

Chapter One

INTRODUCTION

A. Background of the Study

Literature is a form of art which uses language as its medium. Literature is also a social institution which is born in and with language. Others say that literature is the using of language in written form or everything which is written. This could be true since the word 'literature' itself has its origin in Italian word 'litteratura' which is the translation of a Greek word 'grammatica'. Both the words mean letter.

A literary work is a record of human life which reflects and portrays some aspects of activities and experiences that human beings deal with. In his great work *The Mirror and the Lamp*, M.H.Abrams states that literature can be defined as the form of expression, a process whereby strong and irrepressible feelings are forced out. The author expresses his idea into his work, and this idea will then put the basis of the literary work. (Abrams, 1966:79)

By reading a literary work continually, a reader is supposed to be able to have an enjoyable experience while learning something valuable from what he is reading. Related to the statement, Alfred Edward Housman has once stated :

"Good literature continually read for pleasure must, let us hope, do some good to the readers; must quicken his perception though dull, and sharpen his discrimination though blunt, and mellow the rawness of his personal opinions" (in *Barlett, 1980:692*)

Due to what people say that experience is the best teacher, the literary work can teach us many aspects of life that we can apply in the reality. When we notice the characters in a literary work, we can learn a lot about the phenomena of human characteristics. We will see that people act, speak, and think in many different ways. If we look back to our reality we will find the same "characters" with those in the work we are reading.

Short story is one form of literary works. It is a kind of prose that contains not more than one single line of action and develops not more than one idea or theme. The main characteristic of short story is that it is a single line of action that develops a single idea or theme. It differs from novel, which

contains more than one line of action and develops more than one idea or theme. Every single short story presents its own problem; on the other hand, a novel usually has more than one problem. Since it is short enough to be read at one sitting, short story is capable of a unity of effect that a novel is unable to achieve.

Short story becomes the favourite of most readers especially for those of modern era. Most people nowadays have less time for reading. They would rather choose a short story to read than any other since it is short enough to read at one sitting.

This characteristic of short story makes it a good device to convey messages because it will not take too much time for readers to read it but they can get and learn more than one valuable thing from one story.

Oscar Wilde is one of the most famous Irish writers. He was an author, playwright and wit. He preached the importance of style in both life and art, and attacked Victorian narrow-mindedness and complacency. Oscar Wilde had written many short stories during his career. With his talent, wit, charm and instinct for publicity Wilde soon became a

familiar name in the literary world, as much for his conversational skills as for his writing.

The Happy Prince is one of Oscar Wilde's intensely poignant well-known short stories, which is considered among his most popular pieces for children. Many critics state that *The Happy Prince* is also one of his best-loved stories for children.

The most interesting thing from the story is that it gives its readers many valuable teachings to learn and to teach to our children, and even to adults. Based on this reason, in this thesis, the writer is focusing his attention on describing the theme and the messages in the Oscar Wilde's short story.

By knowing the theme, readers could easily understand further the general idea that the entire story reveals, so as to make clearer in depicting the messages that could be learnt. Therefore, theme is obviously needed in understanding a story.

B. Statement of the Problems

The story *The Happy Prince* consists of good teachings for children, especially on the aspect of morality, so that it is considered by many critics one of Oscar Wilde's best-loved stories for children.

(in *Lord Arthur Savile's Crime and other Stories*, 1994:4). Due to the fact, the writer is interested to reveal the theme and the messages of this story.

As the spotlight of the analysis, the writer has two main problems to answer :

1. What is the theme of *The Happy Prince* ?
2. What messages or teachings can be derived from the story ?

C. Objective of the Study

Dealing with the problems that has been mentioned above, the objective of writing this thesis is to describe the theme and the messages in *The Happy Prince* so that the readers of the story may understand the story more easily and bring out something valuable from it.

To finally describe the messages of the story, the writer will build a theme analysis by studying through the plot, the characters, the conflict, especially the conflicts of the Happy Prince and his friend, the Swallow, and the setting. This way is supposed to lead him to the description of the theme.

