#### **CHAPTER 1**

#### INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 Background of the Study

Talking about literature is basically talking about life. Literature means to know about life, as Wellek and Warren said in their book *Theory of Literature*, "literature 'represents' 'life'; and 'life' is, in large measure, a social reality, even though the natural world and the inner or subjective world of the individual have also been objects of literary 'imitation'" (94). It means that literature, as with any art form, should hold a mirror to society and reflects what is happening in society.

In addition, beside Wellek and Warren explain about the definition of literature, they also explain about the relationship between literature and society. As they state that "The relation between literature and society is usually discussed by starting with the phrase that 'literature is an expression of society". It means that the relationship between literature and society is literature an expression of society (95). From literature, the writer express his or her experience and the image of life. So, by reading the literary work, the reader will know about the author's life. Therefore, literature cannot be separated from society, and the study of literature should be related to society.

In literature there are three genres: prose fiction, poetry, and drama, as Roberts and Jacobs state that "We usually classify literature into the following genres or classes: prose fiction, poetry, and drama (2). Poetry is a broad term

that includes a great number of separate sub-types, such as sonnet. Narrative fiction is a chronological account of a series of events. Drama or play is designed to be performed on a stage by live actor (Roberts 3-4). Moreover, these three genres have many common characteristic, they also differ in many ways. Prose generally focus on one or a few major characters who undergo some kind of change in their life. Poetry is much more economical in the use of words. Drama is the form of literature that intended to be performed by actors (Roberts and Jacobs 2-3). In addition, whatever the kind of literature, it enables us to develop a perspective on the event that occur around us (2).

In this study, the writer chooses the American drama as a literary work for object of the study, because the writer is interested in the world of theatre. Besides, it is one of the literary genres which has unique characteristic that makes it different from other form of literature. Drama, like poetry and fiction, is an art of words. In drama the words are mainly dialogue; people talking is the basic dramatic action. The talk may be interrupted by wordless activity, but such activity will derived its significance from its context of dialogue (Reinet xi). Therefore, the writer tend to use the drama as the device.

Talking about drama or play, it cannot be separated from its writer or playwright. There are some American Playwrights in the 20<sup>th</sup> century such as Arthur Miller, Tennessee Williams, Samuel Beckett, Edward Albee, Harold Pinter, and August Wilson. In this study, the writer is interested in a significant figure, August Wilson, as the African American Playwright, because the writer finds out that August Wilson is one of the prominent

playwright in the contemporary American theatre (Krasner 318). August Wilson was born on April 27, 1945. He believes his identity as an African American artist is inherently linked to the legacy of African American struggle and survival (319). August Wilson is famous as an African-American's play writer who often writes about Black experiences in the United States. The efforts of people of color to reach their dreams, along with its complex social issues as racism, are shown in one of his plays entitled *Fences*. Wilson had to spend his childhood in the Black slum community of Pittsburgh-Pennsylvania, which then revealed in many of his dramatic writings (August Wilson 1945-2005).

The writer decides to choose "Fences", as one of the great plays written by August Wilson to be studied. "Fences" won the Pulitzer Prize for Drama in 1987 and won the second Pulitzer Prize in 1990. It was presented in 1983 and next performed in New York and Connecticut (Barnet et.al, 1471). It was first produced in 1985 at Yale Repertory Theatre under the directorial eye of Lloyd Richards (Menson 1). The writer decided to choose "Fences" because the writer is interested in the African American figure and wants to know the life of African American in the United States.

Fences, which is written in the year of 1951 but later developed from 1983-1987 in United States, is about an African-American former athlete named Troy Maxson (a garbage man fifty-six) and his family. In his early age, after facing a lot of problems, finally, he has an opportunity to reach his dream as a professional baseball player, but then he is prevented by his color from

playing in the major leagues. It is set just before the start of civil right movement, in 1957 in Pittsburgh, PA. The play takes place at time when organyzed baseball has finally become integrated, but when racial discrimination remains widespread (Koprince 349). The important issue in the play here is about the American Dream of Black family.

The idea that everyone can have successful life in America is called "American Dream". The term American Dream, which has powerful meaning could make people believe that if they worked hard with all the potential they have, they would get a better future. The term was firstly initiated by James Truslow Adams in his book *The Epic of America* written in 1931. He states that American Dream is the dream of land where life is expected to be better and more prosperous for everybody who has opportunity and potential on their own (qtd in Cullen 4).

The American Dream itself is based on the idea of American live which emanate from the highly valued individualism of Americans. People tend to see the American Dream as tied to the freedom and material well-being from the idea associated with it which has shifted to the American's right. Moreover, the dream is not the same for Americans, like portrayed in the play, each of the character has different dream. in addition, the dream itself constantly change based on the individual's circumstance (Naylor 54).

From the explanation above, the writer focuses on analyzing the character of the play, especially the main character's family as Black people

and the dream of the main character's family. Those reason above make the writer interested in discussing the topic.

#### 1.2 Statement of the Problem

Based on the discussion above, the researcher will formulate the problem of study as follows:

- 1. How are The Maxsons characterized in August Wilson's Fences?
- 2. What is the dream pursued by the characters?
- 3. How do they pursue their dream?

## 1.3 Objective of the Study

The objects of this study are:

- 1. To describe the Maxsons' characterization in the story.
- 2. To find out the American Dream of the Maxsons in the story.
- 3. To find out how the Maxsons pursue their dream.

## 1.4 Significance of the Study

By writing this thesis, the writer hopes that the readers could learn more about the dream of Black people in America. As what is shown in the play *Fences*, an African-Americans have the different dream. they have to struggle to reach their dreams.

The writer wants to attract the attention of the reader to get to know more about August Wilson. Besides the writer expects that by reading this

study, there will be more reader to appreciate August Wilson's works. The writer also hopes that this study will give a contribution on the literary study, especially for the students of English Department.

# 1.5 Scope and Limitation

There are many interesting aspects that can be analyzed in *Fences* such as the theme, setting, point of view, symbolism, etc. but this study only focuses on analyzing the characters of The Maxsons and the American Dream, those will be analyzed by the writer as the scope and limitation for the topic.

## 1.6 Method of Study

The writer does a library research. Therefore, the writer uses some books including the play itself as the primary sources and reads information of some internet sources and other sources such as magazine and journal that support this study to improve the knowledge. In presenting the analysis, I mainly use descriptive method. The research follows the following steps:

- reading the play to get the complete and well understanding on the whole story.
- 2. Selecting and collecting the data in form of narration and conversation from the play related to the problem.
- 3. Analyzing the data collected by firstly categorizing them in two points, dealing with two points of the statement of

problems. Then, each point is analyzed using the theory, which refers to the object of the study.

4. Making conclusion based on the result of data analysis.

#### 1.7 Presentation

These study consists of four chapters. Chapter one is the introduction; consist of background of study, statement of problem, objective of the study, significance of the study, scope and limitation, and the presentation. Chapter two consist of review of related literature and related theories. Chapter three consists of research method, and chapter four is the analysis based on problem of the study. The last chapter contains the conclusion of the thesis.

#### 1.8 Definition of Key Terms

There are some important terms to be used in this study. The terms should be defined in order to avoid misunderstanding in the analysis. They are:

- 1.8.1. African American: One of the largest of the many ethnic groups in the
   United States. African Americans are mainly of
   African ancestry, but many have nonblack ancestors
   as well (Britanica.com)
- 1.8.2 American Dream: An ideal concept which has been maintained byAmerican society since eighteenth century (qtd.Dinurriyah 1).