

# Analysis of the Main Character Costumes in 'Enola Holmes' Movie Using CS Peirce's Theory

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
<p><b>Keywords:</b> Charles Sanders Peirce; Costumes; English Movie; Enola Holmes; Semiotic Analysis</p> <p><b>Received:</b> 17 Apr 2024 <b>Revised:</b> 19 May 2024 <b>Accepted:</b> 20 May 2024</p>	<p>This study aims to analyze the costumes that the main character wears in the movie 'Enola Holmes' by using Charles Sanders (CS) Peirce's theory. The data in this study was collected by watching the movies several times and taking notes on the costumes worn by Enola Holmes, the main character in this movie. The data analysis was done by identifying the signs in the costumes and interpreting their meanings based on CS Peirce's semiotic theory, which divides signs into icons, indexes, and symbols. The result of this study shows that Enola Holmes' costumes function as icons, indexes, and symbols. As icons, the costumes directly represent the Victorian era and Enola's various disguises. As indexes, the costumes reflect Enola's actions, emotions, and experiences. Furthermore, as symbols, the costumes convey meanings related to gender roles, courage, independence, and family heritage. This study helps in gaining an understanding of how film costumes can be used to communicate storylines and to develop characters.</p>

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Costumes in works of fiction are well chosen. In the world of entertainment, including movies, costumes act as more than just clothing; they may also serve as a visual representation of a story. The costumes worn by the characters in the movie, particularly the main character, may describe the character's personality as well as the story's background. Every character in a film or television drama has his or her unique personality and characteristics, which are sometimes represented through costumes (Yin, 2023). It's not just about setting a scene; it's also about symbolism. For example, tidy and well-tailored costumes can convey authority and seriousness. In contrast, an actor dressed in old or unclean clothes may represent poverty or homelessness.

Film and fashion appear to be two different disciplines, but as movie stars adopt new looks, they form a relationship that is mutually beneficial in that their style influences the clothes they wear in the movies (Jing, 2022). Movie actors may be trendsetters, and films can mirror current fashion trends. The semiotics of film separate language into linguistic and visual signs, and a film's costumes are one aspect of this (Vojković, 2020). Costumes in films can be considered as visual representations that contribute to the overall significance of the entire movie. A character's emotions, the period, and other details can all be revealed by their costume.

A movie is an audiovisual medium that conveys a message to an audience (Rahmaton et al., 2023). The development of technology nowadays makes it simple to deliver messages in a variety of forms. There are not just spoken and written forms of communication, but also one in the shape of a movie. Movies may convey messages through characters, situations, settings, signs, and symbols (Absharina, 2023). Watching a movie is not only an entertaining activity; it can also be a medium for delivering



messages, messages conveyed through numerous aspects of the movie itself, which in semiotics examine signs and meanings, such as characters, places, signs, symbols, and even costumes.

The study of how sign systems work or how signs are analyzed is all that semiotics is as a discipline (Cobley & Litza, 2014). The signs for study include not just written literary works but also symbols, sounds, designs, and even costumes. Semiotics helps us understand how we communicate and what others are saying, not through the use of words but rather through the use of other objects around us. One simple example is the use of emojis. Emojis, like the thumb-up emoji, which can signify agree or good, or the crying emoji, which can represent touched or sad.

This study was conducted to find out the sign systems and their meanings in the costumes used by the main characters of the Enola Holmes movie. The Netflix movie 'Enola Holmes' is set in the Victorian era and not only has an interesting story but also has amazing visuals due to its costumes. The film was released in September 2020 and is categorized into the mystery, action, adventure, and criminal genres. Enola Holmes, the name of the film, is also the main character in this one as well. Because she follows her path and doesn't follow social standards, she defies Victorian England's expectations of women. The suffering of Enola's journey and the societal concerns the movie tackles, such as feminism and suffrage, is made ironic and delightful by her awareness of her audience (Temple, 2021). The theory used in this study is the theory of Charles Sanders Peirce, who is a scientist known in the field of semiotics. Peirce divides signs into icons, indexes, and symbols.

### **1.1 Peirce's Semiotics Theory**

Charles Sanders Peirce is regarded as one of Semiotics' most influential figures. According to Peirce's terminology, the sign, taken broadly, is made up of three interconnected elements: (1) the sign in the narrow sense, also known as the representamen, i.e., that which represents something else; (2) the object, i.e., that which the sign represents or stands for; and (3) the (possible or potential) meaning that the sign permits, which may come to pass as it is translated into a new sign (Johansen & Larsen, 2002). Peirce described the sign as a general notion with numerous species derived from icons, indexes, and symbols, each determined by its relationship to an object in a specific situation (Sebeok, 2002). The link with each sign is not constant and might vary based on an object or circumstance. Despite the most basic signs, generation and interpretation have to include indexical, iconic, and symbolic elements (Johansen, 2002). In their most basic form, all three of these kinds of signs, which are icon, index, and symbol, are connected and aid in the understanding of an object. In other words, a sign might contain elements of all three sorts, or even two at once, and is not always only an icon, index, or symbol.

