CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background of Study

The twentieth century has witnessed the birth of a new member into the family of drama the one-act play. For more than a century there had been no dramas written that were worthy of note. Talented playwrights again begin writing dramas, and plays become rich in content and deep in purpose. As the plays become better, the audiences grew to be more intelligent and more critical. John Millington Synge is one of the most important playwrights of the Irish Renaissance. Nowadays, it has been argued that his plays are far more deeply rooted, thematically and aesthetically, in the ancient native literature than was previously believed.

*John Millington Synge’s Riders to the Sea* is a play that only has one act. A one-act play can scarcely more than indicate the result of a struggle. *Riders to the Sea* serves to illustrate the essential difference between the one-act play and the play in two or more acts: since the former is almost always concerned with but a single incident, it is capable of very little development. *Riders to the Sea* intends the audience not only through the speeches of characters but also through the different symbols and images. The information that should be obtained in the *Riders to the Sea* is not enough through the dialogue because of the limited time, so symbols are obtained by the playwright. A number of symbols are used to help the reader to understand the storyline and develop a visceral, or gut reaction to the play. In *Riders to the Sea*, different symbols and images help the story move forward. Such symbols and images contribute to the right mood of the story. The audience is expected to be
able to interpret each symbol that contained in the play. That is why this play is interesting to analyze.

Play is one of literary genre. There is the difference between play and drama. Play may also be regarded as a piece of literature which is read for pleasure. While drama is a work of literature or composition describes life and man activity as means of presenting various actions of dialogue between a group of characters.

A symbol has role in play. A symbol in play is the effort of the playwright to give much information to the audience, because a symbol stands for the idea. A symbol, according to Harmon and Holman (1996:497) is something that is itself and also stands for something else. That means symbol in play for example, doesn’t merely means itself, but has another wider meaning and has a function for certain intention.

There are many symbols found in the play Riders to the Sea that makes it interesting and unique to be analyzed. Peck and Martin (1984:72) explains that:

“A symbol is only used when a writer wants to express an apprehension of something in his mind which is not directly observable in the everyday world. Symbol is not expressed directly by the author but it is expressed by the object, figures, characters and colors where it represents abstract ideas or concept”.

Symbol can expressed as the object to represent in its absence. A symbol may be defined as any object that suggest a larger meaning than itself or as applied specially to literature. For example the word ladder which can represent the relationship between heaven and earth or ascension. Simple colors can also be symbolic, depending on location, or the context in which is used. For example, in
Asian countries, red symbolizes happiness, marriage, and prosperity; in some countries the color of mourning is white. Colour symbolism is used to convey a deeper message to the readers and help us understand the characters true colours.

Symbols are widely used in the play as well as in Riders to the Sea. The Sea is also the symbol of supernatural or something beyond the logic because several time some natural powerful forces and calamities which destroy the happiness of human and also life in various ways. On the other hand the sea also provides the livelihood of the human who go to the sea and live beside the sea by providing many things.

According to T.R. Henn (1963), ‘This general play has become the best tragedy by the help of the symbols’. This play has a short scene, but the events last long. T.R Henn describes this symbolism as the product of the creative imagination of Synge which apprehends or corresponds between myths, legends, events or things. The language which is used in Riders to the Sea is effective, and there are numerous of symbols used. It is known that, symbolism is the main element of any kinds of arts. That makes the play becomes interesting to analyze, which is not the same with other plays which have a long scene and acts.

Riders to the Sea is one-act play by John Millington Synge, an Irish playwright which was published in 1903 and produced in 1904. Riders to the Sea is set in the Aran Islands off the west coast of Ireland and is based on a tale Synge heard there. It won critical acclaim as one of dramatic literature’s greatest one-act plays. The play is about Maurya, an old woman who has lost to the sea all the male members of her family except Bartley, the last of her six sons. In the course of th e play he too drowns.
Symbolic meaning, according to Shipley (1970:217) is word or communicative thing such as gestures or pictures that stand for something else. A symbol has complex meaning. It does not only have “literal” meaning, but also additional meanings beyond the literal. A symbol may have more than one meaning. In fact, the most significant symbol do convey an indefinite range of meanings. Symbols may have very narrow or quite wide ranges of meaning. It is the way to communicate with others and explain more about something.

The misunderstanding of the symbols will make the real meaning and the purpose of the symbols irrelevant and brings the wrong interpretation, conclusion and comprehension to the reader. This thesis will try to analyze the symbols found in Riders to the Sea by John Millington Synge and give the description of the symbols to the reader in order to avoid the wrong comprehension of the symbol’s meaning.

1.1.2. Problems of the Study

During the process of study, it is important to know the problems that are going to be analyzed in that play. Deciding statement the problem would help the writer in collecting data for the analysis.

1. How do the kinds of symbols stand for?

2. What are the functions of the symbols?
1.1.3. Object of the Study

The objective of study is one thing that we must achieve or the statements about what we have done in object that we are going to analyze depend on the problem of analysis. So, the object of the study are as below:

1. To find out how the symbols are there to stand for.
2. To explain what are the function of those symbols.

1.1.4. Scope of the Study

When doing analysis of literary works, actually there should be a scope of analysis, so that the object that are analyzed become clear and the purpose of the analysis is easy to understand by the readers being.

It is important for the writer to limit the analysis. Therefore, she only focused this analysis on symbols that found in John Millington Synge’s *Riders to the Sea*.

1.1.5. Significance of the Study

This study will help the readers more understand the story by explaining how the symbols used in play *Riders to the Sea*. This study can be a lesson, especially to know the symbols, also to enrich the study of literature especially about symbols in the play.