



**HWA CHONG INSTITUTION (HIGH SCHOOL SECTION)**

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Title: **More than a Toy: The Evolution of Woody in Toy Story**

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Class: 4H1

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**Declaration**

I declare that this assignment is my own work and does not involve plagiarism or collusion. The sources of other people's work have been appropriately referenced, failing which I am willing to accept the necessary disciplinary action(s) to be taken against me.

Student's Signature: Jacob

Date of Submission: 20/8/20

# **1 Introduction**

## **1.1 Background**

Toy Story<sup>1 10 11 12</sup> has been a beloved series for many years. Few are unfamiliar with the main protagonist of the series, Woody, the charming cowboy sheriff. Part of this charm stems from the complexity in his character, where his unique evolution across the four movies in the series makes him worthy of analysis.

By examining Woody's development throughout the series in relation to the concepts of Bildungsroman, Symbolic Interactionism and Huizinga's theories of play, I seek to analyse the extent to which Toy Story fits the mould of a Bildungsroman, and ultimately reach a conclusion on how Toy Story adds to the concepts of growth and play.

## **1.2 Rationale:**

I have always found Toy Story franchise to be much more than simply family-oriented flicks. The characters, especially Woody, are relatable due to their strong yet complex identities brought out by the emotion and action of the plot. These layers of character development are easily overlooked by first-time viewers at face value, but in actuality hold a lot of analytical value.

Toy Story also speaks to adults in a unique way. Invoking both a deep nostalgia for childhood and a childlike imagination and wonder. This research paper thus affords them a chance to relive the relatable process of growing up, and remind them that perhaps, adulthood and play do not

have to be mutually exclusive. All in all, this adds to the emotional value of the film, and beckons me to choose it as the film to analyse.

The Bildungsroman genre is also presented in a relatable and thought-provoking manner in Toy Story, through Woody's journey of adversity, formation and education, as well as a quest for renewed purpose, inner peace and freedom<sup>2</sup>, which every single child will have to undertake some way or another. Through Woody's altering perceptions of play, identity and social role, it encourages children to too question the nature of consciousness, and discover one's true purpose in society.

### **1.3 Research Questions:**

- 1) How do Woody's different roles across the 4 movies reflect character development in the framework of a Bildungsroman?
- 2) How does Woody's role as a toy and leader (formed through symbolic interactionism) affect his character growth?
- 3) How does Toy Story, together with Huizinga's theories of play, present new insight on the Bildungsroman?

### **1.4 Thesis Statement:**

Woody as a Bildungsheld (hero in a Bildungsroman) initially has a rigid understanding of self-cultivation, the development of one's mind and identity, and is highly centered around his role as a toy and a leader. Through both his interactions and various experiences Woody learns to

balance his moral responsibilities with his personal freedom, attaining inner peace through embracing the chaotic spirit of play.

### **1.5 Scope of Research / Delimitation(s):**

In my research paper, I will be making use of Goethe's framework of the Bildungsroman, (amalgamated with several elements of French Bildungsroman), Mead and Hewitt's theory of Symbolic Interactionism, as well as Huizinga's Theory on Play, in order to analyse Woody's evolving identity across the 4 Toy Story Movies in relation to his roles, interactions, circumstances, and come to a conclusion as to whether and how Woody's character journey sheds new insight on the genre of Bildungsroman as a whole.

### **1.6 Significance of Research / Usefulness:**

Analysis of Woody's character in each of the movies has already been done in numerous research papers. However, this paper seeks to present Woody's full character arc, and in doing so tie in Woody's perception of the concept of play to his process of growth as a Bildungsheld, suggesting Woody ultimately chooses not to stay in the rigid realm of adulthood, instead embracing the qualities of childhood, and allowing these qualities to better define his strengths as an individual. While the Bildungsroman genre typically revolves around the hero's departure from playfulness and youth to embrace maturity, my research departs from this norm by seeking to show that playfulness and maturity are not mutually exclusive, and it is possible for a hero to

attain the mental maturity to embrace the spirit of youth, and have the courage to defy convention and pursue freedom. This is significant in potentially expanding the scope of the Bildungsroman as a framework, allowing it to increase its applicability and relatability in modern literature.

