

# CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION

### A. Background of the Research

A cartoon series is one of the most timeless literary works. The development of the film series will always be awaited by many people, and it will get a lot of positive responses from its fans. Children, teenagers, adults, and even parents must have their own favourite film series. Not many of the directors remake famous series in certain years to spoil the eyes of fans of the series. Along with the development of the film series and the surrounding circumstances that are constantly changing, some film series entrepreneurs include elements of criticism in each episode. Such as criticizing the politics or economy of a country, the way of dressing in the modern era, and the environment.

Now, the function of the cartoon series itself today is not only as entertainment but also includes aspects of education, knowledge, and new information that is happening in society. because indirectly, when someone sees a movie, the message conveyed by the film will indirectly act as a shaper of a person's perception of the meaning of the message conveyed in the film. The thing that the writer will discuss is about cartoons in the famous children's series, SpongeBob SquarePants. Cartoons are one of the literary works that carry media and audiovisual as a type of literature. cartoons are also one of the

works of fiction that still often appear on television. After studying further, the writer wants to conduct research on the famous US cartoon series SpongeBob SquarePants. Because the writer sees several problems that are mentioned in the SpongeBob series for the audience. SpongeBob SquarePants itself has had many fans since long ago, and now SpongeBob SquarePants remains a spectacle that is still present from time to time. This cartoon series is so loved by all ages, apart from the imaginative storyline, this cartoon also has a plot that is arguably unoriginal as a cartoon for entertainment alone.

In addition, SpongeBob SquarePants became a spectacle for children because of the entertaining nature of the main character. Not only that, sometimes SpongeBob SquarePants also often slips some remarks, innuendo, and even babble that has a certain meaning both in the relationship between humans and humans and humans and their natural environment. As a form of graphic communication, SpongeBob SquarePants as a cartoon is also an interpretive picture that uses certain symbols to convey messages quickly and concisely, or through attitudes towards surrounding people, situations, and certain events. Meanwhile, cartoons also usually not only express the essence of a message that the creator wants to convey and then pour it into a simple image, without details, using symbols and characters that are easily recognizable and so quickly understood by the audience. (Arsyad, 2000).

Although depicted with various types of sea animals, the stories contained in SpongeBob cartoons have the concept of reality or stories as humans socialize with their environment through activities such as work, play, and

other activities. In some parts of the storyline, the author sees some elements of criticism in this series, either about the marine environment that is polluted by humans or an exploitation of marine animals. In this SpongeBob cartoon broadcast, the residents of the bikini bottom city are described as a group of humans who occupy a city nicknamed the bikini bottom. There are some who are aware of the decay of the environment created by humans themselves, but not many of the humans who still do not care about the surrounding environment, and this is the ecocriticism made so that humans are aware of the relationship between humans themselves and the nature they live in. Movies, animations, cartoons, and the like are literary works that fall into the category of drama. a form of literary work that aims to describe a life by conveying conflicts and emotions through behavior and dialogue.

Literature touches everything in whole scope, including about environmental problem from which it becomes one important aspect which is popular now and relevant with earth safety for the future. Therefore, in the mid-eighties, some of these people began to come to their senses, and they begin to connect literature and the environment to respond to the problem. The emergence of various new theories in literary studies, starting from the theories of structuralism, semiotics, genetic-structuralism, literary reception, and singularity signify the rapid development of scientific literary studies in the West.

The complexity of the problems of human life, which is then supported by the rapid development of science, immediately has an impact on the

productivity of literary science, which gave birth to a variety of literary theories that began to develop rapidly, representing the new dawn of the multidisciplinary era. Then the term ecocriticism appeared for the first time in 1978, which was popularized by William Rueckert in an essay entitled "Literature and Ecology: An Experiment in Ecocriticism" Literary studies with an ecocriticism approach have now begun to be widely used, especially in America since the early 1990s, and in 2004, Greg Garrad again developed research on ecocritical theory. Garrad (2004) believes that ecocriticism is a study of the relationship between humans and non-humans, the history of humans, and also culture related to a critical analysis of humans and their environment.

Therefore, ecocriticism is a study that investigates how humans present and depict a connection or synergy between humans and their environment in an expression of cultural products. With the hope that this study will be able to become an education as well as environmental learning. Following this, environmental education may improve human awareness and participation in environmental protection, popularize environmental protection knowledge and skills, and thus help achieve sustainable development International Science Council (2020). We, as humans, sometimes do not realize that the behavior or small things we do in the present will have a big impact on the future.

In this study, the writer found some damage to the oceans caused by human actions that even humans themselves did not realize their actions would damage at least one natural ecosystem, be it the ocean, animals, or plants at the

bottom of the sea. Imagine if our entire ocean is polluted by human negligence, including mangrove ecosystems, coral reefs, the loss of marine life species, abrasion, and even environmental degeneration, which will have an impact on the economic decline of coastal fishermen.

According to Harsono (2008, p. 31), the term ecocriticism comes from the English ecocriticism, which is a combination of the word ecology and the word critic. Ecology can be interpreted as a scientific study of the patterns of relationships that plants, animals, and humans have with each other and with their environment. Criticism itself can be defined as a form and expression of judgment about whether something is good or bad. Ecology encompasses a variety of natural sciences, social sciences, philosophy, and very comprehensive knowledge. This approach is what makes it a very broad science. Being a main subject to be discussed, and which will make its center, has an interdependent nature between all living things that exist.

