THE MEANING OF HOME FOR BRANDON WILLARD AS SEEN THROUGH THE CONFLICTS IN MICHAEL MORRIS’ SLOW WAY HOME

AN UNDERGRADUATE THESIS

Presented as Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Sarjana Sastra in English Letters

By

ARIATA CHRISTY ULY
Student Number: 084214061

ENGLISH LETTERS STUDY PROGRAMME
DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH LETTERS
FACULTY OF LETTERS
SANATA DHARMA UNIVERSITY
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October 15th, 2012

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Defended before the Board of Examiners on November 30, 2012 and Declared Acceptable

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Yogyakarta, 14 Januari 2013

Penulis,

Ariata Christy Uly
Those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength. They will soar in wings like eagles (Isaiah 40:31)

There are no secrets to success. It is the result of preparation, hard work, and learning from failure – Colin Powell

Always have something to look forward to, Someone to share it with and always try to make a difference – Rosemary Conley
This undergraduate thesis is dedicated to:

My Lord, Jesus Christ
My beloved parents, Julius Uly and Harjanti K. Uly
My beloved sisters, Beatrix N. Uly and Penina K. Uly
My loved-one ‘Mbul’ and to all my friends
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First of all, I would like to thank my Lord, Jesus Christ, for His blessing in my life. I realize that without Him, I could not finish my thesis well. I thank God for always making me a way and for answering my prayers every night. I am blessed to have Him as my Lord. I would also like to thank my beloved parents for their support and their patience in dealing with my bad behavior. For my sisters, I am so blessed to have them both in my life. Although we do not always get along, we always share the joys and sorrow through the laugh and tears.

My deepest gratitude goes to Dewi Widyastuti, S.Pd., M.Hum as my thesis advisor and Drs. Hirmawan Wijanarka M.Hum as my thesis co-advisor, for their guidance and advice that are given to me during the process so I could finish this thesis on time. I would like to thank Maria Ananta S.S., M.Ed., as my academic advisor, for guiding me since I am student here.

For Tine, Elisa, Damar, Helga, Cella, Yoyok, Andri and all my friends in English Letters Department 2008, I am so grateful to have them in my life. I thank them for the happiness and craziness that they all have shared. I hope our friendship will last forever. I also thank Rintan Kusumaningtyas, for the advice and support when I am facing such complicated problems. Gerardus Ferdinand as my loved-one and also as my best friend, I thank him for always being by my side and for his unconditional love. Last but not least, thank you to all who have become my friends.
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ABSTRACT

ARIATA CHRISTY ULY. The Meaning of Home for Brandon Willard as Seen through the Conflicts in Michael Morris’ Slow Way Home. Yogyakarta: Department of English Letters, Faculty of Letters, Sanata Dharma University, 2012.

A conflict occurs when there are some differences of opinion or ideas. There are no certain reasons to avoid conflict. A Conflict can be solved successfully or it could have been a fiasco. *Slow Way Home* is the best example for the writer to analyze how the conflicts can lead someone in finding the meaning of home.

This study consists of three objectives. First, this study is written to analyze the internal and external conflicts that happen in the life of Brandon Willard. Second, this study is written to know Brandon Willard’s reactions to the conflicts that happen in his life. Third, this study is written to analyze how the conflicts and the reactions can lead Brandon Willard to find the meaning of home.

The writer uses the library research method to analyze the novel. There are several theories from literature and psychology that are taken to support the analysis. The approach that is used in this study is psychological approach since the analysis deals with the conflicts and the reactions to conflicts.

From the analysis, the writer has found that the meaning of home for the major character, Brandon Willard, can be analyzed through the conflicts and his reactions toward the conflicts. He experiences the internal conflicts within himself when the mother finally comes back to the town. He also experiences the external conflicts with Darrell Foskey, his mother, Pete and Mary Madonna. Several types of reactions are shown toward the conflicts and those are negativism, learned helplessness, placating response, and aggressive behavior that is divided into direct aggression and displaced aggression. Later, togetherness and a new concept of family are the meaning of home for Brandon Willard.
ABSTRAK

ARIATA CHRISTY ULY. The Meaning of Home for Brandon Willard as Seen through the Conflicts in Michael Morris’ Slow Way Home. Yogyakarta: Department of English Letters, Faculty of Letters, Sanata Dharma University, 2012.

Konflik terjadi karena perbedaan pendapat atau gagasan. Seseorang tidak bisa menghindari konflik. Akan tetapi, dia harus menyelesaikan konflik tersebut dengan baik atau konflik tersebut menjadi sebuah masalah besar baginya. Slow Way Home adalah contoh terbaik yang digunakan oleh penulis untuk menganalisis bagaimana konflik dapat membimbing seseorang dalam menemukan arti rumah.

Skripsi ini terdiri dari tiga tujuan. Tujuan pertama ditulisnya skripsi ini adalah untuk menganalisis konflik internal dan eksternal yang terjadi dalam kehidupan Brandon Willard. Tujuan kedua ditulisnya skripsi ini adalah untuk mengetahui reaksi yang diberikan Brandon Willard terhadap konflik yang terjadi. Tujuan ketiga ditulisnya skripsi ini adalah untuk menganalisis bagaimana konflik dan berbagai reaksi terhadap konflik dapat membimbing Brandon Willard untuk menemukan arti rumah.

Penulis menggunakan penelitian pustaka untuk menganalisis novel ini. Terdapat beberapa teori baik dari sastra maupun psikologi yang digunakan untuk mendukung penelitian ini. Pendekatan yang digunakan dalam skripsi ini adalah pendekatan psikologis karena skripsi ini menganalisa konflik dan reaksi terhadap konflik.

CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

This chapter consists of four sections. The first is the background of the study, which covers the reasons for choosing the novel and the topic. The second concerns with the problem formulation, which gives general description of the problem that will be analyzed in this study. The third talks about the objectives of the study to answer the problems stated in the problem formulations. The last part describes the terms that are used in this study.

A. Background of the Study

Everyone wants to live in peace and also wants to have a good relationship with others. Nobody wants to live in a world that is filled with hatred, tension and anger. As much as possible, people will avoid problems so they do not engage themselves in a protracted conflict that can lead to resentment and anger.

People often face conflict when they have a different opinion with others. It happens because the two people do not have the same ideas or opinions about something and it will lead them to a debate. Besides, the conflict also happens because people cannot reach their goals or even, their needs cannot be fulfilled at that time.

A conflict in people’s life shows that they struggle with their own self or with the others to reach some psychological quality. Conflict, sometimes, refers to a psychosocial crisis when people are easily vulnerable or strong in dealing with
it, so it can be solved successfully or could have been a fiasco (http://psychology.about.com/od/cindex/g/conflict.htm).

According to Rhea Carlyn, Psy. D in her article Concepts of Conflict, conflict starts to arise when two or more people do not understand the values, opinions, experiences and agendas that are talked or shared by others. When a conflict happens, people have an opportunity to relieve tension or to create a greater conflict (http://www.livestrong.com/article/258941-concepts-of-conflict/).

Conflict itself is a natural and inescapable phenomenon in human condition (Burgoon & Ruffner, 1977: 503). It means that conflict always happens in human’s life. There is no reason to avoid it but people have a choice to manage it so conflict will be solved successfully.

Home, as stated in Webster’s Third New International Dictionary of the English Language Unabridged with Seven Language Dictionary Volume II H to R, is described as a social unit formed by family where they can live together and also the place where one is emotionally attached to other members (1981: 1082). It means that home is not only the place where people can live together with their family, but also a place where they build affection with each other.

Based on the reason above, the topic was chosen to show the readers that conflict inhibits a person to build a good relationship with others. Besides, facing conflict also inhibits a person to reach the meaning of home itself as the place where he can be together with his beloved family, relatives, or even friends without having disagreements, conflicts or tensions.
Slow Way Home, which is written by Michael Morris, tells a story of a child named Brandon Willard who is left by his drunken mother. He, then, lives with his grandparents in the farmhouse until one day, his mother comes to take him back. That is the time where the conflict begins to emerge. However, instead of giving Brandon back to his mother, his grandparents take him to Florida.

He continues to experience the ongoing conflicts with his new friends in Florida, with people who do not like Sister Delores because she is an African-American woman to the conflicts within him. Those conflicts lead him to discover the truly meaning of home itself where he can be together with his people.

Slow Way Home presents a lot of conflicts which are experienced by certain characters in this novel, especially by Brandon. More than half of this novel shows the conflicts between Brandon and his mother, friends, people surround him and also, with himself. The characters that are described in this novel support the occurrence of conflict. Based on the reason above, Slow Way Home is the best example to describe how someone faces the conflicts in his life and finally finds the truly meaning of home.

B. Problem Formulation

With the background above, three problems are formulated. They will lead the analysis of this study to be explained in detail. The problems are as follows.

1. How are Brandon’s internal and external conflicts described?
2. How are Brandon’s attitudes toward the conflicts described?
3. How is the meaning of home described in *Slow Way Home* seen from the conflicts?

**C. Objectives of the Study**

Since the problem formulation consists of three questions, therefore the objectives of the study also has three sections. The first objective of this study is to know the conflicts happen in Michael Morris’ *Slow Way Home*. The writer will analyze types of several conflicts happening in this story.

The second objective is to know how Brandon Willard, as the major character, reacts toward the conflicts that he experiences. There are several reactions discussed here to show the readers how Brandon deals with the conflicts.

The third objective is to see the meaning of home for Brandon. It is analyzed by focusing on the conflicts that Brandon has experienced. The writer wants to show how the conflicts can lead the major character in finding the truly meaning of home.