### **1.7 Limitation(s):**

I shall only focus on elements of Classical and French Bildungsromans, meaning that other key traits such as the artistic realisation of the hero in a Künstlerroman, will be left out, as they are not applicable to Toy Story and specifically Woody, given that he is not a musician or a painter. Goethe's and the French Novelists' Bildungsromans, on the other hand, contain traits, such as the general archetype of the hero and the trajectory of his journey, that provide the right type of foundation to explore how Toy Story breaks these conventional moulds of the genre, and possibly creates a new sub-category of Bildungsroman on its own.

Lastly, I chose to narrow the scope of play theories to Huizinga's theories, due to the limited relatability of other theories of play to the experience of a toy. Most play-related theories are aimed towards the welfare and development of the child. However, I believe that comparing Woody's perception of the concept of play throughout the movies to the true chaotic and uncompromised nature of play presented in Huizinga's theories<sup>9</sup> will aid me in analysing Woody's journey towards embracing freedom and play.

## **2 Literature Survey:**

## 2.1 Bildungsroman

In his book **“Apprenticeships: The Bildungsroman from Goethe to Santayana”(2005)<sup>2</sup>**, Dr Thomas Jeffers introduces the reader to the origins of the foundational characteristics of a Bildungsroman, starting from the early epics of Gilgamesh and Odysseus. These works centre around the idea of “self-cultivation”, where the hero overcomes “ordeals” and “rigorous tests” in order to prove himself. In later works, the heroes also “strive for actual results” in their “tests”, which included achieving “happiness, satisfaction, or maturity” as the hero grows from youth towards adulthood.

These concepts were collectively labelled as the Bildungsroman in the late eighteenth century in Johann Goethe’s works, where the hero (coined as a Bildungsheld), is “no longer ready-made”, but is instead “the image of a man in the process of becoming”, where the process of self-cultivation is “realistic”, and crucially, revolves around “freedom of choice”. The hero focuses on achieving “morality”, but importantly, aims towards enjoying the “aesthetic, intellectual, and sensual pleasures” of living.

Critics of the Classic Bildungsroman target what they perceive to be idealistic content. For example, in Susan L. Cocalis’ **“The Transformation of 'Bildung' from an Image to an Ideal” (1978)<sup>3</sup>**, she criticises the broad definition of the Bildung as a hero and the “aesthetic education” he goes through. Cocalis posits that having such a “vague” framework makes the Bildungsroman an idealistic symbol of “totality of being”, a fantastical but ultimately futile daydream for “genteel” upbringing. She argues that the hero attaining self-realisation is a “moot

point”, for while the hero would have been expected to undergo a moment of realisation and strive to achieve the ideal being, accomplishing such a goal would be detrimental to both the process of continuous self-purification, undermining the emphasis placed on sustained achievement in the first place. From this, she comes to the conclusion that such “liberal” guidelines towards achieving self-realisation are but a “utopia” in today’s day and age. In response to this, I feel that this criticism is fair in that the goal of the Classical Bildungsroman could be interpreted in some works to be detached from reality. This would explain further developments in the Bildungsroman in the 19th and 20th Centuries that propose different endings for the Bildung, such as the in the French Novelists’ Bildungsroman explored in Franco Moretti’s “The Way of the World: The Bildungsroman in European culture (2000)”<sup>4</sup>. In this form of Bildungsroman, the hero never truly achieves this “totality of being” but still gains further self-awareness, and is content with coming as close to the ideal as reality persists. In this case, the “process” is perhaps more central to growth than the “result”.

In my research paper, I attempt to reconcile this by theorising that the general framework of the Classic Bildungsroman, together with the proposed ‘ending’ of the French Bildungsroman, can be adopted together in the analysis of Toy Story, where the form of closure is unconventional; it lies in the fact that the Bildungsheld accepts that he has not attained totality of being nor perfection, yet he instead chooses continuous development. As such, I disagree with Cocalis as I feel that her criticism does not discredit the framework of the Classical Bildungsroman, but instead builds on it, by presenting the goal of self-realisation as not a one-off defining moment, but instead a gradual, continuous process that in itself adds meaning and purpose to one’s life.