Endraswara (2016:41) Ecocriticism argues that the earth is a physical state, which humans often exploit at will. The focus for literary ecocriticism is to explore the ways in which we imagine and depict the relationship between humans and their environment in all fields as a result of culture. Literary ecocriticism is also inspired by the modern environmental movement.

In this series, the state of the environment, which includes everything in the universe that is home to many species, including forests, oceans, animals, and nature, is described clearly and deeply, but still through a cartoon series. Thus, research related to the relationship between humans and their

environment in the SpongeBob SquarePants series is important. The approach used is ecocriticism.

The research conducted by this writer will focus on a topic about finding elements between human relationships with the environment, both through pieces of images as well as words and even behaviors that illustrate environmental issues in the SpongeBob SquarePants cartoon. The writer will continue all the findings found later and further examine them by looking at the ecocritical side, as well as developing them so as to find results that are in accordance with the main topic of this research.

## **B. Question and Scope of the Research**

### **1. Question of the Research**

Based on the background of the study above, the following problems arise:

- a. What are the environmental damage issues according to an ecocriticism perspective that appear in the cartoon SpongeBob SquarePants?
- b. What are the effects of environmental damage depicted in the SpongeBob SquarePants cartoon?

### **2. Scopes of the Research**

This research focuses on the analysis of environmental problems that are satirized through children's shows in the animated cartoon series "*SpongeBob SquarePants*". Created by Stephen Hillenburg. The writer tries to discover environmental ecocritical elements and explain why they are used and what the meaning behind them is. However, in finding

elements of environmental ecocriticism and their representation, both directly and indirectly, this analysis uses qualitative theory. By analyzing these critical elements, we will find the deepest meanings related to the storyline and character storyline. The writer uses Garrard's (2004) theory as the main research in ecocritical theory and Kemp's (1994) theory for the issue of environmental damage.

### **C. Objective and Significance of the Research**

Based on the previous statement, the research objectives are as follows:

#### **1. Objectives of the Research**

Based on the two problems above, the objectives of this research are:

- a. To understand how the serial portrait can be categorized into a type of ecocriticism in the SpongeBob SquarePants series.
- b. To find out whether there are environmental issues that are included in the form of ecocriticism in the SpongeBob series.

#### **2. Significance of the Research**

There are several expectations from the writer of this research:

- a. Theoretically
  - 1) For readers

This research can help readers improve their understanding of literary studies in film series. and will also help readers find out ecocriticism, along with the attention and meaning of each series episode that will be found in the “SpongeBob SquarePants” series by Stephen Hillenburg.

- 2) For researchers

With the ease of understanding that can be obtained from this research, hopefully it can be used as a reference for students and lecturers at the School of Foreign Languages - JIA and other people who are also interested in this topic to carry out further studies. Practically

1) For readers

This research will help readers get a better picture of environmental and ecocritical issues in the future. Primarily, it will happen. It is useful for those with an interest in literature to know how to write well in literary works such as series, films, poetry, and drama. Also, criticize the environment in the writing process, which adds interesting and aesthetic value to the reader.

2) For researchers

It is hoped that the results of this research can contribute to other people who will conduct research by applying theories from ecocriticism regarding environmental criticism in literature.

#### **D. Operational Definition**

The writer will explain the meaning of the terms one by one to be used in this research through the following:

##### **1. Literature**

Literature itself is an expression for humans, which can be in the form of written or oral works based on a human's thoughts, opinions, experiences, and feelings. Through all these elements, a poem, novel, movie, and others can be created.



## **2. Ecocriticism**

Literary criticism that studies the relationship between the environment and nature together. Ecocriticism can also be interpreted as a symbiosis that is interrelated with each other, such as humans and their environment. This relationship usually occurs between literature and the physical environment, in essence, in a literary work cannot be separated from natural conditions.

### **1. Series**

A storyline that has several episodes that are in sequence with each other or continue in each storyline. Usually, series have at least 3 episodes to shorten the story.

### **2. Cartoon**

Cartoons are a type of fine art that usually takes the form of drawings or animations and has an unrealistic or semi-realistic style designed to influence public opinion or just entertainment.

### **3. Environmental Issue**

Issues that raise the environment involve humans, nature, animals, and plants.

## **E. Systematization of the Research**

Chapter I Introduction consists of Background of the research, questions of the research, the scope of the research, objectives of the research, significance of the study, operational definitions, and systematization of the research.

Chapter II Theoretical description contains theory of cartoon and literature, general idea of Ecocriticism, Relationship between environmental issue and ecocriticism, environmental issue on ocean, water pollution, effects of trash on the ocean, effects of marine pollution on marine life, ocean pollution because of capitalism, and research of the relevance.

Chapter III Research methodology consists of method of the research, procedure of the research, technique of the data collection, technique of the data analysis, and data sources.

Chapter IV Analysis data contain data descriptions, analysis data, and interpretations of research.

Chapter V Conclusions and suggestions contains a summary of the results of the research, and also includes suggestions from the writer for readers included in this last chapter as a closing discussion that the writer has researched.

