RACIAL EQUALITY AS PERCEIVED BY THE THREE MAIN CHARACTERS IN KATHRYN STOCKETT’S *THE HELP*

A SARJANA PENDIDIKAN FINAL PAPER

Presented as Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements to Obtain the *Sarjana Pendidikan* Degree in English Language Education

By

F. Sabrina Cahyamitha

Student Number: 081214088

ENGLISH LANGUAGE EDUCATION STUDY PROGRAM
DEPARTMENT OF LANGUAGE AND ARTS EDUCATION
FACULTY OF TEACHERS TRAINING AND EDUCATION
SANATA DHARMA UNIVERSITY
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Yogyakarta, 16 February 2015

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Rohandi, Ph.D.
“You never really understand a person until you consider things from his point of view and until you climb inside of his skin and walk around in it.”

Atticus Finch

To Kill a Mockingbird

I dedicate this Final Paper to myself,

my family,

my friends,

and everyone who always tries to understand others as fellow human beings
STATEMENT OF WORK’S ORIGINALITY

I honestly declared that this final paper, which I have written, does not contain the work or parts of the work of other people, except those cited in the quotations and the references, as a scientific paper should.

Yogyakarta, 12 March 2015

The Writer

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ABSTRACT


This study discusses The Help, a novel written by Kathryn Stockett. The novel centers on the relationship between black maids namely Aibileen and Minny, with a young white lady namely Miss Skeeter. Their relationships are surprisingly interesting to be discussed since they are from different social status at that time. There are many lines coloring their honest relationship. The lines are separating them because they are considered different races, the maids are black and the young lady is white. Collectively, they struggle for racial equality and seek for better understanding in the black and white relationship.

The focus of the study in this paper is to discover how racial equality is perceived by the three main characters of the novel. It discusses the racial equality from the perspectives of Aibileen and Minny as black and Miss Skeeter as white. It is expected that by understanding the concept of racial equality, people will be more aware of racial equality and they hopefully can avoid the social conflict, prejudice, and contempt among ethnic groups.

This paper applies library research as the method for analysis and uses the combination of both psychological approach and socio-cultural historical approach. The main theories in this paper are the theory of race and racism and the theory of racial equality. Socio-cultural historical background is added to support the findings from the socio-cultural and historical background.

It is revealed that all of the main characters perceive racial equality as something worthy to fight for. All of them generally perceive that all people are supposed to be equal and because of that they shall be treated equally without being separated by racism and discrimination. Personally, Aibileen perceives racial equality as a condition in which all human beings are supposed to be equal because they are from one Creator and because they have autonomy and dignity as human beings. Minny perceives racial equality as a condition in which all human beings are supposed to be equal because they have the capacity of sympathy and natural inclination to feel concern for the well-being of others. Skeeter perceives racial equality as a condition in which the relationship between blacks and whites are not supposed to be separated by the lines created by whites, and she also perceives the same as Minny that all people are supposed to be equal because they have capacity of sympathy and natural inclination to feel concern for the well-being of others. Racial equality is a good learning topic and it is important to have good understanding of racial equality in order to promote solidarity among people.

Keywords: The Help, race, racism, perceive, racial equality
ABSTRAK


Hasil analisa menunjukkan bahwa seluruh karakter utama dalam novel menganggap kesetaraan ras sebagai sesuatu yang layak untuk diperjuangkan dan menganggap bahwa semua manusia seharusnya setara dan oleh karena itu mereka harus diperlakukan setara tanpa dipisahkan oleh rasisme dan diskriminasi. Secara pribadi, Aibileen memandang kesetaraan ras sebagai suatu kondisi dimana seharusnya semua manusia setara karena mereka berasal dari satu Pencipta dan karena mereka memiliki otonomi dan martabat sebagai manusia. Minny memandang kesetaraan ras sebagai suatu kondisi dimana seharusnya semua manusia setara karena mereka memiliki kapasitas simpati dan kecenderungan alami untuk merasa peduli terhadap kesejahteraan orang lain. Skeeter memandang kesetaraan ras sebagai suatu kondisi dimana seharusnya hubungan antara orang berkulit hitam dan orang berkulit putih tidak dipisahkan oleh batasan-batasan ras dan bahwa semua manusia seharusnya setara karena mereka memiliki kapasitas simpati dan kecenderungan alami untuk merasa peduli terhadap kesejahteraan orang lain.

Kata Kunci: The Help, race, racism, perceive, racial equality
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CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

The first chapter of this paper presents the background information of the study which contains the investigated problem, the importance of the study, and the overview of the study strategy. It also involves the discussions of the approaches used in analyzing the investigated problem.

A. Background

A novel, as stated by Clara Reeve, “is a picture of real life and manners, and of the time in which it is written” (as cited in Welleck & Warren, 1956, p. 216). Since it is a picture of real life, manners, and time in which it is written, novel’s writers must have something in their mind which they try to convey to the readers whenever they write a novel. Most of the writers are trying to insert some messages or moral values into their works to make their works more meaningful. Those writers’ conveyed messages can be revealed by analyzing several elements of the novel, such as character, plot, setting, theme, point of view, symbol and some literary devices like irony, metaphor, simile, and so on.

As a writer, Kathryn Stockett, shall have some important messages conveyed to the readers. Stockett, a South-American writer, wrote her first novel, *the Help*, as a reminder of her African American family maid, Demetrie, who had raised and had taught her about many important matters in life when she was a child. In her own words, *The Help* (2009), she wished that she would have been
old and thoughtful enough to ask Demetrie about how it felt to be black in Mississippi working for her white family at that time (p. 461). Her personal experiences with her African American maid were well reflected in her debut novel.

Since she is a Southern white woman in 2008 who wrote in the voice of the two African American maids, she felt very worried and nervous about what she wrote and the lines she crossed at first. However, she did some research for the writing material of her novel wholeheartedly to avoid ethnic bias caused by her status as a white woman. She conducted library study to attain the complete pictures of the situation and condition in 1960s. She went to Eudora Welty Library in Jackson to collect information from the old pictures, books, and newspapers about the situation and condition in Jackson, Mississippi, in 1960s. She also conducted several interviews with black women from Birmingham and her African American friends to gain the understanding of living as African American in America. By conducting the interviews, she avoided bias in writing from the perspectives of African American people, despite her status as a Southern white woman (LitLovers, pp. 2-3).

There are several messages about bravery, woman emancipation, friendship, discrimination, racial equality, and some more, found in *The Help* that can be critically discussed. Each message can be explored further by analyzing the content of the novel meticulously. Here, the writer concentrates the study on exploring the conveyed message of racial equality. The writer was interested in
studying Stockett’s message of racial equality triggered by the following statements of Stockett in *The Help* (2009):

> what I am sure about is this: I don’t presume to think that I know what it really felt like to be black woman in Mississippi, especially in the 1960s. I don’t think it is something any white woman on the other end of a black woman’s paycheck could ever truly understand. But trying to understand is vital to our humanity (p. 461).

According to Stockett (2009), there were such conditions like discrimination and segregation coloring the relationship of black and white women in the United States in 1960s. There were a few possibilities of white women to understand the position of black women in society at that time. However, at least trying to understand will give a little hope for a better future since understanding is a vital element in human relationship. That is the message Stockett trying to convey by writing this novel.

Despite the appearance, status, nationality, race, and so forth, God creates human as an equal being. It is difficult to place oneself in someone else’s position and trying to understand is the least attempt that someone can do as a fellow human being to show respect and concern. In order to understand each other, someone needs to discard his/her pride and to realize that he/she is basically just a mere human. Stockett states her standpoint about racial equality implicitly in these lines below:

> in *The Help* there is one line that I truly prize: Wasn’t that the point of the book? For women to realize, we are just two people. Not that much separates us. Not nearly as much as I’d thought (p. 461).

That message above tries to emphasize that basically white and black people are just two people. There are not so many differences separating them, not nearly as
many as they have thought. Those lines indicate implicitly that people are equal as human beings despite the distinctive of their appearances and races.

The three main characters on *The Help* are two African American maids; Aibileen Clark and Minny Jackson, and a young white socialite lady; Miss Eugenia “Skeeter” Phelan. Miss Skeeter is a reflective self of Kathryn Stockett. In the middle of her ambition to pursue her dream as an editor in New York Publishing, she meets the other two main characters; Aibileen Clark, an African American woman, who works as a maid for her old friend, Ms. Elizabeth Leefolt and Minny Jackson, Aibileen’s maid close friend. This meeting turns to be something which changes their lives forever. Starting from the idea of writing something which is meaningful for her, Skeeter finds her courage to write something which really matters that time, racial discrimination.

