

**EGALITARIANISM IN KATHRYN STOCKETT'S NOVEL
THE HELP (2009)**

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By:

Ary Tuessonwily
2008/04735

Advisors:

Dr. Hj. Kurnia Ningsih, M.A
Delvi Wahyuni, S.S., M.A

ENGLISH DEPARTMENT
FACULTY OF LANGUAGES AND ARTS
STATE UNIVERSITY OF PADANG
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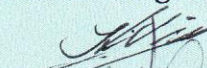

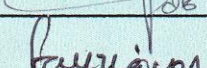
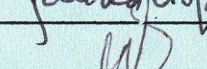
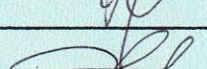
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Jurusan Bahasa dan Sastra Inggris Fakultas Bahasa dan Seni
Universitas Negeri Padang

EGALITARIANISM IN KATHRYN STOCKETT'S NOVEL *THE HELP* (2009)

Nama : Ary Tuessonwily
NIM / TM : 04735 /2008
Jurusan : Bahasa dan Sastra Inggris
Program Studi : Bahasa dan Sastra Inggris
Fakultas : Bahasa dan Seni

Padang, Agustus 2013

Tim Penguji

Nama	Tanda Tangan
1. Ketua : Dr. Hj. Kurnia Ningsih, M.A	1. 
2. Sekretaris : Delvi Wahyuni, S.S, M.A	2. 
3. Anggota : Dra. An Fauzia Rozani Sy., M.A	3. 
4. Anggota : Muhd. Al-Hafizh, S.S, M.A	4. 
5. Anggota : Havid Ardi, S.Pd, M.Hum	5. 

ABSTRAK

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Pembimbing: 1. Dr. Hj. Kurnia Ningsih, M. A.
2. Delvi Wahyuni, S.S., M.A.

Skripsi ini merupakan analisa dari Novel *The Help* (2009) yang ditulis oleh Kathryn Stockett. Topik yang dibahas adalah Egalitarianism. Permasalahannya adalah tindakan-tindakan yang merefleksikan kepercayaan akan kesetaraan untuk semua orang (egalitarianism) yang dilakukan oleh protagonis untuk melindungi hak-hak dan mengangkat status orang-orang kulit hitam atau minoritas di lingkungannya yang rasis. Tujuan penganalisaan ini adalah untuk mendapatkan jawaban sejauh mana novel ini merefleksikan tindakan-tindakan seorang egalitarian serta menunjukkan kontribusi elemen fiksi (karakter dan seting) dalam mengungkap tindakan-tindakan seorang egalitarian dalam novel ini. Penelitian ini dilakukan dengan menginterpretasi teks, konteks dan meanganalisa keterkaitan elemen fiksi satu sama lain. Elemen fiksi tersebut dianalisa berdasarkan konsep egalitarianism yang dikemukakan oleh Richard Arneron. Hasil analisa menunjukkan bahwa protagonis melakukan tindakan-tindakan seorang egalitarian untuk mencapai tujuan utamanya, yaitu kesetaraan untuk semua orang. Seting mengacu pada situasi dan kondisi yang dihadapi protagonis. Situasi dan kondisi tersebut memunculkan gagasan oleh protagonis untuk melakukan tindakan seorang egalitarian. Tindakan-tindakan tersebut terealisasi melalui membangun sebuah hubungan yang baik dengan masyarakat kulit hitam dan menulis sebuah buku non fiksi dari suara-suara orang kulit hitam. Dari kedua tindakan tersebut, terlihat bahwa keinginan untuk menghapus ketidaksetaraan dapat menyeret seseorang untuk melakukan tindakan egalitarianism yang bertentangan dengan ideologi yang dianut oleh kaum mayoritas pada umumnya.

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Finally, I hope that this thesis can be useful for the readers. I am waiting for the suggestion and critics for making this thesis better and better. Thank you.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

The United States faced the most important era regarding civil rights and racial equality in 1960s. This era was marked by the rise of interracial tensions between majorities and minorities especially between whites and blacks. As majorities, whites played roles in society; they ruled and even limited the opportunities of minorities. As the result, blacks received unequal treatments in their social life since they were only regarded as the second layer of citizens and the inferior ones by whites. The injustice and racial inequality that are received by blacks led to social movements called African-Americans Civil Rights Movement. It aimed to end racial segregation and discrimination against blacks and enforce equal rights for them. Even though most of whites reacted negatively and could not accept the equality for blacks, there were some whites who did the opposite. They rejected the ideology of white supremacy and black inferiority since they believe that equality reflects the natural state of humanity.

