

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

A. Background of the Study

Living under poverty usually forces people to do everything in order to survive for their lives. People have to face limited access for some facilities especially in education and health for those who live under poverty. With such condition, people will fight against those conditions and struggle in order to get what they want. They will do everything to change the condition. It can be done by always doing as best as they can and being enthusiastic in living their lives.

Enthusiasm is a spirit that has been set afire to overcome the difficulties (Pale 3). It is needed for those who want to continue their lives. People often get what they want and make their dreams come true by being enthusiastic and believing in themselves. With enthusiasm, people can face any obstacle which may block the dream comes true including limited access in some facilities. This fact becomes an interesting topic to be discussed in a literary work. Enthusiasm differs for each people, depending on what kind of condition that they are in. Some literary works depict the life under poverty and the enthusiasm not only for changing the condition but also for making the dream come true as the main issue. It shows that nothing is impossible with the enthusiasm.

In literature, a story of living with enthusiasm under the poor condition is just like the real fact that is faced by some children in daily life. Many people see this story as a kind of miniature in human's experience for telling to the readers. A story that raises the issue of social life can be seen through literature since it reveals most of experiences in daily lives. Novel is one example of how literary works contribute to the study of social life.

The Barn is one of novels by Avi. The story tells the reader about Benjamin's enthusiasm to accomplish his father's dream, eventhough he lives under poverty with his family. This novel sets in 1850s in Oregon. The story begins with Benjamin's returning from the boarding school since his father suffers a disease that it is called as stroke. Ben's father cannot talk or move. Ben's sister and brother neglect to take care of their father since his father cannot do anything on his own anymore. His sister wants to get married with his boyfriend, while his brother wants to work outside the town. Ben tries to convince his sister and brother to stay for a while so that they can take care of their father and work in the fields together. It falls upon Ben, after discussing about his father's condition with his sister and brother, to care for their father including feeding and washing him. When Benjamin finally finds the way to heal his father by building the barn, he has to solve any problem which blocks his plan so that his father's dream will come true.

Avi was born in New York on December 23, 1937. His birth name was Erdward Irving Wortis and his twin sister who gave him a unique name as Avi. He grew up in an artist's family and writers. He began his writing career

as a playwright. Then, he wrote some novels for children. His works consist of some fictions including historical fiction, animal fantasy, contemporary fiction, supernatural tales, coming-of-age novels and comic stories. His works that got many awards like *The True Confessions of Charlotte Doyle* (1991) and *Nothing but the Truth* (1992) were named Newbery Honor Books. In 2003, he won award Newbery Medal in his novel titled *Crispin: The Cross of Lead*. *The Barn* itself got ALA notable book in 1995. *The Barn* also was chosen as Teacher's choice 1995 and Chicago Tribune Best Book for Young Readers (Geye 2).

The reason to choose this novel is because this story is interesting to motivate other people when they read it. Even though living under poverty, it does not mean that people easily give up with their condition. Living under poverty also cannot be seen as an obstacle for family especially children to achieve their dream. Living with enthusiasm can inspire the other people. New Criticism will be applied to analyze the story because the theory can find out the meaning of text from the text itself without any source outside the text that can influence the text's meaning such as history or author's background. It also can analyse the elements of the text deeper by using New Criticism since each element is revealed one by one but the meaning is related to each other as the organic unity.

Benjamin's enthusiasm to accomplish his father's dream will be discussed in this study. It will be interesting to be discussed since people will make it as a good example and motivate them to make their dreams or their

parents' dream comes true. Beside that, Benjamin's characterization is an important thing to be discussed for he, as the main character, has a great influence to the whole study from the beginning until the end.

B. Statement of the Problems

Based on the background above, the statement of problems can be formulated as follows:

1. How is Benjamin's characterization depicted in Avi's *The Barn*?
2. How is Benjamin's enthusiasm portrayed in accomplishing his father's dream to build the barn?

C. Objective of the Study

The objectives of the study are:

1. To explain Benjamin's characterization that is depicted in Avi's *The Barn*.
2. To explain Benjamin's enthusiasm that is portrayed in accomplishing his father's dream to build the barn.

D. Scope and Limitation

This study will be focused on formal element of the story, especially characterization, plot, and setting that will support the theme. Benjamin's characterization will be the main discussion since he is the one who succeeds

to persuade his sister and brother in making true his father's dream to build the barn. Beside that, the importance of the barn for Benjamin's father has interrelationship with Benjamin character itself. Through Benjamin's characterization, it can be seen the enthusiasm of Benjamin to build the Barn including the obstacles that must be solved by him. Linguistic devices which are paradox, irony, and ambiguity are also discussed to support this study.

