

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

I. BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY.

Paulo Coelho is a writer who has been nominated by Brazilian Academy of Letters and he is “the all time best-selling Portuguese language author” (Wikipedia). Coelho has always managed to come up with extraordinary topics for his writings and his artworks have won numerous literary awards and have also appeared on best sellers list in many countries.

One of his critically acclaimed book is Veronika Decides to Die. According to critical acclaim by Denver Post Veronika Decides to Die is “Coelho’s most artful work to date... pulling the reader into discussion” (Paulocoelho). For these reasons, I choose this literary artwork for my analysis.

Moreover, according to critical acclaim by Revista Ercilla, it is stated that Veronika Decides to Die is “an invitation to reflect closely on our existence” (Paulocoelho). Because of that, I decide to analyze the theme of this novel, “the central idea or dominating idea in literary work” (Shaw 378) by applying existentialism approach. I believe it will provide a great existentialist insight to the readers regarding choices and satisfaction in life.

Existentialism views human existence as a set of underlying theme and characteristics, such as anxiety, dread, freedom, awareness of death, and consciousness of existing (Wikipedia). Existentialism is based on moral individualism, where everything is subjective for it is impossible to find an ultimate justification in making choices. The lack of standard in right and wrong deed is exactly why humans are free to make their own choice.

A well-known philosophical thinker in existentialism is Jean Paul Sartre (Wikipedia), he is one of the founders of existentialism and has declared with his slogan “existence precedes essence” that means there is no predefined essence to humanity, except that which people make for themselves.

Existentialism based on Sartre is a concept to the individual view which deals with human being's existence in finding the meaning of life and emphasizing on individual freedom and choice. In Sartre's theory, everyone in this society is given the free choice and the right to choose whatever one desires, and conform to the society will only lead one to nothingness and meaninglessness in life. So in his view, taking decision in one's own will has its values and appreciation because one can only define oneself with personal choices. And after someone chooses, he or she also has to commit to the choice and must accept all the consequences of the choice, that is what makes the value and existence created solid based on the theory. So I decide to analyze the book Veronika Decides to Die through the concept based on Jean Paul Sartre's theories because of the strong relation between the life of the protagonist Veronika with this philosophical view.

Society has a strong relation to existentialism because the values in society always affect the decision one makes in life. Meanwhile according to existentialism, decision should be made independent of social values (Tameri). Because existentialism appreciates individual values in taking decision.

II. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM.

1. What is the theme of existentialism in Paulo Coelho's Veronika Decides to Die?
2. How is the theme presented through the protagonist?

III. PURPOSE OF THE STUDY.

1. To show the theme of existentialism in Paulo Coelho's Veronika Decides to Die.
2. To show how the theme is presented through the protagonist.

IV. METHODS OF RESEARCH.

In this thesis, I begin my research by library research. First by reading Veronika Decides to Die by Paulo Coelho as the primary text. Next, to support my study in analysis I search reading materials through reference books and Internet sites and I obtain more relevant information on the theory related to the approach that will be used and applied to the analysis of the thesis. Finally, I use all the information for the analysis of the topics I choose for my thesis.

In analyzing the thesis, I use the existentialism by Jean Paul Sartre to

understand the protagonist's life through the portrayal of the protagonist. I study the protagonist's choice, freedom, and individual existence that leads the protagonist's into meaningless in life. And all the theory I relate to her personal life, society, and her desires in social environment.

V. ORGANIZATION OF THE THESIS.

The thesis divides into three chapters, starts with acknowledgements, table of contents and abstract. In chapter one the introduction, which consists of the background of the study, the statement of the problem, the purpose of the study, the methods of research and the organization of the thesis. Chapter two contains an analysis of the existentialist theme of Paulo Coelho's Veronika Decides to Die. Chapter three presents the conclusion of the analysis of literary works. The thesis ends with lists of references in the bibliography and the appendices, which present the synopsis of Veronika Decides to Die and the biography of the author, Paulo Coelho.