

MOURNING TASKS AND COPING MECHANISMS IN *RABBIT HOLE* (2010): A PSYCHOLOGICAL ANALYSIS

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Email: Ichacha734@gmail.com

Received:
28 February 2025

Revised:
28 September 2026

Accepted:
29 September 2026

Published:
30 September 2026

How to cite (APA 7th style):

Maslichah, Permatasari, R. (2026). Mourning Tasks and Coping Mechanisms in *Rabbit Hole* (2010): A psychological analysis. *FRASA: English Education and Literature Journal*, 7(2), 341-357.
<https://doi.org/10.47701/frasa.v7i2.4818>

Abstract

*This research aims to analyze the four tasks of mourning and the coping styles experienced by the main characters, Becca and Howie, in the film *Rabbit Hole* (2010) based on J. William Worden's theory. Becca and Howie are a married couple who experience profound grief after the accidental death of their young son, Danny, in a car accident. This research employed a descriptive qualitative method to analyze the data. The data consisted of primary and secondary sources. The primary data were obtained from the script of *Rabbit Hole* (2010), while the secondary data were collected from books, journal articles, and other relevant sources related to the topic of this research. The data were collected by watching the film, reading the script, identifying relevant dialogues and narrations, classifying the data, and reducing the data for analysis. The findings reveal that both Becca and Howie experience the four tasks of mourning proposed by J. William Worden, namely accepting the reality of the loss, processing the pain of grief, adjusting to a world without the deceased, and finding an enduring connection with the deceased while continuing their lives. In addition, the findings show that each character demonstrates different coping styles in dealing with grief, reflecting their individual ways of adapting to loss.*

Keywords. *Psychoanalysis, four tasks of mourning, Coping style, J. William Worden.*

INTRODUCTION

Literature is a form of art that embodies human creativity, imagination, and profound thought. It possesses both aesthetic and educational values, enabling readers and audiences to understand human experiences from various perspectives. Wellek and Warren (1956) state that literature reflects human life by portraying emotions, ideas, and perceptions, which are open to subjective interpretation. Through literature, people are able to develop empathy and gain a deeper understanding of various social and psychological issues. Literature

encompasses a wide range of forms, including poetry, novels, drama, and prose. In addition, Ramrao (2016) argues that film can also be regarded as a form of literature because it presents stories and human experiences through visual images and sound, making it an important medium for representing reality and human emotions. Therefore, literature is important to study because it provides a means of understanding how human experiences, emotions, and social realities are represented through artistic forms. By examining literary works, researchers can explore how particular human experiences are constructed, interpreted, and communicated to audiences. This makes literature a relevant subject of study, particularly when it represents complex psychological experiences such as grief, loss, and human responses to significant life events.

As one of the most influential literary media, film not only serves as entertainment but also reflects various aspects of human life, including emotional and psychological experiences. Klarer (2004) explains that films, like other literary works, portray numerous social and emotional issues that mirror real-life experiences. One of the psychological issues frequently represented in films is grief, which emerges after individuals experience the loss of someone significant in their lives. Through film, audiences are able to observe how different characters experience, express, and respond to grief in various ways.

Stroebe et al. (2020) describe grief as a multifaceted emotional response to loss that encompasses sadness, anger, guilt, despair, and loneliness. It is a universal experience that may arise from various forms of loss, including the death of a loved one, the end of a relationship, or the loss of employment. Since grief is experienced differently by each individual, psychologists have developed various theoretical frameworks to explain how people adapt to loss and continue their lives after bereavement. One of the most influential theories of grief was proposed by J. William Worden through the Four Tasks of Mourning.

