CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

Literature is creative, an art (Warren & Wellek, 1948). In other words, literature is using creativity and it is an art as well. As an artistic work, it contains beauty so that people can enjoy and become interested in exploring it. The beauty comes from the literary writer's creativity in capturing the world with language which is similar to a painter using canvas and painting. Because of its correlation with creativity and art, then the context that identifies it as literature found in a book of poems or a section of a magazine, library, or bookstore (Culler, 1997). Literature has many genres, but there are three primary forms of literature: Poetry, Drama, and Prose. Each of those has sub-genres that make them unique. The sub-genres of poetry, for example, are lyrics and songs; of drama are melody and comedy; of prose are non-fiction and fiction (Littlehale, 2018).

When talking about fiction, the novel becomes one of its primary sub-genres. From the historian's terms, the novel is called as novella or novelette which etymologically means "something new". The history says that the 'old' form is poetry in which poets expressed their feelings through a certain type of forms, such as sonnets or quartet. Back then, even when they told stories such as legends or myth, they expressed them also in a form of poetry. The newest novel is its form in which the writers use daily language in describing and portraying a story with their normal conversation. Then the term "novel" is now applied to a

great variety of writings that have in common only the attribute of being extended work of *fiction* written in prose (Abrams, 1999).

In the novel, there are some 'themes' included. One of the famous themes in the novel is called 'own worst enemy' where characters are battling their demons or having internal conflicts; having tragic personality flaws, which they must either overcome or which causes their downfall (Penguin Random House, 2018). This type of theme had been famous among dramatists who wrote tragedies, such as Sophocles' Oedipus Rex, and Shakespeare' Hamlet. However, what makes this theme special among novels is that it does not happen to the elite people such as a king or a prince, but ordinary people. In this case, the novelty of a novel; not only does it use ordinary language, but also the problem faced by ordinary people.

One of the common themes in the novel is 'own worst enemy' which the writer found that it is related to the writer's object of the study. The writer will analyze a novel entitled *Forgive Me, Leonard Peacock* written by Matthew Quick, an American writer of adult and young adult fiction and the New York Times bestselling author of *The Silver Linings Playbook* (2008) which was made into an Oscar-winning film; *The Good Luck of Right Now* (2014), *Love May Fail* (2015), *The Reason You're Alive* (2017); and four young adult novels: *Sorta Like a Rock Star* (2010), *Boy21* (2012), *Forgive Me, Leonard Peacok* (2013), and *Every Exquisite Thing* (2016). He was born on October 23, 1973, at Camden, New Jersey, United States. His debut novel, *The Silver Lining Playbook* (2008), became a New York Times bestseller and was adapted as a movie of the same

name in 2012 while his young-adult novel, *Boy21* (2012), was reviewed favorably by *The New York Times*. A year later, he released his 4th novel, *Forgive Me, Leonard Peacock*, and at the same time, he was a finalist for the TIME 100 most influential people of 2013.

Forgive Me, Leonard Peacock has won many awards—PW Picks: The Best New Books for the Week of August 12, 2013; USATODAY Top 10 Young Adult Books for Summer; Mashable 11 Best YA Books of 2013; BookPage Best Children's Books of 2013; and YALSA's 2014 Best Fiction for Young Adults. And get some good reviews; *"... compelling, important... In a time when bullying and gun violence is at the top of the national conversation, this novel serves as a literary segue for teens, parents, and teachers into an open dialogue on sensitive topics."* (Margaret Bristol, Bookish, USATODAY); *"Forgive Me, Leonard Peacock should be stocked in every school library."* (The Denver Post); *"... compelling, well-drawn, realistic characters ... An artful, hopeful exploration of a teen boy in intense need."* (Kirkus Reviews); and *"Quick's use of flashbacks, internal dialogue, and interpersonal communication is brilliant, and the suspense about what happened between Leonard Peacock and Asher Beal builds tangibly. The masterful writing takes readers inside Leonard Peacock's tormented mind, enabling a compassionate response to him and others dealing with trauma. May more Herr Silverman willing to take personal risks to save the Leonard Peacocks."* (School Library Journal).

Forgive Me, Leonard Peacock tells a story of Leonard Peacock, a high school student, who wants to commit suicide on his 18th birthday. His life then

began to "turn-down" when his parents decided to get divorce; Ralph Peacock, Leonard Peacock's father who was a minor rock star back in the early 1990s, decided to leave out of the house, while in the same time Linda, Leonard Peacock's mother, started to rent an apartment in Manhattan and left Leonard Peacock all alone in South Jersey for her fashion designer career and his horrible tragedy that happened to him when he was just a fifteen-year-old teenager.

