

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents background of the study, statement of the problem, objective of the study, significance of the study, scope and limitation, definition of key terms, and organization of the thesis.

1.1 Background of the study

Literature is one of the fields of English curriculum that the students should learn. Literature is still a minor subject in the curriculum of the English Department. Yet, literature is so important to be learned. Literature is a verbal artifact to express life's most important issues. According to Little (1963:2), literature has two qualities. The first quality is that literature says something worth saying. Literature adds to people's knowledge of life in this world. It is based on observation and thought on matters of human importance. The second quality is that literature is something well-said. Through literature, the students can learn another culture and the important issues of life. Besides, the students can also learn about the feelings, emotions, and struggles of life through reading a literary text.

Cleath, John, and Robert (1946:7) state that by learning literature, people will know not a picture that science gives and not a picture that is actually (historically) true, but a picture that is true in the sense that it gives many important things which science from its very nature cannot give; and it presents this picture to us in its most vivid and moving form.

Howe (1978:2) defines literature as imaginative writings-stories, novels, poems, plays which portray or reflect or deal with human existence. It means that literature discusses the whole things of human beings' life, in terms of their problems and

conflicts, and the situation of life. Little (1963:1) also states that literature contains the record of the people's values, their thoughts, their problems and conflicts. In short, literature discusses the whole life. He adds that literature is regarded as the chief art of mankind.

Literature also gives pleasure to people. Little (1963:1) claims that literature is a kind of art, usually written that offers pleasure. When people read a happy story, for example, they will feel that they are in the situation. Howe (1978:4) adds that literature gives pleasure because it presents human experience through imagined circumstances.

The other function of literature is it helps people understand life. Literature is an imitation of people's life (Scholes, Silverman, and Klaus, 1989: 104).

Literature has many forms. According to Little (1963:1), there are three forms of literature. They are fiction/ novel, play, and poetry. This is in line with Roberts and Jacobs' classification of literature. They also differentiate literature into three forms. Scholes, Silverman, and Klaus (1989) classify literature into five forms; that are: essay, fiction, poetry, drama, and film.

According to Roberts and Jacobs (1986:2), novel is included as prose fiction, or narrative fiction. Wellek and Warren (1989:282) also say that novel is one of fictions. The first fiction is romance, and the second one is novel. The novel is a picture of real life and manners, and of the time in which it is written. The romance, in lofty and elevated language, describes what never happens nor is

likely to happen. The writer chooses novel because novel is a reflection of life in reality, such as the life and attitudes of the character. Novel has a better understanding about the thought of the characters, the conflicts, and the way that the characters feel, compared to the other literary genre. Doren (1968:587) says that the characters in novel can be seen

from many sides, and they developed in the readers' understanding. He also explains that some of the favourite novels are real. Thus, the writer chooses novel in doing this analysis.

The writer chooses Steinbeck because he is interested in his deep concern about the condition of workers in his work. Steinbeck experienced the situation in America in 1930s. The workers at that time had undergone hard life. Steinbeck witnessed that situation and it inspired him to write the condition of the workers in his novels.

For this study, the writer takes John Steinbeck's novel entitled *Of Mice and Men* among his other novels mainly because of three reasons. Firstly, *Of Mice and Men* is Steinbeck's best novel. The novel is so famous in the world. The novel is considered as one of his masterpieces. Gregory (1971:367) says that *Of Mice and Men* is written in 1937 and becomes the best seller. Before the year's end, 150,000 copies of the novel have been sold. With the novel, Steinbeck becomes an important figure in American literary firmament. This novel has also accepted many awards because it portrays the real situation of people at John Steinbeck's era. Secondly, Steinbeck writes the real condition of the workers' life in the novel. Unger (1974: 49) states that Steinbeck depicts physical, social, and psychological problems of American life through his novels. It means that through *Of Mice and Men*, the author wants to tell the readers about how hard life is. Related to hard life and the condition of the workers in Steinbeck's era, Steinbeck symbolizes a weak character suffering from mental retardation.

Thirdly, in the novel, there are two main characters that have the same experiences. The characters are George Milton and Lennie Small. George Milton is a man who is short and smart, while Lennie Small is a huge man. Yet, Lennie is a mentally retarded person. Gregory (1971:202) adds that *Of Mice and Men*, one of John Steinbeck's novel, is the story of Lennie, the imbecile giant who is out of

tenderness alone. Steinbeck (1973:7) also explains that Lennie is a simple-minded giant in the novel and he needs special help from his friend, George.

