

Chapter II

Review of Related Literature

In chapter II, the thesis writer will discuss the historical background of Charles Dickens's work, the theory of conflicts and characterization that refer to the discussion of the main character's love. She believes that this discussion will be useful to support the analysis of the novel.

II.1 The Historical Background of Charles Dickens's Work

The scene of Bleak House is the Victorian Period. In this chapter, the thesis writer presents information about the Victorian Period and the situation at that

time. It can make the readers understand why the society treats Esther like a criminal. The readers will also know about the society's behavior to other people, for instance : how the rich treat the poor people.

Nineteenth century England which is referred to as the Victorian period, according to Tom. P Cross, covers through the years between the death of Scott in 1832 and the death of Tennyson in 1892. It is called Victorian to indicate that Queen Victoria, who came on throne in 1837 and died in 1901 was the ruler in England during most of its extent.

In her early years of reign, England was at its peak. Industrialization grew very fast, which made England steady in economy. However, this industrialization created a new change in human life. England soon found herself with two new major classes of society; one represented the capitals and the other represented labors, the employers and the employed. Innumerable abuses arose from the factory system, which needed cheap labor to keep the factories running, and this continued for a long time.

During the early years until the second half of the nineteenth century, England was enjoying economic strength and growth, which had never happened before. Industrial machines, industries, free trade, agriculture and the railways, all contributed a lot to the British economy. Real wages in Britain had risen by almost fifty percent. There were also various factory acts that steadily improved the working classes by such measures as abolishing child labor and limiting the hours

of employment. All of these facts made the Victorians believe in England's economic progress and her prosperity. The upper and middle classes were enjoying their golden years because industrialism grew very fast.

However, despite the Victorians' confidence, England experienced serious economic depressions in the later nineteenth century. By 1880, England experienced a downfall, which led into a transition era. Henry James, a sensitive American author, addressing a compatriot friend in 1880 about the English, called that year "the hour of their possible decline" (James, 969). The English society was a great mess. There also appeared socialist idealists whose ideas accused the middle class England of corruption, which was the cause of the suffering of the low class.

In the Victorian Period, the development in economic condition had a big effect on how the people behaved. People, especially the well to do, became snobs because they knew that they could live comfortably compared to the poor. Despite the fact that the Victorian period was a glamorous and fanciful period, it was still a period where the sufferings of the common people were obvious.

According to John Mosley there was a big gap between the rich and the poor during the Victorian period (Mosley, 6). The rich felt that the poor's poverty had nothing to do with them. They did not feel responsible although it was probably because of them that the poor stayed poor. The rich had a tendency to oppress the poor classes and exploit their energy for their own needs. They did not

want the poor to compete with them in any aspect of life because the rich wanted to stay exclusive.

At that time, there were only rich people who could live happily and their children could get good education. They did not care with poor people. The poor family had to work hard more than fourteen hours a day and children were sent to work for eight hours a day. Children did not get education. They could not go to school because they had to work hard to help and support their family. There was no school and social welfare that helped the poor people out of their problems. Therefore, most poor children were uneducated (Brown, 1963, 150). They did not get a better job, a better life and a good position in society.

Charles Dickens lived during this period and he experienced the upheavals of English society. He always tried to make a better condition in England through his writings. Charles Dickens tried to criticize the attitude of people in English society. He wanted to reveal the attitude of men towards others who came from different class and their attitude to the poor people. In this case, the class distinction was divided according to their social class, such as upper class, middle class and lower class. The upper class which were known as the rich were very proud of their wealth and the middle class liked to be respected as the rich in order to differentiate themselves from the poor. The lower class did whatever to flatter the rich and made them happy although it was against their will. They often lived in hypocrisy. In Bleak House, Mrs Woodcourt, who comes from the middle class,

behaves like a person who comes from high class. She is an educated person. Therefore, she feels different from lower class people. She wants to become a high-class person so she pushes her son to marry a woman from high-class family.

By telling the historical background of Charles Dickens's period, the thesis writer hopes that the readers will know the situation in the Victorian Period because most of Dickens's works were based on the situation in the Victorian Period. It can be useful for the readers to understand well the story in Bleak House because this story has related to the situation at that time.

II.2 Puritan's Way of Life

The thesis writer also will explain about the puritan's way of life because in Bleak House, the story is also related with the puritan's way of thinking.

Bleak House is a novel that is based on the Victorian society, and in this novel, Dickens wants to criticize the society. Therefore, this novel consists of negligent parents, irresponsible institutions, the falsely charitable, orphans, forsaken children, surrogate parents and children who assume parental duties (Axton, 546). In Bleak House, it is shown in Esther's life that she does not have parents that love and care her.

Dickens uses Esther's character to oppose the puritan's attitude toward the illegitimate children, which developed since seventeenth century. The puritan believed that children who were born sinful would inherit their parents' weaknesses

(Walder, 48). This belief can be seen through the treatment of other characters toward Esther Summerson as an illegitimate daughter. The puritan's belief mentioned above is held by Miss Barbary, Esther's aunt. Puritan theology also denied the right of illegitimate children and it seemed as sin as well as a crime for them to demand charity (Walder, 48). The puritans also believed that children who were born out of wedlock inherited their parents' bad character traits (Walder, 46). This is exemplified by Mrs. Woodcourt who thinks that a woman, whose parents are bad, must be bad too.