**D. Definition of Terms**

It is difficult to discuss further without knowing the terms that will commonly be used in this study. To avoid many kinds of misinterpretation in understanding, the writer would like to explain about some words, which are widely related to the topic that is going to be discussed.
1. Home

Based on *Webster’s Third New International Dictionary of the English Language Unabridged with Seven Language Dictionary Volume II H to R*, (1) the social unit formed by a family living together in one dwelling; and (2) the family environment to which one is emotionally attached: focus of domestic affections (1981: 1082). Therefore, home has two meanings that refer to the place where everyone can live together with their family and the place where everyone loves each other.

2. Conflict

Based on *A Handbook to Literature*, a conflict is the struggle that grows out of the interplay of two opposing forces in a plot. One of the opposing forces is usually a person, or if an animal or inanimate being, is treated as though it were a person (Holman Harmon, 1986: 107). Conflict starts to arise when there are two forces against each other about something and one of them can be a person, an animal or inanimate.
CHAPTER II
THEORETICAL REVIEW

This chapter focuses on the analyzing of theories that are used in this study. It is divided into three sections. The first is to review on some related studies that contain some information, comments, or criticisms related to Michael Morris’ Slow Way Home. The second part concerns with some theories that are used in the analysis. The third part deals with the theoretical framework. In this part, the writer tries to explain how the theories are used to support the analysis.

A. Review of Related Studies

The existence of a literary work always invites comments or criticisms from some critics. The criticism can be an agreement or disagreement toward the story. There are some criticisms directed to Slow Way Home and those criticisms are needed to support the analysis of this study.

Before Slow Way Home, Michael Morris has written his first novel entitled A Place Called Wiregrass. Cindy Crosby, in her article A Wry Debut Novel, gives general description about this novel which tells a story of a 48-year-old woman named Erma Lee Jacobs. She has many problems in her life, started from her daughter who goes to prison to the abusive treatments that her husband does to her. Then, she moves with Cher, her granddaughter, to Wiregrass, Alabama. That is the place where she continues her life. Crosby says that this novel shows how love and faith can be together in broken lives. She also finds that the subthemes of
this novel are about racism and the church’s neglect of the poor and abused

After she analyzes the Michael Morris’ first novel, Cindy Crosby, then, analyzes Slow Way Home as the second novel. In her article A Tumultuous Journey: Slow Way Home offers Rich Prose and Vivid Characters, she says that this novel has some familiar themes with the first novel. Those familiar themes are about grandparents who raise their grandchildren alone and have to go away from the past. However, in his second novel, Michael Morris further offers the rich prose and vivid characterizations to draw the interest from readers.

In his second novel, Michael Morris revisits some of the themes that he portrayed so well in A Place Called Wiregrass… The book reverberates with some familiar themes from the first novel (such as grandparents raising their grandchildren and flights from the past). Although some of the scenes are less than satisfactory, Morris’s rich prose and vivid characterizations will endear this book to many readers (http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2003/december/34.64.html).

Slow Way Home is set at the South in the 1970s. Through this novel, Michael Morris wants to show the readers about the human relationships with others, especially with the family. Besides, this novel also wants to pursue the readers to think again about the truly meaning of a family when someone faces problems with his beloved people.

Informed by the racial and religious tensions of the South in the 1970s; Morris’s novel is a story about the richness and complexity of human relationships, the family most of all. Morris’s Slow Way Home asks us to reconsider what it means to be a family when, as Brandon puts it, “your grandma is also your mama,” and the land once you called your own is yours no longer. (http://imagejournal.org/imageupdate/219_110601.html)

According to Betty Smartt Carter in her article Books & Culture’s Books of the Week: Faith, Hope, and Charity in North Carolina, Slow Way Home is a
good novel which is presented for grandparents who always take care of their adult children when the children fail. Besides, this novel is also used as a criticism of the bungling foster care system. She also explains that Michael Morris is able to bring the characters into a life which is filled with a combination of humor and empathy. According to her, the good point of Michael Morris is that he knows how to convey the conversation, particularly the conversation of children (http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2003/novemberweb-only/11-17-12.0.html).

Those opinions, criticisms and comments give deeper information for the writer to analyze the story of the novel. They discuss Slow Way Home from different points of view, such as family, faith and love. Different from the others, this thesis focuses on the meaning of home for the major character, Brandon Willard, as seen through the conflicts he experiences when he has problems with family and people around him.

B. Review of Related Theories

Some theories are used in the study as the guidance in answering the problem formulation that becomes the focus of the analysis.

1. Theory of Conflict

According to Redman, conflict starts to arise when the central character has to deal with other forces. He has a responsibility to solve the conflict. The conflict is ended when the central character succeeds or fails to overcome the other forces (Redman, 1962:363), while Holman and Harmon define the conflict as “the struggle that grows out of the interplay of the two opposing forces in a
plot. It provides interest, suspense, and tension. At least one of the opposing forces is usually a person, or, if an animal or inanimate object is treated as though as it were a person” (1986:107).

Laurence Perrine’s in the book *Literature: Structure, Sound, and Sense* state, “Conflict itself is a clash of action, ideas, desires, or will between two individual or among people in the story” (1974: 44). The statement explains that the difference of action, ideas, desires or will that are shown between two people or more, can be the cause of conflict.

M. H. Abrams in his book *A Glossary of Literary Terms* says that conflict does not always occur among the individuals. Conflict can happen when a protagonist deals with the fate or when he is confronted with the circumstances and a goal that he has set himself. Conflict also appears when there are opposing desires or values in a character’s mind (1981: 137).

There are two types of conflict, which are inner conflict and external conflict. Inner conflict refers to a struggle inside the heart and mind of the protagonist (Redman, 1962: 363). This conflict does not involve any physical struggle and usually cannot even be seen in any visible form, because it happens inside the protagonist’s self and mind. Inner conflict always puts “two elements within the person” (Holman and Harmon, 1986: 107), namely confronting the character’s thought with his or her feeling.

External conflict itself refers to a struggle between the protagonist and the outside force (Redman, 1962: 363). This conflict usually involves visible struggle between the protagonist against his or her opponent. It means that the readers are
able to see the struggle of the protagonist. Holman and Harmon divide the external conflict into four types based on the protagonist’s struggle. The first type is the struggle against nature. In this conflict, the protagonist deals with natural forces, for example are natural disaster, climate, wild beast, and others. The second type is the struggle against another person, usually antagonist. The third type is the struggle against society. In this case, the protagonist may be in conflict with society’s value systems. The society where he or she lives holds a different social value with him or her and he or she believes or does something different with social value believed by the society. The forth and the last type of conflict is the struggle against destiny. This conflict is about the protagonist’s effort in dealing with the greatest force or his creator in order to build or change his or her own destiny (1986: 108).

Elgin F. Hunt in Social Science: An Introduction to the Study of Society, says that a conflict does not always come in direct form, such as frontal war, riot, fight, or any kind of open hostilities. Conflict also does not always mean hate, hatred, or distrust. Conflict can occur because of the limitation of differences of opinion, judgment, perspective, and the opposing arguments (1955: 31-32).

Atkinson, et al. in their book Introduction to Psychology state that conflict is the major source of frustration and it happens because there are two opposing motives. When two motives conflict, the satisfaction of one leads to the frustration of the other. Besides, conflict also starts to arise when a person is confronted with a motive and his internal standards (1981: 424).
In psychology, there are two types of conflicts, which are intrapersonal conflict and interpersonal conflict. Worchel and Cooper in their book *Understanding Social Psychology*, say that the intrapersonal conflict arises when someone has to make a choice between two or more alternatives. Intrapersonal conflict also happens when other people do not behave or act as an individual wants or expects them to. Besides, the intrapersonal conflict refers to a condition when someone has to handle the conflict of whether or not to help other people (1979: 460-461).

Interpersonal conflict happens between two or more persons (Worchel and Cooper, 1979: 462). According to William Wilmot and Joyce Hocker in Beebe et al.’s book *Interpersonal Communication Relating to Others*, assert that there are four elements in interpersonal conflict. Those four elements are an expressed struggle, two or more interdependent people, people who perceive incompatible goals, scarce resources, or interference from others and the last is people who are attempting to achieve specific goals (2009: 216).

2. The Relation between Psychology and Literature

Bornstein (1984: 144) in the book *Psychology and Its Allied Disciplines Humanities Volume 1* states that literature is the best at describing the human condition in dramatic form while psychology has the strength to investigate human’s character or behavior in systematic ways. It means that literature is used to depict the human condition while psychology studies human characteristics
systematically. From that statement, it can be concluded that both subject depict the human condition.

Wellek and Warren in their book *Theory of Literature*, say that the term psychology of literature has four possible meanings. The first is the psychological study of the author as a type or as an individual. The second is the study of creative process. The third is the study of psychological types and laws presented within works of literature, and the last is the effect of literature upon readers (1956: 81). They state that to learn the theory of psychology which is revealed in a work of art is that by analyzing the works.

Meanwhile, Kalish in his book *The Psychology of Human Behavior* states that literature “holds the mirror up to the man” (1973: 8). A good writer or novelist is a person who can communicate or express the feelings of their characters and make them seem more alive than the real people whose behavior attempts to describe by the psychologist. To enrich the story, a writer or a novelist can use the understanding which is provided by psychologist. Besides, the psychologist can also gain their understanding of human behavior by drawing the sensitivity of good authors.

3. Theory of Reactions to Conflict

Since a conflict often happens in one’s life, there is a certain reaction that he will give in dealing with it. The writer takes several theories of reactions to conflict to support the analysis. Those are aggressive behavior, negativism, helplessness and placating response.
a. **Aggressive Behavior**

According to Prothro and Teska in *Psychology: A Biosocial Study of Behavior*, aggressive response is possible to do in order to overcome the obstacle and to achieve the goal (1950: 176). Kalish, in his book *The Psychology of Human Behavior, Third Edition*, stated that there are three types of aggressive reactions and those reactions are the aggression toward the cause of conflict, toward another source or known as displacement, and the last is toward yourself (1973: 153).

