

Literary Analysis Of Selected Short Stories And Poems By Abrenian Writers: Basis For The Localized Grade VII English Learning Materials

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Abstract

This study analyzed selected short stories and poems by Abrenian writers as basis for the development of localized Grade VII English learning materials. Recent trends in Philippine English instruction are heavily influenced by international assessments and standardized measures, often emphasizing abstract skills, foreign texts, and uniform benchmarks over local literature and students lived experiences (OECD, 2019; Rizal, 2021). Despite policies such as the Enhanced Basic Education Act of 2013 (RA 10533) and DepEd Order No. 35, s. 2016, which advocate for contextualized and culturally relevant instruction, existing Grade VII materials remain disconnected from local literary traditions, with limited empirical research on pedagogical integration (Alfonso & Torres, 2020; Dela Cruz, 2019).

Guided by constructivist learning theories (Bruner, 1996; Vygotsky, 1978) and culturally responsive pedagogy (Gay, 2010), this study employed a cultural-formalism approach to analyze themes, literary elements, stylistic features, and socio-cultural values embedded in the texts, emphasizing identity, cultural heritage, resilience, community, and social realities of Abra. These aligned with the Most Essential Learning Competencies (MELCs) outlined by DepEd (2020).

Findings indicate that the selected texts are rich in cultural and literary significance, offering authentic contexts that boost learner engagement, cultural affirmation, and critical thinking. Based on these insights, instructional materials integrating Abrenian literature were developed, featuring analytical and values-oriented activities aligned with curriculum standards. The study concludes that systematic integration of local literature supports DepEd's localization policy and fosters inclusive, meaningful English education, promoting relevance and cultural awareness.

Keywords: *localization, contextualization, Cultural-Formalism Approach, English language teaching, reading comprehension*



I. INTRODUCTION

Background of the Study

The Philippines has long been recognized as one of the leading centers of English education in Asia, a legacy of the American colonial period when English became the primary medium of instruction. This historical foundation helped Filipino learners achieve relatively high English proficiency, contributing to national competitiveness in fields such as education, tourism, maritime services, and business process outsourcing (Gonzalez, 1997; Bautista, 2004).

Recent evidence, however, shows a significant decline in literacy and reading comprehension. Reading is a foundational skill essential for learning across all subjects. Based on the Simple View of Reading Theory (Gough & Tunmer, 1986), comprehension depends on both decoding and language understanding. Weakness in either area affects meaning-making.

Large-scale assessments reveal alarming results. The World Bank (2022) reported that around 90% of Filipino learners struggle to understand simple texts. PISA 2018 showed only 1 in 5 students reached minimum reading proficiency, and PISA 2022 confirmed that the Philippines remains among the lowest-performing countries in reading (OECD, 2023). TIMSS and SEA-PLM results further confirm persistent low performance in literacy and numeracy, indicating systemic issues in curriculum, instruction, and resources (Mullis et al., 2020; UNICEF & SEAMEO, 2020).

Reading difficulties are often linked to weak decoding skills, limited vocabulary, and insufficient background knowledge. Vocabulary depth and prior knowledge strongly influence comprehension, as readers construct meaning by connecting texts with what they already know (Kintsch, 1998). Theories such as Schema Theory (Anderson, 1984) and Sociocultural Theory (Vygotsky, 1978) emphasize that learning becomes more effective when connected to learners' experiences and cultural context.

Because of this, contextualized and culturally relevant texts are important. Studies show that learners better understand and engage with materials that reflect their local culture and experiences (Tan, 2019; Sambayon et al., 2023). Culturally Relevant Pedagogy (Ladson-Billings, 1995) also highlights that students perform better when instruction affirms their identity.

Despite these findings, many Philippine learning materials still rely on foreign texts with limited cultural grounding. This gap contributes to low engagement and comprehension. Local literature, however, has been shown to improve understanding, motivation, and critical thinking by making lessons more meaningful and relatable (Irorita, 2023; Belarde, 2024).

In Abra, rich literary works from local writers remain underutilized in classrooms. At Abra High School Calot Extension, learners continue to show low English performance, with a 2024 NAT Mean Percentage Score of 28.99, indicating "not proficient" levels.

This study, therefore, aims to analyze Abrenian literary works as a basis for developing localized learning materials that improve reading comprehension. It aligns with SDG 4: Quality Education, which promotes inclusive and equitable learning. Ultimately, integrating local literature seeks to enhance literacy, strengthen cultural identity, and make learning more meaningful for students.

Statement of the Problem

This study sought to analyze selected short stories and poems written by Abrenian authors with the aim of identifying the literary elements, cultural representations, and pedagogical implications embodied in these works.

Specifically, this study sought to answer the following questions:

1. What literary elements are present in the selected short stories and poems written by Abrenian writers?
2. What cultural values, traditions and local experiences of Abrenians are portrayed?
3. What pedagogical implications can be drawn from the analysis of the selected Abrenian literary works for use in the Grade VII English curriculum?
4. How can the findings of this study be utilized in the development of localized Grade VII English learning materials? and;
5. What localized instructional materials can be designed to enhance the reading comprehension of Grade VII students of Abra High School Calot Extension?

Research Objectives

1. To identify and analyze the literary elements present in the selected short stories and poems written by Abrenian writers.
2. To examine the cultural values, traditions, and local experiences of Abrenians as portrayed in the selected literary works.
3. To determine the pedagogical implications of the analyzed Abrenian literary texts for use in the Grade VII English curriculum.
4. To utilize the findings of the study as a basis for developing localized Grade VII English learning materials.
5. To design and develop localized instructional materials aimed at enhancing the reading comprehension of Grade VII students of Abra High School Calot Extension.

II. MATERIALS AND METHODS

Research Design

This study employed a qualitative research design, specifically using cultural-formalism approach to examine selected short stories and poems written by Abrenian authors. Cultural-Formalism Approach examines a text's literary elements while considering its social and cultural context (Wellek & Warren, 1949). This method is ideal for the study as it allows the researcher to analyze Abrenian short stories and poems for both literary quality and local relevance, ensuring that the resulting Grade VII English learning materials are engaging and culturally meaningful.

Moreover, a developmental research approach, also referred to as design and development approach, was utilized in designing the localized Grade VII English learning materials. This approach focused on the systematic development and evaluation of instructional materials to ensure their effectiveness and relevance in educational contexts (Richey & Klein, 2007). Similarly, Reeves (2007) highlights that developmental research bridges theory and practice by ensuring that instructional materials are grounded in pedagogical principles while being responsive to learners' needs. This only entails the application of the findings from the literary analysis to produce quality-assured instructional materials aligned with the Grade VII English curriculum - Most Essential Learning Competencies (MELCs).



Population and Locale of the Study

The study focused on the selected short stories and poems authored by Abrenian writers, serving as the primary textual population for literary analysis. Selection is based on criteria such as cultural relevance, literary value, material availability, text length, and representation of Abrenian identity. The locale of the study is the province of Abra, where the chosen authors originate and where the literary traditions examined are rooted.

Data Gathering Instrument

The primary instrument in this study is a Literary Analysis Checklist (LAC) which was adapted and slightly modified by the researcher according to the study's needs. The LAC served as guide in the systematic examination of the selected texts. The checklist covers analysis focus such as theme, characterization, setting, plot, form or structure, figurative language and poetic devices, tone or mood, cultural representation and pedagogical relevance. For the validation of the developed learning materials, an Expert Validation Rubric was used, adapted from DepEd standards for instructional materials. This rubric evaluates content accuracy, cultural relevance, instructional alignment, appropriateness for Grade VII learners, and overall usability.

Data Gathering Procedures

The data collection started by choosing short stories and poems written by Abrenian authors. The researcher looked up literary works that were culturally relevant, valuable, available, and showed Abrenian identity. To locate these works, the researcher checked different editions of Bannawag magazine. After choosing the appropriate pieces, the researcher obtained permission from the authors through Messenger messages and formal correspondence to incorporate their works into the study. Once the authors consented, they also provided the researcher copies of their works for use in the research.

Once the literary texts were finalized and the authors' consent was secured, the researcher conducted a systematic analysis using the Cultural-Formalism Approach. This approach combines close reading of the text's formal elements with an understanding of its cultural context, emphasizing how both aspects influence literary meaning. To analyze each work, which include the selected poems and short stories, the researcher employed a Literary Analysis Checklist (LAC), which examined various components such as theme, characterization, setting, plot or structure, figurative language and poetic devices, tone and mood, cultural representation, and pedagogical relevance. Each of the literary piece was analyzed one after the other. During this process, qualitative coding was utilized to identify patterns, recurring cultural motifs, and potential teaching opportunities within the texts. To ensure the validity and deepen the cultural insights of the analysis, informal follow-up interviews were conducted with two of the authors, namely Vincent C. Berroy and Dr. Leticia Benabese. These discussions provided valuable additional context, allowing the researcher to clarify certain aspects of the texts and gain a better understanding of the authors' intentions and perspectives. The interviews also served as a means of verifying the interpretations made during the analysis, ensuring that the insights drawn accurately reflected the authors' original ideas and cultural viewpoints. By engaging in these conversations, the researcher was able to enrich the overall analysis, making it more comprehensive and grounded in the authors' authentic voices and cultural contexts.



The insights derived from this analysis and informal interviews formed the foundation for the development and crafting of localized Grade VII English learning materials, ensuring alignment with the Most Essential Learning Competencies (MELCs) prescribed by DepEd. After the initial draft of the materials, they were submitted to expert validators, including English teachers and Education Program Supervisors (EPS) within the Schools Division of Abra, who evaluated the content using the Expert Validation Rubric as outlined in DepEd Order 001, s. 2021. The feedback from validators was analyzed qualitatively, and the materials were revised and refined based on recommendations to enhance clarity, cultural accuracy, and pedagogical effectiveness.

As a concluding activity, the completed materials were compiled as the final output of the study, ensuring that all steps were conducted with academic rigor and adherence to ethical standards, including proper acknowledgment of authors and respect for intellectual property.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

This study presented the findings from the analysis of selected short stories and poems written by Abrenian authors, focusing on the literary elements, cultural representations, and pedagogical implications embodied in these works.

Specifically, the findings are organized according to the following areas of inquiry:

1. What literary elements are present in the selected short stories and poems written by Abrenian writers?

The selected Abrenian short stories and poems exhibit a profound use of literary elements such as theme, form or structure, plot, figurative language, mood or tone, setting and characterization which collectively reveal the richness of human experiences, moral insights, and emotional depth rooted in the local Abrenian context. These elements are evident in carefully crafted lines and narrative scenes of these works.

Table 1. *Literary Themes of Selected Abrenian Poems*

Literary Element:	Theme
Title of Poem	Observed Notes and Evidences
MARI JUANA by Leticia M. Benabese	<p>The poem clearly presents a moral and social theme about <i>“corrupted innocence, the consequences of vice, and a warning against moral downfall.”</i></p> <p>Mari Juana is initially characterized by innocence and credibility. This can be seen through the lines:</p> <p style="text-align: center;">“Your name drifts softly to my ear, And thoughts of you keep drawing near A fragrant, gentle maiden fair, Whose tender grace invites my care.”</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>“Damok a mangeg dayta nagan Immapay panunut kinasadlam Nabanglo, agay-ayamuom a balasang</i></p>



Kinataona't mapagtalkan."

Yet her subsequent actions contradict this portrayal and signify a loss of moral standing showing the so-called "*corrupted innocence*." The poem scrutinizes her decisions and highlights their far-reaching effects, especially on the youth. In this way, the poem extends beyond the individual and addresses communal responsibility. The "*consequences of vice*," and "*a warning against moral downfall*" is revealed in the following lines:

"Step back awhile, have mercy, friend,
Think of the future you might mend.
For those who follow, still unsure
They halted, lost, because of you."

*"Adaywam idan, pangngaasim
Panunutem masakbayan dagiti addim
Agad-adalda pay, sika,
Simmardengda laeng gapu kenka."*

**THE NIGHTS
CANNOT KEEP
STILL**

(DI MAK Aidna
DAGITI RABII)

by Hermilinda T.
Lingbaoan-Bulong

The central theme of the poem "The Nights Cannot Keep Still" (*Di Makaidna Dagiti Rabii*) is "the inescapable nature of inner emotional turmoil" and "the persistent effects of unresolved fear, anxiety, and mistrust."

The poem emphasizes that emotional pain cannot simply be ignored or masked, as it lingers and haunts the mind, much like a shadow or a spreading rust as shown in these lines:

"It wouldn't leave, trailing like a shadow...
There is a nightmare that will not allow respite,
like rust that spreads entirely
gnawing the flesh"

*"Di sumina a kas anniniwan...
Adda batibat a di agpabatubat
kasla lati nga agsaknap
a mangnetnget kadagiti lasag."*

Furthermore, the poet illustrates that external distractions or superficial remedies, symbolized by the moon, stars, or imagined amusement, cannot heal the wounds caused by broken trust or inner conflict. This is reflected on these lines:

"...yet looking up to the moon
is not the cure to a tarnished trust.

Playing amusement with the stars
or sailing with closed eyes
is not the answer that you are searching for”

*“...saan nga iti itatangad iti bulan
ti agas ti panagtalek a natulawan.
Saan a pannakilang-ay kadagiti bituen
wanno panaglayag a sikikidem
ti sungbat a sapsapulem.”*

The poem conveys that confronting and acknowledging one’s emotional struggles is necessary, as avoidance only prolongs suffering and unrest.

**TIDE OF A ROSE IN
CHAINS: TWO
POEMS**

(BALUD TI ROSAS
ITI POSAS: DUA A
DANIW)

by Vincent C. Berroy

The poem “Tide of A Rose in Chains: Two Poems” (*Balud ti Rosas iti Posas: Dua a Daniw*) presents a highly layered and philosophical theme centered on “love constrained by suffering, emotional imprisonment, and the tension between beauty and pain.”

In the first part, Arrival (*Isasangbay*), love persists despite hardship. This can be seen through these lines:

“Roses still bloom even in a cramped world of
clenched and stifling breaths,

For even a hardened heart keeps a hidden chamber where
love can take root.”

*“Agmaris rosas latta uray pay iti naillet a lubong ti
nakakaem a gemgem*

*Ta uray pay bimmato a puso adda latta met siledna a
pagubbogan ti ayat.”*

The rose symbolizes enduring love even in a harsh world. However, this beauty of love is not without struggle, as shown in the following lines:

“The clouds may scatter, feelings may be lulled by the
rhythm of sweet surrender;

Yet the canvas still opens to those haunting visions
dancing on its face”

*“Maukrad dagiti dakulap, mailibay ti rikna iti ritmo ti
nasam-it nga isusuko*

*Ngem manglukag latta met dagiti makapasidduker a
ladawan a yul-ula ti kanbas.”*

In the second part, Departure (Ipapanaw), the theme shifts toward loss, departure, and existential questioning which is an “emotional imprisonment.” This is reflected through these lines:

Your soul slipped from the warmth of flesh and
 wandered through the dark,
 Did you come merely as the current of water, only to
 depart the same way?