Together with several other maids, those three main characters struggle in dealing with racial equality issues in the unequal world of segregation. They attempt to break the boundaries laid between white people and black people in which racism and inequality separate them. Their expectation of changing the situation in their hometown makes them challenge themselves to write a controversial book which tells people the truths about the condition of African American maids working for white families.

Each main character has different perception of racial equality. How they perceive racial equality becomes the topic of study in this paper. Thus, the writer formulates the topic of study into a research question: how is the racial equality perceived by the three main characters of the novel? The findings of this study are
intended to emphasize Stockett’s universal messages of racial equality. As a result of finding the answers of the research question above, the readers are expected to have comprehensive understanding of how the three main characters perceive racial equality. Understanding racial equality comprehensively will provide the students in Indonesia with some educational knowledge to prevent them from committing many forms of racial discrimination voluntarily or involuntarily both in school and in society.

The writer conducted library research as a method of the study used in this paper. The primary data of this research was taken from Kathryn Stockett’s novel, *The Help*, while the secondary data was derived from other sources, such as books, articles, internet, and others which could fully support the study, and were related to the problem. Using this method, the writer could obtain some already known information and prior knowledge related to the discussed topic. Furthermore, the psychological and socio cultural-historical approaches were conducted to carry deeper investigation of the topic.

**B. Approach of the Study**

This study employed two kinds of approaches, the psychological approach and the socio cultural-historical approach. The psychological approach was conducted to discover the ways of how people perceived something to their life. This approach uses the knowledge of psychology as means to comprehend the literary works. According to Rohrberger and Woods (1971), “the psychological involves the effort to locate and demonstrate certain recurrent patterns” (p. 13), it
means that the various kinds of psychological theories’ patterns can be used to explain and to reveal certain phenomena presented within the works of literature. Hence, the psychological theory of perception was applied here in order to discover the above matter.

Meanwhile, the socio-cultural-historical approach was conducted to provide references from socio-cultural aspect and historical background which were required in order to accomplish the objective of the study, as stated by Rohrberger and Woods (1971), “the traditional historical approach to literature usually takes as its basis some aspect of the sociocultural frame of reference, combining it with an interest in the biographical as well as knowledge of and interest in literary history” (p. 9). By reading the novel, it was discovered that the novel was written in almost the same time in which certain historical events really occurred in the real life. Some events and several places in the story of the novel really depict some real events and several places which truly exist in the reality.
CHAPTER II

DISCUSSION

This chapter essentially discusses the elaboration of the related literature used in the final paper and the findings of the study as well as the interpretation of the findings.

A. Review of Related Literature

There are three notable discussion sections presented under the heading of the review of related literature namely the review of related studies, the review of related theories, and the review of socio-cultural-historical background.

1. Review of Related Studies

Kathryn Stockett’s *The Help* has been reviewed by several printed and electronic media and it has been also examined by some scholars as the topic interest of their studies. The reviews related to the novel were written by some noticeable electronic media. Stockett herself, in one of her interviews with media, confessed that she was rather afraid when she had been starting to write about African American women, “when other people started reading it, I was very worried about what I’d written and the line I’d crossed” (as cited in LitLovers, p. 3). She acknowledged that there is indeed the line between black people and white people prohibited to cross. She told the media that Skeeter was the hardest character to write. It was because “she was constantly stepping across that line I
was taught not to cross. Growing up, there was a hard and firm rule that you did not discuss issues of color. You changed the subject if someone brought it up, and you changed the channel when it was on television” (LitLovers, p. 3). Kornbluth (2010) considers Skeeter’s project with the maids as a dangerous project in Mississippi for “white women were supposed to keep their distance from blacks, and black women knew better than to share what they saw in their employers’ homes”.

Another review was published in Barnes and Noble (n.d.). The publisher comments on the reason why Skeeter and the maids decide to write a book which can put their lives at risks, as follows “seemingly as different from one another as can be, these women will nonetheless come together for a clandestine project that will put them all at risk. And why? Because they are suffocating within the lines that define their town and their times. And sometimes lines are made to be crossed”. Skeeter, despite being naive and unwittingly patronizing in the beginning, in the end, she is seeing everyone as they truly are. Through Skeeter’s eyes, Aibileen and Minny are less of a mystery and more sympathetic. Their color and station in life is no barrier to her friendship and business relationship with them (“A Critical Review of the Help,” 2010).

According to Dwankowski (n.d.), Aibileen's secret story is an anti-discrimination story, “Aibileen attempts to help Mae Mobley understand that everyone deserves to be treated fairly and not judged by the color of their skin. This message was a major part of Martin Luther King, Jr.’s platform for racial equality”. Blacks deserve racial equality and no parties should deny that right.
Further, she states that during the time period in the novel, many white people felt that black people were inferior. Dwankowski (n.d.) considers the attempts of Skeeter and the maids as bravery for:

they risk isolation and brutal violence but choose to cross lines and tear down the old barriers between blacks and whites built up from the time of slavery and the establishment of the rigid Jim Crow laws. The publication of their book of interviews demonstrates their unyielding courage and rebellion against old Southern etiquette and traditions in a time of social change.

_The Help_ has been analyzed by Kusumaningtyas (2012) and Mere (2013). Kusumaningtyas (2012) analyzed the reaction of African Americans in the 1960s seen through the point of views of the main characters in the novel. According to her, their reactions are either acceptance or resistance. Both Aibileen and Minny accept the unequal treatments legalized by the government. Most of the Blacks in the 1960s prefer to accept the treatments rather than to reject them. However, both of the characters are also depicted resisting the unequal treatments. Minny is persistent to resist the unequal treatments, while Aibileen is more indirect against unequal treatments (she changes her reaction from acceptance into resistance) (pp. 70-71). Mere (2013) discussed the discrimination against African American women in the early 1960s. She analyzed that African American women are forced to endure double discrimination as they are discriminated against for being African American people and for being women.

2. **Review of Related Theories**

There are two main theories engaged in this paper, namely the theory of perception and the theory of racial equality.
a. Theory of Perception

Ruch (1963) defines perception as “a process whereby sensory cues and relevant past experience are organized to give us the most structured, meaningful picture possible under the circumstances” (p. 300). It is an active process and a very personal thing that enable the individual to organize and to give meaning to the information received through the senses. People’s reactions to every situation are determined by the way they perceive the situation and the environment contributes to influence people’s perception of certain matters.

Ruch (1963) states “the same objective situation may be perceived in two quite different ways by two different people or even by the same person at two different times” (p. 302). Furthermore, he explains that there are some personal factors which influence the way of people perceiving something such as the past experience and the personal needs and values. Previous experience plays a big role in affecting people’s perception. People always perceive their surrounding not with a blank mind but with a certain expectancy or hypothesis about what they are going to perceive. Inside, every person has persistent, deep-rooted, and well-organized classifications of ways of perceiving, thinking, and behaving (p. 307). Another influential factor which can affect people’s perception is personal needs and values. Some people may feel a greater need than others to know all the times where exactly they stand in their environment either physically or socially. If they find themselves in an uncertainty situation, they are more likely to jump into interpretation than to tolerate uncertainty (p. 310). It is like their mechanism to cope with confusing situation in their lives.
b. Theories of Racial Equality

In order to perceive the meaning of racial equality, it is necessary to have discussions of the following concepts of race and racism and equality in the context of racial equality.

1) Concepts of Race and Racism

According to Adalberto and Turner (2011), the word “race” is more likely a social concept than a biological one. The notion of race does not make much sense as a biological concept because the physical characteristics that make people distinctive are trivial. However, even though biological differences are superficial and difficult to use as markers of boundaries among people, they are important sociologically. As people perceive that others are biologically distinctive, they tend to respond to them as being different. Adalberto and Turner (2011) define “race” as a social concept, for race is such “a social construction, denoting some rather superficial physical differences among humans” (p. 3).

The concept of “race” does not have great meaning in biology because the genetic differences among humans are not great. Just a small amount of genetic material accounts for differences in skin color, eye folds, hair color and texture, and other markers of “racial differences.” Still, social scientists, census takers, newscasters, and the general public continue to denote people by “their race”. Since humans are so closely related genetically, notions of race seem overblown, at least in a biological sense (p. 3).

Grounded on Adalberto and Turner’s concept of race, it is unfair for some individuals to be treated differently because they belong to a particular racial group, since the concept of race itself does not have great meaning in biology for all humans are from one single species and the differences among individuals are
not that great to make them belong to a different species, thus, make them to be treated differently. The biological factor in the concept of race, which often serves as a primary reason to treat people differently, is just an excuse for making socially significant distinction.

