

ABSTRACT

Literature is the reflection of the author's certain thoughts and ideas. Literary works may deal with human experience of life. We can say that literature is the record of what men have seen in life, what they have experienced of it, and what they thought and felt about the aspects of it. As forms of expression, the literary works can be used as the medium to express the certain ideas and thoughts of the author toward social life.

Sinclair Lewis as one of the greatest American novelists in the twentieth century and the first American who received the Nobel Prize for literature had serious interest in many social issues and problems in his own society and his own country. Main Street, which was published in 1920, is the most successful and famous novel of Lewis, since this novel had offered the new but real image of American small town life. In this novel Lewis brilliantly describes the details of the ugliness of American small town and the traditional type of its society.

Main Street was written in the satirical form. Lewis really criticized and satirized the true nature of the life of American small town. Lewis' satire can be

seen through the aspects in this novel , such as the town setting, the small town people, the main character, and the conflict which build the plot of the story. The town setting of the story is emphasizing the bad sides of Gopher Prairie, a small town in Minnesota. Its main street is covered with mud in rainy season, while in summer the temperature is very hot and dusty. It is really an unlovely town. Carol Kennicott, the main and important character of this story, is a city woman who has to live in the small town with her husband. She receives bad treatments from the people who do not like her ideas in improving the town. Besides she is depressed facing the sordidness of the town and its surrounding. She always has conflicts in her social life there because of their different points-of-view and background of life.

Sinclair Lewis has inserted some autobiographical elements in his work, Main Street. They are not less important than the intrinsic aspects above to support and strengthen his satirical purpose regarding the life of an American small town and its people especially in the twenties through this novel.

ABSTRAKSI

Kesusastraan merupakan pencerminan pikiran dan ide tertentu seorang pengarang. Karya-karya sastra mungkin saja berhubungan dengan pengalaman hidup manusia. Dapat kita katakan bahwa sastra merupakan sebuah rekaman - dari apa yang telah dilihat manusia dalam hidupnya, pengalaman, pikiran dan persepsi serta perasaan mereka tentang aspek-aspek kehidupan. Sebagai suatu bentuk ekspresi, karya-karya sastra dapat digunakan sebagai media untuk menuangkan pikiran dan ide tertentu dari pengarang terhadap kehidupan sosial.

Sinclair Lewis salah satu novelis Amerika terbesar abad dua puluh adalah orang Amerika pertama yang menerima hadiah Nobel untuk bidang sastra. Ia punya perhatian serius terhadap masalah sosial dalam masyarakat dan negaranya. Novel Main Street yang diterbitkan tahun 1920 adalah novel Lewis yang paling berhasil dan terkenal, sebab novel ini telah memberikan citra baru namun nyata - tentang kehidupan kota kecil Amerika. Lewis berhasil - menggambarkan dengan sangat baik, detil-detil keburukan kota kecil Amerika tersebut disertai tipe masyarakatnya yang tradisional.

Main Street ditulis dalam suatu bentuk satire, - karena Lewis benar-benar mengkritik dan menyindir gambar

-an sebenarnya dari kehidupan kota kecil di Amerika. Sindiran Lewis tersebut dapat dilihat melalui aspek-aspek - di dalam novel ini, seperti seting kotanya, masyarakat - kota kecilnya, tokoh utamanya dan konflik-konfliknya yang membangun alur cerita tersebut. Seting kota dalam cerita ini menonjolkan sisi buruk Gopher Prairie, sebuah kota - kecil di Minnesota. Jalan utamanya tertutup oleh lumpur pada musim hujan, sementara di musim panas udara tidak - hanya amat panas namun juga berdebu. Gopher Prairie betul-betul bukan kota yang cantik. Carol Kennicott, tokoh utama dan penting dalam cerita ini, ialah seorang wanita kota yang harus tinggal di kota kecil tersebut bersama - suaminya. Wanita ini mendapat perlakuan yang tidak baik dari masyarakat kota kecil tersebut yang tidak suka terhadap ide-idenya untuk mengembangkan kota. Wanita ini sa ngat terpukul melihat kekumuhan kota dan lingkungan disekitarnya. Dia dan masyarakat kota tersebut selalu mengalami konflik dalam kehidupan sosial karena perbedaan pandangan hidup dan latar belakang satu sama lain.