Unlike stage-based theories that describe grief as a sequence of emotional stages, Worden (2018) argues that mourning is an active process in which bereaved individuals accomplish several psychological tasks to adapt to their loss. The first task is accepting the reality of the loss, which requires individuals to recognize that the deceased has permanently gone and will not return. The second task is processing the pain of grief by acknowledging and experiencing various emotional responses, including sadness, anger, guilt, anxiety, and loneliness. The third task is adjusting to a world without the deceased, which involves external, internal, and spiritual adjustments to life after the loss. Finally, the fourth task is finding a way to remember the deceased while moving forward, allowing bereaved individuals to preserve meaningful memories without preventing themselves from moving forward. These four tasks provide a comprehensive framework for understanding how individuals gradually adapt to bereavement.

Although Worden's Four Tasks of Mourning explain the grieving process, individuals may employ different coping styles while accomplishing these tasks. Coping refers to cognitive and behavioral efforts to manage stressful situations and reduce psychological distress (Carver et al., 1989). Worden (2018) identifies three primary coping styles commonly demonstrated during bereavement: problem-solving coping, active emotional coping, and avoidant coping. Each coping style influences how individuals experience grief and adapt to life after loss. Therefore, examining the relationship between the four tasks of mourning and coping styles provides a more comprehensive understanding of how bereaved individuals respond to grief.

These psychological concepts are portrayed in various literary works, particularly films that explore bereavement and family relationships. One of the films that presents a realistic depiction of grief is *Rabbit Hole* (2010), directed by John Cameron Mitchell and adapted from David Lindsay-Abaire's Pulitzer Prize-winning play. The film tells the story of Becca and Howie Corbett, a married couple struggling to cope with the accidental death of their four-year-old son, Danny. Throughout the story, both characters experience profound grief and demonstrate different emotional responses and coping strategies while attempting to continue their lives after the tragedy. Their contrasting responses make *Rabbit Hole* an appropriate literary work for examining the grieving process through Worden's Four Tasks of Mourning and coping styles.

Several previous studies have examined grief and bereavement from different perspectives. Cremasco et al. (2015) analyzed *Rabbit Hole* using Freud's psychoanalytic theory to examine the psychological suffering experienced by mothers after losing a child. The study emphasized mourning, melancholia, and trauma, concluding that the death of a child creates profound psychological wounds. Goldberg (2011) also examined *Rabbit Hole* as one of several contemporary American dramas portraying death and bereavement. The study focused on how female protagonists cope with death and gradually move toward healing. Furthermore, O'Connor (2019) reviewed the development of grief research from psychological and neuroscientific perspectives, explaining how the body, mind, and brain adapt to bereavement.

These previous studies demonstrate that grief and bereavement have been examined through psychoanalytic, literary, and psychological perspectives. However, the studies above do not specifically examine the mourning process represented in **Rabbit Hole** through J. William Worden's Four Tasks of Mourning while also considering the coping mechanisms demonstrated by the characters. Cremasco et al. (2015), for instance, focused on Freud's psychoanalytic concepts, while Goldberg (2011) emphasizes the representation of grief and the process of healing. Meanwhile, O'Connor (2019) provides a broader psychological and neuroscientific discussion of grief rather than analyzing the grieving process of fictional characters through Worden's framework. Therefore, this study emerges to examine how Becca and Howie respond to the death of their son through Worden's Four Tasks of Mourning and their different coping mechanisms. By combining the analysis of mourning tasks and coping mechanisms, this study seeks to provide a more focused psychological interpretation of grief as represented in *Rabbit Hole* (2010).

Accordingly, this study aims to analyze the four tasks of mourning experienced by Becca and Howie based on J. William Worden's theory and to examine the coping styles employed by both characters in coping with the loss of their son. It is expected that this study will contribute to literary studies by providing a deeper understanding of the representation of grief, mourning, and coping styles as portrayed in *Rabbit Hole* (2010)

Grief is a natural response to significant loss and represents a universal yet deeply personal experience. Parkes and Prigerson (2010) explain that grief is not classified as a mental illness but rather as a normal reaction to the inevitable losses experienced in life. James and Friedman (2009) further describe grief as a complex emotional response that arises from changes in established patterns of life following a significant loss. In this context, Worden (2018) views grief as a multifaceted psychological and emotional response and emphasizes the importance of actively adapting to bereavement through the tasks of mourning. Therefore, understanding grief requires attention not only to the emotional experience of loss but also to the ways individuals actively process and adapt to the changes resulting from bereavement.

