

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

Heroes are often defined as people with the strength or power to defeat their enemies. Heroic characters with several powers are familiar in novels and films. Examples of these are Frodo Baggins from *The Lord of the Rings* trilogy and Harry Potter from the *Harry Potter* series. Some heroes, like Atticus Finch in *To Kill a Mockingbird*, who depends on his position as a lawyer to fight for justice for Tom Robinson, a black man, are heroes even though they lack supernatural powers (Dare, 2001).

Campbell (2004) states that the first job of a hero is to get out of his ordinary or everyday zone and turn to the cause-and-effect zone of people who experience difficulties and eradicate those difficulties. This means that the hero does not face the problem head-on; they choose to find the root of the problem first. After seeing the root of the problem, the hero will understand and overcome the problem and face challenges from the outside world.

Hero is related to self-sacrifice, which means someone willing to sacrifice their own needs for the sake of others (Vogler, 1998). The hero takes action to help others, even if it means sacrificing themselves to death or injury (Becker & Eagly, 2004). From these two definitions, one can draw the conclusion that a hero has the courage to put others' needs ahead of their own, even if it means suffering pain.

In the story of a hero who fights for the happiness of others, there is also the process that they have to go through, which can also be said to be a hero's journey. Joseph Campbell proposed the concept of the hero's journey. He finds a universal theme, which he calls the monomyth: the story of the heroine/hero (Lehner, 2022). Campbell (2004)

summarises in his book that the hero initially lives like an ordinary person, then decides to leave, to be carried away, or to proceed with his or her journey by their own choice. There are three stages of a hero's journey: departure, initiation, and return (Campbell, 2004).

As in the statement above, the story of heroes is also developed in literary works. One of these literary works is a novel. The novel is a piece of literature that attempts to describe the universe in which humans live and tries to give exceptional value so people can learn from it (Danziger, 1973). Reading the novel lets the readers know about someone's experience and the journey they go through. One novel the writer chooses to study the hero's journey is *The Help* by Kathryn Stockett.

The Help is a novel by an American writer, Kathryn Stockett. The novel was written in 2009 and became the year's best-selling novel. This novel is the debut work of Kathryn Stockett and became a New York best seller until it was made into a film in 2011 (McHaney, 2014). Kathryn Stockett was born in 1969 and grew up in Jackson, Mississippi. After graduating from the University of Alabama with a degree in English and creative writing, she moved to New York City, where she worked in Magazine publishing and marketing for nine years (Stockett, 2009). *The Help* is a novel inspired by Stockett's own story, and she never expected the book to gain a massive readership and become a bestseller. The novel marks a milestone in Stockett's writing career because she explores a unique theme and receives tremendous praise for it (McHaney, 2014). (McHaney, 2014).

The Help talks about the story of the black maids working for white families. This novel has three main characters, and each character has a point of view chapter. Two workers, Aibileen and Minny, and the other is Miss Skeeter, a white woman interested in

writing stories about the experiences of black maids working in white families. *The Help* is set in Jackson, Mississippi, in 1960. This is a time when American society still suffered from discrimination and social class segregation between white people and black people. This novel shows how white people treat their black maids, especially focusing on the segregation of all things or facilities that are used by white people and not allowed to be used by black people. They have many differences because, apart from being considered a different race, white families also consider them to be of a lower class. They worked for white families to meet their living needs.

The writer chose *The Help* because the themes of this novel are about social segregation issues and racism felt by black people. As we know, segregation is an act of separation that is usually forced and targets certain groups based on ethnicity or race (Husna, 2024). Therefore, this theme is very relevant to the writer's study of the hero's journey of one of the main characters in the novel, Skeeter. As a white woman, she uses her power to be a voice for the discriminated black maids. The writer chose the hero's journey theory because it not only describes the traditional physical journey of defeating monsters or winning battles, but also relates to explaining the character's emotional and moral struggles in the face of social injustice. In this context, Skeeter can be seen as a modern hero who does not fight monsters or wage war, but rather confronts a system that is segregated and full of discrimination. Her struggle shows courage and sacrifice that reflect the essence of the concept of the hero's journey in real life.

Skeeter, who is initially just a white woman who is silent about the white families' treatment of black maids, eventually becomes a voice for them through her position as a writer and white woman. Skeeter's decision to write a book about black maids is not just a journalistic act, but a personal journey towards change. Through this journey, Skeeter

dares to step out of her comfort zone and faces many obstacles including rejection from her family and friends, and returns with a new, stronger and more meaningful voice. Skeeter's transformation from silence to become a voice for segregated black people can be seen through the stages in the Hero's Journey theory.

Skeeter's actions constitute a heroic journey that encourages black maids to express their feelings. Although many previous studies have discussed the themes of social class and racism in *The Help* novel, the study conducted by the writer specifically analyses Skeeter's heroic journey through the lens of Joseph Campbell's Hero's Journey Theory. It explains how the journey reflects her transformation from silence to voice in a racially segregated society.

1.2 Identification of the Problems

The Hero's Journey concept has been extensively explored in literature, but little is known about its application to Kathryn Stockett's *The Help*, particularly in relation to Skeeter's character. In Kathryn Stockett's *The Help*, Skeeter represents a hero. She is a white woman who lives in a racially segregated society and finally decides to voice the stories of black maids as a form of resistance to the injustice that has been silenced. Therefore, this research aims to identify how Skeeter's journey follows the stages of the Hero's Journey and how the process transforms her from silence to a voice for segregated black maids.

1.3 The Review of Previous Studies

The Help is an excellent novel by Kathryn Stockett. To analyse this research, the writer has analysed several previous studies that will be used as sources, such as an article titled "Racial Discrimination in Kathryn Stockett's *The Help*" from the Lexicon Journal, written by Amalia Putri Maurilla (2015). The writer discusses two objectives, the first of

which is to explore racial discrimination against black maids. The second is to investigate the impact of racial discrimination on the lives of black maids. The researcher finds that two different types of discrimination are depicted in the novel: individual discrimination and institutional discrimination. The researcher also finds that racial discrimination affects black maids' perceptions of white people, namely feelings of distrust and insecurity. From this article, the writer may discover the discrimination black maids face.

The following article is “Women’s Voice through Literacy Practices in Kathryn Stockett’s *The Help*”. This article was written by Salsa Meiliana Asmaradhani and Pratiwi Retnangdyah (2018) and published in Atlantis Press. The article analyses how literacy practices facilitate women's expression of their voices against racial discrimination. This article shows that literacy skills can have a big impact. The literacy practices of the three main characters in *The Help* show that literacy practices are an effective way to help women express their voices. Against the 1960s setting and the violent discrimination against black maids in Jackson, writing and storytelling are a safe way for them to express their voice and hope that it could make a positive change in society. From this article, the writer may find out how Skeeter struggles to persuade the black maids to participate in the book she writes.

The article “The Problem of Racism in Kathryn Stockett's *The Help*” was written by Agata Szulkowska (2017) from the Journal of English Studies. The problem of racism faced by African Americans in the United States is the main topic of this article. The primary purpose of this article is to examine how Kathryn Stockett's *The Help* depicts the relationship between black and white characters who live in Jackson, Mississippi. The writer may have known from this article that the novel very clearly shows that white people hate black maids. By examining the miserable living and working conditions

experienced by black maids, whose lives are always in danger because of the color of their skin, *The Help* raises awareness of the issue of white supremacy and the negative impact of racist behavior on black people.

The undergraduate thesis by Nur Hajah Haningrum (2018) from Muhammadiyah University of Surakarta entitled, “Racial Segregation and Inequality Over the Afro-American Community in Southern America Reflected in Kathryn Stockett’s *The Help* (Sociological Approach)”. This study explains the indicators of racial segregation and inequality of the Afro-American community in *The Help*, describes the racial segregation and community inequality portrayed in the novel, and explains why the author specifically addresses racial segregation and inequality. This research shows six indicators of racial segregation in the novel, namely separated housing, separated facilities, racial hierarchy, separated bathrooms with the assumption that black people carry diseases, separated public services, and segregation in public policy. This research helps the author to understand more about the segregation depicted in the novel between white and black people.

The next article with the title “Analysis of Hero’s Journey in Jack London’s *The Call of the Wild*” by Julius and Robby Satria (2022) from ELS Journal on Interdisciplinary Studies in Humanities analysed the stages of the hero’s journey of the main character in the novel. The researchers analysed using the Archetypal approach by Campbell. According to the article, Buck, the novel's protagonist, has undergone an eight-step hero's journey. Based on the Campbell theory, the hero’s journey has three stages: departure, initiation, and return. Each stages have steps that the hero will experience. From this article, the researchers found four steps in the departure stage, three in the initiation stage,

and one in the return stage. The researchers concluded that the hero's journey often follows the same pattern as theorized and mentioned in the theory of Joseph Campbell.

Another article with the title “The Significance of the Hero's Journey in Siddhartha's Character Development as Seen in Heman Hesse's *Siddhartha*” by Adelia Damayanti and Achmad Munjid (2020) from Lexicon Journal. This article aims to examine how Siddhartha's character develops through his journey. This article uses the hero's journey theory by Joseph Campbell. The article shows that Siddhartha's journey follows twelve out of seventeen stages of the Hero's Journey by Joseph Campbell. This article also shows that Siddhartha's character develops from individualistic to wise. This article helps the writer understand the stages of the hero's journey and also the character's development.

