

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

Each individual has his or her own ideas about many things, and there is no exception on the perception of a better life. Perception of a better life is not just about having a luxurious house or expensive car. Someone can be categorized as a successful person if he or she does not just have many expensive things, but also has good social status in society.

To stand out and become well known in the public is certainly not an easy thing to achieve. Someone must have the courage to sacrifice what he or she has in order to get 'recognition' in the society. The desire to stand out and become well known can be found in many countries, including an advanced country like America. Americans realize that they live in super power country. Therefore, they begin to raise their prestige in their daily lives. Maintaining the image as a country that has a high prestige is more difficult than to get the image. One way for people who live in America to maintain that image is to look 'different' and attractive.

Keeping fit-looking appearance that reflects someone's personality is essential to maintain the prestige. An expensive and attractive appearance is very important because it is an outside representation for someone, to show to other people that he or she is a person who has a good wealth, even though perhaps, it is not. When appearance becomes a main thing for someone to declare their existence, many people are competing to look attractive and different from others.

Expensive looking is one of many features to get an attractive appearance. Many people consider an expensive appearance by wearing expensive branded products.

According to Bauman, The epidemic of using branded products in order to get good representation does not only happen to the adults in America, but also the teenagers in America. Because teenagers tend to imitate what they see and still do not have stable thought about what it means to look attractive. Teenagers have unstable emotions and take for granted the things that their parents do every day. The center of a teenagers' thought lies in what they call as freedom. A teenager thinks that adolescence is a critical period, in that way, they should be able to express themselves through fashion. The more interesting, different, and expensive their appearance, the more they can be accepted by their surroundings. Acceptable in new circles is one thing, but trying to be accepted by a circle in a 'wrong' way is a story in itself.

The Clique is a novel that offers its readers about daily life of teenagers in America. The writer is interested to scrutinize *The Clique* because the novel shows the reality of teenagers that happen until today. In fact, it is not only the teenagers who experience the things that happened in the novel, even adults feel the same. *The Clique* is something people commonly called as teen-lit. Teen-lit or teenage literature is a text that written especially for teenage girls. It usually tells about the stories that happen around teenager's world. Teen-lit is never considered as a serious and heavy reading. Most people consider teen-lit only as a light reading, just to entertain and kill time. Not many academic writing has been done

using teenlit as the main source. That is why the writer interested in analyzing this novel, beside of its content that is quite easy to understand.

First published in 2004, *The Clique* is basically talking about four teenagers who have been friends for a long time. Four of them came from a very wealthy family and lived in a big city named Westchester in New York. In addition, as someone who comes from a rich family and lives in big cities, expensive-looking and interesting appearance is definitely needed. Like most people, they represent the appearance by wearing expensive branded products. Someone's value as a person seems to be deemed almost exclusively on how much they have, what they wear based on the whole appearance, not nearly as much on the quality of the person someone is.

The group is known as 'Pretty Committee' consisting of Massie Block, Dylan Marvil, Alicia Rivera, and Kristen Gregory, they are the most popular girls in one of the most prestigious private school, Octavian Country Day (OCD). Each character in 'Pretty Committee' has its own unique story that is interesting to be discussed. This study will look deeper on the members of Pretty Committee's characterization based on their action and speech in the novel *The Clique*. The dependence of 'pretty committee' members on the usage of branded products are also very interesting to be discussed, because it is a main issue for many people who already stuck with thoughts about the use of branded products.

The author of *The Clique* is Lisi Harrison. One good reason why the author started writing this novel is that she saw many similar problems experienced by people who show off in rallying to get respect from the

surrounding. Based on the interview with Lisi Harrison in Teenreads.com, she said that the book was written for 9-12 year old children, but people of all ages seem to be getting something out of it. This is because she thinks that 'cliques', 'bullying' and the need to 'fit in' happen at every age, even adults feel it. Lisi Harrison eventually represented the problem in a book she wrote using teenagers as her 'medium'. The language used by the author is also very easy to understand that makes it easy for readers to understand the actual contents of the novel. The symbols in this novel are also important in enriching this novel. The symbols of a great life among society, an invisible and open war on breaking down a good established idea of richness, and also consumerism in daily life are fully represented by the author. Following its success, a Hollywood producer agreed to bring the novel into the big screen only a few years after it was published.