According to his semiotic theory, signs fall into three primary categories: symbols, indexes, and icons. Icons are signs that directly or physically resemble the thing they stand for. An index is a sign that indicates a direct or causal link between it and its target. Symbols are indications whose significance concerning the object is established by mutually accepted norms or conventions. While it is simple to refer to Peirce's three forms as "types of signs," they are not always mutually exclusive; an icon, a symbol, an index, or any combination of these can all be considered a sign (Chandler, 2007). This classification is essential for studying texts as well as images in media, making it an appropriate method for examining movie costumes.

### **1.2 Costume in a Movie**

Peirce's semiotic framework is applied to various media, including films, to examine how visual elements convey meaning. Costumes can certainly be analyzed using Peirce's categories. For example, a character's iconic costume in a movie can reflect the character's position or role. Costume design is an important aspect of film that influences character development and storytelling. It includes carefully choosing clothing, accessories, and style to reflect personality and background. Costumes can serve as nonverbal communication tools, providing insight into characters' identities and emotions (Landis, 2012). Besides using words, expressions, or sounds, fashion items can be used to convey messages or

information in a film. Even before a character says a word, costumes may visually convey a variety of information about them through the selection of colors, styles, textures, and accessories. Costume design is an important aspect of the film, influencing character development and storytelling. It entails carefully choosing clothing, accessories, and style to reflect personality and background.

The character and the costume are intrinsically connected, as the character shapes the costume just as much as the costume itself shapes the character as a whole (Annila, 2014). The costume is more than just what a character wears; it is a representation of their identities. Their appearance affects how viewers see them, and their history and personality have an impact on what they wear. The time setting of "Enola Holmes" is the end of the 19th century, namely the Victorian era. Because of this, the film needs precise clothing designs that fit the historical setting. Period movies benefit from accurate costumes because they create a credible storyline and keep viewers interested.

## 2. METHODS

This study employs a qualitative approach to analyze the main character costumes in the movie "Enola Holmes" through the lens of CS. Peirce's theory of signs: icon, index, and symbol. The subject of this study is the movie "Enola Holmes," focusing on the costumes worn by the main character, Enola Holmes, while the objects of this study are the icons, indexes, and symbols represented by these costumes.

Data collection was conducted by thoroughly watching the "Enola Holmes" movie, paying close attention to the costumes, and documenting significant ones through screenshots or detailed notes, including the character wearing the costume, the context of the scene, and specific attributes like color, style, and fabric. Additionally, relevant academic sources, including books, theses, articles, and journals discussing themes, historical context, or costume design related to "Enola Holmes," were incorporated to enrich the article. These sources provided valuable background information and various perspectives, enhancing the interpretation of the costumes through Peirce's theory. Each costume was analyzed as an icon, assessing its direct representation; as an index, evaluating how it indicates specific contexts within the movie; and as a symbol, interpreting its deeper meanings and cultural implications, thereby uncovering the nuanced significance of Enola Holmes's costumes.

## 3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

### 3.1 Icons



**Figure 1.** Enola is Wearing a Victorian-Era Dress (Timecoded: 00:06:13)

Enola is wearing a Victorian blue dress. All of the clothing that Enola is wearing is popular 18th-century Victorian style. It functions as an icon that indicates the movie's time settings. This is emphasized by other costume aspects, such as the Victorian-era cut and style. The book "From Queen to Empress Victorian Dress 1837-1877" (Goldthorpe & Costume Institute, 1988) says that on March 1, 1861, Queen Victoria wore a dome-shaped cage crinoline. About 1860, the skirt's form started to change, becoming more voluminous at the back and considerably flatter at the front. The dress's neckline also altered during the same period, becoming a low, square line that was worn over a chemisette; the trimming in the areas where the high neck was kept produced a yoked look.



**Figure 2.** Enola Wears Men's Clothes to Disguise Herself (Time coded: 00:25:57)

Enola disguised herself by dressing as a male detective. She runs away because she doesn't want to go to a school that teaches girls to be good women. This was at the direction of her brother, but Enola refused and sought out her mother instead. Enola's outfit can be considered an icon to show the profession she is imitating, which is that of a male detective. This iconic sign of the costume worn looks like Enola's actions, which show her masculinity. This male detective outfit depicts different gender roles to avoid people looking for Enola and escape from dangerous situations. The element in Enola's costume that resembles a male detective is the bowler hat used. The bowler hat becomes an icon of Enola's appearance so that it looks more convincing in her disguise. During the Victorian era, women were expected to wear dresses and skirts. Other elements that help Enola's disguise are the vest and trousers that are iconic of the different genders of the real Enola.