Worden proposes the Four Tasks of Mourning as a framework for understanding how bereaved individuals actively adapt to the loss of a loved one. Unlike stage-based theories that describe grief as a passive sequence of emotional stages, Worden (2018) emphasizes that mourning is an active process that requires individuals to accomplish four essential tasks. The first task involves accepting the reality of the loss, which requires individuals to acknowledge that the deceased has died permanently and will not return. The second task involves processing the pain of grief by acknowledging and expressing emotional responses such as sadness, anger, guilt, anxiety, loneliness, and despair rather than suppressing or avoiding them. The third task involves adjusting to a world without the deceased, including external adjustments to daily roles and responsibilities, internal adjustments to identity and self-perception, and spiritual adjustments to beliefs, values, and assumptions about life after the loss. The fourth task involves finding an enduring connection with the deceased while continuing to move forward with life. Through meaningful remembrance, bereaved individuals can maintain an emotional connection with the deceased without preventing themselves from forming new relationships or pursuing future goals (Worden, 2018).

In addition to the Four Tasks of Mourning, coping mechanisms are relevant to understanding how individuals respond to the emotional and psychological demands associated with bereavement. Coping refers to cognitive and behavioral efforts used to manage stressful situations and reduce psychological distress (Carver et al., 1989). In the context of grief, individuals may employ different coping mechanisms depending on how they respond to the loss and the challenges that follow it. Problem-solving coping involves actively addressing practical problems and seeking solutions to difficulties resulting from the loss, whereas active emotional coping involves recognizing, expressing, and processing emotional responses in a healthy manner. Individuals may also employ avoidant emotional coping by suppressing or avoiding emotional responses to grief through behaviors such as denial or social withdrawal. Although avoidance may temporarily reduce emotional distress, prolonged reliance on avoidant coping may interfere with the mourning process (Worden, 2018). Therefore, examining both mourning tasks and coping mechanisms provides a broader

framework for understanding how bereaved individuals respond to loss and adapt to life after the death of a loved one. Overall, Worden's Four Tasks of Mourning and coping styles provide a comprehensive framework for understanding how individuals actively respond to bereavement. By completing the four mourning tasks while employing adaptive coping strategies, bereaved individuals are better able to integrate the experience of loss into their lives and gradually achieve psychological adjustment.

METHOD

This study employed a descriptive qualitative research design using a psychological approach based on J. William Worden's Four Tasks of Mourning theory (2018). A qualitative research design was chosen because it aims to interpret and understand the meanings, behaviors, and experiences represented in literary works rather than to measure them statistically. Specifically, this study analyzes how the main characters, Becca and Howie, experience the Four Tasks of Mourning and employ different coping styles in *Rabbit Hole* (2010).

The primary data consist of the *Rabbit Hole* (2010) film script, including dialogues and narrations related to the grieving experiences of the main characters. Meanwhile, the secondary data were obtained from books, international journals, scholarly articles, and other relevant references concerning grief, the Four Tasks of Mourning, coping styles, and literary criticism.

The data were analyzed through several systematic procedures. First, the researcher watched the film while reading the script repeatedly to gain a comprehensive understanding of the story and its context. Second, relevant data were identified by highlighting, underlining, and coding dialogues and narrations related to the Four Tasks of Mourning and coping styles. Third, the identified data were classified according to the four mourning tasks and the coping styles employed by the characters. Fourth, the data were reduced by selecting the most relevant findings that addressed the research objectives. Finally, the selected data were interpreted and analyzed to explain how Becca and Howie accomplished the Four Tasks of Mourning and employed different coping styles throughout the grieving process.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

This research shows results related to the four tasks of mourning that the main characters, Becca and Howie go through after losing their children.