The concept of consumerism will be applied to scrutinize more about *The Clique* novel. Consumerism is also necessary to discuss further and raise the issues inside the novel. Consumerism became a center of any study in the twentieth century. Several issues such as consuming lifestyle, and brand-minded will be discussed to find out more about the reflection and description of the characters in the novel with the real lives of teenagers in America. However, this study will focus on the characterization of the novel to narrow the discussion.

The characterization on the members of 'Pretty Committee' is really important to sharpen the analysis, and also try to analyze the personality and their habits that could be a clue to analyze their lifestyle based on consumerism. Surrounding environment that may also influence the character's personality will

also not be separated from the writer's analysis. However, the focus is very necessary for the writing of this thesis. The issues that will be raised are the issue of consuming lifestyle and brand-minded that has been spread among the American public, in this case, focusing on teenagers, since lifestyle offers a distraction, as Bill Osgerby means, from the “challenges and dangers of day-to-day living” (143). The characters' lifestyle as their distraction on their daily life is also becomes one of many causes to explain the characters' behavior toward expensive appearance. Lifestyles and the issue about the use of branded products by the teenagers in America are also important to be analyzed because brand-minded and lifestyle has a very strong relationship with consuming and existence itself.

The issues of the brand-minded and consuming lifestyle are interesting subjects of discussion because both issues have become a global issue. There are so many ideas between the experts in the development of consuming lifestyle itself. Because basically everyone is a consumer, but some people think that consumer attitudes are necessary in order to maintain a quality appearance and image like the characters in *The Clique*. The desire to be the center of attention is also one of the many factors why the concept of luxurious lifestyle and the use of branded products are badly needed. To support the lavish lifestyles and use of branded products, more consumption is certainly needed. That is why this study will look deeper in these issues because they are strongly interrelated with each other and already become a global issue.

1.2 Statement of the Problems

This study will finally come out with one main point to be discussed within the analysis

1. What kind of consumerist lifestyle of American teenagers shown by the characters in the novel?

1.3 Objective of the Study

Relating to the statement of the problem, there are several objectives expected to be achieved. The writer hopes the objectives will be able to answer the statement of the problem. Therefore, the main aim of this thesis will be:

1. To find out what kind of consumerist lifestyle of American teenagers shown by the characters in the novel.

1.4 Significance of the Study

Literary work can also be a form of fight and struggle. One of many reasons why the writer interested to analyze *The Clique* novel because the novel is considered as teen-lit. Teen-lit has always been regarded as light reading and never counted as serious literature. It can be proved by the small number of academic writing that use teen-lit as their main source of analysis. Whereas, teen-lit usually tells about the reality happens in teenagers' world. Many teen-lit writers give portray about teenagers' world and try to represent the problems that usually concerned around teenagers' life. Teen-lit is a good example for readers to understand more about teenagers and look further to the story behind the

teenagers' life and problems. That is why the writer felt compelled to discuss this novel deeper because of what is regarded as light reading turns out to save a lot of issues that have been globalized.

This novel also differs from the others because the author describes about general problems experienced by almost everyone in their interactions in society. Although this novel tells about the daily life of teenagers in America, but the problems that is inherent in this novel are actually experienced by many people, including teenagers. The issues presented in the novel is also interesting to discuss because almost everyone ever been in the position of the characters in this novel. Each person must ever be in a position when they feel the pressure from the public and people around them to look attractive.

This novel also describes the efforts undertaken by the characters to become the center of attention, as a proof that the characters also reflect the real daily life of teenagers in America. However, this novel does not only describe the situation among teenagers, but also the real situation among adults. The novel basically tells about the pressure in order to fit in among the society. Apparently, this situation not only happened in teenagers' world, but also in adults'. Besides going to discuss about the issues contained in the novel, this study will also discuss about how the characters in the novel reflects teenager's life in America. The writer hopes to characterize and analyze the issues contained in *The Clique*, so that the readers will be able to see how efforts, lifestyle, and habits of the characters in the novel also reflect the fact of teenage life in America.

