

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of Study

Social prestige is where a person's dignity or self-esteem through social means can be judged from the way he or she dresses, talks and from other social value that most people can judge. *Crazy Rich Asians* is a satirical 2013 romantic comedy novel by Kevin Kwan. Kwan stated that his intention in writing the novel was to "introduce a contemporary Asia to a North American audience". He claimed the novel was loosely based on his own childhood in Singapore. The novel became a bestseller and was followed by two sequels, *China Rich Girlfriend* in 2015 and *Rich People Problems* in 2017. A film adaptation of the novel also released on August 15, 2018. (source: wikipedia)

Crazy Rich Asian is a novel created by Singaporean American writer Kevin Kwan. *Crazy Rich Asian* tells the story of the wealth of Chinese people who are in Singapore with very abundant wealth so that they are in a high social class and they also really like to interfere with other people's business and find out about someone's life. In this rich Chinese family, they really like it when there are people whose social class is as high as them and they really don't like and are annoyed when they know people whose social class is lower than them.

Crazy Rich Asian tells an American named Rachel Wu who has an affair with Nick Young, her student in college. Rachel Wu is invited by Nick Young to attend his sister's wedding in Singapore, and after Rachel goes with Nick, Rachel does not think that Nick and his family are the richest people in Singapore. They own business that has been passed down from generation to generation. It makes Nick and

his family have a lot of wealth. Then Nick invites Rachel to meet Nick's mother, but after seeing Rachel's dress style and way of talking she does not agree because Nick's mother says she is from a not-rich family, while her mother wants to find a partner for her child whose economy is as rich as her. There are two different social classes, namely the upper social class and the middle social class which are from the Chinese race who have different social classes and have an impact on their lives (Arifah Ulfa Nasution. 2021).

The story in the novel makes the researcher interested to make a research, particularly about the social status which might affect one's life. Furthermore, the researcher would like to dig the moral lesson found through the research.

1.2 Problem of the Study

The problem of this research is formulated in two questions which then need an analysis in the chapter four of this research as their answer. The followings are the two problems:

1. What is the social class of the protagonist in *Crazy Rich Asian*?
2. What are the impacts of the social class to the protagonist's life?

1.3 Objective of the Study

The objectives of this study to find out the answers of the research questions as the subject matter of this research. They are as follows:

1. To reveal the social class of the protagonist in *Crazy Rich Asian*.
2. To describe the impacts of the social class to the protagonist's life in *Crazy Rich Asian*.

1.4 Scope of the Study

The scope of this research is focused on the social class of the protagonist in *Crazy Rich Asian*. Furthermore, this research is also driven to reveal the impact of the social class of the protagonist in her life.

1.5 Significance of the Study

Theoretically, this research might contribute an additional reference for other and further analysis about social class by other researchers because they can quote the findings of this research to their scientific works as one of their references. Furthermore, practically, this research might contribute moral lesson as life teaching either to the researcher herself or the readers of this work related to social class and the impact of social class.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Protagonist

Protagonist is the main character as a leading character or important character in a film, drama or poem Josefine Burman (2012). Another opinion also states that the protagonist is a character who wants to achieve a goal and they have a goal and plan hope so they hope they can achieve their goal and realize their plan (Julie Porteous & Alan Lindsay 2019). The role of the protagonist must represent a positive character or something positive and this is very much needed in a story. This role also plays a role as a person who is hurt and someone who suffers and makes the audience have sympathy for this character. This role is usually the center of the figure because this figure determines the motion scenes (Alifia Alvinindyta & Erik Rusmana. 2018).

2.2 Sociology of Literature

Sociology of literature in the theory of Plato and Aristoteles is considered as the basic foundation of the study of sociology of literary works in which the real phenomenon in the social life is reflected in the works of literature. And it is supposed as a media to record the social history of the society. Therefore, the existence of literary works is an interrelation among the author, the society and the reader. Therefore, Rene Wellek and Austin Warren (1994) offered three kinds of sociology of literature. They are: the sociology of the author, the sociology of the literary work, and the sociology of the reader. It is line with Ian Watt in Damono (1979) who differed the sociology of literature in three contexts. They are: social context of the author, literature as the mirror of the society, and social function of

literature. Sociology of literature that studies the phenomenon of literature in relation with social aspects is an approach in understanding sociological aspects in literary works through reading (Wiyatmi. 2013). Furthermore, Swingewood (1972) states that great writers do not set out simply to depict the social world in largely descriptive terms in his works, therefore, the conception of mirror must be treated with great care in the sociological analysis of literature. Then, sociology of literature portrays the connection between the experience of the author's social life from which the work emerges. Literature is potential to describe social phenomenon effectively. Therefore, literary works might be a valuable source of information about social life in certain society. It is the work of the author to recreate social phenomenon in extraordinary way in his work. It is the meaning of literary work as the mirror of social phenomenon (Listiana, Tika Sari. 2018).

