

# CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Background of the Study

Literary works are the kinds of art that force the reader's brain to imagine and memorize the important things, such as: plot, theme, characters and so on that occur in the story. Then the brain is encouraged to link all those important things into a unity to get a full understanding from the story. William Henry Hudson in his book entitled *An Introduction to the Study of Literature* states that,

“Literature is a vital record of what men have seen in life, what they have experienced of it, what they have thought and felt about those aspects of it which have the most immediate and enduring interest for all of us (1965: 10).”

In reading literary works, the readers are brought into large, close, and fresh relations with life; and in that fact lies the final explanation of its power.

Another definition of literature in simpler words, which supports the definition above, is expressed by Kelley Griffith, Jr. in his book *Writing Essays about Literature*, that literature is an expression of the individuals who write it (1990: 41). Literary works sometimes contain of certain messages and expressions. Thus, by reading literary works, readers can imagine and feel these certain expressions and messages that are tried to be conveyed by the author.

Literary works are divided into three branches; fiction, poetry and drama. According to Kennedy, poetry is a rhythmical composition of words expressing an attitude, designed to surprise and delight, and to arouse an emotional response

(2010: 656). Poetry itself is one of the forms of fine arts. It has a fundamental unit called a poem. Annas in *How the Poetry Works* explains that:

“A poem is concerned with emotion, it is emotion shaped, controlled, and contained in form. A poem often says something significant; it attempts to achieve beauty. Of course, what is significant and beautiful is open to discussion and may change with time and place (1996: 181).”

A poem is written by a poet. There are many poets in literary world; one of them is William Blake (1757-1827). Blake was the first English poet to work out the revolutionary structure of imagery that (re)signifies through the Romantic poetry. What makes him a unique figure is his ability to design with great formal inventiveness his own visions not only in his celebrated engravings but also in his poetry (Kazin, 1976: 20).

Among Blake's poems, the researcher is interested in his dark poem entitled “The Sick Rose” which was published in 1789 in his small book of poems called “Songs of Innocence”. The researcher feels certain that this poem holds a very deep meaning and symbolism. If this poem is seen from the surface, it will show an image of a flower that becomes infected by a worm during a stormy night. However, if it is seen deeper, the “Rose” is not exactly a flower and the “worm” is not the kind of an insect. This will be one of the topics that will be discussed further and deeper by the researcher. Another topic that will also be discussed further is imagery.

## **1.2 Statement of the Problems**

There are some problems which are found by the researcher in figuring out the imagery and symbols in the poem entitled “The Sick Rose”. Those problems are as follows:

1. What is the imagery that describes virginity in William Blake’s “The Sick Rose”?
2. What is the symbol that describes virginity in William Blake’s “The Sick Rose”?

## **1.3 Objective of the Study**

The research is aimed to answer the two questions, namely:

1. To describe the imagery that describes virginity in William Blake’s “The Sick Rose”.
2. To describe the symbol that describes virginity in William Blake’s “The Sick Rose”.

## **1.4 Scope of the Study**

To avoid confusion in the discussion of this research, the topic is limited to William Blake’s “The Sick Rose”. The poem is a small piece but it holds a very deep meaning. The researcher mainly discusses on the imagery and symbols describing the virginity in “The Sick Rose”.

### **1.5 Significance of the Study**

This research is expected to deepen the knowledge on poems especially “The Sick Rose” by William Blake. It can enrich the knowledge about the poem especially extrinsic poetic devices in the poem. In this poem, William Blake uses certain symbols describing a woman, a man, and a sexual intercourse. It is described very beautifully that readers must read the poem many times to understand well what “The Sick Rose” really means. Therefore, it is hoped that this research can be added as references for other researchers who are interested in analyzing poems, especially William Blake’s “The Sick Rose”.