

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This chapter covers several points, there are background of the study, problem statement, objective of the study, benefit of the study, and research paper organization.

A. Background of the Study

Marguerite Johnson or known as Maya Angelou who was born on April 4, 1928 in St. Louis, Missouri, is the daughter of Bailey Johnson and Vivian Baxter. Maya Angelou's parents divorced when she was three years old and sent Maya and Bailey to Stamps, Arkansas to live with his grandmother, Annie Henderson. Maya and an older brother named Bailey Johnson Jr., were raised by Momma. Maya Angelou's childhood is very poor. In 1936, Maya was raped by her mother's lover and the man was later killed by her uncle. As a result of that death, Maya became mute and had difficulty in speaking for five years. Growing up without a father figure made Maya Angelou's strong desire in her adult life to have a husband and build a happy family.

Maya Angelou is a poet and screenwriter, orator, and African-American actress. Maya Angelou had a turbulent childhood, but she was able to retell her experiences with great poignancy and effect in her book *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings* (1969). This book is a collection of stories from her childhood and made her one of the first African-American women to reach the bestsellers list. *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings* was also nominated for the National Book Award and her long poem "On the Pulse of Morning" were invited to be read at the inauguration of President Bill Clinton in 1993.

Maya born of African American descent has experienced a long and tortuous journey. The position of African Americans in the white strata of society is sadly discriminated against both race and gender. Maya Angelou received unfair treatment both as a black and a woman. This does not make

Maya a weak and insoluble woman. According to Ethel and Martin (1990), the relationship between blacks as a minority and whites as a majority became an important problem in the 19th century. In 1870, American blacks were declared citizens with all the right guarantees, but they were ridiculed, rejected, and often left without a clear feeling. American blacks often have to be in a world where rules are made by white Americans.

Apart from negative and positive reviews, as an African-American memoir writer and poet, Maya Angelou distinguishes herself by instilling her art with consistent cultural awareness. This experience inspired some Black writers, at least during the early years of African-American literature, to prove they were the equals of European-American authors. As Henry Louis Gates, Jr, has said, "It is fair to describe the subtext of the history of black letters as this urge to refute the claim that blacks had no written in tradition they were bearers of an inferior culture."

Maya Angelou as an African-American writer created many works through the life she experienced at that time. Most African-American literature explores issues of freedom and equality which have long been ignored to blacks in the United States, along with other themes such as African-American culture, racism, religion, feminism, slavery, segregation or migration. African-American literature paves the way for the freedom of blacks to negotiate their new identity as an individual part of the republic.

Maya Angelou created many literary works with the theme of racism such as prejudice and discrimination by white people against blacks in America. Negative assumptions about blacks make Maya often vent her irritation by inviting blacks to fight discrimination. In literature, African-American's poem is portrayed virtually as a minority group in America. The life experienced by Maya made her create a message full of literature. As cited in Rohrberger and Woods (1971), literature is a structure with meaning that involves experience, gives knowledge, it involves one in experiences that he values; it provides knowledge that he values; the such experiences affords the

greater knowledge and wisdom (p. 5). Literature has four genres, namely novel, short story, poem, and play.

Literary works must have coherence between one structure and the others. In making a literary work, one will not be separated from the elements that build the literary work. Elements that exist can be in the form of elements in the literature itself or elements related to things outside of literary work. The external aspects and internal aspects, both aspects have important meaning in building literary works. The combination of the two elements provides completeness that literary works can not only be seen from the inside (text) of literature, but also the forming elements from the outside.

The meaning of literary works can be understood in the social context of the society behind it. Literary works have total coherence which the text-forming elements mean (Goldmann in Kurniawan, 2012: 104). This is where genetic structuralism is related to sociology because the meaning of the structure of literature is placed in the structure of society (Kurniawan, 2012: 104). Goldmann in Faruk (2010: 56) mentions his theory as genetic structuralism. Genetic structuralism in principle is a literary theory believed that literature is not merely a static structure and born by itself, but it is the result of structuring the mind's categorical structure of the subject of the creator or a certain collective subject that is awakened by the interaction between the subject and social situations and certain economy (Faruk, 1999: 13).

The researcher saw that the literary works of Maya Angelou were mostly influenced by Maya's social life. Maya Angelou's selected poems are interesting to be researched by researcher. Maya's life and also her work are so fascinating that many writers are able to be like her. In this case, the researcher tries to analyze the poems of Maya Angelou that related with the racial prejudice toward black in America. In Maya Angelou's selected poems, the researcher can describe the racial prejudice toward black people in America and the reason of Maya Angelou creates the poem.

B. Problem Statement

Based on the background of the study above, the writer formulated the problem by making the research question below:

1. What are the racial prejudices reflected in Maya Angelou's selected poems?
2. How does Maya Angelou reflect the racial prejudice in her poems?
3. Why does Maya Angelou create the poems?

C. Objective of the Study

Based on the research question above, the objectives of this study are:

1. To know the racial prejudice toward the black in America as reflected in Maya Angelou's selected poems.
2. To analyze the racial prejudice reflected in Maya Angelou's selected poems.
3. To describe the reason of Maya Angelou to create the poem.

D. Benefit of the Study

The benefits of this research are:

1. Theoretically

This research could enrich the understanding associated with the racial prejudice of Maya Angelou's poems toward the black in America as reflected in Maya Angelou's selected poems.

2. Practically

The research is expected to provide a new perspective to the readers about the racial prejudice toward the black in America as reflected in Maya Angelou's selected poems.

E. Research Paper Organization

The research paper organization from Maya Angelou selected poem about racial prejudice toward black in America reflected in *Still I Rise* (1978), *America*, and *Weekend Glory* are as follows: chapter 1 includes introduction

which presents background of the study, problem statement, objective of the study, benefit of the study, and research paper organization. Chapter 2 includes literature review which consists of underlying theory and previous study. Chapter 3 includes research method discussing about type of the study, object of the study, type of data and data source, technique of data collection, technique of data analysis, and data validity. Chapter 4 is the analysis of Maya Angelou's selected poems. Chapter 5 contains conclusion, suggestion of the study, and pedagogical implication.