

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Background of the Study

In real life there are many cases of abusive relationships around us. These abusive relationships mostly take male figures as the abuser and female figures as victims. “The causes for abusive relationship are various, such as, poor anger management, jealousy, social stress, etc. There are five forms of abuses; they are social, physical, sexual, emotional, and verbal”. (“Physical Abuse”)

There are many novels that tell about abuse cases, such as *The Girl with Dragon Tattoo* by Stieg Larsson, *The Kitchen God's Wife* by Amy Tan, and *Ellen Foster* by Kaye Gibbons, but in this thesis I will choose *The Kitchen God's Wife* by Amy Tan. In *The Kitchen God's Wife*, the character Winnie Louie shows about how she is beaten by the evil husband, Wen Fu, and how she manages to get away from him.

The Kitchen God's Wife deals with an abuse which can occur everywhere and not just in one place or one culture. This novel also makes me aware about domestic violence. This novel has received some praises from critics in the United States and one of them is that “Within the peculiar construction of Amy Tan's

second novel is a harrowing, compelling and at times bitterly humorous tale in which an entire world unfolds in a Tolstoyan tide of event and detail. – New York Times” (Dew).

In addition Amy Tan is a great contemporary American writer who has achieved many awards because of her works. She received Bay Area Book Reviewers Award, American Library Association's Best Book for Young Adults, Asian/Pacific American Awards for Literature Honorable Mention, and many others. She also received praise from Elgy Gillespie, an author and journalist. Gillespie stated, "Once again I found myself reading Amy Tan all night, unable to put the story down until I knew what happened in the end, sniffing when I got to the sad bits ... and finally going to sleep at dawn with the conviction that Tan had provided an education for the heart." (“Tan, Amy – Introduction”)

I will analyze the theme of the novel through the portrayal of the protagonist. Theme is “the subject or main idea in a talk, piece of writing or work of art, a short piece of writing on a particular subject” (“Theme”). In *oxforddictionaries.com* the word protagonist is defined as “the leading character or one of the major characters in a play, film, novel, etc” (“Protagonist”). I choose portrayal of protagonist as a way to analyze the theme because it is clear that the story of the novel focuses on the protagonist’s life. It is shown how the protagonist’s sufferings give an impact on her personalities and make her unique, which leads to the theme of the novel.

Statement of the Problem

The problems I am going to discuss are:

1. What is the theme of the novel?
2. How does the portrayal of the protagonist help in revealing the theme?

Purpose of the Study

The purposes of the study are:

1. To show what the theme of the novel is.
2. To show how the portrayal of the protagonist helps in revealing the theme.

Method of Research

I use library research in writing my thesis. First, I read the novel that I have chosen. After that, I analyze the theme through the portrayal of the protagonist in the novel. And then, I search for references from the Internet. In the end, I draw some conclusion from my analysis.

Organization of the Thesis

I divided my thesis into three parts, preceded by the Acknowledgements, the Table of Contents, and the Abstract. 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 Analysis of the Theme Through the Portrayal of the Protagonist in Amy Tan's *The Kitchen God's Wife*. The thesis ends with the Bibliography and the Appendices, which contain the synopsis of the novel and the biography of the author.