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**LITERARY ANALYSIS OF WOMEN SOCIAL STATUS IN THE  
BOOK THE SELECTION BY KIERA CASS THROUGH THE  
FEMINIST APPROACH**

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## Abstract

The purpose of this study is to analyze the social status for the understanding of its impact on women based on *The Selection* by Kiera Cass, which was taken as the focal point of this research. To gather the information used to create this investigation, different analysis tables were created. This exploration was analyzed through the Feminist Approach. The material gathered from this search is going to be used as the main base for this investigation.

As the purpose of this study, the investigator considered to gather different comments and facts from websites that had valuable information for the exploration of the topic. Different ideas and information were studied and analyzed for a great comprehension of the social labels that define women in society. During the analysis, it was considered the different factors that surrounds women around the world as well as the researcher's environment, in this case, Costa Rica.

## Resumen

El propósito de esta investigación es analizar los estatus sociales para la comprensión del impacto que genera en las mujeres, basado en el libro La Selección, escrito por Kiera Cass. El cual se tomó como eje principal para la investigación. Para recopilar la información utilizada para crear esta investigación, se crearon diferentes tablas de análisis. Esta exploración fue analizada a través del enfoque feminista. El material recopilado de esta búsqueda se utilizará como base principal para esta investigación.

Como propósito de esta investigación, la investigadora consideró reunir diferentes comentarios y hechos de distintos sitios web que tuvieran información valiosa para la exploración del tema. Se estudiaron y analizaron diferentes ideas e información para una mayor comprensión de las etiquetas sociales que definen a la mujer en la sociedad. Durante el análisis se consideraron los diferentes factores que rodean a las mujeres del mundo, así como el entorno de la investigadora, en este caso, Costa Rica.

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## Chapter I

### Introductory Framework

Through modern times, women, in society, have experienced many changes in their paths and norms that have led their lives. Several of these changes have had a positive impact and others a negative one. Thanks to these changes, that have been reflected over time so far, many romantic, science fiction, drama, and suspense female authors have experienced several situations that serve as inspiration to create new realities or scenarios people could feel represented and comprehended. In the book, *The Selection* written by Kierra Cass, a dystopian society is created, and in this case, the society women live in is not so different from reality. People are divided in castes like a pyramid; in a hierarchy full of rules and difficulties where the number eight is the lowest of the hierarchies and the number one is the powerful one. Additionally, each person from the cast they belong to, is categorized by their talent or skill, finding several obstacles to have a good position in society. This book was published in 2012, and it caused a big impact on young women; subsequently, the author turned the novel into a saga that continues to be sold with great success, nowadays.

This work analyzes social status in the novel and impact on women through comparison of the society reflected in the book and the different circumstances and environment that surrounds women like America, who is the main character in the novel. Therefore, it will be mentioned how the factors and elements that are related to the well-known female labels influence the character's decisions and the consequences of those actions. Furthermore, the analysis will provide a clear and concise document for women and general audience to read, as a

path to have a clear picture on how women live under standards and norms that prevent their emotional and even their physical freedom.

In addition, it is important to mention the relation between feminist criticism and literature, since it will help to draw a map to the center of this investigation. Moreover, by knowing the relation between this literary theory and literature as a root, the investigation will help to address the reality of several situations that are usually ignored by people in general. As a consequence, this analysis hopes not only to show the problems of the different social status of women, but also hopes to empower them, so people can break the barriers of old labels and norms of the current social status that provide a negative impact on women's lives. Finally, based on the previous information, it is important to mention that even though the story was written as type of entertainment, the author created something more that resulted on a novel that shows a clear picture of how it is for women to live in a society that not only divides them by status, but also creates labels that define them as fragile and without personality. This is why the investigation is important, because it will lead the reader to see the hidid dimensions of the story. In addition, it will help to analyze and acknowledge the similarities between the fiction and reality of women's lives.

### **1.1 Problem Statement**

In this investigation, the researcher will gather information about the social status that surrounds women's lives, as it is one of the most important scenarios in the novel *The Selection*. It is very important to understand the status of each one of the castes in this story and the literary approach that will be used, so the target audience will comprehend the elements, concepts, actions, and principles reflected from a female perspective. In addition, readers or future

generations will encounter this work useful in literature studies and even in their own investigations from a different approach based on the results presented. Further, in this project not only some features from the story are investigated, but also the researcher intends to analyze the characters' different backgrounds, thoughts, and actions. Moreover, the reality of social status women lives in their daily lives is compared to the situations presented in the book in order to give a clear picture about the great impact of the social norms and labels. The concluding idea of this investigation is to explain the elements behind the social status that surrounds the characters, so the researcher will show the problems and concerns of this topic and how it affects women in general, even in the present.

