

# CHAPTER ONE

## INTRODUCTION

### **Background of the Study**

Alice Walker is a twentieth century African-American woman writer. She is a novelist, poet, critic, and essayist, but she is famous as a novelist. She is actively involved in many political movements, such as Civil (Human) Rights Movement, Native American Rights Movement, the Woman's Movement, the Anti-Nuclear Movement, and Movement for Peace, Freedom, and Justice in South Africa and Central America. Her most famous novel is The Color Purple, for which she has received the Pulitzer Prize for Fiction and the American Book Award. The novel is an excellent piece of writing by Walker as it focuses on some important topics associated with women, suppression and liberation.

As a woman novelist, Walker has her own tradition in writing the novel. She possibly has the same traditions with the other women novelists, but they never talk about the same thing. This can be seen from the following quotation.

Alice Walker's The Color Purple is an example of a "woman's novel." This means not just that it was written by a woman, but that it carries on an identified tradition of women's writing, in

terms of narrative strategies, themes addressed, and voice. This is not to say that all women write about the same things; but there is a tradition known as women's literature, which has developed with a consciousness of women's traditions of writing as distinct from men's ways of writing. (Lavender, 1998:1)

From the quotation above, I can see that Alice Walker has her own style and characteristics. She has a different way of writing than male writers, especially about feminism. We can see the differences by reading her novel The Color Purple, and comparing it with other novels.

In The Color Purple, Alice Walker is trying to tell the readers about the oppression of women that usually happens among black people. She tells about oppression in her novel, because she wants to fight for women's rights and freedom. She creates Celie as the protagonist to show the readers that a woman also has a right to live and needs support to get freedom from the oppression.

I have chosen The Color Purple to analyse because I find in the novel that the female protagonist can survive in facing oppression, can change, and can get a better life because of the help and support from the other female characters. The support that is given from the other female characters can change the female protagonist to become an independent woman. From the female protagonist's characteristics, the readers can see the condition of women in black communities who need a lot of support from the other women to survive because of the oppression they face from men. And by seeing the changes, the readers will find that a woman who has support can survive and have a better life.

From the reasons above, I decide to analyse the theme in the novel through the protagonist as she plays an important role in revealing the theme. Harry Shaw

in his book Dictionary of Literary Terms (Shaw, 1972: 365) states that “Protagonist is the main character in a work, on whom the author focuses most of the narrative attention.” Harry Shaw states that “Theme is the central and dominating idea in a literary work.” (Shaw, 1972:378) Moreover, he also says that “Theme is the message of moral implicit in any work of art” (Shaw, 1972:378). And by analyzing the theme, I hope that the readers will be able to find that good relationships can help someone to change, and support is important in affecting the changes.

### **Statement of the Problem**

I would like to state the problems of this study as follows:

1. What is the theme in Alice Walker’s The Color Purple?
2. How does the protagonist help reveal the theme?

### **Purpose of the Study**

My purposes of analyzing Alice Walker’s The Color Purple are:

1. To show the theme in the novel.
2. To show how the protagonist helps reveal the theme.

## **Method of Research**

I use library research in this analysis. First of all, I begin by reading Alice Walker's The Color Purple as the primary text. Then I read the references which deal with this work and gather some information which is useful for my analysis from the Internet. Then I use the collected data to support the analysis. Finally, I draw some conclusions.

## **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 theme of sisterhood through the female characters in Alice Walker's The Color Purple. The last chapter, Chapter Three, contains the Conclusion, and it is followed by the Bibliography and the Appendix, which consists of the synopsis of the novel and the biography of Alice Walker.