

# CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 The Background of the Study

It is a universal knowledge that literature is regarded as the reflection of reality. Despite being fictional or being a fictionalized version of true stories and real-life events, literature keeps track of what has happened, is happening, or will happen in many circumstances in human life and in things surrounding it. In his book, *An Introduction to the Study of Literature* (1913), Hudson stated that literature is a vital record of what men have seen in life, what they have thought and felt about those aspects of it which have the most immediate and enduring interest for all of us. It is then fundamentally an expression of life through the medium of language (11). This means that literature is not only as an expression of human experience but also as a series of important life records. Thus, it is not a surprise that they mirror many significant aspects of life.

One of these aspects is a powerful system in charge of controlling people whether it concerns an individual, a wider society, or both as a whole unity. This system often emerges as a government, leading a community on how they act and behave and giving boundaries on how their life should be. The system generally has one aim: to maintain order in the society that they govern. However, through the lens of Marxist criticism, a ruling group may have other agendas to keep the power only on the hands of the few. Due to their high position, an institution often inserts their political views and ideologies into their people. This is where capitalism plays a part in a structured society. According to Tyson (2006), this

ideology drives people to a certain *status quo* that the ruling group finds desirable, as they are the products of cultural conditioning (56).

*Harry Potter* is a best-selling fantasy series written by J. K. Rowling that reflects a huge take on the relationship between ideologies and the people. The story itself focuses on the struggle of a wizard boy, Harry Potter, on fighting against the evil power of Lord Voldemort who wants to become immortal and rule the wizarding world. Harry's adventure begins when he enters Hogwarts, a school especially built and designed for young witches and wizards, and meets all sorts of people. He befriends Ron Weasley and Hermione Granger. Together, they form a strong bond that helps Harry go through the conflicts that he faces and mysteries that he wants to solve. However, aside of focusing on Harry and his time at the wizarding world, Rowling at the same time also includes an organization that plays a role of the wizarding life surrounding Harry, namely the Ministry of Magic. It also features a certain group that wishes to alter entirely the life in the wizarding world called the Death Eaters, which is composed of Voldemort's followers.

J. K. Rowling is an English novelist who concerns a lot about the world's political and social progress, as seen in her criticism of the society through her works and her personal social media account. Her influences and views are widely regarded, especially among her readers. She also actively participates in philanthropy works, combating poverty and social inequality. *Time* magazine made her the runner-up for its 2007 Person of the Year, highlighting the social, moral, and political inspiration she has given her fans. Rowling's political view

has shown that she strongly supports the left-wing, as she comes from a working-class background before becoming a famous, successful writer. As Leach (2008) has reported, she has donated £1 million of her wealth to the Labour Party and praised their agenda on child poverty, noting that her interest inclines toward the liberal system in politics. This can be recognized in the *Harry Potter* series through how she depicts the rise and fall of a ruling group and the effects of it to the community it governs.

The writer believes that the system in the wizarding world reflects Rowling's criticism on the modern British society in relation to the ideologies surrounding the hierarchy of its people. In fact, Britain has gone through a big change over the course of years. The monarchs are no longer in charge of all political affairs and class distinction slowly begins to wither. However, this does not mean that they are entirely gone. Marxist analysis argues that human events and productions focus on relationships among socioeconomic classes, and it explains all human activities in terms of the distribution and dynamics of economic power (Tyson 2006:54). Thus, the cycle of the social system in Britain still revolves around the ruling class and their ideology.

The writer chooses *Harry Potter* series as the object for Marxist literary analysis because she wants to expose how capitalism maintained by the ruling class tries to oppress the society. It also implies the social and political view of the author, which more or less influences the readers' perspective. The writer analyzes this novel by using several theories, including Gramsci's theory of

cultural hegemony and Jameson's theory of political unconscious, hence the relation with Marxist philosophy and ideology.

## **1.2 The Identification of the Problem**

*Harry Potter* series implies deep political views regarding how the ruling class, including the government, manages the wizarding world. Generally, the plot talks about how Harry Potter as the destined hero becomes the key role to help the wizarding world put an end to Lord Voldemort's rising evil power. Yet, somehow the journey on doing so is influenced by the ideologies and political beliefs imposed by the Ministry of Magic. They become the institution that hegemonizes the magical society, thus resulting in dispute, clash, and conflicts of interests.