The Four Tasks of Mourning

According to Worden, the concept of tasks contrasts significantly with Freud's notion of grief work, suggesting that mourners must take proactive steps and possess agency. Mourning is a process, not a fixed state, and these tasks require effort. However, not every loss will challenge these tasks in the same way. Worden also delineates four essential tasks

in the grieving process: Task I: to accept the reality of the loss, Task II: to process the pain of grief, Task III: to adjust to a world without the deceased, Task IV: to find a way to remember the deceased while embarking on the rest of one's journey through life. These tasks are crucial steps that individuals must confront to adapt to their loss.

Task I: Accepting the Reality of the Loss

According to Worden (2018), the first task of mourning is to accept the reality of the loss, which requires bereaved individuals to acknowledge both intellectually and emotionally that the deceased has died and will not return. Acceptance is achieved when individuals gradually recognize the permanence of the loss and begin to adjust their lives accordingly. Worden (2018) emphasizes that this task is essential because denying or avoiding the reality of death may hinder the grieving process.

Becca and Howie demonstrate the first task of mourning in several scenes throughout *Rabbit Hole* (2010). One example can be seen in the following narration:

Becca is alone in the kitchen. It's the middle of the day and the house is deadly quiet. She's been alone with her thoughts for a while. She stares at the paintings on the fridge. She takes them in—a tree, a robot, a shark attacking a woman. They all have the distinctive scrawl of a child, and the name Danny written across the bottom. Becca looks closely for a moment, and then removes the magnets one by one, taking the paintings off the fridge, simply and without emotion.

(Rabbit Hole, 00:15:52–00:16:19)



Figure 1 Becca Removes Danny's Drawings from the Refrigerator

Becca's action symbolizes her gradual acceptance of Danny's death. Although the drawings represent precious memories of her son, she chooses to remove them from the refrigerator, indicating her willingness to confront the reality that Danny is no longer alive. According to Worden (2018), accepting the reality of the loss involves recognizing that the deceased will not return and beginning to acknowledge this reality in everyday life. Therefore, Becca's behavior reflects her effort to accomplish the first task of mourning by accepting the permanence of her son's death rather than denying or avoiding it.

Another example is presented in the following dialogue.

Becca : "How'd it go here?"

Howie : "Not so good. We need to clean out that room."

Becca : *(pause)* "Okay."

Howie : "I thought we could turn it into a guest room or something."

(Rabbit Hole, 01:04:57–01:05:18)



Figure 2. Howie Suggests Converting Danny's Room into a Guest Room

In this dialogue, Howie proposes cleaning Danny's room and converting it into a guest room. His suggestion demonstrates his awareness that Danny will no longer return to occupy the room. Worden (2018) explains that accepting the reality of the loss includes making practical and emotional adjustments that reflect the permanence of death. By proposing a new function for Danny's room, Howie begins to adapt to life without his son. Although the conversation remains emotionally difficult, his decision indicates progress toward accomplishing the first task of mourning.

Based on the findings above, both Becca and Howie demonstrate the first task of mourning through different behaviors. Becca expresses acceptance by removing visual reminders of Danny, whereas Howie shows acceptance by planning to transform Danny's

bedroom into a functional space. Despite their different responses, both characters gradually acknowledge the permanence of Danny's death, which is consistent with Worden's (2018) concept of accepting the reality of the loss.

Task II: Processing the Pain of Grief

According to Worden (2018), the second task of mourning is to process the pain of grief. He explains that grief is not limited to sadness but also involves a range of emotional responses, including anger, guilt, anxiety, depression, and loneliness. Rather than suppressing these emotions, bereaved individuals need to acknowledge and express them, as unresolved grief may interfere with the mourning process and hinder psychological adjustment (Worden, 2018).

The findings reveal that both Becca and Howie demonstrate the second task of mourning by expressing the emotional pain resulting from Danny's death. One example is illustrated in the following dialogue:

Nat : "I'm not talking about blame, I'm talking about comfort."

