

## **Signification functions of *Undomestic Goddess* novel cover**

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### **Abstract**

*Novel cover is like human appearance; it is the first thing that the people will take notice of. It turned out that novel cover is quite essential in influencing the opinions and impression of the reader regarding the novel itself. Novel's cover using symbols, fonts, and colors, construct cover signs functions. The researcher intends to analyze the novel covers sign functions. The source data of the research is selected using purposive sampling following the standard of a novel cover. This research uses three (3) covers of the novel *Undomestic Goods* by Sophie Kinsella as the data source. The theory of signification by Roland Barthes is the analytical tool of this research used to determine the function of the elements in the object of research. The results of the study are both covers have their own significations functions; the first edition (1) cover function emphasizes on promoting the novel by using signification content of the novel. Cover (2) emphasizes promotion function using the author popularity and best-selling author status and promoting the novel by using signification content of the novel. Cover three (3) the latest edition function emphasizes on 'advertises' the novel by using the author popularity and best-selling author status.*

**Keywords:** *semiotic; signification functions; novel cover*

### **INTRODUCTION**

According to Creswell as cited by Habibah & Nurmaily (2020), "literature is an absorption word from the literary Sanskrit language which means "text containing instructions" or "guidelines", from the basic word which means "instruction" or "teaching". Pradani & Rizal (2020) stated that, "Literature has three main genres; such as prose, drama, and poetry." (p.41). Andari (2019) stated, "Prose is a series of stories arranged in a way that contains the imagination of the author. Novel is a form of new prose fiction literature" (p.40). In the past few years, people's interest in literary works, especially novel, is increasing, making many novels become best sellers and continually reprinted to meet readers' demands of the novel. Novels that are continually reprinted over a long period usually have more than one cover. Octaviani (2018) said that "Cover is an outer page displayed in a book that contains illustrations or photos and typography that portrays the content inside" (p.2).

Cover is like human appearance; it is the first thing that the people will take notice of when you see a novel. It turned out that cover has a significance

role; it is quite essential in influencing the opinions and impression of the reader regarding the novel itself. As stated by Desintha (2019), "Cover is one of the most important elements in a book, where the essence of the book contained in it is summarized into a visual force that can attract the attention of the audience to buy and read the book" (p.2). Thus, it is crucial for the publisher to make the novel cover as good and as attention-grabbing as possible as it is one of the critical roles that attract the reader to read the novel and has the most impact on making the customer buy written literary works. As stated in Ford (2016), "What publishers decide to put on the covers of books is largely dictated by the need to have that book noticed above other books: to sell the book and to present an image of the book that will resonate and attract the potential reader" (p. 51).

### **Semiotics**

Koswara & Hermawan (2021) said that "Semiotics is understood as the science that studies signs and everything related to signs such as signs systems." (p.617). In line with Koswara & Hermawan, Rusmana as cited by Simbolon et al. (2019) says that "Semiotics is a study that systematically studies signs, symbols, and symbolic processes." Chandler as cited by Sudarwati & Zatalini (2019) stated, "Semiotics involves the study not only of what we refer to as 'signs' in everyday speech, but of anything which 'stands for' something else" (p. 134). From quotations above we can conclude that as study of sign, semiotic can be used to analyzed anything that have a sign in it, including novel.

There are already a few researches that analyzed cover of novel using semiotic beforehand. Ali (2017) conducts research on cover of the novel *Negeri Van Oranje* and Andrea Hirata's novel *Ayah*. In his research, the researcher employed represent theory and semiotic as the tools of analysis. In selecting the data, the researcher used the purposive sampling method, based the selection of data on the two standards; the popularity and the design standard. The finding of the research is that the cover *Negeri Van Oranje* and *Ayah* could become a literary art as the covers of the novel represents the value of the novel.

Other research that analyzed cover of the novel using semiotic is Gistrama & Prastiwi who conducted a semiotics analysis of the novel illustration on *Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban* by J.K Rowling. Gistrama & Prastiwi found that each element contained in the cover produces meaning that can be understood by anyone who reads it. (Gistrama & Prastiwi, 2020, p. 27).

The difference of this research from Ali (2017) and Gistrama & Prastiwi (2020) are that Ali analyzed an Indonesian and an English novel, Gistrama & Prastiwi analyzed two English novels, while this present study analyses three covers of the same novel. In this research, it is focused to analyze the signification functions of the novel covers.

It was then decided to conduct research on the cover of the novel entitled *Undomestic Goddess* because the novel is one of the bestseller novels of the New York best-selling author, Sophie Kinsella. The novel has been printed many times and has more than one design covers. Thus, the present

researchers were interested in researching the significance of the cover of the *Undomestic Goddess novel*.

## METHOD

This research intends to explore the sign elements in the cover of novel entitled *Undomestic Goddess*. Therefore, the research uses descriptive qualitative method because the results the descriptive data are in the form of written. According to Sagimin & Priyani (2018), “Qualitative research does not use the number or calculating analysis, statistical analysis and technical instruments but it is presented in the form of words or pictures which contains several quotations from expert” (p.61). The object of this research is selected using purposive sampling with certain criteria; the novel’ cover meet the standard design, the novel has more than one design. The research uses the Barthes’s signification theory and semiotics approach to understand the meaning aspects of the sign on the covers of the novel. The data of this research is taken from the covers of three different editions of novel *Undomestic Goddess* by Sophie Kinsella.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This research focuses on the significance that appears on the cover of the novel. The results of research on three (3) novel covers with the same novel title, namely the novel entitled *Undomestic Goddess* by Sophia Kinsella, show that each cover has a distinct signification function. The results of the research can be seen more clearly in table 1 of the significance function of the cover of the novel.

Tabel 1. Cover of novel signification

Type	Cover 1	Cover 2	Cover 3
Text: Author’s name	Author promotion function	The author functions as a promotional tool	The author functions as a promotional tool
Text: Synopses text	The function of promoting story content through narrative quotation		
Text: Endorsement text			Promotion function through endorsements related to authors.
Text: Best-selling author statement		Promotion function through authors best-selling	Promotion function through authors best-selling author status
Visual: Figure of woman	The function of promoting story content		The function of promoting story content
Visual: Work attire	The function of promoting story content		The function of promoting story content
Visual: Domestic goods in the background	The function of promoting story content	The function of promoting story content	The function of promoting story content
Visual: Office-related items	The function of promoting story content		

From the results in Table 1, it can be described that each novel has various significance attributes but still in the same two aspects, namely visual and verbal text.

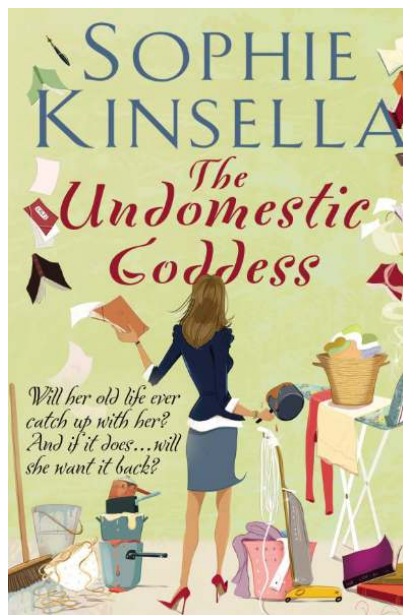


Figure 1. Undomestic Goddess Cover 1

On the first novel's cover (1), which is the cover of the 2006 *Undomestic Goddess* novel. This cover is hereinafter referred to data cover 1.

Sophie Kinsella is a bestselling author who has written eleven novels. Her books are really popular in many countries. One of the most popular books is a novel entitled *Undomestic Goddess*. *Undomestic Goddess* was released in the United Kingdom by Dial Press Trade Paperback in April 2006. The popularity both of the book and the author make the novel reprinted many times with many more different covers. The novel tells us about Samantha Sweeting, an intelligent attorney who really loves to work. Her life was perfect, her works were perfect and promising until one day, she made a huge unforgivable mistake. Her mistake was so significant that it effectively ruined her career as an attorney. After experiencing a complete meltdown, she somehow ended up in the middle of nowhere. She was somehow hired as housekeeper for a beautiful mansion. Samantha, who had no idea how to do any domestic work like cleaning, cooking, or ironing, was forced to take on the housework.

The cover of the novel [cover 1] has two elements that will be discussed in this article; the visual and the written text. Both elements will be analyzed using Roland Barthes Semiotic theory of connotation and denotation. According to Barthes as cited by Fachrozy (2003) denotation is "the explicit or direct meaning or set of meanings of a word or expression, as distinguished from the ideas or meanings associated with it. Connotation is the associated or secondary meaning of a word or expression in addition to its explicit or

primary meaning” (p.3). Using Bathers theory, the cover will be analyzed both the denotation and connotation meaning.

The first text that will be analyzed is the name of the author. On the top part of the novel, there is the name Sophie Kinsella. The name of the author was written in blue with a simple style of font. Because of the simple font and large size of the text (which is larger than the other text on the cover), the text (the author's name) will be one of the first things that the reader take notice of when they first see the book. On the cover of other books, the title of the text usually is larger than the author's name. The aim of making the Sophie Kinsella in large size and in simple font is to get Sophie Kinsella's name out there as the book's author, or to promote Sophie Kinsella as the author.

Second text is the title of the novel, *Undomestic Goddess*. The word domestic which is ‘used in homes, connected to home and family’ and the word goddess which means ‘a woman who is adored, especially for her beauty.’ are not usually used together. But in the cover of novel, the two words (combined with affix Un in front of the word domestic) are the title of the novel. This has the function of promoting story content, as the story mainly tell us about two different worlds of the main character.

Third text that will be analyzed is ‘Will her old life ever catch up with her? If it does...will she wants it back? The publisher wrote the text in an interrogative sentence. The word ‘will’ in the beginning of the sentence and the question mark in the end of the sentence, both denotatively signify that the sentence was written in interrogative. The text was written in interrogative on purpose. The publisher intended for the text to be written in interrogative to not only give the reader a taste of what the novel is about, without giving too much away about the plot, but also to entice readers to read the novel in order to discover the answer to the question posed on the cover. The word ‘her’ and ‘she’ in ‘Will her old life ever catch up with her? If it does...will she wants it back?’ also support the visual of figure of woman, to denotatively signify that the main character of the novel is woman. So, the text has function of promoting story content through narrative quotations.

The cover not only consist of text but also visual element. The first visual element of the cover [cover 1] is figure of a woman from behind. The illustration depicts two identities of the woman figure on the cover; first, as a lawyer and second, as a housekeeper. The figure woman that illustrated in the cover is the main character, Samantha Sweeting. As Samantha Sweeting was a successful career woman whose life was filled with works, the publisher illustrates a figure of the woman standing in work attire; white blouse, blue blazer, light blue short skirt, and red stiletto. Martin, et al. (2015) stated, “Colors connote specific meanings and communicate information beyond simple aesthetic appeal.” A white blouse, blue blazer, and light blue short skirt create the figure's image as a professional career woman. Tavaragi and Sushma (2016) stated, “Color is a form of nonverbal communication” (p.115). Every color communicates a meaning. The color blue is associated with intellect (p. 118). As we can conclude that color of the illustration on the cover signifies something. In the cover, the blue blazer and skirt denotatively signify the woman in the cover as a professional and had intelligent appearance.

Not only the clothes that can denotatively signify something, shoes that were worn by the female figure in the cover also can signify something. Broega

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et al. (2017) stated, "Like clothing, footwear is an accessory of great importance in the composition of personal image, as well as in categorizing characteristics of the individual personality, depending on the style and model of the chosen shoes." (p.2) Stiletto is not a typical shoe to be worn by woman at work. A very tall red stiletto signifies that the main character was also a fashionable woman, as stilettos are shoes that are generally worn by fashionable and high-class people. In another way, to wear the red stiletto shoes, high confidence is needed as red is a very eye-catching color, and as stated by da Silva (2017), red represents power. Thus, the attire that the woman worn in the cover denotatively signify the main character is a powerful, confident and intellectual woman.

Not only does the image of the cover depict clothing, but it also depicts the woman's pose. The image depicts a woman standing with her feet slightly wider than her shoulders. The position according to Rouse (2020) means that the person with this body language, is "ready to face anything" (p. 59). It signifies that the main character of the novel is confident.

The main character was also depicted on the cover, holding two separate objects in her hands. She was holding a folder in her right hand and a pan in her left hands. She holds two different items, two different item that she holds signify is one form of signification that she handles two different things in her life. In her hands visualizes the pots, clothes and laundry basket, iron and iron board were housework-related items representing her job as a housekeeper. Documents, pen, books were office-related items which denotatively signify her as a career woman. Two different items in visualization were showed elaborately to show the messy state she was in when juggling her employment as a housekeeper and a lawyer, housework-related items were scattered on the floor, and office-related items were thrown into the air.

Apart from that, it can be seen how the main character is very careless and inexperienced in his work as a maid. The pile of pans and other items indicates that some carelessness will be involved in the storyline on the cover. The books that fly and also pile up around household items show that the main character does not only have one role but two opposite roles, namely the role related to the domestic household and also the role related to the book. We can see clues that this book has a storyline that is followed by humor in the visualization of the cover. All the visual on the cover has the function of promoting story content.

