

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Research

Based on Andersen and Collins in their book, "Humans of all colors and shapes can make babies with each other (Andersen, 2015)." Humans have different racial characteristics from each other. Every human being is not a biologist or a sociologist who can argue that race is a social construct that can be arbitrarily change and eliminate if a society conflicts with what they think is right. However, ordinary people still differentiate between human races. People say that humans vary, especially in the colour of their skin, head, nose, lips, and hair, and they chose to define these variations as individual races. The public uses this characteristic of race to decide whether foreigners should be treated as superior, inferior, or equal to them. If the person is seen as a threat, the majority is not reluctant to get rid of them. In the end, the minority must try to fit in within the environment of the majority and must be able to defend themselves from the unwanted things that could come from the majority. The writer tries to relate it with the main topic and sees the general point of view of whites seeing Asians as their friend or enemy who lives in their area. The writer needs to see James Dashner's in *The Maze Runner* itself. It also considers the reality of racism experienced by Asian Americans with all problems discussed in this study. The writer also

wants to discover racial justice for Asian Americans through *The Maze Runner*. Then, the writer will relate it with Critical Race Theory as an approach to this study.

James Smith Dashner (James Dashner) is an American writer of speculative fiction, primarily series for children or young adults, such as *The Maze Runner* series. He writes in the genres of young-adult, fantasy, science fiction, and children's literature. He is the author of the #1 New York Times bestselling Maze Runner Series: *The Maze Runner* (2009), *The Scorch Trials* (2010), *The Death Cure* (2011), *The Kill Order* (2012), *The Fever Code* (2016), and newest one, *The Crank Palace* (2020). *The Maze Runner's* novel discusses young adults' adventure and social problems with genres of young adult, dystopia fiction, and science fiction. Young Adult Literature is usually described as a book written for readers aged 12-20 years. It includes books that are primarily written for adults but that appeal to younger readers. Young adult fiction exposes readers to characters they may never meet in real life, along with tools to explore understandings of different people, not a curse. It is in turn, leads to room for the development of new beliefs and challenges to existing opinions. This novel tells the story of a selected group of intelligent teenagers who lose their memory except remembering their names. They must survive in the Glade and Maze filled with monsters named Griver. However, this is also the story of a group of humans called the Creator who make children as the experimental scapegoats for the laboratory and see who can survive and save humankind from the world's destruction. Dashner describes

experts and scientists as the last hope-giver who can experiment with children as objects for the survival of humanity in the world.

The Maze Runner references the real modern world to a fictional environmental disaster that threatens to annihilate all life on earth as a backdrop. Dashner may point out recent natural disasters such as the earthquake and tsunami in the Indian Ocean in 2004 and the earthquake in Haiti in 2010 that claimed hundreds of thousands of human lives. This novel also discusses the ethnicity of public relations, where humans are treated as objects of research experiments. One of the cases that have occurred is the case of Guatemalans whom the United States Public Health Service made scapegoats with the syphilis experiment to test the effectiveness of antibiotics for the human body, which claimed many human lives. In these two things, the writer can interpret that natural disasters can occur at any time, and humans will not avoid them. Therefore, experts and scientists will do various ways to save humanity from destruction even though they have to sacrifice their fellow humans.

The writer chooses this novel to discover the racial problem experienced by Asian Americans through *The Maze Runner*. The writer also tries to find racism in American young adult fiction novels and relate it to reality. One character played as the protagonist takes an interest in the writer related it to the topics. The character's name is Minho. Minho is the Keeper of the Runners who leads the other runners through the Maze. Minho describes as an Asian boy who looks older than the main protagonist, Thomas. In this study, the writer will raise the topic of racial

discrimination where Minho, as an Asian character, faces every problem with the Gladers and the Maze in *The Maze Runner*. It also illustrates how Asians live in various aspects, including law and human rights.

The writer adds a piece of information to support the topics, and it talks about the stereotype of Asians for having a role in American literary works. According to Isabel Paner points out in her study of Asians in the film when Asians are given roles in Hollywood. They are often stereotypes like men are stripped of their masculinity, and women are unfairly painted as either dragon ladies or china dolls (Paner, 2018). Asians are also stereotypes as nerds, donning glasses and an exaggerated accent, or as Kung Fu masters, gangsters, and killers. Stereotypes interpret Asians as exemplary minority people who are intelligent, hardworking, and ambitious do more harm than good. It enters Asians into other roles and considers them to be dimensionless passive foreigners. Those stereotype are explain through screens and books and how Asians are perceive outside the media. It leaves detrimental cultural and social consequences and leads to feelings of inferiority in Asians.

