

# CHAPTER ONE

## INTRODUCTION

### **Background of the Study**

*Bildungsroman* is a German literary term for a genre of novel which focuses on development of the protagonist. From Online Etymology Dictionary, Bildung can be defined as “education, formation, growth” while Roman means “novel” (“Bildungsroman”). An article mentions that *Bildungsroman* is a “novel of education” or a “novel of formation” (“Bildungsroman”). As a novel of education, *Bildungsroman* has the main purpose to show its reader learning process of the protagonist from his or her development. The protagonist in this genre of novel is usually portrayed as a young man or woman. The protagonist’s characteristic begins to develop after he or she learns about moral values through his or her experience in life. During his or her learning experience, the protagonist is able to develop his or her mindset that supports his or her characteristic development toward maturity (“Bildungsroman”). Maturity is “the time or state when someone or something is fully grown or developed” (“Maturity”). Through

maturation process that the protagonist experiences, he or she usually becomes a better person at the end of the story.

Sue Monk Kidd is a notable American writer who is best known for her *Bildungsroman*, *The Secret Life of Bees*, which was published in 2002 (“The Secret Life of Bees”). Having taken a writing course in Emory University, one of the best universities in United States, she developed her writing skills and wrote short stories which received several awards (“About Sue Monk Kidd”). Being successful in writing short story, she wrote nonfiction and fiction which also gain success because of the inspiring stories within them. Some of her nonfiction works are *When the Heart Waits* (1990) and *Traveling with Pomegranates* (2009) while some of her fiction works are *The Mermaid Chair* (2005) and *The Invention of Wings* (2014).

Kidd is a writer who lives in the postmodern period of literature, which began in the 1940s. The story of postmodern novel is often about “quest for understanding the self, finding a grasp of one’s place in the world” (Sorondo). In relation to characteristic development in *Bildungsroman*, understanding the self is one of the results that the protagonist achieves after development.

In this thesis I choose to analyze one of her novels; *The Secret Life of Bees*, set in Sylvan, South Carolina, United States, in 1964. In the novel, the protagonist is Lily Melissa Owens, a motherless fourteen-year-old girl. She lives with her abusive father, Terrence Ray Owens, and her African-American maid, Rosaleen Daise. In school, Lily is alienated by her peers. After an incident, Lily and Rosaleen go to Tiburon, where Lily gets acquainted with a new community, consists of August Boatwright, the Daughters of Mary and Zachary Lincoln

Taylor. They give Lily acceptance, guidance and encouragement which help her characteristics to gradually develop. At the end of the story, Lily becomes a better person.

As a bestselling novel, *The Secret Life of Bees* has been successfully adapted into an award-winning movie. Since its publication, the novel has “found a wide readership and [has] received much critical acclaim” (“The Secret Life of Bees”). The novel also becomes a phenomenon after being sold “more than 6 million copies” (“About Sue Monk Kidd”) and listed by Barnes and Noble as “the sixth bestselling book of the decade” (“Sue Monk Kidd”). In addition, this book is “taught widely now in high school and college classroom” (“About Sue Monk Kidd”).

The literary element that I choose to analyze from this novel is the portrayal of the protagonist. Protagonist by definition is “the central character in the conflict, whether he be a sympathetic or an unsympathetic person” (Perrine 44). The protagonist in the novel is a dynamic character who goes through development and becomes a better person at the end of the story. A dynamic character is defined as a character who “undergoes a permanent change in some aspect of his character, personality, or outlook.” (71)

### **Statement of the Problem**

After reading the novel, there are some things I would like to discuss:

1. How is the protagonist portrayed in the novel?
2. What is the purpose of the author by creating such a character?

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purposes of writing this thesis are:

1. To see how the protagonist is portrayed in the novel.
2. To understand the purpose of the author by creating such a character.

### **Method of Research**

The method I use is library research. I start by reading the novel, *The Secret Life of Bees*. Then I analyze the novel by using formalism. I take some references and resources from the Internet and books to support the analysis and assist me in writing the thesis. Finally, I draw a conclusion from my analysis.

### **Organization of the Thesis**

The thesis is divided into three chapters, preceded by the Acknowledgements, the Table of Contents and the Abstract. In the first chapter, I present the Introduction, which contains 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. The second chapter is the Portrayal of the Protagonist of Sue Monk Kidd's *The Secret Life of Bees*. The third chapter is the Conclusion. The thesis ends with the Bibliography and the Appendices, which include the Synopsis of the Novel and the Biography of the Author.