

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Background of the Study

If one intends to understand a story, it is better to read a novel, although it is usually longer than poetry or drama because in a novel the story is presented very clearly, and sometimes it has important moral messages to the readers. Novel is a genre of literature that is defined as ‘...a form of story or prose narrative containing characters, action and incident, and perhaps, a plot.’ (Cuddon, 1979:430-431). In a novel, a writer can give a more detailed description of the flow of events, a greater variety of characters and detailed settings of place and time than in the other genres. Novel sometimes contains several themes, and multiple narrators. ([Http://landow.stg.brown.edu/victorian/genre/hader1.html](http://landow.stg.brown.edu/victorian/genre/hader1.html).) For the above reasons, I am interested in analyzing novel.

I am also interested in multicultural issue. So I choose Laurence Yep, a Chinese-American writer, because he is one of the multicultural writers. He has written many books based on the issues of Asian-American culture. His concerns are reflected in his many works by exhibiting viewpoints dealing with cultural alienation and racial conflict. Several of his novels are based on his life’s

experience as an outsider. Yep was born and raised in a black neighborhood and educated in San Francisco's Chinatown although he does not speak Chinese. He felt like an outsider at school because he spoke no Chinese like his peers. Several of his works are: Dragonwings (1975), Child of the Owl (1977), Sea Glass (1979), The Serpent's Child (1984), Dragon's Gate (1993), Thief of Hearts (1995). A lot of his works won many prizes, and particularly Child of the Owl, which won many prizes, namely Boston Globe-Horn Book Award for Fiction, School Library Journal's Best Books for Spring, New York Times Outstanding Books of the Year, Jane Addams Children's Book Award.

Child of the Owl is a story about Casey, a young girl who was born as a Chinese-American and she moves to live with Paw-Paw, her maternal grandmother in San Francisco's Chinatown. In this novel, the reader can see how hard it is for Casey to adapt herself to her new environment and how she tries to make a relationship with her grandmother and handle her gambler father. Paw-Paw is a very kind grandmother who always helps Casey in adaptation to the new environment, and she also teaches Casey about Chinese culture. So through this analysis of the novel, I want to show that love is an important key to a relationship.

I notice that the theme of the novel is dominant and worth analyzing. According to Harry Shaw, theme is 'the central idea and dominating idea in a literary work and the message or moral implicit in any work of art' (Shaw, 1972:378). I find that in this novel, the most prominent element used to reveal the theme is character. I am in agreement with William Kenney that 'as a major element in fiction, character is obviously of major importance for theme'

(Kenney, 1966:95). Therefore, in discussing the theme of the novel, I am going to focus my analysis on the major female characters whose roles are significant and dominant in revealing the idea.

Statement of the Problems

In order to analyze the novel, I state the problem as follows:

1. What is the theme of Laurence Yep's Child of the Owl?
2. How do the major female characters help to reveal the theme?

Purpose of the Study

My purposes in studying and analyzing Laurence Yep's Child of the Owl are:

1. To present the theme of Laurence Yep's Child of the Owl.
2. To discuss how the major female characters help to reveal the theme.

Methods of the Research

In this research I use library research. First of all, I read my primary text entitled Child of the Owl by Laurence Yep. Next, I decide what topic is going to be discussed. Then, I read some supporting criticisms and reference books. I continue my research by gathering other related information from the Internet. In this thesis, I use the intrinsic approach, namely the portrayal and action of the major female characters to reveal the theme. Finally, I use the data I have collected for my analysis from which I draw some conclusions.

Organization of the Thesis

I will present my thesis in preceded first by the Preface and Abstract. Chapter One, the Introduction, contains the Background of the Study, the Statement of the Problem, the Purpose of the Study, Methods of Research, and the Organization of the Thesis. Chapter One is followed by Chapter Two, in which I present the Analysis of the Theme in Laurence Yep's Child of the Owl. After that comes Chapter Three, which contains the Conclusion. The thesis ends with the Bibliography, which contains the list of reference books and various sources used in the analysis, and the Appendices, which present the Synopsis of the Novel and the Biography of the Author.