

# CHAPTER ONE

## INTRODUCTION

### **Background of the Study**

Zona Gale is an American woman writer who writes novels, short-stories, and plays. She is also an advocate for women's right (Barbara H. Salomon, Eileen Panetta xxii) and "successfully campaigns for passage of Wisconsin Equal Rights Law" (xxii). Gale works in journalism but it turns out that she prefers to be a novelist. In the literary world Zona Gale has contributed 13 novels, 10 short-stories, and 7 plays. Some of her plays are adaption from her novels. Her experience as a counsellor who deals with women's problems encourages her in her writing. One of her encouragements starts when she finds out that women in 1920s are mostly frustrated by their lack of opportunities ("Women's Role 1920s"). The opportunities refer to independent life, work outside the house, and a great opportunity for women in 1920s to get their acknowledgement.

Gale's works, *Miss Lulu Bett*, was published in 1920 and it becomes the most well-known novel at that time. *Miss Lulu Bett* is a novel which becomes an

over-whelming commercial success (Barbara H. Salomon, Eileen Panetta xxiii), and this novel has been adapted into a play and a film (xxiii). Her play, *Miss Lulu Bett*, makes her become the first woman who got the Pulitzer Prize for drama in 1921 ("Gale, Zona 1874-1938"). Many people consider *Miss Lulu Bett* a brilliant and successful work of Gale. Heywood Broun, a journalist of *The New York Times*, proclaims: "of all American novels received in the last six months, Zona Gale's *Miss Lulu Bett* seems at the top of the list" (ix). Gale's *Miss Lulu Bett* becomes one of the two bestselling novels of the year, and less than a year later (xxii).

American women got Voting Rights in 1920 where at the same year *Miss Lulu Bett* was published. The 1920s becomes a time of widespread change of women as they fight for the rights to vote, to become educated, to support themselves, and to live independent lives (Brian Murphy, 31). Besides, women try to get an acknowledgement for what they have done, an acknowledgement that they no longer depend on family, and that they exist in the society. Furthermore, according to Murphy, through her *Miss Lulu Bett*, Zona Gale "prominently depicts the entrapment of women in confining domestic roles (largely a consequence of women's financial dependence on men) and document changing social mores as women moved into the workplace and began to cast their votes" (33).

Lulu Bett depicts a mid-thirties woman who is enslaved by her family. The family consider Lulu someone who is not strong enough to work outside; they treat her like a slave at that house. At first, Lulu Bett is portrayed as a dependent, passive, and self-conscious person. Getting the acknowledgement and fair treatment from her brother-in-law's brother makes her characteristics develop into

confident, persistent, and independent. The acknowledgement and fair treatments which are given to Lulu lead her to be a better person.

I choose to analyze the protagonist of the novel, because I find it interesting to discuss; moreover, it really has inspiring characteristics. Protagonist is the central character on whom the plot turns (Eastman 9). According to Perrine's *Story and Structure*, a story can be successful only when the characters are dramatized (Perrine 69).

### **Statement of the Problem**

The problems I would like to discuss are as follows:

1. How is the protagonist portrayed in the novel?
2. Why is the protagonist portrayed in such a way?

### **Purpose of the Study**

Based on the statement of the problems, the purposes of the study are as follows:

1. To show how the protagonist is portrayed in the novel.
2. To reveal why the protagonist is portrayed in such a way.

### **Method of Research**

I use library research for my analysis. First I read *Miss Lulu Bett* as the primary text. Second, I also read a couple of books and compile some data from the Internet to support my analysis of the portrayal of the protagonist. Finally, I draw some conclusions for my analysis.

## **Organization of the Thesis**

This thesis consists of three chapters, preceded by the Acknowledgements, the Table of Contents, and the Abstract. Chapter One is the Introduction, which consists of the Background of the Study, the Statement of the Problem, the Purpose of the Study, the Method of Research, and the Organization of the Thesis. Chapter Two is the Analysis of the Portrayal of the Protagonist of Zona Gale's *Miss Lulu Bett*. Chapter Three is the Conclusion, followed by the Bibliography and the Appendices, which contain the Synopsis of the Novel and the Biography of the Author.