People who have a high sense of humanity will avoid discrimination against the minorities. They are categorized as people who believe that all people were created equal in fundamental worth or social status and should be treated equally. These people are called egalitarians. Sears (1998) mentions that one of egalitarian values is equality of opportunity or equal treatments. Egalitarians are

characterized by their belief in the equality of all people and each person can achieve prestige, but it should not be used to gain power over others. Moreover, whites who have the characteristics of egalitarians will treat blacks as minorities equally and even defend their rights as human beings.

In social life, an egalitarian disregards racial diversity as a boundary to interact with black society. He or she maintains the harmonious life as a social being by building a good relationship with blacks. An interracial relationship such as friendship can be created through integration–incorporation as equals into society or an organization of individuals of different groups. It can increase the acceptance of racial differences as well as support racial equality among American societies. Naumann (2002) states that:

Cross-race friends acknowledge and appreciate their differences to a greater degree than same-race friends do. The emotions that the cross-race friends reported—curiosity, enthusiasm, appreciation, compassion, and gratitude—also coincide with the cross-race friends' appreciation for differences that same-race friends did not experience.

From this statement, it is clear that an egalitarian can give moral encouragement to the member of minority group by sharing some positive emotions. It also shows that mutual trust and appreciation in an interracial friendship can maintain their morality. By integrating with different races, egalitarians keep themselves away from racism, hate and prejudice. Kawabata (2009) adds that people who formed interracial friendships exhibited high levels of positive friendship qualities, including companionship, help, and emotional security. These qualities are also the purpose of egalitarians to help and protect blacks from acts of discriminations such as mental or physical violence.

Meanwhile, the belief in equal social and civil rights for all people is called egalitarianism. This is the basis for egalitarians' attitudes in advocating or supporting the principle of equality for all people. It also aims to eliminate inequalities among societies as well as discrimination. Egalitarianism can be created through the personal experience of an individual. Mark Rossiter, a white film-maker is an example who seeks his black nanny who raised him. In this case, egalitarianism is created through the interracial relationship between a white child and his black nanny. Mark realizes that there was something unusual about the ways his nanny treated; unequal and different. He argues that his nanny should have received a better treatment. Johnston (2010) states that Mark considers his nanny as a second mother to him since the affection that she had given makes him to be a better person. This experience makes him consider that all people are equal and should be treated equally.

In United States, egalitarianism can be done through voicing the discrimination and inequality that experienced by blacks to public. Jane Elliott, a white American teacher is an example of egalitarian who supported Civil Rights Movement and protested racial discrimination toward blacks. She created the controversial and startling, the famous "Blue Eyes/Brown Eyes" exercise. This exercise received negative reaction at first and most of whites disagree with it since Elliott involved white children in this exercise. However, the reaction turned into positive since many people realize the bad impacts of discrimination. In her exercise, Elliott labels her students as inferior or superior based solely upon the color of their eyes and exposes them to the experience of being a

minority. Once the experiment was finished, Elliot asked one of her students to reflect on what they had experienced. Every single person expressed how they did not like having lesser privileges and unfair rules. Bandach (2010) says that from Elliott's exercise, people got to experience what it felt like to be hated, mocked, discriminated, and segregated based solely on looks or a physical appearance. This exercise is kind of effort that Elliott takes as an egalitarian in order to raise the status of blacks and make people understand the sufferings of blacks and realize that racial discrimination is very wrong.

The phenomenon about egalitarianism is an interesting issue to be analyzed and explored. This phenomenon can be revealed in literary works, such as novel. One of the novels that shows egalitarianism is *The Help* (2009) written by Kathryn Stockett. Instead of being a racist and discriminate black in her society, the protagonist believes that everyone is equal and has the same rights and should be treated equally in every aspects of life. Egalitarianism can be seen through the actions that she takes to raise the status and defend the rights of blacks.