## 2.2 Symbolic Interactionism (2015)

A key influence in a hero's journey is undoubtedly the interactions he has with those around him, which leads us to our next theory of Symbolic Interactionism. In their article (2015)<sup>5</sup>, sociologists Carter and Fuller explore the theory of Symbolic Interactionism first introduced by philosopher-psychologist George Herbert Mead (1934)<sup>6</sup>. Mead posits that people are "social products" moulded from the social interactions in daily lives. He also adds that people's selves are "purposive", with people actively extracting their roles and purpose through these interactions.

John P. Hewitt also adds to Symbolic Interactionism in his paper "**Self and Society: a symbolic interactionist social psychology**" (2007)<sup>7</sup>, where he proposes 3 categories of identity that seek to add clarity to the framework of Symbolic Interactionism. These consist of "situated", "personal" and "social identity". Hewitt stresses on the shift from situated to personal and social identities as one develops as an individual. From forming a situated identity, which is described as the fundamental "ability to see ourselves as others do", one can then examine and adapt one's behaviour to fit the situation, establishing connections and gaining a clear and unique understanding of oneself and one's societal responsibility.

Critics of symbolic interactionism hold the similar view that it is more of a foundational framework for theories to build upon, rather than being a theory in and of itself. While having clear guidelines within the framework, they claim the theory lacks the quantifiable testability to be used in mainstream psychology<sup>9</sup>. Despite this, I feel that Hewitt's theories provide the

framework with more specificity in terms of how the framework can be applied to one's growth both as an individual and as part of a collective.

### **2.3 Theory on Play in Homo Ludens (1938)**

A key part of growth and maturity of a hero in a Bildungsroman is play. Play is a platform for discovery, where children use toys as a means to begin developing social and interactive skills. In his book *Homo Ludens* (1938)<sup>8</sup>, historian Huizinga characterises play as “silly”, “chaotic”, “polysensory” and “unrestrained”. According to Huizinga, this stems from the fact that play is “a voluntary activity”. He claims that “play to order is no longer play: it could at best be but a forcible imitation of it”, suggesting that it is not possible to engage in meaningful play while also being preoccupied with one's own moral burden.

Huizinga states that while critics may view play as a child-like “instinct”, he firmly disagrees, viewing this view as fallacious and undermining the fundamental utility of play. Instead, he posits that people make the choice to play because they “enjoy” it, and “therein lies their freedom”. He states that true play comes with rules that are “freely accepted”, but “absolutely binding”, providing a sense of relieving “detachment” from the real world.

Huizinga also proposes that for “responsible” beings, play is only seen as a priority when the sheer enjoyment of it allows it to become one, and that as a priority it cannot be compromised by even one's responsibilities in the real world.

In my research paper, I relate this to Woody by suggesting that Woody ironically neglects and overlooks the true value of play, by letting his duty as a leader and a toy become his moral obligation. I theorise that through his character growth, Woody learns to embrace freedom by making the choice to embody the true unrestrained qualities of a toy engaging in play.

