

## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

#### 1. Background of the Study

When people talk about conflict, most of them must have considered it as a serious problem that many individuals try to avoid. In fact, although people tend to avoid, however, conflicts are necessary in their life. It is important to know how people solve their conflict also how they get experiences in dealing with these problems. Experience in solving a conflict adds knowledge and teaches people to evade or solve the troubles much easier when it happens another time. Moreover, they can understand and know how to solve a conflict when it approaches to them. During the time that their life goes on, they must have met some conflicts which later can bring them to their purpose. Thus, conflicts can make them learn and change to be a better person.

When people cannot solve some troubles or conflicts that they get will affect their happy feeling. In addition, an awful condition or situation can make people's happiness can be faded away, especially when they cannot maintain it. A French writer named Rochefoucauld says, "People are never happy or unhappy as they imagine" (Houston Journal). It means that the happiness itself depends on people's own hand. Happiness is a fundamental and lasting sense of joy and serenity that results from achieving personally meaningful and rational values (Rand Journal Online). Since many people are obsessed with happiness, it sometimes leads people to their egoistic character. They get themselves falling

into the fascination of happiness; however, sometimes happiness cannot be long last forever.

People have different perspective about happiness; Most of people define happiness as having a good wife, children, reputation, and prosperity. Somehow, people sometimes find a person, the good-living one who has everything as the requirement of being happy then they will envy to that person's life. In fact, a person who never gets some troubles during his or her life is weaker because he or she will not be aware and not ready when a conflict approaches him or her.

People have to realize that sometimes happiness is difficult to maintain because each person has a time when he gets a problem that can happen and take their happiness away. Even Aristotle, the great Greek philosopher, declares that "the noblest and the most pleasant thing in human life is happiness" (Rand Journal Online), on the contrary, people who cannot uphold happiness will fall to their lowest condition (sadness) and laments themselves in perceiving life (Masman 16).

People's life is like a story in a script. In the script, people become the character, and the conflicts of life become the plot of the story. In literature, some conflicts can develop the main character's characterization of the main character, too. As Michael Ryan says in his book *Teori Sastra*, characterization is a part of the formal elements and its form sometimes drives readers to understand the meaning and message in it (32). The reason why conflict always relates and connects with a person's characterization is because conflicts inside the plot

depict the character's behaviour and its development after the conflict has happened.

Characterization shows the personality, behaviours, mood, situation, custom and believes of a character. How he or she dresses, speaks and all the little things that they do, express his or her quality of self; it is also called the inner self of quality (Nurgiyantoro 166). That quality of characterization cannot be separated from the plot of the story (conflict) since the plot brings the change and influence toward the characterization itself. Thus, conflict is very influential in the improvement of characterization.

Stanton states in his book *An Introduction to Fiction* that there are two types of conflict: internal conflict and external conflict (16). Moreover, it can be recognized that a conflict always connects to a person who wants to strike against the opposite and because of that the conflict is constructed. According to Nurgiyantoro in his book *Teori Pengkajian Fiksi*, a story must have conflicts to construct the core of text (114) because conflicts which are included in plot can show how the characters drive their emotion, take action and face their problem of life. Characterization and plot are always in synchronization with theme because two of those important formal elements contain the idea of the story. All the formal elements are based on the theme in order to form an organic unity.

Theme is usually in the form of one phrase or a sentence, but its function is for the whole story. People can see the theme from the role of the characters, plot and also settings. In addition, the title of one's work can provide a little clue about the theme, as Richard Gill states in the book *Mastering of Literature*,

Jane Austen, then, gave the book its title as a way of indicating that what she was interested in was a tradition of country living rather than just the individual lives of central characters. Jane Austen novel represents a strict idea of manners that passes on such values to the next generation (132)

Sometimes the title of the text does not say anything about the theme. However, the title often gives clues to the readers to find out the theme. Moreover, theme can be represented in many ways, not only by looking at the title of the work itself but also by reading the whole story then find out the ideas of the text. The formal elements always support the theme of the story since theme is the centre of a literary work.

Willa Cather's masterpieces titled *The Professor's House* written in 1925 is worthy to be analyzed since it has dramatic and conflicting story about family's trouble which takes away the main character's happiness. It tells about the life of Godfrey St. Peter, a fifty-two years old professor who suffers in his elder time. He has everything and becomes a famous professor of Spanish History, with a beautiful wife, two awesome daughters, and prosperity. Conversely, he cannot solve severe problems which make him loses his happiness. Moreover, his lack of ability of solving the problem adds his conflicts in his elderly life.

Godfrey St. Peter experiences one of his blissful time when a young orphan man named Tom Outland steps in to his house and asks him to be his mentor. At that time when Tom comes around, St. Peter thinks that his life is happier when Tom introduces himself at the first time. He senses that Tom brings

something which he really needs and carries a joyful atmosphere and happiness to himself and his family.

*The Professor's House* is divided into three sections: *The Family*, *Tom Outland's Story*, and *the Professor*, it all starts from the story of St. Peter's family who becomes richer after Tom's death. He must face his deep sorrow because of losing Tom Outland, his perfect student and dearest foster-son. Furthermore, his life gets complicated because of the conflict with his wife and his older daughter whom turn to someone greedy since she wants to take over the money, also with his son-in-law and his co-worker because of Tom Outland's inheritance. The main character suffers a problem that he has been unable to solve. He starts to understand his family's real behaviour and he realizes the fact that happiness is not in his hand any longer. All the conflicts that he experiences make him feel desperate.

