

## **CHAPTER I**

### **INTRODUCTION**

#### **1.1 Background of the Study**

Nowadays, we live under an established government which set the laws to keep the society in order. Our society is quite easy to get food, water, and other basic needs. Because all the needs are easily available, people tend not to do evil things, such as killing each other. Then, what happens if the government is away? Cormac McCarthy's novel *The Road* tells the life in a post-apocalyptic condition. This condition happens after the collapse of law and social order in which, people live in very limited circumstances, and a total chaos.

Post-apocalyptic fiction is a sub-genre of science fiction that is concerned with the end of civilization either through nuclear war, plague, environmental diseases, or some other general disasters. Post-apocalyptic itself in Oxford Dictionary of Science Fiction is defined as a large-scale disaster in which civilization has been destroyed or has regressed to a more primitive level. After the World War II, this genre obtained its popularity (Booker & Thomas 53-54). In *The Road*, we can see how the main character struggles to live their lives in the post-apocalyptic world.

This novel tells about a father and his son, whose name is never mentioned, struggling to stay alive without being cannibal like others. They make a journey along the land which is dark and grim. The setting is some years after civilization and most life on Earth have been destroyed by a mayor unexplained

cataclysm. The land is full of ash and there is no living animals or plants. Many survivors have turned into cannibals who kill other people for their meal. The boy's mother has given up facing this condition, and after delivering him, she committed suicide. And these two people are left side by side to survive in that grim world.

The Man realizes that the winter would kill them so he decides to take his son south along empty roads towards the sea. They only bring their possessions inside their knapsacks and a supermarket cart which they find at street. Because of the bad weather, the man gets coughs with blood from time to time. However, although realizing he is dying, The Man still struggles to protect his son from the constant threats of attack, exposure, and starvation.

When finally reaching the sea, The Man and The son do not seem to find what they want: peace. Honestly, nothing is improved. The condition is as grim and decayed as the place they left. Finally, The Man's illness brings him to his death. Before he dies, the father tells the boy that he can continue to speak with him in his imagination after he is gone. After the third day of his father's death, The Boy meets a man who says he has been tracking him and his father. He knows that his father was sick. This man, showing that he has a wife and two children, a boy and a girl, succeeds in convincing The Boy that he is one of the good guys and takes him under his protection.

*The Road* shows the reader that even though the nature has been destroyed and the people live in very limited circumstances, they can still survive. With this novel, Cormac McCarthy has won the 2006 Pulitzer Prize. This novel is not only

hailed by critics as McCarthy's masterpiece, it has also achieved commercial success. Besides Pulitzer Prize, this novel also got the James Tait Black Memorial Prize for Fiction in the same year (<http://www.cormacmccarthy.com/works/the-road/>).

McCarthy succeeded in winning some awards because of the theme of the novel which showed some environmental condition. In one of his article published in Guardian.co.uk, George Monbiot, a British environmental campaigner nominated McCarthy into "50 people who could save the planet" by stating that *The Road* is the most important environmental book ever because it shows "that everything we value depends on the ecosystem". Another reason for *The Road* to be an award-deserving novel for the genre is that it does not contain graphs, figures, facts, warnings, arguments, predictions, tables or a single dreary sentence which we can always find in many novels of the same genre.

*The Road* was published in 2006 by Vintage Book. It was also chosen by Oprah's Book Club and becomes "Top 10 Bestselling Oprah's Book Club Books in the past 10 years" by selling 1,385,000 copies in United States ([http://www.mediabistro.com/galleycat/top-10-bestselling-books-in-oprahs-book-club\\_b30637](http://www.mediabistro.com/galleycat/top-10-bestselling-books-in-oprahs-book-club_b30637)). This Oprah's choice also becomes the reason why this book achieved commercial success. *The Road* does not tell what happened with the world. It just shows that there was a catastrophe, but what kind of catastrophe it is not explained. The "moment of destruction is still interesting, but it does not matter anymore. "It doesn't matter how the world ends, just that it does. Making it to the End doesn't mean the story's finished; much of the time, it's only just gotten

started. Stories of the End have never been about ending – they're about the beginning that comes after.” (Phelan, <http://io9.com/5392430/research-reveals-that-apocalyptic-stories-changed-dramatically-20-years-ago>). *The Road*'s theme is about the struggle for survival. It is proven by the efforts of The father to protect himself, but mostly his son, from the constant threats of attack, exposure, and starvation.