By telling the readers about the puritan's way of life, the thesis writer hopes that the readers can know why the society makes distance with Esther Summerson and treats her differently from other children so that it can lead her to become a weak person.

II.3 Theory of Conflict

To get answer of the thesis writer's curiosity, the thesis writer also uses the theory of conflicts in analyzing the inner conflict Esther experiences. This conflict can be happen because of the influence of her past life. By using theory of conflict, the thesis writer expects that she will know how Esther Summerson eventually can settle her inner conflict and have happy life.

Conflict is one of the important elements of plot since it is the backbone of the story, for it provides the elements of interest and suspense. It is mostly found in

novels, plays or short stories, and plays an important role in literary works (Holman, 118).

Many works depend upon a clash of interest and personality clashes. One of the reasons for emphasizing conflict is that people enjoy a contest and doubt. Agreement is an end. Disagreement is a means to an end; it is an active process. When agreement is reached, the struggle is over. First interest then must be centered in the struggle that will be resolved into some sort of agreement. Therefore, conflict will force the readers to keep turning over the pages of a book for they are made curious to know the continuity of the story and what will happen.

Through the conflict, the author will capture the reader's attention with a sense of high interest. Through the conflict, suspense will also be created and the climax of the plot can be reached. Conflict is the central action in the story that tells about the problem encountered by the characters and the way they overcome them, people may distract some conclusions about the truth of life (Brooks, 11).

Basically, there are two kinds of conflicts. First, internal conflict, that is the conflict of a character against himself (Dietrich and Sundel, 116). Man himself is facing a kind of complicated situation in his life. He should choose the best way or alternative choice according to his own consideration. He has to decide what he is going to do. For example, a young man cannot decide whether to enter law school and delay marriage or to find a job and will marry immediately.

Besides, Bernard A Drabert has states that in "Internal conflicts the protagonist attempts to choose between contrary needs or impulses within herself or himself". In the internal conflict, the protagonist has to struggle with himself in achieving his goal (Holman, 119). He has to choose one of two ways that he considers suitable and important for him.

Second, the external conflict is a struggle between man and man or between man and society (Shaw, 91). A character may have an external conflict such as having conflict with another character, nature or society. In the external conflicts, both the protagonists (the central character) and the antagonists (other character) attempt to maintain their own opinion. Both want to defeat other persons and win in facing and in solving their problems. For example, two men try to win the love of a girl, the competition of businessman, and so on.

After looking at all kinds of conflicts, the thesis writer decides to use one kind of conflict in her analysis. Esther Summerson as the main character has a conflict in deciding who her future husband is. Therefore, the thesis writer chooses to use internal conflict to dig out Esther's inner conflict.

II.4 Theory of Characterization

In this analysis, the thesis writer also uses the theory characterization so the readers can know the main character traits. In analyzing literary work, characterization is important. It can help the reader to know the character traits of

the character. Characterization is the technique a writer uses to help the reader become acquainted with a person, or a character, in his writing (Barry, 516). To understand and know the characters which are going to be described, the author uses the method of characterization, which is the technique an author uses to reveal the personality and character of a fictional person (Barry, 517). The character's personality and traits is revealed by describing physical appearance, speech and actions, inner thoughts and feelings and the effect to other characters (Barry, 517). By knowing the character traits of the main character, the thesis writer can understand why Esther's character traits can be like that and how her past life influences her character traits.

There are two kinds of characterization an author uses to present the characters, "Direct presentation" that tells a straightway about who the character is or someone else is used to describe the character directly and "indirect presentation" that reveals what the character says or does (Perrine, 67). In direct presentation the author tells the readers directly about the character traits of the characters. There are five kinds of direct presentation; first characterization through the uses of names, by knowing the characters' name the readers can see their personality. Second, characterization through appearance; the author tells the character traits of the characters through their clothes, posture, make up, and hair style. The author also relates certain physical characteristic with mental, moral and emotional traits. Physical appearance may sometimes be a very unsatisfactory

guide to character, yet it is an effective and concrete way in indicating other traits, such as general, personal or emotional ones (Meredith, 109). Third, characterization by the author; the author interrupts the narrative and reveals directly, through the comments, the nature and personality of the characters. Fourth, characterization through dialogue. In real life, people always talk to each other, they communicate with each other. In the literary works, the characters also communicate with each other. Through dialogue or conversation, they can know what they mean. Fifth, characterization through action; the readers also see the character traits from the character's actions, how they behave if they have to face a problem, how they solve it. Thus, the readers can find the character's personality from the character's actions (Pickering, 21).

Indirect presentation is the author allows the characters to reveal themselves directly through their dialogue and their action (Pickering, 21). The author shows their character in action, they infer what he is like from what he thinks or says or does (Brooks, 169). The readers can see and know the character traits of the character from what they say and do. The author does not tell the readers straightway the character traits of the character.

In the analysis the thesis writer will apply one of the types of characterizations, the indirect presentation, in order to guide and to support her analysis. By applying the indirect presentation, she will know Esther Summerson's

past life and her character traits and how her character traits can also lead her to have inner conflict.