

# **CHAPTER I**

## **INTRODUCTION**

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#### 1.1 Background of the Study

Literature is one of subject matters that is taught starting from the fourth semester. According to the curriculum of the English Department, there are four courses of literature, namely: Literature I, Literature II, Literature III, and Literary Appreciation. Eventhough all courses are only 5% of the entire credits in the curriculum, they are very important.

By studying Literature, the students would learn ways of life such as, the struggle of life, dreams, feelings, or emotions in addition to improving their vocabularies and grammar.

Furthermore, Peden (1971:50) defines that the more one knows the technical aspects of the creation of a story, the greater understanding and pleasure in the work will be.

Roberts and Jacobs (1989:2), then, add that literature can also help people grow into the broader cultural, philosophic, and religious world and to recognize human dreams and struggles in order to develop mature sensibility for the condition of all living things.

Literature is an interesting subject because its language is natural. From the language that is used in the context, it can be found the human's issues which often happen in ordinary life. Besides that, literature is a mirror of truth. Through literature, it is seen that truth becomes the fact in the society. Because of these reasons, the writer finally decides to write a literary research in her thesis writing.

The writer chooses short story as the subject of her research because it is one of the simple form of the narrative. Compared to other works such as novels, dramas, and poems, short stories are easier to comprehend because it has a time limit for the readers to read. Little says that short story must be capable of being read at one sitting. Little (1966:109) adds that short story should create a single impression. It makes the readers understand the content of the story more easily.

Ray B. West Jr. (1965:471) adds that short story, by its nature, concentrates upon a single incident or action; it has few characters; its setting and characterization must rather evoke than develop in dovetails; its effect must be made quickly and sharply.

In this study the writer takes Sherwood Anderson's works because Sherwood Anderson is actually a great writer. Unfortunately only few students at Widya Mandala University know better about him. Sherwood Anderson

influences the work of some famous writers like: Ernest Hemingway, William Faulkner, F. Scott Fitzgerald, Thomas Wolfe, and John Steinbeck. He is an important modern fiction writer. He has helped to make modern theories of fiction central to American Writing. Lecker (1987:778) also says that Anderson deals with the psychology of characters and his themes depend on an emotional, almost poetic intensity rather than on the traditional development of plot through events. His writing is highly autobiographical and reflects his own experiences in a naturalistic manner, charged with a semimythical twist. In order to make other students know more about Sherwood Anderson, the writer chooses his works as the subject of her thesis.

"I'm a fool"; "The egg", and "Death in the Woods", are chosen because they are similar. They talk about failure. Actually the writer has been impressed on "I'm a Fool" because it reveals her friend's experience. But it is required to analyze more than one short story so that the writer tries to find another short stories namely: "The Egg; and "Death in the Woods".

"I'm a Fool" tells about a young boy who cannot accept his existence. He is jealous when he finds other people more lucky than he. The young boy is not bright and rich so that he feels inferiority complex. Covering his inferiority complex, he tries to create a new identity in order to make friends. He starts to lie and

lie until he cannot stop this habit when he meets a special girl friend, Miss Lucy Wessen. He is afraid to be known that he is only a swipe. But what has he gotten finally? Nothing at all. He fails to get a long with Miss Lucy Wessen because he has done a big mistake, a foolish thing. But it is too late to be changed.

The second story, "The Egg", is about a family struggle in doing business. The family has to work hard in order to survive from the hard life. The father used to work as a farm hand but it cannot make their life better so they travel to another town to make a new business. Many ways have been done but they never succeed in their business. They fail and fail again.

"Death in the Woods" as the last story tells about an old woman's struggle in passing her life. When she was young, she never felt happy. Until she has got married, her life does not changes. She still faces many problems. Her husband and her son do not care of her, she fails in her marriage life. She cannot change her husband and her son's attitude, she is too weak to change the condition of her family. Her life is just for feeding the family. But what she has got from her husband and her son is anger, disappointment, disapproval and disagreement. Until she dies in the forest during her journey, nobody cares of her, even her husband and her son. Her death becomes a symbol of both waste and mercy.

Hopefully, this study will popularize literature and literary research. Moreover it might provide the model for the students in analyzing the characterization of short story, especially on Sherwood Anderson's work. Finally the writer is going to present this thesis, entitled "The study of the main characters' failure in the three short stories of Sherwood Anderson".

