

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Story

Reading literary works needs a high concentration because it forces the brain to imagine and to memorize the important things, such as: plot, theme, character, etc., that occur in the story. Then, it can encourage the brain 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 asserted 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 message and expression. Thus, by reading literary works, the readers can imagine and feel this certain expression and message that are tried to be conveyed by the author.

In its broader sense, literary works are divided into three kinds; fiction, poetry, and drama. As a descriptive term, fiction is misleading, for although fiction does often include made-up or imaginary elements, it has the potential for

being “true”: true to the nature of reality, true to human experience (Griffith, 1990: 44). X. J. Kennedy in *Literature: An Introduction to Fiction, Poetry, and Drama* defines that fiction (from the Latin *fictio*, “a shaping, a counterfeiting”) is a name for stories not entirely factual, but at least partially shaped, made-up, imagined (1979: 3). When reading a fiction, readers set their mind to imagine the characters, the setting, and the actions.

Fiction can be divided into two kinds: short story and novel. In this case, the writer is impressed on novel because it is more interesting to be analyzed than short story. Novel, in some respects, is like a short story, but it is longer. According to Edward H. Jones, a novel is a long story written in prose, but because it is long, it differs from a short story in other ways too (1968: 80). There is a main difference between novel and short story that makes the writer becomes interested in analyzing novel, that is focus. A short story focuses on one incident in time; a novel has far more range. It may deal with a lifetime or a number of incidents. Wellek and Warren in *Theory of Literature* assert that novel is a picture of real life, manners, and of time in which it is written (1955: 205).

Then, the writer begins to find a novel to be analyzed. She is interested in Langston Hughes’ novel, *Not Without Laughter*. Langston Hughes is one of many talented black writers connected with the burgeoning of the art known as the Harlem Renaissance (Baym, 1985: 1655). He achieved fame as a poet during the period. He was a poet, novelist, columnist, playwright, and essayist (www.galegroup.com/free_resources/bio/hughes_1.html). In 1929, as Hughes completed his year at Lincoln University, he also completed his first novel *Not*

Without Laughter which was published in 1930 (www.galegroup.com/free_resources/bio/hughes_1.html).

Not Without Laughter is a story about typical Negro family in the Middle West. Hughes based the fictional town Stanton on Lawrence (www.ci.lawrence.ks.us/langston_exhibit/laughter.html), and many of the people and events in the novel were inspired by real people, places, and events that Hughes knew or experienced during his childhood in Lawrence. As was the case throughout the United States, radical discrimination and segregation were a reality for African-Americans in Lawrence and some of the most poignant scenes in the book are those based in fact. In this case, the writer is most interested in the struggle of those black people who try to get the equality of social status with the white people.

Thus, the writer chooses such title to present an analysis on a struggle of an old black woman, who has ever experienced the slavery time, living in the 'white world'. She always respects the white people because she considers that without the white people, the black cannot earn a living. There is one thing of the novel that strikes the writer's attention after she has finished reading it, that is, this novel teaches the readers how to receive the hard situation with joy and pride. Therefore, the writer decides to analyze this novel, *Not Without Laughter*, especially on woman's struggle.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

There are some problems that occur in the novel which are interested to be analyzed by the writer. Those problems are as follows:

1. How is Aunt Hager's point of view towards the white people, who have discriminated the black people?
2. How is Aunt Hager's struggle for raising her children in the 'white world'?
3. How is the effect of Aunt Hager's experience living in the 'white world' in educating her youngest daughter, Harriett, and her grandson, Sandy?

1.3 Limitation of the Problem

In analyzing this novel, the writer limits her analysis in the character of Aunt Hager only. She describes the point of view and the struggle of Aunt Hager's character living in the 'white world'. And since the story tells about the life of black people in America, the writer also restricts that the 'white world' here is the community of white people in the U. S. A., especially in the small town of Stanton, Kansas (www.ci.lawrence.ks.us/langston_exhibit/laughter.html).

1.4 Objectives of the Problem

This analysis aims to answer the problems stated in the statement of the problems that have been formulated before. The purposes are to explain:

1. The point of view of Aunt Hager towards the white people who have discriminated the black people.
2. The struggle of Aunt Hager in raising her children in the 'white world'.
3. The effect of Aunt Hager's experience in educating her youngest daughter, Harriett, and her grandson, Sandy.

1.5 Significance of the Problem

In reading Langston Hughes' *Not Without Laughter*, the writer is able to understand more about the hard life the black people suffer. They have got many difficulties in reaching the equality of social status with the white people. Moreover, the writer also learns more about how an old black woman tries to survive and to raise her children in such a hard situation.

The writer hopes that this analysis can improve the readers' knowledge about the discriminated black people and their struggle to survive. The writer also expects that the readers will get more information about feminism of black woman's struggle through this analysis. Besides, this study is significant since it can be the reference for further research on feminism in a novel. Hopefully, this is significant for the other researchers in analyzing the struggle of black woman who lives in the 'white world' in Langston Hughes' *Not Without Laughter*.