

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Background of the Study

The present writer decides to analyze novel because she considers it a literary work which is easier to understand than poetry or drama. The details of settings, actions of characters, and conflicts, make it easy for readers to imagine the situation and be involved in the story. The present writer believes that every author has the same aim: they want to share with the readers worthy stories in the novels they have written. The present writer agrees that novels have worthy stories and lessons to gain from the stories.

In the literary world, novel is one of the three main genres of literary works. According to the information on the Internet ([About Novel](#), no date), novel is the hardest to define and it is often defined as a fiction, to a certain extent, with characters, incidents, actions, settings, conflicts, theme and a plot. Furthermore, it also states that novel is a relatively recent genre, dating from mainly the early 18th century, and it is linked to realism, which claims to represent life as it appears to be. In this respect it states that novel is meant to reach a large public although in the beginning it was considered to be a lower form of literature. However, later it

is argued that novel is not lower than drama or poetry: what sets novel apart from a short story is that it is longer, more complex, and deals with more than one issue in the lives of its characters; what sets novel apart from a play is that it is not confined to restrictions of the stage, human actors and the audience; what sets novel apart from poetry is that it is written in prose form. According to Harry Shaw (1972:257), “Novel is a lengthy fictitious prose narrative portraying characters and presenting an organized series of events and settings”. On the other hand, Murphy (1972:127) states that “novel is the most widely practiced and most widely read form of literature in the world today”.

The present writer wishes to analyze the theme of Louisa M. Alcott’s Little Women since she finds that the theme is essential in this novel. By knowing the theme of a story, the readers will be able to find the meaning of the story. Shaw (1972:378) states that “theme is the central and dominating idea in a literary work”. Moreover, Shaw (1972:378) also says that theme is “the message of moral implicit in any work of art”. There are many elements which can reveal a theme, namely, the protagonist or the major characters, the plot, and the conflict. The present writer decides to analyze the theme of Louisa M. Alcott’s Little Women through the four major characters, considering that the four major characters lead the readers to the theme through their actions and speeches.

Louisa M. Alcott is one of the famous American writers in the transcendental period, whose novels are very well known. According to the information on the Internet (Little Women, no date), during her writing, Alcott became active in the women’s suffrage movement, wrote for the “Women’s Journal” and canvassed door to door to encourage women to register to vote. She

also became the first woman in Concord to register to vote in the village's school committee election.

Alcott is known for her famous work Little Women, which is also known as one of the best classics and most loved novels of all time. Little Women is a story about four sisters, the March daughters (Meg, Josephine, Beth and Amy), during the Civil War in New England. Together they face hardships and poverty, all the while trying to reach their hope. More than that however, Little Women is a morality tale. Each chapter contains an account of the lives and adventures of the four sisters, lessons on how to be a good person, and ways to achieve happiness in life. Through their dreams, plays, pranks, letters, illnesses, and courtships, women of different ages have become a part of this remarkable family. Little Women is one of the remaining classic novels because it shows that every young person goes through trials and decision points. Family's crises and the mending of broken hearts are some things all young people go through and are accurately portrayed in Alcott's novel.

For the reason above, the present writer decides to analyze the theme of Louisa M. Alcott's Little Women through the portrayal and actions of the four major characters, whose roles are significant and dominant in revealing the idea and who are portrayed in a unique way.

Statement of the Problem:

The present writer would like to state the problems of this study as follows:

1. What is the theme of Louisa M. Alcott's Little Women?
2. How does the portrayal of the four major characters help reveal the theme?

Purpose of the Study:

The purposes of the present writer in analyzing Louisa M. Alcott's Little Women are:

1. to show the theme of the novel.
2. to show how the portrayal of the major characters helps reveal the theme.

Method of Research

The research method that the present writer uses in this study is library research. First of all, she begins by reading the primary text of Louisa M. Alcott's Little Women thoroughly then she decides what topic to discuss. She also reads the references which deal with the work and she gathers some information which is useful for her study from the Internet. Then she uses the data she has collected to support her analysis and, finally she draws some conclusions.

The Organization of the Thesis

The thesis consists of three chapters. Chapter One is the Introduction, which contains the Background of the Study, the Statement of the Problem, the Purpose of the Study, the Method of Research and the Organization of the Thesis. Chapter Two presents the Analysis of the Theme of Louisa M. Alcott's Little Women. The last chapter, Chapter Three, contains the Conclusion. It is followed by the Bibliography and the Appendices, which consist of the Synopsis of the Novel and the Biography of Louisa M. Alcott.