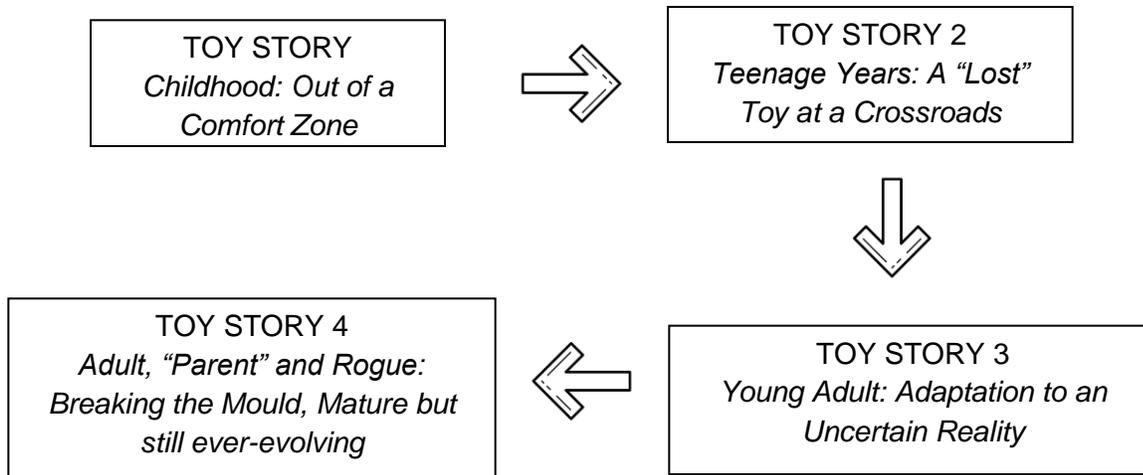
### **3 Methodology:**

Through the lens of the Bildungsroman, as well as Symbolic Interactionism and Huizinga's theories on play, I will analyse the character of Woody in Toy Story 1 through 4, comprising of the visuals (mise en scene), dialogue, and even the music, in order to uncover Woody's relationship with the concept of play, and tie this in to his role as a hero in the series.

### **4 Discussion and Analysis:**

#### **4.1 Woody: The Unorthodox Bildungsheld**

Woody's roles and priorities experience a distinctive shift as we move along the Toy Story tetralogy. This diagram below helps map out my theorised arc, showing Woody's "process of becoming" as a Bildungsheld, and how this development is relatable to a child undergoing adolescence and becoming an adult.



**Diagram 1**

Woody in Toy Story 1(TS1) is presented as an insecure child having to grapple with losing the spotlight, overcoming his jealousy and insecurities to adapt to the new role of just being one of Andy’s toy. Woody’s immaturity and narrow-minded worldview stems from himself being initially the unchallenged favourite toy of Andy, like a single child with the centre of attention. This is seen in the very first scene of the movie, where Andy plays with each of his toys, and assigns them roles. Woody, being Andy’s favourite toy, is the leader, and under Andy’s control Woody “saves the day again”. The use of “again” suggests that Woody is conditioned to being the hero and the focal point of play, which then forms his personal identity.



Image 1: Woody is expected to be the leader and he actively seeks out situations to display this

This is further reinforced by the way Woody interacts with the other toys. As seen above, Woody is commanding the other toys to set up the podium for him to stand on and gather round to listen to him giving a briefing. His position on the podium juxtaposed with the other toys emphasises that he is the leader and the one in charge, while the others defer to him for judgement.

However, his leadership position contrasts with his insecurity once Buzz, the new toy, challenges his spot as Andy's favourite toy, akin to a second child stealing the spotlight from his sibling.

The idea of Woody's spot being replaced is conveyed through mise en scene, where the bed sheet, posters all change from designs of him to that of Buzz. The music "Strange Things" playing in this portion, with the refrain "strange things are happening to me" adds to the atmosphere of unwelcome change for Woody, with him losing this firm grasp of control.

