# CHAPTER I

# INTRODUCTION

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## 1.1    Background of the Study

Studying and analyzing a literary work are not easy for students including those of the English Department of Widya Mandala Catholic University. Some students find it difficult to analyze a literary work because of their lack of ability to fully understand the literary work or in combining the important parts in it, and also because of the language used in the literary work, as De Lisle et. al. (1971:x) say, "But very often students are faced with a double problem : they do not fully understand what they have read and they do not know how to write about what they have understood". The writer believes that the mastery of a language does not guarantee someone to be able to analyze a literary work.

There are factors which might help students in analyzing a literary work : the literary knowledge and experience, besides the analytical ability. Peden (1971:50) says, "The more one knows of the theoretical aspects of the creation of a story, the greater his understanding and pleasure in the work will be".

The writer is interested in studying a literary work for her thesis because of some reasons. Firstly, literature is the expression of life and the representation of human action and experience. The literary works are able to reflect the problems of life and also criticize a certain social condition as it is described by Rene Wellek (1956:109). Wellek says, "Literature is simply a mirror of life, reproduction and obviously a social document that is manifested by means of language".

Secondly, literature is something written beautifully which has the element of entertaining or affording pleasure. Barnet (1963:1) says, "Literature has in it an element of entertaining display and we expect literature to be in some sense of entertaining or to afford pleasure". So in writing literary works, of course, the literary men have some purposes, and one of the purposes is to create enjoyment to the readers. Furthermore, Little (1966:2) adds, "A good literature should include two major points". First, literature says something worth saying. This means that a good literature can add our understanding about life in the world around us. Literature also embodies our thoughts and feeling as a whole, such as love, hatred, survival, death, etc. The second point is that literature is something that is well said. This means something which is expressed beautifully by the author.

The last reason is that by studying literature, the writer would not only improve her vocabulary and grammar but also learn about another culture and ways of life. As Little (1966:1) says, "As the principal element of people's culture, literature contains the record of people's values, their thoughts, their problems and conflict, in short, their way of life".

There are two kinds of literary forms. The first is lyric, that is a short poetry which focuses on thought, feeling or emotion. The second form is narrative which means telling a story. This may take the form of novel, short story, drama, and narrative poetry. Among the forms of narrative, the novel has the longest story which has a series of events arranged in time sequence. Little (1966:97) says, "The novel is the longest form of fiction, in which we may find the most extraordinary wide range of writing". So, the most obvious characteristic of a novel as a literary form is its length. The writer is also impressed by what Kennedy (1983:231) says, "A novel is a book-length story in prose, whose author tries to create the sense that, while we read, we experience actual life". It means that the novel can be carried into the common experience of everyday living.

The subject matter of this thesis is concerned with novel. The writer chooses a novel because first of all, it tells a long story (Cook, 1952:560). The length of the novel makes it possible for the writer to develop all the basic elements of novel. Second, the novel is full of details (Cook, 1952:560). It tries to be realistic, to paint a recognizable picture of what life is like at a particular time. In our modern age we want realism. We want to know about things as they are, even in stories created imaginatively.

In this study, the writer would take Sinclair Lewis as the novelist because she is interested in Lewis' works which deal with the situation of America at that time and his works also deal with the satirical type of the American social condition. The five novels that make Lewis famous are <u>Main Street</u>, <u>Babbit</u>, <u>Arrowsmith</u>, <u>Elmer Gantry</u>, and <u>Dodsworth</u>. They can be read as a series of variations on the same theme. Magill says,

> The pattern in his books is always similar: there is a central character who-at any given moment-realizes the emptiness of his or her life and tries to break out of the mechanical boredom of the suffocating environment. The revolt is shortlived and leads nowhere. (1983:1672).

Furthermore, his novels are almost historical documents since they deal with the American's development and life. He succeeds in giving new image to the American small towns, as Frank N. Magill (1983:1671) says, "While Lewis was still writing about the period of transition from exciting frontier life to small-town boredom, American rapidly proceeded to new phases, to radically different and exciting experiences".

The writer would like to analyze <u>Main Street</u> since in this novel Lewis wants to emphasize the theme about the detail of the mediocrity of the American small town and the narrow-mindedness and lack of vision of its inhabitants. Schorer states,

> Today, when the emancipation of women, for better or worse, is an accomplished face, and when the sociological fate of the small town has largely been settled we can perhaps read <u>Main Steet</u> only as a historical novel". (1963:435).