The concept of race becomes important for the people who support the practice of racism, because according to its adherents, racial differences make one group superior to another. Becker and Becker (1992) define racism as “a belief that human beings are divided into races; that some of these races are morally, intellectually or physically superior to others; and that this superiority is due to inherited biological differences” (p. 1056). In fact, racism is just means for its defenders to justify and to legalize the practice of slavery and for the subsequent denial of human and civil rights to people of colour. Roth (1995) classifies the concept of racism into six applications, namely scientific application, religious application, cultural application, economic application, social application, and institutional application (pp. 722-725). The cultural doctrine of the white man’s burden perceives white people as the chosen human beings in which have a moral responsibility to expose the deprived non-whites to the superior culture of the whites. It is said that black people, if leave alone, will fade in retrogressive ignorance and backwardness. Therefore, white people have a responsibility to save black people by controlling their behaviour and their ways of life. Only white people do have the ability to guide black people to the better life.
2) Concept of Racial Equality: Perceiving Racial Equality from the Two Different Points

Arthur (2007) defines racial equality as a dilemmatic and abstract concept since the questions are always raised about its meaning or what it requires in practice, and for those make the concept of racial equality historically controversial (p. 122). In perceiving racial equality, people preferably should look into the concept of racial equality from the two different points of views of those who oppose the concept as well as from those who defend it.

a) The Opponent of Racial Equality

The opponents of racial equality entirely deny the existence of racial equality. Basically, there is no such concept called racial equality in their perception. They do not acknowledge racial equality because they refuse the basis concept of racial equality stated that all people, including members of all races, are equal. The equality status of all people is opposed as they perceive that human beings are naturally unequal for human beings are divided into races and amongst those races, there is the superior and the inferior one. Arthur (2007) states that blacks are perceived as inherently inferior for they are:

(1) *intellectually* inferior (naturally less able to understand complex problems or less artistically creative); (2) *morally* inferior (inherently less virtuous; less trustworthy, hard working, loyal; (3) *physically* inferior (less athletically gifted); (4) *aesthetically* inferior (less physically attractive); or (5) *emotionally* inferior (less mature or more childlike). (p. 35).

Somehow, basically, the superior and the inferior status of some races are used to secure the privileges of the supposed-superior race toward some scarce resources like the access to jobs, political power, citizenship, social services,
education, housing, and so on. The phenomenon above is what the proponents of racial equality; one of them is Barlow (2003), called racism, “a particular type of relationship, one produced by a conflict (privilege/oppression) over scarce resources in which physical characteristics are social marker” (pp. 13-14). Pierre L. van den Berghe (as cited in Arthur 2007) says, “Humans have the tendency to instinctively sort people according to race, and distinguish members of their own race from the other”. According to Arthur (2007), the tendency can be dangerous if it is acknowledged as a natural phenomenon which later becomes a tool to justify the notion that racism is inevitable (pp. 157-159). The supposed-inferiority is thought to be natural and makes people naturally unequal, and then causes the opponents of racial equality to reason that there is no such concept called racial equality.

b) The Proponent of Racial Equality

Conversely to the opponents, the proponents of racial equality do believe the existence of racial equality. The basis of their belief lies on the perception that all people are equal beings, and because of that equal status, all people should be treated equally, regardless their races. The proponents of racial equality perceive the notion of ‘all people are equal beings’ from: the Christianity theory, the equality-based on interest theory, the moral sense theory, and the equal value of persons theory. Originally, the Christian understanding of the equal status of all beings comes from the faith that there is a personal God. According to LaFarge (1943), the teachings of Christ proclaime “the moral unity of the human race, based upon men’s natural unity as children by creation, of a common Father and
as sharing a common physical origin” (p. 77). Because of those teachings, all human beings, according to Christian ethics, are equal and since they are equal as human beings, they, then, also have the equal rights. The essential rights of individuals, according to Christian ethics, are equal, so are the rights equal of the various groups that make society.

The notion of racial equality-based on interest is proposed by Jeremy Bentham and Peter Singer. They state that “equality is a moral ideal, which insists that actions and institutions give equal weight or equal “consideration”, to the interests of all beings who have interests” (as cited in Arthur, 2007, p. 123). Because the interests are equal, they make the same moral demands. Human beings are not inherently more valuable than other animals because the foundation of their value is their interests. Therefore, racial equality perceived by them as “all persons, regardless of race (regardless of the nature of the being), have interests that should be taken equally into account, not that they are similar in other ways” (p. 124).

The moral sense theory perceives the basic notion for racial equality is “human capacity for sympathy and natural inclination to feel concern for the well-being of others” (as cited in Arthur, 2007, p. 124). One of the proponents of the moral sense theory is Thomas Jefferson (he is influenced by the thoughts of Francis Hutcheson, David Hume, and Adam Smith). Jefferson believes that having sympathetic feelings are unique to people in which it becomes the foundation for claiming that humans are uniquely and equally valuable. Later, in the Declaration of Independence, Jefferson writes “we hold these truths to be self-
evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness” (as cited in Hasday, 2007, p. 5).

The equal value of persons theory proposes that “all person, despite their different moral worth, have equal value” (as cited in Arthur, 2007, p. 124). However, the idea of “the equal value of persons” does not deny that some people are more morally worthy than others (as cited in Arthur, 2007, p. 124). People have equal value because they are intrinsic beings, as they have dignity and autonomy. As intrinsic beings, people have value on themselves. Autonomy is people’s intrinsic value; it is the source of people’s dignity for autonomy is the capacities of people to act intentionally and not just by instinct (like any other beings, e.g. animals). The capacity of person to act intentionally brings in the capacity of person to reason. The capacity of person to reason is the capacity to understand that something is a reason. Reasoning beings can make moral demands/claims on others supported by reasons and also understand the moral demands others make on them. In other words, autonomy gives people the ability to make claims on each other, which in turn gives such people value and gives others reason to treat them with respect as moral beings with rights. Those are the reasons why people are uniquely valuable other than another being, like animal (Arthur, 2007, pp. 124-132).

All persons are of equal value. People should value equally all those who posses autonomy because autonomy works as a range of property. Autonomy is only a capacity that a person has; it is not a fixed thing. Autonomy can develop
over time, once it is acquired to a sufficient extent; people treat it as a range of property. Once a threshold of property has been reached, a person is autonomous and should be treated equally (Arthur, 2007, pp. 133). As conclusion, Nielsen (1985) formulates the basic of the notion ‘all people are equal beings’ into six moral claims of equality as follows (p. 15):

1. All human beings have a right to have the protection of their persons and vital interest.
2. All people have a right to be treated as equals, not because they happen to be equal in some particular respect or other, but simply because they are human.
3. All people are of equal moral worth, and have a right to be treated equally, however unequal they may be in merit, abilities, or even in moral sensitivity.
4. All people have a right to be treated as ends (as something intrinsic worth) and never merely as means.
5. All human beings, capable of such choices, have an equal right to choose how they shall live.
6. All human beings have a right to equality of concern and respect, a right they posses not in virtue of birth, characteristic, merit, or excellence, but simply as human beings with the capacity to make plans and give justice.

Optimist proponents believe racism is not natural; it is a product of human culture. As stated by Storey (2010), “it is important to understand that ‘race’ and racism are not natural or inevitable phenomena; they have a history and are the result of human actions and interactions. But often they are made to appear as inevitable, something grounded in nature rather than what they really are, products of human culture” (p. 168). Because racism is not natural and inevitable phenomenon, it is possible for people to eradicate the racism phenomenon. However, there is a certain condition that should be fulfilled to eradicate racism, white and black people must work together to promote racial equality. White people must have positive attitudes toward black people. Arthur (2007) concludes
that universally, racial equality is perceived as the notion which provides the basic
rights and opportunities for all the races and avoids racism, especially the
institutional one, which imposes a particular burden on its victims (p. 134).

3. Review on Socio cultural-Historical Background

A literary work must be related to the socio cultural-historical actual
evidences and facts found in the society at the considered time to analyze literary
work using socio cultural-historical approach.

Movements of Martin Luther King, Jr. in 1960-1970s

Martin Luther King, Jr. became the symbol of the fight against
institutional racism and the impacts of long slavery in 1960-1970s. He was
proudly leading African Americans with his infamous movement called non-
vviolent movement. The battle of racial equality in 1960-1970s, especially the non-
vviolent movements conducted by Martin Luther will be elaborated in the
following parts.