*“Nauyos ti kararuam manipud iti nalamiis a lasag ket
 nagkarawa iti kasipngetan
 Simmangbayka kadi laeng a kas iti agus ti danum sa
 met laeng agpakada?”*

By the poem’s title itself “Tide of a Rose in Chains” (Balud ti Rosas iti Posas), it captures the paradox of beauty trapped in suffering.

The table shows the literary themes reflected in the three (3) selected Abrenian poems entitled “Mari Juana”, “The Nights Cannot Keep Still” (Di Makaidna Dagiti Rabii) and “Tide of A Rose in Chains: Two Poems” (Balud ti Rosas iti Posas: Dua a Daniw). This highlights how these works convey cultural values, moral lessons, and social experiences specific to the Abrenian local community.

“Mari Juana” highlights moral decline and the loss of innocence; “The Nights Cannot Keep Still” (Di Makaidna Dagiti Rabii) focuses on emotional turmoil and the struggle to confront inner fears; and “Tide of a Rose in Chains: Two Poems” (Balud ti Rosas iti Posas: Dua a Daniw) examines love intertwined with suffering, loss, and existential reflection. These poems demonstrate how themes use vivid imagery and symbolism to convey moral, emotional, and philosophical messages, deepening understanding and encouraging personal reflection.

Themes in poetry are the central ideas, messages, or insights that the poet communicates through language, imagery, and structure. Themes like love beyond death and grief and loss in “Annabel Lee” and “The Raven” which are both written by Edgar Allan Poe, choices and consequences in “The Road Not Taken” by Robert Frost, inner strength and determination in “Invictus” by William Ernest Henley, and overcoming oppression and empowerment in “Still I Rise” by Maya Angelou, though, are not directly stated or mentioned in the lines of these poems, these are the very beauty and life of these pieces. Themes are often universal, covering ideas like love, friendship, identity, justice, and morality, making them accessible and relevant to learners.

According to Sharma (2025), themes serve as the conceptual core of a poem, giving coherence and guiding interpretation. They help readers move beyond literal meanings and understand deeper emotions, experiences, or social issues embedded in the piece. Moreover, identifying themes allows readers to connect personal experiences to the poem, enhancing comprehension and critical thinking. Teaching themes in poetry encourages students to reflect on human experiences and social realities. (Kennedy & Gioia, 2016). Thus, exploring themes in



poetry enables learners to better interpret texts while fostering analytical skills, emotional understanding, and a stronger connection to real-world experiences, making learning more meaningful and relevant.

The presence of thematic elements in these selected Abrenian poems underscores their relevance and qualification as good instructional resources in the Grade VII English curriculum. These texts are suitable for curriculum localization and contextualization as they facilitate the exploration of cultural identity, ethical and moral values, and emotional development, while simultaneously promoting the enhancement of reading comprehension and literary analysis skills among learners.

Table 2. *Literary Themes of Selected Abrenian Short Stories*

Literary Element:	Theme
Title of Short Story	Observed Notes and Evidences
<p>MARCUS <i>by Vincent C. Berroy</i></p>	<p>The story develops a multi-layered theme centered on “misjudgment”, “hidden humanity, grief, and emotional isolation.” These can be seen through the story’s narrative scenes and characters’ dialogues.</p> <p>At first, Eloisa interprets Marcus through fear and suspicion, especially after witnessing unusual activities as shown in this scene:</p> <p>“Eloisa saw bundles of cash that Marcus received from the woman. Shortly after, Marcus loaded several taped packages into the woman’s car.”</p> <p><i>“Nakitana dagiti nagadu a nareppet a kuarta nga inawat ni Marcus manipud iti babai... adda dagiti banag a nabungon ken naka-packaging tape nga inkarga ni Marcus iti lugan ti babai.”</i></p> <p>This creates a false impression of criminality. Her fear intensifies when she sees a weapon. However, this perception is dismantled by a revelation, a “hidden humanity” showed by Marcus. It only shows a human nature to commit the act of “misjudgment”. This is reflected in the following scenes:</p> <p>“Once, she accidentally saw Marcus in the garage. He had taken something out of the car. Her eyes widened when she saw a long firearm. This man is truly dangerous!</p> <p>Marcus handed her a box. He opened it. Inside was something similar to the packaged items she had seen before. It was a painting.”</p>



“Bimlad pay dagiti matana idi malasinna ti atiddog a paltog. Napeggad sa ketdi a talaga ti amona!”

*“....Sa linukatan daytoy ti maysa a nakabungon...
Painting gayam.”*

Truly that people are often misunderstood when seen only from fragments of truth. Additionally, “emotional isolation” is also a core theme which revealed in Jacob’s line:

“Did you know that only when you arrived did daddy start making conversations again after mommy died?”

“Ammom kadi nga idi laeng dimtengka a nangrugi a makisarita ni daddy sipud natay daydi mommy?”

Marcus’s silence and isolation are not signs of danger but of mourning.

MAKOTO
by Vincent C. Berroy

The story “Makoto” conveys a complex set of themes that focuses on “*cross-cultural interaction, shared understanding, and appreciation of native customs.*” These are revealed through the unfolding events of the plot and the exchanges between the characters.

At the start of the story, the journey is purely physical. As the plot progresses, however, it evolves into a meaningful cultural interaction, especially when tension emerges as the characters crossed cultural boundaries, as illustrated in the following narrative:

“Most of the time, I’m traveling alone from Manila to Abra. But this time, I had a companion, Makoto Sugii, a 27-year-old Japanese woman. I was only three years older than her. Our seat numbers were next to each other. It was a long day trip. We didn’t talk at first. I tried to sleep but couldn’t...“You crossed the boundary. You violated the law of the ubaya. You must see the tribal leader...”

“Kaaduanna a sisiak la nga agbibiahe nga agpa-Abra manipud Manila... ngem toy a gundaway, adda kaduak. Ni Makoto Sugii, 27, balasang a Haponesa. Ininaunaak laeng ti tallo a tawen. Agkaabay dagiti numero ti inreserbarmi a tugaw. Napaut ti day trip.

Dikam' agin-innuni idi damo, inkidemko ngem diak met mairidep... "Sinariyo ti bangen. Linabsingyo ti paglintegan ti ubaya. Dumatagkayo iti pangat no bigat."

This highlights the importance of respecting indigenous law. Ultimately, the theme resolves into appreciation and transformation. The narrator realizes that learning is reciprocal as shown in this narrative:

"Maybe the beautiful and intelligent Japanese woman thought she had outsmarted me. But truth is, she was the one I outsmarted."

"Ti kunana, namaysaannak ti napintas ken masirib nga iskolar a Haponesa. Ngem isuna ketdi ti namaysaak."

**HOMEWARD
RETURN TO
BANGUED**
(PANAGAWID IDIAY
BANGUED)
by Teresita T. Ambalneg

The story conveys a profound moral theme centered on guilt, redemption, consequence, and the inescapability of one's past. It portrays how inner transformation is not enough unless one fully confronts previous actions and accepts their consequences.

Francis, once a hired killer, is burdened by remorse and seeks spiritual renewal, yet his past continues to haunt him. His decision to return to Abra symbolizes a deliberate step toward facing the truth and reclaiming his humanity. This is evident in the following lines from the story:

"It is comforting to realize that even though his heart had hardened, he was still human, capable of feeling sorrow and remorse."

"I surrendered myself to God when Margie died. I repented, even if I know I cannot undo the past."

"I'm going home to bid farewell to the man who shaped my life and the path I followed."

"Maragsakan ta natakuatanna a bimmato man ti pusona, tao met a makarikna iti liday ken panagbabawi."

"Simmukoakon ken ni Apo Dios idi matay ni Margie. Nagbabawiakon uray no ammok a saanen a maisubli dagiti pasamak."

“Agawidak ta innak agpakada iti tao a nangmuli iti kinataok ken nangaramid iti dalan a sinurotko iti biag.”

The narrative suggests that genuine redemption can only be achieved through acknowledgment of wrongdoing and accountability, rather than avoidance or escape.

The table illustrates the dominant themes found in the chosen Abrenian short stories entitled “Marcus”, “Makoto” and “Homeward Return to Bangued” (*Panagawid Idiy Bangued*). It emphasizes how these narratives express the community’s cultural identity, ethical perspectives, and everyday experiences that shape the lives of the Abrenian people.

The stories explore complex themes such as misjudgment, emotional isolation, guilt, redemption, and cross-cultural understanding. “Marcus” focuses on confronting one's past to achieve true redemption and inner transformation. “Makoto” underscores the value of humility and mutual respect in cultural exchanges, showing that genuine understanding fosters positive change. “Homeward Return to Bangued” (*Panagawid idiy Bangued*) on the other hand, highlights how superficial judgments can be misleading and emphasizes the importance of empathy, respect for cultural differences, and moral growth.

The theme of a story refers to its central idea or message, which often reflects universal truths, moral lessons, or societal issues. Understanding themes in short stories is fundamental to developing literary comprehension and critical thinking skills among learners. According to Smith (2018), recognizing themes helps students connect personal experiences with literary content, fostering empathy and deeper understanding. In the context of Grade VII English curriculum, studying themes in short stories is particularly relevant because it introduces young learners to complex ideas in a manageable format. Johnson (2019) emphasizes that short stories are effective teaching tools due to their brevity and rich content, enabling students to analyze themes within a concise narrative structure. Furthermore, the importance of teaching themes lies in enhancing students' language skills, such as vocabulary, comprehension, and expression. As Garcia (2020) notes, engaging with themes helps students articulate their thoughts clearly and develop their moral and cultural awareness. It also prepares them for more advanced literary works and fosters a lifelong appreciation for literature.

The rich thematic depth of the chosen Abrenian short stories highlights their suitability as instructional materials in the Grade VII English curriculum. Through these narratives, learners can explore cultural identity, reflect on values, and build emotional awareness, all while enhancing their comprehension and literary interpretation abilities. Moreover, the contextual relevance of these texts fosters greater learner engagement by connecting lessons to their lived experiences. This alignment between content and culture not only deepens understanding but also promotes a more meaningful and enduring appreciation of literature.

Table 3. *Form or Structure of Selected Abrenian Poems*

Literary Element:	Form or Structure
Title of Poem	Observed Notes and Evidences
MARI JUANA <i>by Leticia M. Benabese</i>	The poem is structured as a lyric poem composed of five quatrains, with each stanza consisting of four lines that follow a consistent rhyming couplet pattern (AABB). This regular



rhyme scheme is evident in lines such as:

“Your name drifts softly to my ear
And thoughts of you keep drawing near
A fragrant, gentle maiden fair
Whose tender grace invites my care,”

*“Damok a mangeg dayta nagan
Immapay panunut kinasadlam
Nabanglo, agay-ayamuom a balasang
Kinataona’t mapagtalkan.”*

This contributes to the poem’s musicality and smooth, flowing rhythm. The uniform structure and balanced line lengths enhance its lyrical quality, allowing the speaker’s emotions and reflections to be conveyed in a melodious and expressive manner. Moreover, the poem employs direct address which establishes an intimate and conversational tone between the speaker and the subject. This is seen in the line:

“But tell me why, sweet Mari Juana”

“Ngem, apayen, aya, Mari Juana”

**THE NIGHTS
CANNOT KEEP
STILL**
(DI MAKAIDNA
DAGITI RABII)
by Hermilinda T.
Lingbaoan-Bulong

The poem is written in free verse, characterized by the absence of a fixed rhyme scheme, meter, or stanzaic regularity. Unlike traditional poetic forms, the lines vary in length and structure, and the poem unfolds in a continuous, flowing manner without adherence to patterned rhythm or end rhyme. The phrasing mimics natural speech rather than conforming to metrical rules. The absence of formal structure allows the poem to mirror the instability and intensity of the speaker’s emotional state, reinforcing the sense of unease conveyed throughout the text. This can be observed in lines such as:

“There is an anxiety in the chest that cannot be cast off...
...like rust that spreads entirely
gnawing the flesh,”

*“Adda babantot iti barukong a di maiwagsak...
...kasla lati nga agsaknap
a mangngetngat kadagiti lasag.”*

In terms of form, it is best classified as a lyric poem. It



focuses on the internal experiences of fear, anxiety, and psychological unrest, as seen in the series of fragmented and rhetorical expressions such as:

“Fright? Hesitation? Anger?...
...The stubborn question persists
picking the wounded mind.”

“*Aliaw? Aripapa? Gura?...*
...*Umappayaw latta tis util a saludsod*
a mangsukit iti nasugatan a panunot.”

These elements highlight the introspective and emotive nature of the poem, which is a defining feature of lyric poetry. Moreover, the use of vivid imagery and extended metaphors such as anxiety compared to “*a cutting sharpness*,” “*a specter*,” and “*rust that spreads entirely*”, enhances the expressive quality of the piece while maintaining its abstract and reflective tone.

**TIDE OF A ROSE IN
CHAINS: TWO
POEMS**

(BALUD TI ROSAS
ITI POSAS: DUA A
DANIW)

by Vincent C. Berroy

The poem is divided into two distinct sections labeled as *Arrival* and *Departure*. This bipartite structure reflects a clear progression from beginning to ending, presence to absence, and love to loss.

It is written in free verse, meaning it does not follow a fixed rhyme scheme or regular meter. Instead, it relies on natural rhythm, imagery, and line breaks to convey meaning. The poem uses long, flowing lines, which create a reflective and meditative tone. These extended lines allow the poet to develop complex ideas and layered imagery. There is no consistent rhyme pattern, as seen in lines like:

“For even a hardened heart keeps a hidden chamber
where love can take root...
...Even the eddies of waves and whirlpools wail into
the void.”

“*Ta uray pay bimmato a puso adda latta met siledna*
a pagubbogan ti ayat...
...*Nangemkemen dagiti sangi ti dalluyon ken alikuno*
a mangungaw iti kaunggan.”

Furthermore, this piece can be classified as a lyric poem because it expresses deep personal emotions and reflections rather than telling a straightforward story. It is also an elegy



particularly in the second part (*Departure*), as it mourns loss and reflects on absence and memory. The emotional tone shifts from hopeful and tender to somber and reflective, which is the characteristic of elegiac writing.

The table provides a comprehensive analysis of the structural features and poetic forms of the selected Abrenian poems, emphasizing the creative artistry of local writers.

The poems exhibit different structural features: “Mari Juana” is a lyric poem with a regular AABB rhyme scheme in five quatrains, creating a musical and intimate tone. “The Nights Cannot Keep Still” (*Di Makaidna Dagiti Rabii*) is written in free verse, lacking a fixed rhyme or meter, which reflects the speaker’s emotional chaos and uses vivid imagery and metaphors for emphasis. “Tide of a Rose in Chains: Two Poems” (*Balud ti Rosas iti Posas: Dua a Daniw*) has a bipartite structure divided into “Arrival” and “Departure,” also in free verse, with long lines that evoke reflection and mourning, shifting from hope to loss.

