

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1 Background of the Study

In Dictionary of Literature, C. Hugh Holman defines a novel as a prose narrative on a large scale. Long plot and numerous characters are among its distinctive characteristics. These characteristics enable the readers to gain deep understanding towards the story (1986, 315-318). For that reason, the thesis writer chooses to study a novel for her thesis.

In particular, the thesis writer thinks that John Steinbeck's The Grapes of Wrath, is worth analyzing.

She chooses Steinbeck, the American nineteenth century novelist, because she is interested in his deep concern about the condition of American lower class in his works. Steinbeck experienced the American Depression year, when most of the states had undergone hard life. The lower class people, especially the farmers, become the victims at that time (Minter; 1994,730). Steinbeck witnessed that terrible social condition that later inspired him to write about the hardship of the poor workers.

Another reason that makes the thesis writer chooses Steinbeck is because as a realist, Steinbeck likes to write about the real condition around him. He has to know his material first hand. He would not narrate a story which has no basis in fact. Thus, most of his works take place in California and deal with subjects which he thoroughly understands, because he was born and grew to maturity there (Coles, 1984:1). In preparation of writing his novels, Steinbeck would often live, work, and be with people about whom he was to write. Thus, in preparation for writing The Grapes of Wrath, Steinbeck went to Oklahoma, joined some migrants and rode with them to California. Once in California, he stayed with these migrants, lived with

them in Hoovervilles, joined them in search for work, and attempted as much as possible, to come to terms with these people's essential characteristics (Owen, 1989:15).

The thesis writer chooses The Grapes of Wrath among Steinbeck's other works mainly for three reasons. First, The Grapes of Wrath is Steinbeck's best novel. He elected to the National Institute of Art and Letters (1939), received the Pulitzer Prize (1940), and given the Nobel Prize (1962) for this novel (Coles, 1984:9).

Secondly, The Grapes of Wrath was one of the most influential and controversial novels of the thirties. Steinbeck wrote the real condition of the migrants' life in a novel, but it was debated whether the situation could possibly be this bad. Within six months, there had been more public response to his novel than to any novel in American history. Many people said that Steinbeck had written nothing but "black lies", but other people testified to the accuracy of Steinbeck's portrayal even conditions were much worse than had been reported by Steinbeck (Charlotte, 1980:7).

Third, in this novel Steinbeck was successful in vividly describing the whole condition of the 1930's

immigrants by telling the story of one family only. He once said that the plight of the migrants was something impersonal and distant. Eventhough the American people have heard a lot about this plight they did not really understand the real and detailed fact. He felt that the American people could never really sympathize with these immigrants merely from reading about and hearing about their general plight. Therefore, he decided to tell the story of one family, The Joads, then the entire situation would be better understood. The Grapes of Wrath is a phenomenon on the scale of a national event (Charlotte, 1980:16). He began the story from condition of the smallest part of society, a family, and then to the condition of the biggest part of society, a nation.

The thesis writer chooses the developing and changing character traits influenced by the changing settings as her topic since it appeals to the thesis writer that the relation between the character and setting is an interesting subject to discuss. In this novel, the thesis writer notices some character development in the two main female characters, that is are Ma Joad and Rose of Sharon when they have to face with several new settings. She perceives that there is

a sharp change in the character traits of Ma and Rose of Sharon.

Furthermore, the thesis writer finds it interesting that Steinbeck put the female character of Ma Joad and Rose of Sharon as his main characters in the novel. Ma is described as the physically and mentally strongest person in her family. In addition, though Rose of Sharon is changing slowly throughout the novel, Steinbeck put her last action as the climax of the novel.

### **I.2 Statement of the Problem**

As the thesis writer stated above the two main female characters in Steinbeck's The Grapes of Wrath, are Ma Joad and Rose of Sharon. In this study, the thesis writer will analyze how Ma Joad's character traits are developing and Rose of Sharon's character traits are changing in accordance with the changing setting.

### **I.3 Purpose of the Study**

The thesis writer wants to trace the process of Ma Joad's developing character traits and Rose of Sharon's changing character traits as affected by the changing

setting they are dealing with. Therefore, the thesis writer wants to analyze the relation between the changing settings and characters.

#### **I.4 Importance of the Study**

The thesis writer hopes that the readers may learn that the settings, where human beings live in, give much influence on human's characters. Everything that happens around a human being certainly gives great impact on him/her. It means that the setting plays an important role in influencing one's life.

The thesis writer hopes that by reading this study, the readers can learn more about John Steinbeck as a realist. Steinbeck likes to describe the setting, where he puts his characters, as clear as possible. His characters are seemed as a living human being. The readers may learn how Steinbeck's, as a realist, ways of writing.

She also hopes that the readers can learn more about the two main female characters of the novel. The female characters are seldom to discuss by other criticism, the thesis writer hopes that the readers will know that Ma Joad and Rose of Sharon also play an important role in the novel.

### **I.5 Scope and Limitation**

The thesis writer chooses to focus the study only on the two main female characters in the novel those are Ma Joad and Rose of Sharon. In this analysis the thesis writer uses the other characters, such as Pa, Tom, Casy, and Connie the family members of Ma Joad and Rose of Sharon as a means to get a better understanding of the two female characters.

The thesis writer limits her study mainly on the changing character traits of Ma and Rose as resulted by the changing setting, in the novel. Therefore, the thesis writer will also analyze the settings in the novel.

### **I.6 Methodology**

The thesis writer will apply the literary approach to analyze John Steinbeck's The Grapes of Wrath. The main source in this analysis is Steinbeck's novel, The Grapes of Wrath, which was published in 1966 by Compass Books Edition. As the secondary data, the thesis writer also gathers some reviews, biographies, letters and criticism concerning the life of Steinbeck and the writing process of The Grapes of Wrath.

The thesis writer will also apply two literary devices, those are setting and characterization as tools to analyze to work. Moreover, the thesis writer will use a psychological theory to help her to analyze the role of settings towards the changing characters.

### **1.7 Organization of the study**

The thesis writer divides this thesis into five chapters. Chapter one is the introduction that consists of Background of the Study, Statement of the Problem, Purpose of the Study, Importance of the Study, Scope and Limitation, Methodology, and the Organization of the Study. In chapter two, the thesis writer presents the related literature and related theories to the topic. The analysis will be in chapter three and four. In chapter three, the thesis writer is going to analyze the early character traits of Ma Joad and Rose of Sharon before and during the hard and long journey. In chapter four, the thesis writer will analyze their character traits after they have already undergone new experiences and problems. Then in the chapter five, the thesis writer will write the conclusion of the analysis.