

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

It is widely known that the blacks in the United States of America are often regarded to be inferior to the whites. The blacks have fewer opportunities than the whites in almost all aspects of life; they lack freedom or ‘the power or right to act, speak, etcetera as one wants without anyone stopping’ (Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary of Current English 1995:471).

The present writer is particularly interested in reading poetry because poetry has hidden meanings so that she feels challenged to analyse poems for her thesis. A poet may write on different subject matters, such as the beauty of nature, love, death, urban life, racial discrimination and religion. The present writer has decided to analyse poems on racial discrimination because racial discrimination has been an important issue in the United States of America.

Racial discrimination may exist because different races have different traits and certain races consider themselves to be superior to others: ‘...a certain race is inherently superior or inferior to others, and/or those individuals should be treated differently according to their racial designation’ (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Racial_discrimination#Nazi_Germany).

In the United States of America, there is discrimination against Americans of Asian and African descent. The present writer thinks that God has created us equal so it is absolutely wrong to discriminate people because of the colour of their skin. She intends to analyse freedom from discrimination which is found in literary works.

Margaret Walker is a black writer who writes poems on racial discrimination. The focus of her writing has always been the blacks' experience; her '...racial pride allowed her to dedicate over seven decades of her life to this experience, dealing with such themes as time, racial equality, love and freedom.' (<http://voices.cla.umn.edu/newsite/authors/ALEXANDERmargaretwalker.htm>).

The present writer has chosen the works of Margaret Walker because her works deal with the issue of racial discrimination in the United States of America. The issue is clearly pictured in the themes of her works, especially in "For My People", "I Want To Write", "Southern Song", and "We Have Been Believers".

It is crucial to remember that theme is '...the central and dominating idea in a literary work'. (Shaw, 1972:378). Understanding the theme means knowing the poet's intention of writing the poem. The present writer intends to analyse the themes of Margaret Walker's poems.

1.2 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

To make an effective and representative study, the present writer will focus on two things:

1. What are the themes of Margaret Walker's "For My People", "I Want To Write", "Southern Song", and "We Have Been Believers"?

2. How are the themes revealed?

1.3 PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

This particular study is conducted with the purpose of:

1. Finding the themes of Margaret Walker's "For My People", "I Want To Write", "Southern Song", and "We Have Been Believers".
2. Showing how the themes are revealed.

1.4 METHODS OF RESEARCH

The method of research the present writer uses is library research. She firstly reads "For My People", "I Want To Write", "Southern Song", and "We Have Been Believers". Secondly, she reads books which support the research. Thirdly, she searches in the Internet in order to get information to support her analysis.

1.5 ORGANIZATION OF THE THESIS

The present writer divides her thesis into three chapters. Chapter One deals with the Introduction; which consists of the Background of the Study, the Statement of the Problem, the Purpose of the Study, the Methods of Research, and the Organization of the Thesis. Chapter Two consists of the Analysis of the themes of Margaret Walker's "For My People", "I Want To Write", "Southern Song", and "We Have Been Believers". Chapter Three contains the Conclusion. The poet's biography and the four poems that the present writer has chosen to analyse will be presented in the Appendices.