Several scholarly studies emphasize that the structure and form of poetry are essential in shaping meaning, emotional impact, and interpretation. In a formalist stylistic study conducted by de Ramos (2025), Filipino poems were analyzed using syntactic frameworks, revealing that variations in sentence structure, stanza arrangement, and irregular rhyme patterns significantly contribute to thematic depth and reader response. The study found that even in free verse, structural elements such as line construction and grammatical organization influence how meaning is conveyed, particularly in expressing emotional transitions like fading faith and internal conflict.

Moreover, discussions highlighted by Leech and Short (2007), stylistic features such as structure, rhythm, and patterns in poetry contribute directly to meaning and interpretation rather than serving as mere decoration. The study stresses that elements such as enjambment, line breaks, and stanza patterns guide how ideas unfold and how readers interpret the poem’s message. This supports the claim that structure determines emphasis and progression in poetry.

Furthermore, instructional research from the Yale National Initiative highlights that even free verse poetry possesses an “open form,” where structure is shaped through lineation, cadence, and the tension between sentence and line. Scholars like Paul H. Fry argue that line breaks are deliberate choices that create units of meaning, emphasizing that free verse is not formless but governed by subtle structural principles. Complementing this, broader literary studies affirm that modern poetry, while flexible, still relies on fundamental structural elements such as lines and stanzas to organize meaning and distinguish it from prose.

These studies are clearly reflected in the analysis of the selected Abrenian poems. In “Mari Juana,” the structure follows a narrative progression, where the arrangement of events mirrors the character’s moral transformation, aligning with the idea that structure shapes thematic development following couplet rhyme scheme pattern. In “The Nights Cannot Keep Still” and “Tide of a Rose in Chains: Two Poems,” the use of free verse with irregular line lengths and flowing structure reflects emotional unrest and psychological tension, demonstrating how open form can intensify meaning is observed.

The analysis of the poetic structure and forms of the selected Abrenian poems is significant, and it holds substantial value for Grade 7 English learners. Understanding poetic structure and form enables students to move beyond surface-level reading and engage in deeper literary analysis. By recognizing how lines, stanzas, and overall organization contribute to



meaning, learners develop critical thinking and interpretative skills. When applied to localized texts such as Abrenian poems, learners are able to connect literary structure with cultural expression, enhancing both comprehension and appreciation. Thus, integrating the study of poetic form and structure in the curriculum not only strengthens literacy skills but also fosters cultural awareness and meaningful engagement with literature.

Table 4. *Plot of Selected Abrenian Short Stories*

Literary Element: Title of Short Story	Plot Observed Notes and Evidences
<p>MARCUS by Vincent C. Berroy</p>	<p>The story begins with the exposition, where Eloisa, driven by her need to prepare for her midwifery exam, takes a job as a helper and tutor for a boy named Jacob in a luxurious house outside their town. This initial setup introduces the mysterious Marcus, her employer, whose secretive nature and strict instructions that can be noted through his line:</p> <p>“You may enter all the rooms except mine”</p> <p><i>“Nawayaka a sumrek kadagiti amin a siled puera iti siledko”</i></p> <p>This establishes an atmosphere of intrigue. As the story progresses, the rising action unfolds through Eloisa’s suspicions and discoveries as she witnesses Marcus exchanging cash and taped packages with a woman, later sees him with a firearm, and eventually enters his forbidden room, where she finds scattered equipment and a disturbing portrait of Marcus dressed as a devil. These revelations heighten her fear and deepen the mystery surrounding Marcus’s true nature, creating internal and external conflicts.</p> <p>The tension reaches its peak during her decision to leave abruptly, feeling threatened and disturbed, especially after Marcus pleads with her to stay until her scheduled departure, revealing a vulnerability that complicates her perception of him. The climax is embodied in the emotional farewell on the balcony, where Marcus silently gazes at the moon, and Eloisa resolves to leave, marking the highest point of tension. The falling action follows with her departure and Marcus’s unexpected gift which is a portrait of her, symbolizing a profound, unspoken connection and his inner remorse.</p>



The story concludes with a sense of unresolved emotion, as Eloisa leaves the house, pondering the duality of Marcus's character, a dangerous yet tender, and the impact she had on him. The primary conflict is both external and internal: Eloisa's fear of Marcus's hidden dangers and her moral dilemma about what lies beneath his charm, alongside Marcus's own internal struggles with guilt and longing. This layered conflict underscores the story's themes of mystery, hidden darkness, and complex emotional ties, leaving readers with a lingering sense of ambiguity and emotional depth.

MAKOTO

by Vincent C. Berroy

The story starts with the exposition, where the narrator recounts his first non-solo trip from Manila to Abra, as he was accompanied by Makoto Sugii, a 27-year-old Japanese woman studying cultural and anthropological studies in Southeast Asia.

Their initial silence and eventual conversation reveal a developing bond, especially after Makoto expresses her trust in the discipline and kindness of the Muyadan tribe, prompting the narrator to offer her a personal tour of their home. As they journey through unfamiliar territory, the story introduces cultural elements and the narrator's concern for Makoto's safety, setting the stage for potential conflict.

The rising action intensifies when Makoto crosses the bamboo barricades into the tribe's territory, violating local laws, which results in her being summoned by the tribal leader and the ritual priest. She faces the tribal customary law, which imposes a fine, requiring her to contribute a pig and exposes her to the tribe's sacred rituals. Throughout this process, Makoto's curiosity and the narrator's protective attitude create tension, especially as Makoto interviews the tribal leader and witnesses the rituals.

The climax occurs when Makoto is allowed to witness the thanksgiving ceremony, and the narrator observes her taking photos, believing she might have outsmarted him. However, the narrator reveals that he outsmarted her instead, implying a deeper understanding of local customs and her intentions.

The falling action includes the narrator seeing Makoto's photos on Facebook, which he interprets as her



attempt to showcase her experience, but with a sense of superiority and control.

The story ends with a reflection on the incident, emphasizing that the narrator's awareness and knowledge of their culture protected them from a potentially disastrous situation. The central conflict involves the cultural clash of Makoto's curiosity and outsider status versus the tribe's strict customs and the narrator's protective role, which ultimately reveals his deeper understanding and strategic thinking. This conflict underscores themes of cultural respect, intelligence, and the subtle power dynamics between outsiders and indigenous communities.

**HOMEWARD
RETURN TO
BANGUED**
(PANAGAWID IDIAY
BANGUED)
by *Teresita T.
Ambalneg*

The story begins by vividly portraying the family's home, creating an atmosphere marked by memory and an enduring sense of loss that mirrors the characters' emotional burdens. In the exposition, the main characters namely Francis, his current wife Tina, and children Eunice, Eric, and Janice, are introduced, along with the tragic background of a bus accident that claimed the life of Margie, his deceased wife, while leaving Eunice and Eric injured. This situation establishes the central tension of the narrative. Francis is longing to return to Abra in order to confront his past and find closure but is opposed by Tina's desire to maintain safety and stability in Manila.

As the story progresses, the rising action develops through Francis's growing inner conflict, revealed in his uneasy thoughts and hidden struggles, including his involvement in a violent incident that further complicates his situation. The external conflict intensifies when Francis reveals his plan to Tina, who strongly opposes it due to fears for his safety and the risks tied to their past. Their conversation highlights their opposing perspectives. Francis seeks healing and resolution, while Tina prioritizes the protection of their already vulnerable family.

The climax occurs when Francis, overcome by memories of Margie and a deep sense of guilt, resolves to return to Bangued despite Tina's objections.

In the resolution, he comes to terms with his own emotional vulnerability, realizing that beneath his hardened exterior, he is still capable of grief and repentance. Ultimately, he chooses to face his past in hopes of finding peace and reconciliation.

The story presents both external conflicts, seen in Francis's decision to return home, and internal conflict,



reflected in his struggle with guilt, loss, and the need for closure. Together, these conflicts highlight themes of redemption, forgiveness, and the importance of confronting one's past to achieve inner peace.

The three stories "Makoto" and "Marcus" by Vincent C. Berroy, and "Homeward Return to Bangued" (*Panagawid Idiay Bangued*) by Teresita T. Ambalneg, each depict nuanced cultural, emotional, and moral conflicts rooted in Philippine indigenous traditions, family dynamics, and personal struggles.

"Makoto" explores cross-cultural encounters and the importance of understanding local customs, illustrating how outsiders' curiosity can clash with indigenous laws. "Homeward Return to Bangued" delves into themes of grief, forgiveness, and reconciliation, emphasizing the significance of confronting one's past to attain inner peace. While "Marcus" highlights resilience and adaptation in the face of tragedy, reflecting Filipino values of familial bonds and perseverance.

Previous studies, such as those by Reyes (2018), emphasize the importance of culturally relevant materials in language learning, noting that stories rooted in local contexts enhance learners' engagement and understanding. According to Hernandez and Santos (2019), utilizing stories that reflect authentic cultural practices and conflicts fosters deeper emotional connection and promotes critical thinking among learners. Moreover, research by Dela Cruz (2020) suggests that localized narratives serve as effective tools for developing intercultural competence, especially in multicultural classrooms.

Applying these insights, the plots of these stories can serve as valuable sources for crafting learning materials that resonate with Abrenian students' experiences and cultural identity. They provide realistic scenarios that foster comprehension, discussion, and moral reflection, thereby making language education more meaningful and contextually relevant. Integrating such stories into curricular materials can enhance learners' cultural awareness, moral sensitivity, and linguistic skills, ultimately promoting a more holistic and locally grounded educational approach.

Table 5. *Figurative Language and Poetic Devices in Selected Abrenian Poems*

Literary Element: Title of Poem	Figurative Language or Poetic Devices Observed Notes and Evidences
MARI JUANA <i>by Leticia M. Benabese</i>	<p>The poem employs various figurative language such as personification, metaphor, imagery, symbolism and rhetorical questions to deepen its meaning.</p> <p><i>Personification</i> is evident when the poet writes, "<i>Your name drifts softly to my ear,</i>" (<i>Damok a mangeg dayta nagan</i>) giving the name Mari Juana human qualities of movement and gentleness. Similarly, "<i>Thoughts of you keep drawing near</i>" (<i>Immapay panunut kinasadlam</i>) personifies thoughts as actively approaching, emphasizing the persistent allure of the</p>



subject.

The *metaphor* of Mari Juana as a delicate maiden is expressed in the line, "A fragrant, gentle maiden fair" (*Nabanglo, agay-ayamuom a balasang*), comparing her to a tender, appealing figure. Her grace is described as inviting care: "Whose tender grace invites my care" (*Kinataona't mapagtalkan*), suggesting an almost irresistible charm.

The *imagery* of light appears in the phrase: "They chase the light you make appear" (*Agpapisda nga umar-araraw*), symbolizing attraction and hope created by her presence.

The poet also uses *rhetorical questions*, such as: "But tell me why, sweet Mari Juana... You answered all who sought your manna?" (*Ngem, apayen, aya, Mari Juana... Sinungbatam met aminen ida? Intedmo payen dayta bagim A tanda ti kinababaim?*). These provoke reflection on her generosity or influence. The word "manna" on the other hand, symbolizes divine sustenance, highlighting her role as a provider or temptress.

Alliteration subtly enhances the musicality of the poem in lines like "longing's tide" (*agtarigagay*), reinforcing the sense of desire and yearning.

Altogether, these devices work to portray Mari Juana as a captivating, almost divine figure whose allure is both tempting and thought-provoking.

**THE NIGHTS
CANNOT KEEP
STILL**

(DI MAK Aidna
DAGITI RABII)

by Hermilinda T.
Lingbaoan-Bulong

The poem employs various poetic devices and figurative language to vividly express the inner turmoil.

Personification is evident in the line: "The nights cannot keep still" (*Di makaidna dagiti rabii*), giving the night an active quality that emphasizes restlessness.

Imagery is abundant throughout the poem, with descriptions such as: "bursting from within" (*a sumsumgiab iti kaunggan*), "trailing like a shadow" (*Di sumina a kas anniniwan*) and "gnawing the flesh" (*mangnetnet kadagiti lasag*), which evoke powerful visual and tactile sensations of inner pain and anxiety.

The poet also uses metaphors to deepen this sense of suffering, comparing the persistent anxiety to "a cutting sharpness" (*kasla tadem a makaipas*) and "a specter that cannot be warded off" (*kasla di mapasiat nga aningaas*), portraying emotional distress as physical and ghostly entities that haunt the mind.

The simile "trailing like a shadow" (*Di sumina a kas anniniwan*) further emphasizes the relentless nature of the



feeling, suggesting it follows closely and cannot be escaped.

Repetition of the word "cannot" underscores a sense of helplessness, reinforcing the idea that these feelings are persistent and uncontrollable. This can be observed through the lines: "the nights cannot keep still," (*saan a makaidna dagiti rabii*) "can't be explained" (*di masumra ti bitek nga awanan nagan*) "cannot be cast off" (*di maipaksiat*), and "cannot be warded off" (*di maiwagsak*).

Subtle alliteration appears in phrases like "playing amusement with the stars," enhancing the musical quality of the poem. It repeats the 's' sound.

Symbolism is also present in references to the moon and stars (*bulan ken bituen*) which traditionally represent hope and guidance; however, the line "looking up to the moon is not the cure to a tarnished trust" (*saan nga iti itatangad iti bulan ti agas ti panagtalek a natulawan*) suggests that outward symbols cannot heal internal wounds.

The poem also employs contrast, juxtaposing the beauty of the sky with the inner distrust and pain, highlighting the disconnect between outer appearances and inner reality.

Overall, the poet masterfully uses these literary devices to portray a night filled with restless anxiety and emotional suffering that cannot be soothed by external beauty or superficial comfort.

**TIDE OF A ROSE IN
CHAINS: TWO
POEMS**

(BALUD TI ROSAS
ITI POSAS: DUA A
DANIW)

by Vincent C. Berroy

The poet masterfully employs figurative language to explore themes of love, arrival, departure, and the enduring ache of separation. The poem weaves together imagery, personification, metaphor, symbolism, and rhetorical questions to create a poignant meditation on the transient beauty of love and the profound ache of separation that lingers long after farewell.

Personification appears in lines such as: "the canvas still opens" (*manglukag latta met...ti kanbas*) and "the wind accompanied you" (*ti angin a nangdalungdong*) which give human qualities to inanimate and natural elements, emphasizing their active role in the emotional landscape.

Vivid imagery is pervasive, from "haunting visions dancing on its face" (*makapasidduker a ladawan*) to "the dusk gathered its blackness upon the ridges" (*nagdalungdong iti nangisit ti tangatang*), creating visual and sensory impressions that evoke feelings of longing, loss, and melancholy.

The metaphors of love being born "in the hollow"

(*lukong*) and the "chains of the rose's own tide" (*balud ti rosas iti posas*) symbolize the complex, often confining nature of love and emotional entrapment, while the "current of water" (*agus tidanum*) used to describe departure captures the sense of inevitable flow and transient existence.

Symbolism is evident in references to dusk, shadows, and the fading candle, representing the fading presence and the passage of time, as well as spiritual reflection through the mention of biblical scripture, which underscores the moral and existential questions surrounding loss.

The poet's use of rhetorical questions such as whether the departed "will still return" intensifies the sense of doubt and longing.