1.1.1 Egalitarianism

According to Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (2002), the term egalitarianism is described as a belief that all human beings are equal in fundamental worth or moral status and should be treated equally in society. Meanwhile, egalitarians are people who believe in the equality of all people. Egalitarians always care about human equality and treat all people equally,

regardless their social or racial background. It deals with the attitudes of egalitarians in order to remove inequalities among people as well as discrimination on grounds such as race, gender, religion, etc. Moreover, Gordon (2008) states that egalitarianism is the position that equality is central to justice. Egalitarians believe that there are certain absolute humanitarian principles like autonomy, freedom or human dignity that owned by human beings and should be protected. It can be understood that egalitarianism promotes equality and human rights in order to remove inequalities, discrimination and injustice.

Therefore, egalitarianism in this analysis refers to the belief which affects the attitudes in order to raise the status as well as defend the rights of blacks; marginalized and discriminated racial minorities who are treated unequally by the majorities. Those are done by building a good relationship with black society and writing a book from blacks' voices.

1.1.2 American Civil Rights Movement

In American Declaration of Independence in 1776, Thomas Jefferson stated "all men are created equal". It was about the promise of America—freedom and equality for all. It was based on the fact that The United States is a racially diverse country where American societies consist of several different races and ethnic groups which are white as the major and dominant one while the rest are Native American (Indian and Alaska), Hispanic, Black (African-American), and Asian. One of its purposes is to unite American citizens and eliminate racial diversity among them.

Unfortunately, the reality that occurred in society proves otherwise. Not all people can accept the differences that have been existed, especially regarding racial diversity. This difference is regarded as a thing that can distinguish humans into certain racial groups. Blank (2004) mentions that basically race was defined as a natural or biological division of the human species based on physical characteristics of others, such as skin color, hair texture, and distinctive features. But, it becomes socially significant when members of a society routinely divide people into groups based on the possession of these characteristics. It happens when some of the major groups in a society come with notions of racial superiority.

However, racial diversity between human beings is just merely physical, but the term “race” is constructed by the group of society that have a power to distinguish between them and the minorities as the inferior ones. The notion of “racial superiority” that possessed by the dominant race sparked a debate in which they have power over the minority ones. This phenomenon brings such different social perceptions, attitudes, and behaviors toward each group.

In United States, blacks as the minorities struggled for equality. Karson (2005) states that in 1896 the Court ruled in *Plessy v. Ferguson* that blacks and whites could be legally separated as long as the facilities for each were “equal.” Facilities for blacks and whites, however, were rarely equal. More importantly, the Supreme Court’s “separate but equal” doctrine, by legally backing segregation, gave white society a powerful tool to keep blacks from enjoying even the most rudimentary rights of citizenship. These injustice and unequal treatments

that conducted by whites toward blacks led to the emergence of Civil Rights Movement.

The Civil Rights Movement occurred when African-Americans fighting for desegregation and against discrimination and the denial by society of their legitimate claim to equal human and civil rights. Karson (2005) mentions that the civil rights movement accomplished far more than the elimination of racial barriers. It led to the overwhelming transformation of American social, cultural, and political life. Moreover, this movement demanded the prevailing notions about the citizenship rights of blacks. For example, coupled with a redefinition of the role of the government and courts in protecting these rights, continue to bolster the human rights of all Americans, regardless of their skin color. The accomplishments of civil rights movement were not just to claim the rights of blacks as American citizens and human beings, but it also removed inequalities and discriminations against blacks in order to promote racial equality to all Americans.

The Civil Rights Movement has the same purposes with egalitarianism. They both are basically the same in promoting and demanding equality. However, egalitarianism is not created by forced, but it comes from the willingness of individuals. Civil rights movement demanded equal rights and outlawed major forms of discrimination against racial and ethnic minorities as well as ended inequalities such as racial segregation. Even though many conservative Americans disagreed with the Civil Rights movement, many white Americans still support the Civil Rights movement. These people can be categorized as egalitarians since

they believe that people are equal and should be treated equal, and that is one of egalitarianism's principles. Furthermore, there were very rare people who have the characteristics of egalitarianism at Civil Rights era.

1.1.3 A Brief of Kathryn Stockett

Kathryn Stockett was born in 1969 in Jackson, Mississippi. She studied at University of Alabama with a degree in English and Creative Writing. After graduating, she moved to New York City where she worked both in magazine publishing and marketing for nine years. She currently lives in Atlanta with her husband and daughter. *The Help* is her debut novel.