The writer wants to expose how these elements affect the life of the witches and wizards and create an imbalance within the society. Consequently, such condition also becomes an allegory that reflects the modern capitalistic society of Britain. This shows the problems that the government dominated by the ruling group, whether in real life or in fiction, suffers from instability and corruption in its regime.

## **1.3 The Scope of the Research**

The writer limits the discussion on the role of the ruling class, specifically the government, in controlling the wizarding community. The analysis explores how it affects both the individuals and the groups involved under its regime, and

how they react to such condition. The writer also questions the underlying implication that relates the system in the series to the society in Britain.

#### **1.4 Research Questions**

1. How does the author depict the relationship of the two capitalistic elements, the ruling group and the oppressed group, in the *Harry Potter* series?
2. How does the allegory in the *Harry Potter* series reflect the modern British society?

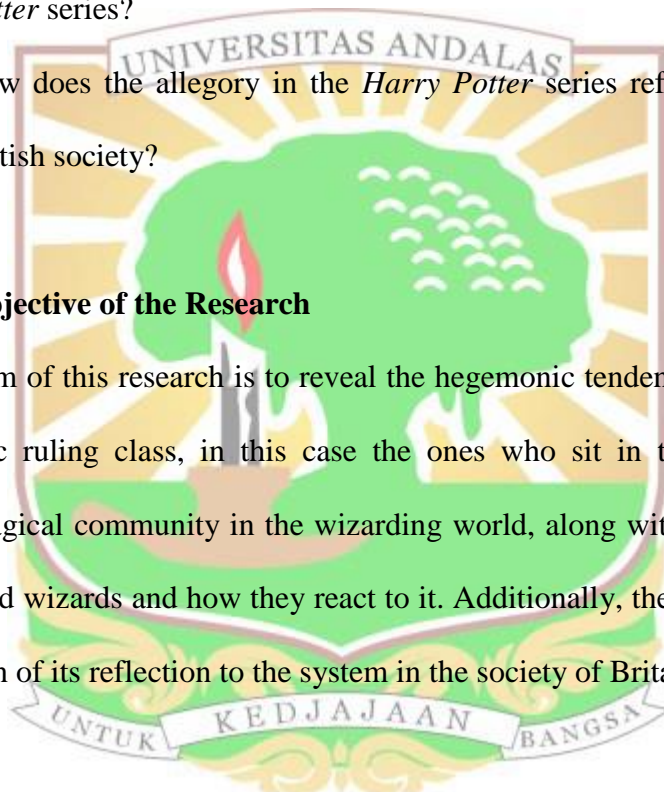
#### **1.5 The Objective of the Research**

The aim of this research is to reveal the hegemonic tendency displayed by the capitalistic ruling class, in this case the ones who sit in the government, toward the magical community in the wizarding world, along with how it affects the witches and wizards and how they react to it. Additionally, the writer wants to see the relation of its reflection to the system in the society of Britain.

#### **1.6 The Review of the Previous Studies**

Due to its popularity, the writer has found some articles and thesis that have analyzed the series, whether they talk about only one of the books, selected books, or the entire series as the whole.

A journal article by Meysam Ahmadi from Islamic Azad University, Iran, is proven useful for the writer's topic. In his article, *Cultural hegemony in Charles*





*Dickens's A Tale of Two Cities* (2014), he claims that Dickens shows how the governing class was able to spread its beliefs in institutions, schools, and popular culture, while the lower class seems to only have to accept their fate. This fact is relevant to the issues happening in the *Harry Potter* series, and thus the writer finds similarities in his article with the writer's idea. Additionally, his article is interesting because he finds out that the rulers use consensus models rather than exert coercion and punishment to achieve their favorable goals. Despite the brief elaboration, he manages to explore the class issue and the ideological strategies well.

Erin Vollmer's journal article entitled *Harry's World: An Exploration of J.K. Rowling's Social and Political Agenda in the Harry Potter Series* (2007) helps on identifying the hierarchy and the political beliefs within the series. Vollmer finds that a perfect society will not come into actuality and prejudice will still exist. Nonetheless, she concludes that Rowling ultimately demonstrates what society should strive for: harmony that can only exist with diversity. The strength of her article lies in how she gives a general but sufficient take on Rowling's point of view in politics, which is then implemented in the storytelling.

A Ph.D thesis by Natasha Anne Giardina from James Cook University entitled *To steal past watchful dragons: cultural hegemony and ideology transmission in children's fantasy literature 1900-1997* (2011) reveals how Harry, as a child character, exhibits the qualities of adult leadership which makes him the hero that fights against the ideology that endorse adult hegemony. Giardina argues that Harry's actions, which are not under adult supervision, shows resistances

towards adult's ideology in a conservative hegemonic system. What makes her thesis fascinating is that she does not only focus on one novel, but several children's literature at the same time. Furthermore, her findings prove that Harry has the ability to be conscious of the greater good, and thus makes him a representable character for a particular class.

Another thesis that is relevant to the writer's topic is *Harry Potter & the Riddles of Political Ideology* (2015), written by Cynthia Perri from Arcadia University, Pennsylvania. Her thesis elaborates Marxist characteristics within the Ministry of Magic and how the Ministry treats the citizen into different classes through political involvements. She shows how prominent that the role of ideology plays in fostering these political evaluations and identifies several repressive ideologies employed by the bourgeoisie to oppress the proletariat. She also discovers that the book was heavily coded with Marxist sentiments such as the bourgeoisie, the proletariat, and a class system. Even though her elaborations are rather broad in some parts, her findings are useful for the writer to enrich the writer's analysis.

The thesis with the same object of the writer's is *The Political Unconscious in J. K. Rowling's Novel Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets: A Marxist Reading* (2016), written by Elisa Noveria Chandra. Through Fredric Jameson's theory, she uncovers how Hogwarts students are sorted into different houses, which reflects the ideology of British's class society. She elaborates how the wizarding society uses blood status as their standard, with Slytherin rejecting Muggle-born wizards and glorifying the Pureblood wizards, which is similar to

the characteristics of the upper class. Her thesis is helpful and relatable because the writer will also explore how politics, especially that regarding the ruling class, control the society and impose some standards to it. However, the writer finds an arguably different result with the findings of her thesis, specifically regarding the rebellion erupted from the upper class. This will be further discussed in the writer's analysis.

The next related thesis is written by Ihsan Hidayatullah, entitled *Criticism of Hegemonic Practices in American Society in Depression Period in John Steinbeck's In Dubious Battle* (2016). The thesis talks about how hegemony operates in the society through ideology and repression, found in the novel *In Dubious Battle* by John Steinbeck. Despite discussing a different object, the idea is similar to the writer's research, in which the Ministry of Magic tries to suppress any rebellion that comes from the magical community by implanting their ideologies. Even though his thesis only generally exposes the Depression Period, the way he puts his idea into perspective is engaging and can be understood easily.

The writer also finds the relation of her topic with Stella Zavera Monica's thesis entitled *Tyrannical Control over the Proletariat in George Orwell's Animal Farm* (2016). The writer chooses this thesis because of the same theory used, though applied on different object. Monica discovers several results from her analysis. First, using Gramsci's theory, she proves the existence of hegemony between the animals in the farm. Second, the hegemony practice itself is a reflection of the condition in many countries. Third, she finds that propagandist is



the media of efficacy of ideology, because people are manipulated with the idea given by a leader through his speech. In spite of many big ideas, the findings in the thesis correspond to one another. These findings reflect the corrupted society that has been hegemonized by the ruling class or leader, which bears resemblances to the writer's main focus.

All the studies above are conducted and analyzed by the respective writers in order to highlight the issues related not only to *Harry Potter* series as the object, but also to elaborate on the play of cultural hegemony in both literary work and reality. Although similar topics may have brought into attention, the analysis that the writer wants to emphasize has not yet been explored. While the other researchers use one theory to explain one specific issue, the writer chooses two theories in this research to dig deeper into her idea of how two big things, the hegemonic issue and the real-life representation of it, can correlate with one another.

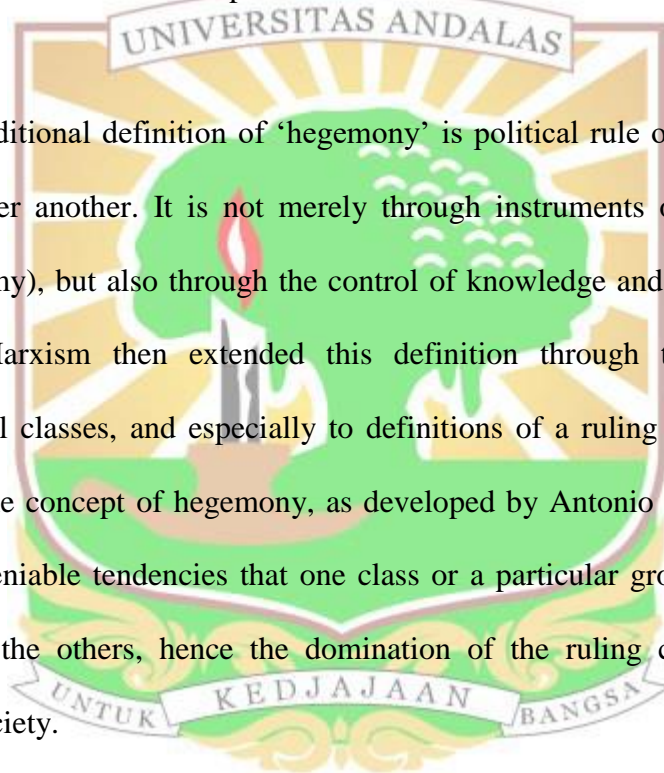
### **1.7 Theoretical Framework**

Marxism, or Marxist theory, is based on the ideas formulated by Marx and Engels as a critique of industrial capitalism. It focuses attention on social history in relation to political economy, particularly with regard to class struggle (Hitchcock 2008:14). Marxism deals with the issues of classes and power in society. In a regime dominated by the ruling class, it may be unavoidable that things such as capitalism and hegemony happen.

Capitalism, according to Marxist, is the creation of class inequality in which the proletariat—workers who sell their labor power for a wage in order to make a living—enables the capitalists who own and control the means of production to recover a profit at the expense of the workers (Hitchcock 2008:16). He believes that the motive behind all social and political activities is to get, keep, and maintain economic power. This condition results in class struggle, and Marxist predicts that it will erupt rebellions to strive for establishing a classless society.

The traditional definition of ‘hegemony’ is political rule or domination of one group over another. It is not merely through instruments of violence (the police, the army), but also through the control of knowledge and culture (Mikics 2007:141). Marxism then extended this definition through the relationship between social classes, and especially to definitions of a ruling class (Williams 1977:108). The concept of hegemony, as developed by Antonio Gramsci, shows there are undeniable tendencies that one class or a particular group of people is favored over the others, hence the domination of the ruling class itself in a capitalistic society.

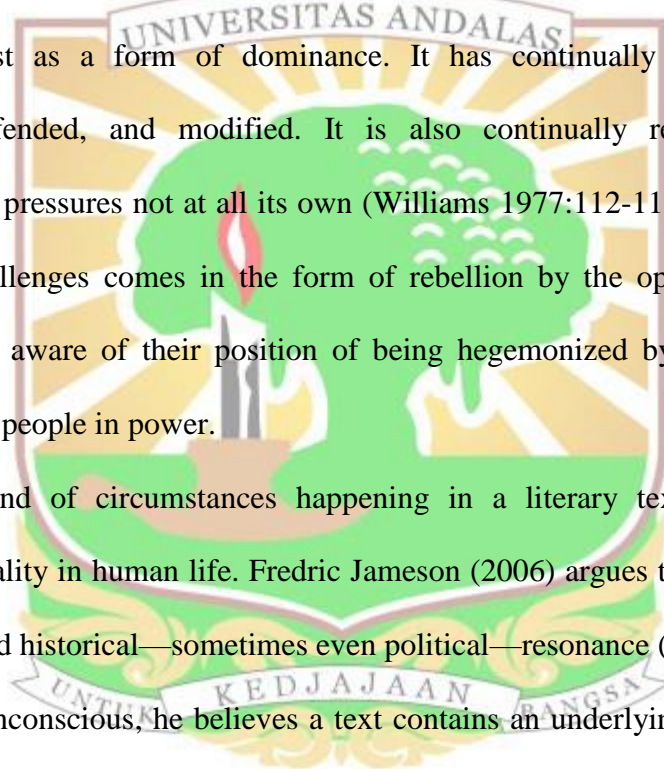
Cultural hegemony begins to be involved once those of the favored group who holds the position of power try to maintain their domination by manipulating the community, spreading their ideology and the good impacts that their governance bring to gain the trust of the people. Mouffe in *Gramsci and Marxist Theory* (1979) further elaborates that Gramsci’s theory of hegemony is not only connected to a theory of the party and of the state, or to a new conception of the



party and of the state. Aside of political education, it also includes, in all its forms, the new and wider conception of civil society understood as a super structural primary moment (40). The entire understanding of hegemony concerns with how the ruling class imposes and builds the society around the ideologies that they choose to believe.

The domination of a ruling group is prone to a series of challenges. This is because their hegemonic practices, nor any other hegemonic practices, do not just passively exist as a form of dominance. It has continually been renewed, recreated, defended, and modified. It is also continually resisted, altered, challenged by pressures not at all its own (Williams 1977:112-113). One of these inevitable challenges comes in the form of rebellion by the oppressed people, once they are aware of their position of being hegemonized by the ideologies created by the people in power.

This kind of circumstances happening in a literary text consequently mirrors the reality in human life. Fredric Jameson (2006) argues that certain texts have social and historical—sometimes even political—resonance (1). In his theory of Political Unconscious, he believes a text contains an underlying interpretation of the real-life society, often conveyed in allegorical ways. Interpretation of a narrative becomes a crucial tool to observe these hidden allegorical conditions that happen in human history. Jameson also urges that it is important to “always historicize” because he claims that Marxism offers a philosophically coherent and ideologically compelling resolution to the dilemma of historicism, and only



Marxism can give an adequate account of the essential mystery of the cultural past (3).

In order to see the underlying interpretation of a literary work, Jameson emphasizes that real-life history becomes a very crucial element. The way the author depicts a certain circumstance in the novel may reflect a particular historical event in reality. He then elaborates that it is in detecting the traces of that uninterrupted narrative, in restoring to the surface of the text the repressed and buried reality of this fundamental history, that the doctrine of a political unconscious finds its function and its necessity (4). Thus, a literary work cannot be separated from reality and somehow becomes a reflection of a historical event in human life.

Furthermore, in the last chapter of his book, "Conclusion: The Dialectic Utopia and Ideology", Jameson (2006) claims that it is important to look at a text from the perspective of dual hermeneutics: the negative and positive hermeneutics. Hermeneutics is the study of interpretation, thought of both as reading and as dialogue: the conversation that occurs between readers and texts (Mikics 2007:141). The negative hermeneutics, according to Marxist's views, refers to how a text becomes an ideology that supports the dominant class on ruling the oppressed class. Positive hermeneutics, on the other hand, deals with what Jameson calls as 'Utopian Impulse'. It shows the struggle of a class or group under a domination to understand class-consciousness and then to rise and fight for their rights in order to create a classless society.



According to Jameson, this dual hermeneutics is crucial: that a Marxist negative hermeneutic, a Marxist practice of ideological analysis proper, must in the practical work of reading and interpretation be exercised simultaneously with a Marxist positive hermeneutic, or a decipherment of the Utopian impulses of these same still ideological cultural texts (2006:286). The awareness of a class system and capitalistic elements in the society then becomes the key for the oppressed class, those who must work and produce surplus value for the dominant class, to eventually rebel and reach the ultimate utopia.

### **1.8 Method of the Research**

In conducting this study, the writer will apply library research. The research methods from HLWIKI Canada (2017) state that successful library research is defined as the systematic study and investigation of some aspect of library and information science where conclusions are based on the analysis of data collected in accordance with pre-established research designs and methodologies. Therefore, the writer will also follow three steps, which are collecting the data, analyzing the data, and presenting the result of the analysis.

#### **1.8.1 Collecting Data**

The writer will use two kinds of data: primary and secondary data. The primary data is the *Harry Potter* series by J. K. Rowling, which contains seven novels. The secondary data consists mainly of other books and articles related to this study and to Marxist theories.

### 1.8.2 Analyzing the Data

In analyzing the data, the writer first understands the storyline in the *Harry Potter* series, before identifying the type of its governmental system. Then, the writer analyzes the hegemony imposed by the government and how it affects the people under its regime. After that, the writer applies the perspectives of Marxist theory, including Cultural Hegemony by Antonio Gramsci and Political Unconscious by Fredric Jameson, from some related books or electronic sources to support the analysis.

### 1.8.3 Presenting the Result of Analysis

In presenting the processed data, the writer uses descriptive method due to the qualitative result gained as the output of the research. According to Jennifer Mason's *Qualitative Researching 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition* (2002), qualitative research aims to produce rounded and contextual understandings on the basis of rich, nuanced and detailed data (3). It elaborates the analysis with arguments and opinion, because the data is in the form of words, statements, and paragraphs instead of in number and pictures. Thus, Qualitative research should produce *explanation or arguments*, rather than claiming to offer mere descriptions (7).