In 1960, four African American college students staged a sit-in at a
segregated store lunch counters in Greensboro, North Carolina. They refused to
move from their seats until the government stopped the law of segregating lunch
counters in college and university, although they were humiliated. They thought
that segregation explicitly put them under the inferior status. They wanted to be
proud of their selves being black people in America. They withstood the rough
treatment of white people and focused on their goals.
In 1961, blacks and whites started Freedom Rides. However, several of these rides ended in violence and assaults. In 1962, one year after that, James Meredith won the right to attend the all-white University of Mississippi. President John F. Kennedy himself sent federal troops to suppress the subsequent violence. King (1968) spoke to people that “freedom is not won by a passive acceptance of suffering. Freedom is won by a struggle against suffering” (p. 22). Negroes hold only one key to the double look of peaceful change. The other is in the hands of the white community. Notion of “separate but equal” degrades black people’s dignity as fully human beings. It wounds their self-worth (grounded in people’s dignity and autonomy), self-respect (grounded in the sense that one’s ends are worthy and confidence in the ability to achieve them), and self-esteem (the sense of acceptance if not pride in one’s identity as a member of a group) by segregating them, implying that they are inferior to white people (Arthur, 2007, p. 143).

King says that “the immorality of segregation is that it treats men as means rather than ends, and thereby reduces them to things rather than persons” (p. 144). King (1968) says “for years the Negro has been taught that he is nobody, that his color is a sign of his biological depravity (evil), that his being has been stamped with an indelible imprint of inferiority, the whole dirty business of slavery was based on the premise that the Negro was a thing to be used, not a person to be respected” (p. 45). On August 28, 1963, Martin Luther King led the march to Washington. Here, he delivered his well-known speech of “I Have a Dream”, hoping the better future together for blacks and whites in equally status. On April 12, King was arrested during a protest march in Birmingham, Alabama, while in
jail, he wrote his famous “Letter from Birmingham Jail”. On June 12, the day after President Kennedy announced his intention to send civil rights legislation to Congress, Medgar Evers, the secretary of NAACP, was murdered outside his home. September 15, a bomb exploded at the Sixteenth Street Baptist Church in Birmingham, killing four young black girls; more riots erupted in the city. Afterward, on November 22 President Kennedy was assassinated in Dallas, Texas.

In 1964, King commented on blacks and whites relations when they came together in marching in Mississippi by SNCC and CORE. He says that:

Like life, racial understanding is not something that we find but something that we must create. A productive and happy life is not something that you find; it is something that you make. And so the ability of Negroes and Whites to work together, to understand each other, will not be found readymade; it must be created by the fact of contact (p. 32).

On July 2, President Lyndon Johnson signed into law the Civil Rights Act. Finally, the long awaited law was passed by both houses of Congress. Later on December 10, King was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize. On August 6, 1965, voting Rights Act was signed into law, banning the use of literacy tests and poll taxes that had been employed to prevent blacks from voting.

In *Loving v. Virginia* case 1967, the Supreme Court rules that prohibiting interracial marriage was unconstitutional. Whites in 1967, including many persons of goodwill, proceed from a premise that equality was a loose expression for improvement. White America was not even psychologically organized to close the gap—essentially it sought only to make it less painful and less obvious but in most respects to retain it. King (1968) theorizes that “it’s an aspect of their sense of
superiority that the white people of America believe they have so little to learn. Whites, it must frankly be said, are not putting in a similar mass effort to re-educate themselves out of their racial ignorance” (p. 11). The great majority of Americans were uneasy with injustice but unwilling yet to pay a significant price to eradicate it.

On April 4, 1968, Martin Luther King, Jr. was assassinated in Memphis, Tennessee. King was assassinated on a balcony outside his hotel room. On April 11, President Johnson signed into law the 1968 Civil Rights Act that prohibited discrimination in the sale, rental, and financing of housing. However, the struggles for racial equality of black people still continue until today. A new challenge in modern era now is to eradicate the race stereotype and race prejudice toward ex-oppressed race. For that to be realized, black people and white people must work together to understand each other better. As King says in 1968 in his book Where do We Go from Here?: Chaos or Community?, it is impossible for white Americans to grasp the depths and dimensions of the Negro’s dilemma without understanding what it means to be a Negro in America. Of course it is not easy to perform this act of empathy. Putting oneself in another person’s place is always fraught with difficulties. If the present chasm of hostility, fear and distrust is to be bridged; the white man must begin to walk in the pathways of his black brothers and feel some of the pain and hurt that throb without let up in their daily lives (pp. 121-122).

B. Findings

Based on the results of the in-depth research and investigation using library study method, the writer finally can elaborate how the three main characters of The Help novel perceive racial equality. It is generally found that the
three main characters of the novel have only slightly different ideas in perceiving the concept of racial equality. According to Arthur (2007), racial equality is perceived as a notion which provides the basic rights and the opportunities for all the races and avoids racism, especially the institutional one, which imposes a particular burden on its victims (p. 134). From the beginning of the story, the concept of racial equality itself is a strange concept to the three main characters of the novel and it is hardly accepted by them. However, their idea of racial equality concept develops because of their encounter with a new experience in making a book which talks about their daily experiences in dealing with racial inequality issues.

1. Racial Equality as a Condition where All Human Beings are Supposed to be Equal, Regardless Their Races

   Basically, all of the three main characters in the novel have the same perception that racial equality is supposed to be a condition where all human beings are equal, regardless their races. However, they perceive the equality status from the different notions. Aibileen perceives the equality status of human being by believing that all humans are from one Creator, Minny and Skeeter tend to perceive the equality status of human being to be based on the capacity of sympathy and natural inclination to feel concern for the well being of others.

a) Aibileen

   Aibileen’s foundation of the equality status of human being is based on the Christian teaching which is according to LaFarge (1943), proclaims that “the
moral unity of the human race, based upon men’s natural unity as children by creation, of a common Father and as sharing a common physical origin” (p. 77). Basically, Aibileen is a religious person. She is a very faithful Christian and she dedicates all her life to follow Christian’s teachings. She perceives all races as equal beings and should be treated equally, because according to Christian ethics, all humans are equal coming from one common Father and sharing a common physical origin, and thus have the equal rights. Since the essential rights of individuals are equal, the rights of the various groups that make society are equal too (LaFarge, 1943, p. 7). She believes that no matter distinctive blacks and whites are, they are still human beings coming from one Creator and belong to one species of human. Even Jesus the Saviour has a black skin because of the sunburn.

“But Aibileen”-----Miss Hilly smile real cold-----“colored people and white people are just so……different.” A course we different! Everybody know colored people and white people ain’t the same. But we still just people! Shoot, I even been hearing Jesus had colored skin living out there in the desert. (Stockett, p. 190, ch. 14).

Skin colour is just a variation in human physical appearance in which it is so trivial to be the reason to justify that blacks and whites belong to different human’s races, one race is inferior and another race is superior (Adalberto & Turner, 2011, pp. 2-3). Aibileen agrees with that notion, she teaches Mae Mobley about that through her secret stories with Mae Mobley.

“One upon a time they was two little girls,” I say. “One girl had black skin, one girl had white.” Mae Mobley look up at me. She listening. “Little colored girl say to the little white girl, ‘How come your skin be so pale?’ White girl say, ‘I don’t know. How come your skin be so black? What you think that mean?’ “But neither one a them little girls knew. So little white girl say, ‘Well, let’s see. You got hair.’ “I gives Mae Mobley a little tousle
on her head. “Little colored girl say, ‘I got a nose, you got a nose.’ I gives her little snout a tweak. She got to reach up and do the same to me. ‘Little white girl say, ‘I got toes, you got toes.’ And I do the little thing with her toes, but she can’t get to mine cause I got my white work shoes on. “So we’s the same. Just a different color,’ say that little colored girl. The little white girl she agreed and they was friends. The End.” (Stockett, p. 204, ch. 15).

Aibileen’s secret stories with Mae Mobley, according to Dwankowski (n.d.), is an anti-discrimination story, “her attempts to help Mae Mobley understand that everyone deserves to be treated fairly and not judged by the color of their skin”.

Often, people can be really mean toward each other because they are physically different from each other as Aibileen says in these parts.

“Today I’m on tell you bout a man from outer space.” She just loves hearing about peoples from outer space. Her favorite show on the tee-vee is My Favorite Martian. I pull out my antennae hats I shaped last night out a tinfoil, fasten em on our heads. One for her and one for me. We look like we a couple a crazy people in them things. “One day, a wise Martian come down to Earth to teach us people a thing or two,” I say. “Martian? How big?” “Oh, he about six-two.” “What’s his name?” “Martian Luther King.” She take a deep breath and lean her head down on my shoulder. I feel her three-year-old heart racing against mine, flapping like butterflies on my white uniform. “He was a real nice Martian, Mister King. Looked just like us, nose, mouth, hair up on his head, but sometime people looked at him funny and sometime, well, I guess sometime people was just downright mean.” I could get in a lot a trouble telling her these little stories, especially with Mister Leefolt. But Mae Mobley know these our “secret stories.” “Why Aibee? Why was they so mean to him?” she ask. “Cause he was green.” (Stockett, p. 303, ch. 23).

The tendency of humans to, as Pierre L. van den Berghe (as cited in Arthur, 2007) said, “instinctively sort people according to race, and distinguish members of their own race from the other”, according to Arthur (2007), can be dangerous if it is acknowledged as a natural phenomenon which later becomes a tool to justify the notion that racism is inevitable (pp. 157-159). Further, Aibileen
also perceives that the worth of a person does not depend on his/her race and skin color.

I take the brown wrapping from my Piggly Wiggly grocery bag and wrap up a little something, like a piece a candy, inside. Then I use the white paper from my Cole’s Drug Store bag and wrap another one just like it. She take it real serious, the unwrapping, letting me tell the story bout how it ain’t the color a the wrapping that count, it’s what we is inside (Stockett, p. 302-303, ch. 23).

All people, however different they are both physically and morally, still have equal value. No matter unequal an individual may be physically or may be in merits, abilities, and even in moral sensitivities, he/she still has an equal value as a human being who has dignity and autonomy. Human’s dignity and autonomy are the things that make a human valuable, not race or skin color (Arthur, 2007, pp. 124-133). Therefore, race and skin color cannot be the criteria to treat an individual unequally. All human beings have dignities and autonomies, because of that all human beings are supposed to be equal.

Aibileen perceives skin color as well as lines between blacks and whites as means to give a certain group much more authority over another group.

“She just don’t see em. The lines. Not between her and me, not between her and Hilly.” “It ain’t true.” “Say what?” “You talking about something that don’t exist.” Aibileen shakes her head, “I used to believe in em. I don’t anymore. They in our heads. People like Miss Hilly is always trying to make us believe they there. But they ain’t.” “Cause that line ain’t there. Except in Leroy’s head. Lines between black and white ain’t there neither. Some folks just made those up, long time ago. And that go for the white trash and the so-ciety ladies too.” “So you saying they ain’t no line between the help and the boss either?” Aibileen shakes her head. “They’s just positions, like on a checkerboard. Who work for who don’t mean nothing.” (Stockett, p. 319, ch. 24).

In blacks and whites’ case, physical distinctive marked by the difference in skin color becomes a justification to support the inferiority of black people. Aibileen
does not believe in the inferiority of black people. She still views that all people, regardless their distinctive nature like races, are supposed to be equal. Aibileen teaches Mae Mobley that blacks are not dirty, that she has to love all people without exception, and that she must not judge people by their color, “I spent teaching Mae Mobley how to love all people, not judge by color”, whatever her teacher, Miss Taylor, teaches her otherwise, ‘she said black means I got a dirty, bad face’ (Stockett, p. 416, ch. 30).

b) Minny

Later in the end of the story, Minny perceives all human beings are supposed to be equal since they have human capacity for sympathy and natural inclination to feel concern for the well-being of others as Jefferson proposed (Arthur, 2007, p. 124). She learns her new perception from her interactions with Miss Celia and Miss Skeeter. Those white ladies make her realize that human beings are capable of sympathy and empathy, that white people can be truly kind and sincere toward blacks, that among whites, there are individuals who really concern for black people and try to make a better future for them.

“Tell her, Johnny. Tell Minny what you said to me.” Mister Johnny lifts his head. His hair’s all mussed and he looks up at me. “You’ll always have a job here with us Minny. For the rest of your life, if you want. “Thank you, sir,” I say and I mean it. Those are the best words I could hear today. I reach for the door, but Miss Celia says, real soft, “Stay in here awhile. Will you, Minny?” So I lean my hand on the sideboard because the baby’s getting heavy on me. And I wonder how it is that I have so much when she doesn’t have any. He’s crying. She’s crying. We are three fools in the dining room crying (p. 412, ch. 30).

Those lines above show that at the end, Minny can be sincere in her relationships with white people. She finally realizes that white people are also human beings
who are capable of feeling sympathy. She is slowly trying not to judge all white people as arrogant and almighty beings, but treats them equally like she treats her fellow black people. She is trying to understand Miss Celia as a person with all of her kindness and flaws.

In the dialogue lines above, Minny is being sympathetic toward Miss Celia’s problems and vice versa. Minny and Miss Celia can feel each other’s sufferings and being sympathetic to that. They cry together without noticing the differences between them as a black maid and a white lady. Their status and race are no longer important compared with their togetherness as equal human beings who are capable of sympathy and natural inclination to feel concern for the well-being of others.

e) Skeeter

The moral sense theory perceives the basic notion for racial equality as “human capacity for sympathy and natural inclination to feel concern for the well-being of others”. Having sympathetic feelings are unique to people in which it becomes the foundation for claim that humans are uniquely and equally valuable (Arthur, 2007, p. 124). Skeeter agrees with that perception. She perceives “all people are of equal moral worth, and have a right to be treated equally, however unequal they may be in merit, abilities, or even in moral sensitivity” (Nielsen, 1985, p. 15). She learns that perception from her interactions with black maids. When one of the maids, Louvenia, told her about her white lady, Skeeter finds that Louvenia’s white lady who she considered as not an important person can understand the nature of human being that human is equal, that blacks and whites
are just people with no significant differences as human beings, that both black people and white people have the capacity to feel sympathy and empathy as shown in her revelation below.

I watch Lou Anne slip away in the parking lot, thinking, *There is so much you don’t know about a person.* I wonder if I could’ve made her days a little bit easier, if I’d tried. If I’d treated her a little nicer. Wasn’t that the point of the book? For women to realize, We are just two people. Not that much separate us. Not nearly as much as I’d thought (Stockett, p. 426, ch. 33).

She realizes that Lou Anne is a better person than her, “But Lou Anne, she understood the point of the book before she ever read it. The one who was missing the point this time was me” (Stockett, p. 427, ch. 33), since Lou Anne treats her maid kindly as a human and she does not place her relationship with her maid based on color but based on the idea that they are people who have sympathy and empathy.

I learn that Lou Anne, whom I find dull and vapid and have never paid much mind to, gave Louvenia two weeks off with pay so she could help her grandson. She brought casseroles to Louvenia’s house seven times during those weeks. She rushed Louvenia to the colored hospital when the first call came about Robert and waited there six hours with her, until the operation was over. Lou Anne has never mentioned this to any of us. And I understand completely why she wouldn’t. (Stockett, p. 263, ch. 19).

In the end of the story, Skeeter hopes that her book can improve the relationship between blacks and whites; at least, it can make the white people understand black people better and treat them as humans and with more respect. She believes that understanding is the key to promote racial equality as King said in the paragraph below.

It is impossible for white Americans to grasp the depths and dimensions of the Negro’s dilemma without understanding what it means to be a Negro in America. Of course it is not easy to perform this act of empathy. Putting
oneself in another person’s place is always fraught with difficulties. If the present chasm of hostility, fear and distrust is to be bridged; the white man must begin to walk in the pathways of his black brothers and feel some of the pain and hurt that throb without let up in their daily lives. (King, 1968, p. 121-122).

2. Racial Equality as a Notion Supposed to Provide the Basic Rights and the Opportunities for All Races and to Avoid Racism

The three main characters acknowledge that racial equality is perceived as a notion which is supposed to provide the basic rights and the opportunities for all the races and to avoid racism. They realise that there are lines between blacks and whites because of racism. Those lines create racial inequality in society and put blacks on the inferior status.

a) Aibileen

According to Ruch (1963), the ways of people perceiving something are influenced by mostly personal factors which are the past experience and the personal needs and values (pp. 302-313). The white supremacies frequently justify the unequal treatments of the blacks and put them under the subhuman category (Roth, 1995, pp. 722-725). Aibileen past experience taught her that, as King (1968) states, “Negro is nobody, that his color is a sign of his biological depravity (evil), that his being has been stamped with an indelible imprint of inferiority, that he is a thing to be used, not a person to be respected” (p. 45). However, she believes otherwise, like in her following statements, “I want to yell so loud that Baby Girl can hear me that dirty ain’t a color, disease ain’t the Negro side a town. I want to stop that moment from coming-----and it come in ever white child’s life-
---when they start to think that colored folks ain’t as good as whites” (Stockett, p. 98, ch. 7). Aibileen wants to tell us that she suffers from racism and she dreams of a better future. When racism can be eradicated, the racial equality can be achieved. Aibileen’s view on the equal rights of all races can be seen through her statements below.

“Aibileen, you wouldn’t want to go to a school full of white people, would you?” “No ma’am,” I mumble. But then I think: Why? Why I have to stand here and agree with her? And if Mae Mobley gone hear it, she gone hear some sense. I get my breath. My heart beating hard. And I say polite as I can, “Not a school full a just white people. But where the colored and the white folks is together.” (Stockett, p. 190, ch. 14).

In her statements above, she thinks that blacks and whites should be given equal rights to obtain education without being separated by segregation laws. She begins to think about racial equality only if blacks’ chances to attain equal education are the same with the whites. Racial equality is supposed to be a notion which provides the basic rights and the opportunities for all the races and avoids racism. She really dreams about that reality someday in the future.

b) Minny

What Minny demands for racial equality is that her children are being considered as valuable as white children, and that the white ladies stop considering her children as inferior by calling them dirty and by accusing them of stealing the silver. It is what she called racial equality. Racial equality is supposed to be a condition which provides the basic rights and the opportunities for all the races and avoids racism. Minny’s expectation of a better future is shown as follows.
And I know there are plenty of other “colored” things I could do besides telling my stories or going to Shierly Boon’s meetings---the mass meetings in town, the marches in Birmingham, the voting rallies upstate. But truth is, I don’t care that much about voting. I don’t care about eating at a counter with white people. What I care about is, if in ten years, a white lady will call my girls dirty and accuse them of stealing the silver (Stockett, p. 223, ch. 17).

The segregation system with its notion “separate but equal” really violates Minny’s dignity as a human. The “separate but equal” notion creates public contempt and it carries a message of impurity and inferiority to the black people. According to Arthur (2007), it degrades black people’s dignity as fully human beings. It wounds their self-worth (grounded in people’s dignity and autonomy), self-respect (grounded in the sense that one’s ends are worthy and confidence in the ability to achieve them), and self-esteem (the sense of acceptance if not pride in one’s identity as a member of a group) by segregating them, implying that they are inferior to white people (p. 143).

c) Skeeter

Skeeter perceives the relationship between blacks and whites as the unbalance relationship. Sometimes, they love each other however, they cannot really show their love to each other because there are a lot of lines separating them as revealed in the lines below.

“I’d like to write this showing the point of view of the help. The colored women down here.” “They raise a white child and then twenty years later the child becomes the employer. It’s that irony, that we love them and they love us, yet....” I swallowed, my voice trembling. “We don’t even allow them to use the toilet in the house.” (Stockett, pp. 108-109, ch. 8).
Deep down, whites always believe that they are more superior to blacks, including Skeeter at the beginning. However, in the end, Skeeter learns that the lines between blacks and whites are just social construction as stated by Adalberto and Turner (2011) that “race is just a social construction, denoting some rather superficial physical differences among humans” (p. 3). Finally, she understands that Aibileen and Minny are just human like her and that their color does not prevent her to be friends and to work with them, “In the end, Skeeter is seeing everyone as they truly are. Through Skeeter’s eyes, Aibileen and Minny are less of a mystery and more sympathetic. Their color and station in life is no barrier to her friendship and business relationship with them” (“A Critical Review of the Help,” 2010).

Racial equality as perceived by Skeeter is a condition when black people and white people are supposed to be equal in status without being separated by lines. The lines between blacks and whites make her restless because they restrict her interaction with blacks as her fellow human being. She hopes for the equality for the blacks in which she does not need to feel insecure having a friendship with them. It is revealed in her statement on the following paragraph.

“Aibileen, how long have you been wanting to ask me this? If I’d check these books out for you?” “A while.” She shrugs. “I guess I’s afraid to mention it.” “Did you…think I’d say no?” “These is white rules. I don’t know which ones you following and which one you ain’t.” We look at each other a second. “I’m tired of the rules,” I say. (Stockett, p. 159-158, ch. 12).
3. Racial Equality as Something Worthy to Fight for

The three main characters perceive racial equality as something worthy to fight for because racial equality is something good. They have special way to promote racial equality. Their way is by writing a civil right story which hopefully can create a better relationship between blacks and whites based on mutual understanding.

a) Aibileen

As time goes by, Aibileen perceives that the struggle for racial equality is something valuable to fight for. It is worth all the troubles and efforts since it is something good and natural. She really strives for something which can help the struggles for racial equality. Although it is just a small action, she refuses to give up because she knows that her efforts are worthwhile.

“Aibileen,” Miss Skeeter say, and I hear her start to break down again. That calm-down in her voice is cracking. “We can stop. I understand completely if you want to stop working on it.” If I say I don’t want a do it anymore, then everything I been writing and still have to write ain’t gone get to be said. No, I think. I don’t want a stop. (Stockett, p. 195, ch. 14).

She is really proud of her attempt to be a part of something that can be a pioneer to promote the idea of racial equality in the future as shown in the following statements.

Thirty-five maids done said no and I feel like I’m selling something nobody want to buy. Something big and stinky, like Kiki Brown and her lemon smell-good polish. But what really makes me and Kiki the same is, I’m proud a what I’m selling. I can’t help it. We telling stories that need to be told (Stockett, p. 213, ch. 16).

Aibileen also follows Martin Luther King, Jr. non-violent movements by joining a sit-in at the Woolworths lunch counter on Amite Street as a part of protest against
segregation and racial inequalities. She even persuades Minny to join her in the sit-in, “you gone make me go by myself again? Come on, I’m on bring some gingerbread and some__” (Stockett, p. 222, ch.17).

b) Minny

In the end of the story, Minny perceives racial equality as something worth her efforts to fight for. She warns Skeeter of being serious with her because racial equality is not just a plaything for her and her kin, “You don’t have to do this, Minny,” Aibileen says. “It’s alright if you want a change your mind.” Slowly, warily, Minny settles again in her chair. “I do it. I just want a make sure she understand, this ain’t no game we playing here” (Stockett, p. 168, ch. 12). Minny feels proud, good, and happy telling her story. She finally feels like she can cross the unbridgeable lines between blacks and whites. She has been suffocated for a long time because of those lines which define her town and her times, and sometimes the lines are made to be crossed. She is being proud of herself by joining Aibileen and Skeeter in their little efforts to pursue better condition in the future and mutual understanding between black maids and their white employers.

I don’t want anybody to know how much I need those Skeeter stories. Now that I can’t come to the Shirley Boon meetings anymore, that’s pretty much all I’ve got. And I am not saying the Miss Skeeter meetings are fun. But here’s the thing: I like telling my stories. It feels like I’m doing something about it. When I leave, the concrete in my chest has loosened, melted down so I can breathe for few days (Stockett, p. 223, ch. 17).

Aibileen considers Minny as a brave woman. She has a strong solidarity and she risks her own life to create a better future for her children. She wants her children to be free of false accusations, blacks’ stigma, and prejudices. She does
not want her children being accused as inferior by white people anymore. It is as Dwankowski (n.d.) said in the following lines.

They risk isolation and brutal violence but choose to cross lines and tear down the old barriers between blacks and whites built up from the time of slavery and the establishment of the rigid Jim Crow laws. The publication of their book of interviews demonstrates their unyielding courage and rebellion against old Southern etiquette and traditions in a time of social change.

Aibileen tells Minny’s character as being brave in the statements below.

The more I look, the more I start to understand what’s going on here, what Minny’s done. I don’t know why I’m just now getting this. Minny made us put the pie story in to protect us. Not to protect herself, but to protect me and the other maids. She knew it would only make it worse for herself with Hilly. But she did it anyway, for everybody else. She don’t want anybody to see how scared she is (Stockett, p. 437, ch.34).

c) Skeeter

Skeeter expects that her book can improve the mutual understanding between blacks and whites, “My face is burning red. I speak slowly. ‘We want to show your perspective……so people might understand what it’s like from your side. We---we hope it might change some things around here’ ” (Stockett, p. 167, ch. 12). Dwankowski (n.d.) says that “the bold action she takes bringing society one-step closer to racial equality”. She is being proud of what she has done and she is also proud of the black maids for their efforts to make everything happens, “When I tell him about the colored maids filling past me after the prayer meeting, I feel a swell of pride over what we’ve done” (Stockett, p. 389, ch. 28). Skeeter does not have any regrets for writing the stories about black maids and for caring for them and their problems. The paragraph below shows how Skeeter feels about her actions and she does not regret her actions.
Sometimes, when I’m bored, I can’t help but think what my life would be like if I hadn’t written the book. Monday, I would’ve played bridge. And tomorrow night, I’d be going to the League meeting and turning in the newsletter. Then on Friday night, Stuart would take me to dinner and we’d stay out late and I’d be tired when I got up for my tennis game on Saturday. Tired and content and……frustrated. (Stockett, p. 427, ch. 33).

She thinks that her life will become very frustrated if she does not write the book and begin to notice everything that happens between blacks and whites.

Because Hilly would’ve called her maid a thief that afternoon and I would’ve just sat there and listened to it. And Elizabeth would’ve grabbed her child’s arm too hard and I would’ve looked away, like I didn’t see it. And I’d be engaged to Stuart and I wouldn’t wear short dresses, only short hair, or consider doing anything risky like write a book about colored housekeepers, too afraid he’d disapprove. And while I’d never lie and tell myself I actually changed the minds of people like Hilly and Elizabeth, at least I don’t have to pretend I agree with them anymore. (Stockett, p. 427, ch. 33).

