Success of Children's Literature from Slovenly Peter to Harry Potter*. Routledge, 2001.
22. Zipes, Jack. *The Oxford Companion to Fairy Tales*. Oxford UP, 2002.