Usually, this type of concerns and aspects are overlooked or ignored, since they are considered fiction situations that do not have relevance; however, they exist even in real life and have significant repercussions, especially for women, in this case. The investigation is created under the idea that fiction and reality are well connected, since authors usually write from their experiences and perspectives and the stories, they create usually influence people in real life because they feel identified with the characters or the situation, depending on the circumstances. As a result, the study not only hopes to show the problems and concerns, but also to demonstrate through research and a comparison chart, the relevance of the story with reality. Therefore, the research question of this analysis is: What is the impact of social status and norms on women and how it affects their lives?

## **1.2 Objectives of Investigation**

### **1.2.1 General Objective**

To analyze social status for the understanding of its impact on women using the Feminist Approach.

### **1.2.2 Specific Objectives**

- To explain the idea of the dystopia the female characters live in and how it influences in their necessity of having social status.
- To examine the consequences of America's decisions in wanting to rebel against the norms established by the Selection.
- To evaluate the impact of social labels on women's lives.

### **1.3 Justification of the Study**

The purpose of this literary investigation is to analyze social status for the understanding of its impact on women in the book *The Selection*. The study of these elements is rewarding for the reader, as it will help to find interest in serious topics related to social status for women such as the pressure it applies and how this influences women and how this affects them, not only the emotional area, but also the decisions they make, as it can even affect their surroundings. Like the characters in the book, women are constantly tested for the entertainment of the world without considering the internal and external affections. The study of social status and their impact provides certain background that serves as a guide for readers and women that study the repercussions of norms in today's society, to analyze the dystopian features that affect women in the book and how it is reflected in reality. It can also show a more in-depth matters than just the social area, such as the female perspective in a patriarchal country that is looking for solutions to political areas that present different problems.

In the book, the feminine characters that live in different castes of the country of Ilea get the opportunity by the kingdom to compete to be the chosen one to marry the prince and obtain both, social and economic benefits for her and her family. Additionally, thanks to the Selection, the kingdom will obtain a good political image, they can show to the rest of the countries. Further, following their families and kingdom's ideals and rules regarding their ways to act, marriage, in the book, is more than just love, as it is a legal commitment for the future princess. This type of situation is a challenge most women face every day, along with having to fight against the comments and stigmas imposed by society. Consequently, they do not develop a true feeling of freedom and own decisions, and thus, forget to impose themselves in certain scenarios or situations. A comparison between the book and the reality is enriching as women are often considered as fragile.

On the other hand, future researchers or people interested in the book, as this thesis, will find a good basis, elements, and inspiration of information for future investigations that are related to the feminist approach or different approaches, but related to the novel's characteristics. By investigating the social status that creates a big impact on women, the investigator provides the target audience with a clearer view, as she investigates, with a critical vision, an expanded reality that is connected to the book and real life. In addition, it is also important to understand that this approach provides more understanding on the struggles of women within patriarchal society. By investigating the social status and its impact on women, without hesitation, it will help the target audience to comprehend the different actions and decisions of the main character as a woman. Moreover, it will make the reader to understand how women face different obstacles like study and work problems, family expectations, necessity of money, norms, reputation, and the constant labels from long ago. In addition, it will motivate the readers that are interested in

female daily problems, to analyze the matters, decisions, actions, and elements that can change women's lives in society.

#### **1.4 Antecedents**

*The Selection* by Kiera Cass is a famous romantic and attractive dystopian novel for readers that was published on April 14, 2012. It is the first novel in a five-book series after becoming a phenomenon in the literary world. The author stated that she was inspired to write the book after thinking about two characters and the differences in their stories and thoughts, Queen Esther from the Bible, and Cinderella, wondering if either of them were happy with their ending stories. Although, at the beginning the reviews were a complete-chaos differing from negatives and good, the reception it received from young women was outstanding, staying for sixty-seven consecutive weeks on The New York Time Best Sellers list. Even to this day, *The Selection* is a popular novel still desired among young women, to the point that after several conversations, on April 2020, it was announced that the book would become a film adaptation by the Netflix company.

It is well established that books are usually written with the inspiration of the author's own experience and surroundings; however, Kiera Cass decided to create a new reality based not only on her experience, but also based on other women's stories, as it was stated. A previous investigation conducted by Kiki Otaviani (2020), for the Bung Hatta University under the title *An Analysis of Characters Trait's and Setting as Reflected in the Novel the Selection by Kiera Cass* aimed to analyze the formation of the main character's traits, which are influenced by the setting and the main theme of the novel, and how the rest of the characters can be used as a comparison of the characteristics America Singer possessed as a main character. Moreover, one of the main

objectives of the investigation was to highlight the setting that illustrates how the characters could be either helped or hurt depending on their surroundings and situations.

Moreover, as part of this investigation, it is important to do a deep comparison of the book between the feminism that is seen in fiction and the one seen in reality. Literature authors use the female perspective in their stories to draw a connection with the feminist population that looks for inspiration, help, or reflection. In a study led by Juan Alberto Ulate (2020), from Ciudad Universitaria Rodrigo Facio, Costa Rica, entitled *La Construcción de una Poética Femenina en el Texto Madre Nuestra que Estás en la Tierra de Ana Isarú*, analyzes the topic of the female writing based on their most representative features. The study also mentioned how the feminine language can be used to create a scenario that allows the opportunity to identify ideas, values, and shared perspectives that revolve around a female representational consciousness. In addition, using that basis, ethics and esthetic are created for the female characters; that is, the characteristic in short stories, novels, and poems.

Following the same thread, another element that represents the feminist approach that is important for this investigation is the women's position in society. An investigation that supports this element is the one written by Surya Prasad Tiwari (2021), from Tribhuvan University, Kirtipur, titled *Analysis of The Novel Priya Sufi from Feminist Perspective*. In this analysis, the author identified and highlighted the feminist issues in terms of women's position in society, patriarchy, and political and social factors presented in novels like *Priya Sufi*. However, the main objective was to critically analyze the language and how women are treated in society, along with all forms of social inequality and injustice.

Another important analysis is the one from Itsna Syahadatud Dinuriyah (2017), for the State Islamic University Sunan Ampel Surabaya with the thesis *Pastiche of Cinderella in Kiera Cass' The Selection: A Postmodern Study*, which showed the novel's historical context. Since it is a dystopian society, the main element is the fiction, but it does not leave aside the religion, the social, political, and economical area. In this investigation, the postmodernism was mentioned as a characteristic of the book's setting, as well as the mixing genres and portrayal of consumer society, which is an important feature of the novel. One example of the consumer society related to postmodernism mentioned in *The Selection* is technology, which is the central focus on many lives of Ilea, leading them to live in headway of technology and media industry. Additionally, Cinderella's story is used as a comparison of the magic scenario and environment, and context this first one shows and the horrible one *The Selection* portrays because of the unjust social condition.

Finally, Farrah Halimatussadyah (2019) from Universitas Pendidikan Indonesia, mentioned in her article entitled, *An Analysis of Écritue Féminine in the Selection Series: The One (2014) Novel*, that Kiera Cass successfully adapted *écriture féminine* in her novels which implies the detailed works of dystopian descriptions, symbols, and elements that are perfectly connected to the feminist studies that makes the novels a valuable research object under the feminist approach. This was concluded through a feminist approach. Women are constantly labeled by society; however, they are connected to the most important elements of the stories and reality. In addition, the main character, America's life is a pretty clear example of the detailed work of the dystopian descriptions, as she and her family always lived in a complicated environment perfectly described in the book because of their status, and it even affecting

America's relationships and decisions, to the point where she was forced to enter the fierce competition against her own convictions as a woman, just to help her family.

### **1.5 Scope**

- This investigation aims to analyze the social status of each one of the castes described in the book and based on it, to explain and address their impact on women, either positively or negatively.
- Furthermore, the researcher examines the dystopian features to discuss the relation between them and the reality women live.
- The purpose is to explain the consequences of the actions taken by characters like America that were pushed by the social pressure and expectations from their own families, society, and country.
- Even though, many approaches can be used in this investigation, the main approach that will be used to analyze the novel is the feminist one, as it sparks the interest in elements that affect society, nowadays.