In doing the analysis, the writer only uses the aggression toward the cause of conflict and toward another source. Atkinson, et al. in their book *Introduction to Psychology* explains that aggression toward the cause of conflict is an expression done directly by someone toward the source of the conflict or frustration. He has learned this expression as a way to solve a problem. Meanwhile, displaced aggression is done by someone when he gets angry and does not know what to attack, so that he tries to seek something to attack. In this case, he could attack an innocent person or object rather than attacking directly the source of the conflict (1981: 427).

b. **Negativism**

In *Psychology: A Biosocial Study of Behavior*, Prothro and Teska assert that Negativism is one of several reactions to conflict. Someone will show this reaction as his effort to remove himself from the stresses of a situation by making his participation in it impossibility. This reaction is done to avoid someone from an unpleasant situation (1950: 192 – 193).
c. Helplessness

Someone will learn helplessness when he faces uncomfortable and stressful situation. He, then, does not know what to do in order to avoid or escape from the conflict. In addition to that, he is unable to overcome that situation (Atkinson, et al. 1981: 428 – 429).

d. Placating Response

Beebe, et al. in their book *Interpersonal Communication Relating to Others*, states that non-confrontational style is one of ways to deal with conflict. In this style, there are placating response, computing and withdrawing but the writer only uses placating response to analyze this study. Placating response is actually done by someone because he is uncomfortable with negative emotions. In this response, he learns to do what others say and quickly agree in order to avoid conflict (1996: 312).

C. Theoretical Framework

Some theories are employed by the writer to be the basic understanding in doing the analysis of the study. First of all, the theory of conflict is used to analyze the internal conflicts and external conflicts that are found in the story. The internal conflicts here are the conflicts that Brandon Willard must face and struggle within himself, while the external conflicts are the conflicts that he has to face and struggle between he and the people around him.

Second, the theory of reactions to conflict is used to analyze the reactions of the major character toward the conflicts that he has experienced in his life.
There are several reactions which are done by Brandon to deal with his conflicts. Besides, this theory is also used to analyze the meaning of home for the major character as seen through his conflicts. The conflicts that he faces and deals lead him to find out the truly meaning of home for him.

Theory of the relation between psychology and literature is used to help the writer in analyzing this work from two point of view, psychology and literature. The theory of conflict is taken from both psychology and literature point of view, while the theory of reactions to conflict are taken from psychology. Therefore, the theory of relation between psychology and literature takes an important role in this research.
CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

This chapter is divided into three parts. In the first part, the writer describes the object of the study. The description of the novel and the information of its publication are clearly presented. In the second part, the writer explains the application of the approach used for the study. Finally, in the last part, the writer describes the methods that are taken in analyzing the novel *Slow Way Home*.

A. Object of the Study

The object of this study is Michael Morris’ second novel *Slow Way Home*. It was first published in New York, the United States of America in 2003 by HarperCollins Publishers, Inc. This novel consists of 288 pages and twenty-four chapters. The version used in this thesis was published by HarperSanFransisco, a division of HarperCollins Publishers, Inc.

*Slow Way Home* describes the journey of a boy after his mother leaves him at the bus station. The story itself is presented by a first person narrator which means the readers will read the story from his point of view.

This novel is set in the 1971 and takes place in North Carolina and Florida. The novel itself tells a story of an 8-year-old boy named Brandon Willard who lives with the drunken mother, Sophie, and her boyfriend, Darrell Foskey at the beginning of this story. One day, Darrell and Sophie decide to move to Canada without taking Brandon with them. The mother leaves him at the bus station and
says to him to wait for Nana and Poppy, his grandparents, to take him so he can live with them. This is the time where his journey began.

He lives well with his grandparents until one day, his mother comes back to take him with her. Some attempts are done by grandparents to keep Brandon at their side includes hiring a lawyer, but the custody of Brandon is won by his mother. Instead of giving Brandon back to his mother, Nana and Poppy take Brandon to Florida to start a new life with the new identity. In Florida, Brandon meets new people and is also involved in various conflicts with the people there directly or indirectly. The various conflicts that he faces in his life lead him to realize the real and truly meaning of home. For him, home is not only a building, but also a place where his people are.

B. Approach of the Study

The writer analyzes this novel by using the psychological approach. The approach is the appropriate one to answer the problem formulation in this study. Actually, literature and psychology are different from one another, but they have a close relationship which benefits one another. Fiction, drama, poetry, and essay belong to literature, while psychology learns human behavior and mental process. The differences can be seen clearly but they have the similarity in discussing human and life.

Since this study deals with the conflicts and the reactions to the conflicts that are also seen from psychology point of view, the most appropriate approach to apply is psychological approach. Mary Rohrberger and Samuel H. Woods in
Reading and Writing About Literature mention that psychological approach is a viewpoint from where readers could observe certain human recurrent pattern.

Like mythopoeic approach to literature, the psychological involves the effort to locate and demonstrate certain recurrent pattern. Unlike the mythopoeic approach, it draws on a different body of knowledge-most often on that offered by Sigmund Freud and his followers. This is not to say that all psychological criticism postdates Freud (1971: 14).

From explanation above, it is understood that psychological approach is aimed to observe literature specifically by using the theory of psychology, in which the pattern of human mind is widely studied. Here, psychological theory is utilized as the basis of the observation. The most often theory that is used is one proposed by the founding father of psychology, Sigmund Freud. Nevertheless, there is still a wide possibility for using other experts’ theories since this body of knowledge is developed through time.

C. Method of the Study

In doing the research of the study, the writer used the library research method to answer the problems that are formulated in the previous chapter. There are two kinds of data used in the study. The first and the primary data, is the novel written by Michael Morris, Slow Way Home and it was published in 2003. The secondary data are the books that were used to provide the theories, such as Perrine’s Literature: Structure, Sound and Sense, Abram’s A Glossary of Literary Terms and Teska Psychology: A Biosocial Study of Behavior. Besides books, the writer also used some criticisms that were taken from internet.
There are five steps that the writer did in analyzing the study. First, the writer read the novel *Slow Way Home* in detail to get a deeper understanding so the writer would be able to analyze the novel.

Second, the writer formulated three problems that were needed to be solved. The first problem dealt with the kinds of conflicts faced by the major character. The second problem dealt with the reactions done by the major character when he faced conflicts. The third problem focused on how the conflicts could lead the major character in finding the meaning of home.

The third step was finding the related books that provided the theories to answer the formulated problems and also the criticisms to help the writer in analyzing the study deeper.

Fourth, the required information was gathered to answer the formulated problems. The required information based on the theories and references that was able to help the writer in analyzing the novel.

The fifth step, the writer made a conclusion based on the analysis. In this step, the writer chose the important points to be written in several paragraphs. Those important points were gathered in one chapter called conclusion.
CHAPTER IV
ANALYSIS

This research aims to analyze the meaning of home in the novel *Slow Way Home*. There are three questions on the problem formulation that needed to be answered by the writer in order to find out the meaning of home. The first question is about how the internal and external conflicts in the novel are described. The second question is about the types of reactions to conflict given by Brandon Willard. The third question is about how the meaning of home can be described through the conflicts. The writer will explore the novel by elaborating the answers based on the order of the problem formulation.

A. The Description of Internal and External Conflicts in the Novel

This part aims to describe the conflicts that happen in the novel. The conflicts that are going to be analyzed are only the internal and external conflicts experienced by the major character, Brandon Willard. The reason why the writer only analyzes the conflicts experienced by Brandon Willard is because the conflicts themselves lead Brandon Willard to find out the meaning of home that is going to be discussed in the next part.

In this part, the writer explains the internal and external conflicts. The first conflict that is going to be discussed is the internal conflicts. The second conflict that will be analyzed by the writer is the external conflicts. The external conflicts show the struggle of Brandon Willard toward the other characters.
1. Internal Conflict

Conflict itself begins when a main character fights against the other forces. The character has a responsibility to end the conflict and he can be said succeed or fail in overcoming the forces (Redman, 1962: 363). According to Abrams, internal conflict happens when a character has opposing desires or values in his mind (1981: 137). It is similar with Redman that define the internal conflict is a struggle that happens inside a character’s mind and heart (1962: 363). Holman and Harmon also state that in facing the internal conflict, a character has to deal his thought with his feeling (1986: 107).

In psychology, internal conflict is known as an intrapersonal conflict. According to Worchel and Cooper, intrapersonal conflict is occurred by several causes. The first, intrapersonal conflict happens when someone has to decide from two or more alternatives. Second, someone is said having an intrapersonal conflict when another individual does not behave as he wants. Third, an intrapersonal conflict occurs when someone has to decide whether he wants to help other people or not (1979: 460-461).

Brandon Willard is at eight years old when the mother leaves him alone at the bus station but then she promises that one day she will come back to take Brandon with her. For a long while, he lives with his grandparents in a farm in Raleigh until one day his mother comes back.

“Is that cake good to you,” Nana asked while staring at the screen. Even though she couldn’t see me, I forced a smile and nodded. I ached to tell her my mama was back in town. To mount up and protect my safe haven. To run out of the door and down the driveway and hug my mama. To slap her across the face the same way the woman from Nana’s story had slapped her wayward husband (Morris, 2003: 20).
From the quotation above, it can be seen clearly that there is a struggle inside Brandon’s mind. He has to choose whether to tell Nana that his mother, Sophie, has back to town or not. He has certain reasons why Nana must know. Sophie is his only mother that he loves, although she has left him at the bus station. He wants to live with the mother again so he can share the love and affection to his mother.

Since the story begins, it has been told that the relationship between Brandon’s mother and the grandparents has deteriorated and that is the major reason why Brandon has another choice to hide the arrival of his mother. He does not want the relationship between the grandparents and his mother gets worse. If Nana knows about the arrival of his mother, she will send the mother away from home and does not allow her to see Brandon again. However, if Nana does not know about the arrival of his mother, he could see his mother even if only from a distance. Besides, he also wants to be alone and needs more time to think whether he should go with the mother if she asks or stays with the grandparents.

