

# CHAPTER ONE

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

The present writer has chosen to analyze novel because novel is more detailed in telling the story compared with drama and poetry. Through a novel, she can catch the feeling and emotion of every character such as their sadness, happiness, dilemma, anger, hatred, sorrow, and much more, which cannot be expressed clearly through either drama or poetry.

The present writer decides to analyze Lolita by Vladimir Nabokov, a Russian-born American novelist, critic, and acknowledged lepidopterist. According to Nabokov in Lolita, "A work of fiction exists only insofar as it affords him what he shall bluntly call aesthetic bliss that is a sense of being somehow, somewhere, connected with other state of being where art such as curiosity, tenderness, kindness, ecstasy, is the norm." (Nabokov, 1955: 332) That is why; the present writer has chosen Vladimir Nabokov's work to be analyzed because the things he has mentioned make novel much more appealing for her than another genre.

The present writer decides to analyze one of Vladimir Nabokov's novels, Lolita, because Lolita is his best known novel, of which the material shocked many people in the world when it was first published. The shock comes from its protagonist who is a pedophile and it became a scandal as soon as it was published because that kind of material was considered to break the taboos in the mid-fifties. When it was first

published in 1955 in Paris, Lolita was soon banned for its controversial content. But as an underground readership grew, the novel gained international attention, and, as a result, the bans were lifted, and it became one of the most controversial novels of the 20<sup>th</sup> century because of the unusually erotic predilections of its protagonist, who is obsessed with a 12-year-old girl named Dolores Haze a. k. a. Lolita.

In Vladimir Nabokov's Lolita, the portrayal of the protagonist is revealed clearly through the point of view of the protagonist himself as the narrator. The protagonist, Humbert Humbert, is writing the manuscript for Lolita, entitled "The Confession of a White Widowed Male", from a jail cell, where he is imprisoned for the murder of Clare Quilty. In this dark, comic novel, Nabokov paints a complex portrait of obsession that reveals Humbert to be both a middle-aged monster and a wild romantic who fails to attain his ideal.

Lolita with a scandalous protagonist caused a controversy at first, but the novel has now gained almost universal approval as a brilliant work and record not to the controversy its material aroused but to its author's use of that material to tell a love story that is almost shocking in its beauty and tenderness. That is what makes this novel interesting.

When the present writer knows what kind of story Lolita is, she thinks that this novel is a pornographic story and she feels disgusted with the protagonist named Humbert. But, after reading the novel for the first time, Humbert as the narrator and protagonist manages to persuade the present writer that his memoir is a love story and not a pornographic story. Although he describes his pedophile's sexual activities, through his brilliant style of writing, he portrays himself as an ordinary man who

becomes a victim of his sexual deviation and a man with deep and true love towards Lolita. He tries to persuade the readers through his style of writing that uses first person point of view and poetic language.

However, after reading Lolita for the second time and deeply thinking about it, the present writer realizes that Humbert actually is a monster who ruins a life of a little girl. No matter how Nabokov describes Humbert, he is still the villain and Lolita is the victim. Humbert is a self-centered man and it can be seen through how he writes his journal in order to get justification for his sins.

Humbert, as a protagonist, becomes both a perpetrator and victim of his disastrous obsession with Lolita. Nabokov can make the present writer, who at first feels disgusted with Humbert's pedophilic sexual activities, change her view. What happens in the book is terrible, and its focus around a man of about forty engaging in a sexual relationship with a barely pubescent girl, is particularly nasty. But Nabokov manages to make Lolita something more than just a story of the unusual, erotic predilections of its protagonist through his brilliant and beautiful, yet evocative style. He brings to life the exquisitely amoral main character, Humbert Humbert, who is capable of the kidnapping and ravaging of the young girl, and portrays him as a person who is still seemingly human.

All of these make the present writer decide to analyze the portrayal of the protagonist, which is "the act of showing or describing somebody or something in a picture, play, book, etc." (Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary, 2000: 982)

## **1.2 THE STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM**

Having read Vladimir Nabokov's Lolita, the present writer formulates the problems as follows:

1. What is the portrayal of the protagonist in Nabokov's Lolita?
2. What is the author's purpose in creating such a character?

## **1.3 THE PURPOSE OF THE STUDY**

Based on the statement of the problem, the purpose of the study is:

1. This study is done to show the portrayal of the protagonist in Nabokov's Lolita.
2. This study is done to show the author's purpose in creating such a character.

## **1.4 METHODS OF RESEARCH**

The method of research used by the present writer is library research. She reads the primary text, Vladimir Nabokov's Lolita, and then she makes a study and obtains the necessary data about the author and his work from the Internet. She also reads some references dealing with the topic.

## **1.5 THE ORGANIZATION OF THE THESIS**

The present writer divides this thesis into three chapters. Chapter One is the Introduction, consisting of the Background of the Study, Statement of the Problem, Purpose of Study, Methods of Research, and Organization of the Thesis. Chapter Two deals with the analysis of the protagonist of Lolita. The present writer concludes her analysis in Chapter Three. This thesis ends with the Bibliography and the

Appendices, in which she presents the synopsis of the work as well as the biography of the author.