She thinks that at least by writing the book, she can be her true self. She can confront her white friends openly whenever she does not agree with their ideas, especially when it is related to black people.
CHAPTER III

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In conclusion, this chapter discusses the research question of how the three main characters in *The Help* perceive racial equality. It also discusses the recommendations for the future researchers and the teachers who are interested in the topic of racial equality applied as a learning material in the classroom.

C. Conclusions

Referring to the findings in chapter two, it can be concluded from those findings that in general, racial equality is perceived as a condition in which naturally, all human beings are supposed to be equal, regardless their races, and because of that they have the equal basic rights and should be treated equally. The concept of racism brings the inequalities among humans. The notion of racism believes that human beings are divided into races; one race is superior to the other race. Racism evokes the discrimination and segregation. Discrimination and segregation are evil because they deprive humans from their rights and create social contempt, prejudice, and stigma.

The three main characters in the novel, at the end of the story, perceive racial equality as something worthy to struggle for. Aibileen and Minny understand racial equality as a condition in which there are supposed to be no individuals who are more superior or inferior rather than the others, while Skeeter perceives racial equality as a condition in which everybody is supposed to have
sincere relationship without being separated by lines of segregation. All of them perceive that one of the keys to gain racial equality is the understanding between races.

Personally, Aibileen perceives racial equality as a condition in which all human beings are supposed to be equal in status because they are from one single Creator and they share a common physical origin and because they have equal value, all of them have autonomy and dignity. Minny perceives racial equality as a utopia, an ideal, yet unreachable and impossible condition. She perceives racial equality as a condition in which all human beings are supposed to be equal because all of them have a capacity for sympathy and natural inclination to feel concern for the well-being of others. Skeeter personally perceives racial equality as a condition when black people and white people are supposed to be equal in status without being separated by lines created by whites. She also perceives racial equality as a supposed condition in which all humans are equal because all of them have a capacity for sympathy and natural inclination to feel concern for the well-being of others.

D. Recommendations

In this part, the writer suggests recommendations for the future researchers and the English teachers who are interested in using racial equality as a learning material in the classroom. The future researchers who are interested in discussing the Help as the topic of their study shall consider discussing the irony depicted in the novel. There is so much irony depicted in the novel which has not been discussed thoroughly. The researchers can also discuss the social antagonism
depicted in the novel. In the world of discrimination and segregation depicted in the novel, social antagonism can be discovered in the interactions between two races, black and white, in which black people as the oppressed living in the world of inequality and white people as the oppressor.

As for the teachers, racial equality is a good material to be learnt in the classroom. The teachers can combine the topic with the four basic skills in learning language, listening, speaking, reading, and writing. The teachers can use racial equality as a topic of debate or they can provide students with the stories that contain the moral lessons of racial equality. The topic is very suitable to be discussed in Indonesia, because Indonesian people consist of many ethnic groups. It can be used to promote the solidarity among Indonesian people and to avoid racial conflict and contempt.
REFERENCES


APPENDIX A

SUMMARY OF THE HELP

*The Help*, Kathryn Stockett’s debut novel, tells the story of black maids working in white Southern homes in the early 1960s in Jackson, Mississippi, and of Miss Eugenia “Skeeter” Phelan, a 22-year-old graduate from Ole Miss, who returns to her family’s cotton plantation, Longleaf, to find that her beloved maid and nanny, Constantine, has left and no one will tell her why. Skeeter tries to behave as a proper Southern lady: She plays bridge with the young married women; edits the newsletter for the Junior League; and endures her mother’s constant advice on how to find a man and start a family. However, Skeeter’s real dream is to be a writer, but the only job she can find is with the Jackson Journal writing housekeeping advice column called “Miss Myrna.” Skeeter knows little about housekeeping, so she turns to her friend’s maid, Aibileen, for answers and finds a lot more.

Aibileen works tirelessly raising her employer’s child (Aibileen’s seventh one) and keeps a tidy house, yet none of this distracts her from the recent loss of her own son who died in an accident at work while his white bosses turned away. Two events bring Skeeter and Aibileen even closer: Skeeter is haunted by a copy of Jim Crow laws she found in the library, and she receives a letter from a publisher in New York interested in Skeeter’s idea of writing the true stories of domestic servants. Skeeter approaches Aibileen with the idea to write narratives from the point of view of 12 black maids. Aibileen reluctantly agrees, but soon finds herself as engrossed in the project as Skeeter. They meet clandestinely in the
evenings at Aibileen’s house to write the book together as the town’s struggles with race heat up all around them. Aibileen brings in her best friend, Minny, a sassy maid who is repeatedly fired for speaking her mind, to tell her story, too. Hearing their stories changes Skeeter as her eyes open to the true prejudices of her upbringing. Aibileen and Minny also develop a friendship and understanding with Skeeter that neither believed possible.

Along the way, Skeeter learns the truth of what happened to her beloved maid, Constantine. Constantine had given birth, out of wedlock, to Lulabelle who turned out to look white even though both parents were black. Neither the black nor the white community would accept Lulabelle, so Constantine gave her up for adoption when she was four years old. When the little girl grew up, she and Constantine were reunited. While Skeeter was away at college, Lulabelle came to visit her mother in Jackson and showed up at a party being held in Skeeter’s mother’s living room. When Charlotte Phelan discovered who Lulabelle was, she kicked her out and fired Constantine. Constantine had nowhere else to go, so she moved with her daughter to Chicago and an even worse fate. Skeeter never saw Constantine again. Skeeter’s book is set in the fictional town of Niceville and published anonymously. It becomes a national bestseller and, soon, the white women of Jackson begin recognizing themselves in the book’s characters. Hilly Holbrook, in particular, is set on vengeance due to the details in the book. Hilly and Skeeter grew up best friends, but they now have very different views on race and the future of integration in Mississippi. Hilly, who leads the Junior League and bosses around the other white women in the town, reveals to Stuart, Skeeter’s
boyfriend, that she found a copy of the Jim Crow laws in Skeeter’s purse, which further ostracizes Skeeter from their community.

In the end, it is a secret about Hilly that Minny reveals in Skeeter’s book that silence Hilly. The book becomes a powerful force in giving a voice to the black maids and causes the community of Jackson to reconsider the carefully drawn lines between white and black.
APPENDIX B
LESSON UNIT PLAN

School : SMA Merah Putih Bersatu
Subject : English
Class/Semester : 7/I
Topic : Narrative Text
Unit : We are the Same! Don’t be Mean to Me!
Skill : Reading
Time Allotment : 2x45 minutes

A. Standard Competence
5. To understand the meaning of short functional text and simple essay in the form of narrative text in daily context and to access information.

B. Basic Competence
5.2. To respond the meaning and the rhetoric steps of a written essay accurately, fluently, and acceptably in the daily context and to access information from narrative text.

C. Indicators
1. Identify the type of narrative texts.
2. Identify the generic structure and language features of narrative texts.
3. Recognize the characters in the narrative texts.
4. Recognize the theme of the narrative texts.
5. Answer the questions related to the contents of the narrative texts.
6. Have the discussion related to the contents of the narrative texts.
7. Find the moral lessons in the narrative texts and relate the lessons to the daily life experiences.

D. Learning Objectives
1. The students are able to identify the type of narrative texts.
2. The students are able to identify the generic structure and language features of narrative texts.
3. The students are able to recognize the characters in the narrative texts.
4. The students are able to recognize the theme of the narrative texts.
5. The students are able to answer the questions related to the contents of the narrative texts.
6. The students are able to have the discussion related to the contents of the narrative texts.
7. The students are able to find the moral lessons in the narrative texts and relate the lessons to the daily life experiences.