Through these devices, the author vividly portrays the cyclical nature of love's arrival and departure, illustrating how memories and grief persist even as the physical presence dissolves.

The table presents a detailed analysis of the figurative language and poetic devices used in three selected Abrenian poems, demonstrating how these elements enrich meaning, intensify emotion, and shape readers' interpretation.

In "Mari Juana", the poet employs a wide range of devices such as personification, metaphor, imagery, symbolism, rhetorical questions, and alliteration. In "The Nights Cannot Keep Still" (Di Makaidna Dagiti Rabii), figurative language is used to depict intense psychological unrest. Personification along with vivid imagery, simile, metaphor and symbolism work together to immerse readers in the speaker's mental and emotional struggle. Meanwhile, "Tide of a Rose in Chains: Two Poems" (Balud ti Rosas iti Posas: Dua a Daniw) uses figurative language to explore love, loss, and separation. Through personification, imagery, symbolism, and metaphor, interplay of these devices highlights the cyclical and enduring nature of love and grief.

The table demonstrates that figurative language is essential in poetry as it transforms ordinary language into expressive, layered, and emotionally resonant discourse. Each poem uses these devices uniquely, yet all contribute to deeper thematic understanding and reader engagement.

The use of figurative language in poetry has long been recognized as central to literary expression. Aristotle (translated in 1996) emphasized in *Poetics* that metaphor is a key element of effective writing, as it enables poets to convey complex ideas through imaginative comparison. This aligns with the analyzed poems, where metaphors and symbols communicate abstract emotions such as love, anxiety, and loss. Moreover, existing literature emphasizes that poetry imbued with figurative language enhances language acquisition and emotional intelligence among young learners (Smith, 2018; Lee, 2020). From a formalist perspective, Brooks (1947) argued that poetic meaning emerges from the interplay of literary devices, including imagery, symbolism, and irony. He stressed that these elements should be analyzed collectively, as they



contribute to the unity of the text. This is evident in the poems, where multiple devices work together to create a cohesive emotional and thematic impact.

In linguistic and stylistic studies, Jakobson (1960) identified the “poetic function” of language, wherein the focus is on the message itself such as its structure, patterns, and aesthetic qualities. Devices such as alliteration, repetition, and imagery enhance this function by drawing attention to how meaning is constructed, not just what is being said.

In educational inquiry, Langer (1995) found that students who engage with figurative language develop stronger interpretive and critical thinking skills. Similarly, Beers (2003) emphasized that explicit instruction in literary devices helps students move beyond literal comprehension toward inferential understanding.

In the Philippine context, the Department of Education (DepEd, 2016) K–12 English Curriculum emphasizes the analysis of figurative language such as metaphor, simile, personification, and symbolism—as a key competency for Grade 7 learners. The curriculum aims to enhance students’ interpretive and analytical skills by engaging them in close reading of literary texts, thereby fostering a deeper appreciation of language and stylistic elements (DepEd, 2016). This focus on figurative language not only aids students in uncovering underlying themes and meanings within texts but also promotes critical thinking and interpretive skills essential for literary analysis. Furthermore, integrating figurative language analysis encourages learners to develop their creative expression and connect literary devices to cultural and contextual frameworks, enriching their understanding of Philippine literature and diverse literary traditions.

Table 6. *Mood or Tone in Selected Abrenian Poems*

Literary Element: Title of Poem	Mood or Tone Observed Notes and Evidences
MARI JUANA by Leticia M. Benabese	<p>The tone of the poem "Mari Juana" by Leticia M. Benabese is wistful and contemplative, characterized by gentle longing and concern. The speaker admires Mari Juana’s grace and allure but also expresses regret and a plea for mercy or understanding. The poem evokes feelings of nostalgia, reflection on potential consequences, and a sense of loss, creating an overall mood of tender sorrow and thoughtful concern. This can be seen through the following lines:</p> <p style="text-align: center;">"Your name drifts softly to my ear, And thoughts of you keep drawing near"</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>“Damok a mangeg dayta nagan Immapay panunut kinasadlam”</i></p> <p>This opening line conveys a gentle, and almost nostalgic feeling, highlighting admiration and tenderness. Meanwhile, there are also lines that suggest a tone of concern and a plea for Mari Juana to consider the consequences, indicating reflection and worry about the future. This is evident through</p>

the following statement:

“Step back awhile, have mercy, friend,
Think of the future you might mend.”

*“Adaywam idan, pangngaasim
Panunutem masakbayan dagiti addim”*

Moreover, the following lines reflect a sense of loss and the fleeting nature of admiration, adding to the contemplative mood:

"Those suitors once who sang your praise
Now turn from you with clouded gaze;"

*“Dagiti agrayo kenka nga agtutubo
Mulenglengdan nga agmamayo”*

**THE NIGHTS
CANNOT KEEP
STILL**
(DI MAKAIDNA
DAGITI RABII)
*by Hermilinda T.
Lingbaoan-Bulong*

The tone of Hermilinda T. Lingbaoan-Bulong's poem “The Nights Cannot Keep Still” (Di Makaidna Dagiti Rabii) is intense, restless, and somber, expressing inner turmoil, anxiety, and emotional pain. These are highlighted through key lines that depict agitation, confusion, lingering distress, and disillusionment, portraying a mood of emotional unrest and inner conflict. This can be observed through the following lines:

"The nights cannot keep still
from the oddly sweltering feeling"

*“Di makaidna dagiti rabii
ta adda karkarna a dagaang”*

This opening sets a tone of agitation and discomfort, emphasizing the inability to find peace. In the later part of the poem, the questioning and the mention of unexplainable throbbing evoke feelings of confusion and emotional distress, as shown through these lines:

"Fright? Hesitation? Anger?
The throbbing can't be explained."

*“Aliaw? Aripapa? Gura?
Di masumra ti bitek nga awanan nagan”*



The following lines, on the other hand, depict a haunting, lingering pain that refuses to go away, emphasizing a somber and anguished mood:

"There is an anxiety in the chest that cannot be cast off,
like a cutting sharpness,
a specter that cannot be warded off."

*"Adda babantot iti barukong a di maiwagsak
kasla tadem a makaipas
kasla di mapasiat nga aningaas."*

Moreover, the following lines suggests a mood of disillusionment and despair, conveying that superficial beauty or hope cannot resolve inner wounds:

"The sky may be colorful,
yet looking up to the moon
is not the cure to a tarnished trust."

*"Namaris man ti tangatang
saan nga iti itatangad iti bulan
ti agas ti panagtalek a natulawan."*

Overall, the poem's tone is one of emotional unrest, inner conflict, and a sense of being trapped in pain, creating a deep, somber, and restless mood.

**TIDE OF A ROSE IN
CHAINS: TWO
POEMS**

(BALUD TI ROSAS
ITI POSAS: DUA A
DANIW)

by Vincent C. Berroy

The tone of Vincent Cab. Berroy's "Tide of a Rose in Chains: Two Poems" (*Balud ti Rosas iti Posas: Dua a Daniw*) is reflective, melancholic, and contemplative. It conveys feelings of longing, nostalgia, love, and loss through imagery of hope amid hardship, emotional pain, farewell, uncertainty, and mourning.

Despite confinement or hardship, there is a quiet optimism about love's resilience. This is a sign of being reflective and hopeful as seen in the following lines:

"Roses still bloom even in a cramped world of clenched and
stifling breaths,
For even a hardened heart keeps a hidden chamber where
love can take root."

"Agmaris rosas latta uray pay iti naillet a lubong ti nakakaem

a gemgem

*Ta uray pay bimmato a puso adda latta met siledna a
pagubbogan ti ayat”*

The poem also portrays emotional pain intertwined with tenderness and hope. This can be observed in the following lines:

"Your eyes darkened in the pulse of anguish and the
bitterness of tears,
Yet beneath your gentleness there bloomed a fragile smile
undoing every ritual"

*“Nasdeman dagiti mata iti nagtibnok nga apgad ti ling-et ken
pait ti lua
Iti ngudo ti iddek adda naumbi nga isem a nangwaknit iti
amin a ritual”*

The following lines of the poem evoke a somber mood of farewell and the fading of someone’s presence, thus, a sense of loss and departure:

"Your candle thinned away, slowly fading as your light grew
dim.
Your soul slipped from the warmth of flesh and wandered
through the dark"

*“Narunot ti kandelam, in-inut a sinaguyepyepka ket naiddep
ti silawmo
Nauyos ti kararuam manipud iti nalami a lasag ket
nagkarawa iti kasipngetan”*

Overall, it expresses deep introspection and a persistent sense of yearning.

This table presents the mood or tone reflected in three selected Abrenian poems.

In "Mari Juana," the tone is wistful and contemplative, characterized by gentle longing and concern, evoking nostalgia and a sense of loss through reflective lines that explore admiration and regret.

"The Nights Cannot Keep Still" (*Di Makaidna Dagiti Rabii*) exhibits an intense and restless tone, expressing inner turmoil, anxiety, and emotional pain, with lines that depict agitation, confusion, and lingering distress, creating a somber, restless mood.



Meanwhile, "Tide of a Rose in Chains: Two Poems" (*Balud ti Rosas iti Posas: Dua a Daniw*) adopts a reflective, melancholic tone, emphasizing feelings of longing, love, and loss, intertwined with hope and resilience amid hardship. Its imagery conveys a mood of gentle optimism tinged with sadness and introspection.

These observations highlight how tone and mood in poetry serve to evoke emotional responses and deepen the thematic impact, which can be instrumental in developing localized learning materials that foster emotional awareness, cultural relevance, and literary appreciation among Grade VII students.

Understanding mood and tone is fundamental in the study of poetry, as these elements significantly influence how readers interpret and emotionally connect with a poem. Mood refers to the emotional atmosphere that a poem creates for the reader, while tone pertains to the poet's attitude toward the subject or audience, conveyed through stylistic choices such as diction, imagery, and rhythm (Meyer, 1989). According to William Wordsworth, poetry is the "spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings," highlighting how emotional expression that is closely tied to tone, serves as the foundation of poetic meaning. This perspective underscores the necessity of guiding learners to recognize tonal shifts as a means of interpreting deeper emotional and thematic content.

Research by Smith (2005) emphasizes that an effective exploration of mood and tone enhances students' critical reading skills by enabling them to analyze how poets evoke specific feelings and attitudes. When students can identify mood and tone, they gain deeper appreciation and a more nuanced understanding of poetic texts, which in turn fosters emotional intelligence and interpretive skills.

Since these Abrenian poems clearly exhibit distinct tones and moods, they can also be effectively used as valuable sources of learning materials. Their emotional depth and cultural relevance provide meaningful opportunities for students to develop their interpretive skills, deepen their understanding of poetic elements, and foster a stronger connection to their own cultural identity.

Table 7. *Mood in Selected Abrenian Short Stories*

Literary Element:	Mood
Title of Short Story	Observed Notes and Evidences
MARCUS <i>by Vincent C. Berroy</i>	<p>The mood of the short story, "Marcus" by Vincent Cab. Berroy, can be described as tense and suspenseful, with moments of emotional vulnerability and underlying unease.</p> <p>For instance, in this scene, it establishes an air of suspicion and foreshadows danger, creating a tense mood as Eloisa perceives Marcus's secretive nature:</p> <p>"Marcus seemed mysterious. There was something hidden beneath his charm that made her uneasy."</p>
	<i>"Misterioson sa ketdi ti amona. Kasla adda nakaam-amak</i>



nga ilemlemeng ti nakaawis iti pannakipagrikna a kinalidayna."

As the story progresses, the discovery of a weapon heightens the suspense and signals imminent danger, contributing to a threatening atmosphere:

"Her eyes widened when she saw a long firearm."

"Bimlad pay dagiti matana idi malasinna ti atiddog a paltog."

The scene where sight of the painting and her reaction of shock and sobbing transpired, deepen the story's unsettling mood, blending horror with emotional distress:

"It was a man she recognized—Marcus! But dressed like a devil."

"Isu ti pannakatangadna iti nakadakkkel a ladawan. Napalalo a kigtotna. Lalaki a kalanglanga ti amona ngem kasla nagkawes iti diablo!"

Moreover, statements such as: "She was touched" and "She was moved" at the end of the story, after Marcus gives her a portrait of herself, introduce a poignant, bittersweet tone. It is an emotional release amidst the tension.

Overall, the story's mood oscillates between suspense, fear, and emotional tenderness, which helps to evoke a strong emotional response from the reader and underscores the story's themes of mystery, hidden truths, and compassion.

MAKOTO
by Vincent C. Berroy

The mood of the story, "Makoto" by Vincent Cab. Berroy, can be described as a mix of warmth, curiosity, and subtle tension. It transitions from an initial sense of adventure and cultural exchange to moments of tension and underlying unease.

The beginning part of the story sets a tone of new experiences and mutual curiosity, creating an inviting and warm atmosphere:



"Most of the time, I'm traveling alone from Manila to Abra. But this time, I had a companion—Makoto Sugii, a 27-year-old Japanese woman."

"Kaaduanna a sisiak la nga agbibiahe nga agpa-Abra manipud Manila. Ngemi toy a gundaway, adda kaduak. Ni Makoto Sugii, 27, balasang a Haponesa."

In the succeeding scene of the story, it reflects a mood of growing friendship and shared understanding, emphasizing cultural exchange and openness as shown in:

"When she found out I was a Muyadan, it felt like we had known each other for a long time as we chatted endlessly."

"Idi naammuanna a maysaak a Muyadan, kasla nabayagkamin nga agam-ammo a nagpatatang."

The mention of tribal laws introduces a subtle tension, highlighting the seriousness of cultural norms and the potential for conflict. This is reflected through this line:

"You crossed the boundary. You violated the law of the ubaya," he said in our native language while glancing at Makoto.

The closing line adds a layer of confidence and a hint of rivalry, creating a mood of quiet triumph and cleverness:

"Maybe the beautiful and intelligent Japanese woman thought she had outsmarted me. But in truth, she was the one I outsmarted."

"Ti kunana, namaysaannak ti napintas ken masirib nga iskolar a Haponesa. Ngem isuna ketdi ti namaysaak."

Overall, the story's mood is a blend of warmth, cultural curiosity, and underlying tension, with moments of reverence for tradition and subtle hints of rivalry or triumph. It evokes feelings of adventure, respect, and a quiet confidence in cultural understanding.



**HOMEWARD
RETURN TO
BANGUED**
(PANAGAWID IDIAY
BANGUED)
by Teresita T.
Ambalneg

The story "Homeward Return to Bangued" (*Panagawid Idiay Bangued*) by Teresita T. Ambalneg has a reflective and somber mood characterized by sadness, hardship, and emotional longing. It explores themes of loss, struggle, and inner conflict, ultimately highlighting human resilience amidst life's difficulties. The narrative evokes feelings of grief, tension, and quiet acceptance, encouraging empathy and contemplation about the characters' emotional journeys.

This opening line sets a tone of bittersweet reflection, acknowledging both happiness and pain, creating a mood of introspection:

"It is comforting to realize that even though his heart had hardened, he was still human; capable of feeling sorrow and remorse."

