

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

This chapter talks about the background, problems, and objectives of study.

#### 1.1 Background of the Study

Literature is close to the everyday life. A lot of imaginations contained in the literature are inspired by everyday life. It means that the literary work is a reflection of life itself. This is in accordance with Sumarjo and Saini (1986, p. 3) who suggest that the literary work is a form of personal expression of human experiences, thoughts, ideas, and spirits by means of a language.

Sometimes a lot of things are deliberately hidden by the creator in his work from his readers, therefore it needs a deep study to reveal the hidden messages. The study of literature is an activity to learn the elements and relationships between elements in a literary work based on the theoretical approach and the literary work (Aminudin 1995, p.39). Therefore, it can be said that the study of literature is an activity that will involve a certain literary criticism and the result of interpretation of certain elements hidden in the literature.

One of the study of literature is to find human irony contained in literary works. Zaimar (2002, p.53) says that irony is the event or situation which is in

contrast with what is expected or supposed to happen. Irony can be found in daily life. A tax officer, for instance, is supposed to help the country in gathering public funds to create prosperity. Yet some tax officers are willing to receive bribery for their own sake. This is very ironical because instead of maintaining the law, they break it. Due to the great number of ironies happening in human life and the nature of literature as a representation of human life, one can easily find irony in literary works. Therefore, literary work is interesting to study to reveal the phenomena in human life. In this case, the writer highlights the human irony which is sometimes delivered by several writers through literary works such as poetry, short stories and novels.

One of the literary genres is short story. Short story is a fictional prose narrative that tends to be compact and to the point. Short story, as a kind of literary work, can provide benefits to the reader. It can provide experience and pleasure, develop the imagination, develop an understanding of human behavior, and deliver a universal experience; a universal experience that must be related to life and humanity. It can be a problem of marriage, romance, tradition, religion, friendship, social, political, educational, and so on. Therefore, it is not surprising if a reader of short story feels as if he or she is looking at a miniature of human life and feels close to the problems that exist in it.

A short story that is going to be studied in this thesis is Shirley Jackson's *The Lottery*. It tells about unnamed village in America where people annually gather in a field to find out the winner of a lottery. Tessie Hutchinson, the main

character, is late to come to the annual event. Everyone agrees that lottery is important, but no one seems to know when it began or what its purpose is. As Mr. Summers reads a list of names, the heads of each household come forward to select a folded slip of paper from an old black wooden box. Bill Hutchinson (Tessie's husband) draws the paper with the black mark on it, and everyone begins to speculate that Hutchinson will win the drawing. Tessie takes the black paper with the black mark on it, and she says it is not fair. Finally, people pelt her with the stones they have gathered before the drawing as the celebration.

The story in *The Lottery* really astonished the writer because commonly those who win the lottery will get a prize which must be something favorable, but in *The Lottery* winner gets the stones thrown at her by the people. The writer assumes that this story may have ironical aspects. The curiosity to know deeply about the meaning of the short story has driven the writer to take Shirley Jackson's *The Lottery* as the object of his thesis.

To uncover the meaning that is found in *The Lottery* the writer uses *Semiotics* theory. According to Sara Ilstedt Hjelm (2002, p.3), semiotics is concerned with everything that can be taken as a sign. Therefore, semiotics examines signs and meanings. Semiotics approach to the short story is considered appropriate because a literary work usually provides particular signs. Each individual can interpret the signs in the story with his or her own point of view.

However, to be able to interpret the short story, the writer employs semiotics approach.

In this thesis the writer will analyze the existing signs in *The Lottery* to review the issue in this study, namely the human irony. Therefore, the writer decides to choose the title “**A Human Irony in Shirley Jackson's *The Lottery*.**”

## **1.2 Problem of the Study**

The writer formulates the problem of the study as follows: what are the human ironies are reflected in Shirley Jackson's *The Lottery*?

## **1.3 Objective of the Study**

In this research, the goal is to know the human ironies reflected in Shirley Jackson's *The Lottery*.

