

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background of the Study

Literature takes a very important place in education; therefore, it is worth studying as what Little (1966:1) says:

Wherever there is education, there is the study of literature. This is because the literature of a people is the principle element of its culture. It contains the record of the people's values, their thoughts, their problems and conflicts - in short, their way of life. Whether transmitted through the spoken or written word, literature may fairly be regarded as the chief art of mankind. Through this art, each generation tries to pass onto the next "the best which has been thought and said".

In relation to the aim of the students at the English Department that is improving their English language skills or gaining native-like English competence, literature supports that, as stated by Little. Little (1966:1) also describes that in studying literature, we explore "the best" in writing, and in doing so, learn to think, speak and write more effectively ourselves. Referring to the positive impact of literature towards the English language competence, the following quotation from Gwin (1990:10) clearly depicts:

Literature provides an effective way of understanding the complex of subtle elements that

go into creation of what we call "good writing". There is no way to explicitly teach all these elements and communicate the way they combine to make a piece of coherent written discourse without exposing students to the experience of expert writing.

The quotation above is also supported by a research done by Salih (1989:25) which reports that the students exercise or practice all of the skills in literature courses like listening to what an instructor is saying, and often they must jot down notes, ask or answer questions. Furthermore, students tend to agree that literature help them acquire a native-like competence in English, express their ideas in good English, learn the features of modern English, learn how the English linguistic system is used for communication, see how idiomatic expressions are used, speak clearly, precisely, and concisely, and become more proficient in English, as well as creative, critical, and analytical learners.

In addition to those reasons above the writer would like to put forward her own personal reasons for choosing literature as her thesis. First, since its primary concern is human experience with all its complexity, problems and conflicts, it enables the writer to extend her own actual experience which has least possibility or impossibility at all to undergo in this limited real world through reading it. Besides, it

develops the writer's understanding of the complexity of human nature, much more than she could do in real life either because of her own prejudice or fear to acquaint with unknown people, and through reading it too the writer is able to penetrate into the character's inner self, to read his mind, to know what he is thinking which is impossible to be done even to the closest person to her.

Literature is a verbal artifact to express feelings, imagination and thought. It can be in the form of a short story, drama, poetry or novel. In this study the writer chooses a novel to be analyzed under some consideration as follows, since in the novel there is room and time for greater variety and elaboration of all elements of fiction such as plot, character, setting and point of view, the interrelationship between characters or events are more drawn out, requiring somewhat more patient to perceive (Cooper, Chalpin, 1971:xviii-xix). The novel, with its slower pace and longer development, may introduce unique qualities that threaten the familiar social forms, may eventually alter them, or understanding of them, after lengthy gestation and growth (West Jr., 1968:119).

Based on those viewpoints of Cooper with Chalpin and West Jr., the writer deliberately chooses a novel for

her thesis.

There are a lot of novelists, but the writer chooses a novel written by Theodore Dreiser with the consideration that he is considered a pioneer of American Naturalism (Parrington, 1950:325). Dreiser and his contemporaries, such as Sinclair Lewis, Sherwood Anderson, and Upton Sinclair, write about "life as it is". Their work represent American social life with reality. In all his works, Dreiser tries to describe what he has experienced. His personal life greatly influences his novels. The differences between the rich and the poor; the powerful and the weak members of society; the apparent helplessness in the face of inscrutable laws of fate and nature are the most obvious characteristics of Dreiser's fiction (Bradley, 1962:847). Frohock (1972:46) adds that Dreiser's naive innocence of vision made him report what he saw rather than what he was supposed to see.

For the writer, the most appealing characteristic of Dreiser as a novelist is that he tends to write what he saw and not what he would like to see. In other words, he saw life as it is and that is represented in his novels. Thus, by analyzing Dreiser's *Sister Carrie* it will be possible to get a clear picture of American society's life. The crucial part of all, the writer comes

to the conclusion that accumulation of greed causes someone suffers in his life, and the true happiness is not laid on material things.

Theodore Dreiser's first novel "Sister Carrie" is deliberately chosen since it is well-unified, the style more fluent and natural and it is also historically significant as a pioneer work of the naturalistic movement in American literature (Magill, 1964:3506). Besides, "Sister Carrie" has not yet been analyzed by any students at the English Department of Widya Mandala University. Hence this study hopefully will be something new.

Although the primary matter in fiction is the idea, characters also play an important role in the story, because characters are considered as one of the principal function to encourage the reader's empathy and sympathy so that he will experience the reality of fictional world for himself (Dietrich, 1967:75). Therefore, it is quite reasonable to study the main characters in Sister Carrie.

1.2. Statement of The Problem

Related to the background of the study the problems explored were formulated as follows:

1. What are the basic characteristics of the main

characters?

2. How does each main character see himself and other main characters?
3. Whether or not the main characters able to embody the theme?

1.3. Objective of the Study

This study aims at showing the students that Graham Little's point character analysis is helpful and applicable to know everything about the character. This study attempts to find:

1. The basic characteristics of the main characters.
2. How each main character sees himself and other main characters.
3. Whether or not the main characters able to embody the theme.

1.4. Significance of the Study

This study attempts to provide a model for students to study main characters in a novel using Graham Little points of character analysis. Thus, 'by reading it hopefully the students' interest to conduct a literary research will be aroused which will result in enriching their literary experience, broadening their literary

knowledge and developing their analytical abilities for studying a piece of literary work. Furthermore, these literary experience, knowledge and analytical abilities will make them easier to read and understand other novels and it will lead to minimize the students' failure in answering literary essay tests.

1.5. The Definition of Key Terms

Before entering the next discussion, the writer would like to provide some definitions of key terms which will often occur in this study to avoid misinterpretation.

1. Character in literature is the author's representation of a human being, especially of those inner qualities that determine how an individual reacts to various conditions or attempts to shape his or her environment (Roberts, 1977:54).
2. Characteristic might be thought as a reasonable facsimile of a human being, with all the qualities and vagaries of a human being (Roberts, 1964:11).
3. Characterization: Description of characteristics or essential features (The Oxford University Press Vol. II C, 1961:281).
4. A novel is book-length story in prose, whose author tries to create the sense that, while we read we

experience actual life (Kennedy, 1979:231).

5. The theme of a piece of fiction is its controlling idea or its central insight. It is the unifying generalization about life stated or implied by the story (Perrine, 1966:117).
6. The point of view in a work of fiction represents the source of the story's "telling" or "seeing". It is the point from which the author imagines his scene and the angle from which the author imagines his scene and the angle from which the reader is led to view it (West, Jr., 1968:223).
7. Main characters are the characters whose role is important in a work.

1.6. The Organization of the Thesis

Having gone through the Introduction in chapter I, the writer proceeds to Review of Related Literature and Study in chapter II. Methodology will be in chapter III. Chapter IV contains Main Characters Study in "Sister Carrie". Conclusion and Suggestion will be in the last chapter.