

# CHAPTER ONE

## INTRODUCTION

### **Background of the Study**

Losing identity is a problem that most teenagers face. Bad environment, pressure from the society and stress may cause one to lose one's identity. According to Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English, there are two definitions of identity, "who someone is, somebody's name," and "the qualities and attitudes you have that make you feel you have your own character and are different from other people".

I always have interest in the issue of identity, and in literature, there are many novels which deal with the issue. That is why I choose to analyse a novel for my thesis. Moreover, novels are more interesting and enjoyable to read. Novels also provide more detailed information than other literary genres, and their narrative form in presenting ideas makes people easy to understand and analyse them. "A novel is a fictional prose work of substantial length". (Dictionary of Literary Terms)

From those novels that talk about identity issue, I am particularly interested in the life of teenagers because at their age teenagers are usually facing

many things for the first time, especially things related to their identity, such as, relationship with the opposite sex, beliefs in the greater power, clashes with people around them and disagreement with others' opinions. The different way every teenager faces and solves his/her problems interest me most. There are many teenage fiction writers who write about teenagers or troubled teenagers, such as, Joy Cowley, Victoria (Vicky) Mary Jones, and Margaret Mahy, but Fleur Beale writes in a different approach. She was a former teacher who was always concerned about her students. Beale writes I am not Esther because she is inspired by one of her students who was beaten up and expelled from his family for going against their religious belief. "Beale shows her understanding of teenagers, male and female, and her ability to motivate even reluctant reader" (Fleur Beale). In I am not Esther, Fleur Beale brings up the topic of a 14-year-old girl's struggle to deal with her new life in a fundamentalist Christian family.

After I read the novel, I found that the most dominant literary element is conflict. Conflict is "the opposition of persons or forces upon which the action depends in drama and fiction" (Dictionary of Literary Terms). In a novel, conflict is categorized as one of the main keys to an interesting and exciting novel. There are three types of conflicts:

One type of conflict is elemental, ... physical: a struggle between man and the physical world. It represents man versus forces of nature; the difficulties and dangers, for example faced by explorers, navigators, astronauts. Rain, cold, heat, wild beasts in the jungle, treacherous tides – these are constant obstacles to mankind.

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Another type of conflict is social: a struggle between man and man. Much popular fiction is based on social thought: two men trying to win the love of a girl: the competition of business men: a girl having difficulties with her parents over her conduct: racial and prejudices, etc.

A third kind of conflict is internal: or psychological: a struggle between desires within a person. External forces may be important and other characters may appear in the narrative, but the focus is always upon the central figure's inner turmoil.

(Shaw 91)

I choose to analyse the conflicts of the protagonist, particularly social and inner conflicts because the social and inner conflicts of this novel are the most significant elements. The inner and social conflicts of the novel are mostly related to the protagonist's identity loss.

### **Statement of the Problem**

1. What are the social and inner conflicts in the novel?
2. What causes the social and inner conflicts?
3. How are the social and inner conflicts resolved?

### **Purpose of the Study**

1. To show what the social and inner conflicts in the novel are.
2. To show what causes the social and inner conflicts.
3. To show how the social and inner conflicts are resolved.

## **Method of the Research**

In composing my thesis, I read Fleur Beale's I am not Esther as my primary text and Longman Dictionary of Literary Terms. I also search internet sites to find the information and the data I need in analyzing I am not Esther. After that I draw a conclusion from my analysis.

## **Organization of the Thesis**

The thesis is divided into three chapters. The first chapter is the Introduction containing the Background of the Study, the Statement of the Problem, Purpose of the Study, the Method of Research and the Organization of the Thesis. In the second chapter, I present the analysis of social and inner conflicts of the major characters in I am not Esther. I conclude the analysis of social and inner conflicts of the major character in I am not Esther in the last chapter. The thesis ends with the Bibliography and Appendices that contain the summary of I am not Esther and also the biography of the author.