

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Background of the Study

Stephen Crane is an American novelist, short story writer, and poet in the late nineteenth century. His best known novel is *The Red Badge of Courage*, which was published in 1895. The protagonist of this novel is Henry Fleming, and the setting of it is during the American Civil War, which lasted from 1861 to 1865. Crane himself was born 6 years after the American Civil War had ended, so he did not have direct experience of the war. However, he succeeded in creating realistic stories about the battlefield as he has the ability to capture the true feelings and images of combat (“Stephen Crane”). For Crane “it is an achievement to write a novel that is acclaimed by veterans and goes down in literary history as a standard work in American war literature” (Nagel).

The Red Badge of Courage, which I have chosen to analyze in this thesis, becomes “his famous and best novel in American Literature” (“Stephen Crane”). The novel is the story of Henry Fleming, a teenager who enlists with the Union Army because of “his desire for heroism” (“Stephen Crane”). He thinks that war always brings victory and thus he wants to be part of the war. Later on when he is in battle he realizes that his thought

about the war is wrong. He faces great fear of death and becomes cowardly. In the end, he regains his courage and confidence, and fights boldly.

As I notice that the portrayal of the protagonist of *The Red Badge of Courage* is the most outstanding element in this novel, I am interested in analyzing the development of the protagonist's characteristics deeper. Protagonist is "the leading character of a drama, novel, or other literary works. The person is not always a hero of a work, but he is always the principal and central character" (Shaw 305). It is hoped by knowing the characteristics of the protagonist, the reader will understand the author's purpose better.

Statement of the Problem

The problem that will be analyzed in this thesis are:

1. How is the protagonist portrayed in the novel?
2. What is the purpose of the author in portraying such a protagonist?

Purpose of the Study

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

1. To show how the protagonist is portrayed in the novel.
2. To show the purpose of the author in portraying such a protagonist.

Method of Research

I use library research in writing my thesis. First, I begin with reading the primary text, Stephen Crane's *The Red Badge of Courage*. Second, I search for additional information through the Internet and other references to support my study. Third, I use the information that I have gathered to analyze the primary text. After that, I draw some conclusions from the analysis.

Organization of the Thesis

This thesis consists of three chapters, preceded by 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. Chapter Two consists of the Analysis of the Portrayal of the Protagonist in *The Red Badge of Courage*. Chapter Three is the Conclusion, then followed by the Bibliography and the Appendices, consisting of the synopsis of the novel and the biography of the author.