In the day when Leonard Peacock decided to kill himself, he gave out presents and said good-bye to the four people who matter most to him: his Humphrey Bogart-obsessed next-door neighbor, Walt; his classmate who was also a violin virtuoso, Baback; the Christian homeschooler he had a crush on, Lauren Rose; and his high school Holocaust teacher, Herr Silverman. The story goes on slowly by finally revealing Leonard Peacock's secrets as the hour's tick by and the moment of truth approaches; a day in the life of a disturbed teenage boy.

What made the writer attracted to analyze the novel is when she found out Herr Silverman's willingness to help his student and his preventive actions toward Leonard Peacock's suicidal attempt. The writer has seen Herr Silverman's preventive actions as an example of an act that a teacher should have. While on the other side, it is important for a teacher to obey their code of ethics toward the student and the profession.

1.2 Statements of the Problem

In this study, the questions raised are:

1. What are Herr Silverman's preventive actions toward Leonard Peacock's suicidal attempt?

2. What is the result of Herr Silverman's preventive actions that comply with ethical codes of conduct as a teacher?

1.3 Objectives of the Study

By following the statements of the problem, this study aims to find out Herr Silverman's preventive actions toward Leonard Peacock's suicidal attempt and see how his preventive actions comply with ethical codes of conduct as a teacher.

1.4 Significance of the Study

While this study focuses on a fictional novel, it does reflect the reality of teenage life which is in some way very dynamic and confusing. A literary study may shed light on this reality in a more meaningful way. By analyzing the characters of the novel under study, especially Herr Silverman, a distinguished teacher, it is expected that this study can give a significant contribution to several groups. In general, it expected that the readers of this thesis can understand the novel better by looking at the complexity of teenage suicide, rather than being judgmental to the case. Secondly, teachers and educators can develop their understanding of professional ethics so that they can deal with the

problems in a more professional way. The last but not least, this study can be a good example of employing the Moral-Philosophical approach in literary criticism so that more research on literature can be conducted to expose the complexity of teenage suicide.

1.5 Scope and Limitation of the Study

The writer limits the discussion to Herr Silverman's preventive actions toward his student's suicidal attempt and how his preventive actions comply with ethical codes of conduct as a teacher. There are many other characters involved, but this study focuses on Herr Silverman.

1.6 Theoretical Framework

By following analyzing a novel, the writer uses literary criticism. According to Frad (2018), literary criticism is a discipline of interpreting, analyzing and evaluating works of literature. One of the six approaches is the Moral-Philosophical Approach to analyze the character, Herr Silverman, who is a teacher, to get the morality value of his behaviors.

Among the schools of philosophy which discuss the issue of suicide problem, the writer will employ Utilitarian Ethics. Proposed by John Stuart Mill, it argues that all actions are right as long as it promotes happiness. Since suicide creates misery for the doers and the people they love, preventing suicide is an action that is regarded as correct in utilization ethics. To do so, the writer uses indicators for detecting Herr Silverman's preventive actions: M. H. Abram's Characterization Methods, and NEA's Code of Ethics: 1st and 2nd principles.

1.7 Definition of Key Terms

Preventive action: Action to eliminate the cause of potential nonconformity or other potential undesirable situation. (Beacon Quality)

Suicide: Ending someone's life. (heretohelp.org)

Moral-Philosophical approach: A belief that the large purpose of literature is to teach morality and to probe philosophical issues. (S. F. Fard)

Utilitarianism: A theory based on the principle that actions are right in proportion as they tend to promote happiness and being wrong as they tend to produce the reverse of it. (J. S. Mill)

Teacher's Codes of Ethics: The aspiration of all educators and provides standards by which to judge conduct. (NEA.org)

1.8 Organization of the Study

This study consists of five chapters. Chapter I deals with the background of the study, the statement of the problem, the objective of the study, the significance of the study, the scope, and limitations of the study, the theoretical framework, the definition of key terms, and the organization of the study. Chapter II presents a review of the theories used in analyzing literary work as well as the review related literature. Chapter III views the research method of the

study. Chapter IV presents the findings and analysis of the study. Chapter V presents the conclusion of the study and suggestions.