Those reasons above lead Brandon to decide what he should do and finally, he chooses not to tell Nana about the arrival of his mother. He thinks it will be better to keep it as a secret so nobody will know.

Poco and Brandon are friends and they meet at the market where Poppy and Nana sells their crops. Actually, Poco has the same condition with Brandon. If Brandon is left by his mother, then Poco is left by his father. In this following dialogue, Brandon tries to ask Poco whether he wants to go with his father if the father asks or not.
“Poco, do you ever hear from your daddy?”

Poco’s stomach continued to expand as he shrugged his shoulders. “Your mom call?”

I stared up at the giant wooden beams and the big lights that dangled above us from the ends of skinny cable. “She’s busy working. But I got a feeling she might be calling soon.”

“One time he came here.” Poco was sitting up, picking at a splinter in the bleacher. “Daddito got in a fight with him so then he left.”

“But when he left, did he want you to go?”

“He’s busy. Busier than your mom even. My dad…” Poco suddenly stood. “My dad travels all the time. Back to Cuba and stuff.”

“You know, the time he came here, did he want you to go with him?” (Morris, 2003: 22).

When asking Poco, Brandon actually is asking to himself. There are two options that he has to choose, whether he has to go back to his mother or stay with the grandparents. It is shown in a question that he asks over and over again to Poco. The question shows how confused he is when he has to decide what he should do. He is worried about his mother arrival to ask him to go with her.

On the one hand, deep in his heart and mind he still loves his mother and wants to live together with her. However, on the other hand, he is still confused whether it is good to go with the mother or not. The confusion that he experiences encourages him to ask such questions to Poco. He hopes he can get the definite answer from Poco to lead him on what he should do next.

The aim of the conversation above is to convince Brandon whether the decision he will make later is a good decision or not. But, until the end of the conversation, he does not get an answer as he wants. He remains in a state of wondering what he should do.
One day, the mother comes for the second time when Brandon and Nana, the grandmother, are at home. Her arrival is very sudden. When a small quarrel happens between the grandmother and the mother, Brandon has a struggle inside his mind.

My hand reached for the door handle and I fought ripping that door right off its hinge and cussing her out. I’d pretend like I was somebody mean and hateful like Aunt Loraine and yell things like, “Go on trash,” until she cried real hard and begged forgiveness. Then remembering that she had promised to come back and get me when things got better, I let go of the handle. Maybe she was keeping her word. I pictured a big house up in Canada. A two-story house like all the popular people at school have (Morris, 2003: 32).

The quotation above shows how hard Brandon tries to handle himself and internal conflict that he experiences. In the quotation above also describes that there are two options from which he has to make a choice. First, Brandon thinks this is the right time where he can curse his mother and yells at her some harsh words such as ‘go on trash’ for what she has done to him. Even, he wants to be like Aunt Loraine that really hates Sophie, the mother, so he can curse her and send her away from home. He will feel very satisfied if he can see the mother’s tear and hear the mother’s apology.

Second, if he sends the mother away from home, he may be disappointed in the next day. Therefore, he turns back into someone who is filled with love to his mother when he remembers about the promise that she makes to take him to Canada. He thinks that this time, the mother has really changed and everything is better. The mother comes to his house to show that finally, she fulfils her promise.
Finally, those considerations above lead Brandon to make a choice to let the mother remains at home. He thinks that this is his good decision so he can be with the mother again.

Since the custody of Brandon is won by the mother, he has to attend the schedule of visits made by a government woman from the child services agency together with his grandparents. They will meet the mother in some designated public places. At each visit, the mother always acts as if she is a good mother. “Stop it, I wanted to yell. Stop trying to act like you’re some Carol Brady, some perfect mother because you’re not” (Morris, 2003: 56).

There is a struggle inside Brandon’s mind that he wants to tell and also yell to everybody so they will knew that the mother is not a good mother like she acts now. However, if he does that, he will make her into a trouble with the government woman. The mother will not be allowed to see him again because the government woman knows that she is a drunken mother and as the result, he will be separated from his mother for the second time. Therefore, it would be better to stay quiet and do not say anything.

2. External Conflict

According to Perrine, the difference of action, ideas, desires or will could be the major cause of conflict (1974: 44). It is similar to Hunt that defined conflict happens because the difference of opinion, judgment, perspective, and the opposing arguments (1955: 31-32). Conflict, as Holman and Harmon stated,
occurs when there is a struggle between two opposing forces that provide interest, tension, and suspense (1986: 107).

External conflicts are the conflicts between a character and the outside forces that the struggle can be seen by the readers (Redman, 1962: 363). According Holman and Harmon, external conflicts are divided into four types that are the struggle against the nature, the struggle against another person, the struggle against society, and the struggle against destiny (1986: 108). This study only uses the second type, the struggle against another person to analyze the external conflicts experienced by Brandon.

In psychology, external conflict is known as an interpersonal conflict. According to Worchel and Cooper, there are four elements found in the interpersonal conflict (1979: 462). However, this study only uses three elements that are an expressed struggle, two or more interdependent people, and people who are attempting to achieve specific goals.

In this part, the writer will analyze the external conflicts experienced by Brandon Willard with the other characters. There are certain characters that have problems with him and vice versa and then, lead them to some visible struggles such as debating, verbal abuse and others.

By analyzing the external conflicts, the writer will be able to conclude the meaning of home for Brandon Willard that is going to be explained in the next part. The writer will use the method from the theories that have been explained above.
a. Conflict with Darrell Foskey

In the beginning of this story, it is told that Darrell Foskey is one of the mother’s boyfriends. Darrell moves into their apartment when Brandon is eight years old. The conflict between them starts when Brandon does not want to eat the steak and it culminates when he laughs at Darrell.

At the air conditioning unit, Darrell slammed the workboot against the wall. The long leg pinned me in like the hogs on my grandparents’ farm. “You ungrateful bastard. I paid for this steak and you’re eating every bit of it.”

My lip flinched and I fought to control it with the edge of my tooth. “Can we… can we just cook it a little bit and then…”

“Now right there’s what I’m talking about. You didn’t see your mama and me whining about our steak. Boy, why do you go and do things just to piss me off?” (Morris, 2003: 6-7).

There are two reasons why Brandon and Darrell involved into a big conflict. The first, Darrell wants Brandon to eat the steak because he has tried to find a good restaurant where they could have dinner together to celebrate his coming out of his job in order to find a better job in Canada. The second, the desire to be respected and appreciated is needed by Darrell. He wants Brandon to respect him as if he is Brandon’s father. He also has the manly pride to prove the honor and power as a mature man and does not want Brandon to embarrass him in front of the public.

From the very first time, Brandon prefers to eat chicken rather than steak but he does not dare to say it to Darrell. He just says there is sticky stuff coming out of the steak. He makes it as a reason why he does not want to eat the steak. Actually, when he laughs at Darrell, he does not mean to mock Darrell or to
embarrass him in the front of the public. He laughs because he pictures Darrell in some sort of cartoon when Darrell gets angry.

The difference of intention and desire leads them into a big conflict that could not be prevented. Darrell uses some harsh words and slams the workboot against the wall to release his anger to Brandon, while Brandon could not do anything to reduce Darrell’s anger.

Finally, the time to go to Canada comes. Brandon is happy that he could live better there until he heard that news from Darrell. He is not allowed to move to Canada and lived there together with his mother. In this following dialogue, it can be seen clearly that there is a conflict between Darrell and Brandon.

“Boy, your mama’s too chicken shit to tell you, so the heavy falls on me. Always the heavy around here.” Darrell sighed in such a way that if it had come from anybody else, I'd guess they were being sympathetic. “Now’s not a good time for us to be watching after you. I might even be travelling with the pipeline and all. And you got school.”

My hand slowly slid down the plastic seat cover, brushing Mama’s shoulder before I sank back into my proper place.

“Hell, we’re even having to sell the car. I’m dropping it off to the man right now. Money is tight and you’d just be…”

“I can cut back on my eating. Peanut butter and jelly don’t cost much. And I love that.” (Morris, 2003: 8).

From Darrell’s first speech, moving to Canada is a hard time to start everything from the beginning. Although working hard to get a better life is his main purpose, paying Brandon’s school fee is not his main interest. He does only have a time to focus himself on earning much money. It can be seen from Darrell’s second speech where he asserts that ‘money is tight’. He only has a little money to start a new life there. If he takes Brandon to Canada with him and
Sophie, it means he has to share his money for paying Brandon’s needs. Therefore, Darrell does not want it happens and Brandon is just a burden for him. Based on several reasons above, Darrell comes into a final choice of not taking Brandon to Canada.

Darrell has an opinion which is different from Brandon. If he does not take Brandon with him to Canada, it could help him to reduce the cost and would have a chance to earn much money. Meanwhile, Brandon thinks this is not a good idea to separate him from his mother. For him, the mother is the only person he loves the most in this world. He wants to do anything includes to eat butter and jelly that would not cost much.

The differences of opinion lead them into a conflict. Brandon wants to go to Canada, but Darrell does not want to take him. He could not say anymore about the decision that Darrell makes. This is also the time where he finally is separated from his mother.

b. Conflict with Sophie Willard

Sophie Willard is the mother of Brandon Willard. She really loves her son but in order to get a decent life, she leaves Brandon at the bus station. She prefers to go with Darrell, her boyfriend, rather than taking care of Brandon. One day, she comes back after she has gone for a long time.

Brandon, then, lives with his mother again after the grandparents are arrested for an accusation that they have carried off Brandon. This time, they live with Kane as her mother’s new boyfriend. Both of them have planned to get
married. One day, Brandon asks her mother a question that leads them into a conflict.

“Mama, if you marry Kane and we become a family. Will we go spend Christmas and stuff at Uncle Cecil and Aunt Loraine’s? And then go see Nana and Poppy…”

“Now don’t start getting on my ass about all that.” She leaned back up and ran her fingers through the side of hair that was still teased. “What, you don’t want to be with me?”


Brandon wants his family to be reunited. For him, his family is not only about the mother, but also about Uncle Cecil, Aunt Loraine, Mac, Mary Madonna, Nana and Poppy. He does not want the feud between the mother and her family continues, so that he could visit his family whenever he wants. He thinks that through the marriage of Kane and his mother, everything would be better.

For the mother, Sophie, the only family Brandon has is her. There is no use to build a good relationship between her and the family for the second time. She considers such people are no longer belonging to her family. For her, Nana, Aunt Loraine, Poppy, and Uncle Cecil are the outsiders.

The difference of will and desire between Sophie and Brandon leads them into a conflict. When Brandon asks such questions because he thinks that his family would be reunited, Sophie gets angry. She thinks Brandon does not love her and does not want to be with her. The conflict ends when Sophie still refuses to see her family.

When Christmas comes, Brandon wants to send a Christmas card to his grandparents. Since he does not know the address of the prison where they are arrested, he asks his mother. Once again, this question leads them into a conflict.
Addressing the envelope was the hard part and in all the excitement of tree decorating I let my guard down. “What prison is Poppy and Nana in?”

…

“Why, Brandon?”

Slipping down lower in the seat, my heart began to rev-up. “I just thought I … uhh … we … could you know, send them a card.”

The sound of the ornament slamming into the wall caused me to sink lower. Pieces of red glass rested on the floor like a shattered egg. “Nothing’s ever good enough for you. I bust my ass trying to get to the store and make this a special Christmas and you don’t appreciate it.”

“Mama, I do.”

“No, you don’t neither. All you want to do is sit there and think how much better life would be without me. Stuck off God knows where in some dumpy trailer. They probably wouldn’t even had room for a Christmas tree.” She paced circles around the tree, snatching off icicles and ornaments. “Just forget the whole damn thing.” (Morris, 2003: 196).

At the Christmas time, Brandon wants to share his happiness and joy to his grandparents that are arrested in a jail. It is not a big mistake to send them a Christmas card because they are Brandon’s real grandparents. Once again for Brandon, his family is not only about the mother but also about the grandparents. Through a Christmas card, he wants his grandparents to know that he is fine and lives better. He wants to celebrate the Christmas not only with his mother but also with his grandparents, although just through a Christmas card.

When listening to Brandon’s words, Sophie gets angry. It can be seen from her reaction. She slams one of Christmas ornaments into the wall that makes Brandon afraid. She thinks Brandon does not love her. What she wants is Brandon appreciates what she has done. She has done everything to make this Christmas becomes an unforgettable moment only for Brandon. She hopes Brandon could forget his grandparents and they could celebrate the Christmas together.
Those differences of opinion and will lead them into a visible struggle called external conflict. Each of them keeps their wishes. Finally, Sophie ends the conflict by not telling Brandon the address of the jail and saying to Brandon to forget this problem.

One day, Brandon finds a letter from Nairobi informing a message that Brandon should meet the grandparents. This letter has been hidden by his mother to stop Brandon seeing Nana and Poppy. The truth makes him angry and leads to a bigger conflict with his mother.

The aluminum bleacher vibrated when I stomped my foot. “I told you I wanted to see them. I told you.”
“What the hell?”
“You know what. I found that letter from Nairobi. They wanted to see me but you stopped it. I hate you!”
Tears were on my checks, natural enemies to Mama just like water was for the witch on *The Wizard of Oz*. She began to sink and bend forward to the point of breaking.
Her words were as soft as mine had been loud. “Hate me, I deserve it.”
I ran up and down the bleachers, shouting and screaming. Nothing broke her far away stare. She just sat there with her hands folded in her lap staring at the gap between the bleacher seats (Morris, 2003: 207).

According to Brandon, it is a big mistake to hide such an important letter from him. The mother should realize that he has a very great desire to see the grandparents and he deserves to it. He wants to know the life of his grandparents that are in jail, whether they are fine or having some problems. However, instead of giving the letter and allowing Brandon to see Nana and Poppy, the mother hides it. When finally he knows the truth, he gets angry at his mother.

Meanwhile, the reason why the mother hides the letter from Brandon is just because she does not want to be separated from him anymore. She is afraid if
she gives the letter to Brandon; he would go away and choose to live with the grandparents. Another reason is that she wants to build a new life with Brandon without thinking about other people. She does not need her parents to disrupt her new life with Brandon.

The truth and the difference of will and desire lead them into a big conflict that provides suspense and tension. Brandon really gets angry to his mother for what she has done and the mother keeps blaming on herself.

c. Conflict with Pete

When the grandparents are arrested and sent to a jail, Brandon lives in the child protection for a while. There is a boy named Pete who is not too friendly to Brandon. One day, Sister Delores comes to see Brandon but she remains outside because she does not want others to disrupt her business with Brandon. Sister Delores is an African-American woman. Unfortunately, Pete sees her visit and starts to mock Brandon when she has gone.

“I ain’t telling you again fatso. Shut up!”

“We saw you hugging on her. Crying like a little baby. I was betting that you would go to nursing on her nay minute.” He poked out his lips and made a sucking sound that made the twins break into laughter. The twins leaned lower on the cedar branches until the limbs sagged closer to the ground. Pete began rubbing his eyes and sucking air all at the same time. “Brandon’s a nigger lover,” he began singing.

As if a dam of boiling water had been set free, I began to feel my chest rise with each word he sang. I gripped the folded creases in the bag until the paper ripped. “Shut up!” (Morris, 2003: 176).

African-American people or usually called as black people are in the lower position than white people. The blacks are often not allowed to make a friendship or any relationship with the whites. For the whites, the blacks are just a slave who
has to serve them. Those are the main reasons why Pete mocks Brandon and calls him as a nigger lover.

Pete does not like the relationship between Brandon and Sister Delores, an African-American woman. His own perspective tells that blacks are bad and whites are good. He does not respect the blacks like Brandon does. That is why he keeps mocking on Brandon and then, involving into a big conflict with Brandon.

Meanwhile, Brandon’s perspective tells that blacks and whites are equal in the eyes of God. He does not care about the position between black and white. Brandon, even, has considered Sister Delores like his family, so he gets angry when Pete says those nasty words.

There is a visible struggle seen from the conflict that happens between Pete and Brandon. Brandon gets angry and when he could not restrain his anger, he slams into Pete’s rib. They are involved in a big fight that could not be prevented.

d. Conflict with Mary Madonna

After the mother leaves to Canada, Brandon then lives with his grandparents in Raleigh in a farm. Here, he also lives together with Uncle Cecil, Aunt Loraine, Mac and Mary Madonna. One day, all family members celebrate the birthday of Brandon and Uncle Cecil and Mary Madonna’s win at Miss Sunbright beauty contest. When Mary, Mac and Brandon are in the wooden cart, Mary tells them that her mother was a queen. Brandon also tells that his mother was a majorette but Mary does not agree with him. The conversation, finally, leads them into a big conflict.
Mary Madonna had her hand on the side of her hips. “She must’ve been dressed up for Halloween. Cause your mama’s never been nothing but trouble.”

...“Well it’s the truth. Nobody would pick something like her to be a majorette. All she used to do in school was act trashy. Smoking cigarettes and chasing boys.”

...I wanted the engine to drown her words in the roar. “Shut up!” (Morris, 2003: 28-29).

Because of Mary’s words saying that her mother was a queen, Brandon also wants to say that his mother was a majorette by asserting that Nana has a picture of her. He wants to prove that the mother is accomplished when she was young, but Mary does not agree with him. According to Mary, it is impossible for a woman, who always be a trash for the family and people around her, could get such an award. The mother is a woman who always makes trouble. Since she was young, she had been known as a girl that had bad manner such as smoking cigarettes and chasing boys.

For Brandon, the mother is always a good woman although she has left him alone at the bus station. She is the only mother he has, who has brought him into the world. It is impossible for him to know that the mother could act like a trash and as a trouble for people around her. Mary keeps insulting his mother and as the result, he gets angry. He does not like the way Mary insults his mother.

Finally, Mary and Brandon are involved into a big conflict that can be seen from the visible struggle done by Brandon. He tries to turn the wooden cart they are traveling so that she is hurt. It is seen clearly that he is very angry with Mary Madonna.
B. Brandon’s Attitude toward the Conflicts

The aim of this part is to analyze Brandon’s attitude toward the conflicts. Several types of reactions to conflict are discussed here. Those reactions are shown by Brandon Willard when he has to confront several conflicts in his life. The writer uses several theories of reactions to conflicts taken from psychology. The theories are negativism, learned helplessness, placating response and aggressive behavior.

1. Negativism

Negativism is the reaction to the conflict done by someone when he knows that his involvement could create a conflict. Therefore, he tries to remove himself and does not want to get involved in an unpleasant situation. He does negativism because he wants to avoid from such a situation (Prothro and Teska, 1950: 192 – 193).

Brandon Willard is left by his mother at the bus station but she promises to return someday so that they will be together. He, then, lives with the grandparents in a farm in Raleigh. One day, when his mother finally returns, he experiences an internal conflict.

“Is that cake good to you,” Nana asked while staring at the screen. Even though she couldn’t see me, I forced a smile and nodded. I ached to tell her my mama was back in town. To mount up and protect my safe haven. To run out of the door and down the driveway and hug my mama. To slap her across the face the same way the woman from Nana’s story had slapped her wayward husband.

But I did nothing but sit there in the air-conditioned home and feel the nervous past coil around my chest. A feeling that I thought had been long cut away (Morris, 2003: 20).
The internal conflict that he has is to tell Nana that the mother has returned to the town or remain silent so that Nana does not know anything about the arrival of his mother. Since the story begins, it has been told that the relationship between Nana and the mother has deteriorated and if he keeps telling Nana about the arrival of the mother, he may not be able to see his mother again. Nana probably would not allow the mother to see him. Another choice he would take is to remain silent because he does not want the relationship between the mother and Nana gets worse. Having a chance to see his mother even if only from a distance is also another reason why he remains silent. He also needs more time to think in order to find the right answer of a question whether he should go with the mother or stay with the grandparents.