E. Significance of the Study

The study is expected to contribute to the academic students of Universitas Airlangga. This study is to provide the important idea of *The Barn's* novel and the way to analyze novel or prose by applying New Criticism theory. Then, this study serves as a reference for students of literature major at Universitas Airlangga who want to study prose. Thus, this study also purposes to give brief explanation about formal elements in a literary text especially in characterization, plot, and setting which are related to the theme as an organic unity. It will be supported by some linguistic devices which are paradox, irony, and ambiguity that depicted in the text.

Above all, this study is important since it provides the picture of the life in country side under the poverty with limited access of education and health facilities. Through Benjamin's characterization, it is expected that the reader will get more understanding on the portrayal of the boy who tried to ensure both his older sister and brother for keeping their father alive by

making his father's dream comes true to build the barn. It is also expected that the reader can get the picture of children who show their affection by taking care of their parents when they are sick. In doing so, this study is expected to give contribution in increasing sense of humanity in society.

F. Theoretical Background

The Barn Novel by Avi will be analyzed by using the theory of New Criticism for this theory is the most compatible to get the meaning of the story considering it will be found in the text itself. New Criticism will be used in analysing the formal elements such as characterization, plot, and setting. In characterization, it will discuss more about Benjamin character as the main character who makes a change in family's life. In plot, it will focus more in conflict since it has relation to the theme. In setting, it will support the story line since the setting has great influence to the story line.

Examining and analyzing the formal elements of the literary work can be done with New Criticism theory since New Criticism believes that there is a relationship between the meaning and the formal element of the text (Tyson 149). By looking at the formal elements, the reader can get the idea and the value of the text like Tyson stated that formal elements is the only way to determine the text's value (147). Litz, et al. also emphasizes that each formal element has inter-reaction with the other elements in order to get the theme and contribute to the unity since literary text is an organic in nature (206). No

matter how each formal element has its own interpretation but all of the formal elements unite to support the theme (organic unity).

The formal elements that will be discussed in this study are characterization, plot, and setting. Characterization is the way the writer reveals the personality of a character (Kennedy 45). Plot is a pattern of carefully selected, causally related events that contains conflict (Griffith 30). Plot has cause-effect relation in literary text to create the conflict towards the character (Nurgiyantoro 112). Setting is “the place or location of a story’s action along with the time in which it occurs” (DiYanni 61).

Linguistic devices that will be analyzed in this study are paradox, irony, and ambiguity. Paradox is a statement that seems self-contradictory but represents the actual way things are, while irony is a statement or event undermined by the context in which it occurs. Ambiguity here is a word, image, or event that has two or more different meanings (Tyson 138-140).

New Criticism dominated literary studies from the 1940s through the 1960s that concerns with the text itself. It means that New Criticism focuses the reader’s attention on literary work as the sole source of evidence for interpreting it (Tyson 136). The reader cannot interpret the text by looking to the author’s intention (intentional fallacy) or by looking to the reader’s personal response that will produce the feeling and emotion to the text (affective fallacy). It also cannot be looking the biographical-historical context as it dominated literary studies in the nineteenth and early twentieth century. It is known as “the death of the author.” It means that it excludes the use of

historical background of the text, author's background, author's intentions, and the reader's response in interpreting the text.

G. Method of the Study

The method of the study is qualitative method and the analysis of this study is applying New Criticism theory. The primary source of the study is *The Barn* novel by Avi that is the most important source in which the data for this study come from. The other data can be found from the secondary sources which are printed books, journals, articles and electronic books to support and provide the information for this study. The next method is close reading that is done by reading the novel more than once to get more understanding of the story itself. Then, it continues with finding the issue from the text that will be suited to be analyzed by New Criticism theory. The process of analysis of this study is by discussing Benjamin's character since he is the one who accomplishes his father's dream with supporting from his sister and brother. It can be found by the narration of the author and the dialogues between the characters in the story. Then, the next analysis is about finding the enthusiasm of Benjamin, including the obstacles and its solutions, in accomplishing his father's dream to build the barn. In this case, it will automatically discuss the formal elements those are the characterization, plot, and setting of the story. It also will discuss linguistic devices which are paradox, irony, and ambiguity that support this study. All of the formal elements and linguistic devices will have different interpretation but they will share the same idea. All of the

interpretations are based on *The Barn* novel itself as the primary source. From these interpretations, the writer will draw conclusion to show the organic unity of every elements of the story as the last step. So, the writer can get better understanding from the formal elements of the story.

H. Definition of Key Terms

Characterization : The process in treating the characters.

Enthusiasm : Enthusiasm is a spirit that has been set afire to overcome the difficulties.

Plot : a pattern of carefully selected, causally related events that contains conflict.

Setting : the place or location of a story's action along with the time in which it occurs.

Theme : a central idea in the literary works.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW