

# CHAPTER ONE

## INTRODUCTION

### **Background of the Study**

During World War II from 1939 until 1945, America took part in the war. After World War II, America becomes and it is still a superpower thanks to its strong economy. This great progress makes Americans enjoy material success. Thus, material wealth becomes an important thing for them to get a better life. Moreover, material wealth is also a measure of social status in America: “the quality and quantity of an individual’s material possessions became an accepted measure of success and social status”. ((Datesman, Maryanne Kearny., Edward N. Kearny, and Joan Crandall, ed, 1997:27). Material wealth is one of the traditional American values. The other traditional American values are: equality of opportunity, competition, and hard work. Most Americans apply traditional American values in their lives.

Equality of opportunity is a belief that everyone has the same opportunity to succeed. Thus, many Americans believe that achieving success is not only a dream, but this belief gives them spirit or hope that they can achieve success. People must compete with others in order to succeed. Competition is part of

American life: 'The pressures of competition in the life of an American begin in childhood and continue until retirement from work. Learning to compete successfully is part of growing up in the United States.' (Datesman, Maryanne Kearny., Edward N. Kearny, and Joan Crandall, ed, 1997:26). Moreover, Americans also believe the value of hard work in order to achieve material wealth. These beliefs often make Americans obsessed with success.

However, their obsession with success, especially the financial one, often has a negative effect on their lives. They often have wrong views of success. The false view of success causes them to make mistakes which ruin not only their own lives, but also other people's lives.

The present writer has chosen two plays that portray the protagonists who are obsessed with success, especially financial success. Both plays are concerned with the same issue: false view of success. Both plays are written by Arthur Miller, who was one of the famous American playwrights in the twentieth century.

The protagonists in *All My Sons* and *Death of a Salesman*, represent Americans who are greatly inspired by the value of material wealth. This makes them become materialistic, although they come from different backgrounds. The protagonist in *All My Sons*, Joe Keller, is a successful businessman whereas Willy Loman as the protagonist in *Death of a Salesman*, is an unsuccessful salesman. They also have different ways to achieve success. The protagonists also have different solutions in solving their concept of success. The ways the protagonists solve their wrong view of success make the present writer interested in analyzing both plays.

In this thesis, the present writer intends to analyse the theme through the protagonist in both plays. She notices that the theme is very significant in those two plays. According to William Kenney, theme is ‘the total meaning discovered by the writer in the process of writing and by the reader in the process of reading’. (1966:94). Besides, theme is the controlling idea of the play, which can guide the reader of the play to understand the play better.

The present writer considers the protagonists of the two plays have important roles in revealing the theme. According to Kenney, ‘as a major element in fiction, character is obviously of major importance for theme’. (Kenney, 1966:95). Therefore, the present writer analyses the theme of these plays through the protagonist of each play.

### **Statement of the Problem**

The present writer formulates the following questions:

1. What is the theme in Arthur Miller’s *All My Sons* and *Death of a Salesman*?
2. How is the theme revealed through the protagonist?

### **Purpose of the Study**

This study is carried out in order to show the following:

1. The theme of the plays.
2. The way the theme is revealed through the protagonist.

### **Method of Research**

The present writer uses library research in carrying out her study. Firstly, she reads these two plays as the primary texts. Furthermore, she reads several books dealing with the topic she is going to discuss. Then, she analyses the plays by using the references that support her analysis. Finally, she draws some conclusions from her analysis.

### **Organization of the Thesis**

The present writer presents this thesis in four chapters. The first chapter contains the Introduction, which consists of the Background of the Study, Statement of the Problem, Purpose of the Study, Method of Research, and Organization of the Thesis. Chapter Two contains the analysis of theme of *All My Sons* whereas Chapter Three contains the analysis of theme of *Death of a Salesman*. The fourth chapter is the Conclusion, of the discussion and analyses of the two plays. This thesis ends with the Bibliography and the Appendices, comprising the synopses of the two plays and the biography of the playwright.