"Maragsakan ta natakuatanna a bimmato man ti pusona, tao met a makarikna iti liday ken panagbabawi."

The mention of Margie's death and her short life evoke feelings of sadness and grief, deepening the somber mood:

"Margie died. She was eight months pregnant."

"Ni Margie, pimmusay. Walo a bulan ti sikogna. Darundon."

The narrative of struggle, survival, and involvement in dangerous activities like "gun for hire" hints at hardship and a difficult life, contributing to a mood of tension and sorrow:

"He became a gun for hire once he graduated from high school. His companion was a woman, Sabina."

"Nagbalin a gun for hire apaman a nagturpos ti hayskul. Babai ti kaduana, ni Sabina."

Tina's plea and emotional resistance, on the other hand, highlight inner conflict, emphasizing feelings of fear, helplessness, or resistance to a painful reality. The imagery of someone crying quietly and the emotional weight of their tears reinforce a mood of sorrow, resignation, and



emotional pain:

"I don't want you to go!" Tina started crying."

"Saanko kayat a mapanka!" Aganug-ogen ni Tina."

Overall, the story's mood is predominantly somber and reflective, emphasizing themes of hardship, loss, emotional struggles, and a deep sense of longing or acceptance of life's painful realities. It evokes empathy and contemplation from the reader about the characters' struggles and resilience.

This table presents the mood conveyed in three selected Abrenian short stories. The moods of the three short stories vary. "Marcus" has a mood that combines tension, suspense, and emotional tenderness, creating a mix of danger and compassion. "Makoto" shifts from warmth and curiosity to subtle tension and rivalry, reflecting themes of friendship, cultural norms, and quiet triumph. "Homeward Return to Bangued" (*Panagawid Idiay Bangued*) has a somber and reflective mood, highlighting themes of loss, hardship, and resilience, encouraging empathy and contemplation of the human spirit amid adversity.

The observations highlight how literary elements like mood are essential in shaping emotional responses and thematic depth in these stories, serving as a foundation for developing localized learning materials that emphasize emotional engagement and cultural relevance in teaching Grade VII students.

Literary mood plays a vital role in shaping readers' emotional responses and understanding of a short story's themes. According to Miall and Kuiken (1994), "mood is an essential component of narrative that influences how readers interpret characters, plot, and underlying messages." Their study emphasizes that mood creates an emotional atmosphere that immerses readers, making the story more impactful and memorable.

Kohl (2009) further asserts that "the manipulation of mood in short stories can evoke specific emotional reactions, thereby enhancing students' engagement and empathy." This emphasizes the importance of selecting stories with distinct moods such as suspense, nostalgia, or sorrow to facilitate emotional and moral development among learners.

In a recent study, Garcia (2020) found that "local stories with strong emotional tones and mood variations effectively foster cultural identity and emotional intelligence in students." She said that stories that evoke mood, serve as powerful tools in developing learners' literary appreciation and emotional literacy.

Furthermore, Tannen (2017) notes that "literary mood can be intentionally crafted through diction, imagery, and tone, which are critical in teaching students to analyze and interpret short stories." This underscores the pedagogical importance of teaching students to recognize and analyze mood to deepen their comprehension and appreciation of literary texts.

In summary, these studies demonstrate that the deliberate use of mood in short stories significantly enhances students' emotional connection, comprehension, and cultural



understanding. Developing localized materials that incorporate stories rich in mood, just like that of “Marcus”, “Makoto” and “Homeward Return to Bangued,” can foster a more engaging and meaningful literary learning experience for learners.

Table 8. *Settings of Selected Abrenian Short Stories*

Literary Element:	Setting
Title of Short Story	Observed Notes and Evidences
MARCUS by Vincent C. Berroy	<p>The story is set primarily within a secluded and well-maintained two-story house located outside the town’s poblacion, which emphasizes both privacy and an air of affluence.</p> <p>The house’s description as "a beautiful two-story house" (<i>maysa a napintas a dos grados a balay iti ruar ti poblasion ti ilida</i>) and "well-built" suggests a comfortable, possibly luxurious environment. However, the atmosphere within the home is tinged with mystery and underlying danger. For example, Marcus’s instruction that Eloisa may “enter all the rooms except mine,” (<i>Nawayaka a sumrek kadagiti amin a siled puera iti siledko</i>) hints at secrets hidden behind closed doors, especially since she later notes, “She never learned anything about Marcus’s wife or Jacob’s mother,” (<i>Awan ti nayam-ammo kenkuana nga asawa ni Marcus, wenno ina ni Jacob</i>), adding an aura of secrecy.</p> <p>The private spaces, including Marcus’s bedroom and the garage, are essential to the story’s dark tone, as they conceal items such as "a long firearm" and "packages" that imply illegal activities.</p> <p>The house also contains scattered equipment and a chandelier, creating an atmosphere that is simultaneously luxurious and unsettling, especially when Eloisa is told to retrieve a "black plastic case" from Marcus’s room, which is described as having "a cold breeze" greeting her and "various equipment" scattered on a table further emphasizing the secrecy and ominous undertones.</p> <p>The scene on the balcony overlooking Mount Pusuey, especially during the full moon, adds a reflective and somewhat melancholic mood, as Marcus sits silently gazing at the moon, reinforcing the sense of mystery and emotional complexity.</p> <p>Overall, the setting which is a combination of a beautiful, secluded house with hidden, dangerous secrets, serves as a fitting backdrop for the unfolding story of mystery, emotional depth, and underlying danger.</p>



MAKOTO

by Vincent C. Berroy

The story is set in a remote and culturally rich region, specifically within the tribal community of Muyadan in Manabo, Abra.

The narrative begins with Makoto Sugii, a 27-year-old Japanese woman, traveling from Manila to this secluded area, emphasizing a journey from urban to rural, modern to traditional. The setting is vividly described with details such as: “Makoto kept snapping photos using her DSLR and phone at the unfamiliar sights” (*makumikom ti DSLR ken selpon ni Makoto kadagiti baro a buya kenkuana*) indicating a rural environment where Makoto captures photographs of the natural surroundings.

The mention of “My mother was surprised to see us as she was with a mortar and pestle in the kitchen” (*naklaat ni inang a nadatnganmi nga agleblebbek iti bassit nga alsong iti kosina*) paints a picture of a humble, traditional household, where family members cook and interact in a simple, rural kitchen.

The story also introduces the community’s cultural practices, as seen when Makoto observes a ritual: “Trespassing, especially strangers, during the conduct of our ritual is considered a grave offense”, highlighting the community’s sacred traditions and strict adherence to customary laws.

The setting further deepens with scenes of traditional structures, such as the “tribal leader’s house” (*balay ti tribal leader*) and the community’s way of life, characterized by “bamboo barricades set up at every entrance of our neighborhood” (*kawayan iti Tunggal umunegan iti purokmi*) describing bamboo and natural materials used in their homes.

The story culminates with Makoto’s experience of the ritual and her immersion into the local culture, supported by details like “She will also interview the tribal leader and the baglan” (*interbiuennanto metten ti pangat ken ti baglan*) reflecting the community’s spiritual and social practices.

In summary, the setting is a blend of the lush, natural environment and the culturally rich, traditional Abrenian-Muyadan tribal community, creating a backdrop that emphasizes both the beauty and the solemnity of their way of life.

**HOMEWARD
RETURN TO
BANGUED**
 (PANAGAWID IDIAY
BANGUED)
 by Teresita T.
Ambalneg

The setting of the story "Homeward Return to Bangued" (*Panagawid Idiay Bangued*) is vividly depicted as a peaceful, urban environment in Caloocan, which is characterized by a well-maintained and orderly household.

The story opens with detailed descriptions of the house's exterior, such as "A tall concrete fence enclosed it, thick with creeping plants" (*nangato ti sementado a bakud a kimpetan dagiti agkalkalakat a mula*) indicating a sturdy concrete fence surrounding the property, and "plants were neatly arranged in front of and along the sides of the house" (*napintas met ti pannakaurnos dagiti mula a naipadaga ken naibakka iti sango ken sikigan ti balay*) showing the lush, well-kept plants that adorn the yard.

The presence of a fishpond with "*dakkel a sabsabong dagiti rosas iti asideg ti bassit a fishpond*" and "*colored carp*" swimming inside adds to the idyllic setting, emphasizing tranquility and natural beauty.

The story also describes the community's serenity as seen in scenes of family gatherings like Eunice and Eric relaxing in the garden, "having snacks" (*agmermerienda*) and the quiet, domestic atmosphere of their home.

The setting shifts to the interior of the house when describing the family's daily routines, such as Tina preparing food in "kitchen" (*nalawag a kosina*) and interactions among family members reveal a close-knit, humble household.

The story also references the Bangued town's infrastructure, like the mention of "a bus" and the "elementary school," establishing a sense of place within a small, provincial community. The environment reflects a peaceful, simple life in Bangued, contrasting with the complex emotional struggles of the characters.

Overall, the setting composed of both the urban landscape at present and rural in a flashback, the family's modest home, and the small-town atmosphere underscore themes of homecoming, familial love, and the yearning for stability amidst challenging circumstances.

The table presents the settings in three selected Abrenian short stories, demonstrating how place and environment contribute significantly to narrative meaning, mood, and thematic development.

In "Marcus," the story is set mainly in a secluded, well-kept two-story house outside the *poblacion*. Although the house appears comfortable and affluent, its isolation and restricted areas like Marcus's forbidden room, build an atmosphere of secrecy and tension. Hidden objects such



as firearms and suspicious packages reveal danger and concealment within the domestic space, emphasizing the story's mysterious and ominous tone and reflecting Marcus's hidden, darker side.

In contrast, "Makoto" is a story that is set in the remote, culturally rich community of Muyadan in Manabo, Abra. The shift from urban Manila to this rural, indigenous environment highlights a cultural transition that influences the narrative. The traditional homes, natural landscapes, and sacred rituals immerse the protagonist and readers in indigenous practices and values. The setting emphasizes themes of cultural encounter, respect, and learning as Makoto experiences and navigates unfamiliar traditions and social norms.

Meanwhile, "Homeward Return to Bangued" (*Panagawid Idiay Bangued*) is a story that features a peaceful, orderly domestic setting in Caloocan, with flashback references set in Bangued. Detailed descriptions of the home's garden, fishpond, and interior evoke stability and warmth. This tranquil environment contrasts with the characters' emotional struggles, highlighting themes of loss, healing, and family bonds. The setting symbolizes a space of refuge and memory, emphasizing the significance of homecoming.

The table illustrates that setting is not merely a physical location but a dynamic literary element that shapes characterization, influences plot progression, and reinforces thematic concerns across the stories.

The importance of setting as a literary element has been widely discussed in literary theory and pedagogy. Forster (1927) emphasized that setting provides the context in which characters act and events unfold, influencing both narrative structure and reader interpretation. He argued that environment is closely tied to character development, as it shapes motivations and behavior. Similarly, Abrams (1999) defined setting as the general locale, historical time, and social conditions in which a literary work occurs, noting that it often functions symbolically to reflect themes and emotional undertones. This is evident in "Marcus," where the house symbolizes secrecy and danger, and in "Homeward Return to Bangued," where the home represents comfort and emotional grounding.

From a structural perspective, Brooks (1947) argued that all elements of a literary text, including setting, work together to create a unified meaning. The interplay between setting and tone, for instance, enhances the reader's understanding of underlying tensions and conflicts within a story. In the field of education, Langer (1995) found that students develop deeper comprehension when they can "enter" the world of the text. Richly described settings enable learners to build mental images, enhancing interpretation and critical thinking.

Moreover, culturally responsive pedagogy underscores the value of contextualized settings in literature. Ladson-Billings (1995) and Gay (2010) both emphasized that students learn more effectively when texts reflect familiar cultural environments. Thus, the use of Abrenian settings such as tribal communities, provincial towns, and Filipino households, supports learners' cultural identity and relevance in learning.

Table 9. *Characterization of Selected Abrenian Short Stories*

Literary Element:	Characterization
Title of Short Story	Observed Notes and Evidences
MARCUS <i>by Vincent C. Berroy</i>	The story "Marcus" employs a rich and nuanced approach to characterization through indirect methods, suspense, and gradual revelation. Marcus is portrayed as a dynamic character, initially



perceived as secretive, cold, and potentially dangerous, but as the narrative unfolds, he is gradually revealed to be a grieving husband and a deeply emotional artist. His vulnerabilities and past traumas come to light, revealing a complex inner world.

Eloisa also undergoes a clear internal transformation; she begins as hesitant and practical, driven by necessity, then becomes fearful and suspicious, and ultimately develops empathy and understanding toward Marcus.

Jacob, on the other hand, remains largely static, serving as a symbolic figure representing innocence and emotional truth.

The story primarily relies on indirect characterization, revealing traits through characters' actions such as Marcus's secretive handling of money and his painting, his dialogue, like Marcus's statements about secrecy and Jacob's insights into Marcus's silence, reactions from other characters, especially Eloisa's shifting perception, and symbolic objects like the closed room, the gun, and the painting, which reflect Marcus's hidden self, danger, and emotional depth.

Marcus is a round character, embodying contradictions: mysterious yet vulnerable, dangerous yet deeply emotional, detached yet capable of connection, making him psychologically realistic.

Eloisa functions as a foil, contrasting Marcus's secretiveness with her openness, highlighting his inner complexity.

Jacob, as a symbolic character, embodies innocence and serves as an emotional bridge, emphasizing the lingering influence of the past.

Overall, the story's characterization reveals the layered depths of Marcus's personality and the evolving perceptions of those around him.

MAKOTO

by Vincent C. Berroy

The story "Makoto" employs indirect characterization. The author does not explicitly describe the traits of the characters; instead, their personalities are revealed through their actions, dialogue, thoughts, and interactions with others. For instance, Makoto's curiosity, courage, and respect for culture are shown through her willingness to travel, ask questions, and participate in indigenous practices, rather than being directly stated. Similarly, the narrator's hospitality and cultural awareness are



demonstrated through how he guides and assists Makoto throughout her stay.

In addition, the story also uses dynamic characterization, particularly for both Makoto and the narrator. Makoto develops in terms of her deeper understanding of the Muyadan culture, while the narrator experiences a more reflective change, realizing that the encounter is mutually transformative. Their growth is subtle but significant, showing an expansion of perspective rather than a complete change in personality. Furthermore, the characterization can be considered round characterization, especially in the case of Makoto. She is portrayed as a multi-dimensional character, an academic, a traveler, and a culturally sensitive individual, rather than a one-sided figure.

**HOMeward
RETURN TO
BANGUED**
(PANAGAWID IDIAY
BANGUED)
*by Teresita T.
Ambalneg*

The characterization in “Homeward Return to Bangued” (*Panagawid Idiay Bangued*) is predominantly indirect, dynamic, and psychological, allowing the reader to uncover the depth of the characters, especially Francis, through actions, memories, dialogue, and inner conflict rather than through direct description. The story carefully constructs its characters by revealing their past and present conditions side by side, creating a layered and emotionally intense portrayal of human transformation, guilt, and redemption.