## Chapter II

### Theoretical Framework

In this chapter, there are certain elements of the book that are of relevance for the main topic of this investigation, so they will be discussed and analyzed throughout the research paper. The idea is to draw a structure of the entire process in order to not only explain, but also to demonstrate the importance of using and understanding the different theories and features that are a vital part of the investigation. In order to have a better understanding of the main theme of the book, the theories and approach most related were chosen. These theories not only discuss topics that are in plain sight, but also, they expose the hidden messages, important elements, and the details of the book and its characters. In this case, the book selected for the investigation provided a series of elements that conducted to the feminist approach. “Feminist ethics is the attempt to understand, criticize, and correct our moral beliefs and practices, using gender as a central category of analysis” (Lindemann, 2019, p. 11). In other words, the feminist ethics aims to comprehend and work on how gender operates within moral beliefs and usual practices, how the historical privilege available for men keep oppressive ideas and orders that damage to others, in this case, women.

Even though, it is normal to believe that the only purpose of the feminist approach is to discover how the social interactions against women works and to offer some solutions against oppressive structures, it also helps to consider the experience of women and even people in general who live in constant oppression. In the patriarchal system, there are several variables that are considered normal; however, this approach helps to study and reveal truths that exist to this day in the current social order, so much that current literary works as the novel that will be

investigated yield elements that serve for analysis under the type of theory that will be developed throughout the investigation. Moreover, as one of the main objectives of the investigation, it is beneficial to analyze the impact on women based on the social status. This research project is targeted to women; therefore, it is fundamental to acknowledge the relation between the situations encountered in real life and the situations that occur in books that women tend to read, as they feel related to them. Finally, this chapter will study and explain in detail the concepts of literature, theory, and the approach that will be used in the investigation. Additionally, it will show how to identify themes, symbols, and motifs, along with the author's biography information, and the plot of the novel *The Selection*. Plus, information and details of the main characters and situations will be mentioned for the reader to know the story better.

## **2.1 Literary Theories and Approaches**

For this investigation, it is essential to have knowledge about the different elements that offer a well-structured guide on the research related to literary works. In this case, the elements that have relevance in this work are literature, literary theories, and approaches. These series of elements have several features that are necessary to be studied, such as their definitions and characteristics for a better explanation and careful analysis that results on a beneficial study. As stated, the researcher concluded that it is necessary to study and explain the different variables as literature, literary theory, and approach for a better understanding on why the approach chosen entails all the objectives that are hoped to be obtained at the end of the investigation.

### **2.1.1 Definition of Literature**

The Merriam Webster Dictionary defines literature as “writings having excellence of form or expression and expressing ideas of permanent or universal interest,” which implies that

literature is considered an art or work based on creative ideas coming from the imagination, just like poetry, journalism, songs, letters, stories, and novels. Moreover, the Cambridge Dictionary defines literature as “written artistic works, especially those with a high and lasting artistic value.” Finally, Britannica offers a more detailed definition as “imaginative works of poetry and prose distinguished by the intentions of their authors and the perceived aesthetic excellence of their execution.” All of the definitions lock themselves in that literature is an artistic work that is based on the language, subject matter, imagination, and the history of origin. Kusch mentions that,

Literature conveys sacred knowledge, teaches moral and social lessons, announces new ideas, records revolutions, tests the limits of cultural values, and shows us our best and worst selves ... we tell of ourselves through narrative, performance, lyrical reflection ..., literature encapsulates human experience and records the messy, painful, triumphant, and sublime realities of the passage of humans through our world. While other fields of study attempt to understand humans by measuring and compiling facts about our psychological responses, economic behaviours, sociological institutions, and anthropological patterns, those fields smooth out the edges of our rough and often irrational behaviours by highlighting general tendencies or statistical probabilities. Literature offers us the human life in total – not reduced – with its inconsistent logic, morality, and identity on full display.

(Kusch, 2016, p. 1)

Literature is considered as a form of human expression and feelings, emotions, and thoughts are placed on the different types of written works. As stated above, it is a way in which a person, writer, creates a piece of art using words as tools. The majority of the writings related to

the human expression is designed to engage readers into an emotional trajectory they feel connected to. As stated above, literature offers a series of experiences based on words and imagination, and by unifying these elements, the emotional and intellectual factors come up, providing the reader with the ability to feel and know what the characters feel in different situations. Richard Abcarian focuses on the following,

literature can also help us get closer to life, to understand it in a new way when we get back from our literary journey. We understand what Dickinson means because we can connect to it—we think about our experiences as readers and that helps us understand the poem while, at the same time, the poem clarifies something about how reading makes us feel. The best literature helps us to understand ourselves, one another, and our world in new ways and to make connections that had never occurred to us or that we might have sensed but were unable to express. (Abcarian et al., 2019, p. 77)

In other words, thanks to literature, the ideas, feelings, and emotions that are expressed through the words of the characters help us not only to better understand the text and the character, but also to create a connection that allows the reader to compare what is read with life itself and, consequently, to understand themselves and the situation that they live in their own reality. Novels, like the book chosen for the investigation, are an example of the matter explained.

