

# **CHAPTER I**

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### 1.1 Background of the Study

Literature is taught step by step at the English Department of Widya Mandala Catholic University Surabaya, through Introduction to Literature, Prose, Drama, and Poetry. By studying literature the students would learn ways of life and human issues, such as the struggle of life, feelings, dreams, or emotions in addition to improving their vocabularies that are often found in everyday life. Studying literature can also broaden the students' mind, so they can learn how to appreciate the work of art.

McCloskey and Stack (1993:vi) say that literature provides students with motivation to learn and models of high quality language while it enhances students' imagination. Literature motivates students by touching on themes they care about, such as love, fear, changes, and dreams. Good literature is about human experience. Literature also offers new vocabulary in context and serves as a source for learning about the mechanics of language in authentic contexts, as they are used by masters of that language. In addition, literature can give students the means to imagine and think creatively.

Kennedy (1976:cii) claims that literature, as an art of words, helps us become more sensitive to our own language which means that we have the ability to use words to express our own feelings, thoughts and ideas in a better and clearer way. In addition, studying literature also helps us grow, both personally and intellectually; it

provides an objective base on our knowledge and understanding; it helps us connect ourselves to the broader cultural, philosophic, and religious world of which we are a part; it enables us to recognize human dreams and struggles in different places and times that we would never otherwise know (Roberts and Jacobs, 1989:2).

According to Howe, Hollander, and Bromwich (1979:2) literature is an imaginative writing which is in the forms of stories, novels, plays, poems which deal with human existence.

Learning a literary work is interesting and pleasing to the writer because literary work can give her many human issues that are very essential to learn as a guidance to the better value of life. Learning literary work enables her to broaden mind and also deepen insight by observing and learning human beings' problems and their solution. Therefore, the writer is challenged to write a literary research as her thesis.

There are at least two major types of literary works. The first type is those such as poems, short stories, and novels. While plays or dramas and operas are categorized in the second type. The function of both of them is the same. They add our understanding of life and also help people to appreciate and criticize about the values of life that surround us.

The writer here takes a play as the subject matter of the study because the interaction of the characters in a play is easier to observe than that in the novel or poem. The reason is that the language of a drama or play is more natural and put in the appropriate context, so the readers can see the interaction of the characters which clearly are shown in the dialogues. Barnet, Berman and Burto (1989:13)

state that the modern playwrights often help the reader by providing fairly full stage directions. The following example is a quotation from Anton Chekhov's *Three Sisters*.

IRENA [*clapping her hands.*] Three cheers for Andriushal! Andriushal's in love!

CHEBUTYKIN [*comes up behind Andrey and puts his arms round his waist.*] 'Nature created us for love alone.' ... [*Laughs loudly, still holding his paper in his hand.*]

From the quotation above, the reader can more easily imagine how Irena acts toward her brother Andriushal who is falling in love; she claps her hands to show that she cares for her brother's feeling. Then Chebutykin continues Irena's acting by coming up behind Andriushal and putting his arms round his waist, and also says '*Nature created us for love alone*' ... while laughing loudly and still holding his paper in his hand.

Another reason for choosing drama is that it is very different from other fictions, such as novels or short stories. First, compared with novels, drama does not take much time for the readers to read. Second, the time sequences in drama are clear, for instance in Anton Chekhov's *Three Sisters* the time sequences are written down clearly, such as: "*It is midday, It is eight o'clock in the evening, It is past two o'clock in the morning.*" Third, drama presents characters which are shown in dialogues and action, so that it has a dramatic characterization which other fictions do not have. It has quality to describe human characters, attitude, and action. Little (1966:2) says that there might be no form of literature more popular than drama. It is an unusual literary form that may be treated as literature or as theatre.