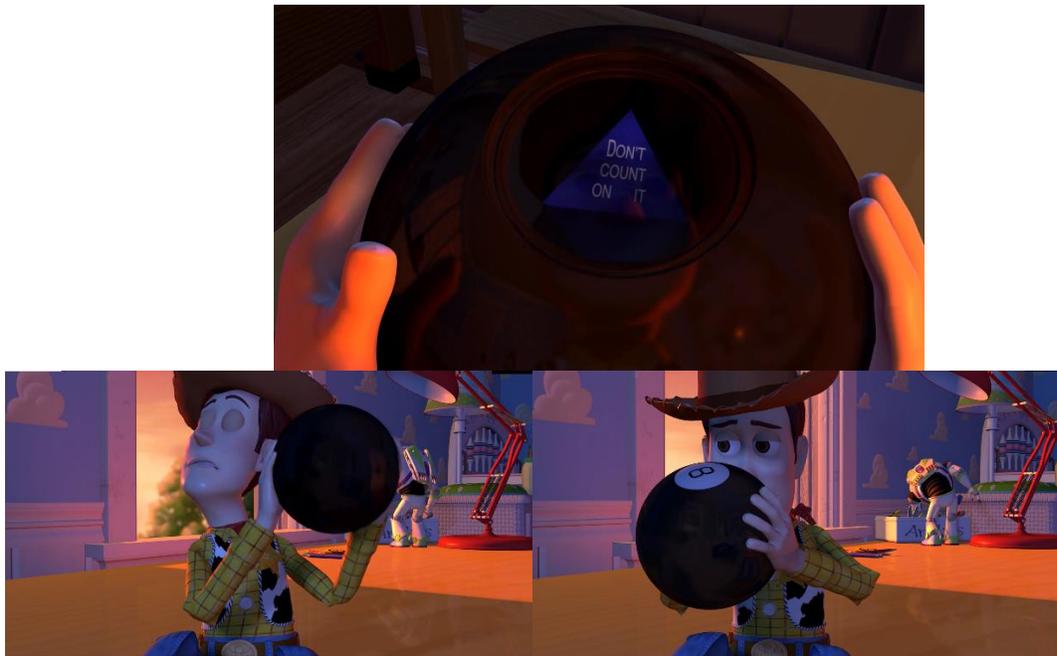


Image 2: Woody uses an 8 Ball to see if he will be picked by Andy over Buzz for a car trip, and the Ball enigmatically responds with “Don’t Count on It”

Woody becomes so uncertain and desperate that he is shown relying on an 8-Ball, a symbol of destiny, to provide him with a path when he cannot see a path for himself, showing Woody’s doubts of his new role and identity.

However, Woody turning point is seen in the face of adversity, where Woody tries to get rid of Buzz but loses the trust of the other toys in the process, forcing him to reevaluate how he should treat Buzz in order for his leadership not to be questioned. Buzz has an “identity” crisis of his own, finding out he is just one toy among millions other identical copies, and Woody comforts him by assuring him he is not just any toy, but “Andy’s toy”. This interaction then allows Woody to realise both his and Buzz’s importance to Andy, and that he was being naïve and selfish to put his interests before Andy’s. Therefore, by accepting the differences between him and Buzz, as well as accepting being both literally and metaphorically below Buzz, he develops the spirit of

camaraderie, and through him and Buzz return back to Andy safely, Woody evolves to become a more secure leader and individual.



Image 3: Woody and Buzz escape to return to Andy in the closing scenes of the movie

In Toy Story 2(TS2), Woody is seen to have grown in maturity entering a “teenage” stage, yet just like other teenagers, his biggest identity crisis hits him. When Andy accidentally rips Woody’s arm off, he cannot take him to camp and instead leaves him at home. This makes Woody question his true value to Andy, viewing this action as a precursor to eventual abandonment.



Image 4: In Woody's vision, he is dropped by Andy through a bunch of cards into a bin, where Andy places the lid to shut him off, and leave him to be torn apart by mutant toys

Through the vision we see Woody casting doubt over his role as a toy due to his tendency to tear, with the deck of cards scattering representing Woody's self-identity falling apart. With Andy placing a lid on Woody in the vision, it shows Woody's true fears, that Andy will eventually shut him off to be left purposeless.

Throughout the second movie, Woody comes across a literal and mental crossroads. Woody is stolen by an toy collector, who reveals that he is the last piece and most valuable part of a collection called the "Woody's Roundup", which was to be sent to a museum and put on display for eternity. Through interactions with a new character and another piece of the collection, cowgirl Jessie, Woody comes to sympathise with and relate to her heart-breaking tale of rejection.



