

## Chapter I

### Introduction

#### 1.1 Background of the Study

Absence of parents is serious problem for every country in the world. It can lead to the development of young generation in the wrong way and will give more problems to the society. The problem arises when the young generation is treated hostility by the adults or society and lead them to be a trouble maker in society. The abandoned children need to be taken care in serious manner by all of the elements of society, so that they will be developed into good citizen. There are many examples of the impact of the absence of parents to the society. In Jakarta, there are many mass brawling between students from different schools for showing their pride. They fight with students with other school in highway and causes disruption to the residents near them. One of the examples of the effect of mass brawling is the case at Friday, 11 September 2015 on Bojongsari, East Java. A boy named Reza slashed with sickle knife in his back by mysterious another student from other school. But he was saved by the police and the culprit ran away from the place of the case (<http://metro.sindonews.com/>). This happens because they have problem before which involves two schools and one of them want to take revenge to student from other school or just showing his pride. The question is do their parents know what they are doing to other or are they abandoned by their parents that make them doing such criminal case?

Another effect of parental absence can also be seen from medical site. Researchers in China have found that children who have been left without direct parental care for extended periods of time show larger gray matter volumes in the brain, according to a study being presented today at the annual meeting of the Radiological Society of North America (RSNA). The researchers found larger gray matter volumes in multiple brain regions, especially in emotional brain circuitry, in the left-behind children compared to children living with their parents by blood. The average value of IQ scores in abandoned children was not significantly different from that of controls, but the gray matter volume in a brain region associated with memory encoding and retrieval was negatively correlated with IQ score. Because larger gray matter volume may reflect insufficient pruning and development of the brain, the negative correlation between the gray matter volume and IQ scores suggests that growing without parental care may delay brain development ([www.sciencedaily.com](http://www.sciencedaily.com)).

One of the ways to educate readers about the negative effect of children development is through the literature. Through literature readers, especially young children are aware of how to overcome the problem of absence of parents if they are in abandoned situation. Children literature is one of the ways to advertise to the society about the importance of parental care to the children as well as the media to educate about the important things to care more about the issue of absence of parents. Children literature is the type of literary works that uses children as main character based on the adult perspective or at least perspective of the writer as an adult (Hateley 1). Children literature aims young readers as the

target by using simple language, so that they will understand the content of the text easily. Moreover, children literature is simpler and more understandable, rather than literary works from adult, because children literature uses illustration and simple plot to entertain the readers.

Children literature uses perspective of adult because children are identifies as lack of knowledge of reality, so that they need adult knowledge to develop and be wise enough in thinking about their reality. Children text always has moral value as the content to inform children about the good things that they should learn from the story of the text. Children literature has a purpose to educate children adult belief and values through the text through interesting story, so that children as the readers will accept adult way of thinking and recognize that this is the right way of thinking (Yan Wu 44).

Children's novel is one of the children literary texts that has the value of adult to inform children or young ages readers about the right way of thinking based on their own cultural perspective. Children novel uses children as main character who still lack of knowledge and as the story goes, he/she would become wise enough by receiving the help of adult or learning something beneficial from adult to survive in his/her world. The writer uses *The Summer of the Swans* by Betsy Byars as children's novel that shows how Sarah Godfrey and Charlie Godfrey as her younger brother undergo the absence of parents through the story (Yan Wu 45).

Betsy Cromer Byars (born August 7, 1928) is an American author of children's books. Her novel *The Summer of the Swans* won the 1971 Newbery Medal. She has also received a National Book Award in category Children's Fiction in 1980 and an Edgar Award for in 1991. She has a title as one of the ten best writers for children in the world by The British Literary Journal, *Signal*. Due to the popularity of her books with children, she has also been listed as one of the Educational Paperback Association's top 100 authors (National Book Award; 1981). One of her best literary works is *The Summer of the Swan*.

*The Summer of the Swans* was first published in 1970. The following year the novel won a Newbery Medal, and Betsy Byars was hailed as an outstanding new children's author. Since then Byars has become one of the most prolific and respected children's authors in the United States. This novel was adapted for television as *Sara's Summer of the Swans* in 1974 and it has become a perennial favorite of young readers (The Glencoe Literature library; 1992)

This novel tells the story of Godfrey Family, especially Sara and her brother who has physical defect to become the problem of their life without parents. Sara is the protagonist character that is not satisfied with her appearance. Charlie as her brother suffers from weakness of physical defects. He cannot communicate with other people as a normal boy. This novel shows how Sara overcomes her problem caused by the absence of parents as well how she can accept Charlie as a normal boy without caring about the physical weakness that he suffers. Since this novel is categorized as children literature, this novel also has moral value represented by Sara to develop her mental condition as adult by

undergoing some of the problem along the storyline, so that young readers can be inspired to be more adult and mature and accept their own condition. *The summer of the swan* also informs readers that as a result of *Fallacy* or mistaken belief which is believed by many people but is not useful in reality, is depicted in Sara and how at the end Sara realizes that her beliefs is wrong and knows that family is more important than physical appearance (Harrison 28).

This novel is also a form of didactic way to educate children through the text, because the purpose of children literature is to give the proper model of children as the main character in the literary works to be imitated by children as the readers in real life. This is the true meaning of children literature to the readers which is to educate readers to become more matured from reading the literary works. This is reason why the writer chooses *The Summer of the Swan* as the object of the study because it informs the readers about the important things about the proper way to develop attitude toward society and family. Thus, the writer knows that children literature is different from other kinds of literary works because it contains moral value that can educate the readers.