1.5 Scope and Limitation

In order to gain a comprehensive analysis, a scope and limitation will be noticed in scrutinizing the novel. Using consumerism to elaborate the characters in novel, the focus on the characterization in the novel is needed. The object of the analysis will be a work of literature entitled *The Clique* (2004), written by Lisi Harrison. Several issues that appear in the novel will also be presented to make the analysis clear.

The analysis of the characterization in this novel is very important to do to show the reality of being a teenager and their dependence on consumerism. To analyze this novel, the author will try to give a clear picture of the characters' everyday lives as well as their efforts to become the center of attention. Pursuit to get a lot of attention from their surrounding will be discussed in this study. Lifestyle and efforts would be associated with the issues that exist in the novel, which is consumption move in teenager's daily life.

1.6 Theoretical Background

One specific theory is used to support the analysis of the novel and to complete the study. The theory of consumerism will be used to analyze the characters in the novel based on their lifestyle and consuming habits. This study, therefore, use the element of characterization. The study will be focusing on a subject of characterization in the novel as the result of socioeconomic condition, fashion, and the role of lifestyle implied in the novel. The explanation about the

daily life as a teenager in this novel, which also has a strong relation with lifestyle and their consuming habits is also important to bridge the novel with the theory.

The concept of consumerism by Steven Miles will be used in analyzing the characters' aspect on having a strong willing to be the center of attention. "The twentieth century began with high hopes for replacing the competition of the marketplace by a more efficient and more humane economy, planned and controlled by government in the interests of the people." (Sowell, 178). In this case, consumerism starts its story by being a center of any study. Consumerism began to be a popular study because it is showing its existences in the society. The simplest way to explain the significance of consumerism is that it describes the process of purchasing products such as food, clothing, house, car, electricity, water, or anything else, and then consuming or using those products.

The meaning of consumerism itself, however, goes well further than the definition, and has experienced a few collisions that changed from its original way when it was first used in the 1930s to illustrate a new consumer movement founded in conflict to the bigger dominance of advertising against society. However, by the end of the twentieth century, it is with much irony that consumerism came to mean a cultural nation striking in purpose to reliance on business and never-ending shopping and buying. This movement in the meaning of consumerism reflects the shift in how commercial values have transformed American culture over the century. Therefore, the writer felt consumerism is suitable as a tool to analyze the novel deeper, for the investigation of the characterization, especially their lifestyles and consuming products in the novel.

1.7 Method of the Study

In order to keep up the validity of the data, the analysis requires consistent and accurate information concerning the topic. Based on this fact, some sources that support the analysis of this topic will be added. In addition, since the study focuses on literary work, particularly a novel, qualitative research is considered as the applicable theory in conducting the research.

Further, the research in analyzing the novel is completed by collecting more information through library research, including the literary work being analyzed. Other sources and several books related to the topic will also be used. In addition, the references related to the study, from online journals and articles as well as any printed materials dealing with literature and the novel itself are also utilized. The main reference of this study is the work itself, yet other relevant books and literary theories are required to help the writer understand the issues during the analysis process.

The main source of the data is the novel itself. The writer will read the novel and scan the events, especially the characters as a main foundation that will be analyzed. Moreover, the next method used is data collecting, to collect data related to the novel. Reviews and criticism on the novel will also be helpful source of the analysis.

1.8 Definition of Key Terms

- Brands** : Distinguishing symbol, mark, logo, name, word, sentence, or a combination of these items that companies use to distinguish their product from others in the market.
- Clique** : Small, exclusive group of people; group with common interest or pursuit.
- Issue** : Subject of concern: something for discussion or of general concern; the central or most important topic in a discussion or debate
- Lifestyle** : Manner of living: the way of life characteristic of a particular person, group, or culture
- Peer Pressure** : Social pressure by members of one's peer group to take a certain action, adopt certain values, or otherwise conform in order to be accepted.
- Prestige** : Distinction or reputation attaching to a person or thing and thus possessing a cachet for others or for the public; having or showing success, rank, wealth, etc.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