Primarily, the story uses indirect characterization. Francis is not directly labeled as a criminal or a remorseful man; instead, his identity unfolds through flashbacks, conversations, and internal reflections. His past as a hired killer is revealed gradually, through recollections of his violent acts, his involvement in murder-for-hire operations, and his connections with dangerous individuals.

At the same time, his present self is shown through his efforts to live a normal life, care for his children, and distance himself from his former identity. His fear after witnessing a shooting, his anxiety about being tracked down, and his insistence on returning to Bangued all serve as evidence of his inner turmoil. These details allow the reader to infer his character rather than simply being told who he is.

Moreover, Francis is a highly dynamic and round character. He undergoes a profound internal transformation, from a ruthless and desensitized killer to a man burdened by guilt and seeking redemption. His change



is largely influenced by his late wife, Margie, whose moral influence led him to abandon his violent life. However, his past continues to haunt him, as seen in his paranoia and fear of retaliation. His decision to return to Bangued, despite the risks, reflects his desire to confront his past and seek closure. This complexity of being both a perpetrator of violence and a remorseful father, makes him a round character with conflicting traits and emotional depth.

Tina, on the other hand, is also characterized indirectly and serves as a foil to Francis. Her cautious, protective, and pragmatic nature contrasts with Francis's restless and guilt-driven personality. Through her dialogue and reactions, she is portrayed as someone who prioritizes safety and stability, especially for the sake of the children. Her resistance to returning to Abra highlights her fear of the consequences of Francis's past actions.

Although she does not undergo as dramatic a transformation as Francis, she still exhibits emotional depth, particularly in her expressions of fear, concern, and love.

The children namely: Eunice, Eric, and Janice, function as symbolic characters. Their physical and emotional conditions reflect the lasting impact of past tragedies on the family. Eunice's blindness, Eric's amputated arm, and Janice's delayed speech all symbolize the enduring consequences of the accident that killed Margie. They serve as constant reminders of loss, suffering, and the fragile nature of life, reinforcing the emotional weight carried by Francis.

The table presents a comparative analysis of characterization across three selected Abrenian short stories, highlighting how authors construct characters through indirect methods, development, and psychological depth.

In "Marcus" by Vincent C. Berroy, characterization is primarily indirect and layered, unfolding through suspense and gradual revelation. Marcus is initially perceived as secretive and potentially dangerous, but later emerges as a grieving husband and emotionally complex artist. This shift demonstrates dynamic and round characterization, where contradictory traits coexist—mystery and vulnerability, detachment and emotional depth. Eloisa also evolves significantly, moving from practicality to fear, and eventually to empathy, making her a dynamic character and a foil to Marcus. Jacob, meanwhile, remains static and symbolic, representing innocence and emotional truth. The use of objects such as the closed room, firearm, and painting further deepens characterization by symbolizing Marcus's hidden identity and internal struggles.

Similarly, "Makoto", also by Vincent C. Berroy, employs indirect characterization, where traits are revealed through actions, dialogue, and interactions rather than explicit description. Makoto is portrayed as curious, respectful, and open-minded through her engagement with



indigenous culture. Both Makoto and the narrator exhibit dynamic characterization, as their perspectives expand through cultural exchange. Makoto, in particular, is a round character, balancing multiple identities as a researcher, traveler, and culturally sensitive individual—while the narrator reflects both insider knowledge and personal realization.

In “Homeward Return to Bangued” (*Panagawid Idiay Bangued*) by Teresita T. Ambalneg, characterization is deeply psychological, indirect, and transformative. Francis is portrayed as a highly dynamic and round character, whose past as a hired killer is gradually revealed through flashbacks and inner conflict. His present actions such as caring for his children and seeking redemption, contrast with his violent past, creating a complex moral tension. Tina serves as a foil, embodying caution and stability, while the children function as symbolic characters, representing the lasting consequences of trauma and loss.

The characterization in these stories is not static but evolves through narrative progression. The authors rely heavily on indirect techniques, allowing readers to infer traits, thereby promoting deeper engagement and critical interpretation.

Recent studies affirm that characterization plays a crucial role in developing students’ literary comprehension and critical thinking skills. According to DiYanni (2020), indirect characterization revealed through actions, speech, and thoughts, encourages readers to actively construct meaning, making reading a more analytical and engaging process. This aligns with the analyzed stories, where characters are understood gradually rather than through explicit description.

In contemporary literacy research, Beers and Probst (2017) emphasize that students develop deeper comprehension when they examine how characters change over time. Dynamic characterization, particularly in emotionally complex narratives, helps learners explore motivations, conflicts, and moral dilemmas, as seen in the transformation of Francis and Marcus.

Furthermore, Wilhelm (2022) highlights that students engage more meaningfully with texts when characters are psychologically complex and relatable. Round characters such as those with multiple, sometimes conflicting traits, mirror real human experiences, allowing learners to connect literature with real-life situations. This is evident in Makoto’s cultural sensitivity and Francis’s moral struggle.

Additionally, Partnership for 21st Century Learning (P21), U.S.-based education organization, highlights that analyzing characters fosters essential skills such as empathy, perspective-taking, and ethical reasoning. These skills are particularly evident when students engage with characters like Francis, whose journey involves guilt and redemption, or Makoto, whose experience reflects cultural respect and learning.

2. What cultural values, traditions and local experiences of Abrenians are portrayed?

Abrenian literature underscores the notion that life in Abra is intricately shaped by a dynamic interplay between external realities and intrinsic values. These literary expressions reveal that the essence of human existence within this cultural context is defined not solely by societal conditions but also by deeply held virtues such as responsibility, resilience, and respect for others. Such values serve as guiding principles that enable individuals to navigate life’s challenges while fostering social cohesion and moral integrity. Ultimately, Abrenian literary works illustrate that the true measure of humanity in Abra lies in the capacity to uphold these core principles, which in turn sustain personal growth and communal harmony amidst a complex



and ever-changing environment. These narratives affirm that cultural values are not merely inherited but actively lived and reshaped through everyday experiences. In doing so, they emphasize the enduring role of literature as a mirror of society and a guide for future generations in navigating both tradition and transformation.

1. Moral Responsibility and Social Accountability

1.1. Moral Responsibility and Social Accountability as Reflected in the Selected Abrenian Poems

In “Mari Juana,” the poem emphasizes the importance of dignity and moral conduct within the community. The line: “You gave yourself without a plea—Is this the modesty you see?” (*Intedmo payen dayta bagim a tanda ti kinababaim?*) directly challenges the individual to reflect on their actions and the loss of personal and communal honor. The speaker's question implies that moral responsibility is a shared value, and actions are scrutinized in the context of community reputation and integrity. The phrase: “You answered all who sought your manna” (*Sinungbatam met aminen ida*) further highlights the expectation that individuals answer for their deeds, reinforcing accountability.

In “The Nights Cannot Keep Still” (*Di Makaidna Dagiti Rabii*), the line “The throbbing can’t be explained” (*Di masumra ti bitek nga awanan nagan*) reveals that guilt and moral failure are internal, unnamed burdens. The phrase suggests that moral transgressions may not always be publicly acknowledged but are felt deeply within the conscience. The internalization of guilt signifies that moral responsibility is not solely social but also personal, influencing one's inner sense of integrity and self-awareness.

In “Tide of A Rose in Chains: Two Poems” (*Balud ti Rosas iti Posas: Dua A Daniw*), the metaphor “like grains carved upon the ridge where the carver’s chisel seeks its balance” (*ta kasingin ti bukel a naitukit iti sep-ang ti mangtartarimbangon a batibat*) symbolizes that moral consequences are deeply internalized and enduring. This imagery reflects the belief that one’s moral actions are rooted within the self and have lasting impact, akin to a seed that grows internally and influences future behavior. It underscores the value that moral accountability is intrinsic and lifelong, affecting both individual conscience and societal standing.

Collectively, these poems depict a community that highly values moral integrity and accountability. In Abrenian society, individuals are expected to act with integrity because their actions impact not only their personal honor but also the harmony of the community. The explicit questioning in “Mari Juana” demonstrates a cultural emphasis on public accountability and moral uprightness. Meanwhile, the internalized guilt in “The Nights Cannot Keep Still” (*Di Makaidna Dagiti Rabii*) and the internal symbolism in “Tide of A Rose in Chains: Two Poems” (*Balud ti Rosas iti Posas: Dua A Daniw*) reveal that morality is also a deeply personal matter, with internal conscience serving as a guide and judge. These cultural nuances reflect the belief that morality transcends external judgment; it is rooted in internal principles that guide behavior, ensuring that actions are aligned with community values and personal integrity. This duality of external and internal moral responsibility is central to the Abrenian worldview, where

maintaining one's good name and inner moral compass is essential for social harmony and personal virtue.

1.2. Moral Responsibility and Social Accountability Reflected in the Selected Abrenian Short Stories

In "Marcus" by Vincent C. Berroy, the story presents moral responsibility as a complex journey from concealment to humanization. Initially, Marcus is depicted in scenes where he is involved with suspicious items: "Eloisa saw bundles of cash that Marcus received from the woman... loaded several taped packages into the woman's car" (*Nakitana dagiti nagadu a nareppet a kuarta nga inawat ni Marcus... adda dagiti banag a naka-packaging tape nga inkarga*), which suggest illegal dealings or morally questionable activities. The tension between secrecy and the possibility of redemption is highlighted by his internal conflict, exemplified in his strict command: "I don't want to be disturbed." (*Diak kayat ti madisdisturbar*) and his isolation, reflecting guilt and moral struggle. The later revelation through Jacob: "only when you arrived did daddy start making conversations again after mommy died" (*Idi laeng dimtengka a nangrugi a makisarita ni daddy sipud natay daydi mommy*), signifies a turning point. Marcus begins to reconnect emotionally and take responsibility, especially for his family. His care for Jacob and the rekindling of his voice symbolize that moral accountability is fluid; it can be rekindled through relationships, love, and acknowledgment of responsibility. It underscores that even those who stray from social norms retain the capacity for moral redemption within a familial framework.

In "Makoto", moral responsibility is depicted through the lens of indigenous customary law and collective community norms. The key scene where Makoto "You crossed the boundary. You violated the law of the *ubaya*" (*Sinariyo ti bangan. Linabsingyo ti paglintegan ti ubaya*) illustrates the unintentional violation of a sacred boundary, *ubaya*, which is considered a serious offense within the community. The response to: "Trespassing... is considered a grave offense. A fine will be imposed based on our customary law," shows that the community relies on structured, culturally rooted justice, rather than punitive hostility.

The narrator's role in "I shouldered Makoto's fine" (*Siak ti nangibaklay iti multa ni Makoto*) demonstrates shared responsibility. The narrator, acting as a community member, assumes moral accountability by paying the fine, embodying the collective and relational nature of social justice. Makoto's participation in the ritual and acceptance of the community's ruling reflect respect for social norms and cultural authority, reinforcing the importance of harmony with tradition.

In "Panagawid Idiay Bangued" (*Homeward Return to Bangued*), the narrative vividly illustrates moral responsibility through themes of guilt, repentance, and acceptance of consequences. Francis's reflection: "I surrendered myself to God when Margie died. I repented" (*Simmukoakon ken ni Apo Dios idi matay ni Margie. Nagbabawiakon*) shows his acknowledgment of his past violent actions and their spiritual and moral repercussions. His statement, "If they want to kill me...I'm not helpless anyway" (*No papatayendak... saan a siak ti madusa*) underscores a rejection of divine or spiritual punishment, emphasizing that accountability is not only social but also spiritual.



Francis's resolve: "I will spend my life watching them struggle" (*Tungpal biagko a buybuyaek ti panagtuokda*) indicates that he perceives his children's suffering as a form of moral consequence, internalizing guilt and responsibility deeply. His willingness to return to a dangerous place despite the risk signifies that moral responsibility involves confronting one's past actions head-on. It highlights that in Abrenian culture, moral accountability encompasses owning one's history, seeking forgiveness, and accepting the social and spiritual repercussions.

In Abrenian culture, morality is more than a mere set of rules; it is a lived, relational system emphasizing accountability to family, community, and oneself. Redemption and moral growth are possible through acknowledgment of faults, seeking forgiveness, and actively confronting one's past. Such a worldview fosters a culture where moral responsibility is integral to personal identity and social harmony, emphasizing that one's actions have enduring consequences that can be addressed through sincerity and repentance.

The concept of moral responsibility and social accountability is a central value in Filipino and indigenous communities, reflecting a collective consciousness that individual actions impact not only oneself but also the broader society. According to Reyes (2010), Filipino cultural values emphasize *hiya* (shame) and *pakikisama* (smooth interpersonal relationships), which serve as social mechanisms to uphold moral conduct and prevent behaviors that could bring shame to the community. These values foster a sense of responsibility that extends beyond personal morality to the communal good.

In indigenous contexts, particularly among the Igorot and other Cordilleran groups, traditional practices such as *baki* (advice or admonition) and rituals serve to reinforce social accountability. As Bower (2015) notes, elders and community leaders are custodians of moral standards, and their roles include ensuring that individuals adhere to customary laws and uphold community honor. These practices exemplify a societal structure where morality is collective and enforceable through cultural norms and rituals.

Research by Santos (2018) on Filipino poetry and oral literature highlights how themes of moral responsibility are embedded in traditional songs and stories. These narratives often depict characters facing moral dilemmas, emphasizing the importance of integrity and accountability. For example, in "Tide of A Rose in Chains: Two Poems" (*Balud ti Rosas iti Posas: Dua A Daniw*), the internalized guilt and moral consequences reflect a cultural tendency to view morality as an internal compass, guiding individuals toward righteousness.

Furthermore, contemporary studies, such as that by Cruz (2020), suggest that Filipino cultural values continue to influence modern notions of social responsibility, especially in community-oriented activities and civic engagement. These values are transmitted through family, education, and media, reinforcing the importance of moral responsibility in maintaining social harmony.

2. Community Consciousness

2.1. Community Consciousness Reflected in the Selected Abrenian Poems

In "The Nights Cannot Keep Still" (*Di Makaidna Dagiti Rabii*), the line: "The stubborn question persists, picking the wounded mind" (*Umappayaw latta ti sutil a saludsod, a mangsukit iti nasugatan a panunot*) suggests that the persona's inner turmoil is not purely personal but is influenced by external forces, including social expectations and lived realities. The persistent questioning "*saludsod*" that



disturbs the “*nasugatan a panunot*” (wounded mind) indicates that individual consciousness is shaped by interactions with the surrounding environment. This reflects an Abrenian worldview in which emotional and psychological experiences are intertwined with social conditions, reinforcing the idea that the individual cannot be separated from the collective.

Similarly, in “Tide of a Rose in Chains: Two Poem” (*Balud ti Rosas iti Posas*), the line “Coloring the world and filling it with dreams” (*Nakamarmaris ti lubong ken napno iti arapaap a nangpasangbay kenka*) portrays the world as actively engaging with and responding to the individual. The “*lubong*” (world) is not a passive backdrop but a participatory space that shapes human experience. The welcoming yet complex nature of the world suggests that one’s journey is always situated within a broader network of relationships, expectations, and shared meanings.