Beberapa elemen otobiografi Sinclair Lewis telah disisipkannya di dalam novel Main Street ini. Hal ini tidak kalah pentingnya dengan aspek-aspek intrinsik dalam mendukung dan memperkuat tujuan sindirannya tentang kehidupan kota kecil Amerika beserta masyarakatnya yang masih tradisional pada tahun dua puluhan melalui novel ini.

SYNOPSIS

Carol Milford Kennicott, a graduate of Blodgett College, with a year of additional study in a Chicago library school, works as a librarian in St. Paul, Minnesota, for three years before her marriage to Dr. Will Kennicott, a native of Gopher Prairie. She is a rebel against ugliness, and one factor in her decision to accept Kennicott is the opportunity to make over a planless prairie town.

The story proper begins when, after a honeymoon in the Colorado Mountain, the Kennicotts approach Gopher Prairie on the train. In the drab town are three thousand people, in a social strata ranging from farmer to bank president. There is no park to rest the eyes in main street. The Kennicott family home is outdated and stuffy in Carol's opinion. The prairie, vast and empty, stretches away on every side.

Dreams end and realism begins when Carol takes a thirty-minute walk, inspecting the town, north and south, east and west. Then she realizes the shabbiness surrounding her. Her first social evening is also a disappointment, for she finds bad habits of the small town people. They, both men and women, like to evaluate and criticize

a new person from all sides.

As time goes on, Carol makes one attempt after another to enlist the help of others in uplifting Gopher Prairie. She tries to introduce something different. An early project is the formation of a dramatic club, which functions to present 'The Girl from Kankakee' for the small town people. Carol becomes a member of the Jolly Seventeen, a bridge club composed of an elite group of young married women. She also joins the Thanatopsis Club, a literary organization, and tries to change the club programs. Her suggestions make little headway. Her appointment to the library board gives her a chance to express her opinions about books and reading, but her ideas are not welcomed by the local librarian.

After the Kennicotts' child, Hugh, is born, Carol feels that with a baby she can never escape from Gopher Prairie. For two years after Hugh is born, Carol is a part of the town. She has already begun to plan her son's college education.

Parallel with the story of the Kennicotts is that of Bea Sorenson, Carol's maid who becomes the wife of Miles Bjornstam, a free-thinking Swede. Carol's closest woman friend is Vida Sherwin, a high school teacher, who has almost the same background of education with Carol's and later marries Raymond Wutherspoon, a manager of the Bon Ton, the highest class store in town.. Carol is attracted to Guy Pollock, a lawyer who has ideas similar

to her. He had attempted some improvement projects, like Carol, but all of them ended in failure.

The only serious extra-marital love affair in Main Street is that between Carol and Erik valborg, a tailor's assistant five years younger than she. Their relationship becomes the town gossip which is always talked by the people. Dr. Kennicott puts a stop to the romance and makes plain to his wife the kind of life she will lead if she married the son of a Swede farmer. Erik abruptly leaves the town on train.

Finally Carol takes the train herself with Hugh. She leaves Kennicott and spends eighteen months working in Washington. She enjoys the city life, but after a time she is willing to return to her husband and Gopher Prairie. Gradually her horizon is broadened, and she becomes conscious of some of the reasons for her mistakes in Gopher Prairie. Her hatred of the town has run out. Returning to Gopher Prairie, Carol finds that the town has not changed, except for some new buildings. Then the second Kennicott baby is born, a girl. Carol predicts her child will see great changes.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION