

# CHAPTER ONE

## INTRODUCTION

### Background of The Study

Agatha Christie is a British author in the 20<sup>th</sup> century who is famous for her novels. She is also famous for her plays, such as *The Mousetrap*, and short stories, such as *The Submarine Plans* and *The Second Gong*. She is considered to be one of the most famous murder mystery writers. She is clever at making stories and unforgettable detective characters. Agatha Christie has made a great contribution to the world of literature, especially in the genre of detective story.

Most of her works have been filmed and the stories of her two famous detective characters, Miss Marple and Hercule Poirot, have been made into a serial in television and radio versions. Miss Marple looks like an ordinary old woman. She does not like a detective at all, yet with her ability to observe human nature, she can solve a murder case with her shrewd observation.

Hercule Poirot is a Belgian man who has interesting physical appearance and also eccentric manners. His first appearance is in Christie's first book, *Mysterious Affair at Styles*. It is difficult for someone to argue with him for he has strong character. His famous tool in identifying murder case is called "grey cells." He always finishes each case with a dramatic denouement.

In this thesis, I would like to analyse one of the many world famous Christie's books, *Towards Zero*. This novel, which is a whodunit story, was written in 1944. Whodunit story is "a novel or drama concerning a crime (usually a murder) in which a detective follows clues to determine the perpetrator" ("who-dun-it"). Such type of story makes the readers want to keep reading because they cannot find out who the murderer is until the end of the story. In this novel, Christie does not use Hercule Poirot or Miss Marple as the detective (*Towards Zero*).

This novel presents a new detective named Battle. Actually, Christie does not lose her touch on creating good murder mystery story. She beautifully forms a story that discusses separately how each character has connection to the others, which brings them to be involved in a mysterious murder. She is able to create an atmosphere that makes the readers continue to guess until the end who is likely to be the murderer.

I am going to analyse the elements of plot, namely suspense, surprise and artistic unity. According to Laurence Perrine, suspense is "the quality in a story that makes readers ask 'what's going to happen next?' or 'How will this turn out?' and impels them to read on to find the answers to these questions"(45). The next is surprise, which is "proportional to the unexpectedness of what happens; it becomes pronounced when the story departs radically from our expectation. In the short story such radical departure is most often found in a surprise ending: one that reveals a sudden new turn or twist" (47). The last is the artistic unity, which is "the condition of a successful literary work whereby all of its elements work

together for the achievement of its central purpose where the suspense and surprise are acceptable and believable for readers” (“Artistic Unity”).

### **Statement of The Problem**

The problems in this study are formulated in the following questions:

1. Which parts of the story act as suspense in the novel?
2. Which parts of the story act as a surprise in the novel?
3. How is the artistic unity presented in the novel?

### **Purpose of The Study**

The analysis is conducted with the following purposes:

1. To show parts of the story which act as suspense in the novel.
2. To show parts of the story which act as surprise in the novel.
3. To show how the artistic unity is presented in the novel.

### **Method of Research**

In conducting the study, I used library research. First, I read Agatha Christie’s *Towards Zero* as the primary text. Then, I also read as well as compiled some information from the Internet to support my analysis of suspense, surprise and artistic unity of the novel and I made some conclusions of my analysis. Finally, I wrote the report in this thesis.

## **Organization of The Thesis**

This thesis consists of three chapters, which are preceded by the Acknowledgements, Table of Contents and Abstract. The first chapter is the Introduction, which consists of Background of the Study, Statement of the Problems, Purpose of the Study, Method of Research, and Organization of the Thesis. The second chapter is the Analysis of Elements of Plot in Agatha Christie's *Towards Zero*. The third chapter is the Conclusion. The thesis ends with the Bibliography and the Appendices, which contain the synopsis of the novel and the biography of the author.