I. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

Literature is like a mirror that reflects all the lives of people in other places and a period of time. We can learn the history of one country through its literary works. The word ‘literature’ comes from the Latin word ‘litera’ which means an art of written works. Early literature was oral, meant to be memorized and recited. Later, literature was written down and read. All cultures and countries have their own literature, even some of them famous in the world. Taylor (1981:1) says, “Literature, like other arts, is essentially an imaginative act, that is, and act of the writer’s imagination in selecting, ordering, and interpreting life-experience”. It means that literature is an interpretation of human’s mind that uses language as medium. It has a large scope and fantastic. In literature, there are three branches of literature such drama, poetry, and prose. Meanwhile, prose can also be divided into novel, short story, romance, etc.

Novel is one of literary form, and therefore developed as a piece of prose fiction. The novel was recognized as a major literary form in the end of the Neoclassical period. Most novels are concerned with ordinary people and their problems in the societies in which they find themselves. Novel is written in narrative form, telling the social problem, including love, politic, war, the story of technology, the historical, background of one area, biography of someone, etc. What is told in a novel might have happened, in the sense of ‘true life’, as historical and biography story. But a novel may be just as fiction. But fiction must be true to life as we know it or we accept it. It must be probable.
The author of novel of course has a certain purpose why he or she writes a novel. It means that the author has some messages to the reader through his novel. That is why; an interpretation must be done to find out the meaning of novel. We can approach the novel through the characters. As Gill (1985:235) says that the approach through characters to analyze a novel is very important. If you interpret a novel in this way, you will have to consider the effect characters have on you, the feelings they arouse in you, and the judgments you make about them. It means that we can find the meaning and the significance of novel by exploring characters’ mind. Therefore, I interest to discuss the main characters in this thesis.

Characters are the person who plays an important rule to build up the story. A character in a novel is not a real human being and has no life outside the literary composition, however well the illusion of reality has been created by the author. Characters action the way how people live their lives, how they love and hate, how they struggle for their ideals, even how they struggle to prove themselves. All the characters must act and behave according to themselves. He arranges everything, which is to be the main character. He can be a hero or heroine. And minor character completes the story. Sometimes a novelist takes himself in character; he usually uses another name or uses the first person singular pronoun ‘I’ in his work. It proves that most of author made their works base on their background of life, and the situation of their period. Bonazza (1982:3) says that character refers to one of the persons in the story, the end result of the author’s effort to create a fictional personality. It is, of course, not possible to have action without characters or no conflicts without character.

Learning about character of course brings us to clarifying what the character is like. We should, therefore, also think about how an author creates the personality,
or individuality of a character. Gill (1985:97) explains that we need to do this, because many questions in public examination ask to write about what a character is like. In answering a question like that we will be writing about the ways in which an author has made a particular character distinctive. When we talk about characters, they must be included protagonist and antagonist character. Generally protagonist presented the good habits, and in contrary with antagonist which presented the bad habits or evil.

There are some students of literature in the faculty of cultural studies, University of Sumatera Utara, discuss about main character in their thesis. Such, Rani Yusniati Andayani Damanik’s thesis, An Analysis of the Main Characters’ in Harper Lee’s novel To kill A Mockingbird (2009), and Nadya Natasha’s thesis, An Analysis of Main Characters in Arthur Golden’s novel Memoirs of a Geisha (2011). Most of them describe about how the main characters portrayed in the novel and how the main character struggle in their life. But there is no thesis discuss about main characters in the novel Steal Away. That is way I would discuss about this novel in my thesis.

Steal Away is written by Jennifer Armstrong, the winner of numerous awards for both fiction and nonfiction, Jennifer Armstrong has written more than 100 books for all ages, from pre-school through young adult. She receives an ALA Notable Children's Book and an SCBWI Golden Kite Honor book from her novel Steal Away. This novel published in 1992, telling of an orphan Susannah with her slave Bethlehem who tries stealing away from Virginia to Vermont. Susannah loves Bethlehem, although Bethlehem is slave, she believes that slavery is wrong. Their trip of stealing away is not easy but their friendship is strong. I interest to analyze
Steal Away because this novel is full of escape adventure, the friendship, and the enduring racism.

There are many characters in this novel, they are; Bethlehem Reid, Susannah McKnight, Free, Mary, Uncle Reid, Aunt Reid, Fidelia, Byron, Mary’s mother, Mary’s father, Lizer, Nahum, Anna Tuke, Given, Mrs. Tuke, and Dorothea Tuke. Meanwhile this thesis focuses to the main characters; Susannah and Bethlehem.

1.2 Problem of the Study

Base on the background of the analysis above, the problem of the analysis may be recognized as follows:

- How the characteristics of the main characters portrayed in the novel?

1.3 Objective of the Study

Every analysis has certain purpose or objective to be obtained and avoid deviation from have been planned. Based on the problem of the study above, this thesis has an objective to analyze. It may be recognized as follows:

- To identify the characteristics of the main characters portrayed in the novel.

1.4 Scope of the Study

When we analyze a novel, there will be many things to be discussed. So, it is important to make limitation of the analysis to avoid the readers of getting confused. This thesis limits the analysis only to discuss about the characterization of the main characters in the Jennifer Armstrong’s novel Steal Away, they are Susannah and Bethlehem.
1.5 Significances of the Study

This thesis is entitled An Analysis of The Main Characters Found in Jennifer Armstrong’s novel “Steal Away”. The significance of this analysis contains theoretical and practical intention. Theoretically, it may enrich the knowledge about literature, especially about character through the novel. Practically, the readers can get better understanding about Steal Away, especially understanding of its main characters. And I hope this thesis can be used as the reference for students of literature for further study, and can be added to the library collection.