**Figure 3.** Enola Disguised Herself as a Widow (Time Coded: 00:59:40)

Enola disguises herself as a widow. She dresses as such to find clues about her mother's whereabouts and help Lord Tewksbury. She wears black widow's clothes; the color black is often associated with sadness. The black clothes Enola wears as a widow are iconic for her status as a widow who pretends to grieve. The black color is also often associated with mystery; the black widow's clothes worn by Enola are an icon of her status of feigned grief. All the elements that Enola wears in this costume are black, long black clothes, and the veil she wears. The costume worn by Enola shows her identity as a widow in mourning. Enola's disguise also helps her not to attract attention, as people may not notice the details of a widow in mourning.



**Figure 4.** Enola is Wearing a Planter Man's Suit (Time Coded: 01:04:16)

Enola is Wearing a Planter Man's Suitwidow. After disguising herself as a widow, Enola asked the planters to give her clothes, and Enola gave her money. Enola wore the planter's men's suit to disguise herself, as this allowed her to move freely in London. The men's suit Enola wears is an icon of masculine menswear in the Victorian era. Enola's appearance also helps her not draw attention to the simplicity of her costume.

### 3.2 Indexes



**Figure 5.** Enola Used a Corset Before Putting on the Dress (Time coded: 00:39:19)

In this scene, Enola is seen wearing a corset before putting on a dress. Enola is uncomfortable while wearing the corset. During the Victorian era, corsets were commonly worn by women to cinch their waists and for body shape. Enola's wearing of the corset reflects her adherence to societal norms, despite her aversion. Her struggle with the corset serves as an Index of the constraints and discomfort

experienced by women of that era. The corset is an index of the rigid gender norms of the time. The discomfort Enola feels while wearing the corset demonstrates the relationship between societal norms and the era's patriarchy. The corset serves as an index of societal control over women's bodies, and Enola's unease represents a departure from the standard.



**Figure 6.** Enola Wears Tattered Clothes After a Fight (Time Coded: 00:54:59)

Enola is dressed and tattered after the fight. Enola also has a wound on her knee, indicating that she has been in a fight. Previously, she was unexpectedly drawn to a man while on a mission to find her mother. She fought the man and eventually escaped. She was hiding in tattered, dirty clothes, with a wound on his knee. This is an Index of her adventurous and dangerous activities. Aside from her clothes, Enola's appearance represents her physical condition as well as her emotions following the fight, such as the wound on her knee and her exhausted facial expression, which demonstrate her connection to the fighting event.



**Figure 7.** Enola Disguised Herself as a Widow (Time Coded: 00:59:40)

The widow's clothes, worn by Enola are very different from her daily clothing style. This becomes an index of her disguise, as she is trying to look older and fit her role as a widow. Enola's widow outfit is categorized as an Index. Reinforced by the accessories used, namely the veil to cover her face. The veil worn by Enola as a widow becomes an index to hide her true identity. Enola's daily clothing style is less formal, especially in comparison to the widow's outfits. This is Enola's attempt to adjust to a role that is quite different from her previous identity. Enola can also hide in open spaces when wearing the widow's clothes, allowing her to freely visit the appropriate locations.



**Figure 8.** Enola Wears Boots (Time Coded: 00:39:38)

Enola is often seen wearing boots to move fast, free, and agile. The boots also show that she is ready for adventure and danger. This is important for scenes where she needs to run, climb, or avoid danger. In this scene, she wears boots before going on her mission to find her mother, but she doesn't succeed because she has to be stopped by someone and ends up in a fight. So, the boots that Enola always wears are categorized as an Index of her ability to move and readiness to face danger. Boots are frequently connected with strong, independent people. The use of boots demonstrates her toughness and independence as the main character, who can face a variety of challenges. Enola's boots also represent an opposition to constraining standards, as women in the Victorian era wore more feminine shoes for outside activities.

### 3.3 Symbols



**Figure 9.** Enola Wears Men's Clothes to Disguise Herself (Time coded: 00:25:57)

Enola's menswear can be interpreted as a symbol of her rejection of conventional gender roles. She refuses to be constrained by her brother's expectations of how a woman should behave and dress. In this scenario, the norm is the Victorian era in the year 1800, when women tried to change the system so that everyone had a voice, but they were left voiceless (Kurniati et al., 2022). The costume also represents freedom and independence, as males in that era had more freedom than women. Enola signifies independence for herself by appearing like a male while also demonstrating her refusal to follow the rules that confined women at the time.