As an author with her first novel, Stockett has won several prestigious awards such as New York Times bestseller (Fiction, 2009, 2011), Amazon's Best Books of the Year (#19, 2009), Orange Prize Longlist (2010), Indies Choice Book Award (Adult Debut, 2010), Townsend Prize (Fiction, 2010), Exclusive Books Boeke Prize (2009), SIBA Book Award (Fiction, 2010), International IMPAC Dublin Literary Award Longlist (2011), and Christian Science Monitor Best Book (Fiction, 2009). Those awards are the proof that *The Help* is one of the novels that suitable to be read by all people. *The Help* has sold more than 3 million copies and a Hollywood film version has released in 2011.

The Help is inspired by Stockett's own experience in Jackson where her grandparents lived, and where she spent a great deal of time in her childhood. D'Souza (2011) says that Stockett's family maid, Demetrie has become the main inspiration for Stockett in writing her novel. Ironically, even though she had

raised Stockett and helped her family, she was not allowed to use the family bathroom. It proves that her racial background as a black could not keep her away from racial prejudice and segregationism.

The interracial connection that Stockett experienced with her childhood maid has contributed in creating her own perspective about blacks. In an interview with TIME (2009), Stockett explained that she started writing in the voice of Demetrie, which later became the character of Aibileen in *The Help*. Stockett recalled Demetrie to *Penguin Group Publisher*:

My grandmother's maid was named Demetrie. She started working for my grandparents in 1955, when my father and uncle were still boys and she was twenty-eight. When they were grown, she looked after us, the grandchildren. I loved Demetrie dearly, and I felt so loved too. We got the best part of her.

The quotation above shows that Skeeter considered Demetrie not just merely a maid. She could see and feel the loyalty and affection that given by her. More than that, she adored Demetrie as much as her own mother. The closeness that she had with her childhood maid had inspired her to write her favorite character in *The Help*. Stockett's talent is natural. She just wrote down her feeling and her past experiences into papers and with a little opportunity, her novel becomes famed around the world.

Stockett is one of white Americans who supports the status of African-Americans as proper American citizens. She also supports Obama as the first African-American president to govern United States. In Daily Mail (2009) Stockett states that:

I have never been more proud of the United States than I am this year. We have elected an African-American president. We have the stellar Michelle Obama setting the standard for American women. I simply cannot say it enough: look how far we've come.

Stockett's statement above reflects her feeling of proud that apparently what they have been fighting for is not in vain and bring positive results. She also relieves that finally blacks get their rights as American citizens as well as equal opportunity with whites.

1.1.4 The Help

Kathryn Stockett's novel, *The Help* (2009) shows Egalitarianism. It is a philosophy asserting the equality of all human beings, especially in their access to the rights and privileges of their society. Egalitarians express the idea that all human persons are equal in fundamental worth or moral status. In this novel, egalitarian is represented by the protagonist, Skeeter, a white American who favors blacks as equal as whites. Egalitarianism that committed by the protagonist aims to defend the rights and raise the status of blacks amongst racist society. It is uncovered through two actions: building a good relationship with black society and writing a nonfiction book from blacks' voices.

In building a good relationship with black society, the protagonist makes some efforts. First, she shows positive attitudes toward black maids and put all of the differences between them aside. This is done to give moral encouragement to

the blacks and maintain the harmonious life as social beings. Second, she searches for her childhood maid's existence. There is a close connection between the protagonist and her childhood maid who is a black and played the role of a mother for her. Those efforts are made in order to defend the rights of blacks as human beings.

The protagonist writes a nonfiction book from blacks' voices. This book tells the truth about the life of black maids that unnoticed by public. This truth is told and experienced by black maids themselves. There are several points contained in this book. First, the protagonist exposes segregationism and inequalities that occurred in her society. Second, she reveals the violation of human rights such as unjust treatments toward blacks. Third, this book tells the irony of black maids who work for white households. It is made to let people know and understand that blacks are also human beings who live with equal rights. It is the way of the protagonist to raise the status of blacks.

1.2 Problem of Study

The Help (2009) expose several issues, but egalitarianism emerges as an important issue to be analyzed. To reveal egalitarianism, the research questions are needed. Those research questions are:

1. How far does Kathryn Stockett's novel *The Help* show egalitarianism?

- 2 To what extent do the fictional devices such as characters and setting give contribution in revealing egalitarianism?

1.3 Purpose of Study

This analysis is going to find out how far the novel *The Help* (2009) by Kathryn Stockett exposes egalitarianism. This analysis is done in order to explore to what extent characters and setting give contribution in disclosing egalitarianism.

