

# CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1. Background of The Research

According to Oxford Dictionary, the definition of urban is "connected with a town or city." Lehan (1998:73) claims that urban setting is a city setting as central setting of a text. Urban literary works take place in an urban area which is a city. Urban life can be seen by the amount of the population, political situation, economy, culture, and social. Therefore, urban life can be defined as the combination of several aspects that form the characters of urban people in a city. Also, urban life is the way of life of urban people who live in an urban area. Thus, urban life in literature can be described as a literary work with a city as the theme and the setting. In this research, I will focus on the social setting in *Hiroshima* by John Hersey as the object.

The world knows that America destroyed Hiroshima on August 6, 1945. Some literature has talked about the city before, during, or after the bombing. Some sources mention that many people don't know much about what happened after the catastrophe. It is interesting to see how Hersey depicts the city after the tragedy. The significance of this research is to describe how Hersey writes what happened to Hiroshima society after the bombing and what kind of urban life the society has gone through.

In dealing with a terrible situation, do they help each other? Do they love each other?. This research will reveal how this novel portrays the setting of the novel after the bombing of Hiroshima society through six main characters. Furthermore, I will explore how Hersey represents the urban people's reaction to a hard time in Hiroshima through six different characters and perspectives.

John Richard Hersey was a journalist and American writer. Hersey was born in Tienstin, China. He is the son of Grace Baird and Roscoe Hersey. Hersey and his family returned to America at ten years old and continued studying there. John Hersey is an American writer who did an interview in Hiroshima after being bombed by America. After finishing his study, he becomes a journalist for "The New Yorker." Since the war between America and Japan ended, he was sent to Japan to report the devastated country's reconstruction. In Japan, he spent three weeks doing research,

met with survivors, and interviewed six of them. Then he returned to America and began writing the stories of six people who survived after the bomb. The interviews were resulting a novel entitled "*Hiroshima*." He applied fiction writing technique from non-fiction report that makes it as an example of New Journalism. *Hiroshima* by John Hersey is a novel that sets in an urban area, which is Hiroshima. This novel is an American literary work that portrays the urban life in Hiroshima after being bombed by America. *Hiroshima* is John Hersey's masterpiece that was published on August 31, 1946, and won Pulitzer Award in the same year.

Literature has become a medium to express feeling for a long time. A feeling can produce a literary work, whether it comes from experiences, thoughts, or interviews. James (1981, 307) argues that Literature is a unique of human activity, expression of human activity, and experience of human activity. Literature can be functioned as the reflection of human beings, such as experience, feelings, ideas, and passions. While Eagleton (1983: 1) defined literature as 'imaginative' writing in the sense of fiction. There is two most popular kind of literature. They are fiction literature and non-fiction literature. Meg Files explained three main differences between fiction and non-fiction literature. First, non-fiction is bound to factual truth, while unbound fiction can play fast and loose with details of the actual experience. Lewis (1966: 14) explained that fiction can be defined as imaginative narrative prose, but the story commonly makes sense and contains the truth which dramatizes human interactions. The second difference between fiction and non-fiction is voice. Who is telling the story? In non-fiction, the voice belongs to the writer. In fiction, the voice belongs to a character. Third, fiction is made up of scenes that show relationships, events, connections, and emotion, but non-fiction gets to play show and tell (Files, 2016: 335-336). From that explanation can be concluded that fiction literary work is an idea that developed to create a story. So it might be real or not. In analyzing the novel, I added some elements such as plot, character, point of view, and theme to have a better understanding about the novel. Non-fictional literary work is created based on real events, real stories, and characters. *Hiroshima* by John Hersey is based on real stories, real places, real events, and real characters. This novel takes place in Japan, Hiroshima. The story comes from interviewing six survivors that survived after the bomb dropped.

As the novel is based on real events of interviewing survivors, Hersey indirectly adapts fiction writing techniques from non-fiction reports that make it as an example of the New Journalism. At that time, America did not destroy Hiroshima without reason. In 1945 Hiroshima was a prosperous and developed city in Japan. Hiroshima was known as a crowded city and the center of the industry of Japan. Hiroshima is a Japanese military base and has a huge port which makes it a very potential area for attack. By using an Atomic bomb named "*Little boy*" with an American B-29 bomber plane named "*Enola Gay*," America smashed Hiroshima to pieces. That accident was estimated killed 70.000-120.000 of 350.000 people instantly. More than 60% of buildings in Hiroshima were destroyed. After that brutal attack, America hoped Japan would weaken and surrender so that America would win the war.

With more than 300.000 population, Hiroshima is one of the crowded cities in Japan. The urban life of Hiroshima before the bombing was an industrial city that had many factories. After the bomb dropped, more than a quarter of the population reduced. The incident forced people to embrace each other to get a better life and situation. I decided to choose this novel because it provides great details of Hiroshima's condition at that time. People should know how is urban life in Hiroshima after destroyed in pieces by an atomic bomb. As the urban life in Hiroshima at that time reflected in *Hiroshima* by John Hersey, I will analyze and reveal it along with this thesis.

The novel portrays the urban life of Hiroshima society after the bomb dropped through six survivors with their own perspectives. Each character has their own destiny. In dealing with a horrible time, every character shows their own way of living by following their own faith. They show love for each other, treat each other with respect and compassion for human beings. Therefore, this novel can be a motivational story for another urban society.

This research comes up with the issue of how Hersey portrays urban life in *Hiroshima*. Therefore this research is needed to conduct for some reasons. First is to inform people how the novel depicts the effects of the bombing to the urban life in Hiroshima; second, to show how inspiring and motivating Hiroshima society is in

facing a hard time, and the last is what Hersey wants readers to learn from such tragedy.

## 1.2. Identification of the Problem

The novel *Hiroshima* has a unique setting. The atomic bomb that destroyed Hiroshima at that time resulting a unique urban setting. It is unique because the explosion caused Hiroshima to become a devastated urban area. Thus, in this research, I will analyze the urban life in a ruined urban area. Hersey in *Hiroshima* describes the city of Hiroshima as a crowded and busy city before the bombing. The explosion of the atomic bomb caused the dead and the wounded were everywhere, many buildings were falling down. The bombing turns Hiroshima into a land of corpses. In this novel, the six survivors portray the urban life in Hiroshima after the bomb dropped with their own perspectives and stories.

According to the six different characters and perspectives in this novel, I will discuss how Hersey uses the settings of urban life in Hiroshima after the bombing, how people lived their life at that time, and how the people in Hiroshima deal with it. This research focuses on how Hersey depicts urban life as the setting and the intrinsic elements that build the novel. However, some settings have implied meanings or metaphorical and intrinsic elements to build up a story. Therefore, I will analyze the setting and the structure in this novel intrinsically by using formalist criticism. The depiction of urban life in *Hiroshima* can be seen from the setting of the story. The setting of a story is an instrument that helps to describe the elements of the story. It includes the setting of place, setting of time, and social setting. The structure of *Hiroshima* is the basis for comprehend the story of the novel. The structures consist of characters, plot, point of view, and theme. This thesis will reveal what kind of urban setting is in the novel. This research will also investigate how the setting functions in delivering the theme of the story.

## 1.3. Review of Related Studies

The bombing of Hiroshima in 1945 has attracted the attention of some researchers, including Yavenditti (2014). He examines that there is collective conscience among Americans. Yavenditti found out that some Americans think that there are moral standards in the conduct of war. But there are Americans who think

that the war must be over. In addition, he also mentions there are 85 percent of those Americans surveyed approved the atomic bombings, 10 percent disapproved, and 5 percent had no opinion. Thus, I conclude that the Americans collective conscience approved that using the atomic bomb was the most efficient way to make the Japanese surrender in order to end the war. This article may help me in finding another perspective about the bombing in Hiroshima.

The next is an extensive article by Patrick B. Sharp entitled *From Yellow Peril to Japanese Wasteland: John Hersey's "Hiroshima"* (2000). His article explains the atomic bombing of Hiroshima describes an obvious example of how technology can completely change history and challenge the common view of the world. Sharp stated that Hersey's "Hiroshima" was in tune with many Americans. He further explains that Hersey gives a unique and powerful example of how narrative structures come up to make sense of new technologies. Using the "wasteland" imagery of literary modernism, Hersey encapsulated the horror of the atomic bomb within a familiar framework for his American audience. This article informed how the use of the atomic bomb to destroy a country attracted world attention. This article provides information about the Hiroshima situation at that time, which help me in figuring out the setting of the story.

Stuart Christie (2010) examined how Hersey reconstructed the interviewer's perspective "eye witness" narratives. Christie investigates the details of Hersey's novel, which tries to depict sounds and sensations precisely. He accordingly depicts individuals by name, recording their perceptions and feelings. He also shows the attempts by survivors to overcome the devastation by recalling pre-bombing narratives of family, connection, and tradition. This journal gives me a clear explanation about how detail Hersey depicted the situation at that time. The great details that have been informed from this journal help me in understanding the story thoroughly.

Regarding urban life, Daniel Paul McKeown, B.A., in his thesis (2004), explains that there are two types of views on urban life. The one who tends to view the city setting as central to the identification of a text as urban literature and the one who tends to view character as central to the identification of a text as urban literature. He confirms these views and approaches are valid in their fundamental basis.

McKeown explains urban literature cannot be considered urban without the presence of the city. "Urban" is an adjective that denotes someone or something as the city. The city comes up as a prominent and imposing image in modern and post-modern literature. However, it is the experience of the characters that builds the narrative image and perception of the city. McKeown argues that "urban" is not only a condition created by the city setting but rather an attitude and state of mind expressed by the characters (1-2). This thesis gives a clear explanation regarding urban and literature that helps me in conducting this research.

In 2011, Ebony Elizabeth Thomas released an article entitled *Landscapes of City and Self: Place and Identity in Urban Young Adult Literature*. She argues that Urban landscapes feature iconic symbols from the past and contemporary times. Symbols become representative artifacts of the cities. This article states that cities as the geographic, cultural, and economic differences are considered commonplace with wider implications for readers, teachers, and literary critics. There are some connections between literature for young adults and trends in the culture of urban life. She claims that we are living throughout a time of profound cultural shifts. The world's populations are more urban than at any other time in human history. New technologies, global economies, the speed of information flow, and transnational workforces are rapidly changing the cities that we live in (13). This article helps me realize the relationship between the elements that build a city and literature in human life. From this article, I became more aware about the meaning of symbols or decorations in a city.

About Formalist Criticism, I use a thesis from Ghindo Rizano (2005) as a guide due to using the same theory. Rizano explains that in analyzing a literary work through Formalist Criticism, all the extrinsic elements such as historical context, author's intention and author's background are irrelevant to formalist understanding. Rizano tries to analyze the form or structure of George Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four* by looking at the relationship between the system of imagery and the system of symbols in the novel. He says that Formalist Criticism emphasizes imagery and symbol as elements that build up the form. His thesis helps me to have a better understanding about formalist criticism. The explanation of applying the Formalist criticism is very useful to help me in writing this research.

#### 1.4. Research Questions

This research will answer several questions:

1. How does John Hersey describe urban life in *Hiroshima*?
2. What kind of urban setting does Hersey use to portray urban life in *Hiroshima*?
3. How does setting function in delivering the theme of the story in *Hiroshima*?

#### 1.5. Scope of the Research

This research is focused on urban life in one of John Hersey's masterpieces, *Hiroshima*. This research will investigate the depiction of urban life after a great disaster struck a big city like Hiroshima. So, I limit this research to two discussions. First, I will focus on the urban setting in Hiroshima as reflected in *Hiroshima* by John Hersey. Second, I will investigate and reveal the social life of urban people in Hiroshima after the bombing.

#### 1.6. The Objective of the Research

This research aims to explore how John Hersey describes the urban life in Hiroshima after the bombing in his novel "*Hiroshima*." Furthermore, this research will reveal the Hiroshima society's reaction in facing a tremendous terrible disaster through six different characters who survive. This research also investigates how John Hersey uses urban life as the setting in Hiroshima, to figure out how John Hersey intertwines the kinds of urban settings in Hiroshima, and to investigate how the settings function to deliver the theme of the story in Hiroshima.