

CHAPTER THREE

CONCLUSION

After analyzing the theme through the portrayal of the protagonist in Betty Smith's *A Tree Grows in Brooklyn*, I am going to draw some conclusions in this chapter. The protagonist of the novel is Francie Nolan, an Irish-American girl who works hard in order to get out of poverty despite all the hardships she experiences in her life.

First, Francie is portrayed as an observant person. This characteristic can be seen when Francie observes an old man's and a poor baby's appearance in detail. Her observation leads her to realize that she might also become a poor woman and have a baby with poor condition in the future if she stays in poverty. This realization then motivates her to find ways to have a better life. Francie's observant characteristic can also be seen when she observes the New York workers who are typically disciplined in terms of working. She then learns not to be late for work and this enables her to adjust well with her job. This observant characteristic later supports her to be successful. When her senior reader leaves the job to get married, Francie, who becomes a good worker because of her

observant characteristic, is the one that is appointed by her boss to be the new city reader. Being in this position means that Francie can get more money to get a proper education and help her family's financial situation.

Francie is also portrayed as a tough person. This characteristic can be seen from her reaction when she is avoided by her friends because she smells of garlic and kerosene oil. Instead of breaking down, Francie simply accepts the fact that she has to be alone and carries on with her life. She also tries to overcome her loneliness by reading books and focusing on her study. Francie's response towards this incident indicates that she is a tough person who can deal with difficulties. Her tough characteristic eventually contributes to her success. When she is bullied by her friends at work to give up the job, she is able to deal with their malice because she is tough. She decides to stay at work and this decision enables her to earn the money needed to fund her education and to get her family away from poverty. Thus, it can be seen from this incident that Francie's tough characteristic contributes to her success at work.

The first two characteristics then become the foundation for the development of the other two characteristics: positive and industrious. Francie's being positive can be seen when she is able to look at the positive side of being a street musician. She is sure that she can earn much money and get away from her poor life by becoming a street musician even though she has never tried it before. She also focuses on the positive side of getting an education. Education will increase her knowledge; therefore, she decides to stay at school even though sometimes she experiences unpleasant things there. Francie's positive characteristic later opens her ways to success. This can be seen when she decides

to apply for college even though she does not have a high school's diploma. She eventually gets accepted at college and this means her dream to get a higher education comes true. As a whole, this incident suggests that Francie's positive characteristic contributes to her success.

Meanwhile, Francie's being industrious can first be seen when Francie becomes a rag picker. She works hard collecting and processing valuable trashes to earn money. She then works at the Press Clipping Bureau. She makes a great effort to memorize the heading on the file box and get a predicate as the fastest reader in the Bureau. Her industrious characteristic later contributes to her success: She gets a job as a teletype operator. Her industrious characteristic causes her to be an expert in her job in a relatively short time and as a result, she gets her salary increased in only a week. This means that Francie can get more money to pay for her education and get away from poverty. As a whole, this incident suggests that Francie's industrious characteristic supports her to be successful.

At the end of the novel, it is described that Francie is able to enroll herself in another university and move to a better neighborhood. This fact signifies that she finally manages to get away from poverty and to have a better life. Thus, from the portrayal of Francie's characteristics and her final success, it can be concluded that the theme of this novel is "one has to be observant, tough, positive, and industrious to achieve success."

After analyzing the theme of the novel through the portrayal of the protagonist, I am of the opinion that Betty Smith has successfully conveyed her message to the readers. Her simple writing style which is easy to understand and her life-like portrayal of Francie – considering that this literary work can be seen

as a semi-autobiographical novel – have helped the readers to grasp the universal theme that people need to be observant, tough, positive and industrious to be successful.

I myself as one of the readers agree with Smith’s opinion that success can be achieved if people have those kinds of characteristics. This novel indeed inspires me to pay attention more to my surroundings, to be a tough and positive individual, and to work harder so that I can achieve success in the future. Therefore, as a whole, I believe that this novel is both interesting to read and worth analyzing.