Since negativism is a response when someone does not want to involve himself in a difficult situation that could lead a conflict, then Brandon chooses to remain silent because he does not want to involve himself in a difficult situation if he should tell Nana about his mother’s arrival. He knows once he tells Nana, he would create a conflict for all three of them. The relationship between the mother and Nana will get worse and it will be increasingly difficult to meet his mother. He, then, learns that remaining silent is a good way so as not to create a conflict.

Brandon, once again, experiences inner conflict when the mother comes again for the second time. This time he has to choose whether to yell some harsh words at her and send her away from home or let her stays. In this following quotation, Brandon shows his reaction to the inner conflict he experiences.

Then remembering that she had promised to come back and get me when things got better, I let go of the handle. Maybe she was keeping her word. I
pictured a big house up in Canada. A two-story house like all the popular people at school have (Morris, 2003: 32).

From the above quotation, it is shown that he prefers to do nothing and let the mother stays as his way to deal with the inner conflict he experiences. There are two reasons why he shows this reaction. First, he thinks that the mother has kept her promise to take him to Canada and live together in a two-story house. Second, he does not want to create a bigger conflict for both of them by yelling some harsh words at her and sending her away from home. Therefore, the only thing that could be done by Brandon is to withdraw himself from an unpleasant situation that may occur if he chooses to be rude to his mother.

This type of reactions to conflict is also shown when Brandon has to deal with the inner conflict that occurs because the mother is pretending as if she is a good mother for Brandon to the government woman. In this following quotation, it can be seen the difference in Brandon’s attitude with what he is thinking.

When Mama wrapped her arms around my shoulders, the sugared-mint scent of Jack Daniels and Listerine drifted past. She sat on her fingertips and tried to smile real big. “Hey handsome,” she said with a wink. Black makeup clumped together in little balls and hung around the edge of her eyes. “You still doing good in school and everything?”

Stop it, I wanted to yell. Stop trying to act like you’re some Carol Brady, some perfect mother because you’re not. “Yes ma’am. I got a B on my math test.” (Morris, 2003: 55 - 56).

There are several reasons why Brandon wants to yell at his mother. First, he knows that before coming to see him, the mother has been drinking. It is proven from the sugared-mint scent of Jack Daniels that is familiar for Brandon. Second, he does not like the way of his mother pretends as if she is a good mother. If he yells and tells the real condition of his mother to all people who is there, he
will create a bigger conflict and a new problem for him, the mother and the government woman.

The first possibility that may occur is if he tells everything, the mother could be angry with him. The mother will also feel ashamed of the government woman. His act, of course, will make the situation worse. The second possibility that could be happened is that the government woman will not allow the mother to see Brandon anymore if she knows the truth. Therefore, Brandon decides not to yell at her since he does not want to make a new problem especially for his mother. He tries to pull himself from the uncomfortable situation that may occur.

2. Helplessness

Helplessness is a response done by someone when he is trapped in an unpleasant and stressful situation and he does not know what to do to avoid or escape from the conflict. This reaction also shows how someone does not be able to overcome a difficult situation (Atkinson, et al. 1981: 428 - 429).

Brandon, then, experiences the external conflict with Darrell. The conflict happens because of two things. First, Brandon does not want to eat steak and second, Darrell feels that Brandon laughs at him and tries to ‘piss him off’. In this following dialogue, Brandon shows his reaction to the external conflict he has.

My lip flinched and I fought to control it with the edge of my tooth. “Can we … can we just cook it a little bit and then…”

“Now right there’s what I’m talking about. You didn’t see your mama and me whining about our steak. Boy, why do you go and do things just to piss me off?”

I wanted to ask for forgiveness like Mama had done. I wanted to say the words that would make him remove his leg and let me go free. But when I opened my mouth, it was dry and the tongue heavy (Morris, 2003: 7).
Darrell wants Brandon to appreciate his effort in finding a good restaurant where they could eat steak together with Sophie, the mother. To be respected as if he is Brandon’s father is also needed and the important thing that Brandon should know that Darrell has a manly pride to prove the honor and power as a mature man where he does want Brandon to embarrass him in public. Those desires that could not be fulfilled by Brandon then lead them into a big conflict.

Brandon learns about helplessness because he is trapped in a new situation in which he is unable to overcome. At first he thinks that he is able to overcome or solve the conflict by persuading Darrell to cook again the steak, but the persuasion fails. It can be seen clearly from the above quotation that he could not do anything to solve the problem. The situation is getting more difficult and he does not know what to do. In the last speech, it is shown that Brandon actually wants to ask for forgiveness of what he has done but he cannot. In addition, he does not have a solution so that he can solve that difficult situation.

Showing helplessness is also seen in a conflict between the mother and Brandon. The conflict occurs when Brandon asks about the address of the jail where his grandparents are kept. He wants to share the happiness and the joy of Christmas to the grandparents. By sending a Christmas card, he hopes that the grandparents know that he is fine and lives better.

For Sophie, Brandon has lived better now and there is no point worrying about the grandparents. She wants Brandon to appreciate her for all she has done to create a beautiful Christmas. Sophie, then, feels that Brandon is unhappy living
with her and she begins to cry. Brandon’s reaction towards the conflict is seen in this following dialogue.

I pulled at her sleeve but she jerked away.

“No matter how hard I try nothing is ever good enough for you. Working my ass off to please you but all you want is to be with them. You hate my guts. No matter what I do that’ll never change. I’m just not going to put up with this shit.”

Trying to wrap my arms around her back, I yelled the words as loud as I could. “Mama, I love you. I do. Really.”

“No you don’t. Don’t nobody love me. You’re just like the rest. I’m better off to just leave this place and never come back.” (Morris, 2003: 196).

For several times, Brandon has to be confronted with a new situation where he himself is unable to solve the problem. In this time of conflict, he shows helplessness as the reaction that he shows toward this conflict. At first, he thinks that by saying ‘I love you’ he could fix the problem and overcome the conflict. However, in the last speech, it can be seen that Brandon is unable to overcome the conflict that he has created. He does not know what to do because the mother is still upset and crying.

3. Placating Response

Someone will give the placating response when he feels uncomfortable with the negative emotions. He tends to obey and agree with what others say in order to avoid the conflict (Beebe, et al. 1996: 312).

In experiencing several conflicts, Brandon does placating response as a way to deal with the conflicts. This response is shown in a conflict between Brandon and Darrell that occurs because Brandon does not want to eat the steak and Darrell thinks that Brandon is trying to ‘piss him off’.
Darrell has some desire that he wants Brandon to fulfill. He has the manly pride that Brandon has to respect and by trying to ‘piss him off’ Brandon has made him embarrassed in public. On the one hand, Brandon does not mean to do that. He laughs because he pictures Darrell in some sort of cartoon when Darrell gets angry. Brandon, then, gives the placating response as his way to deal with the conflict as seen in this following quotation.

By this time I had been trained to follow Darrell’s golden rule: not to speak unless spoken to. He said that’s how I showed respect (Morris, 2003: 7).

The above quotation shows Brandon’s reaction toward the conflict between him and Darrell. Since he does not want to be engaged in a bigger conflict with Darrell anymore, he chooses to follow Darrell’s rule and does what Darrell says. He even agrees that he has to remain silent if there is no important thing to speak. Following what Darrell says shows that Brandon does not want to make him angry anymore.

Placating response is also shown in an external conflict happens between Brandon and Darrell. These two persons have different opinion but it does not involve any physical attack. The conflict happens since Darrell does want to take Brandon to Canada. Darrell only has a little money to start a new life there and if he takes Brandon, it means he has to share his money for paying Brandon’s needs. By not taking Brandon to Canada, he could reduce the cost and have more chance to earn much money.

Meanwhile, Sophie is the only mother that Brandon has and he wants to go with her wherever she goes. He does not want to be separated from his mother.
Therefore, he wants to do anything such as eating butter and jelly. He thinks those foods will not cost too much. He, then, reacts toward the conflicts as seen from this following dialogue.

“Hell, we’re even having to sell the car. I’m dropping it off to the man right now. Money is tight and you’d just be …”

“I can cut back on my eating. Peanut butter and jelly don’t cost much. And I love that” (Morris, 2003: 8).

His reaction is seen by giving a statement that he will be fine if he should eat peanut butter and jelly. He thinks that it is a better way to solve the problem so that they will take him to Canada but it fails. Darrell remains on his opinion that he does not want to take Brandon to Canada. Realizing that he cannot change Darrell’s opinion, he chooses not to continue his words. He does not want to create a bigger conflict with Darrell like before. Therefore, he withdraws himself from an unpleasant situation that may occur by accepting Darrell’s decision.

Brandon also experiences an external conflict with his mother, Sophie. The conflict happens when Brandon asks about how to spend Christmas with Uncle Cecil, Aunt Loraine, Nana and Poppy if she is married to Kane. The mother does not like his question and finally, she gets angry.

Brandon thinks that the marriage of his mother with Kane could end the problems and conflicts that have happened for so long between the mother and her family so that he could visit his family whenever he wants. However, on the other hand, Sophie does not want to fix the relationship. For her, there is no point to build a good relationship between her and the family for the second time. The
only family she has is Brandon and Kane. Brandon, then, gives the placating response toward the conflict which is shown in this following dialogue.

“Now don’t start getting on my ass about all that.” She leaned back up and ran her fingers through the side of hair that was still teased. “What, you don’t want to be with me?”

“No. I just want to...”

“Brandon, cut me some slack. Why can’t you just be happy with you and me like it used to be? Huh? Remember how we used to watch cartoons?” (Morris, 2003: 188).