Cormac McCarthy is an American novelist. He has written ten novels, with genres ranging from Southern Gothic, Western, and Post-apocalyptic. Three of his novels have been adapted into motion pictures: *No Country for Old Men*, *All the Pretty Horses*, and *The Road*. McCarthy attended the University of Tennessee from 1951–52 and 1957–59 but never graduated. While at UT he published two stories in *The Phoenix* and was awarded the Ingram-Merrill Award for creative writing in 1959 and 1960 (<http://www.cormacmccarthy.com/biography/>)

The writer is interested in analyzing this novel because there is still a few writing in Indonesia about novels told in post-apocalyptic setting. The theme of post-apocalyptic is itself interesting because it is part of urban culture, and thus also part of popular culture. However, McCarty, with his apocalyptic novel, succeeded in winning the Pulitzer Prize in 2006—bringing something which is considered popular to be equalized with high level of literary. *The Road* is also considered one of the best post-apocalyptic novels ever (<http://www.scifinow.co.uk/top-tens/ten-of-the-best-post-apocalyptic-novels/>).

In this study, the writer analyzed the novel using intrinsic approach . What becomes the main focus of this study is how the setting and characters affect the conflicts of the main character, The Man. According to Rene Wellek and Austin Warren in their book *Theory of Literature*, the main part of intrinsic approach is based on the text and the structural points of literary works (75).

Conflicts in this novel become interesting because the setting is in post-apocalyptic time which makes the story more complicated and unnatural. The decayed situation has also caused some conflicts for the main character. Those settings and characters are then analyzed related to its effects towards the conflict of the main character. Like what Wellek (139) states, this study is an intrinsic study because the writer considers one or more elements of fiction, such as setting, and characters into her analysis.

Although considerable research has been devoted to the novel, *The Road*, by Cormac McCarthy, less attention has been paid to the study of the effects of setting and character towards the conflict of the main character.

## **1.2 Statement of the Problem**

Based on the background of study above, the writer is interesting in analyzing about :

- How do the setting and other characters affect the conflict of the main character in *The Road*?

### **1.3 Objective of the Study**

The objective of this study is to find out some influences of the setting and other characters toward the main character in *The Road*. The conflicts found then will be analyzed based on its correlation with the some factors causing their appearance.

### **1.4 Significance of the Study**

The thesis is analyzed thoroughly to be understood by anyone who is interested in learning more about the elements of fictions which affect the conflict of the main character. This analysis can be used as reference for further research, especially students taking literary subjects. Finally, this study is meant to give a better understanding about the novel *The Road*, by Cormac McCarthy.

### **1.5 Scope and Limitation**

The study of setting as a whole is a wide area to cover, so the writer of this thesis limits herself to observe the conflicts that the main character, The father, has to face. The conflict of The son will be part of discussion as long as it has connection with The father's conflicts. The writer focuses on some factors including the setting and other characters which affect the conflict of the main character. The study concern on the novel itself since it is analyzed using intrinsic approach. The setting and characters become consideration in this study if they have such effect onto the conflict of the main character.

## **1.6 Theoretical Background**

In completing this thesis, the writer uses a lot of materials to support her ideas; naturally there are few of them which acted strongly as the foundation instead of others. The writer uses the intrinsic approach suggested by Edgar V. Roberts. Intrinsic approach is used to explore and understand the work itself. The intrinsic approach is focusing on the literary work in isolation from other aspects outside the work such as character, setting and conflict. The writer observes this analysis from the intrinsic angle where all elements of fiction are connected to one another. Finally, from the intrinsic elements, the writer analyzed how they affect the conflict of the main character in *The Road*.

## **1.7 Method of the Study**

This study is a textual research by using qualitative method. Qualitative research means "any kind of research that produces findings not arrived at by means of statistical procedures or other means of quantification" (Strauss and Corbin, 1990, p. 17).

In this study, the writer chose intrinsic approach as the main tool for analysis. The writer analyzed how the narrative elements like setting and characters affect the conflict of the main character. The text of the novel *The Road* by Cormac McCarthy becomes the primary data used in this study. The writer conducted a close-reading a few times towards the novel and she noted some important information related to the topic discussed in this study, especially about the character and setting which affect the conflict of the main character. A further

textual analysis is held to selecting important details as the evidences of her findings.

The writer also read some secondary sources to support the facts she found from the novel. Reading the novel once again, the writer identified some points of the novel which can answer her research question. Finally, she synthesized all the interpreted data into a form of coherent arguments. Using qualitative method, these arguments will be formulated in the conclusion as the outcome of the analysis of this study.

### **1.8 Definition of Key Terms**

- **Character** : Strong, hard-hearted, firm and unyielding character make the Man able to survive and bring his Son further to the South.
- **Post-apocalyptic** : A setting after a great destruction, usually caused by nuclear war.
- **Safety** : The condition of being safe, free from danger, risk, or injury.
- **Shelter** : Something that provides cover or protection, as from the weather.
- **Threatened** : Feelings of insecurity or anxiety.



# **CHAPTER II**

# **LITERATURE REVIEW**