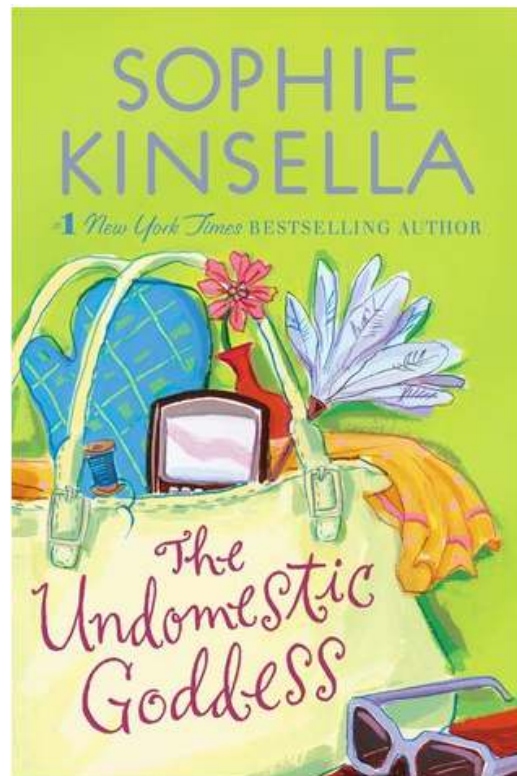


Figure 2. *Undomestic Goddess* cover 2.

The second cover of *Undomestic Goddess* is published in November 2008 by Dell. Like the first cover, there are both visual and text of cover 2 that will be analyzed. In the cover, the first written text, which is positioned on the very top of the cover, is the name of the author Sophie Kinsella. The name of the author is written in gray, in simple font make it the first text that will be noticed by reader. It is written in biggest font, compared to two other texts in the cover, to highlight the author's name as the main feature of the cover. Below the author's name there is another text, "1 New York Times BESTSELLING AUTHOR" which is written in smaller font than the name of the author. Together with the name author, the text '1 New York Times BESTSELLING AUTHOR' has function to promote the novel through author's best-selling author status.

In the cover, both text and the visual have connotative meanings. The first visual on the cover is illustration of bag. In the cover, the bag takes more than half the space, make it is the first visual that will be noticed when you look the cover. Different to the two other cover editions, this cover did not include the visual of woman to denotatively signify the main character as a woman. This cover instead uses a bag. The bag, which is a woman hand bag, means the owner is a woman and thus denotatively signify the main character is woman. The bag has function to promote the story using visual. Inside the bag, instead of usual woman stuff such as tissue, make up, wallet etc., the bag is full of domestic stuff (such as thread for sewing, flower, flower pot, duster, rag, and heat resistant glove.) those are not the stuff that are usually

be brought using this kind of bag. Those items are domestic item that usually used to do house chores like cleaning, cooking and sewing. Domestic items inside the woman hand bag, denotatively signify two different worlds combine into one. Next visual that will be analyzed is sun glasses. The blue sun glasses is an accessory that usually worn by fashionable people to complete their appearance. Thus, it signifies the main character is a fashionable person. Thus, it has function to promote the story using visual.

The last visual is the green background. The color green as stated by Satrianti (2017) means “balance or harmony” (p. 118). The color signifies the balance or harmony that the main character tries to create while juggling between the two worlds she was in.

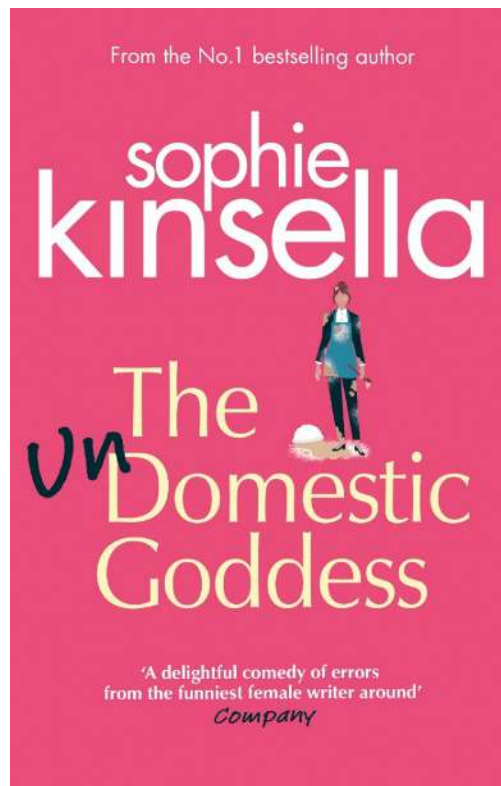


Figure 3. *Undomestic Goddess* cover 3

The latest edition of *The Undomestic Goddess*' cover is seen on the second cover [data cover 2]. The cover was released by Black Swan in 2018, marking a 12-year difference between the first [data cover 1] and second [data cover 3] and 2-year difference between covers 2 and data cover 3. In the cover, the first written text, which is positioned on the very top of the cover, is the text 'From No 1 bestselling author'. The text 'From No 1 bestselling author' is written in white, in smaller size compared to other text on the cover. Although it is placed on the very top, the text was not the main feature of the cover, as it is not written in the biggest nor boldest font. However, it does not mean the



text is not important, the text actually has quite essential significance; the text has the function to promote the book through the author accomplishment as the best-selling author.

This text 'From No 1 bestselling author' is not present on the cover 1. The text 'From No 1 bestselling author' has function to promote the novel through authors best-selling status. The second text that will be analyzed is the author's name, Sophie Kinsella. Like on the previous covers [data cover 1 and 2], the author's name is the main feature of the cover. In cover 3, however, the author's last name, Kinsella, was written in the biggest and the boldest font on the cover and the author first name, Sophie, in a smaller font size. The name is written in white reflect simplicity of the cover as stated by Amirdabbaghian and Shunmugam (2019) "The color white in the Western world reflects openness and simplicity" (p. 235). The size, the font and the position of the author's name illustrated that it is the main selling point of the text. As stated by Ali (2017), "The title that written in big size font and placed on the top part of the cover, signifies the makes the title of author becomes the main feature of the cover" (p. 506). Making the author's name becomes the main feature of the cover indicates that the publisher intends to make the author's name and best-selling author reputation as one of the tops 'selling points' of the novel. As the author of the book in 2018 (the year of the cover is used for the first time) Sophie Kinsella, was already a reputable author with many best-seller novels, it is not unusual for the publisher to make the author's name the selling point of the novel. The publisher put the statement that the novel is the works of 'No 1 bestselling author' close to the author names to support the name of the author as the main selling point in the novel cover.

The title of the novel on the cover was written in two different fonts; the prefix un which means 'not or the opposite of' according to oxford dictionary', is written with a different font style to highlight the prefix. The prefix un also written in different color to show contrast or emphasize the prefix. The publisher highlighting the prefix un in 'undomestic' is to highlight or emphasize that the figure of the main character cannot do domestic chore or the house chore. This also depicted by the illustration on the cover. The publisher did not put much illustrations on the cover of the novel. The only visual element on the cover is the illustration of the main character of the novel, Samantha. The visual illustrated a woman wears office attire, a blouse, blazer, and pants. The attire that the main character wore is dirty. Like in the cover of the novel [data cover 1], the office attire signifies the main character as a career woman. The figure also wore an apron. The apron usually wore by someone who cooks; it can be a housewife, a cook or a housekeeper. On the cover, the apron signifies the housekeeper job. The figure of the character also held something in her hand; a rice ladle. Food was spilt from the rice ladle, and food also scattered everywhere. Her dirty attire, food that spills from the rice ladle and was scattered everywhere denotatively signify her inability to do cooking. Thus, the illustration has function to represent the story of the novel.

The next visual that will be analyzed is the background. The novel' cover is dominated by a pink background, accompanied by a few illustrated images, showing the simplicity of the storyline that will be told in the book. As we already know, as stated by Tina (2017) "Pink is often associated with the feminine and fragility. Pink usually signifies women and its sort of things

related to them” (p.7). Thus, pink is usually a female color. Many of the products are painted in pink or have pink color are targeted specifically for woman and girl. Tavaragi and Sushma (2016) stated, “Color is a very influential source of information when people are making a purchasing decision.” (p. 128). The publisher uses the color pink as the background as pink is a female color representing the novel as the novel's target reader, and the story's main character is a woman. It also represents the romance that happens in this novel. As stated by Rahmah (2019), “Pink signifies romance, love, and friendship” (p.19).

At the bottom part of the cover, there is endorsement text from company. The endorsement text is “The delightful comedy error from the funniest female writer around.” is written in simple white font. The size of the font can be considered small if it compared to other text in the cover. The text it has promotion function through endorsements related to authors, the phrase ‘the funniest female writer around’ is refer to Sophie Kinsella, the author of the novel. Together with other text, it has function of advertises the novel.

## CONCLUSION

The results of the study indicated that both novel covers have their own signification functions: The first edition (1) cover function emphasizes on promoting the novel by using signification content of the novel. Cover (2) emphasizes promotion function using the author popularity and best-selling author status and promoting the novel by using signification content of the novel. Cover three (3) the latest edition function emphasizes on ‘advertises’ the novel by using the author popularity and best-selling author status.

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