

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1 Background of the Research

In his book entitled *Literary Criticism: An Introduction to Theory and Practice* (2001), Charles E. Bressler states that Literature as an art, describes written and sometimes spoken material (p. 9). Literature is valued on a particular subject, such as plays, novels and poems. Literary works are written based on real conditions in society and the author's life. The phenomenon that occurs in the real world is depicted in literary works such as novels, poetry and dramas. A literature reflects society, while society gives big influence to literary works. Therefore, literary works are the reflections of the situation, condition, and problems that occurred at the time.

In this research, the writer analyzes the American dream in two novels of Steinbeck, *Of Mice and Men* and *The Pearl*, as document of the situation and condition that occurred at the time. These two novels tell about the dreams of the lower-class people in America to the reader. The main characters of both novels face many problems in society and struggle to achieve their dreams to get a better life with their friends and family. They fight to change their destiny and to get prosperity.

The American dream is the desire of everyone, especially from the lower-class people to get a better life. It is a whises for success and to get prosperity in the life of Americans. The American people believe that with determination and hard work they will gain a better life, without seeing their social, racial, and religious status. The term of the American dream was launched by James Truslow Adam in his book *The Epic of America* in 1931. He states, "The American dream is that dream of a land in which life should be better and richer and fuller for everyone, with oppportunity for each according to ability or achievement." (p.404). It

is the dream of get a land and opportunity to have the same status in society. Ownership of land and home is a symbol of the achievement of the expected prosperity. People are successful if they have their own land and get job in accordance with their abilities, skills and expertise.

The American dream can be called as the expectation and thoughts of Americans for a better life in social and economic. The basic principle of the American dream is the right to live, liberty and pursuit of happiness. Everyone has freedom to achieve happiness without pressure by others.

The writer has several reasons in conducting the research using novels *Of Mice and Men* and *The Pearl*. First is because the two novels tell about the lower-class' dream, which tells about the human desire to change into a better life. This novel shows the reality of the lower-class people in facing their lives. Second is because John Steinbeck is one of the greatest American authors. He uses his own experience as a perspective in his works.

John Steinbeck is one of the American authors who get the Nobel Prize in Literature for his work. He was born on February 27<sup>th</sup>, 1902, in Salinas, California. *Of Mice and Men* and *The Pearl* are the best literary works that have been written by Steinbeck. He is one of the greatest American authors that have written many works about the lower-class people on literature.

*Of Mice and Men* was published in America in 1937 and got the Nobel Prize in 1962, this novel tells about immigrant labor workers who work in agriculture and have a dream to get a land, house, money and freedom. They want to live a happy life with their own business. *The Pearl* was published in America in 1947. This novel tells about a pearl diver and his family who live in poverty. They live by the beach where the place was a slum area for the destitute. The main character has dreams to have much money and to send their son to school and so that he can have a good future. He also wishes to make his marriage with his

wife to be consolidated by the church. They also have many other wishes such as to have new clothes and so on. The two novels describe the main characters' lives in poverty.

Steinbeck's novels are mostly discussing American society. People live in poverty and struggle with social problems. He wrote those novels based on phenomena that happen in America at that time. Steinbeck worked as a journalist in New York while finishing his first novel in 1929. He also had worked in livestock with immigrant labor workers.

Steinbeck shows the dream of the lower-class people, as a person who has the desire to achieve dreams and to get a better life. It shows that people want to get success in many aspects of life. Steinbeck also describes about rural areas in America, such as the agricultural land and the seashore, places that are inhabited by the lower-class and the working-class. *Of Mice and Men* shows the laborer dream and *The Pearl* shows a pearl diver's family dream. They live in dirty and destitute places. People who live in rural community work harder every day, but they still cannot fulfill their needs. They do not have any chance to get success and prosperity. Poverty and difficult life make them far from success, but they still have a desire to change their lives to be better.