D. Significance of the Study

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Since there are still few thesis that deal with short story in the English Department of Airlangga University, the writer does expect the result of this thesis to be very helpful for any student, especially those of the language and literature department, who wants to write a thesis dealing with any other short story.

This thesis is written hopefully that it will give comprehension to the readers about the study of literature. It might be useful as a reference, or a model, of a literary-work analysis. Others who want to write about a similar analysis of any other literary work may use this writing as a comparison or pattern, and can learn something from this.

This thesis will also be useful for any student of literary department who wants to write about the theme and the messages of a short story. Moreover, the writer wishes that, by reading this thesis, readers may gain something valuable about human life to teach to either themselves or the children since *The Happy Prince* is full of good teachings of morality. The Happy Prince had once been the real prince of the Palace of Sans-Souci. His courtiers had called him the Happy Prince because he had always lived in

happiness inside the Palace, he had never known what had happened outside the Palace, where there were ugliness and misery. All he knew at that time was pleasure of life. After he had died, people set his figure on a statue high above the city. We can see in this story that his limitation doesn't make him stop thinking of and caring for others.

Last but not least, this thesis is truly expected to be able to encourage our literary authorities and Indonesian writers to think of writing, or at least translating and adapting, stories which are useful and meaningful for our today's children, since we see that our children today are 'hungry' for such stories which are well-filled with good messages or valuable teachings for them.

E. Scope and Limitation

In this thesis, the writer will focus the analysis on describing the theme and the messages of *The Happy Prince*. Before describing the messages of the story, the writer will find the theme of the stories.

The theme is the idea that puts the basis for the story. It emerges in the characters and whatever they do in action. Based on this fact, the writer will emphasize the analysis on the characters of the

story, especially the major characters, the Happy Prince himself and his friend, the Swallow, and their conflicts to finally describe the theme and the messages. Besides, the writer will also analyze the setting and the plot of the story in general to support the analysis to find the theme and the messages.

F. Theoretical Background

This thesis is concentrated on the searching for the theme and the messages of Oscar Wilde's *The Happy Prince*. In analysing the story, the writer will see it only from its existence as the work of art. According to the statement, the analysis will be focused only on the intrinsic elements, that are plot, characters, conflict, setting, and theme. In this way, the kind of approach he uses is the *intrinsic approach*, which deals with only the intrinsic elements of a story.

Due to the fact that the writer will see the story only from its existence as the work of art and focus on the intrinsic elements, he will at the same time disregard any extrinsic aspects of the story. He will look at the story only by the criteria intrinsic to its own mode of being. In this way, it will be easier for the writer to go solely through the work

itself. Therefore, the theory that the writer chooses is the objective theory.

G. Method of the Study

In writing this thesis, the writer collects informations from encyclopedia, dictionaries, books on literary theories, and any printed materials dealing with literature or especially with short stories. The main reference of the study is, of course, the work itself. However, some relevant books on literary theories are required as a support to understand the theories that are used in the analyzing process. Yet, some more books or printed materials are also used as references. All the printed materials can be seen in the bibliography.

The method used by the writer in building up the analysis is the descriptive method. He will make a descriptive analysis on the short story he is analyzing so as to find the theme and the messages.

Another method used here is the content-analysis method, which emphasizes on the subject matter of a work of literature. By this method, the writer will focus on the text itself, or the intrinsic elements of the stories, especially plot, character, conflict, setting, and theme. Those intrinsic elements are the

aspects that support the content of the story, so that they will surely lead the writer to understand the theme of the story and finally to bring out the messages.

H. Definition of Key Terms

The Happy Prince

In this thesis, there are two kinds of the term 'The Happy Prince'. The first is one which is written in italic (*The Happy Prince*). It refers to the title of the story. The second is one which is written in a usual way (the Happy Prince). It refers to the major character of the story, that is the Happy Prince. Sometimes, it is also written 'the Prince'.

The Swallow

The term 'the Swallow' in this thesis is begun with a capital letter in the word 'Swallow' because it refers to not just another swallow but a major character of the story. The Swallow is a little swallow that became a friend of the Happy Prince and helped him much.

CHAPTER II

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK