

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

People may see death as something that is ambivalent. They may see it as a relief, and at the same time they may see it as a horrible thing. This is the impression that I get from a best-selling novel, titled Veronika Decides to Die, which depicts a life of a person who suffers from depression because of her unfulfilled desires. On reading the title, I become curious about why such a person wants to end her own life; therefore, I am eager to analyze the novel.

The remarkable novel above is written by one of the most famous authors of the 21st Century named Paulo Coelho. His works have been translated into many languages and some of which have become best-selling. According to the Bambi Award ceremony speech which took place in Germany, ‘Coelho is not only one of the most widely read, but he is also one of the most influential authors today’. <<http://www.santjordi-asociados.com/biography.htm#bio>>. He is famous for his inspirational works, including Veronika Decides to Die. In comparison with The Alchemist, the work is more interesting as it shows how sexuality becomes one of the most important aspects in someone’s behavior. For

the purpose of medication, the work is recommended for doctors and it has also been adapted into a theater in several countries.

I am challenged to analyze the meaning of the work for the reason that Coelho's 'ideas, philosophy and subject matter covered in his books touch the aspirations of millions of readers searching for their own path and for new ways of understanding the world' <http://www.paulocoelho.com/eng/Bio_Coelho.html>. Therefore, the subject I will analyze from the work is the theme, which is said to be one of the major aspects in literature as 'the purpose of the story,' (Perrine, 1959: 106). In my opinion, without knowing the theme, readers might never understand the meaning of the work; consequently, what ideas that Coelho wants to convey might not be successfully delivered to them.

According to Perrine's Story and Structure, one of the methods to reveal the theme is 'to explore the central conflict and its outcome' (Perrine, 1959: 110). The most significant conflict in the work is the inner conflict which happens in the protagonist's mind. On the one side she wants to end her life, while on the other side she starts to doubt her decision to die as the will to be alive appears. These two opposing forces that exist in her mind are the problem she has to face and overcome.

In order to achieve a better understanding, I try to analyze the protagonist's inner conflict to reveal the theme by using the psychoanalytic theory developed by Sigmund Freud. Psychoanalysis is one of the fields of psychology, 'the study of human behavior and mental processes' <<http://www.answers.com/psychology?cat=health>> Psychoanalysis is used as a method of psychotherapy to cure personality disorders. Freud focuses on the

unconscious process as an important part in human psyche. In literature, the theory is ‘an excellent tool for reading beneath the lines’ (Guerin, 1992: 117); therefore, it will be best to read the hidden reasons that cause the inner conflict.

There are three basic points that I want to apply from Freud’s theory of psychoanalysis. Firstly, the assumption that there are unconscious aspects in the human mind and it is operated by the id, the ego and the superego. Secondly, people’s desires are often repressed in order to comply with social demands. Finally, sexuality has an important role in someone’s behavior. There are disturbances of the three points above in the protagonist’s mind that cause her inner conflict, which I will discuss in the following chapter. As the novel deals with sexuality and suicide, I will use other Freud’s theories, psychosexual development and suicide, to support my understanding about the inner conflict.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The problems are stated as follows:

1. What is the theme of the work?
2. How do the protagonist’s inner conflicts help reveal the theme?

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

Based on the statement of the problem above this study is done:

1. To show the theme of the work.
2. To show how the protagonist’s inner conflicts help reveal the theme.

METHOD OF RESEARCH

I start the research for this thesis by library research, first by reading Veronika Decides to Die as the primary text. Then, to support my study, especially in accordance with the topic of my study, I perform research for additional information, which is done through secondary reading from some books. Firstly, I read Perrine's Story and Structures to enlarge my knowledge about literary elements. Secondly, I read Wortman's Psychology, Schneidman's Clues to Suicide, and Guerin's A Handbook of Critical Approaches to Literature to enlarge my understanding about Sigmund Freud's Psychoanalysis Theory. Finally, I also read and compile some texts that are taken from the internet. All of the information and knowledge that are gathered are then used to analyze the novel. Finally, I draw some conclusion from the research I have made.

In searching the inner conflict, I read Freud's Psychoanalysis Theory to understand the protagonist's conflicting desires and motivations through certain behavior in order to achieve better understanding. By knowing the id, the superego, and the ego, I study the protagonist's psyche that triggers the inner conflict. Freud's other theories, Psychosexual Development and Suicide, is also used to understand the inner conflict. All of the theories are mainly focused on the protagonist who is affected by her past life and her surroundings such as her family and society.

THE ORGANIZATION OF THE THESIS

The thesis is presented in four chapters and preceded by the Table of Contents, and the Abstract. The first chapter is the Introduction, which consists of the Background of the Study, Statement of the Problems, the Purpose of the Study, Method of Research, and the Organization of the Thesis. Chapter Two consists of the theoretical background based on Sigmund Freud's psychoanalysis theory that will be used to analyze the novel. Chapter Three is the analysis of Veronika Decides to Die, and the analysis will be concluded in the last chapter. The thesis ends with the Bibliography and the Appendix, which contains the Synopsis of the Novel and the Biography of the Author.