

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Background of the Study

Jane Austen was an English female author who lived in the 18th century. She was one of the most prolific authors who lived in that era. She wrote mostly about women and the life of middle-class people in England at that time and Austen was capable in creating vivid characters regarding this topic. She successfully created outstanding description of characters through her novels, as mentioned by Stephanie Vardavas, a Professor at the University of Oregon that “Austen was a genius when it came to creating vivid and unique characters” (Vardavas).

Austen’s works are not only great in depicting lifelike characters but also deeply concern with love and marriage. The issues she wrote in her books are relevant not only for women in her era but also women nowadays. As the Chairman of Northern Branch of the Jane Austen Society, Marilyn Joice affirmed, “She’s writing about people and their problems, their dysfunctional families, why and even if, woman should marry. Those issues were relevant then, and they’re relevant now” (Halford). Thus, I believe that Austen has important messages that she conveys through her works. Austen has written many great works such as

Sense and Sensibility (1811), *Pride and Prejudice* (1813), *Mansfield Park* (1814), *Emma* (1815) and many more. Among all of her great works, I chose to analyse her first work about women which is *Sense and Sensibility*. *Sense and Sensibility* is one of her works in which she proved her capability in writing great portrayal of characters. The eloquent depiction of characters in this novel leaves a great impression on the readers. Not only that, Austen shows an insight about life that can be seen through the characters in the novel. This novel was adapted into a movie on 26th January 1996 and won an Oscar for Best Writing, Screenplay Based on Material Previously Produced or Published (“*Sense and Sensibility*”).

In *Sense and Sensibility*, Austen depicts two sisters with opposing characteristics; one is rational while the other is sentimental. The novel shows us how they overcome the challenges in their daily and love life with their characteristics. That is why the portrayal of the characters in this novel can convey a good message to the readers, as well as becoming its strength. Thus, I chose to analyse the theme through the two female protagonists in this novel. Protagonist itself means “the main character, which creates the action of the plot and engages readers, arousing their empathy and interest. The protagonist is often a hero or heroine of the story, as the whole plot moves around him or her” (“Character - Examples and Definition of Character”). Theme is defined as a main idea or an underlying meaning of a literary work, which may be stated directly or indirectly (“Theme - Examples and Definition of Theme”). Through the analysis of theme and the portrayal of the protagonists in this novel, we can explore more about the kind of women Austen wants to show her readers and how they overcome problems that may happen to women at that time.

In order to complete my analysis, I am going to use formalism. “In literary criticism, formalism refers to a style of inquiry that focuses, almost exclusively, on

features of the literary text itself, to the exclusion of biographical, historical, or intellectual contexts” (“Formalism”). Considering that I will only focus on theme and the portrayal of the characters in this thesis, I do not need any external sources but the novel itself.

Statement of the Problem

The statements of the problem are as follows:

1. What is the theme of the novel?
2. How does the portrayal of the protagonists help in revealing the theme?

Purpose of the Study

According to the problems above, the purposes of the study are:

1. To show what the theme of the novel is.
2. To show how the portrayal of the protagonists helps in revealing the theme.

Method of Research

In writing my thesis, I did some library research. First, I began my research by reading Jane Austen’s *Sense and Sensibility*. Then, I read some books and references which might be relevant to the chosen topic. After that, I analyse the primary text. Finally, I drew some conclusions from my analysis.

Organization of the Thesis

This thesis consists of three chapters preceded by Acknowledgements, Table of Contents, and Abstract. Chapter One is Introduction, which consists of the Background of the Study, Statement of the Problem, Purpose of the Study,

Method of Research, and Organization of the Thesis. In Chapter Two, I analyse the theme through the contrasting characteristics of the protagonists in Jane Austen's *Sense and Sensibility*. Chapter Three contains the Conclusion from what has been analysed in the previous chapters. This thesis ends with Bibliography and Appendices, consisting of Summary of the Novel and Biography of the Author.