1.4 Previous Study

The analysis about Kathryn Stockett's novel titled *The Help* (2009) which focuses on egalitarianism has not been found yet. However, there are some studies that have given contribution and inspiration in analyzing this novel.

The first study is written by Janet Maslin (2009), entitled *The Help: Racial Insults and Quiet Bravery in 1960s Mississippi*. This study focuses on the characters and setting. The purpose of this study is to reveal racial discrimination in Mississippi, United States during 1960s. It is based on the concept of liberalism and segregationism. These contradiction concepts are represented by two characters in *The Help* who are the same in racial background but have different personality and ideology. The concept of liberalism is represented by the protagonist, Skeeter. She is described as a liberal person who avoids being racist and dependent. She also supports ideas such as civil rights and freedom. Those characteristics are reflected by some actions. First, she refuses being a housewife and spending time playing bridge like her friends do. On the contrary, she prefers

to find a job and earn money by her own. Second, she protects individuals from violence. It can be seen by the way she treats blacks as minority friendly. Meanwhile, the concept of segregationism is represented by the antagonist named Hilly. She is a white who supports the separation between blacks and whites. In addition, she is categorized as a dependent person who has no job and relies on her husband. This study shows that racial discrimination can be triggered by the ideology and personality background of a person. It also shows the bravery of a woman who fights against conservative ideology of her society which is represented by the protagonist.

Another study is written by Reidun Kornelie Mork (2005), entitled *All Men are Created Equal: Langston Hughes's Opposition to Discrimination Against African Americans*. This study focuses on the works of Langston Hughes. This analysis deals with the concept racial inequality. It employs the method of New Historicism, and views the text in the context of the cultural conditions of its time of production. The purpose of this study is to disclose segregationism in United States, and the different stages of the practice of it. This is represented by Hughes' poems such as "The Weary Blues" and "Mulatto". This study shows blacks' struggle for equality. It is reflected by the speakers and tones of these poems. The speakers are African Americans and the tones are anger and frustration.

Those studies have given contribution and inspiration for this analysis. They also enrich the knowledge about segregationism and racial inequalities in

United States. Meanwhile, this study focuses on egalitarianism. It discusses those points as some issues in Kathryn Stockett's novel *The Help* (2009).

1.5 Theoretical Framework

The analysis of this novel deals with the concept of egalitarianism. To clarify the meaning of egalitarianism, Arnerson (2013) states that an egalitarian favors equality of some sort: People should get the same, or be treated the same, or be treated as equals, in some respect. An egalitarian maintains that people ought to be treated as equals—as possessing equal fundamental worth or moral status, dignity and as equally morally considerable. Egalitarianism promotes equality and human rights as the natural states of humanity. It advocates the removal of racial inequalities, discrimination and injustice among people since it opposes racism.

Egalitarianism is critically needed to defend the rights of minorities as human beings since equality as the central of justice. It can be applied in a multicultural society like United States where most of majority groups believe that they are superior to the minority or inferior ones. In this analysis, the majority refers to whites and blacks as the minority. Walzer (1983) states that it can be called a society if its practices and institutions are in accord with the shared values and cultural understandings of its people. Egalitarianism becomes a requirement of justice in multicultural societies, because this is an underlying important element of people's shared values and cultural understandings. It holds that

everyone at all times and places have an equal moral entitlement to be treated according to the shared norms and cultural understandings of one's people or group.

Egalitarianism influences someone's attitude toward others. Egalitarianism can be created through personal experiences of a child with his caregiver. It is related to the concept of attachment. It is an emotional bond that connects one person to another person. An attachment relationship was possible between domestic workers or caregivers and the children they help to raise. The earliest bonds formed by children with their caregivers have a big impact that continues throughout life. According to Merwe (2009) attachment refers to an affectional tie that one person forms to another specific individual. Attachment can be applicable to non-maternal caregivers. In this analysis, an attachment occurs between a white child and her black maid as a non-maternal caregiver. Furthermore, Merwe states that a white child that raised by a black maid experiences severe anxiety in being separated from them. To overcome this separation anxiety, the child will strive to seek her caregiver existence. Since regarding all people are equal and the absence of racial prejudice, it can be understood that egalitarianism can be reflected by a good interracial relationship between whites and blacks.