Literature is not only a personal connection between the reader and the literary work, it additionally allows a person to have a greater appreciation of the world that surrounds us. It is an element that allows to learn and understand society, its different stages, and its complexity.

Precisely, the impact of literature on society has resulted on a change in different social patterns thanks to the consciousness it unleashes. Akhter wrote that,

Both literature and society are very much interdependent and produce a complex web of effects on each other. In another of its aspects, literature can be regarded as a means or a tool to enable a writer to pronounce his verdicts, though often very implicitly, on the society, some of whose preoccupations he does not approve of as salutary... literary imagination has a singular power to intervene in society, to call to its best sides, to state its finest values and concerns, to offer a criticism of life, have stressed the power of great art, to know and interpret the world and also to act as a humane influence in it. (Akhter, 2022, p. 16)

This relationship is the example of a mirror as many of the factors of society are reflected on literature works, for example, a novel. Such is the value of the relationship between literature and society that currently one way to create a correlation that awakes the other's interest is through other elements that supports literature: theories and approaches, that will be explained in this investigation, which are a basis to create a series of opinions, thoughts and criticism that impact society through analysis.

### **2.1.2 Definition of Literary Theory**

The purpose of this section is to explain the basis of literary theory. Usually, the term theory hints a plan or action. However, in terms of literature, the idea of theory changes a little, as it is immediately related to literature matters. The Collins Dictionary defines literary theory as “the systematic analysis and study of literature using general principles.” This implies that theories could show how to understand literature. Basically, literary theory draws a line that

demonstrates the relationship between the author and the literary work and presents a system that helps the reader to understand the literary work they could be studying. Literary theory reorients thinking, and it pushes to analyze beyond the obvious of a story, poem, or novel, and questions the most basic assumptions of the literary work. This variable of literature implies delving into the elements that make up the story, such as characters, plot, setting, and the background like the ideology of the story. Klages mentions in her book,

That is the essence of literary theory: to examine and explain why the category “literature” has enduring cultural importance, and to interrogate the forces that manipulate how we describe that importance. Literary theory, in the broadest sense, is an explanation or idea about what “literature” is, how “literature” is different from other kinds of writing, and how “literature” functions within a cultural context (Klages, 2017, p. 6).

In other words, besides being considered as just hypotheses, literary theory is also the basis of the literary analysis in any literary work in a cultural context. It applies ideas and focuses on the language, cultural structure, culture influences, social background, and perspectives of the story to be applied correctly and to provide a good understanding and foundation of what is being read. In addition to this explanation, Upstone mentions the following.

It is here that literary theory plays perhaps its most important role: by giving you an almost limitless number of texts to work into your own response, literary theory ensures that your interpretation will be truly original. This is why, although literary theory can initially appear alienating and difficult, it is something to get really excited about. (Upstone, 2017, p. 9)

The previous explanation implies that literary theory sometimes could be perceived as a difficult task; however, it is important to remember this element only deals with the analysis and collection of categories, ideas, and classifications of the text for its study. It is a guide to have the closest idea for a developed exploration and original explanation of the ideas that are usually observed in the written works. Barry comments that,

Rather, nearly all the difficulties you will have will be the direct result of the way theory is written, and the way it is written about. For literary theory, it must be emphasized, is not innately difficult. There are very few inherently complex ideas in existence in literary theory. On the contrary, the whole body of work known collectively as “theory” is based upon some dozen or so ideas, none of which are in themselves difficult. (Barry, 2017, p. 17)

Following the same thread based on the previous explanation, an important element to consider is that literary theory is not only to collect ideas, but it is also a frame that supports the literary criticism. It provides the correct practices and interpretive moves to understand the literary criticism and based on it, apply the correct approach to better understand the literary work’s meaning and have a correct interpretation of it.

### **2.1.3 Definition of Literary Criticism**

Literary criticism and literary theory are two important terms necessary to study or to carry the analysis of a literary work like novels, poems, and short stories. Usually, the terms of literary theory and literary criticism are mixed and could be confused because of certain similarities. However, it is essential to mention that these two variables, although they complement each other for a successful literary analysis, share several differences that are

necessary to define in the investigation. As it was mentioned, literary theory denotes ideas, abstracts, and set of collections that are quite clear in a literary text. In other words, it is a combination that shows the relation of the literary work and its author. On the other hand, literary criticism is defined by the Cambridge Dictionary as “the formal study and discussion of works of literature, for example by judging and explaining their importance and meaning.” In this case, literary criticism works as a tool in the text that helps to construct meaning. The Collins Dictionary adds that “Literary criticism is the academic study of the techniques used in the creation of literature.” This implies that this element is about the research, interpretation, and evaluation of the literary works.

Literary criticism implies action and analysis, it helps to evaluate the literary work under study. Additionally, it helps to understand the theories or methods we see in literature and apply the correct one to the text. In other words, it refers to critical methods that serve as a main support to interpret texts and develop a correct meaning and argument related to the literary work depending on the connections with the history, society, or culture. Foley mentions that,

We shall consider the ways in which a critical approach to the connections between literature and society can help us understand how things that we think of as being beyond politics—like novels and poems, as well as how we are trained to read them—are in fact profoundly political. It is precisely because literature is often seen as sealed off from the domain of politics that it is important to undertake this scrutiny; ideology is often most influential when it is most invisible. (Foley, 2019, p. 121)

This supports the main point that literary criticism interprets the literary works based on life experience, culture, social perspective, and history. It is not only an opinion, but also a good judgment supported by evidence related to the different variables of literature like theme, style, setting, and background. The purpose of these elements is to provide the reader with a good judgement and a sustained connection with the literary work by reading the details as stated previously. Parker wrote the following.

Instead of history, impressionism, moralism, or reading out loud, the new critics called for the study of literature to focus on rigorous, systematic interpretation. For the new critics, the best response to a literary text is an interpretation of that text. And the best way to develop interpretation, according to the new critics, is through close reading, which means detailed, careful attention to evidence from the text itself, to the words on the page (Parker, 2019, p. 35)

Literary critical analysis is written for general, it is not focused on a specific audience, but it is intended for general public like students, readers for hobby, or general public. Moreover, literary criticism does not always mean “negative,” it means a deep analysis and critique based on the evaluation and interpretation of the author’s work in order to understand all the particular features of the literary work.

Following the explanation, literary criticism provides the audience with relevant information, historical, social, or biographical. It does not only see the literary work from an artistic perspective, but also looks for other points that result important if the text offers something more like situations related to the actual world and could even make possible to reevaluate the meaning of the text for the

reader. Sridhar comments that “Its aim is to deepen and enhance the experience of other readers, an aim which will be fulfilled only if the critic is able to bring to the work a degree of expertise and an appropriate fund of knowledge. These qualities differ from critic to critic, which means that every critical account has something different to offer” (Sridhar et al., 2021, p. 36).

What is more, literary criticism offers more than just a better understanding of literature, it also offers new spaces that give writers the opportunity to play beyond the rules they know and push their creativity beyond the limits. This element also demonstrates its effectiveness in studies thanks to its feature that allow to break with the usual and see the diversity of topics for the analysis of the literary works. North mentions that,

But criticism, in its day, was also more than this— like any long-standing disciplinary paradigm, it pursued a research program that was necessarily quite diverse. Thus, in the hands of its various practitioners, “criticism” also involved the development of new hermeneutic and interpretative methods; sociological research into the present state of the culture; advanced pedagogical theory; extended enquiries into the nature of educational institutions; philosophical enquiry into the nature of the “literary,” the “aesthetic,” “language,” “culture” itself, and so on. (North, 2017, p. 6)

Finally, literary criticism gives a way to expand the world as it is known. This variable allows the reader to go beyond what they understand about the world, and the environment that surrounds and pushes them to learn about different perspectives that are well known as approaches in literature. There are around eleven approaches to literary criticism. There is the

historical-biographical criticism, philosophical, psychoanalytic, practical criticism, formalism, reader-response, new criticism, post-structuralism, deconstruction, and feminist criticism. For this work, the approach that will be explained for research purposes is the feminist one. It will be considered in the next section.

#### **2.1.4 Definition of Feminist Criticism**

When the word feminism comes up, people immediately tend to relate it with women, but it is more than that. Feminism is a belief in equality and equity of the sexes in different areas like economic, political, and social. The Cambridge Dictionary defines feminism as the belief that women should be allowed the same rights, power, and opportunities as men and be treated in the same way, or the set of activities to achieve this state.” Feminism is represented by a great group of women and institutions committed to support women’s interests and rights. Kim Q. (2021) stated that “feminist philosophy is, in fact, forged in a context of ongoing gender-based oppression and its entanglement with racism, ableism, classism, cisnormativity, heteronormativity, Eurocentrism, and Anglocentrism” (p. 25). The importance of this movement has developed to such an extent that in literature, the feminist criticism has been acclaimed for years, as it gives way to question the inequalities along the different areas in which women are involved.

As the main objective of this exploration project has a relation with women’s status, the most beneficial approach the researcher decided to use is the feminist. As stated, the researcher concluded the feminist approach entails all the objectives that are hoped to obtain at the end of the investigation. Feminist criticism is defined as “the literary analysis that arises from the viewpoint of feminism, feminist theory, and/or feminist politics” (Napikoski, 2020). In concrete

words, this approach supports women's actions, knowledge, experience, and value in literature. "Feminist literary criticism recognizes that literature both reflects and shapes stereotypes and other cultural assumptions" (Napikoski, 2020). This information states that the feminist approach also analyzes the patriarchal attitudes presented in literature. Additionally, it studies the factors and situations that could affect women like status, sexuality, physical, and emotional ability. It helps to interpret the texts from a new perspective where readers can study the female subjugation under patriarchal norms. In fact, Disch comments the following,

Feminist theories arise in conjunction with feminist activism and academic practices, seeking to illuminate the barriers and constraints that circumscribe women's lives, explain their dynamics and persistence, and identify mechanisms for change. From the outset, feminist theories have been diverse and contentious, reflecting the specific conditions of their emergence. (Disch et al., 2016, p. 2)

Although there are many ideas that can be under the focus of the feminist criticism, this variable's main concern is to examine the gender irregularities of masculinity and femininity within literary works. If people take a close look to old literary works, they will notice the patriarchal structures are represented in almost all of them. In these works, decisions made by women are few and they are always considered as secondary, even just as a company or entertainment. For example, Stark mentions that, "When we look comparatively at men and women's participation in work cultures the impact of these essentialist beliefs becomes pronounced: women, on average, have less or slower career advancement, less superannuation and are less likely to be in leadership positions" (Stark, 2017, p. 38).

Feminist criticism provides the opportunity to consider the roles between men and women in society and reminds that those roles usually are unequal in reality because of the patriarchal ideology, and that fact is often represented in literature. Some and some examples from years ago that can be found are from authors Jane Austen, Virginia Woolf, Mary Leapor, and Charlotte Bronte. “While feminism has at times been called out for its narrowness and white centrism, contemporary feminist theory is more often attuned to subordination and dominance that goes beyond gender and considers multiple and intersectional identities” (Harps et al., 2018 p. 35). Following the thread of the investigation and information provided above, the feminist approach is usually criticized due to the claim this theory holds about the importance of the female voice.

To conclude the idea of the feminist criticism, it is fundamental to have knowledge that this approach in specific is useful for analyzing how important is to see the clear picture about the society is constructed for both men and women, not only from one side. This approach studies and considers how literature reflects the different challenges women face, offering an image of the big impact both in real life and fiction. McCann mentions:

Feminist theories, like other political philosophies, provide intellectual tools by which historical agents can examine the injustices they confront and build arguments to support their particular demands for change. Feminist theories apply their tools to building knowledge of women's oppression. That knowledge is intended to inform strategies for resisting subordination and improving women's lives. (McCann, 2017, p. 21)

Feminist approach has a valuable contribution to literature as it examines, analyzes, and deconstructs the patriarchal system in literary works and reclaims the female voice as a great

contribution. The feminist criticism is well connected to the feminism as both depend on each other because they remind women and people interested in literature about the unequal situations in society, which is the main reason the researcher concludes the approach is the correct one for the investigation.