### **1.2 Statement of the Problem**

Since the writer is concerned with failure in the three selected short stories, the questions will be:

1. Why does the main character in "I'm a Fool" fail in passing his youth ?
2. Why does the main character in "The Egg" always fail in doing business ?
3. Why does the main character in "Death in the Woods" always fail in passing her life ?

### **1.3 Objective of the Study**

In order to analyze the three short stories, the writer intends to find out the causes of the characters' failure from "I'm Fool"; "The Egg"; and "Death in the Woods" by seeing the setting, the psychological problems and the social problems.

#### 1.4 Significance of the Study

Since this study is a qualitative one, it emphasizes on the process of analyzing data before coming to the conclusion. This study is aimed at giving some contribution to the teaching of literature at the Department of English at Widya Mandala Catholic University.

Finally, this study hopefully encourages other students of the English Department of Widya Mandala Catholic University to write thesis on literature. In other words the writer hopes that literature will become more interesting to the students.

#### 1.5 Scope and Limitation of the Study

In this study the writer focuses on the characters because characters always become the center of conflict in every literary work. Burroways (1992:98) states that characters are the foreground of all fictions.

The study is limited in the three selected short stories because they are similar that talk about failure. For these reasons the study will concentrate on the analyzing the main characters' failure through setting and characters' problems (psychological problems and social problems).

## 1.6 Definition of Key Terms

Before coming to further discussion, it is necessary to clarify some key terms applied in this thesis.

### 1. Short story ✓

Short story is a piece of fiction under 10,000 words, which depends on situation and has a single impression (Brook, Jr. et al. 1946:25-28).

### 2. Character ✓

Character is a person who is involved in the story (Hawthorne, 1985:47).

### 3. Setting

Setting is the time and the place in which an action happens (Knickerbocker, 1960:437).

### 4. Plot

Plot is the story line, the events that take place (Harvey S. Wiener, 1897:469).

### 5. Conflict ✓

A conflict is a clash of actions, ideas, desires, or wills. It may be man-against-man, man-against-environment, and man-against-himself (Perrine, 1966:59).

### 6. Failure

Failure is a lack of something expected especially in performance or achievement. In other words, it is the fact of being not fulfilling hopes or expectation

(Webster Dictionary, 1936).

## 7. Analysis ✓

Analysis is the way to separate a story into its component parts, then select a single part for close study (Kennedy, 1983:1366).

### 1.7 Methodology of the Study

In this point the writer is going to discuss about the methodology which is used to analyze the characters in the following chapter. Because this study is a qualitative study, practical criticism is used.

M. H. Abrams (1971:36) divides literary criticism into two types namely: theoretical criticism and practical criticism. Theoretical criticism is used to establish, on the basic of general principles, a coherent set of terms distinctions and categories to be applied to the consideration and interpretation of works of literature as well as the standards or norms which these works and their writers are to be evaluated. Practical criticism or applied criticism concerns with the discussion of particular works and writers. The practical criticism can also be distinguished into two, namely: impressionistic criticism and judicial criticism. First, impressionistic criticism attempts to represent in words the left qualities of a particular work and to express the attitudes and feelingful responses which the work directly evokes from the critic as an individual. Second,

judicial criticism attempts to analyze and explain the effects of a work in terms of its subject, organization and techniques and to base the critic's individual judgment on general standards of literary excellence.

For this literary research, judicial criticism is used. In developing this thesis, the writer applies analytical method to analyze the main character's failure and the causes of their failures. The writer quotes evidence from the text so strengthen the hypotheses. Little (1968:89) states that character may be presented mainly through description and discussion, or, in a more dramatic manner, by the author's simply reporting the character's speech and action.

The procedure used in studying the character is as follows:

First of all, the writer chooses the three short stories of Sherwood Anderson which are about failures.

The second step is that the writer applies some theories in analyzing the characters.

Third, the writer discusses the three short stories one by one and finds the causes of the character's failures.

The fourth step, the writer contributes her ideas and opinions in her subjective analysis in this thesis.

The fifth, in supporting her research, the writer quotes some sentences from each story to be the evidences of the analysis.

Finally, the writer gives a conclusion according to the three selected short stories.

### 1.8 Organization of the Thesis

This thesis consists of four chapters. Chapter I deals with the background of the study, statement of the problem, the objective of the study, significance of the study, scope and limitation of the study, definitions of key terms, methodology of the study, and organization of the thesis. Chapter II presents the review of the related literature. Chapter III discusses the character analysis of the three selected short stories of Sherwood Anderson: "I'm a Fool"; "The Egg"; and "Death in the Woods". Finally the conclusion and suggestion of the study will be in chapter IV.