Image 5: In this scene, Jessie recalls the sorrowful memories of how her previous owner, Emily, gave her away when she grew up and got too old to play with toys

Woody's need for renewed approval and acceptance, a trait largely also seen in other teenagers, causes him to reevaluate whether returning to Andy was worth it if he could be in a museum and admired for eternity. Buzz tries to remind him that he is a "toy, a "child's plaything", and not a "collector's item", Woody remarks, "For how much longer?", showing a clear contrast to when he convinced Buzz in the first movie that life was only worth living if a toy was "loved by a kid". Woody attempts to break free from a mold set for him, yet this selfish motive eventually made Woody guilt-stricken as he heard the lyrics to the theme "You got a Friend in Me" , which states "And as the years go by, Our friendship will never die. You're gonna see it's our destiny." These lyrics have a connoted sense of hope, jolting Woody out of his conflicted state, and reminding him of his priorities as a toy; to be loved by one special child over being merely seen and acknowledged by millions of others.



Image 6: Woody is reminded of his unbreakable bond with “Andy”, whose name is on his shoe

Overall, in the second film, we see Woody’s role of a toy being thoroughly challenged. From being the leader of the group he has spent so long with, he attempts to change his role to being that of a “celebrity”, to be admired and viewed at a distance, behind a screen. However, he ultimately resists this temptation as he is reminded of his responsibility bounded to being “Andy’s Toy”.

In the third film(TS3), Woody’s development mirrors that of Andy, as both are entering their “adult” phases. Andy is about to leave for college and chooses to take Woody along with him regarding the rest as “junk” to be placed in the attic. While Woody would typically relish the opportunity to remain with Andy, his character growth is seen as he chooses not to abandon the other toys, who view themselves as being cast aside and viewed as “garbage” by Andy, thus deciding to send themselves to a daycare centre. As seen in the image below, Woody is aware

that Andy has moved on, yet he refuses to accept this, and attempts to convince the other toys that Andy has not deserted them from college.



Image 7: In this scene, Woody flips over an image of Andy graduating from High School, and realizes that Andy has moved on from his childhood, with the new pictures physically covering up and hiding away the toys he once played with, signifying a shift in priorities and lifestyles



Image 8: In this scene, the toys are in the car on the way to the daycare centre, and Woody vents his frustration at the toys for losing trust in Andy,

Through the altercation between Woody and the other toys portrayed above, we see how Woody's desperation to persuade the other toys isolates himself from the others and threatens to undermine the bonds he had built up with them.

Woody manages to escape from the daycare, but despite being warned of the danger of returning, connoted by the words "Returning now would be suicide", Woody decides to go back and save his friends, showing him risking his own personal safety for others. Woody encounters Lotso, the antagonist who is resentful at being seemingly abandoned by his owner, but as Woody attempts to convince him that an owners "bond" with his toy transcends their physical presence together, Woody finally comes to terms with how lucky he was to be loved by Andy in the first place.

However, it is through interactions with the main antagonist of the third film, Lotso the toy bear, that Woody is reminded of what could happen if he refuses to move on from Andy, and therefore he decides to move on, as seen from the farewell, “So Long Partner” Woody says to Andy internally.

He realizes that he has to “Be There” for Andy, and that includes accepting and adapting to a new reality, under a new owner, thus showing maturity on his part.



Image 9: Andy reluctantly passes Woody to Bonnie, entrusting him to her in the process

The fourth and final film (TS4) is what truly sets Toy Story apart as a unique form of Bildungsroman. Toy Story 4 sees Woody deal with complete obsolescence. He is not Bonnie's favourite toy, or even a toy she even plays with, yet his arc is completed as he begins to develop parental instincts, first towards Bonnie and then towards another toy Bonnie made, Forky. For Bonnie, he sympathises with her loneliness in school, spurring him to then help Bonnie to create a toy of her own from trash, Forky, out of his parental instinct and will to be protective over

Bonnie, displaying his maturity. This shows further development in Woody, as despite knowing he has nothing to gain, he still firmly believes that the most “noble” thing a toy can do is to, once again, “be there” for the child.



Image 10: Woody secretly provides Bonnie with the materials required to produce Forky

Woody also displays parental instincts over Forky himself. Being made from trash, Forky believes he belongs to a bin, unaware that he is the most beloved toy of Bonnie’s. This dramatic irony emphasises how far Woody has fallen off the pecking order, being played with less than literal trash, yet it also reinforces how he has an increased level of maturity.