Willa Cather is one of great woman writers in early 1920s. By 1923 she had won the Pulitzer Prize for her *One of Ours*. Possibly because of her success in writing, she continues to write some later novels such as *The Professor's House* (1925), *My Mortal Enemy* (1926), and *Death Comes for the Archbishop* (1927). The most remarkable in Cather's writing is her ability in using the complexity of the conflicts which often thrill the readers. Also, her writing is enriched with beautiful words which make the readers feel strongly attached to the story. In addition, this novel also brings its beauty and gives senses to people who read it and also the novel gives knowledge to the reader about life in early year of American literature.

Overall, this study aims to give the reader explanation about how the main character's characterization and conflicts support theme of the story as an organic unity. Moreover, the writer also intends to explain that family's conflict can make someone's cannot feel the happiness again when he is not able to maintain it, like Godfrey St. Peter character in *The Professor's House* novel.

## **2. Statement of the Problems**

The background of the study leads to some statements that are going to be analyzed in this thesis. The following statements are formulated to make a focus on the analysis:

1. How are Godfrey St. Peter's characterization and conflicts portrayed in Willa Cather's *The Professor's House* novel?
2. How do the characterization and conflicts support the theme of the story?

## **3. Objective of the Study**

The study aims at reaching several objectives that are expected. The following objective will be answered according to the questions proposed in the statement of the problems. The objectives are as the following:

1. To explain Godfrey St. Peter's characterization and conflicts in Willa Cather's *The Professor's House* novel.
2. To analyze how the main character's characterization and conflicts support the theme in the story.

#### **4. Significance of the Study**

Concerning the objective of the study, there are three points of significance of the study. Firstly, the study is expected to give and add the knowledge of the readers about the main character, Godfrey St. Peter and his conflicts which he has experienced in *The Professor's House* novel. In doing so, the writer will explain how his conflicts support the theme of the story. In addition, this study also gives readers knowledge that maintaining happiness is not easy, people have to manage their feeling in order to keep sensing happiness. Secondly, this study will be useful for the readers about the formal elements especially for those are interested in analyzing the main character's conflicts. Thirdly, this study is purposed to give something valuable for English Department students of Airlangga University, particularly those who take literature as their major.

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

The writer of this thesis limit herself to observe the types of conflict, both internal and external one, and also the characterization of Godfrey St. Peter since the characterization and conflicts cannot be separated. The subject of this analysis is the main character's conflicts; Godfrey St. Peter which later supports the theme of maintaining happiness is difficult in *The Professor's House* novel. The focus of the study is on the portrayal of the main character and his conflicts whether it is uttered in direct quotations and conversations or implied in the explanations. In addition, the writer limits the analysis only on the primary text, not including

discussion outside the text, such as socio-cultural context when the text was written.

## **6. Theoretical Background**

The most appropriate theory in analyzing conflicts and characterization which support theme in this thesis is New Criticism. The theory involves the writer to examine the formal elements of the text. New Criticism theory examines the text itself without any other theories from outside in order to regard the work and the elements of fiction as an organic unity. In addition, it also uses the concept of elements of fiction based on Richard Gill's concept in his book *Mastering English Literature*. Two important elements of fiction, characterization and plot and how they support the story are considered to be sufficient to support the theme of a story. Gill's explanation about the conflicts inside plot, characterization and theme are used to support this study deeper. This theory and concept are used to examine the novel in deeper analysis about the character and plot which support the theme inside the story.

## **7. Method of the Study**

The method in this study is qualitative. The first step is close reading which means reading the novel and understanding what inside the text is. After several times of reading, the writer will be able to find the theme of the novel. And then, it continues with examining Godfrey St. Peter's characterization by explaining the portrayal of him in the story. Second, the writer will observe the

plot, to find out the conflicts, both internal and external ones that happen to Godfrey St. Peter and other characters. In addition, the writer examines how the conflicts, which support the theme of the difficulty in maintaining happiness, are presented in the novel.

The data collection in this study is conducted by doing close reading. The novel *The Professor's House* becomes the primary source in this study. The writer explores for more details from secondary sources such as online sources, printed books and some articles to support the analysis. Here, the writer gets the main and additional theories and knowledge which support her thoughts.

The data analysis of this thesis is to explain how the main character's conflicts support the theme of the story. Firstly, the writer will explain the characterization of the main character. It continues with explaining the conflicts of the main character then explicating it with the idea of maintaining happiness. It can be done by examining the conflicts which are inside the plot by the conversation between each character. In addition, the explanations in the story whether indirect or direct form (denotative or connotative) to prove that plot, conflict and characterization are part of the formal elements to make an organic unity to support theme of text.

Overall, after explaining how the main character's characterization and conflicts support the theme of the story, the writer can synthesize the analysis in order to write the conclusion and it will answer the statement above by using New Criticism theory.

## 8. Definition of Key Words

*Happiness* : Something precious about people's feeling that sometimes is difficult to maintain.

*Characterization* : The way that author describes the characters' behaviours and habits.

*Conflict* : An event which always fight against and to contradict something

*Plot* : the way the story goes and reveals the events

*Character* : the person or actor in the story