In the novel, there are many utterances showing that Lennie is a mentally retarded man. He often forgets about something happened before and he must imitate what his friend, George, does to know whether his action is right or not. Here are the evidences:

"I forgot," Lennie said softly. . ."

(Steinbeck, 2006: 4)

Lennie looked startled and then in embarrassment hid his face against his knees. "I forgot again."

(Steinbeck, 2006: 6)

George lay back on the sand and crossed his hands under his head, and Lennie imitated him, raising his head to see whether he were doing it right.

(Steinbeck, 2006: 7-8)

Payne and Patton (1981: 119) mention *Of Mice and Men* as one of the popular literature which contains the characteristics of a mentally retarded person. The writer would like to analyze the level of mental retardation of Lennie Small

because he wants to know Lennie's characteristics. Besides, the writer also wants to find out how Lennie Small with the level of mental retardation copes with the other characters.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Based on the background of the study, the writer wants to find out the answer of the following questions:

- What level of mental retardation does the main character (Lennie Small) belong to.
- How does the main character (Lennie Small) with the level of mental retardation cope with the other characters.

1.3 Objective of the Study

Based on the statement of the problem above, the objective of this study will reveal:

- The level of mental retardation that the main character (Lennie Small) belongs to
- How the main character (Lennie Small) with the level of mental retardation copes with the other characters.

1.4 Significance of the Study

This study hopefully can give contribution to the readers of the novel and the students of non-literary department. Since this study concerns with character analysis, it is expected that the readers of the novel and the students can have a better understanding to comprehend literary works. This study can also become a good reference for reading a literary work.

Besides, the writer hopes that through this study, the readers of the novel and the students of non-literary department can be aware of a person suffering from mental retardation. By giving knowledge of characteristics of mentally retarded persons, the writer also hopes that the readers of the novel and the students of non-literary department can deal with abnormal people, especially mentally retarded persons, in their surroundings.

1.5 Scope and Limitation

The scope of this study is focused on the main character considered as a mentally retarded person. Therefore, the thesis writer focuses on the analysis of the main character considered as a mentally retarded person. The limitation of this study is on the main character, Lennie Small, considered a mentally retarded person. The other characters in the novel are also analyzed to support this analysis.

1.6 Definition of Key Terms

To avoid ambiguity, the writer defines terms used in this study:

1. Literature

Literature is a written (and also spoken) composition designed to tell stories, dramatize situations, and reveal thoughts and emotions, and also, more importantly, to interest, entertain, stimulate, broaden, and ennoble readers (Roberts and Jacobs, 1986:1).

2. Novel

Novel is a fiction prose narrative of considerable length in which characters and action representative of the real life of past or present times portrayed in a plot of more or less complexities (Jeremy Hawthorn, 1985:1).

3. Character

Character is an extended verbal representation of a human being, the inner self that determines thought, speech, and behavior (Roberts and Jacobs, 1986:134).

4. Mental Retardation

Mental retardation is a usually chronic and irreversible condition whose diagnosis is based on an IQ of 70 or below and problems with daily functioning that begin before the age of 18 (Holmes, 2001: 511).

5. The Level of Mental Retardation

The level of mental retardation is based on the person's level of functioning (<http://www.minddisorders.com/Kau-Nu/Mental-Retardation.html>).

It means that the level of mental retardation of a person is determined by the potential to learn adaptive skills such as communication and social interaction

(<http://www.humanillnesses.com/original/Men-Os/Mental-Retardation.html>).

1.7 Organization of the Thesis

The writer divides this study into five chapters. The first chapter introduces background of the study, statement of the problem, objective of the study, significance of the study, scope and limitation, definition of key terms, and organization of the thesis. The second chapter deals with the theories that are used in doing this analysis, which comprises the underlying theory: novel, kinds of novel, elements of novel, theory of mental retardation; and previous studies. The third chapter presents research methodology, which consists of research design, research instrument, research data, data collection procedure, and data analysis

procedure. Furthermore, in chapter four, there will be the analysis of the study. Finally, the last chapter concludes the whole discussion of this study and suggestions from the writer.