**Figure 10.** Enola Wears Pendant Necklace (Time coded: 00:41:14)

Enola wears a pendant necklace. Character accessories can convey symbolic connotations. Enola's pendant necklace could signify her family heritage or her relationship with her mother. Since her father passed away while she was a young child and her two older brothers moved away to pursue their careers and education, Enola has lived alone with her mother. Thus, Enola's pendant necklace qualifies as a symbol. The necklace could signify the close emotional connection and support that Enola has, even without the presence of the person giving it, which is her mother.



**Figure 11.** Enola Wears a Red Dress (Time coded: 00:39:46)

Enola wears a red dress. Red dresses are frequently used as symbols of courage. The color red represents Enola's rejection of the rigid social and gender stereotypes of her time. It also represents Enola's transformation from a girl bound by societal expectations to a brave and independent individual. So, Enola's red dress is considered a symbol of her courage. In addition, the color red signifies strength. Enola's choice of a red dress demonstrates her strength in the face of challenges, as seen by her ability to deal with a difficult situation while wearing it.





**Figure 12.** Enola Used a Corset Before Putting on the Dress (Time coded: 00:39:19)

In the Victorian era, the corset was considered a symbol of man's control over the human body, and women were required to have an idealized appearance according to the beauty standards of the time. Enola directly confronts this norm by wearing a corset, and her discomfort symbolizes her disapproval of this norm. Enola's discomfort in wearing the corset also shows that she will not submit to the norms that restrict women and will not let the norms control her according to the wishes of society at that time. The corset serves as a symbol of Enola's defiance of these norms. Enola's visible discomfort while wearing the corset is her desire to be free from these norms and her desire to be herself.



**Figure 13.** Enola is Wearing a Planter Man's Suit (Time Coded: 01:04:16)

Enola's menswear is seen as a symbol of her rejection of the strict gender conventions existing at the time. It also portrays Enola as an independent, intellectual person who is not afraid of challenging societal standards. Men's clothing also represents strength and courage, two characteristics commonly linked with masculine positions at the time. Wearing men's costumes demonstrates that Enola has these characteristics and is capable of dealing with the same challenges as men. Enola's men's clothing can also be interpreted as a symbol of independence and freedom. In that era, men had greater freedom and mobility than women. Gender stereotypes have been starting to distinguish the notions of female and male identity since the Victorian era, using terminology such as authentic femininity cult and masculine gender identity (Azis & Sunra, 2022). This indicates that throughout that era, society developed a strict idea of how men and women should behave, dress, and fulfill their roles in life. These stereotypes are frequently restrictive and negative, forcing individuals to adapt to restricted social norms that ignore

the range of gender identities and signs that exist. Enola expresses her freedom by dressing as a guy, demonstrating that she does not abide by the rules that limit her space as a woman.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

The costumes in the film "Enola Holmes" are more than just ornamental components; they also function as effective storytelling and character development elements. This article, using Charles Sanders Peirce's semiotic theory, demonstrates the multiple ways in which Enola Holmes' costumes function as icons, indexes, and symbols, all of which contribute to the narrative's depth and complexity.

The costumes act as icons, directly reflecting the Victorian-era setting and historical context and bringing people into the era. Enola's disguises, in which she dresses up as a planter man, detective, and widow, visually communicate her embraced personal identities. Furthermore, the costumes function as indexes, revealing information about Enola's acts, situations, and emotions. The tattered clothes she wears after a fight represent her adventurous spirit and the challenges that she faces, while the corset represents the societal limitations placed on women during that time. As symbols, Enola's costumes go beyond their literal depiction and dive into deeper meanings. The clothes she wears represent her rejection of gender stereotypes and her search for independence. The pendant necklace signifies her familial lineage and the emotional support she receives from her mother. The red outfit represents bravery and transformation, indicating Enola's development into a brave and self-sufficient individual.

Beyond just being elements of clothing, the costumes in "Enola Holmes" play a crucial role in the story's development. They serve as visual signals to help characters evolve, convey emotions, and challenge cultural standards. Using Peirce's semiotic theory, this study uncovered the complex nature of Enola Holmes' clothing, proving its importance in structuring the story and increasing the reader's understanding of the main character and her journey.

Based on the results of this article, the author hopes that future studies will expand the semiotic analysis to other characters' outfits in "Enola Holmes" or analyze costumes in other Victorian-era films. This would provide a more comprehensive knowledge of how costumes serve as signs in various circumstances. While this study focused on Peirce's theory, future studies might investigate using other semiotic frameworks, such as Saussure's or Barthes', to gain different perspectives on the process of creating meaning in costume design.

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