CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

*Into the Wild* is a 1996 non-fiction novel, it is adapted from the true story of Christopher McCandless which is made into a biography by Jon Krakauer. This novel discuss about a young man’s way of life and psychology that fulfilled with rejection and madness he got from everywhere with society, especially his family although his family really loved him then choose to abandon everything that he had and start his journey into the wild. The writer interested to choose the title because want to give information to the readers about everything we learn, read or believe, we should filter it with everything we got as best as we can, or we just end up drowning into someone’s mindset.

*Into the Wild* tells the true story about Chris McCandless, a young Emory graduate who is found dead in the Alaskan wilderness in September 1992, when he is twenty-four. McCandless grows up in wealthy Virginia suburbs of Washington, D.C., and is a very gifted athlete and scholar, who from an early age shows deep intensity, passion, and a strict moral compass. After graduating from high school McCandless spends the summer alone on a road trip across the country, during which he discovers that his father secretly had a second family during Chris’s childhood. McCandless returns home and starts as a freshman at Emory, but his anger over this betrayal and his parents’ keeping it from him grows worse over time.

By the time that McCandless is a senior at Emory, he lives monastically, has driven away most of his friends with his intensity and moral certitude, and barely
keeps in touch with his parents. He lets his parents think that he is interested in law school, but instead, after graduating with honors, he donates his $25,000 savings anonymously to charity, gets in his car, and drives away without telling anyone where he is going, abandoning the use of his real name along the way. He never contacts his parents or sister, Carine, again.

Not too long after leaving Atlanta, McCandless deserts his car in the desert after a flash flood wets the engine, and from then on, he hitchhikes around the Northwest, getting jobs here and there but not staying anywhere for long, often living on the streets, and keeping as little money and as few possessions as he can. During this time he gets to know a few people rather closely, and everyone admires his intensity and willingness to live completely by his beliefs, but he avoids true intimacy.

After about two years of itinerant travel, McCandless settles on a plan to go to Alaska and truly live in the wilderness, completely alone, and with very few supplies, to see if he can do it, to push himself to the very extremes. He spends a few months preparing, learning all he can about hunting, edible plants, etc, and then he leaves South Dakota, where he’d been working, and hitchhikes to Fairbanks. Those whom he tells about the plan all warn him that he needs to be better prepared, or should wait until later in the spring, but he is adamant and stubborn.

In April of 1992 McCandless gets dropped off near Mt. McKinley, and hikes into the wilderness. He spends the next sixteen weeks hunting small game, foraging, reading, and living in a deserted bus made to be a shelter for hunters, not seeing a single human the entire time. He is successful for the most part, although he loses significant weight. In late July, however, McCandless probably eats some moldy seeds, and the mold contains a poison that essentially causes him to starve to death,
no matter how much he eats, and he is too weak to gather food anyway. McCandless is quickly incapacitated by the poison. Realizing he is going to die, he writes a goodbye message, and a few weeks later some hunters find his body in the bus.

Another information that we should know, After leaving his things, before he starts his adventure, Chris changed his name into “Alexander Supertramp” in order to avoid his family to tracking him.

Driving west out of Atlanta, he intended to invent and utterly new life for himself, one in which he would be free to wallow in unfiltered experience. To symbolize the complete severance from his previous life, he even adopted a new name. No longer would he answer to Chris McCandless; he was now Alexander Supertramp, master of his own destiny. (Krakauer, 1996:23)

All the story above show that the main character has idealism belief, Idealism is the group of philosophies which assert that reality, or reality as we can know it, is fundamentally mental, mentally constructed, or otherwise immaterial. Epistemologically, idealism manifests as a skepticism about the possibility of knowing any mind-independent thing, or in simple meaning, Idealism is the philosophy that believes the ultimate nature of reality is ideal, or based upon ideas, values, or essences. The external, or real world cannot be separated from consciousness, perception, mind, intellect and reason in the sense of science. And for some people, Idealism or the unrealistic belief in perfection mostly ends in frustration.

From the explanation above, this thesis discusses about what are the factors that make the leading character become an Idealist. In this analysis the writer use the library research, some related references such as books and thesis are used to support
the theory. The data are obtained from “Into The Wild” novel and the other books that related to the problems. This analysis deals with descriptive qualitative method.

In order to answer the problems above, the writer will apply psychological approach and the theory of convergence. Psychological approach can focuses on the author, the characters, the audience and the text. For author, the theory is used to analyze the author and his/her life, and the literary work is used to supply evidence for this analysis. This is often called "psychobiography." For the characters, the theory is used to analyze one or more characters; the psychological theory becomes a tool to explain the character’s behavior and motivations. The closer the theory applied to the characters, the more realistic the work appears. For the audience, the theory is used to explain the appeal of the work for those who read it; the work is considered embodying universal human psychological processes and motivations, to which the readers respond more or less unconsciously, and for the text, the theory is used to analyze the role of language and symbolism in the work.

Theory of Convergence is the theory which stated that the establishment or development of personality of a person is determined by innate factors and also factors in the surrounding environment.

As we know there are some people who adopt idealism and become successful, but this novel shows that if our understanding of something wrong is too much, it will only make us become a victim. This novel teaches us to not only rely on the ego, but also must be balanced with the reality. What is also important is that our lives are regulated by parental advice, due to the freedom to live without the attention of the parents may not be able to bring us into a better and more comfortable life. It is not even a good thing to leave your parents whatever the reason is, it could even be
boomerang for us when we need help from the others, and however the parents will surely give the best for their children.

There is nothing wrong with Idealism, but everything that we believe combined with ego and anger, will only bring us to a confusion. In confusion, people will lose their mind and will do something stupid in the name of Idealism. And this is what the writer wants to explain in the thesis and become the significance of the study.

1.2 Problems of the Study

   Followings are the problems of analysis in the thesis:

   1. How is the leading character’s personality as reflected in *Into The Wild*?
   2. What are the factors that influence the leading character’s personality to become an Idealist man in *Into The Wild*?

1.3 Objectives of the Study

   1. To describe the personality of Christopher McCandless in *Into The Wild*
   2. To explain the factors that make Christopher McCandless become an Idealist man as found in *Into The Wild*

1.4 Scope of the Study

   In order to avoid excessively large discussions, based on the identification of the problem, the scope of the study is limited to analyze the personality and the factors that make the main character become an idealist according to the psychology of literature.
1.5 Significance of the Study

With this research, it is expected will be obtained the following benefits.

1. Theoretical Benefits

This research is expected to be useful for the development of Psychology in Literature. Findings and new objects that exist in this study should be used as additional science, especially in the fields of Literature and the rest for development of personality psychology in English literature.

2. Practical Benefits

This research is expected to contribute knowledge about the personalities that will be able to serve as an evaluation for readers and researchers in attitude and action. Besides, for the purposes of teaching, knowledge of prospective educators' personality obtained from this study are expected to be equipped to understand the various characters that are owned by their students or children.