Woody readily embraces his role to “baby-sit” Forky to make sure “nothing happens to him”, finding a new purpose for himself in the process. In the line where he explains to Buzz why he is going to such extreme measures, such as taking night watches over Forky to ensure he does not escape, “ No, no. I need to do this. That little voice inside me would never leave me alone if I gave up,” it is implied that Woody’s moral conscience is what is motivating him on. When Forky gets lost and Woody tries to get him back to Bonnie, Woody has a moment of realization, where

Forky suggests that Woody's inner unhappiness could stem from his purpose as a toy being "fulfilled", causing him to begin reevaluating his role and priorities in life.

Woody also encounters his old love-interest Bo Peep, who is now without an owner and considered by Woody to be "lost", and their differing viewpoints on whether Woody's opinion is valid is the focal point of the movie. However, Bo Peep accused him of being closed-minded and resistant to change, as inferred from, "Open your eyes, Woody. There's plenty of kids out there. It can't be just about the one you're still clinging to." This encourages Woody to reevaluate his loyalties and purpose, allowing him to undergo his most significant emotional growth. When, Bo is ready to leave for more adventures into the unknown, Woody is torn on whether to return to Bonnie, where he would be purposeless once more, or follow Bo, where he would have a new lease of life. In this instant, Buzz reassures Woody that "Bonnie will be okay" without him, and encourages Woody to listen to his "inner voice" once more.



Image 11: Woody changes expressions from confused, conflicted and heartbroken to bittersweet

This helps Woody to finally realize that his work as a child's toy is over. Even if he remained with his friends with Bonnie, he would still feel unfulfilled. Therefore, he makes the most unexpected decision, to leave the friends he had forged relations with for the past 4 movies. It seems both selfish and selfless, yet it sees Woody prioritise his own personal happiness for the first time in the series. He chooses to pursue continuous adventures and growth with a renewed purpose, thus concluding his arc as a *Bildungsheld*.

#### **4.2 Perception of Play: From Rigid Responsibility to Unrestrained Freedom**

I posit that Woody initially has a rigid understanding of play, seeing it as a duty he has to fulfil for Andy, rather than an activity purely for personal enjoyment. This is seen in TS1 when other toys complain about the party being moved forward and Woody mentions, "C'mon guys! Every Christmas and birthday we go through this." This suggests Woody views play as cyclical and methodical, as well as a responsibility where the toys should be used to "go through" the motions, thus being simply a forcible imitation of play. He puts Andy's interests first, and he is clear on his objective as a toy; to be "[there] for Andy when he needs [him]". Midway through TS1, Woody ends up in the hands of Sid's (the antagonist) house, and through his open interactions with the mutant toys,



Image 12: Sid's mutilated toys

and watching one of them getting blown up by Sid, Woody realizes that he is fortunate to be Andy's toy, distorting his view of unrestrained play, as he now is condition to perceive unrestrained play as inhumane and irresponsible, which is ironic as one would expect a toy to understand the true chaotic spirit of play. Yet, Woody resolves to solely bind himself to the duty of being Andy's toy and nothing else, only allowing Andy to activate play for him. These views are reinforced in Woody's vision in TS2, where he is left distraught and torn apart when Andy leaves for camp without him, and envisions being grabbed down and ripped to shreds by mutants. This suggests he is uncomfortable towards play without an owner in control, thus closing off any possibility of play for the sake of play, if it does not involve Andy.



Image 13: Woody grabbed down by mutant toys in his vision

When Woody is tempted to be placed in a museum, I feel this shows both progression and regression in his view of play, as while he does attempt to progress from his view of play as a responsibility tying him down for eternity, he instead turns to being locked up in a museum as the alternative, which would mean him being restrained for a purpose entirely the opposite of true and unrestrained play.

In TS3, while the other toys are looking forward to being played with again at the daycare, he views this as unacceptable, calling the daycare a “sad, lonely place for washed-up toys who have no owners”. This further reflects and reinforces his narrow worldview, as any future without Andy is perceived as being bleak and purposeless. However, when Andy reluctantly hands his toys over to Bonnie, his neighbour, introducing the toys as if they were real people, Woody realizes that Andy has not forgotten about them, but is simply passing them on to a new child with the childlike imagination he once had. His rigid idea of play is challenged as he realizes that play does not have to be associated with one owner for perpetuity. While not entirely changing his perception of play, he realizes he does not have to tie himself to the past, showing some progress in this perception.