From all the events that happened, racial justice is form. Racial justice aims to preserve and extend constitutionally guaranteed rights to people who have historically been denied rights based on race. Each generation of civil rights activists has made substantial progress in the legal, political, social, educational, and other fields. The forced abolition of indigenous peoples and the institutionalization of slavery marked the beginning of a system of racial injustice whose countries had not yet been

liberated. One example of a recent racial problem is that racial discrimination against Chinese and other ethnic Asians has sharply increased in number and severity globally amid the COVID-19 pandemic (Gao, 2021). This rise has been swift and severe in the United States, fueled by xenophobic political rhetoric and racist language on social media. It has endangered the lives of many Asian Americans and is likely to have a long-term negative impact on the economic, social, physical, and psychological well-being of Asians. Racial discrimination will undermine appreciation and tolerance, including what is happening to Asian Americans today. Therefore, every race must generalize every action in various aspects of life, even by upholding racial justice. It is also to demonstrate equality of rights and obligations under the laws and norms related to living in the United States.

Derrick Bell argues that race is a social construct, not a biological reality (Delgado, 2001). For realists, racism is society's way of allocating privilege and status. It has drawn attention to how dominant cultures perpetuate racism at different times in response to changing needs such as the labour market. The racial hierarchy determines who gets the actual benefits, including the best jobs, the best schools, and invitations to parties at people's homes. It affects several lives in all aspects, both those related to law and those obtained in everyday life. All the attitudes contrary to ideology and human rights require fair treatment of attitudes towards others. Systematic appropriate treatment of people of all races can lead to equitable opportunities and outcomes for all.

The writer puts Critical Race Theory as an approach for supporting the topics. As Delago and Stefancic in their book *Critical Race Theory* state, "Race is a social construction, not a biological reality (Delgado, 2001)." CRT helps racial minorities uphold human rights and shows awareness of the majority to tolerate all races in the United States, including Asian Americans, without comparing each other. All races are human beings who have the right to live on earth, and humans are social creatures who cannot live without other humans. One can get rid of most of the sting by changing the system of images, words, attitudes, subconscious feelings, scripts, and social teachings. It conveys that certain people are less intelligent, reliable, hardworking, and virtuous than the rest. The truth is that Asian Americans play a bizarre role in America's thawing plots. They are a model minority. Society uses its success to pit itself against people of another colour as justification that racism does not exist. It is pretty sad for the minority, where they are often treated as foreigners who are considered only living in majority areas in the USA.

The writer finds that Americans still perceive Asian races as foreigners in their territory based on this research. The writer will look at the injustices, the racial discrimination, and the differences in attitudes felt by the Asian minority in living life with the American majority. The writer will relate it with the racial justice for Asian Americans through the Asian character in *The Maze Runner* as a solid subject character. It is also to illustrate Asian Americans by James Dashner in *The Maze Runner*.

The topic connects with Critical Race Theory by Ricard Delgado and Jean Stefancic as an approach to this study.

1.2 Identification of Problems

The novel *The Maze Runner* examines the young adults who try to survive from the Glade and the Maze to find the way out of that place. They have to fight off with the monster called Grievors, and the Creators who make them stuck in that place. As another protagonist, Minho shows as a character who can be tricky and stand out in his roles in the novel where usually Asian characters are always looked down on in American works.

The writer wants to converse how James Dashner shows the character of Asian characters who can survive in the troubled world with their conditions being tested as lab scapegoats. Although, this illustrates that Minho is only a supporting character who helps the main character to gathering the information. Then, Thomas, the main character can solve the remaining puzzles and take the Gladers out of that place.

The racial discrimination experienced by Asian Americans makes them survive with the different attitudes and actions received from Americans. Some Americans still think that Asians should not just stay in America and return to their origin country because, Asians are seen as a nuisance. Still, they are considered not part of America simply because of their biological differences and have different races from Americans. It makes Asian Americans feel strange even though they have lived in

America for a long time. The perceive injustice make them uncomfortable to live in USA and always isolates themselves from society.

The writer believes that James Dashner portrays racial justice for Asian Americans' lives through *The Maze Runner*. The writer also discovers how Dahnser sees Asia Americans in *The Maze Runner*. It will connect with Critical Race Theory as the perspective of it. Therefore, Minho, one of the main protagonists who an Asian, shows something different from the other characters. As one of the characters who play an essential role in solving the Maze puzzle, Minho can take them out of the Maze.

The writer wants to discover the problem of injustice and racism that Asians sometimes receive from Americans. It is simply because of the racial differences they have and involve them in real life. The writer tries to look at the racial issues to break the destructive views of Asians in the eyes of Americans within the law and human rights.

1.3 Review of Related Literature

In the review of previous studies, the writer will show some analysis related to this research. The studies that the writer found are necessary sources concerning the topics and novel. The writer reviews several studies conducted by other researchers to see the different points and enrich the analysis of views and opinions.

The first Study by Retno Eka Putri Sugiastini (2019) from Jember University is entitled *An Analysis of Formulaic Structure in James*

Dashner's The Maze Runner. In this thesis, Sugiastini discusses finding out the novel's narrative structure, such as setting, plot, and characterization, as the standardization aspect based on Cawelti's theory formula. This study aims to know the formulaic pattern of the novel as the famous novel and to know the relationship between the formula structure and cultural problems related to power domination. The writer assumes that this research tries to find out how dystopian novels could become popular novels at that time and also to find out how the forms of formula patterns related to American culture explain the domination of power. From this study, the writer wants to find out the uniqueness of this novel which makes it different from other novels. It also helps to find detailed explanations about the novel that allows the writer to discuss the topic. It also takes as the support detail information about the novel.

The second Study by Deepa Ranganathan (2013) from Smith College entitled *A Guest in Someone Else's House: The Construction of Asia American as Foreigners*. This thesis discusses the ability of social workers to attend to the needs of Asian American clients and trainers. Using the problem object with Critical Race Theory, the writer thinks that this research discusses how social workers and students deal with various circumstances and situations that are sometimes considered outsiders living in America. When they get less treatment, they have to understand the situation and solve problems from whites. It helps the writer to discover the social issue Asian Americans have faced for generations, like being treated racist in the real world. It will help the writer to relate it

with the racism that portrays Asian characters in the American writer's novel, making them unique as the characters in *The Maze Runner*. With these, the writer could discover the issue of how whites usually treat outsiders, especially Asians, as they work in America and support it with the data already in this study.

The third Study by Isabel Paner (2018) from the Dominican University of California is entitled *The Marginalization and Stereotyping of Asians in American Film*. In her thesis, she discusses the relating portrayals of Asian stereotypes in a film to societal effects. She emphasizes how fictitious depictions can have damaging impacts once taken outside the realm of cinema. The writer discovers that this study aims to dissect the marginalization of Asian and American races. This study also tries to stereotype Asian-Americans in the Hollywood film industry, including how history has shaped the perception of Asian-Americans as foreigners and "un-Americans." The writer discovers that this thesis is helpful because it can help the writer finds some racial issues by Asian in Hollywood films. The industry has been subjected to unfair stereotyping and under-representation since the twentieth century and up to the present. It also analyzes and dissects the marginalization and stereotyping of Asians in American films through text and film analysis and critical theory that helps the writer see the description of Asian characters as an Asian American by James Dashner portrayed through his novel *The Maze Runner*.

The fourth is Dwilingga Razanda's (2017) thesis from Andalas University entitled *The Contribution of American Slavery Conflict to Development of Black People Life as Reflected in Toni Morrison's Beloved*. The idea discusses the function of the slavery conflict in America on the development of the black community as depicted in Toni Morrison's *Beloved* novel. This study uses the Conflict Theory from Georg Simmel and is supported by Lewis Coser. He explains that race and movement are present because of conflict and will take place continuously so that there is a development in the form of relations between communities. The writer discovers that the slavery conflict in America depicted in the novel positively affects black communities' development and how the battle can open up opportunities for them to relate to their surroundings and their future. The writer can find a picture of the racist problem received, and the positive effect black groups receive with the explanations above. The development of black society opens up opportunities to establish relationships with their surroundings and their future. Here, the writer wants to see that conflicts between races do not permanently harm a community relationship. It can bring each race to open a broad mindset and think about welfare to be together for a peaceful life.

The fifth is a study by Ardha Prima Tahier (2017) from State Islamic University Syarif Hidayatullah entitled *An Ecocritical Analysis of Nature and Culture in The Maze Runner Trilogy Novel by James Dashner*. The study aims to reveal how nature is presented, what kind of human

attitude the characters demonstrate, and how the interconnection between nature and culture is depicted in *The Maze Runner* trilogy novel. The study investigates the five environmental aspects within the trilogy; the representation of nature, nature exploration; the interconnection of nature and culture; technology; and political impact on nature. By applying an ecocritical approach and descriptive qualitative method, the analysis discovers a deep environmental value proposed by *The Maze Runner* trilogy. The study discovers that nature is represented through a metaphorical object of home. Then, the character demonstrates a lack of a human attitude towards nature viewed from their exploration of nature. Also, the interconnection between nature and culture is based on examining an inappropriate encounter between a desert and a city, which leads to the absence of a boundary between a desert and a concept, and how a totalitarian government induces a disrespectful attitude towards nature by misusing advanced technology. The writer discovers this study can contribute to preserving nature through academic ways and could help find some vital information about *The Maze Runner*, like the settings or characteristics of the characters to finish this study.

The sixth study is Dwigo Biyas Tarigan (2017) from Sanata Dharma University, Yogyakarta, entitled *The Messages Revealed through Thomas's Conflict in James Dashner's The Maze Runner*. This study discusses identifying the main character, Thomas, to identify the conflict faced by Thomas and to show the messages as revealed through the conflicts faced by Thomas in *The Maze Runner*. The study uses New

Criticism as an approach and conducts some study about the novel's character and characterization, conflict, and messages. Thomas has four characteristics; they are curious, intelligent, brave, and selfless. Those characteristics lead Thomas to survive from the Grievors and find a way out from the Maze. Thomas' conflicts are divided into two; first, internal conflicts and; second, external conflicts. The study tries to find the messages revealed through the conflict Thomas faces. The writer discovers the study will help this research add some critical information, especially the character of the main character as whites, and shows how he helps his friends of another race, especially Asia, through the problems in *The Maze Runner*.

The seventh is a journal article by L. Westenberg (2017) from The University of Notre Dame Australia entitled *Locating experience in Time and Place: A Look at Young adult Fiction and Spiritual Intelligence*. This article discusses young adult fiction, including comparing a novel of older context (*An Episode of Sparrows*) with contemporary dystopian fiction (*The Maze Runner*). It can foster young adults' exploration of self-awareness and cultivate the continue development of notions of connectedness, justice, and responsibility. This study explains that developing spiritual intelligence through sharing experiences of young adult fiction can encourage absorption in stories, plots, characters, and themes by teaching awareness of self and others. The writers discovers that this study compares novels in historical context with contemporary dystopian young adult fiction that can influence narrative transport with

positive results for exploring ideas about responsibility, justice, and self. In this study, the writers discovers that spiritual intelligence, fostered through young adult fiction, affects mental and emotional well-being and encourages exploration of attitudes towards social justice, social responsibility, and self in many adolescents. It will help the writer search the relationship between spiritual intelligence in young adults and the narrative transportation effect of young adult fiction that connects with the characteristic of Asian characters written by James Dashner through the genre of his novel.

1.4 Research Question

To limit the scope of the analysis, the writer focuses on answering the following questions:

1. How is racial justice for Asian Americans depicted in *The Maze Runner*?
2. How is racial discrimination experienced by Asian Americans shown and the reaction against it in *The Maze Runner*?
3. How does James Dashner portray Asian Americans through *The Maze Runner*?

1.5 Scope of the Research

The writer focuses on racial justice for Asian Americans through *The Maze Runner*. The research discusses the impact of racial discrimination,

which puts Asian Americans socially into inconvenience life, including a good education, access to good work, and legal protection by analyzing the social condition from characters and dialogues in the novel then elaborating them. The study aims to discover the racial justice for Asian Americans portrays by James Dashner's *The Maze Runner* using the Critical Race Theory perspective. The writer hopes the readers will learn the issues experienced by Asian Americans as real things that connect it with real life.

1.6 The objective of the study

The study's objective is to discover the racial justice for Asian Americans portrayed by James Dashner in *The Maze Runner*. It discusses the racial discrimination experienced by Asian America portrayed in *The Maze Runner* and how the reaction against it by Asian Americans. It's also to discover how James Dashner portrays Asian Americans through *The Maze Runner*.