This study will only find the meaning of the text without paying attention to another factor, such as history or playwright's background. Since New Criticism only focuses on the literary text itself as the main source to better understanding of the text, by looking at formal elements, and the method that are used is close reading. Through this theory, the writer is interested in analyzing how the maturity of Sara Godfrey is portrayed as a result of behavior development to overcome her problem. The writer chooses that as a topic to show to the readers



about how important children literature to educate the children because this novel contains the story of the sibling relationship which is unusual as a result of physical defects which one of the main characters suffers.

## 1.2. Statement of the Problem

By exploring on the main character, the writer tries to formulate the problem in *this* novel, as the following

1. How does Sara Godfrey undergoes the impact of her parents' absence?

## 1.3 Objective of the Study

Due to the questions above, the aim of this study is to analyze why Sara Godfrey overcome her parent absence as the moral value of the text as well as how she can take cares of her selfishness by having an imperfect of little brother and her own feeling of unsatisfied by her won physical appearance. The writer also analyzes the formal elements such as characterization, plot, and theme to support the topic of the study.

## 1.4 Significance of the Study

From this thesis, the writer hopes to inform about the benefit of children literature as the media to educate the children as the readers. *The Summer of the Swans* represents the portrait of Sara to overcome her parent absence and how

Sara's mental development can educate readers in facing their real problem in their real life. The writer believes that through the analysis of Sara Godfrey and her brother through the story written by Betsy Byars, the readers can understand the pattern of children literature in general. Thus, it is hoped that this study can be an additional reference to other people who analyze the similar issue about parent absence in children literature, as well as to be a worthy study in Universitas Airlangga, especially for students studying Literature in The Faculty of Humanities.

### **1.5 Scope and Limitation**

In order to limit this study and to focus the analysis, the writer focuses the discussion on the two formal elements, character and plot to form thematic unity or the as the core of the study which support the topic of the absence of parent in this novel.

### **1.6 Theoretical Background**

Novel *The Summer of The Swans* will be analyzed by applying the theory of New Criticism since this theory is considered to be the most suitable theory that only focuses on detailed analysis of the text and the language provided by the text itself. It means that the usage of the author's background or author's should be neglected. This theory focuses on analyzing formal element of the text to achieve its organic unity (Tyson 121). To understand the meaning of the text, the writer

only focuses on some of formal elements, there are character and characterization, and plot that form the theme in *The Summer of the Swans* novel.

Character and characterization is the first element of the text that shows the portrait of the main character inside the story. Character is the object that interfere the story and has role to determine how story will be developed (Harrison 51).

The second element is the plot or the storyline itself that tells how the main character runs his/her live. In children literature, plot also shows how the main character which is literally children or young fellow, undergo his/her own problem and become more wise to act in his/her real life.

The third element of text is theme. Theme is the central idea or issue through the novel. A theme is formed by the formal elements of the text itself to support the idea about the topic of a literary work. The theme of any literary work is the base that acts as a foundation for the entire literary piece. The theme links all aspects of the literary work with one another and is basically the main subject. The theme can be an enduring pattern or motif throughout the literary work, occurring in a complex, long winding manner or it can be short and succinct and provide a certain insight into the story (DiYanni 86)

### **1.7 Method of the Study**

The writer uses descriptive qualitative method in analyzing this literary text because it does not need any survey, nor participant as the source of the study. The writer uses close reading or reading carefully inside the novel to determine



what formal elements consist of and which one is related with the topic of this study to support the topic itself. Since the writer uses New Criticism as theoretical approach, close reading is essential for analyzing the issue in this text

For data collection, the writer uses the novel as the primary data or the object that will be going to be analyzed. The data will be taken from the content of the text novel itself. After reading closely on the novel, the writer collects data and information which is related with the topic discussed that is the absence of parents from printed books, thesis, journal and article online to support the analysis. The first step of analysis is to identify the character's portrayal and personality from the main character behavior toward the other character, also opinion of the other character through the narration and the dialogue in the novel, so that it can be revealed how character undergoes the problem and how the text delivers the moral value to the readers as the main philosophy of children literature.

The writer analyze the plot start from situation after the death of Sara's mother and the economic condition change the attitude and behaviour of the Godfrey's family. Sara and Charlie as the main character undergo many problems after the death of their mother: physical problem, psychological problem, and social problem. Sara has to face the boring and complicated condition. Every situation bring the something new for Sara to learn from that and changes Sara become develop in her characters and understanding of life. After all, the writer tries to find the central idea or theme of the novel. The theme of this text is the

impact of parent absence in Charlie represent the impact to himself, and Sara represents the impact of parents absence to herself.

### 1.8 Definition of the Key Terms

In analysing this study, the writer finds some important key terms that can be remembered to make more easily to the readers in understanding this study.

The following key terms are stated below:

Physical Deflect : Having imperfect physical ability, either in one of the human sense, mental behavior, nor part of the body

Parents Absence : The way some parents relate or fail to relate to their children. These parents are not the custodial parent, or the parent non-custodial parents who do not reside with the child.

Impact : The strong effect or influence that something has on a situation or person

Didactic : Tries to reinforce someone to believe in one's perspective or ideology