Sophie, the mother, asks him to forget about his question. She wants Brandon to enjoy the quality time with her like used to be. He, then, does what his mother says. He does not want this conflict to continue and to be complicated. That is why he follows his mother words after he is unable to find any explanations to explain his intention.

4. **Aggressive Behavior**

Someone does aggressive behavior to overcome and to achieve the goal (Prothro and Teska, 1950: 176). Aggressive behavior consists of three types but the writer only uses the direct aggression and the displaced aggression. The direct aggression is done toward the source of the conflict in order to solve a problem. The displaced aggression is done by looking for something to attack rather than attacking directly the source of the conflict. He could attack an innocent person or object (Atkinson et al., 1981: 427).

a. **Direct Aggression**

Brandon experiences a conflict with Pete, a boy who lives in the child protection. The conflict occurs because Pete mocks Brandon that he is a nigger
lover. According to Pete’s perspective, an African-American is a bad person to be a friend of the whites. The position of the whites is higher than the black. Meanwhile, black and white are equal for Brandon. The conflict involves a visible struggle done by Brandon.

My yell made him turn and for a split second I saw a speck of fear in the brown eyes. He hadn’t yet made it completely around when I slammed into his rib cage. The sucking sound of a nursing baby was changed into gasping for air. His belly was as soft as a trampoline and for good measure I slammed my elbow into it twice before he hit the sidewalk. Another gasp let lose from his mouth as his head landed on the cement. My fist hit his nose until blood oozed like the ketchup he poured on corn dogs (Morris, 2003: 177).

Brandon wants to overcome the conflict by attacking Pete directly as the source of the conflict. They are both involved into a big conflict where Brandon does a visible struggle against Pete. He hits Pete several times in several parts of Pete’s body. The direct aggression is his way to deal with his conflict and also the way of how he releases his anger toward the source of the conflict.

Direct aggression is also seen in a conflict between Brandon and Mary Madonna. The conflict occurs because she says that Brandon’s mother is nothing but a trash for the people around her. Brandon does not agree with what Mary says because for him, the mother is someone who has brought him into the world although she has left him alone at the bus station. He loves his mother. However, Mary Madonna keeps saying bad about his mother and her words make Brandon gets angry. They are, then, involved into a conflict where Brandon gives the direct aggression as his reaction toward the conflict. It can be seen in this following quotation.
When Mac turned around to stare Mary Madonna into submission I spotted his blue sneaker on the accelerator. Before he could push me away, my foot reached over and slammed Mac’s shoe. The gas pedal sunk towards the metal floorboard. Our heads jerked and the go-cart lurched forward. All the while, the make believe float disconnected from its hook (Morris, 2003: 29).

He wants to overcome the conflict by hurting Mary Madonna as the source of the conflict. The way to attack Mary Madonna is by reversing the wooden cart they are travelling. It can also be seen from the above quotation that the anger enables him to do things that harm his own cousin. Direct aggression is done by Brandon as his way to deal with his conflict and vent his anger.

b. Displaced Aggression

Displaced aggression is shown in a conflict between Brandon and his mother. The conflict occurs because the mother hides the letter from Nairobi which tells the mother to allow Brandon to see his grandparents. The mother keeps hiding the letter because she does not want to be separated from Brandon anymore. If she gives the letters to Brandon, she is afraid that Brandon would choose to live with the grandparents. On the other hand, Brandon has a great desire to meet his grandparents. He wants to know the life of the grandparents that are in jail. They are both involved into a conflict where Brandon gives the displaced aggression as his reaction toward the conflict. It can be seen in this following dialogue.

Her words were soft as mine had been loud. “Hate me, I deserve it.”

I ran up and down the bleachers, shouting and screaming. Nothing broke her far away stare. She just sat there staring into the darkness. Coldness settled in the aluminum before either of us spoke (Morris, 2003: 207).
Since he could not scold and hurt his mother as the source of the conflict and he does not know what to attack, he chooses to shout and scream toward the objects around the place where he is. The displaced aggression is his way to vent his anger so he could deal with the conflict.

C. The Meaning of Home for Brandon Willard

The aim of this part is to analyze the meaning of home for the major character, Brandon Willard. The meaning of home itself is seen from the reactions given by Brandon toward the conflicts that happen in his life. Most of his reactions show that he does not want to create and involve in bigger conflicts since the conflicts could make his relationships with others get worse.

1. Togetherness

Most of the internal conflicts that he experiences occur because of the mother’s arrival. The very first conflict occurs when the mother finally comes back to the town but only Brandon notices it. He, then, experiences a dilemma whether he should tell Nana, the grandmother, that the mother has come or not. If he tells Nana, there are some possibilities that could happen such as the relationship between the mother and the grandparents will get worse, then Brandon and his mother will not be able to see each other. However, if he does not tell Nana, he could see his mother even if only from a distance. Therefore, he chooses not to tell Nana and remains silent. This reaction belongs to negativism since he does not want to create bigger problem for him, the mother and the
grandparents. He knows once he involves himself by telling Nana, a conflict among the three of them could happen.

The second conflict that he experiences is still about the mother arrival. This time, he has to choose whether he should go with the mother if she asks or stay with the grandparents. The dilemma can be seen from the dialogue between him and Poco, his friend. Since the life of Poco is almost similar to his, he asks whether Poco wants to go with the father or not if the father asks. The question that he asks tends to convince him.

The third internal conflict occurs when the mother comes for the second time. Brandon has a struggle inside his mind whether he should yell at the mother some harsh words and send her away from home or let her stay to know that she finally fulfils her promise. Brandon ends the internal conflict by giving negativism as his reaction toward that conflict. He chooses to do nothing and let the mother stay since he does not want to involve himself in an unpleasant situation.

He experiences the fourth internal conflict when he meets the mother at a designated public place. In that place there is a government woman from the child services agency. Brandon really knows that the mother is not a good mother like she acts now and he wants to yell what is on his mind about his mother but he does not do it. If he does that, the government woman would not allow the mother to see Brandon anymore and for the umpteenth time, he has to live separately from his mother. Therefore, he reacts in a negativism way since he does not want to engage in an unpleasant situation that could happen.
Besides internal conflicts, Brandon also experiences external conflict with Darrell Foskey. The very first conflict with Darrell Foskey starts to arise when Brandon does not want to eat steak and says that there is icky stuff coming out of it. Darrell also thinks that Brandon tries to embarrass him in public. Showing helplessness and placating response are the two reactions that Brandon shows toward this conflict. Those reactions are given because he does not want to create an unpleasant situation between him and Darrell, also he does not want make his mother angry and upset because of his behavior. The second conflict with Darrell happens because he does not want to take Brandon to Canada. For him, Brandon is just a burden. Meanwhile, Brandon still wants to go to Canada with Darrell and the mother. He does not want to be separated from his mother. Until the conflict ends, Darrell keeps his words and Brandon does placating response by accepting Darrell’s decision.

Another external conflict happens between him and Mary Madonna, his cousin. Mary Madonna has been told by her mother that the mother of Brandon is not a good woman since she was young. She insults his mother as she calls the mother as a trash for the family. Brandon gets angry because he loves his mother even though she is a bad woman for others. He, then, does direct aggression as his reaction to the conflict that happens.

Based on the analysis of the internal and external conflicts that Brandon experiences, the analysis shows that living togetherness with his mother is one of the meanings of home for him. It can be seen from his reactions toward the internal conflicts. He thinks carefully how to react so he does not threaten the
existence of his mother as it is seen in his internal conflict when meeting his mother and the government woman is there.

Keeping togetherness between him and his mother is one of his great desires. When he is involved in a big conflict with Mary Madonna, it is clearly seen that he really loves his mother. Although the mother is not a good woman for others, the mother is one and only person who has brought him into the world. Therefore, he does the best he can so he could live in togetherness with the mother since living separately from his mother is not that he wants. He does not want to be separated from the mother. He also pictures that the mother, perhaps, has build a two-story house so they can live together and no longer separated.

The conflicts that he experiences with his mother are mostly about the grandparents. Brandon really wants to see his grandparents and also wants to know whether they are fine while they are kept in a jail or not. Meanwhile, the mother always feels that Brandon is unhappy living with her though she has done her best to make Brandon satisfied and happy. Whenever Brandon asks about the grandparents, the mother always gets angry. She also hides an important letter from Nairobi informing that the mother has to allow Brandon to see the grandparents. In dealing with the conflicts, Brandon learns to be helpless, gives the placating response and does the displaced aggression as his reactions toward these external conflicts.

The external conflicts that occur between the mother and Brandon show clearly that he wants to live in togetherness not only with the mother but also with the grandparents. The grandparents have cared for Brandon since the mother
leaves him for a long time. They take care of Brandon and fill him with love and affection.

The conflicts and the reactions lead Brandon in finding the truly meaning of home. For Brandon, home is not only a place where he finally could live together with the mother but a place where he could live also with the grandparents. In the following dialogue, the meaning of home is asserted clearly.

Each word he uttered became softer until finally the Santa Claus disguise had peeled away. “What do you picture when you think of living with your mother?”

“A two-story house.” I looked up and held the judge's stare. “A place where Nana and Poppy can live with us too.” (Morris, 2003: 51).

The above dialogue happens in a court. A judge asks Brandon to describe a house that he wants to live with the mother. The answer that he gives refers to the meaning of home. The mother and the grandparents are the people that he loves the most in this world. Since the mother goes for a long time, the grandparents take the mother’s role in caring for Brandon and fulfilling him with love and affection. Meanwhile, the mother has a great significance for Brandon. She is the only one who has brought him into the world. Besides, he used to spend quality times with her before she finally decides to leave him. Living separately from the grandparents or the mother is not that he really wants. He hopes that someday, the family could be reunited so that they can live together in a same house.