In the fourth movie, as Bo Peep attempts to change Woody's perception of play without an owner, Bo Peep suggests to Woody to follow her in "getting out there", "seeing the world", and Woody responds with "Without a kid? No. You can't teach this old toy new tricks." This once again shows Woody's obstinately clinging onto his old beliefs.



Image 12: Woody hands over his Sheriff Badge to Jessie

However, as mentioned above on page 22, as Woody listens to Forky, Bo Peep and then his inner voice, he is successfully persuaded to make the shift and embrace unrestrained play. Woody is observed to be handing over his Sheriff Badge, a symbol of leadership and order, to Jessie. This action is symbolic in showing how Woody has left behind a part of his old identity by leaving the group. While he has always been tied down by a moral responsibility to lead the group, to put Andy, Bonnie, and the other toy's interests beyond his own, he has now reached the stage of life, having undergone numerous identity crises, where he has to follow his instinct and break out of

this conventional mould set for him in order to enjoy a new lease of life, to regain a sense of purpose.

Therefore, Woody takes a bold step into the unknown by handing over the badge of order and duty to Jessie. He finally accepts that his job as a child's toy and a leader is finished and fulfilled. He becomes a free spirit, as seen where his tone is enthusiastic when he replies to Bo Peep's suggestion to help other toys find their owners, "Yeah, let's do that", suggesting he does not view it as a burden, but a fun and meaningful activity where he derives enjoyment from. This is further reinforced when Buzz responds to another toy's question if Woody is now a "lost toy". Buzz refutes, insisting that "He is not a lost toy. Not anymore." This reinforces the idea that when Woody was restrained to being Bonnie's toy, he had grown bored, disinterested and disillusioned, with his character arc seemingly stagnating as he envisioned himself being cast aside by Bonnie once he returned with Forky. However, now that he had freed himself from the shackles of responsibility, he had the leeway to explore as much as he loved with Bo Peep, leaving him with ample room for continued adventures and further growth.

## **5 Conclusion**

In conclusion, from TS1 to 4, we see a flawed "child" growing up with his owner to become a "teenager" and then to a mature adult. However, while the mature adult would be expected to have achieved a totality of being under the guidelines of Classical Bildungsroman, Woody is not a conventional hero in this sense. Through TS4, which I find to be his "Mid-life Crisis", Woody's sense of purpose is truly questioned, and Woody shows that the best decision for continuous growth is not necessarily the most straight-forward nor morally correct one. Woody finds an alternative take of the traditional Bildungsheld, who is expected to reject childish

endeavours, as he embraces unrestrained play with his own agency, thus finding its true value; one that is voluntary and detached from one's responsibilities. Toy Story, therefore, is more than just a coming-of-age tale, as Woody does not simply rest on his laurels once fulfilling his purpose as a toy. He shows that he is more than a toy; he is his own entity, an unfinished tale left with pages of excitement and escapades still yet to be written.



Image 13: The closing scene at the carousell shows Woody and Bo Peep using the theme park meant for children for their own fun and enjoyment

### **Resources/ References:**

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<sup>2</sup> Jeffers, T. (2005). Apprenticeships: the bildungsroman from goethe to santayana. Palgrave Macmillan.

<sup>3</sup>Cocalis, S. (1978). The Transformation of "Bildung" from an Image to an Ideal. Monatshefte, 70(4), 399-414. Retrieved March 11, 2020, from [www.jstor.org/stable/30156979](http://www.jstor.org/stable/30156979)

<sup>4</sup>Moretti, F. (2000). The way of the world: the Bildungsroman in European culture. London: Verso.

<sup>5</sup>Carter, Michael & Fuller, Celene. (2015). Symbolic Interactionism. Sociopedia.isa. 10.1177/205684601561.

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