

# CHAPTER ONE

## INTRODUCTION

### Background of the Study

Frances Hodgson Burnett was an English–American author of romance novels and children’s books. As an author, she has made a name by her children’s books, especially because the books “capture the timeless wonder of the fairy tale;” also, “Burnett’s best children’s books—*Little Lord Fauntleroy*, *A Little Princess*, and *The Secret Garden*—can entertain a child and often an adult reader almost a century after they were written, an unusual longevity for children’s fiction” (Bixler 119). Because of these facts above, her “reputation as a superior children’s author remains secure” (119).

Although not denying that her *Little Lord Fauntleroy* (1886) and *A Little Princess* (1905) are also famous, I am more interested in analyzing *The Secret Garden* (1911), as the book is widely “recognized as Burnett’s best work for children” (94). The book is different from the other two famous children’s novels Burnett has written because as Bixler has stated in her book, Mary Lennox, the

protagonist in *The Secret Garden*, is Burnett's "most complex fictional child" (95), which makes *The Secret Garden* more interesting to read and analyze.

In this thesis, I am going to reveal the theme through analyzing the portrayal of the protagonist in *The Secret Garden*. A theme in literature is defined as "the unifying generalization about life stated or implied by the story" (Arp, Johnson, and Perrine 203) and protagonist means "the central character in a conflict, whether sympathetic or unsympathetic as a person" (108). In addition, according to Shaw, to portray is "to draw forth the portrait (characterization) of individuals presented in literary selections" (295).

In the novel, it is apparent that the author has focused on the protagonist's life. Besides, the theme as the main message is already evident through the portrayal of the protagonist so that formalism or intrinsic approach is considered to be appropriate for the analysis.

### **Statement of the Problems**

The problems I am going to discuss in this thesis are formulated as follows:

1. How does analyzing the portrayal of the protagonist help in revealing the theme?
2. What is the theme of the novel?

### **Purpose of the Study**

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

1. To show how analyzing the portrayal of the protagonist helps in revealing the theme.

2. To show the theme of the novel.

### **Method of Research**

In writing this thesis, I used library research. First, I read Frances Hodgson Burnett's *The Secret Garden* as the primary text. Then, I gathered some information from the Internet and books in order to support my analysis. After analyzing the portrayal of the protagonist and revealing the theme in the novel, I drew some conclusions from my analysis.

### **Organization of the Thesis**

This thesis consists of three chapters, which are preceded by Acknowledgements, Table of Contents, and Abstract. The first chapter is Introduction, which consists of Background of the Study, Statement of the Problem, Purpose of the Study, Method of Research and Organization of the Thesis. Chapter Two contains Study of Theme through Analyzing the Portrayal of the Protagonist in Frances Hodgson Burnett's *The Secret Garden*. Chapter Three deals with Conclusion, followed by Bibliography and Appendices, which consist of the summary of the novel and the biography of the author.