CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

This chapter provides discussion of the background of study, statement of the problem, purpose of study, significance of the study, scope and limitation, and definition of key terms. Each section is presented as follows.

1.1 Background of Study

“Literature is the product of author’s creative thinking in the form of imaginative writings” (Abrams, 2009:177). This means that literature is the creative work of the author in which it is full of imaginative ideas. He writes based on what he feels, sees, and experiences in the real life through writing language as the media. Furthermore, Welleck and Warren (in Kurniawan, 2012) assert that literature represents a life and social reality, whereas the natural world and individual have also been the object imitation of the literary. In other words, every literary work which had been made would have a close relationship with life. Moreover, it has also a strong connection with society, in which it can express to the readers of social condition at the time when it was composed. Indeed, literature acts as the reflection of the human life and the reality in society.

Literature gives beneficial as Francis Connoly (in Kurniawan, 2012) mentioned that the reason for reading literature is because of the necessity of information, amusement, or even a solace. Thus, by reading literary works, we are getting not only an amusement, but also certain message which presented by the author to the reader through the characters or other elements. In addition, Robert
(2002) added that many people read literature for pleasure whereby being surprised or upset by an unexpected twist of events.

One of the kind of literary works is film, whose means of “Photographic depictions far surpass the means of realistic portrayal in the theater (Klarer, 2004:56)”. It implies that a literary work is not simply an imagination in a piece of paper such as other written literary works, but also moving picture of reflection life. Therefore, film gives a new color for literary work because it is a new medium to portray the story and carry the message from the author through its photographic depictions. A filmmaker wants to make the viewers are easier to enjoy the story through the depiction rather than through reading novel or short story. Accordingly, they will spend less time to see the description through its portrayal and get a clear understanding about the story.

As a form of both art and entertainment, film has various topics. One of them is the topic about oppression, such as in a film *12 Years a Slave*. In this film, Steve McQueen as the director wants to notify the viewers a fact that occurred during the slavery period in American history, when oppression toward slaves stood at the center of society. The film is based on the true story of Solomon Northup in which he truly reflected the real condition of black slave during slavery period. In the film, Solomon Northup was a free Afro-American man who was kidnapped into slavery and suffered from various forms of oppression, such as forced to work overtime, experienced several of physical abuses, and viewed less than human. Furthermore, he tried to survive and be loyal to his master while he was struggling to get his freedom as a free Afro-American man as before. Therefore, it has attracted the researcher to
conduct this study since the film has an interesting story which is filled with courage and desires of the main character to extricate from the forms of oppression.

Considering oppression is the topic in the film *12 Years a Slave*, thus, in a broader sense it can be defined as a cruel treatment which addressed to another. However, in a more specifically sense, Simpson & Weiner (in Campbell, 2011:30) states that oppression is “An uncomfortable or distressing sense of (physical or mental) constriction; affliction; depression or heanness and prolonged cruel or unfair treatment or physical exertion of authority, mastery, or power; tyranny; exploitation”. This means oppression is the condition in which people feel unhappy and hardship because of treatment of authority or power in a weighty, cruel, bad or unjust manner. Further, Prilleltensky (2008) said that the objects of resistance to oppression are not merely individual, but also can be others or even the collective. In the modern era, oppression still exists in various forms. The forms of oppression toward individual or even a group can be seen in everyday life. For example oppression toward labors whose power are exploited for company’s profit, mistreatment toward household servants which has done by employer, and many more. Consequently, the study on oppression toward slave is necessary to conduct.

Oppression is expected to present an explanation about the social phenomena, since it happens because of the lack of awareness in which human being both man and woman, or black or white have equal right and opportunity. Accordingly, the researcher is interested in conducting the study entitles “An Analysis of Oppression Faced by Solomon Northup as a Black Slave In Steve McQueen’s Film 12 Years A Slave” to analyze the phenomenon of oppression case in the film.
1.2 Statement of Study

Established along the background of the study above, the researcher wants to answer the following questions:

1. What were the forms of oppression faced by Solomon Northup as a black slave in Steve McQueen’s film “12 Years a Slave”?  
2. What were the causes which made Solomon Northup get oppression as a black slave in Steve McQueen’s film “12 Years a Slave”?  
3. What did Solomon Northup do to be liberated from oppression forms as a black slave in Steve McQueen’s film “12 Years a Slave”?

1.3 Purpose of Study

In relation to the previous problems of this study, the objectives of the study are developed as follows:

1. To know and describe the forms of oppression which faced by Solomon Northup as a black slave in Steve McQueen’s film “12 Years a Slave”.  
2. To describe the causes which made Solomon Northup get oppression as a black slave in Steve McQueen’s film “12 Years a Slave”.  
3. To explain Solomon Northup’s efforts to be liberated from oppression forms as a black slave in Steve McQueen’s film “12 Years a Slave”.
1.4 Significance of Study

The result of this study has significance for the following people:

1. For the English Department Students

   The students can take the lesson about oppression toward black slave, which now often used as a theme in written literary works and film. Therefore, they can know the facts about the condition of black people (Afro-American) who experienced forms of oppression during slavery period. Then, it may inspire them in learning academic literary study.

2. For the Lectures

   The lecturers may utilize this field as reference when they teach culture and history of the struggles of Afro-American people in slavery periods, especially about oppression toward black slave which now becomes a part of American history record.

3. For other Researchers

   For those who are interested in analyzing films, it is hoped that this study can be an inspiration to conduct another study about film.

1.5 Scope and Limitation

The scope of this study focuses on oppression which experienced by the main character, Solomon Northup. The oppression studies here are limited on forms of oppression itself as well as the reason to overcome the oppression which is exposed in the Steve McQueen’s film “12 Years a Slave”.
1.6 Definition of Key Terms

The definitions of key terms are expected to avoid misunderstanding or misinterpretation for the reader. The definitions of key terms are:

1. Analysis is “A detailed explanation and examination of a work of literature which is becomes an indispensable part of criticism (Cuddon, 2013:34)”.

2. Oppression is defined as “An uncomfortable or distressing sense of (physical or mental), hardship, depression and prolonged cruel or unjust treatment or exercise of authority, control, or power; tyranny; exploitation (Campbell, 2011:30)”.

3. Solomon Northup is the main character in “12 Years a Slave” film.

4. Black slave is a designation for Afro-American black people, which became a slave as the effect of slavery in Africa-America history.

5. “12 Years a Slave” is a historical drama film about slavery in 17th century America which is directed by Steve McQueen.

6. Film or motion picture is “A photographic medium that can imply both art and entertainment (Quinn, 2006:165)”.