

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1 Background of the Study

Literature is interesting to be discussed. Literature has some definitions based on what relates to, thus, we should specify its definition. Here, the researcher defines that literature is an art that made of words (Gutkind 1). There would be always some messages, point of view, and idea that try to be explored by literature. No matter what it is, where it is and when it is.

We have known that literature is a part of the human life that reflected the reality in what happened in each aspect of live. Literature represents life which deals with internal and external factors of human life; it will be interested to criticize it, because we will get a lot of knowledge by this criticism (Jones 1). To criticize literary works, we need some understandings about literary criticism. Peck and Coyle define that Literary criticism is the analysis, interpretation and evaluation of literary works (150). It does not mean that literary criticism is to find the fault in literary works. Analyzing literature means analyzing human life as experiences, ideas, motivations, emotions or expectations which are expressed in the words.

Literary work is an author's creative thinking. The author writes the literary based on what he feels, sees, and the experiences in real life. Literature represents life; and life is, in a large meaning, social reality, even though the natural world and subjective

world of the individual have also been the objects of the literary 'imitation' (Wellek and Waren 94). In other way we can say, literature is one of the subject which deals with inner and outer factors of human life which are described through author's imagination. The author creates the literary work not only using the skill and creation ability at all, but also based on the vision, inspiration and struggle.

Literature has several genres; some of them are poetry, drama, and novel (Borges 21). As like another field of study, literature also has its main function. Nevertheless, the writer not discuss all about those literary genre. In this study, the writer is going to discuss about the novel as one of literary works will be analyzed.

According to Encyclopedia Britannica (1994) Novel is an invented prose narrative on considerable length and a certain complexity that deals imaginatively with human experience usually through a connected sequence of events involving a group of persons in a specific setting. Within its broad framework, the genre of the novel has encompassed an extensive range of types and styles: picaresque, epistolary, Gothic, romantic, realist, historical to name only some of the more important ones.

Some of the authors write a novel in the form of women's experience. One of the authors who wrote the novel as representation women's experience is Harriet Jacobs. Jacobs writes *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* and published the novel in 1861. The novel tells about a woman's struggle, to get what she needs. Although she is slave but she always struggle to get her freedom and her children.

*Incident in the Life of a Slave Girl* sets in the year when Civil War began. It tells about women enslavement and sexual exploitation. Harriet Jacobs' autobiography, written under the pseudonym "Linda Brent", details her experiences as a slave in North Carolina, her escape to be free in the north, and her ensuing struggles to make free her children. The narrative was partly serialized in the New York Tribune, but was discontinued because Jacobs' depictions of the sexual abuse of female slaves were considered too shocking. (Manfra 3). Harriet Jacobs describes her efforts to fight off the advances of her master, her eventual liaison with another white man (the father of two of her children), and her ultimately successful struggle for freedom. Jacobs' account of her experiences, and her search for her own voice, prefigure the literary and ideological concerns of generations of African-American women writers to come.

In addition, *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* is the most representative slave narrative written by a woman. Critics who have studied this work find it to be a very valuable text in the tradition of African American literature. The narrative's formal, sometimes melodramatic style that emulates the style of 19th century romantic novels seemed totally inappropriate for its delicate subject matter: the sexual abuse of enslaved black women (Manfra 3).

Based on the background explanation above, the writer intends to study the novel. There are several reasons from writer to conduct this study. First, the struggle of slave woman to get freedom become the main reason for the researcher in analyzing

*Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*, because it becomes the most explosive issue in the novel. Second, this novel tells about racial discrimination and oppression toward slave women. Third, it portrays pain and suffering either (physically and emotionally) by slave woman. Based on those reasons, the researcher focuses her analyze on struggle and oppression to get freedom of slave woman in the novel.

The struggle in getting equality in rights and positions are worth enough to reveal. Feminist literary criticism means to reveal women discrimination and subordination within literary work. From the reason above the researcher wants to analyze the novel by using feminism perspective especially the struggle and oppression to get freedom of slave woman in the novel entitled *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*.

