

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Background of the Study

No one can live alone and wants to be alone in this world. They prefer to live as part of the community and they want to be an acceptable part of the society. To be acceptable in the society, they need to make some adjustments and follow the social norms, which means “standard pattern of behavior that is considered normal in a particular society.”(Microsoft Encarta: 2002)

However, rules, customs, standards, and patterns bring limitation to human private life. One becomes “... not able to act and live as he or she chooses without being subject to any, or to any undue, restrains, and restrictions.” (Microsoft Encarta: 2002) This public’s restrictions and restrains can also shape and destroy an individual’s life, especially someone who has an important position in the society. For example, if an important person like a president makes a mistake, people will take it seriously, even if it is actually a small mistake. They treat it as if it is unusual and inappropriate for him/her to do that. On the other hand, it may be all right for ordinary people to make the same mistake. This is because as an important person, the society will take much interest in him/her and they will assume that the person must have a perfect personality. It is, of course, impossible

for a human being not to make mistakes. Hence, the social restrains can cause a bad effect especially for significant people.

The same condition can be found in the novel The Human Stain by Philip Roth. The novel tells about two major characters, Coleman Silk and Faunia Farley, who both get the pressure from the society. The pressure leads them to do uncommon things. They create something untrue about themselves.

Coleman Silk, a black American with fair skin, badly wants to be accepted in the American society. He lets people believe that he is Jewish so that no one will know he is black. He keeps his secret for over fifty years to his friends, colleagues, even to his wife and children. Coleman believes that by doing so, he will be accepted and can get the chances to do anything he wants. He gets a high position as the Dean in Athena University and he is respected by many people. He does this because there are many pressures at the time for the blacks as the society believes blacks are inferior to whites.

Pressures also influence Faunia. She is raped by her rich stepfather but no one believes her. It is because her rich stepfather has power in his money so that he can do anything, especially to control people. Moreover, most people appreciate rich people more. They consider rich people to be good since they have a high position in the society. Learning from this situation, Faunia knows someone can do anything if they have much money and money will attract people's attention. Faunia does not want to attract people's attention because she feels humiliated when people know about her being raped. This traumatic experience makes Faunia Farley choose to be a liar by telling people that she is illiterate and to marry a stupid veteran man. She does this because she knows no one will

pay too much attention to stupid people and there is power in it. For her this is a benefit as she can do anything she likes and no one will blame her.

By inventing the situation as they wish, both Faunia and Coleman can get what they want. But they do not realize that their action have a risk which they should face.

The public's restriction, interference, or fear makes the character of Coleman and Faunia become complex as well as challenging to analyze. That is why the present writer focuses her analysis on the characters, in order to reveal the theme of the novel, which is defined by Shaw as "... the central and dominating idea in literary work besides the message or moral implicit in any work of art." (Shaw, 1972:378)

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The problem which will be discussed in this thesis are:

1. What is the theme of The Human Stain?
2. How does the portrayal of the major characters help to reveal the theme?

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The present writer's purposes of writing this thesis are:

1. To show the theme of The Human Stain
2. To show how the portrayal of the major characters helps to reveal the theme

METHOD OF REASERCH

Firstly, the present writer reads The Human Stain comprehensively. Then she uses some references in the library to find information which is related with the work and later on, the present writer browses the Internet to find more information about the work and biography of the author. After the present writer gets all information she needs, she begins her analysis of the novel and draws some conclusion.

THE ORGANIZATION OF THE THESIS

The thesis consists of three chapters. Chapter One is the Introduction, consisting of the Background of the Study, Statement of the Problem, Purpose of the Study, Method of Research, and Organization of the Thesis. Chapter Two deals with the discussion of the theme of the novel. The last chapter, Chapter Three, is the Conclusion, which is followed by the Bibliography and the Appendices, consisting of the synopsis of the novel and biography of Philip Roth.