

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Background of the Study

Anita Diamant is a twentieth century American author, who first started her writing career as a freelance journalist. Most of her articles have been published in local magazines and newspapers such as The Boston Globe, Parenting Magazine and some others (“Biography of Anita Diamant”). The Red Tent is her first novel, which becomes best-seller and for which she got Book of the Year Award in 2001 called *Book Sense* (“Biography of Anita Diamant”). Her job as a journalist has affected most of her works, which present topics about humanity.

One of her novels, The Last Days of Dogtown, tells about the past life of American people in a place called Dogtown, which is located in Cape Anne, Massachusetts. It presents a “tiny community rejected by the rest of the world” (Heilke 5). This novel is interesting to be discussed because of the way she tells about the reality of life in past time. She creates such interesting characters in the novel, the topic of which concerns discrimination, which is “the practice of treating one particular group in society in an unfair way” (Longman 384).

After reading the novel, I am attracted to analyze the theme of The Last Days of Dogtown. According to Perrine, “The theme of a piece of fiction is its controlling idea or its central inside. It is unifying generalization about life stated or implied by the story” (112). The analysis is conducted through discussing the conflicts in the novel. Shaw defines conflict as “the opposition of persons or forces, the action of which depends in drama and fiction” (91). There are three types of conflict: (a) elemental or physical conflict, which is about a struggle between man and the physical world; (b) social conflict, which is about a struggle between a man and a man and (c) internal or inner or psychological conflict, which is about a struggle between desires within a person (Shaw 91-92).

I agree that the theme of The Last Days of Dogtown is “discrimination can be caused by skin colour, age and social status.” I analyze the theme through the inner and social conflicts among some of the characters in the story, namely Judy Rhines, Cornelius Finson, Black Ruth and Oliver Younger.

After reading the discussion in the thesis, the readers are expected to realize that the conflicts experienced by the characters in this novel play an important role in conveying the idea of the story. That is why I intend to discuss the theme of The Last Days of Dogtown through the characters’ conflicts.

Statement of the Problem

Based on the background of the study presented previously, the problem in this literary study are formulated as follows:

1. What is the theme of the novel?
2. How do the inner and social conflicts in the novel help reveal the theme?

Purpose of the Study

The stated problems lead to the purposes of the study, which are

1. to show the theme of the novel.
2. to show how the inner and social conflicts in the novel help reveal the theme.

Method of Research

In writing this thesis, the method of research I use is library research. First, I read The Last Days of Dogtown by Anita Diamant as my primary text. From books and the Internet, I also read and search some other sources and texts which can support my analysis. Then, I analyze the novel and draw some concluding remarks of the result of my analysis.

The Organization of the Thesis

In my thesis, there are four chapters that are preceded by the Abstract, the Acknowledgements and the Table of Contents. Chapter One is the Introduction, which consists of the Background of the Study, the Statement of the Problem, the Purpose of the Study, the Method of Research and the Organization of the Thesis. Chapter Two is the discussion of theme through inner and social conflicts in Anita Diamant's The Last Days of Dogtown. Chapter Three is the Conclusion. This last chapter is followed by the Bibliography and the Appendices, which contain the synopsis of The Last Days of Dogtown and the biography of Anita Diamant.