As feminism has been widely known and acknowledged in literary studies, many researchers use the feminism approach to analyze literary works, such as novels. The researcher wants to analyze novel using feminism focuses on radical feminism and existentialist feminist. Generally, women in their relation to men are the main topics discussed in the study.

The related study is done by Miftakhul Maarif, the student of The State Islamic University of Malang (2010), who wrote under the title *Woman Struggle Against Gender Inequality in the Tenant of Wildfell hall by Anee Bronte*. She is focused a

struggle to get understand of position and the role of the woman character, to explore the inequality culture which place woman as an inferior.

The Differences of study with the researcher above, here the researcher focuses the study on the struggle and oppression of a slave girl to get freedom. The researcher focuses in female character who struggle for freedom from suffering and injustice treatment of the slavery in the novel.

### **1.2 Statement of Problems**

Based on the background of the study above, I am interested in analyzing the problems, which are formulated as follows:

1. What kind of oppression that experienced by Linda as a slave woman?
2. How did Linda fight against the oppression?
3. What is the meaning of Linda's freedom for female existence?

### **1.3 Objective of Study**

Related to statement of the problem, the objectives of this study are formulated as follows:

1. To describe the kind of oppressions was experienced by Linda as a slave woman in Harriet Jacobs' *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*.
2. To reveal the fight of Linda as a slave women against the oppression in Harriet Jacobs' *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*.
3. To know the meaning of Linda's freedom for female existence.

#### **1.4 Scope and Limitation**

This research aims to analysis the novel *Incident in the Life of a Slave Girl* by Harriet Jacobs. Here, the researcher wants to conduct an analysis on one of the characters in the novel, Harriet Jacobs, she is the female character who fights against the oppression and for the efforts done by her. She is a slave woman as the character in the story who undergoes the oppression and suffering sexual exploitation. Thus, in this study the writer focuses the female character who struggle for freedom from suffering and injustice treatment in slavery.

#### **1.5 Significance of the Study**

The researcher hopes that the finding of the study will give direct contribution to the existing knowledge in the field of literature. Theoretically, the researcher aims to enrich to the theoretical based on literary studies, especially related to the feminist literary criticism. Feminism as one of the literary criticism can also be applied in several side of life. By having well understanding about feminism, we will be more sensitive to the set of problems in life, especially about women. Furthermore, it can give general information and understanding for the reader that essentially man and woman are equal, whether the right, power, or competence in society. Thus, it should be there is no different assumption between man and woman. And women should not get discrimination and injustice treatment in the society.

Theoretically, the researcher will know how to analyze novel use feminist literary criticism; in this case the students will get information about struggle of slave woman to get freedom and struggle against oppression as female character in Harriet Jacobs' novel *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*.

Furthermore, the result of this study is expected to be useful as reference and alternative information for others especially English literature students who conduct the similar research.

## **1.6 Method of the Study**

This research is library based. Therefore the writer makes good use of some books including the novel itself as the primary source, articles, journals, and online resources. In presenting the analysis, the writer mainly uses descriptive-analytical method. The research follows the following steps:

1. Reading the novel to get complete and well understanding of the whole story.
2. Find the data in novel to find the word that is related.
3. Selecting and collecting data in form of narration and conversation from the novel related to the problem.
4. Analyzing the data collected by firstly categorizing them into two points, dealing with the statement of problems. Then, each point is analyzed using feminism theory, which refers to the objectives of the study.
5. Making conclusion based on the result of data analysis.

### 1.7 Definition of The Key Terms

**Struggle:** The ability to do something or act in a particular way, the capacity to influence the behavior of others, the emotions, or the course of events.

**Freedom:** The need for independence and spontaneity. It is also the need to have choices and to feel in control of making those choices.

**Oppression:** The unjustifiable placing of a burden on someone or some group, by interfering with their powers, interests, or opportunities. Or, the condition in which people feels unhappy and hardship because of something.

**Slavery:** Slavery is the condition where people have no their own freedom in their life. They are still hold by other people, and they lose their own authority to choose the way of life.

**Feminism:** Comprises a number of social, cultural and political movements, theories and moral philosophies concerned with gender inequalities and equal rights for women