

# CHAPTER ONE

## INTRODUCTION

### **Background of the Study**

Science fiction or known as sci-fi is “a form of fiction that deals principally with the impact of actual or imagined science upon society or individuals” (Sterling). Based on the definition, a novel can be called a science fiction when the story deals with fiction about science. Science fiction might be invented in the future which addresses political science, psychology and sociology, or electronics. Science fiction writers typically write about futuristic science and technical development for new social innovation that will surprise the readers’ awareness about the possibilities of new things that can be created and thus advancing their consciousness. In 1920s, the term science fiction was popularized by the American publisher, Hugo Gernsback, and the Hugo Awards is given every year in honor of his contribution to the genre since 1953. The Hugo Awards is given to top writers, editors, illustrator, films, and fanzines of science fiction.

One of the 20<sup>th</sup> century American science fiction authors is Daniel Keyes. He is well-known for his novels and short stories. Daniel Keyes studies psychology, but all he wants is to be a writer. Therefore, the subject matter of his works always revolves around psychological matter, such as the human mind. For Keyes, intelligence is not necessarily the most important thing in human life. He once said, “I’ve learned that intelligence alone doesn’t mean a damn thing. It only leads to violence and pain” as quoted by Emily Langer in her article in The Washington Post (Langer).

One of his works that reflects his opinion about the importance of intelligence is *Flowers for Algernon* (1960), a short story that won the Hugo Award in 1960. He developed the story into a novel *Flowers for Algernon*, which was published in 1966 and it won the Nebula award in 1966. The book is considered to be the greatest novel of Daniel Keyes. Therefore, I have chosen this novel to be analyzed for my thesis. The story is about a man with an intellectual disability, named Charlie. According to Littlewood, a British anthropologist and psychiatrist at University College London, as quoted by Kristi D. Mutz in her thesis, “the general stigma towards intellectual disability is overwhelmingly negative, both on a local and global level” (Mutz 5), thus a person like Charlie often gets negative treatments from people around him because he lives in an environment where the majority of people has normal intellectual level. The book shows that Charlie often gets mocked by his friends because of his low I.Q level. A person with intellectual disability will feel quite safe and equal when he or she is living with a group with the same deficiency (Matikka 4). However, if a person with intellectual disability lives with normal people, he or she may suffer in

comparison. Thus, the state of surrounded by normal people becomes a reason why Charlie feels unhappy.

According to Matikka's journal, Aristotle (1962) explained that "more than anything else people seek happiness, and while happiness itself is sought for its own sake, every other goal is valued only because we expect that it will make us happy" (Matikka 2). From the statement it can be seen that as a person with an intellectual disability, Charlie wants to understand many things, including what people are talking about. He then lets himself to be an experiment of a surgery for the sake of his wish to be a smart person. However, ironically, when he becomes intelligent, he does not get happiness, but suffering. His intelligence makes him realize that being knowledgeable in so many things drives him into becoming an arrogant, self-centered, and anti-social man.

As *Flowers for Algernon* deals with an extraordinary subject matter, I decide to analyze the narrative technique of the novel. I am interested in analyzing the way Keyes delivers his idea to the readers. My analysis will focus on narrative technique based on Richard M. Eastman's theory in *A Guide to the Novel* (1965). According to Eastman, narrative technique is a way the author chooses to tell the story with the aim of giving the readers certain effects that the author wants them to achieve (31). In every novel, the author can choose different way of telling the story. Narrative technique in a novel is also able to build a connection between the story and the reader.

## **Statement of the Problem**

The problems I am going to analyze are:

1. Which elements of narrative technique are used by the author in *Flowers for Algernon*?
2. What are the effects of each element of narrative technique used on the readers?

## **Purpose of the Study**

Based on the problems that have been mentioned, the purposes of the study are:

1. To show the elements of narrative technique used in *Flowers for Algernon*.
2. To show the effect achieved through the use of each element of narrative technique.

## **Method of Research**

I perform library research in writing my thesis. First I read *Flowers for Algernon* as the primary text. Second, I also read other books and references from the Internet to support my analysis of the narrative technique used in the novel. Next, I analyze the narrative technique of the novel. Lastly, I draw some conclusions from my analysis.

## **Organization of the Thesis**

This thesis consists of four chapters, which are preceded by the Abstract and the Table of Contents. 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 deals with the theory of Narrative Technique. Chapter Three is the analysis of the narrative technique in Daniel Keyes' *Flowers for Algernon*. Chapter Four is the Conclusion. The thesis ends with the Bibliography and the Appendices, which consist of the summary of the novel and the biography of the author.