E. Learning Materials
Learning materials are enclosed.

F. Learning Methods
Task-based Activity, Cooperative Learning (Lecture, Active Discussions, Questions and Answers)

G. Learning Activities
Preparation before Teaching:
- The teacher prepares the handouts and worksheets which will be distributed to the students.
### Activities in Class

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time Allocation</th>
<th>Teacher’s Activities</th>
<th>Students’ Activities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Pre-Activities  | 1. The teacher greets the students. (3 minutes)  
2. The teacher reviews on the previous materials. (3 minutes)  
3. The teacher begins to teach the new material by asking some preliminary questions related to racial equality. (4 minutes) | Pre-Activities  
1. The students greet the teacher.  
2. The students actively pay attention to the teacher.  
3. The students pay attention to the teacher. The students try to actively answer the questions from the teacher. |
| 10 Minutes      |                       |                      |
| Whilst Activities Exploration (15 minutes) | 1. The teacher distributes the handouts to the students.  
2. The teacher gives short explanations related to narrative text, the generic structure and the language feature.  
3. The teacher gives explanations about how to find the generic structure and the language feature of narrative text.  
4. The teacher asks the students to find the generic structure and the language feature of narrative text. | Main Activities Exploration  
1. The students receive the handouts.  
2. The students listen to the teacher’s explanations.  
3. The students listen to the teacher’s explanation.  
4. The students answer the teacher’ questions.  
5. The students listen to the teacher’s explanation.  
6. The students listen to the teacher’s explanations.  
7. The students answer the |
| 65 Minutes      |                       |                      |
from the example story.
5. The teacher gives explanations about the intrinsic and the extrinsic elements of narrative text.
6. The teacher gives explanations on how to find the information from the narrative text.
7. The teacher asks the students about the information related to the narrative text in the example story.

**Elaboration (25 minutes)**
1. The teacher distributes the worksheets to the students.
2. The teacher asks the students to work individually with the worksheet.
3. The teacher asks the students to find a partner and to compare their answers with another student. (Pairing discussion)
4. The teachers check on the students’ works.
5. The teacher asks the students to prepare for the whole class discussion.

**Elaboration**
1. The students receive the worksheet.
2. The students work individual with the worksheet.
3. The students compare their works in pair.
4. The students ask questions to the teacher when they find difficulties.
5. The students prepare themselves for the whole class discussion.

**Confirmation**
1. The students answer the questions in the worksheet.
2. The students discuss the answer with the teacher.
3. The students answer the teacher’s questions and relate the topic with their daily life experiences.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Confirmation (25 minutes)</th>
<th>Post-Activities</th>
<th>Post-Activities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. The teacher asks the students to answer the questions in the worksheets. (whole class discussion)</td>
<td>1. The teacher opens a discussion about difficulties and problems in learning the material. (3 minutes)</td>
<td>1. The students tell the teacher about the difficult problems in learning the material.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. The teacher discusses the answers with the students. (whole class discussion)</td>
<td>2. The teacher makes a short review on what they have learned today. (10 minutes)</td>
<td>2. The students listen to the teacher.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. The teacher asks the students about what they think about the topic and how it has relation with the students’ daily lives. (whole class discussion)</td>
<td>3. The teacher gives the students the closing greeting. (2 minutes)</td>
<td>3. The students greet the teacher.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**H. Learning Sources**

- Dictionary
- Handout and Worksheet
- Laptop and Viewer
✓ Board and Board Markers

I. Learning Evaluation

Formative evaluation during the teaching and learning activities. It is a non-test evaluation. It also uses the students’ attendance and the students’ activeness for additional score.

Scoring Procedures

Test Specification

Reading

Format : Written Worksheet
Task : S answers the questions on the worksheets and has the discussion related to the topic after that.

Yogyakarta, 16 February 2015

Teacher

F. Sabrina Cahyamitha
NIM: 081214088
HANDOUT AND WORKSHEET

WE ARE THE SAME! DON’T BE MEAN TO ME!

Activity 1- Please Recall Your Memory

Answer the following questions briefly!

1. Have you ever been told a story in your life by your parents?
2. What was your favorite story when you were child?
3. What is your most favorite story/book right now?
4. What do you know about narrative text?

Box of Treasure—Let’s Learn Together about Narrative Text!

Definition

- Narrative writing presents a story of sequence events which involves characters.
- Narrative is a type of text that is proposed to amuse and to deal with actual and vicarious experience in different ways; narrative also deals with problematic events which lead to a crisis or turning points of some kind, which in turn find a resolution.
- Narrative text is a description of a series of events, either real or imaginary, that is written or told in order to entertain people. This type of text structurally organizes the action, thought, and interactions of its characters into pattern of plot.

The Purpose

- To tell a story to the readers.
- To amuse and entertain the readers.
- To teach moral lessons to the readers.

Generic Structure

1) Orientation: the introduction of the characters who involve in the story, time and the place where the story takes place.
2) Complication: a series of events in which the main character attempts to solve the problem.
3) Resolution: the ending of the story containing the problem solution.
Let's Get the Example!
1. Can you tell about the generic structure of the text?
2. Can you tell about the text’s features?

Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves

Once upon a time there were 40 cruel thieves who put their stolen money and treasures in a cave. They went in the cave by saying “Open Sesame” to the cave entrance. A poor person, named Ali Baba saw them while they were doing that, so he heard the opening word. After they left, he went toward the cave and opened it. Suddenly he found a very large quantity of money and golden treasures. He took some of it and went back home. After that he became a rich man and his brother wanted to know how he became rich. Ali Baba turned into the richest man in his village. His evil brother was really jealous of him, and wanted to know how he could get such a lot of money. Therefore, when Ali Baba went to the cave again to take some more money, his brother followed him. He saw everything, and decided to go back the next day to take some money for himself. The next morning he found a lot of money in the cave, and he wanted to take all of them. Unfortunately, when he was busy carrying the money to his house, the thieves came. The boss of the thieves asked him how he knew about the cave. He told everything, but unluckily they killed him and went to Ali Baba’s house. After finding Ali Baba’s house, they made a plan to kill him the following night. Some of the thieves hid in big jars, and the boss pretended that he was a merchant who wanted to sell the jars to Ali Baba. Ali Baba who was a kind man invited the boss of the thief to have lunch together.
After lunch they took a rest. Luckily, the house maid went out of the house, and found that there were thieves inside the jars. She finally boiled hot oil and poured it into the jars to kill all of them. The boss of the thieves was caught, and put into prison. Ali Baba was saved from the danger, and he finally lived happily ever after with his maid who became his wife shortly after.


Activity 2-Now Please Hear My Story

Aibileen’s Secret Story 1

A Little Black Girl and A Little White Girl

One day Mae Mobley asked me to tell her a story. So, I told her bout a little colored girl and her white friend. “Once upon a time they was two little girls,” I say, “One girl had black skin, one girl had white.” Mae Mobley look up at me. She listening. “Little colored girl say to the little white girl, ‘How come your skin be so pale?’ White girl say, ‘I don’t know. How come your skin be so black? What you think that mean?’ “But neither one a them little girls knew. So little white girl say, ‘Well, let’s see. You got hair.’ “I gives Mae Mobley a little tousle on her head. “Little colored girl say, ‘I got a nose, you got a nose.’ “I gives her little snout a tweak. She got to reach up and do the same to me. “Little white girl say, ‘I got toes, you got toes.’ And I do the little thing with her toes, but she can’t get to mine cause I got my white work shoes on. “So we’s the same. Just a different color,’ say that little colored girl. The little white girl she agreed and they was friends. ‘The End.’ say me to her. (Adapted from The Help, Stockett, p. 204, ch. 15).
Aibileen’s Secret Story 2

Why the Earthlings are So Mean to Me?
A Tale of A Green Martian Luther King

“Today I’m on tell you bout a man from outer space.” Say me to Mae Mobley. She just loves hearing about peoples from outer space. Her favorite show on the tee-vee is My Favorite Martian. I pull out my antennae hats I shaped last night out a tinfoil, fasten em on our heads. One for her and one for me. We look like we a couple a crazy people in them things. “One day, a wise Martian come down to Earth to teach us people a thing or two,” I say. “Martian? How big?” “Oh, he about six-two.” “What’s his name?” “Martian Luther King.” She take a deep breath and lean her head down on my shoulder. I feel her three-year-old heart racing against mine, flapping like butterflies on my white uniform. “He was a real nice Martian, Mister King. Looked just like us, nose, mouth, hair up on his head, but sometime people looked at him funny and sometime, well, I guess sometime people was just downright mean.” I could get in a lot a trouble telling her these little stories, especially with Mister Leefolt. But Mae Mobley know these our “secret stories.” “Why Aibee? Why was they so mean to him?” she ask. “Cause he was green.”

(Adapted from The Help, Stockett, p. 303, ch. 23).

Activity 3-Time for Discussion

Please answer the following questions based on Aibileen’s secret stories above!
1. Who are the characters in Aibileen’s secret story 1?
2. Who are the characters in Aibileen’s secret story 2?
3. What are the differences between a black little girl and a white little girl in the secret story 1?
4. What are the differences between Martian and the Earthlings?
5. What do you think of the differences?
6. Do you think that the differences can be used to treat people differently?
7. What do you think of the reasons Aibileen’s stories being called as a secret?
8. What are the moral lessons of the stories?
9. Have you ever been treated differently because you are different from the others?
10. Have you ever treated someone differently because he/s different from the others?

Activity 4—Please Share Your Story about Racial Equality Here!