

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Background of the Study

Basically, individuals need to define themselves so they would recognize and have self-knowledge of who they are, what they want to achieve in this life and how they want other people to see them. By defining one's self, one would be able to find one's true self or one's self-identity.

I notice that the formation of identity itself is a part of one's personality development. Erik Erikson, in his theory of Eight Stages of Psychosocial Development, classifies identity as 'one stage in a complete process of human development.' (<http://scholar.lib.vt.edu/theses/available/etd-042620001-194845/unrestricted/chap2.pdf>). On the other hand, I also find 'the work on self and identity has a special place in the study of human nature ...Life goals develop and are influenced by one's view of what one is like, the way one would ideally like to be (or would like to avoid being),...' (<http://www.tandf.co.uk/journals/titles/15298868.asp>). Thus, I am of the opinion that to find one's true self or self-identity becomes an

important thing since it becomes an integral part of one's complete process of human development.

Two novels that deal with the quest of self-identity are Jamaica Kincaid's Lucy and Sandra Cisneros' The House on Mango Street. I have decided to analyse them as they have some things in common. I find that both novels portray a coming-of-age girls' quest to find their true self as they consider themselves to be incompatible with the situation in their life. In Kincaid's Lucy, the protagonist is a teenager from Antigua who has come to America in order to find her true self. Her native surrounding is the major excuse why she tries to find her true self. In Cisneros' The House on Mango Street, the protagonist is a Hispanic immigrant's daughter who finally finds her true self through her interaction with her surroundings, which she at first does not like. However, both protagonists in these two novels come to different results since they have different ways and thoughts in their process of finding their true self.

Both Jamaica Kincaid and Sandra Cisneros are regarded as prolific contemporary authors of this century. Some of Kincaid's works have been awarded and her first novel has been nominated for the PEN/ Faulkner Award. Cisneros' works are also known for her reflection of her experience as a Latina woman in America. According to Cynthia Tompkins of Arizona State University, Cisneros is acclaimed as 'the most visible Chicana in mainstream literary circles. The vividness of her vignettes and the lyrical quality of her prose attest to her craft.' (Rozakis, 1999:385).

In this thesis, I would like to analyse the theme of the novels as it is the most prominent aspect. Theme is ‘the total meaning discovered...by the reader in the process of reading.’(Kenney,1966:94). I am of the opinion that the theme, which deals with the effect of one’s attitude in finding self-identity is very significant. Both protagonists in these two novels portray different attitudes and reactions towards the incompatible situation in their life which in the end affects their thinking in the process of finding their true self. Thus, I would like to analyse the theme through the portrayal and actions of each protagonist in the novels.

Statement of the Problem

In analysing the theme of Jamaica Kincaid’s Lucy and Sandra Cisneros’ The House on Mango Street through portrayal and actions of the protagonists, I would like to state the problem as follows:

1. What is the theme of Jamaica Kincaid’s Lucy and Sandra Cisneros’ The House on Mango Street?
2. How does the portrayal and actions of the protagonists help to reveal the theme in each novel?

Purpose of the Study

Based on the statement of the problem above, I would like to state the purpose of the study as follows:

1. To show the theme of Jamaica Kincaid’s Lucy and Sandra Cisneros’ The House on Mango Street.
2. To show how portrayal and actions of the protagonists help to reveal the theme.

Method of Research

In writing my thesis, I do some library research and use Internet in order to find some theories and references required. Firstly, I begin by reading Kincaid's Lucy and Cisneros' The House on Mango Street. Secondly, I decide what topic to analyse. Thirdly, I study some reference books which are relevant to the subject. Fourthly, I collect some information from the Internet to support my analysis. Finally, I analyse the topic and draw some conclusions.

Organization of the Thesis

This thesis consists of four chapters, preceded by the Preface and the Abstract. Chapter One is the Introduction, which contains the Background of the Study, Statement of the Problem, Purpose of the Study, Method of Research, and Organization of the Thesis. Chapter Two presents the analysis of the theme in Jamaica Kincaid's Lucy whereas Chapter Three presents the analysis of the theme in Sandra Cisneros' The House on Mango Street. Chapter Four contains the conclusion of what has been analysed in the previous chapters. This thesis ends with the Bibliography and the Appendices, which consist of the biography of the authors and the summary of the novels.