

## CHAPTER THREE

### CONCLUSION

Based on the analysis of the protagonist of *The Bell Jar*, I am going to draw some conclusions in this chapter. The protagonist of the novel is Esther Greenwood, a static character whose major traits are ambitious and naive. Because of her ambitious and naive traits, she experiences confusion and depression; however, they do not change her basic traits.

Esther has an ambition to become a writer or a professor which position is still dominated by men at that time. As a straight A student for fifteen years, editor of a literary magazine, correspondent to the town Gazette, secretary of the Honor Board, winner of numerous scholarships and prizes like one month internship in a well know fashion magazine at New York, she visions herself to be a successful woman. She also has plans to get some big scholarships to study all over Europe after she graduates.

Besides being ambitious, Esther is a naive person. She is naive when she learns that society has different expectation and standard for men and women. She naïvely rejects the society's standard about how a woman should stay pure before marriage but men are not supposed to. Esther is also demanded by her mother to

learn shorthand because it is a practical thing for women to learn and it will help her to get a husband but she rejects it because she naïvely thinks women and men should be equal. Another society's standard that Esther cannot accept is the conception of marriage for women. Women are demanded to be married and become a mother. However, Esther naïvely thinks that women should not become only as a housewife who merely stays home and takes care of her family.

However, Esther's ambitious and naive attitudes clash against the society norms which then causes her to feel confused. Although previously Esther has decided to pursue her career before marriage, she gets confused because of the society norms that demand women to perform household duties. Esther sees many different choices of what she could be but she is confused about which one to choose. She also realizes that she is unable to seize all those choices, thus, she becomes unstable and breaks into tears while she is at the office. Esther also finds that she does not make it to the writing class she has planned to take for summer. She is stuck at home and her confusion starts to affect her health. She starts to take sleeping pills because she cannot sleep due to overthinking and later her confusion contributes her to become depressed.

Esther's depression turns worse that she has to see a psychiatrist. She is unable to sleep, eat, read and write, which bother her the most. She starts to hear voices inside her head that tells her that she is not going to make it if she still does not know what she wants. Because Esther can no longer deal with the depression, she attempts to commit suicides several times. She ends up in a mental hospital for months because of her suicide attempts. At the end of the novel, it is told that after Esther goes through some treatments and therapies, she begins to improve and soon can leave the hospital but she states that she may experience relapse

regarding her mental instability. However, her naive and ambitious attitude remains in the end even after Esther suffers from confusion and depression.

From the portrayal of Esther Greenwood, the reader can see clearly that Esther Greenwood faces some difficulties being a young woman at that time. Esther is a brilliant and ambitious student but she is confused with the society norms about women's natural duty as a housewife which she naively rejects. The society does not give her the chance to explore her best potentials and eventually her lack of understanding and ambition lead her to confusion and mental breakdown. I argue that Esther is created to show that depression can occur when someone who is young, naive and ambitious has to confront the society norms that do not align with one's ambition and idealism on how a woman should live in a society. Thus, I am of the opinion that Sylvia Plath is successful in portraying the struggle of Esther Greenwood to understand and deal with the reality of the social life.

After reading Sylvia Plath's *The Bell Jar* and analyzing the portrayal of the protagonist of the novel, I personally agree that Esther's depression happens as the consequences of her ambition, naivety and lack of experiences that clash with the reality of the social life and gender bias in the 1950s U.S. The complex situation that Esther experiences reflects the situation in real life. I think *The Bell Jar* is worth reading because the story is realistic, captivating and dramatic at the same time. I think it is realistic because the story represents a real life story that happens to a young woman in the 1950s.

Not only the young women at that time experience those mistreatments but even young women today still have to experience confusion and perhaps depression due to gender bias and lack of life experiences. In conclusion, this novel has given

me one perspective of a young woman's life in the 1950s U.S. and how she deals with the harsh reality in the context of being a young woman.

