

# CHAPTER ONE

## INTRODUCTION

### **Background of the Study**

The present writer has decided to analyse a novel for her thesis. According to the present writer, novel is easier and more enjoyable to read than other genres of literature because it gives clear and detailed information. According to Murphy (1972:127), 'novel is the most widely practiced and most widely practiced and most widely read form of literature in the world today'. Novel is an account of life which involves conflict, plot, characters, action, setting and theme. (Shaw, 1972: 257). In a novel, the readers can have a more detailed description of the flow of events, characters and settings.

There are many well-known American writers, but the present writer has chosen Willa Cather, one of the most prominent women writers in American Literature, who won the Pulitzer Prize for her novel *One Of Ours*. Her novels mainly focus on the destruction of provincial life and the death of the pioneering tradition. She portrays life in Nebraska and the pioneering West. Willa Cather spent her childhood in the Nebraska prairie states. Almost all her novels use women as the protagonist and to some extent, they portray some of her own childhood experiences.

The present writer has decided to analyse A Lost Lady because this novel deals with the social condition in 1923 and because Cather criticizes women who are too materialistic for money, for which they would sacrifice even their dignity. The novel describes what happens to Mrs. Forrester, a small town aristocrat who marries a contractor. Niel, the narrator of this story, is dismayed when he discovers that Mrs. Forrester has a lover, Frank Ellinger. After her husband's death, she is left deprived and the Lady has changed to be a woman who loses her dignity and is willing to sacrifice herself only for wealth. Eventually, she leaves the town and marries a rich Englishman. Mrs. Forrester's manners and characteristics convey some knowledge to the readers about the value of life according to the author.

In writing this thesis, the present writer chooses theme to be analysed because she thinks it is the most dominant element in Cather's A Lost Lady. Theme is defined as 'the total meaning discovered by the writer in the process of writing and by the reader in the process of reading' (Kenney, 1966:94). The theme will be analysed through the protagonist of the novel. 'As a major element of fiction, character is obviously of major importance for theme (...the question...is whether the author does things, or whether things happen to them).' (Kenney, 1966:94-95)

The present writer intends to reveal the theme through the portrayal and actions of the protagonist in this novel. She finds out that the protagonist plays a significant role in the revelation of the theme of A Lost Lady.

### **Statement of the Problem**

In order to analyse the novel, the present writer states the problems as follows:

1. What is the theme of Willa Cather's A Lost Lady?
2. How does the protagonist help to reveal the theme?

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of the study is:

1. To discuss the theme of Willa Cather's A Lost Lady.
2. To discuss how the protagonist helps to reveal the theme.

### **Methods of Research**

The method of research which is used is library research. First of all, the present writer begins by reading Willa Cather's A Lost Lady. She then searches for and gathers the information needed for the thesis from some reference books and materials from the Internet to support the analysis of the primary text. Finally, she analyses the data and draws a conclusion based on what she has analysed.

### **Organization of the Thesis**

The present writer divides her thesis into three chapters. In the first chapter, she represents the Introduction, consisting 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. In the second chapter, the present writer presents the analysis of the theme of Cather Willa's A Lost Lady.

Afterwards, she concludes her analysis in Chapter three. The thesis ends with the Bibliography and the Appendices, consisting of a synopsis of A Lost Lady and the biography of Willa Cather.