CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1. BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

People as social creatures have a need to express their feelings and thoughts. One beautiful way to express them is through poetry. Poetry as a type of literature is a composite of individual poems - involving unique combinations of grammar, sound, rhythm, thought, feeling - and appeals to the imagination. More profitable than defining poetry, perhaps, is the defining of a poem. 'A poem is arrangement of words creating a moment experience'. (Knapp, 1965, 1)

Among many kinds of poems, there are poems that tell about black people's life. The present writer would like to show that in America, black people are still struggling with the issue of discrimination. They struggle to achieve equality in many fields of life, such as education, politics and economy.

The poems that the present writer intends to discuss are written by Maya Angelou, an African American poet. Many of Angelou's poems have almost entirely short lyrics; the words are powerful, filled with hope and courage, and their themes are about the life experiences of black people, including discrimination. Most of Angelou's poems are concerned with the struggle to achieve racial equality. The present writer will deal with four of Maya Angelou's poems, namely *Caged Bird, Still*

I Rise, Million Man March Poem, and Life Doesn't Frighten Me. The present writer would like to analyse the theme of the poems for she finds that theme is worth analysing. Theme is 'the central concept developed in a poem. It is the basic idea which the poet is trying to convey and which, accordingly he allows to direct his imagery'. (Reaske, 1966, 42) The present writer finds that the four poems which will be analysed have the same issue about equality in life.

The author uses a lot of repetitions, imageries, symbols and figures of speech, such as metaphor, simile, personification, and hyperbole to blend her feeling in presenting the theme of the poems. In order to help the reader understand the poems, the present writer gives the definition of each element used in the poems. Imagery is 'a word or sequence of words that refers to any sensory experience'. (Kennedy, 1976, 523) Symbol is 'a visible object or action that suggests some further meaning in addition to itself'. (Kennedy, 1976, 659) Metaphor is ' a statement that one thing is something else, which, in a literal sense, it is not'. (Kennedy, 1976, 537) Simile is 'a comparison of two things, indicated by some connective, usually *like*, *as*, or a verb such as *resembles*'. (Kennedy, 1976, 537) Personification is 'a figure of speech in which a thing, an animal or an abstract term (truth, nature) is made human'. (Kennedy, 1976, 544) Hyperbole is 'a figure of speech which employs exaggeration'. (Reaske, 1966, 34)

Angelou's poems are easy to read and understand and they are capable of reaching an audience regardless of age, race, gender or social class. Although the language the poet uses is simple, her poems have deep meanings.

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2. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

1. What is the theme of Maya Angelou's four poems ?

2. How does the author reveal the theme ?

3. PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

1. To show the theme of Maya Angelou's four poems

2. To show how the author reveals the theme

4. METHOD OF RESEARCH

In this thesis, the present writer uses library research. First, she reads the poems of Maya Angelou. She then selects the data from certain reference books which are relevant to the topic of the thesis. She also looks for more information about the poet's life, background, and her poems from the Internet. After that, she draws the conclusion.

5. ORGANIZATION OF THE THESIS

This thesis consists of three chapters. Chapter One is the Introduction, which consists of Background of the Study, Statement of the Problem, Purpose of the Study, Method of Research and Organization of the Thesis. Chapter Two is the analysis of the four poems of Maya Angelou. The last chapter, Chapter Three, is the Conclusion of what is discussed in the previous chapter. The thesis also includes bibliography and biography of the author.

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