2. Family

The external conflict also happens between Pete and Brandon. Pete is one of the children who live in the child protection where Brandon also lives there for
a while. Sister Delores is Brandon’s friend and she is also an African-American woman. When she comes, Pete sees her coming and starts to mock Brandon. He says that Brandon is a nigger’s lover. He does not respect the blacks as Brandon does. Meanwhile, Brandon has considered Sister Delores as his family. Therefore, family is the second meaning of home for Brandon. It can be seen clearly from this quotation.

Jesus didn’t have to appear for me to fell God’s love that day. It was found in each of the people who formed a wall around me. While studying their various shapes, colors, and imperfections, I realized I was part of them. A family joined together by ties stronger than blood and land. Joint heirs of past and future combined (Morris, 2003: 269).

From the quotation above, home is described as a place for people where they can be united as a family. In the last speech it is stated that ‘a family joined together by ties stronger than blood and land’. According to Brandon, the member of the family is not only about the people who are tied by blood but also the people who really care about him and love him very much. For all this time, he only finds the true love from his mother and his grandparents, but now, he knows that another true love can be found from other people even Jesus Christ.

Brandon finds out that no man is perfect. God has a purpose in creating humans with differences. He, then, realizes that human with various shapes, colors, and imperfections should be united as a family. Brandon sees those differences as the bond that is created by God to unite the people to be brothers and sisters that would live as a family to share love and affection to each other.

The quotation above also shows clearly Brandon’s feeling that he has become part of them although most of them are not his family who is tied by
blood. Together with them, he could join and feel the past and the future for the same time.

Home, for Brandon, is not only about the building but also about the togetherness among him, the mother and the grandparents and they could live under the same roof and in the same house. Home is also the place where the people who are not tied by blood can be united as a family, as brothers and sisters to share love and affection to other members. It can be seen clearly from this quotation “But just remember a home is wherever your people are. Boards rot and concrete but it’s the people inside that really matter “(Morris, 2003: 264). Home is a place where Brandon can feel the love and affection given by the mother, the grandparents, and his beloved people. It is also a place where he learns about the togetherness between him, the mother and the grandparents and about family that he could find from his people who are not tied by blood, people who have showered him with love.
CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

In the last part of this thesis, the writer draws the conclusion of what is discussed in Chapter IV of this study. After analyzing the novel *Slow Way Home*, the writer can conclude the answers to the problem formulation stated in chapter one. The first problem formulation is about answering the description of the internal and external conflicts experienced by Brandon. The second problem formulation is about answering the Brandon’s Reaction toward the conflicts. The third problem formulation is about answering the meaning of home for Brandon as seen through the conflicts.

The analysis starts with the description of the internal and external conflicts experienced by Brandon Willard. Most of his internal conflicts occur because of his mother. He is in a dilemma whether he should go with the mother if she asks or stay with the parents. On one hand, he really loves his mother although she has left him alone at the bus station, while on the other hand, he also loves the grandparents because they have filled him with love and affection since the mother leaves for a long time.

He also faces some considerations on how he should behave to his mother when the mother finally comes back home and wants to take him so they can live together. He wants to be rude to his mother such as yelling some harsh words to her, telling her that she is not a good mother, and making her cry but he cannot do
it. He really loves his mother and hopes that she finally can keep her promise to take him to Canada and then live together in a two-story house.

Brandon Willard also experiences the external conflicts with Sophie Willard as his mother, Darrell Foskey, Mary Madonna, his cousin, and Pete, his friend in the child protection when he lives there for a while. Some of his external conflicts show the visible struggle. The conflict with Darrell starts to arise when Brandon does not want to eat steak and laughs at him in public. Another conflict occurs when Darrell does not want to take Brandon to Canada. Darrell has very little money to start a new life there and if he takes Brandon, it means he could not focus himself on earning much money since he has to pay for Brandon’s needs.

The external conflicts that occur between Brandon and his mother are mostly because of the debate about his grandparents. Since the mother leaves him, Brandon lives with the grandparents. They take care of Brandon and love him very much. That is why he wants to live also with them under the same roof. His desire makes his mother angry because she thinks that he is unhappy living with her. Another external conflict occurs between Pete and Brandon. It is because Pete sees Brandon is talking to Sister Delores, the African-American woman. For Pete, the position of the blacks is lower that the whites. Therefore, it is inappropriate for the whites be friends with the blacks. Meanwhile for Brandon, blacks and whites are equal.

The last external conflict happens between Brandon and Mary Madonna, his cousin. It occurs because Mary Madonna says the bad things about his mother.
Although the mother has left him, Brandon still loves her. Therefore, he gets angry when hearing those bad things from Mary Madonna.

On the second problem formulation, the writer concludes that in dealing with the internal and external conflicts, Brandon shows several different reactions. Those reactions are negativism, learned helplessness, placating response and aggressive behavior. The first reaction he shows is negativism. He does this reaction since he does not want to involve himself in an unpleasant situation. This reaction can be seen when he chooses to remain silent and does nothing toward the internal conflicts. He knows that once he involves himself, a bigger conflict could happen.

The second reaction he shows is helplessness. This reaction is done since Brandon does not know what to do to avoid the conflict. He is also unable to overcome that difficult situation. He does this reaction when facing the external conflicts with Darrell Foskey and Sophie Willard, his mother. He tries to find out the solution to make the situation gets better but the solution fails and as the result, the situation is still not better. He, then, does not know what he should do next.

The third reaction is the placating response that is shown when he faces the external conflicts with Darrell Foskey and Sophie Willard, the mother. Someone does the placating response by following what others say to avoid the conflicts and that is what Brandon does since he does not want to engage in a bigger conflict. He follows Darrell’s rule that he has to remain silent if there is no
important thing to speak. He also follows what his mother says about forgetting to send a Christmas card for the grandparents.

The fourth reaction is aggressive behavior that is divided into two types, direct and displaced aggression. Brandon does direct aggression when he faces the external conflicts with Mary Madonna and Pete. The conflict between him and Pete occurs when Pete sees Brandon is talking to Sister Delores, an African-American woman and then he says that Brandon is a nigger’s lover. Brandon gets angry and does the physical attack against Pete. Meanwhile, the conflict between him and Mary Madonna occurs when she says something bad about his mother. Brandon does not like her way in insulting his mother and finally, he reverses the wooden cart they are travelling.

Displaced aggression is done when Brandon gets angry because the mother hides a letter from Nairobi. The letter informs that the mother should allow Brandon to see his grandparents. Since he really loves his mother, he could not attack her physically but he chooses to shout and scream toward the objects around the place where he is.

Finally, the writer is able to draw the conclusion for the third problem formulation. The conflicts that Brandon experiences with the people around him and his reactions to conflict are the important things that could lead Brandon in finding the meaning of home. Living in togetherness with the mother and the grandparents and having a new concept about family are the meaning of home for Brandon Willard.
BIBLIOGRAPHY


APPENDIX

Summary of Michael Morris’ *Slow Way Home*

*Slow Way Home* is a novel written by Michael Morris in 2003. This novel tells a story of a child who is left by his mother at the bus station when the mother wants to get a better life in Canada with her boyfriend, Darrell Foskey. At first, Brandon lives with the mother and her boyfriend where he often involves into several conflicts with the boyfriend. The big conflict between him and Darrell Foskey starts to arise when Brandon refuses to eat the steak that has been ordered. The culmination of the conflict is when Darrell thinks that Brandon tries to embarrass him in public by laughing at him. Darrell, then, gets angry and does the physical attack against Brandon. He also tells Brandon to follow his rule that Brandon is not allowed to speak unless there is something important.

On the next day, when Brandon seems to be happy because he can go to Canada to get a better life, Darrell says that he cannot go with them. He is not allowed to go because Darrell does not want to share his money to pay Brandon’s needs. Darrell also asserts that he has to sell a car to get enough money to start a new life in Canada. Therefore, it is impossible to take Brandon since he is just a burden for Darrell. That is the time where he is separated from his mother. He, then, lives with the grandparents, Nana and Poppy, at the farm in Raleigh.

For a while they live in peace and happiness until the mother comes back home after she leaves for a long time. At first, Brandon does not want to tell Nana that the mother has returned. He remains silent until one day, the mother comes to
the farm and shows herself in front of Nana. Since that time, they, especially the grandparents, are always filled with fear and anxiety that Brandon would be taken by the mother. They then take the case to the court but unfortunately, the case and the custody of Brandon are won by the mother. Instead of giving Brandon back to his mother, the grandparents take him to Florida to start a new life with the new identity.

In Florida, Brandon meets new people and Sister Delores is one of them. She is a preacher and an African-American woman. Through his friendship with this woman, Brandon learns about faith in Jesus and the equality between blacks and whites. Brandon and his grandparents really enjoy living in this new place until that sad day comes when the grandparents are arrested on charges of carrying off him. Brandon, then, lives in a child protection to wait for the mother to take him home. In this place, he involves into a big conflict with Pete, his new friend, because Pete mocks him as a nigger lover.

The mother finally comes to take him home. They live in a new flat with Kane, the mother’s new boyfriend. Brandon is happy living with his mother but he could not deny that he really misses his grandparents. His desire to know the news of his grandparents and to meet them is the major cause of the conflicts that often occur between him and his mother.

After Kane knows that Sophie Willard, the mother, cheats on him with his friend, he leaves the flat. The life of Brandon and his mother does not get better. One day, the mother tells Brandon to pretend as if he had a stomachache so that she could steal the golden necklace. This lie is finally known and the mother is
taken to the jail while Brandon is taken to the police station. There is Aunty Gina, a person who wants to take care of Brandon and he lives with her for a while.

Brandon asks for help to Aunty Gina to release his grandparents. She does her best to fulfill his wish and finally, he could live again with his grandparents. A few days later come the news that his mother is found dead in the road. Many people attend the funeral to strengthen Brandon and from this situation, he learns that a home is wherever his people are. Those people have filled him with love and affection.