

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

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1.1. Background of the Study

By studying English literature, students would not only improve their vocabulary building, but also learn human ways of life and value. This is confirmed by P. Gurrey saying that good literature does not only give factual knowledge, but also gives deeper and more valuable ideas, thoughts and moral teaching in the society (1970:173). In this chapter, the writer will state her reasons why literature is taken for her thesis; why novel is chosen; why theme is analyzed, and why Fitzgerald's writing is put forward.

Since literature expresses human values, it appeals to the writer to forward literary study in her thesis. One of its genres, that is novel is then taken to be discussed. Yet, understanding a novel is not easy since novel with its length consists of elements of literature, such as character, plot, setting, conflict, point of view, symbol, etc in a certain wide range, and each contributes idea to its final effect. Simon and Schuster (1966:105) say, " The length of the

novel is particularly suited to deal with the effect on character of the passage of time. It expands in space as well as in time; therefore, novel is decidedly not meant to be read at a single sitting".

Understanding a novel means grasping the story's ideas. Therefore, in order to achieve a good understanding of a novel, the theme is to be detected, as mentioned by Simon and Schuster that theme is the meaning of the story (1966:88). Wiener adds, "The theme in a novel, as well as in a play and short story, is its main idea, the dominant point the writer had in mind for his work (1987:463). Essentially, theme is the basic idea of life in general that is expressed in a literary work. It is about a comment on life, a description of how people act and the effect of their actions upon themselves and others (Robert, 1977:63). So, theme is the core of the author's purpose for writing a story. Achieving the theme will make a reader understand what the writing is about. Based on the reasons above, the writer focusses the study on theme to have an easier understanding of the necessary implications of the novel forwarded.

From a large number of well known novels, she is attracted by the writing of an American author

named F. Scott Fitzgerald. He is one of great authors who was counted on during his time, that is the period of twenties when the American values of society were changing. The moral decline of youths, the ignorance of religion and the display of wealth are the main phenomena of the time.

What fascinates people about Fitzgerald besides his description of character is his accurate placement of themes in his works. It seems that his writing cannot be separated from his life and things coming in his time (Adams, 1976:163). Therefore, his works are often affected by the circumstances as Morris says that Fitzgerald's issues of works are mostly stemming from the incongruity of the situation in which he is absorbed by his sense of it (1969:399). It means that the situation he experienced in his life impressed him much.

For the writer, it is interesting to recognize the American idealism and its atmosphere of life. To achieve the atmosphere, Fitzgerald's novel, entitled The Great Gatsby is forwarded. It depicts a picture of the American society of the 20's. The decade of the twenties, particularly in the United States was the periode of change since most traditional ways of life were changing. Their ways of life, their

ambitions and their thoughts are defined clearly enough in this novel. The negative quality of the people, such as greed, egotism and lust are also commented. Further, Fitzgerald portrays the atmosphere of people telling lies, pursuing wealth, and believing that only money could do and replace everything, even a man would mercilessly ruin his fellows for his own sake.

Following are brief descriptions of the major characters of the story. The characters are Gatsby, Daisy, Tom, and Nick as the narrator. As a narrator, Nick is also involved in the actions he is describing or telling.

Nick Carraway was a young man in his late of twenties. He was from a well-to-do family in the Middle West of America. He wanted to learn a bond business and found a job in the East as many people said that money could be easier earned there. Being attracted with the beauty of the East, its wealth, and its promise, he decided to go to the East, that is to New York in the spring of 1922. He stayed in West Egg, 20 miles away from New York city and there he became involved in the lives of his neighbours: Gatsby, Tom, and Daisy.

Jay Gatsby was a newly rich young man who got money by selling alcoholic drinks illegally. He fell in

love with Daisy before he became rich. They planned to marry, but when he spent a short time at Oxford and his returning home was delayed, Daisy was married to the wealthy Tom Buchanan. Meanwhile, Gatsby was trying to get a lot of money as a bootlegger, and when eventually his business was successful, and he became rich, he still kept his dream that someday he would meet Daisy again and marry her.

Daisy Fay was beautiful and enchanting. She was Gatsby's dream; she was his idea of perfection and beauty. Unable to wait for Gatsby from Oxford, she allowed herself to be lured by Tom. Later, she turned to love Gatsby again, but she did it just for her own satisfaction; she wanted to recall her last joyful time with him.

Tom Buchanan, Daisy's husband, was a wealthy young man whose feelings and actions were self-directed. His utterance and manner showed that he was bad tempered and too proud of himself. He entertained his guests by showing off his possessions, including his mistress. He worried only when he was about to lose Daisy. The carelessness of Daisy and Tom, eventually, indirectly caused Gatsby's death.

The story of the novel is all the more interesting for it draws the contradictory condition in the self-

side of the major characters. In contrast to the gracefulness of Daisy, a corruption underlies her world; in contrast to Gatsby's crowded party, there are emptiness and depression in his heart, and in contrast to Tom's power and wealth, there are lies and cunning coming up at the background.

1.2. Statement of the Problem

The Great Gatsby depicts people's ways of life: what they seek, and how they face it. Since this study is going to derive the idea of the story, the question arising is: "What is the theme of the novel?"

1.3. Objective of the Study

The discussion of the theme will give readers a better understanding of what the story is about for theme is the author's idea in writing the story. Therefore, the objective of the study is to find the theme in The Great Gatsby.

1.4. Significance of the Study

This analysis is hoped to be "the bridge" for the fellow students to know The Great Gatsby more , and to

give them a kind of motivation to make further discussion on the novel.

1.5. Limitation of the Study

The discovery of theme can be analyzed through elements of literature, such as character, plot, setting, point of view, symbol, tone, style, etc. However, the discussion in this thesis is limited to the study of theme through character, plot, setting, and the point of view.

1.6. Definition of Key Terms

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

1a. Character is an element which creates a liaison of understanding between reader and writer (Shipley, 1962:51).

b. Still about character, Robert explains that character in literature is also 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 (1977:54).

2. Protagonist, stated by Perrine, is one who takes the leading or the principal part in the story and becomes the central character in the conflict and the action (1966:59).
3. Point of view, defined by Buckler and Sklare, is the particular angle of vision which an author uses in a story or the point from which he views the pattern of events he chooses to relate (1960:16).
4. The theme in a poem, novel, play or short story, as Wiener writes, is its main idea, the dominant point the writer has in mind for the work (1987:463).
5. The plot, as Hawthorn states, is an ordered organizing sequence of events and actions (1985:53).
6. Setting, mentioned by Pooley, is the time, place and general environment in which a piece of fiction occurs (1967:513).
7. Conflict is explained by Pooley as a struggle between opposing forces, a clash of action, ideas, desires, or value. It may take place between a character and an outside force or within the character himself (1967:518).

1.7. Organization of the Thesis

After the Introduction in Chapter I, the writer describes Review of Related Literature in Chapter II. Chapter III is concerned with the Methodology of the Study. The analysis of the theme through plot, character, setting, and the point of view will make up Chapter IV, and this thesis ends with Summary and Suggestion in Chapter V.