

# CHAPTER ONE

## INTRODUCTION

### **Background of the Study**

Drama is “a word of Greek origin meaning “action” and referring to a performance on the stage in which actors act out the events and characters of a story” (“What Is Drama”). Drama is performed with a purpose to tell people about something related to life’s experiences as well as to entertain people. One of the earliest forms of drama was originated from Greece which is called Greek Tragedy. Greek tragedy is one branch of drama played in a serious way showing terrible events that happen to a heroic character as a consequence of moral flaws of the protagonist, known as a hero (Conversi). When a hero confronts downfall, “he is recognized as a tragic hero or protagonist” (“Tragic Hero”). In modern days, such tragic hero often becomes the center of the story, as shown in the plays written by Arthur Miller.

Arthur Miller is considered one of the great American playwrights of the twentieth century. He often wrote stories about social tragedy which reflect his social life that is likely to stress about his love experience with four different women in different periods. “Miller’s tragedies ask audiences to examine and

Perhaps even fix the social flaws that create such circumstances” (Abbotson). Miller’s works are typically known for their tragic heroes which deal with ethical issues. Many of Arthur Miller’s works give more focus on how people react to the morality issues under great pressure.

Arthur Miller’s achievement as a great playwright is shown from his winning the Avery Hopwood Award for Playwriting at University of Michigan in 1936. He also won the New York Drama Critics' Circle Award for the best play of 1947, received two Emmy Awards in 1967 and 1981, the Tony Award for Lifetime achievement in 1999, two Tony Award for his plays in 1949 and 1953, and a Pulitzer Prize for drama in 1949. Arthur Miller greatly influences the world of American literature for “his voices are an important part of the American landscape” (“Arthur Miller”).

*The Ride down Mt. Morgan* is one of Miller’s plays that made its premiere in New York at the Public Theater in a production starring Patrick Stewart on October 23, 1991. The story is about a man around fifty named Lyman Felt, who suffers great loss caused by the moral flaws on his characteristics because of him wanting to have two wives and families at the same time. Such moral flaws are said to be unacceptable in the existing social values of the play. Lyman is an example of “a man who wants everything and can deny himself nothing, Lyman suffers great loss as a result—public humiliation, and private desperation” (Weber). He represents human characteristics who seeks self-pleasure and who wants to complete the mission of being true to himself. The drama shows how ignoring moral flaws and being selfish may lead to catastrophic result. However, Lyman Felt does not think that having an affair may destroy his life as “the pleasure of living his carefully maintained double life was probably worth its ultimate destruction” (Weber).

As the theme of *The Ride down Mt. Morgan* is the most outstanding aspect of the play, I decide to analyze it through the portrayal of the protagonist. According to Literary Devices, theme is defined as a “main idea or an underlying meaning of a literary work that may be stated directly or indirectly” (“Theme”), while portrayal is “a description of someone or something in a particular way; a representation” (“Portrayal, def. 1.1”). Protagonist is “the main figure or one of the most prominent figures in a situation” (“Protagonist, def. 1.1”). I think Arthur Miller wants to deliver a message about the problem that may occur when a person’s moral flaws do not fit to the society he lives in. In the play, Miller mainly focuses on how Lyman Felt’s characteristics become the source of all the troubles he has to face in life, and how they also affect the people he cares about.

Since I only refer to the script as the source of references, the most suitable approach is Formalism. Formalism is a literary criticism that “refers to a style of inquiry that focuses, almost exclusively, on features of the literary text itself. . . . That the form of a work of literature is inherently a part of its content” (“Formalism”).

### **Statement of the Problem**

The problems I am going to discuss are:

1. What is the theme of the play?
2. How does the portrayal of the protagonist help reveal the theme?

### **Purpose of the Study**

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

1. To show the theme of Arthur Miller’s *The Ride down Mt. Morgan*.
2. To show how the portrayal of the protagonist helps reveal the theme.

## **Method of Research**

The method I used in writing this thesis is library research. First, I started by reading *The Ride down Mt. Morgan* by Arthur Miller. After that, I searched for any necessary information and references relevant to the subject in the Internet. Then, I used the data to analyze the protagonist in order to reveal the theme of the play. Finally, I made some conclusion from my analysis.

## **Organization of the Thesis**

The thesis consists of three chapters, preceded by Acknowledgements, Table of Contents, and Abstract. Chapter One is the Introduction. It includes Background of the Study, Statement of the Problem, Purpose of the Study, Method of Research, and Organization of the Thesis. Chapter Two contains the analysis of theme through portrayal of the protagonist in Arthur Miller's *The Ride down Mt. Morgan*. Chapter Three is the Conclusion of what has been discussed in the previous chapter. This thesis ends with Bibliography and Appendices, which consist of the summary of the drama and the biography of the author.