Becca : "Oh, comfort. Well then."

Nat : "Where are you getting it?"

Becca : "Comfort? I'm not."

Nat : "Well I think you should."

Becca : "Okay. I'll get right on that then. See what I can dig up on eBay."

Nat : "I'm just trying to help you, Becca. I wish someone had given me a little advice when Arthur died."

Becca : "You know what I wish? I wish you would stop comparing Danny to Arthur! Danny was a four-year-old boy who chased his dog into the street! Arthur was a thirty-year-old heroin addict who OD'd! Frankly, I resent how you keep lumping them together!"

(Rabbit Hole, 00:37:46–00:38:17)

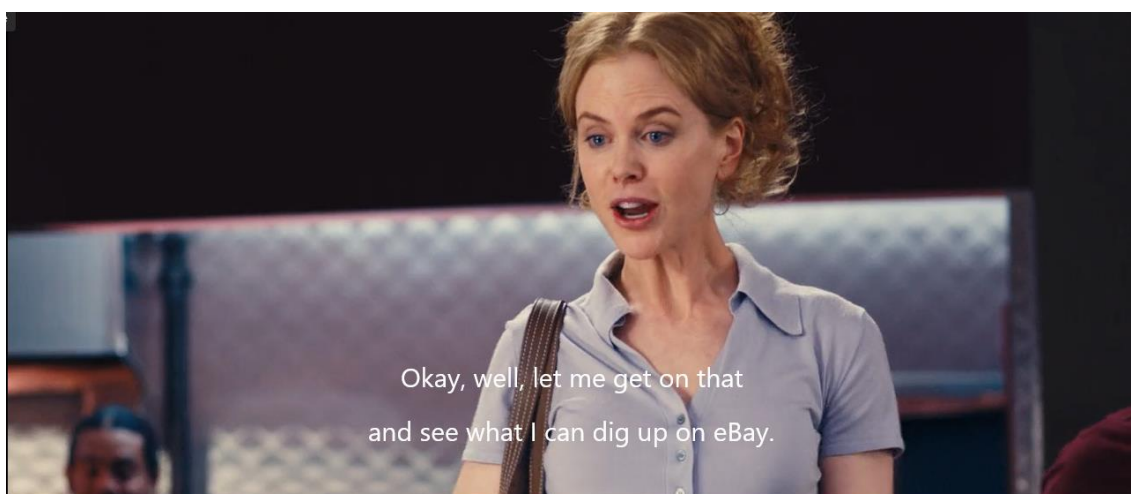


Figure 3. Becca Expresses Her Anger During Her Conversation with Nat

The dialogue shows Becca's strong emotional response when Nat compares Danny's death with Arthur's. Becca rejects the comparison because she believes the two situations are fundamentally different. Her emotional outburst reflects the anger, sadness, and frustration she continues to experience following Danny's death. According to Worden (2018), processing the pain of grief requires bereaved individuals to acknowledge and express painful emotions instead of denying or suppressing them. Therefore, Becca's reaction demonstrates her effort to confront the emotional pain of losing her son, illustrating her progression in accomplishing the second task of mourning.

Another example is presented in the following dialogue between Howie and Jason, the teenager involved in the accident that caused Danny's death.

Howie : "So my wife agrees to meet you in a public place, and you...what? Apologize?"
Jason : "I guess."
Howie : "Okay, you apologize, and then what?"
Becca : "Alright, Howie, that's enough."
Howie : "What is that?"
Becca : "It's a comic book."
Howie : "It's a comic book. A comic book."
Jason : "No, she didn't."
Howie : "No, she didn't. Because this is our house. And just because there's a sign out front doesn't mean you can pop in."
Becca : "Howie, all right."
Howie : "No, it's not alright. You don't just walk into someone's home like that. You should show a little fucking respect."
(*Rabbit Hole*, 01:06:30–01:07:13)