Moreover, Modood (2007) states that multicultural society is most timely and necessary, best fits the ideal of egalitarianism since there are many conflicts appear between the whites and blacks. They can coexist peacefully and equitably

in a single society if there is equality. As the basic principle of egalitarianism, Modood in Malik (2008) defines equality as:

Not having to hide or apologize for one's origins, family or community but requiring others to show respect for them, and adapt public attitudes and arrangements so that the heritage they represent is encouraged rather than contemptuously expect them to wither away.

The quotation above shows that egalitarianism can be created if there is a mutual respect among society. In United States, positive attitudes that given by members of majority group can give moral encouragement to the minority. It is based on the fact that many marginalized people who regarded as minority in United States become the victim of discrimination acts such as prejudice and segregationism. Those acts are categorized as unequal treatments. In contrary, there are also some people who uphold moral values and equality in order to promote egalitarianism in a multicultural society.

Egalitarianism aims to eliminate barriers in a society. This phenomenon is associated with cultural analysis. According to Guerin (2005), it deals with the power structures of society at large and questions inequalities in order to discover models for restructuring relationship between majority and minority. In culturally diverse societies, it is easily to find such inequalities that disadvantaged to the minorities. In this case, meaning and individual subjectivity are culturally constructed, they can thus be reconstructed. This reconstruction can be understood as efforts to eliminate barriers and create equality among societies in order to raise the moral status of minority. Furthermore, Hall in Griffin (2012) states that the

purpose of cultural analysis is to empower people who live on the margins of society, people who have little say in the direction of their lives and who are scrambling to survive. The reconstruction of racial inequalities among societies is the reflection of egalitarianism.

The theories above are related each other to reveal the issue of egalitarianism in novel *The Help* (2009). This analysis is going to show the efforts to raise the status and defend the rights of blacks as the minority group among multicultural society.

The form of this analysis is based on text and context-based interpretation in order to reveal egalitarianism. It means that this analysis not only focuses on the word itself but also the phenomenon that happens in reality. According to Madden (2002), text-based interpretation focuses exclusively on text itself and requires close reading. It breaks down the whole text to deconstruct its meaning. Moreover, the elements outside of text are not used in analyzing text. In analyzing this novel, fictional devices such as characters and setting are crucial to be examined.

The first fictional device that is used in this analysis is character. Ford (2005) defines character as a person who is responsible for the thoughts and action within a story or play in a piece of literature. The different attitudes, mannerisms and even appearances of character can greatly influence the other major elements in literary work. The different attitudes in this novel are represented by the protagonist Eugenia Phelan (Skeeter). While most of white

Americans tend to marginalize blacks as the minorities, she favors blacks equally and friendly. It is revealed by observing what the protagonist does including the interaction with other characters.

The second device is setting. It is not merely about location and time of the story, but it is more about the atmosphere of the story itself. Madden (2002) states that:

Setting in fiction is the location and atmosphere of the story. It has direct and indirect impact on the character and conflict. It support and emphasizes the story meaning.

The statement above shows that setting plays as one of important elements that can influence the character. In other words, setting cannot be separated from the characters since the characters and their action are influenced by the situation and condition in the story. Moreover, the meaning behind the story can be found by using setting. In this analysis, the setting focuses on social and atmosphere in Mississippi, United States.

Meanwhile, Madden (2002) states that context-based interpretation means considering the work within a frame of cultural, psychological and biographical criticism. It emphasizes that the work is inseparable with the aspects outside of the work such as culture and history. The meaning of a story can be revealed by paying attention to its context. Context-based interpretation in this analysis refers to the phenomenon and situation of United States during Civil Rights era in 1960s when interracial tensions raised between majority and

minority (whites and blacks) and egalitarianism became a crucial issue at that time.

1.6 Methodology

The analysis of this novel focuses on egalitarianism that occurs in United States during Civil Rights era in 1960s. It is done by combining text-based and context-based interpretation to reveal the meaning. Text-based interpretation focuses on exploring fictional devices such as characters and setting. These devices cannot be separated because they are interrelated each other. Characters are used to show some characteristics of egalitarianism from the character's attitudes and thoughts. Setting reveals the meaning through circumstances and atmosphere of the story. It is used to see how egalitarianism works in a culturally diverse society. These devices are connected to context-based interpretation by observing social phenomena in United States. Furthermore, these elements are associated with Arnerson's perspective about the concept of egalitarianism.