The next article by Nurtekin Cura (2019) is titled “Billbo's Hero's Journey through the Scope of Campbell's Monomyth.” This article discusses a hero's journey in *The Hobbit or There and Back Again* by J.R.R. Tolkien. It explained Bilbo's journey as a hero through the scope of Joseph Campbell. This article helps the writer better understand the journey and stages of a hero using Campbell's theory.

The undergraduate thesis by Fajrya Mulyadi (2011) from Jakarta State University entitled “The Hero's Journey in Bryan Lee O'Malley *Scott Pilgrim's Finest Hour*” analysed the portrayal of hero's journey in a contemporary graphic novel written by Bryan Lee O'Malley through the plots, images, and text or dialogues in the novel. The researcher used the hero's journey by Joseph Campbell. He found there are six portraying the departure stages, twenty-one of which are the initiation stages, and one portrays the return stage. The thesis is useful for the writer to know more about the concept and stages of hero's journey.

The next article is “A Journey for a Personal Legend: An Archetypal Reading of the Hero’s Journey in Paulo Coelho’s *The Alchemist*” from Journal of Critical Reviews. This article is written by Dr. Ahmed Abdelsattar Abdelaziz Keshk (2020), and he analyses the concept of the hero’s journey in the novel. The researcher uses the archetypal approach of Carl Jung and Joseph Campbell to analyse the stages of the hero’s journey. The researcher finds how far Santiago’s journey is crowned by achieving a spiritual maturity, or in Coelho’s own words. This article explains that the hero’s journey forms a universal experience for all readers, regardless of their racial, religious, or cultural background. This article supports Joseph Campbell’s monomyth by showing how the hero’s journey structure reveals universal patterns of personal transformation, as seen in Santiago’s quest in *The Alchemist*. It strengthens the research by illustrating how the same framework can be applied to analyse Skeeter’s journey in *The Help* as a path toward social awareness and voice.

The next article is “A Jungian Hero’s Journey as Individuation in J.K. Rowling’s *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer’s Stone: A Jungian Approach*” by Volkan Kilic (2023) from RumeliDE Journal of Language and Literature Studies. This article aims to highlight the archetypes that direct Harry Potter’s journey at each step of the Jungian hero’s journey, as well as the starting point of his journey of self-discovery and personal development. This article uses Carl Jung’s theory of archetypes and individuation and reveals that the hero, Harry, evolves through the process of recognizing, confronting, and adjusting shadow representations and personas in his psyche in this novel. This article helps the writer to gain a better understanding of Carl Jung’s Archetype theory, and serves as an example of how archetypes are applied in literary analysis.

The last article is “The Monomyth or the Hero’s Journey in William Faulkner’s Screenplays: *The Last Slaver* and *Drums Along the Mohawk*” by Hanane Boukemmouche and Samira Al-Khawaldeh (2022). This article describes the main stages of the hero's journey by exploring the journey of the main protagonist from the beginning of the quest to reaching the end of his journey and through the processes experienced. The article applies Campbell's theory of the hero's journey and draws on Carl Jung's thoughts on the individuation process. This research shows the psychological development of the main protagonist through different stages.

From previous studies, many mythological novels or classic novels discuss the hero’s journey of a character with superpowers or magic that involves elements of fantasy and physical adventure. However, not many discuss the hero’s journey in modern historical novels do not involve fantasy elements, such as Kathryn Stockett's *The Help* novel. This research aims to identify how Skeeter's journey follows the stages of the Hero's Journey and how the process transforms her from silence to a voice for segregated black maids.

1.4 Research Questions

This study will answer the following questions:

1. How does Kathryn Stockett depict Skeeter’s Hero’s Journey through the lens of Joseph Campbell’s theory?
2. How does Skeeter’s character transform from silence to voice in a segregated society through her Hero’s Journey?

1.5 Scope of the Research

This study limits the problem only by discussing the hero's journey of Skeeter in *The Help* through the hero's journey stages by Joseph Campbell, and also how Skeeter's character transform from silence to a voice in a segregated society.

1.6 Objectives of the Research

The research aims to achieve the following objectives:

1. To analyse how the author depicts Skeeter's hero's journey in *The Help* novel through the lens of Joseph Campbell's stages of the hero's journey.
2. To examine how Skeeter's character transforms from silence to voice in a segregated society through her Hero's Journey.