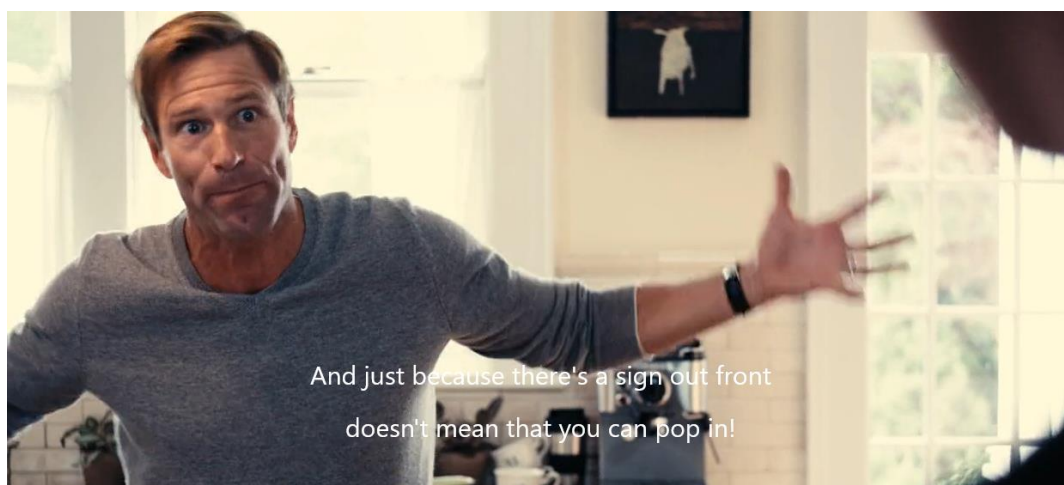


Figure 4. Howie Confronts Jason at His House

This scene demonstrates Howie's inability to control his anger when Jason unexpectedly visits his house. Jason's presence reminds Howie of the accident that claimed Danny's life, triggering intense emotional distress. His reaction reflects unresolved grief and the emotional pain he continues to carry. Worden (2018) states that anger is one of the natural emotional responses experienced during bereavement, and expressing such emotions forms an important part of processing the pain of grief. Consequently, Howie's confrontation with Jason illustrates his attempt to process the emotional consequences of his son's death, despite the difficulty of doing so.

Based on these findings, both Becca and Howie accomplish the second task of mourning by expressing the emotional pain associated with Danny's death. Although they express their grief differently, Becca through anger toward her mother's comparison and Howie through his confrontation with Jason, both characters demonstrate that acknowledging and expressing painful emotions is an essential part of processing grief, as proposed by Worden (2018).

Task III: To Adjust to a World Without the Deceased

According to Worden (2018), the third task of mourning is to adjust to a world without the deceased. This task requires bereaved individuals to adapt to the changes brought about by the loss in three areas: external adjustment, internal adjustment, and spiritual adjustment. External adjustment refers to changes in daily roles and responsibilities, internal adjustment concerns changes in one's identity and self-perception, and spiritual adjustment involves re-evaluating personal beliefs, values, and assumptions about the world following the loss (Worden, 2018). The findings reveal that both Becca and Howie experience this task throughout *Rabbit Hole* (2010).

One example of internal adjustment is illustrated in the following scene.

INT. SUPERMARKET – DAY

Sammy : "I want the [Fruit Roll-ups."
Lori : " Not happening."
Sammy : "Please, I'll be good."
Lori : "Stop it."
Sammy : "Please?"
Lori : " No. "
Sammy : "I promise"
Lori : "No, I'm not gonna get 'em."

Becca tries to not pay attention, but it gets under her skin. The boy's whines turn into wails, and still, the mom does nothing. It goes for several beats until Becca

cannot take it anymore. She is suddenly striding down the aisle toward them. Surprised, Izzy hurries after her... But it's too late, Becca is already talking to Lori.

Becca : "You know what? It's only three bucks, why don't you just get him the roll-ups?" The boy stops whining. He and Izzy look to Lori to see her response. The woman's eyes narrow.