Novels and characters are a unity which cannot be separated because without characters, a novel cannot exist. Characters are the most important part of a novel as through the action and the dialogues among characters we are able to appreciate what kinds of character they are; round character or flat character, as Bain, Beaty and Hunter (1977:501) say, "In proportion to the fullness of their development, the characters in a story are relatively flat or round characters". While concerning the importance of characterization in narrative fiction, Hawthorn (1986:50) says, "The most important methods of characterization available to the novelist are: first by description, secondly by action and thirdly through a character's thought or conversation". Therefore, through the characters' dialogue or conversation and behavior, the problems and conflicts arise, the plot is made and the theme is known.

Having no experience to analyze the main character of the novel and realizing how important it is to know other characters' traits, in this thesis the writer tries to analyze the main character in the novel of Main Street.

## 1.2    Statement of the Problem

This study is intended to analyze the main character of Sinclair Lewis' novel entitled Main Street. In analyzing the main character of the novel, the writer would like to use Little's points, as follows :

1.  What are the basic qualities of the main character?
2.  How does the main character see himself?
3.  How do the other characters see the main character?
4.  How is the main character treated by the author?
5.  Does the main character exemplify and embody the theme?

## 1.3    Objectives of the Study.

In this thesis, the objectives of the study are  to find out :

1.  What the basic qualities of the main character are.

2.  How the main character sees himself.

3.  How the other characters see the main characters.

4.  How the author treats the main character.

5.  Whether or  not the main character exemplifies or embodies the theme.

## 1.4    Significance of the Study

Having  analyzed the main character of  the  novel, the writer expects to get good points, such as :

1.  To  show  that  a character analysis  is  useful  for  further  literary  studies.  It gives  opportunity  for¯further  analysis  on  similar  subject  to  reveal  certain human traits.

2.  To encourage students of English Department of  Widya Mandala Catholic University  to  read  novels  and  appreciate  them.  Although  the  novels  are written a  long time ago, still  they  tell about human behavior  which can  be applied  in  today's life,  and  through  the  appreciation  of  the  novel,  the student will  be  able  to  recognize  traits  of  character  exemplifies  or embodies the theme.

## 1.5    Limitation of the Study

The center attention  of the study is on the analysis on the main character, based on the reason that  the main  character is the important part in the novel,  the

one that plays important role and makes major decision that influences the whole story of the novel.

## 1.6 Definition of Key Terms

Before going on to deep discussion about the main character, the writer thinks it is necessary to define some key terms that are applied in this thesis, so that there will be no unexpected misinterpretations.

1. Novel is an extended, fictional, prose narrative that portrays characters in a plot (Guerin, 1986:1137).

2. Plot is the sequence of happenings by which the characters resolve the dramatic situation or problem that confronts them; it is how they work their way out (Cook, 1952:561).

3. Character is the element that involves all the participant within the story, including animals and the narrator (Guerin, 1986:1125).

4. Characterization is the information about how we learn about characters; any indication that characters are changing or developing; significant new information about a character (Hawthorn, 1986:71).

5. Setting is the place in which a story is laid, but it is more than the physical location. It is also the historical time; it is also the climate of prejudices and opinions of the locality; it is also the work and habit of the people of the community (Cook, 1952:561).

6. The theme of a piece of fiction is its controling idea or its central insight (Perrine, 1959:61).

7. The basic qualities of the main character are the characteristics or the detail descriptions of the main character which cover:
   a. Physical (age, physical oddities, etc).

b.   Social relationships (personal relationship with other characters in the work; wider social relationships such as social class, occupation).

c.   Mental Qualities (typical ways of thinking, feeling and acting).

8.  'How the main character sees himself' means what the main character thinks about himself, whether he likes himself or not, whether he is satisfied with himself or not.

9.  'How the other characters see the main character' means what the other characters think about the main character, their opinions about the main character.

10. 'How the author treats the main character' means how the author presents the main character in the story. Whether the author presents him sketchily or roundedly, portrays him descriptively or dramatically, treats him sympathetically or unsympathetically.

11. 'Whether or not the main character is able to embody the theme' means whether or not the main character through his role in the story presents the theme or what the author wants to say.

## 1.7     Organization of the Thesis

This study consists of five chapters. Chapter I deals with Introduction including also the background of the study, the statement of the problem, the objective of the study, the significant of the study, the limitation of the study, the definition of key terms and organization of the thesis. Chapter II is concerning the review of related literature. Chapter III is dealing with the research methodology. Chapter IV contains the discussion of the findings and the analysis of the narrative aspects of <u>Main Street</u>, and Chapter V is about the conclusion.