In this thesis the writer takes Anton Chekhov as the playwright because he is a Russian dramatist, possibly the one best known outside Russia whose plays are in the repertory of every county. In his plays he conveys the spiritual discouragement because the social and cultural circumstances change. As stated by Fen (1972:9), in the plays which are the work of Chekhov maturity reflects the mood of spiritual discouragement, a helplessness before the overwhelming, impersonal forces of circumstances, an awareness of personal significance. His plays portray the constant attrition of daily life, and the waste, under the social condition of Old Russia, of youthful energy and talent. At the same time they contain a note of hope for the future which is heavily stressed in modern Russian productions. This hopefulness seems to accord with Chekhov's own view of his plays (Phyllis Hartnoll, 1983:93). Trilling (1967:250) says that all Chekhov's plays are concerned with the defeat of delicate and generous minds, and the warmth of feeling that the Russian intelligentsia directed to Chekhov in his lifetime was in gratitude for his having made its plight so fully explicit and for having treated its pathos with so affectionate a tenderness. The Russian intelligentsia was recruited from several social classes, but most of the characters of Chekhov's plays derived from the minor aristocracy or gentry, usually more or less impoverished (1967:250).

Anton Chekhov's *Three Sisters* was completed in 1900 and performed for the first time by the Moscow Art Theatre on January 31, 1901. The writer takes Anton Chekhov's *Three Sisters* because it challenges her to see how the feelings and the response of the major characters whose names are Olga, Masha, Irena or the three sisters and their brother, Prozorov, when they try to find a miraculous

solution to all life's problems by going to Moscow but the solution will never occur. Dodson (1970:82) says that the three sisters move between memory and aspiration, between the nostalgic past with its air of gentility and romance, symbolized by Moscow, and the desired future, also symbolized by Moscow. But a blight has settled over their lives, and they seem unable to cope with their present existence or to achieve a more desirable future. Burto, Berman, and Barnet (1975:552) also say that the three central figures, Olga, Masha and Irena, are the myth of Moscow as the paradise lost, as the symbol of everything that is lacking their dreary, uneventful existence. Moscow is the name of their desire to get away from it all, to find a magical solution to all life's problems. As the play progresses, it becomes increasingly obvious that the eagerly awaited move to the metropolis will never occur.

## **1.2 Statements of the Problem**

The study is intended to analyze Anton Chekhov's *Three Sisters* play. The research questions concerning this are formulated as follows:

1. What are the basic characteristics that Olga, Masha, Irena and Prozorov have in Anton Chekhov's *Three Sisters*?
2. What is the plot of the play?
3. What is the setting of the play?

## **1.3 Objectives of the Study**

In line with the problem statements the purpose of this study is firstly, analyzing the basic characteristics of Olga, Masha, Irena and Prozorov which comprises their physical qualities, their mental qualities, the relationship of Prozorov

and his three sisters, the three sisters' relationship with one another, the three sisters and the society's relationship, Prozorov and the society's relationship; secondly, discussing the elements of the plot one by one (exposition, conflict, suspense, climax, and resolution); thirdly, analyzing the setting.

#### **1.4 Significance of the Study**

This study is expected to give some contributions to the students of the English Department of Widya Mandala Catholic University Surabaya in studying literature. They are expected to be able to understand how to analyze a literary work. The writer hopes, the study can be taken by the students as a model in analyzing a literary work especially drama.

#### **1.5 Scope and Limitation**

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

There are many characters in the drama, but the writer only bases her study on the major characters: Olga, Masha, Irena and Prozorov.

#### **1.6 Theoretical Framework**

In studying this dramatic art, the writer deals with some theories concerning the analysis on the characters of Anton Chekhov's *Three Sisters*. The theories are drama, plot, character, and setting. All the theories will be discussed thoroughly in Chapter II.

## 1.7 Definition of Key Terms

Before coming to further discussion of the thesis, it is necessary to define some key terms used in this thesis writing to avoid misinterpretation.

1. A **play** is a special fiction which has plot, characters, and dialogues, and it uses words to create action through the dialogues of the characters (Scholes, 1978:731).
2. A **plot** is the sequence of incidents of which a story is composed (Perrine, 1966:59).
3. A **character** is a person in a literary work who generally refers to his whole nature, such as his personality, his attitudes toward life, his spiritual qualities as well as his moral attributes (Potter, 1967:3). Robert (1989:1011) also claims that character is created by the playwright to carry the action, language, idea, and emotion of the play.
4. **Dialogue** means "a conversation", "a speaking together". Dialogue involves an exchange of opinions or ideas and dialogue is used in narrative poetry, short stories, novels and plays to reveal characters and to advance action (Shaw, 1972:80).
5. **Setting** is the time and the place in which the action happens (Knickerbocker, 1960:437).
6. 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).