Lori : "Not that it's any of your business, but we don't allow candy in our house, and my son knows that."

Becca : "Come on, it's just fruit. Why don't you give him a treat?."

Lori : "Are you a mom?"

The question hangs there. Izzy lowers her eyes. Becca is obviously caught off-guard. She struggles to respond.

Lori : "Yeah, I didn't think so. (moves her cart) Excuse me..."

(*Rabbit Hole* 01:04: 02– 01:04:21)



Figure 5. Becca Confronts Lori at the Supermarket

In this scene, Becca intervenes in Lori's conversation with her son after witnessing the child's persistent requests. Her reaction reflects not only sympathy toward the child but also the emotional impact of losing Danny. However, Lori's question, "Are you a mom?", forces Becca to confront her own identity. Although she remains Danny's mother, his death leaves her uncertain about how she defines herself in the absence of her child.

According to Worden (2018), internal adjustment involves reconstructing one's identity after the death of a loved one, as bereavement often changes an individual's sense

of self, self-esteem, and perceived life roles. Becca's silence in response to Lori's question demonstrates her struggle to reconcile her identity as a mother while living in a world where her son is no longer alive. Therefore, this scene illustrates Becca's effort to accomplish the third task of mourning through internal adjustment.

Another example demonstrates spiritual adjustment during Becca's participation in a support group meeting.

Ana : "God had to take her. He needed another angel."

Sam: "He needed another angel."

Becca : "(beat) Why didn't he just make one?"

Silence. They all turn to Becca, confused.

Becca : "Another angel. I mean, he's God after all. Why didn't he just make another angel?"

(*Rabbit Hole* 00:14:00 – 00:14:10)



Figure 6. Becca Questions God's Purpose During the Support Group Meeting

During the discussion, Ana explains her daughter's death by stating that God needed another angel. Rather than accepting this explanation, Becca questions the logic behind it by asking why God did not simply create another angel instead of taking a child. Her response reflects confusion, resentment, and doubt regarding God's purpose.

Worden (2018) explains that spiritual adjustment occurs when bereaved individuals reassess their beliefs, values, and assumptions about life after experiencing a significant loss. The death of a loved one may challenge previously held religious beliefs and alter an individual's understanding of justice, faith, and the meaning of suffering. Becca's question

demonstrates that Danny's death has disrupted her spiritual beliefs, illustrating her struggle to adjust spiritually to a world without her son. Thus, this scene represents Becca's spiritual adjustment, one aspect of the third task of mourning.

Howie also demonstrates internal adjustment, as illustrated in the following dialogue.

Howie : "Thank you. (changing) Hey, how are the kids?"

Rick : "They're good. Emily's doing ballet. Robby is in tee ball."

Howie : "Wow. Tee-ball."

Howie tries to look interested, but Rick sees through it.

(*Rabbit Hole* 00:10:53 – 00:11:08)



Figure 7. Howie Talks with Rick About His Children

This conversation highlights Howie's difficulty in interacting with discussions about other children after Danny's death. Although he attempts to maintain a normal conversation, his response lacks genuine enthusiasm because it reminds him of the life he expected to share with his own son.

According to Worden (2018), internal adjustment requires bereaved individuals to redefine their identity and adapt to the loss of important life roles. Danny's death profoundly affects Howie's identity as a father, making it difficult for him to relate to conversations about children's everyday activities. His restrained reaction reflects his ongoing effort to reconstruct his identity and adapt to life without his son. Therefore, this scene demonstrates Howie's progression in accomplishing the third task of mourning through internal adjustment.

Based on the findings above, the third task of mourning is reflected through different forms of adjustment experienced by the two main characters. Becca demonstrates both internal adjustments, by struggling to redefine her identity as a mother, and spiritual adjustment, by questioning her religious beliefs following Danny's death. Meanwhile, Howie demonstrates internal adjustment as he attempts to redefine his identity as a father while adapting to life without his son. These findings are consistent with Worden's (2018) view that successful mourning requires bereaved individuals to adjust not only to changes in daily life but also to changes in their identity and worldview.

