

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

James Baldwin is one of the most important African-American writers in the twentieth century. He wrote novels, short stories, plays, children's books, a volume of poetry and essays. Most of his literary works discuss racism against African-Americans. In his literary works, he discusses sexual identity, and he also reflects on his personal experience about life as a black man who lived in America. That is why some of his literary works are known as autobiographies, such as his novels Go Tell It On The Mountain (1953) and his second novel, which he wrote in 1956, entitled Giovani's Room ("James Baldwin Wrote About Race and Identity in America").

I have chosen Go Tell It On The Mountain, James Baldwin's first novel, for analysis in my thesis. I find this novel interesting to analyse because this novel is based on James Baldwin's personal experience. James Baldwin said, "Mountain was the book I had to write if I was ever be going to write anything else" ("Go Tell It On the Mountain"). It means this novel is the most important work for him. Go Tell It On The Mountain established him as a profound and new voice in

American literature. In this novel, James Baldwin explores issues of race, religion, and sexual identity. "... see how race, sex, and religion influence the lives of people in a small Harlem church. Religion creates deep, strong emotions in this people" (Longman 217).

I would like to analyse the portrayal of the male character in this novel, specifically the protagonist. I think analysing the characteristics of the protagonist is interesting for me because:

Every reader is interested in people, or should be, because people are the most important single factor in individual lives. In fiction, reader, primarily interested in the individuals concerned, has a natural tendency to identify with the "hero". . . . It is difficult to identify with a character whom one does not know or understand. (Shaw 71)

I believe that the author of the novel has a particular purpose in creating the protagonist's characteristics. "Without characterization, no thesis, no plot, and no setting can develop genuine interest for a reader or cause him to care what happens, or does not happen, to whom and why" (Shaw 71). The protagonist in this novel is John Grimes. He is portrayed as a young black boy who lives in Harlem. On his fourteenth birthday, he faces a big question in his life, finding out his own identity.

Having a self-identity crisis, John also has pressure from his step-father, who does not love him, his mother, and the society around him, by expecting him to be a better person. So, to be acceptable in their midst, John pretends to be a well-behaved person in front of his family and the church society. John's effort in pretending to be someone he has not encouraged me to analyze the character

thoroughly. Based on this reason, I also intend to find the influence of pressure from the family and the society on the portrayal of the protagonist.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The problems are stated as follows:

1. How does the author portray the protagonist?
2. What is the purpose of the author in creating such a protagonist?

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

According to the statement of the problems, the purposes of this study are:

1. To show how the author portray the protagonist in the novel.
2. To show the purpose of the author in creating such a protagonist.

METHOD OF RESEARCH

In doing my analysis, I use library research. I read Go Tell It On the Mountain as my primary text. Then, I also read and collected some texts from the library and Internet to support my topic. And then, I used all the data that have been collected to analyze the novel. Last, I write some conclusions using the information that I have gathered.

THE ORGANIZATION OF THE THESIS

In my thesis, there are three chapters, which are preceded by Acknowledgements, Abstract, and Table Of Contents. The first chapter is the

Introduction, which consists of Background of the Study, Statement of the Problem, Purpose of the Study, Method of Research, and the Organization of the Thesis. The second chapter is the discussion of Go Tell It On the Mountain. The last chapter is the Conclusion of the discussion. My thesis ends with the Bibliography and the Appendices, which include the Synopsis of the Novel and the Biography of the Author.