

# **CHAPTER I**

## **INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1 Background of the Study**

Literature is a work of imaginative writing with the purpose to entertain and give aesthetic pleasure. Literature pictures human life in society expressed through written or oral form. According to (Pickering & Hoeper, 1981) literature is a uniquely human activity, born of man's timeless desire to understand, express, and finally share experiences. Literature is an activity that is born from a man's boundless desire to express and share their experiences.

There are many forms of literature; novel, poetry, fable, prose, movie, drama, etc. One of the literary works used for this research is novel. Novel is a narrative with considerable length produced through the experience and imagination of the writer. A novel is created through connected events written into words involving a group or persons in a specific setting.

One of the most popular novels that is considered a masterpiece is "The Bell Jar" by Sylvia Plath. The novel "The Bell Jar" was written by Sylvia Plath, an American writer and poet. The novel was first published in 1963 under the alias "Victoria Lucas". The Bell Jar novel tells the story of Esther Greenwood, a college student who aspires to be a poet. The story explores Esther Greenwood's problems with societal challenges and customs.

Sylvia Plath was born to Otto and Aurelia Plath on October 27, 1932 in Boston, Massachusetts. She was an American Poet whose best known for her “Daddy”, “Lady Lazarus” poem and “The Bell Jar” novel. Sylvia Plath was driven to excel as a writer at a young age as a daughter of an entomologist and published her first poem at the age of eight. At Smith College she attempted suicide and was submitted to electroshock treatment. While attending Cambridge University, she married poet Ted Hughes. Sylvia Plath struggled with mental health issues in 1962 and 1963, including divorce because Ted Hughes had an affair with other women and her depression lead to her leaving her children alone. Her 1963 work, *The Bell Jar*, was disregarded by her writing community which adds to her depression. Severe depression episodes occurred six months before her death, and she attempted suicide by the age of 30 on February 11, 1963, by inhaling gas from her oven. Sylvia Plath was not widely recognized in her lifetime but her fame increased later. Her works, often confessional and preoccupied with alienation, death, and self-destruction, include the volumes *The Colossus* (1960), *Ariel* (1965), and *The Collected Poems* (1981, Pulitzer Prize) and a semiautobiographical novel, *The Bell Jar* (1963).

Psychological approach is the approach used for this research of novel. Psychology is the study of behavior and the mental process behind it. the theory

used in this study of psychology is the psychoanalysis of Sigmund Freud. Freud structured the psyche into three parts: the id, ego, and super ego.

The id is an unconscious psychic mind that seeks pleasure without considering what is possible or improper. It is the only region in contact with reality, acting as the decision-maker for the personality. The ego, the only one of the three psychic minds, differentiates itself from the id when exploring reality. The superego represents the ideal aspects of personality, aiming for perfection. It has two parts: the conscience and the ego-ideal. The conscience develops from punishments experienced by improper behaviors, while the ego-ideal develops from rewards from proper behavior.

According to (Freud, 1933), anxiety is a unpleasant state that is felt that warns the person upon upcoming danger. The unpleasant feeling is often hard to identify but the anxiety is always there. The ego is the only one out of the three parts of the mind that is able to produce and feel anxiety. Id, ego, and external world on the other hand are involved in one of three kinds of anxiety, the neurotic, moral, and realistic anxiety. The ego's reliance towards the id creates neurotic anxiety, its reliance towards the superego creates moral anxiety, and its reliance on the outer world results in realistic anxiety.

Defense mechanism is part of the mind, produced by the ego to protect and defend the mind against the anxiety of the person. Freud's defense mechanism includes repression, reaction formation, displacement, fixation, regression,

projection, interjection, and sublimation (Freud, 1926). As stated in the novel, “Joan grew wistful "You'll come visit me, won't you, Esther?", “Of course.” But I thought, “Not likely.”!’ This is an example of repression from the book. Esther does not speak her mind as she represses it by saying other things different from what she is thinking.