Task IV: Finding a Way to Remember the Deceased While Embarking on the Rest of One's Journey Through Life.

As stated by J. William Worden, it is important to find ways to honor and remember deceased loved ones, allowing their memory to stay with us while we continue to move forward with our lives (81). He explains that the fourth task of mourning involves creating a space where the memory of the deceased can be cherished, enabling the grieving person to both pay tribute to their loved one and continue living. Rather than forgetting the loved one, this task encourages individuals to preserve meaningful memories through various forms of memorialization, allowing them to honor the deceased while gradually moving forward with life (Worden, 2018). In *Rabbit Hole* (2010), both Becca and Howie demonstrate the fourth task of mourning.

This can be seen in the following quotation from the film script.

Becca and Nat carry the milk crates of Danny's stuff down to the basement and put them in the corner with a few other things Becca has put aside. Becca stands there, taking it in. Danny's been reduced to a small corner of stuff in the basement. She lets out a breath, then turns to her mother.

(Rabbit Hole 01:09:16 – 01:09 :25)



Figure 8. Becca stores Danny's belongings in the basement

In this quote, Becca and Nat take the milk crate containing Danny's belongings to the basement and place it in the corner alongside other items that Becca has set aside, representing an act of memorialization. By carefully storing Danny's belongings, Becca preserves a tangible connection to his memory while subtly demonstrating her willingness to continue with her life. This balance between maintaining an emotional bond with the deceased and gradually moving forward reflects an essential aspect of the grieving process. Therefore, Becca's actions illustrate Worden's fourth task of mourning, which involves finding a way to remember the deceased while embarking on the rest of one's journey through life. Another example demonstrating the fourth task of mourning can be seen through Howie's response in the following quotation:

Becca checks the back seat. A cake box is carefully placed there. She also notices Danny's booster seat and gets a little pang.

Becca : "I really wish you'd take that out of here, Howie." Howie : "You're hardly in this car, what's the difference?"

Becca : "It's just weird."

(*Rabbit Hole* 00:33:15 – 00:33:22)



Figure 9. Howie keeps Danny's booster seat in the car

In this quote, Howie and Becca are in the car when Becca notices Danny's booster seat, which stirs her emotions. She asks Howie to remove it, but he does not see the need, believing it does not matter since Becca rarely rides in the car. This suggests that Howie keeps the booster seat to preserve Danny's memory, even though he's no longer with them. Through this moment, it's clear that Howie is holding onto a physical reminder of Danny while navigating his own journey through grief. From this quote, Howie's behavior aligns with

the fourth task of mourning, as described by Worden: to find a way to remember the deceased while embarking on the rest of one's journey through life.

CONCLUSION

Based on the results and discussion above, it can be concluded that the characters Becca and Howie in *Rabbit Hole* (2010) poignantly illustrate the grieving process through the lens of J. William Worden's four tasks of mourning. Their journey reflects the complexities and challenges individuals face after the loss of a loved one. Becca and Howie's experiences with accepting the reality of their son's death, processing the pain of grief, adjusting to a world without him, and finding meaningful ways to remember him provide a vivid representation of how these tasks unfold in the mourning process. The film reveals that mourning is not a linear or fixed state but a dynamic and ongoing process that involves both emotional and psychological effort. Through their interactions and personal struggles, Becca and Howie demonstrate the four tasks of mourning: accepting the reality of the loss, processing the pain of grief, adjusting to a world without the deceased, and finding a way to remember the deceased while embarking on the rest of one's journey through life.

Practically, this research contributes to a better understanding of the grieving process as experienced by bereaved individuals. The findings may serve as a useful reference for students and researchers in literary and psychological studies, particularly those interested in analyzing grief through Worden's theory. In addition, this study may help readers recognize that grieving is a gradual and individualized process, thereby fostering greater empathy and awareness toward people who are coping with the loss of a loved one.

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