

# CHAPTER ONE

## INTRODUCTION

### Background of the Study

In 1960s, racial discrimination was a great issue in the United States of America. Racial discrimination is discrimination, unfair treatment or bias against someone or a group of people on the basis of their race. (“Racial Discrimination”). Due to the racial discrimination, the whites made a separation of African-Americans in the United States of America in the form of segregation. Segregation is a system that keeps different groups separate from each other, either through physical dividers or social pressures and laws. “Separate but equal” was the phrase used to describe the racial segregation of the blacks and the whites. There were separated bathroom, schools, churches, library, restaurants and so on. The whites were very discriminative towards the colored people, which made the blacks feel intimidated by the whites. (“Segregation”)

One of the white American writers who wrote novel about racial discrimination is Kathryn Stockett. Stockett is a white woman who is willing to understand the life of African-American maids. Being raised by her old black maid, she is curious about their life because she has a stronger bound with her old

black maid rather than her own mother. Moreover, the blacks has been raising the white children, but the whites underestimate the blacks. She wants to understand how they feel when being underestimated and unfairly treated (in 1960s). She has the ability to show the relationship between the black maids and the whites masters. She wrote her masterpiece, *The Help*, based on her childhood experience. She was inspired by her grandparent's black maid who had been working with her family since she was a child. The novel was published in 2009, and was made film in 2011. The novel turned out to be The New York Times best seller in August 2011 and has sold five million copies. Her other works are *Made in Hollywood* (2005) and *Old South, New South*. (2014) ("Kathryn Stockett").

Kathryn Stockett's *The Help*, which I have chosen to analyse in this thesis, is a novel about racial discrimination that happened in the United States of America. Set in 1960s, the story is about some black women who work in the white homes of the South, and a white woman who wants to know the point of view of the blacks. From this novel, we can see how the whites treat the blacks, and we can also understand the situation of how the blacks feel when underestimated by the whites.

As the novel deals with the relationship between the white and black people, the most outstanding literary element is conflict. There are three types of conflicts, which are: physical conflict, social conflict, and inner conflict. Physical conflict is a struggle between man and the physical world. Social conflict is a struggle between man and man. Inner conflict is a struggle between desires within a person. (Shaw 14). The conflicts that I will analyse are social conflicts and inner

conflicts. The social and the inner conflicts of the major characters in the novel help to convey the social issues.

### **Statement of the Problem**

The problems I am going to discuss are:

1. What kinds of conflict happen in the novel?
2. What is the cause of each conflict?
3. What is the resolution of each conflict?

### **Purpose of the Study**

Based on the above problems, the purposes of this study are:

1. To show the kinds of conflict happen in the novel.
2. To show the cause of each conflict.
3. To show the resolution of each conflict.

### **Method of Research**

The method of research that I use is library research. I begin the research by reading Stockett's *The Help*. In order to analyze the primary text, I read some information and materials from the Internet that can support my analysis and help me writing the thesis. And then, I draw some conclusions of the analysis which has been discussed.

## 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. In Chapter Two, I analyze the social and inner conflicts of the major characters in Kathryn Stockett's *The Help*. This thesis ends with the Bibliography and the Appendices, consisting of the Synopsis of the Novel and the Biography of the Author.