The novel “The Bell Jar” by Sylvia Plath consists of the life of Esther Greenwood and is considered a semiautobiographical novel. The novel consists of psychological elements that can be analyzed using the Psychoanalysis theory by Sigmund Freud. This study will focus on the main character of the novel Esther Greenwood. From the above reasons, the writer entitles the research “Anxiety And Defense Mechanism Of Esther In The Bell Jar Novel By Sylvia Plath: Psychological Approach”.

## **1.2 Identification of the Problem**

Based on the background, the writer identified some problems. The problems are divided into several parts:

1. The main character’s depression in “The Bell Jar” novel by Sylvia Plath.
2. The struggles of Esther Greenwood that lead to anxiety in “The Bell Jar” novel By Sylvia Plath.
3. The problems that caused the main character to experience anxiety in “The Bell Jar” novel by Sylvia Plath.

4. The types of anxiety experienced by the main character in “The Bell Jar” novel by Sylvia Plath.
5. Types of defense mechanism used by Esther to reduce their anxiety in “The Bell Jar” novel by Sylvia Plath.

### **1.3 Limitation of the Problem**

Based on the problem identified, the writer will limit the research problems to make it easier to collect the data. After limiting down, the problems are as bellow:

1. The types anxiety experienced by the main character in “The Bell Jar” Novel by Sylvia Plath.
2. Types of defense mechanism used by Esther to reduce their anxiety in “The Bell Jar” novel by Sylvia Plath.

### **1.4 Formulation of the Problem**

Based on the problem the writer have identified and narrowed down, the writer will formulate the problem into research questions that need to be answered as below:

1. What are the types of anxiety experienced by the main character in “The Bell Jar” novel by Sylvia Plath?
2. What are the defense mechanisms performed by the main character in “The Bell Jar” novel?

### **1.5 Objective of the Research**

According to the problems the researcher have found and identified, this research will contain two objectives:

1. To analyze the anxieties experienced by the main character in “The Bell Jar” novel by Sylvia Plath.
2. To discover the defense mechanisms performed by the main character as a result of their anxiety in “The Bell Jar” novel by Sylvia Plath.

### **1.6 Significance of the Research**

#### **1. Theoretically**

This study offers insight into literary works that depict human life. It is anticipated that this research will further psychoanalysis and psychological understanding of anxiety and defensive mechanisms. The purpose of this study is to advance our understanding of literary studies in general and psychoanalytic theory in particular.

#### **2. Practically**

This research is hoped that this research will be helpful in educating readers and the researcher themselves about Sigmund Freud's psychoanalysis hypothesis. It is anticipated that this research, which employs a psychoanalytic perspective, will give light on the anxiety that frequently affects adults and adolescents. This research aims to enlighten readers and the author himself

about the defensive mechanisms that arise from worry by examining the anxiety that frequently appears in the book.

### **1.7 Definition of Key Terms**

**Psychological Approach** : The psychological approach in psychology refers to the study of human behaviour and mental processes from a psychological perspective. This approach focuses on understanding how thoughts, feelings, and behaviours are influenced by internal factors such as emotions, thoughts, and perceptions, as well as external factors such as social and cultural influences. The psychological approach places an emphasis on the role of the mind and its influence on behaviour.

**Anxiety** : Anxiety is an unpleasant state that is felt by a person. This unpleasant feeling is often hard to identify but the anxiety is always there. The ego is the only one out of the three parts of the mind that is able to produce and feel anxiety. Anxiety produced by the ego represents as an alarm signal of potential threat or danger to the person,

meanwhile Freud also emphasizes that anxiety is a felt, affective, unpleasant state accompanied by physical sensations that warns the person against impending danger.

**Defense Mechanism** : People utilize defense mechanisms, or avoidance behaviours, to distance oneself from unpleasant situations, people, or ideas. Psychoanalytic theory, which views personality as the interaction of three components: the id, ego, and super-ego is where the concept of defensive mechanisms originated. Defense mechanisms, in the words of Anna Freud, are "unconscious resources used by the ego" to ultimately lessen internal stress. Patients often adopt these unconscious tactics to reduce internal conflict, especially the struggle between the id and superego.