2.2. Community Consciousness Reflected in the Selected Abrenian Short Stories

In “Marcus” by Vincent C. Berroy, community consciousness is reflected through the healing and supportive role of Eloisa within the family. The scene where “*only when you arrived did daddy start making conversations again after mommy died*” (*Idi laeng dimtengka a nangrugi a makisarita ni daddy sipud natay daydi mommy*) reveals that Marcus’s social and emotional recovery is linked to human relationships. Eloisa, although an outsider and helper, becomes integral to restoring communication and connection within the household.

In “Makoto”, community consciousness is vividly expressed through the collective enforcement of traditional laws and shared responsibility. The scene where “*You crossed the boundary. You violated the law of the ubaya*” (*Sinariyo ti bangan. Linabsingyo ti paglintegan ti ubaya*) and the statement “*Trespassing... is considered a grave offense*” illustrate how the community actively upholds its cultural and sacred practices. Makoto’s violation is not seen as merely an individual mistake but as an offense that affects the entire community, requiring collective accountability. The act of the narrator paying the fine, “*I shouldered Makoto’s fine*” (*Siak ti nangibaklay iti multa ni Makoto*), exemplifies shared responsibility, thus, individual actions have communal consequences. The invitation “*I’ll take you to our home*” (*Yawisko ti isasangbaymo iti pagtaenganmi*) highlights the culture of hospitality and inclusion, welcoming outsiders but also emphasizing respect for community rules.

In “Homeward Return to Bangued” (*Panagawid Idiy Bangued*), community consciousness centers on family as the primary social unit. Francis’s concern about returning to Abra reflects his sense of responsibility toward his wife and children. Tina’s resistance, “*They will you!*” (*Papatayendaka sadiay!*), reveals the collective apprehension about safety and well-being, a danger to one affects all.

Furthermore, Francis’ acknowledgment that he must witness his children’s suffering as part of his fate demonstrates that individual identity is inseparable from family bonds. His past actions and decisions are not isolated but shape the lives of the entire family.



This demonstrates that in Abrenian culture, individual well-being is inherently connected to community and relationships. Eloisa's presence extends beyond her role as a helper; she becomes a vital part of the support system that nurtures emotional healing and social integration.

These stories affirm that in Abrenian culture, a person's identity, decisions, and well-being are embedded within a network of relationships. Community consciousness is not merely an external social norm but a lived value that sustains individual and collective harmony.

Community consciousness is a fundamental value deeply embedded in Filipino and indigenous cultures, emphasizing the interconnectedness of individuals within their social groups. According to Reyes (2015), community consciousness in Filipino culture is rooted in collectivism, where individual well-being is intertwined with the welfare of the group. This perspective aligns with Hofstede's cultural dimensions, which describe collectivist societies as emphasizing group harmony, shared responsibilities, and relational identity (Hofstede, 2001). Such values foster social cohesion and reinforce the importance of maintaining harmonious relationships within families, communities, and cultural groups.

In indigenous Filipino societies, including the Cordillera and Aeta communities, social consciousness manifests through rituals, customary laws, and communal decision-making (Benedict, 2004). These practices uphold the idea that individual actions are not isolated but impact the community's moral integrity. For example, in the Cordillera region, the enforcement of traditions and laws demonstrates collective responsibility, as documented by Luna (2012), who notes that violations are addressed through community-led sanctions that aim to restore social harmony.

Research by Salazar (2018) emphasizes that in Filipino culture, the family is the core of community consciousness. Family members are expected to prioritize collective needs over individual desires, especially in times of crisis or decision-making. This aligns with the narratives in the stories where Francis' decisions are driven by his responsibility to his family, and Tina's fears reflect concern for collective safety.

3. Emotional Resilience

3.1. Emotional Resilience Reflected in the Selected Abrenian Poems

In "The Nights Cannot Keep Still" (*Di Makaidna Dagiti Rabii*), emotional pain becomes more intense and inwardly focused. The lines "There is a nightmare that will not allow respite" (*Adda batibat a di agpabatubat*) and "like rust that spreads entirely, gnawing the flesh" (*Kasla lati nga agsaknap a mangnetnet kadagiti lasag*) depict suffering that remains unexpressed, emphasizing a silent torment that does not erupt outward. The use of imagery suggests heaviness and suffocation, reinforcing the idea that pain is deeply internalized.

Similarly, "Tide of A Rose in Chains: Two Poems" (*Balud ti Rosas iti Posas: Dua A Daniw*) intensifies this portrayal through vivid sensory images such as "Wind-scattered were the footsteps that tried to seize all their remaining strength" (*Nagkaykayaw-at iti angin dagiti takkiag*) and "Your eyes darkened in the pulse of anguish and the bitterness of tears" (*Nasdeman dagiti mata iti nagtibnok nga apgad ti ling-et ken pait ti lua*) which evoke emotional exhaustion, grief, and the physical weight of sorrow.

3.2. Emotional Resilience Reflected in the Selected Abrenian Short Stories



In “Marcus” by Vincent C. Berroy, emotional resilience is reflected through Marcus’s gradual opening up and reconnection with others. The scene where Marcus starts making conversations again after the death of his wife reveals how he initially copes with grief through internal strength and silence. This shows that his emotional recovery is linked to building relationships. Eloisa’s role as an outsider and supporter highlights how community and relational bonds are vital to healing.

Similarly, in “Makoto,” community consciousness is expressed through Makoto’s resilience in adapting to a foreign environment while maintaining her integrity. The scene where she’s asking how to get to Manabo from Bangued to a stranger, illustrates her determination to persevere. Her ability to deal with the shame of guilt after violating *ubaya*, shows emotional resilience.

In “Homeward Return to Bangued” (*Panagawid Idiay Bangued*), emotional resilience is centered on family and moral responsibility. The scene where Francis faces his past and says, “I surrendered myself to God when Margie died...” (*Simmukoakon ken ni Apo Dios idi matay...*) demonstrates his moral courage. Tina’s resistance, “They will you!” (*Papatayendaka sadiay!*), underscores the collective apprehension about threats to their family’s well-being.

These stories affirm that in Abrenian culture, emotional resilience involves not only enduring personal pain but also transforming hardship into moral strength and relational responsibility. The community’s support and family bonds serve as vital foundations for healing and growth, emphasizing that resilience is woven into the fabric of social and familial relationships.

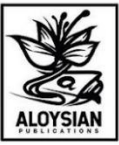
According to Reyes (2018), Filipino resilience is deeply rooted in the concept of *kapwa*, which refers to shared identity and interconnectedness among individuals. This cultural trait fosters a supportive environment where individuals draw strength from their relationships, enabling them to recover from traumatic experiences. Similarly, Salazar (2020) emphasizes that family remains the primary source of emotional support in Filipino society, serving as an essential buffer against stress and hardship. The strong sense of *bayanihan*, or communal unity and cooperation, further reinforces collective resilience, as community members actively participate in helping each other rebuild after calamities or personal setbacks (De Guzman, 2019).

Research by Cruz (2017) underscores that resilience in Filipino culture is not solely an individual trait but a shared social process that involves maintaining harmony and fulfilling social obligations despite difficulties. This interconnectedness fosters a sense of responsibility and moral strength, which are vital in overcoming life's challenges. Moreover, studies have shown that faith and spiritual beliefs also play a significant role in fostering resilience, providing hope and purpose during times of hardship (Luna & Santos, 2021). Overall, literature indicates that in Filipino society, emotional resilience is inherently linked to community consciousness, family bonds, and shared cultural values, which collectively serve as vital resources for individual and collective healing.

4. Love, Sacrifice, and Suffering (*Ayat, Sakripisio ken Panagsagaba*)

4.1. Love, Sacrifice, and Suffering Reflected in the Selected Abrenian Poems

In “Mari Juana”, love is shown not just as emotional intimacy but as something that can be bought, traded, or exploited. Desire leads to loss of dignity and creates a form of suffering tied to social or material circumstances. Love here is inseparable



from sacrifice, as giving one's affection often requires paying a price, whether literal or symbolic.

In "The Nights Cannot Keep Still" (*Di Makaidna Dagiti Rabii*), it emphasizes emotional longing and restlessness. Love becomes a source of internal suffering, where sleepless nights and unexpressed desire symbolize the torment of unattained or unfulfilled love. The suffering is psychological and intimate, illustrating how deep emotional attachment can be both beautiful and painful.

Meanwhile, in "Tide of A Rose in Chains: Two Poems" (*Balud ti Rosas iti Posas: Dua a Daniw*), here, love is portrayed as persistent even against resistance. It continues to exist in hearts that are hardened or emotionally scarred, showing that love is sacrificial and enduring, yet accompanied by inevitable pain. The bitterness and tears highlight that true love often demands emotional resilience.

4.2. Love, Sacrifice, and Suffering Reflected in the Selected Abrenian Short Stories

In Marcus, love is deeply rooted in grief and emotional silence, as shown in his characterization as a "grieving husband and a deeply emotional artist," suggesting that his love for his past relationship continues to exist but is transformed into quiet suffering and internalized pain. Instead of openly expressing affection, Marcus carries his emotions through silence and isolation, showing that love can persist even when it becomes wounded by loss.

In Makoto, love, though not the romantic one, develops through a brief but meaningful encounter during a long journey, where the lines "*I'm usually traveling alone from Manila to Abra,*" (*Kaaduanna a sisiak la nga agbibiahe nga agpa-Abra manipud Manila*) and the introduction of "*Makoto Sugii, a 27-year-old Japanese woman,*" then narrating how he and Makoto didn't talk much "*We didn't talk at first*" highlight emotional distance and hesitation. This silence becomes a form of sacrifice, as both characters experience unspoken emotions and missed opportunities for deeper connection, making their bond subtle and bittersweet.

Meanwhile, in Homeward Return to Bangued (*Panagawid Idiay Bangued*), love is tied to family, memory, and the painful act of returning home after tragedy, where the "lingering presence of loss" and "physical and emotional scars from a tragic accident" emphasize that love is inseparable from grief and remembrance. The journey home (*panagawid*) symbolizes both the endurance of family love and the suffering caused by revisiting painful memories.

According to Reyes (2015), Filipino notions of love extend beyond mere affection to encompass acts of sacrifice, where individuals are willing to endure pain for the sake of their loved ones. This perspective aligns with traditional Filipino values that emphasize *sacrificio* (sacrifice) as an essential component of genuine love.

In the Ilokano-Abrenian context, love is frequently portrayed as inseparable from suffering, as reflected in local expressions such as "*A baybayadandat' uray mano,*" which translates to "love reduced to transactional suffering," indicating that love involves giving up personal comfort or enduring hardships. Studies by Cruz (2018) highlight that such cultural expressions reveal a worldview where love is not just about happiness but also about enduring emotional pain and sacrifice. For instance, Mari Juana's narrative demonstrates how desire can lead to exploitation and loss of dignity, emphasizing that love driven by selfish motives often results in suffering. Meanwhile, in "The Nights Cannot Keep Still" (*Di Makaidna Dagiti Rabii*), sleepless

nights and emotional longing (“*Di makaidna dagiti rabii*” and “*Adda karkarna a dagaang*”) symbolize the inner burning of longing and emotional sacrifice.

These cultural expressions and narratives suggest that in Ilokano and broader Filipino culture, love is often regarded as sacrificial and accompanied by suffering, which ultimately signifies its depth and sincerity. Such perspectives reinforce the understanding that love, in these societies, is more than an emotional experience; it is a moral act rooted in sacrifice and resilience.

5. Spirituality and Faith (*Natibker a Pammati*)

5.1. Spirituality and Faith Reflected in the Selected Abrenian Poems

In “Mari Juana”, spirituality is implied through moral framing, particularly in how the narrative presents sin, desire, and dignity as morally loaded experiences. Although explicit religious references may be minimal, the story constructs a sense of right and wrong that echoes religious ethics. This suggests that human actions are not only social or emotional but also moral in nature, reinforcing the idea that spirituality is present in the background as a standard for judgment and self-reflection.

In “The Nights Cannot Keep Still” (*Di Makaidna Dagiti Rabii*), spirituality is expressed through symbolic imagery that highlights the limitations of earthly or natural remedies for emotional suffering. The line “Yet looking up to the moon, is not the cure to a tarnished trust” (*Saan nga iti itatangad iti bulan, ti agas ti panagtalek a natulawan*) suggests that neither the moon nor natural elements can heal broken trust or inner anguish. This implies that human suffering cannot be fully resolved by physical or natural means alone, pointing toward the need for a deeper, possibly spiritual form of healing. The imagery emphasizes emotional emptiness that transcends the material world.

In “Tide of A Rose in Chains: Two Poems” (*Balud ti Rosas iti Posas: Dua A Daniw*), spirituality becomes more explicit through direct reference to scripture, as shown in “For the words of John 16:26–27 no longer suffice” (*Ta saanen nga umdas dagiti balikas iti Juan 16:26–27*). The invocation of biblical text highlights reliance on divine guidance and reinforces the importance of faith in moments of suffering and confinement. Here, spirituality is not only implied but openly expressed as a source of strength and meaning, suggesting that human endurance is anchored in trust in God.

5.2. Spirituality and Faith Reflected in the Selected Abrenian Short Stories

In “Marcus”, spirituality is implied through the character’s experience of grief and emotional transformation. As a “grieving husband and a deeply emotional artist,” Marcus reflects a form of inward spirituality shaped by loss and remembrance. His silence and emotional restraint suggest a process of internal reckoning, where suffering becomes a space for reflection and meaning-making. In this sense, faith is not explicitly stated but is manifested through endurance and the quiet acceptance of pain, which is often interpreted in Ilokano narratives as a form of spiritual strength.

In “Makoto”, spirituality is more subtle and can be interpreted through the theme of human connection and unspoken emotion. The narrative’s setting, a shared journey between strangers, highlights moments of stillness and reflection, such as “I’m traveling alone from Manila to Abra” and “We didn’t talk at first.”



These moments of silence may be read as spaces for introspection, where individuals confront their own emotions and uncertainties. The presence of *baglan* and *pangat* also shows spirituality. While religious references are absent, the restrained interaction suggests an implicit belief in fate, timing, or providence, which is often associated with spiritual understanding in literary interpretation.

In “Homeward Return to Bangued” (*Panagawid Idiay Bangued*), spirituality is more closely tied to memory, family, and the aftermath of tragedy. The narrative emphasizes the “lingering presence of loss” and “physical and emotional scars from a tragic accident,” which situates suffering within a broader moral and existential context. The act of returning home (*panagawid*) becomes symbolic of reconciliation, not only with family but also with personal history and emotional wounds. In Ilokano cultural interpretation, such journeys are often associated with reflection, forgiveness, and quiet faith in healing, even without explicit religious statements.

Recent studies emphasize that spirituality and faith remain central to Filipino, particularly Ilokano, cultural identity and literary expression. Literature is often used as a medium through which individuals interpret suffering, morality, and human relationships within a religious framework.

A study by Domingo et al. (2022) on Ilokano Pasion traditions highlights that faith and religiosity are deeply embedded in community life, emphasizing values such as *panata* (vow), family solidarity, and devotion. The research found that religious practices are not merely ritualistic but serve as expressions of emotional connection, cultural identity, and moral grounding. This supports the idea that spirituality in Ilokano narratives is often tied to collective values and moral reflection, rather than just explicit religious doctrine.

Similarly, Castor et al. (2024) note that oral narratives in the Philippines function as carriers of spiritual wisdom, transmitting faith-based values across generations. Their study explains that storytelling integrates religious beliefs with everyday life experiences, reinforcing the role of faith in shaping how individuals understand suffering and resilience. This aligns with literary texts where spirituality is embedded in narrative structure and character experience.

Furthermore, Liamzon and Banzon-Librojo (2025) examine Filipino Catholic identity and argue that faith plays a crucial role in identity formation and meaning-making, especially in contexts of struggle and moral decision-making. Their findings show that individuals use religious narratives to interpret life events, cope with difficulties, and construct personal meaning.

In relation to Ilokano literature, Damoco et al. (2023) emphasize that local short stories reflect real-life experiences shaped by cultural values, including religiosity and moral consciousness. These narratives mirror how communities integrate faith into daily life, particularly in dealing with emotional and social struggles.

Additionally, recent philosophical research by Suyat and Lopez (2025) on the Ilokano concept of *inamoyo* (love) suggests that Filipino emotional experiences are deeply connected to relational values, spirituality, and communal identity, further supporting the idea that faith and emotion are intertwined in Ilokano thought.

3. What pedagogical implications can be drawn from the analysis of the selected Abrenian literary works for use in the Grade VII English curriculum?



Integrating Abrenian literary works into the Grade VII English curriculum offers multifaceted educational benefits that extend beyond language mastery. As emphasized by Ladson-Billings (1994), culturally relevant texts serve as powerful tools for fostering cultural literacy, enabling students to connect with their heritage and community identities. These texts also support the development of moral reasoning, emotional intelligence, and social awareness by providing authentic contexts for exploring human values, ethical dilemmas, and emotional experiences. Moreover, engaging with local literature nurtures a sense of pride and belonging, which is crucial for identity formation among young learners (Gutiérrez, 2008).

Literature from Abrenian sources functions as holistic educational instruments that ground learners in both their local culture and universal themes. For example, “Mari Juana” with its figurative language and symbolism, is highly effective for teaching values education. According to Schmitt (2000), figurative language in poetry encourages students to think critically and interpret abstract ideas, fostering deeper literary comprehension. Its rhetorical questions serve as catalysts for classroom discussions on peer influence, societal expectations, and moral choices, aligning with the principles of moral development outlined by Kohlberg (1984). Such discussions help students develop empathy and ethical reasoning, essential components of moral education.

The poem “Tide of A Rose in Chains: Two Poems” (*Balud ti Rosas iti Posas: Dua A Daniw*), presents complex imagery and abstract themes suitable for advanced learners. Its use of symbolism, metaphor, and tone shifts offers opportunities for in-depth literary analysis, encouraging higher-order thinking skills (Bloom, 1956). The poem’s philosophical themes about life, love, and mortality require guided interpretation, which aligns with the findings of Alexander (2010), who advocates for scaffolded literary analysis to deepen students’ understanding of complex texts. This approach not only enhances critical thinking but also cultivates reflective and philosophical inquiry.

The poem “The Nights Cannot Keep Still” (*Di Makaidna Dagiti Rabii*) provides valuable insights into figurative language, tone, and psychological themes. Its emotional depth makes it an excellent resource for developing emotional literacy and mental health awareness among students. As Davis (2010) highlights, exposure to emotionally rich poetry enhances students’ capacity for empathy and emotional regulation. However, its abstract and ambiguous imagery necessitate teacher facilitation to help students articulate their feelings and interpret complex symbolism, consistent with the strategies suggested by Tompkins (2006) for teaching poetry.

Short story “Marcus”, with its exploration of themes such as judgment, irony, and character development, offers substantial opportunities for literary analysis and moral reflection. Its focus on how limited knowledge influences perception supports the development of critical literacy skills and social consciousness (Freire, 1970). The use of the Ilokano language further enhances cultural literacy, as language is a key carrier of culture and identity (Gee, 2000). Integrating language and literature thus promotes a holistic understanding of cultural values and social realities.

“Makoto” on the other hand, emphasizes intercultural awareness, respect, and indigenous traditions, making it highly relevant for fostering global citizenship and cultural sensitivity. According to Bennett (1993), intercultural competence involves understanding and respecting cultural differences, which this story promotes through its depiction of humility and ethical research practices. The literary elements of irony and symbolism serve as effective tools for



discussing cultural identity and ethical considerations, supporting intercultural learning (Byram, 1998).

Finally, “Homeward Return to Bangued” (*Panagawid Idiay Bangued*) explores themes of justice, redemption, and moral transformation. Its emphasis on characterization and symbolism offers a platform for moral reasoning and ethical reflection, aligning with Kohlberg’s (1984) stages of moral development. Engaging students in discussions about accountability and ethical actions cultivates responsible citizenship and personal integrity, making this work valuable for moral education and literary analysis.

In conclusion, integrating Abrenian literary works into the Grade VII curriculum aligns with contemporary pedagogical frameworks that emphasize culturally responsive teaching, critical literacy, and moral education. These texts serve as effective pedagogical tools that foster a deeper understanding of local culture while engaging students with universal human experiences, thus supporting their development as culturally aware, morally conscious, and emotionally intelligent individuals.

4. How can the findings of this study be utilized in the development of localized Grade VII English learning materials?

The analysis of selected Abrenian literary texts namely “Mari Juana”, “Tide of A Rose in Chains: Two Poems” (*Balud ti Rosas iti Posas*), “The Nights Cannot Keep Still” (*Di Makaidna Dagiti Rabii*), “Marcus”, “Makoto”, and “Homeward Return to Bangued” (*Panagawid Idiay Bangued*), demonstrates their significant potential in the development of localized Grade VII English instructional materials. These works are deeply situated within the cultural, social, and historical contexts of Abra, thereby providing a meaningful basis for contextualized language instruction that aligns with learners’ lived experiences. Culturally responsive pedagogy underscores the importance of integrating learners’ cultural backgrounds into the curriculum to enhance engagement and academic achievement (Ladson-Billings, 1994). Similarly, Gay (2010) asserts that students exhibit greater motivation and participation when instructional materials reflect their own cultural realities and community narratives.

Furthermore, these literary texts explore essential themes such as familial responsibility, moral integrity, empathy, resilience, and community values. These elements are critical in fostering both ethical reasoning and social-emotional development among learners. For instance, Mari Juana employs symbolic language and moral reflection, which can serve as effective tools for values education. This supports the argument of Nussbaum (1997), who posits that literature plays a crucial role in cultivating empathy and moral imagination. In addition, narratives such as “Homeward Return to Bangued” (*Panagawid Idiay Bangued*), which address themes of justice and redemption, can facilitate meaningful discussions on moral decision-making and civic responsibility, aligning with the principles of character education (Lapsley & Narvaez, 2006).

Moreover, the diversity in narrative styles, figurative language, and structural complexity across these texts provides opportunities for enhancing learners’ comprehension skills, vocabulary acquisition, and literary analysis. Exposure to varied literary forms and figurative expressions contributes to the development of linguistic competence and critical thinking skills (Schmitt, 2000). The representation of personal and societal dilemmas within these works further encourages learners to engage in problem-solving and ethical reflection, which are essential competencies in 21st-century education (Partnership for 21st Century Skills, 2019).



In addition, these literary works support interdisciplinary learning by establishing connections between literature and other subject areas such as history, social studies, and civic education. For example, “Makoto” highlights themes related to cultural awareness and respect, which can be integrated into discussions on heritage and identity, thereby promoting a more holistic educational experience. The incorporation of interactive pedagogical strategies, including role-playing, dramatization, reflective journaling, and project-based learning, can further enhance student engagement and deepen understanding. These approaches are consistent with the sociocultural theory of learning, which emphasizes the role of social interaction and active participation in knowledge construction (Vygotsky, 1978), as well as constructivist principles that view learning as most effective when learners are actively engaged in meaningful tasks (Brown, 2009).

In conclusion, the integration of locally relevant literary texts into English instruction extends beyond the development of language proficiency. It also promotes cultural literacy, moral development, and a strengthened sense of identity and community among learners. Culturally grounded educational practices contribute to holistic learner development by bridging academic content with students’ cultural experiences and social realities (Ladson-Billings, 1994; Gay, 2010). Consequently, this approach fosters a more relevant, engaging, and transformative learning environment that prepares learners to become both linguistically competent and socially responsible individuals.

5. What localized instructional materials can be designed to enhance the reading comprehension of Grade VII students of Abra High School Calot Extension?

To improve the reading comprehension of Grade VII students at Abra High School Calot Extension, it is essential to develop localized instructional materials that reflect the learners’ cultural context, lived experiences, and linguistic environment. Core reading materials may be sourced from Abrenian literary works such as Mari Juana, Balud ti Rosas iti Posas, Di Makaidna Dagiti Rabii, Marcus, Makoto, and Panagawid Idiay Bangued, which are characterized by rich local themes, values, and social realities.

Self-Learning Modules (SLMs) can be structured around these texts, offering guided reading passages, comprehension exercises, vocabulary tasks, and reflective prompts that enable independent learning and accommodate differentiated pacing. Research indicates that SLMs that include guided reading passages, comprehension questions, vocabulary development tasks, and reflective activities can significantly improve students’ reading skills and learning autonomy (Department of Education, 2020; Bernardo, 2021). Such materials allow learners to progress at their own pace while reinforcing comprehension strategies through structured and scaffolded activities.

Complementary Learning Activity Sheets (LAS) can provide collaborative exercises, including role-playing scenarios, story mapping, character analysis charts, and critical-thinking tasks, encouraging learners to engage in discussion and synthesis of ideas with their peers. Learning Activity Sheets (LAS) have been found to enhance collaborative and interactive learning. Studies show that activities such as role-playing, story mapping, and character analysis promote deeper engagement with texts and improve learners’ ability to interpret and synthesize information (Tomlinson, 2014). These strategies encourage peer interaction and discussion, which are crucial in developing higher-order thinking skills and comprehension.



The inclusion of multimedia elements, such as audio narrations in English, visual illustrations, and digital storyboards, can further enhance comprehension and engagement. The use of audio, visual, and digital resources has been shown to improve comprehension by providing multiple modes of input, thereby addressing diverse learning styles (Mayer, 2021).

Moreover, project-based activities embedded within SLMs and LAS such as developing localized story maps, composing reflective journals that relate personal experiences to the dilemmas of characters, or dramatizing key scenes, can foster analytical thinking and deeper understanding of the texts (Thomas, 2020; Bell, 2010). Through the integration of these culturally relevant materials, students are expected not only to strengthen their reading comprehension and language proficiency but also to cultivate an appreciation for local heritage, communal values, and ethical lessons, thereby rendering the learning process both meaningful and motivating. These approaches align with constructivist learning theory, which posits that knowledge is best acquired through active participation and meaningful engagement (Vygotsky, 1978; Brown, 2009).

Overall, the literature suggests that the integration of localized literary texts, structured SLMs, collaborative LAS, multimedia resources, and project-based activities can significantly improve reading comprehension among Grade VII learners. More importantly, these approaches contribute to the development of cultural appreciation, ethical awareness, and learner motivation. By situating learning within the students' cultural context, education becomes more relevant, engaging, and transformative, ultimately supporting both academic achievement and holistic development. The developed localized materials can be accessed through <https://bit.ly/LocalizedMaterialsEng7>. Furthermore, these materials provide teachers with adaptable and context-sensitive resources that can be tailored to diverse classroom needs and learning styles. They also encourage active learner participation, fostering critical thinking and deeper textual engagement. Ultimately, the use of such localized and varied instructional strategies strengthens the connection between language learning and real-life cultural experiences.

IV. CONCLUSION:

Based from the findings obtained, the following conclusions were drawn:

The analysis made in this study demonstrates that Abrenian literary works are highly valuable instructional resources within the Grade VII English curriculum. These texts serve as effective tools to support the development of learners' language proficiency, particularly in reading comprehension, vocabulary, and expressive skills. Engaging with Abrenian literature enables students to analyze, interpret, and evaluate literary content, which in turn enhances their critical thinking and analytical competencies. Through close examination of themes, characterization, and literary devices, learners are encouraged to think deeply about the messages conveyed and the cultural contexts embedded within the texts.

In addition to language development, the integration of culturally relevant literature fosters a richer appreciation of the learners' cultural heritage. It allows students to see reflections of their own traditions, values, and social realities in the texts they study, nurturing a sense of identity and pride. This cultural grounding also promotes moral and social development, as students explore themes rooted in local experiences such as community, family, respect, and resilience, thereby encouraging empathy and social consciousness.



Furthermore, the deliberate inclusion of key literary elements such as theme, characterization, setting, figurative language, and symbolism, provides meaningful opportunities for reflective and higher-order learning. These elements serve as lenses through which learners can deepen their understanding of the texts, fostering skills in analysis, synthesis, and evaluation.

The effectiveness of instruction is further amplified through the use of localized and culturally responsive teaching strategies. These approaches make learning more relevant and engaging by connecting literary content to students' lived experiences, local environment, and cultural practices. Techniques such as storytelling, role-playing, and community-based projects help contextualize lessons, making abstract concepts more tangible and meaningful for learners.

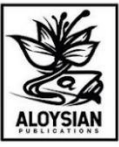
The development and deployment of localized instructional materials such as Self-Learning Modules (SLMs), Learning Activity Sheets (LAS), and multimedia resources, are crucial in enhancing educational outcomes. These materials are designed to be accessible, adaptable, and aligned with students' diverse needs and contexts. They facilitate independent learning, reinforce understanding, and provide varied modes of engagement, which are especially important in fostering inclusive education.

The findings underscore the importance of integrating Abrenian literary works into the English curriculum as part of a broader, culturally responsive pedagogical framework. This approach not only advances language acquisition but also nurtures cultural awareness, moral values, and critical thinking skills. By doing so, it contributes to the holistic development of learners; equipping them with the competencies necessary to thrive academically, socially, and culturally in their community and beyond.

Recommendations:

Based from the findings and conclusions drawn, the following recommendations are forwarded by the researcher to optimize the integration of Abrenian literary works into the Grade VII English curriculum and instructional materials:

1. Curriculum developers are encouraged to incorporate more Abrenian literary works and other local texts into the Grade VII English curriculum to foster cultural relevance and contextualized learning.
2. Teachers and educators should create and utilize localized instructional materials, such as SLMs, LAS, and multimedia resources, that are rooted in local literature and culture.
3. Educators are advised to adopt interactive and learner-centered teaching strategies, including role-playing, dramatization, reflective writing, and project-based learning, to boost student engagement and comprehension.
4. Conducting training programs and workshops is recommended to equip teachers with the necessary skills and knowledge for effectively implementing culturally responsive teaching practices; and
5. Schools are encouraged to collaborate with local writers, cultural practitioners, and community members to enrich the teaching and learning experience of local literature.



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