As defined by Richard, Taylor (1981) that literature is the result of the writer's imagination by selecting, ordering, and interpreting of his life experience. Literature is also understood as a record of what someone has seen, experienced, and felt in his or her life (Hudson. 1977). Thus, literature might be fundamental expression of life through language as its medium. People will feel pleasure when they are reading literary works because they may feel happy and sorrow in the literary works reflecting love, hatred, and sorrow which may reflect their own life experience.

2.3 Social Class

In general, social class is divided into 3 classes, namely upper, middle and lower classes. the first upper social class is a high social class that contains the rich and has a lot of wealth and they are very proud of the wealth they have. They also will make relationship to those who come from upper class as well so that there are

descendants from rich to rich, also maintaining family stability. This class will try to maintain their privileges, power, status and social position and try to influence politics, education and other institutions to protect and limit access to their class. Whereas the lower class - as opposed to the higher class - was very different interests. They do not have a special form of capital that they need to protect. All of them interested is to gain access to resources and capital of a higher class. People who are in the middle social class only have wealth and are not abundant in the future and they save more for the future. And the lower social class are those has the lowest income is very low and usually the case is a lack of education and poverty. according to social conflict theory (Engels & Marx, 1848).

Social class is one form of social stratification. Social class is group of people that classifies people into different categories or level in similar positions in the social hierarchy. The bases of the criteria that put them in different levels may include wealth, education, occupation, family background, sex, income, religion, etc. (Doda, Zerihun: 171). Chinese life is indeed very famous for its glamorous life. Most of them are people who have a lot of wealth. Abundant assets owned by them can be categorized as inherited wealth. Wealth that will never end even a generation. Ibn Batuta (Fourteenth Century) said, "Nowhere in the world are there to be found people richer than the Chinese" (Kevin Kwan, 2013).

Social class is included as one of social stratification as defined that: "social stratification is the segmentation of society into different hierarchical arrangement or strata referring to the differences and inequalities in the socioeconomic life of people in a given society" (Macionis, 1997; Henslin and Nelson, 1995; Calhoun et al 1994).

Social class is classified into three classes. They are: lower class, middle class, and upper class (Barry. 2002). Lower class is characterized by poverty. Those who are classified in this class are laborers and peasants. The people belong in this class commonly live in rural areas, work in farm and factories. They live from the states' welfare and social spillover because they are very poor. Middle class is characterized as hard-workers. They work as a doctor, an architect, an engineer, a manager, and a lawyer. They run their own business and employ people to work for their company. They are called as hard-worker because they are working to survive by being a proprietor of little company. They might do as a national subversion against the economic system imposed by the bourgeoisie. The last classification of social class is the upper class. Those who classified in this class are they who invest their money on a new business and they who inherit the wealth from their family who was extremely rich. Upper class invest their money to many multinational and transnational corporations either as investor or partners.

A researcher concluded in her research that there are some indicators of social class. They are types of works, incomes, educational level, fashion, transportation, and residence. Furthermore, there is difference of woman's attitude towards man in the upper class and middle class. Women from middle class tend to be aggressive, materialistic, and exaggerated towards men, while women from upper class tend to be proud, arrogant, and under estimate towards men (Dewi, Silvana Kristina. 2020).

2.4 Impact of Social Class

The impact of social class might be on the attitude and the conflict in one's life. The conflict is potential to cause the oppression, injustice and alienation (Rapika. 2017). The depiction of social class issue is very clear in *Crazy Rich Asian*,

where the upper-class who really likes to make parties which are certainly very luxurious and expensive are seen throughout *Crazy Rich Asian*. However, it can also be seen how people from the upper-class groups.

The impact of social class inequality is a social conflict that can occur within the family or their environment. In *Crazy Rich Asian* there are many social conflicts that become differences and disputes between families and between social classes. The conflict happens when the middle class feel themselves very low (Arifah Ulfa Nasution, Siti Norma Nasution & Riko Andika Rahmat Pohan. 2021).

When someone with different background or different class wants to enter into a higher social class family, then conflict will take place because the upper social class will strongly refuse to have relationships or bonds with people who do not come from the same class. This is found in *Crazy Rich Asian* novel (Berutu, Nur Hasyami. 2021).

The impact of social disparity causes the lower classes have a low self-confidence, because they always feel underestimated, insulted, and they are never considered in the society. In addition, there will be a discord in the society because of the social jealousy between any groups with each other. To resolve the social disparity problems, there should be awareness of the upper class to not always underestimate the lower class. People of the upper class should be able to not judge people of their wealth but they should appraise the people because of their attitude. So, the lower class will have the same opportunity to do things and do not to feel excluded from their society. Therefore, it is suggested in one research concluding that it should accept a person with different character but he or she has the same mindset about social inequality. Therefore, he always ignores the class or social

status in his life and he behaves well to everyone, even though he was from upper class social (Widya, Oka. S. 2013).