## **2.2 Themes, Motifs and Symbols**

For the investigation, since it will be a literary analysis of the book *The Selection*, the researcher considers convenient to comprehend other elements that will help to have a better understanding of the study. As stated, themes, motifs, and symbols are essential in literature for several purposes. Usually, these topics help the reader to understand the author's message and the literary work's details.

### **2.2.1 Themes**

As a general definition, it is well known that a theme is a literary element that refers to the main idea of the text, a lesson conducted by the narrative of the literary work. Themes are not a complex idea, they can even be summed up in a sentence, but that does not mean it is not deep. In addition, readers can also find secondary themes in a work. They can be hidden as the author could only want to focus on one theme in specific and not to express more. It is important to mention that the purpose of this device is to help the reader to understand the work for a better comprehension and application of the analysis. The theme in a text cannot be missed, as it provides a space that allows to understand for example the character's feelings, conflicts, situations, decisions taken, and experiences. In other words, it is connected to the character's internal journey. Themes are a way for the readers to have a perspective of the world inside of the story or poem, and create a connection with it. As stated, even though, the theme could be short,

it can be deep, and that is why the author usually lets the reader to explore the theme through reading the text.

*The Selection* is a novel that allows to explore many themes which the author could present explicitly or not, and they will be explained in this investigation. For that, it will be important to see in detail the feelings, emotions, thoughts, expressions, situations, and interactions between the characters, since it will provide an insight on how the world is observed by the characters and how the reader, in this case, can interpret it. Furthermore, some themes that can be mentioned in general are the competition and society and class. The competition is one of the main themes in the novel. Competition in this story is categorized as opportunity and success, and no matter how, women, in this case, should be capable of doing everything in their will to achieve their goals through different tasks and against many competitors, and win a better lifestyle and a position in society. The other main theme is society and class. It is clear that the Ilea country is a place with an unfair hierarchy because they imposed a strict caste system that prejudices their people, as only the highest classes have the opportunity of a good life.

In *the Selection*, the dream of all the people who live in Ilea, is that their daughters, sisters, nieces, or anyone who is a woman is chosen to enter the Selection and compete for the prince Maxon. In the case of America Singer, the protagonist, the reader can see how she struggled with her desire to be something more in life despite her social limitations without the need to listen the norms dictated by the kingdom, and being able to help her family who depended on her for a stable future because of the Selection. Kiera Cass tried to use the protagonist as a clear example of the problems these themes cause in people as it becomes an internal conflict with no good solution.

### **2.2.2 Motifs**

The Cambridge Dictionary defines motif as “a pattern or design.” A motif in a story is a repeating idea in a literary work, meaning that it is constantly present through the story to catch the attention of the reader. It can be a repeated phrase, action, word, a topic, a sound or more. In addition, it evokes moments that helps the reader to remember the connection among situations or scenes from the story. Motifs play a significant element to define the nature of the story and its events. They can be confused with themes; however, it is not the same as a that literary device. Motifs are actually a way to help identifying the theme of the story and the theme as stated is the central idea or the message of the text. It is important to note that for the motif to be found in a story, the reader must be careful when reading and pay attention to the repeated actions, situations, or words the characters do or say in order to not confuse it with the theme but to find its contribution towards the development of the theme. For example, in the novel selected for the investigation, the cameras and the audience are motifs present in the story and, additionally, they support the themes.

### **2.2.3 Symbols**

The symbol is the literary device that uses a physical object or action that means something more and deep than its just literal meaning, and associates it with an idea. It helps to understand a concept or idea outside of the general theme, and opposite to the motif, its presence is not repetitive, it is showed once or twice in the story, since if used again and again, it becomes a motif. Moreover, symbols can be found in the story as similes, personifications, metaphors, or other figures of speech. Symbols allow the author to show an idea or message in the text on multiple levels and with that path the reader can be connected to the characters, setting,

background, and plot of the story. In *the Selection* novel, there are different symbols like the cage or crown that will be explained later in the investigation.

### **2.3 Author's Biography**

Kiera Cass is an American writer well known around the world for her novels, especially *The Selection*, which caused a great impact on the literary world for young women. She was born on May 20, 1981 in Myrtle Beach, South Carolina. She went to the Socastee High School in the same city where she was born, and years later, she attended Coastal Carolina University studying music. Finally, she was transferred to Radford University and graduated from the University with a degree in History. Before becoming a famous author, Kiera Cass got married and moved to Blacksburg, where she started a family and decided to take care of her children. Thanks to that stage in her life, she inspired herself to write. She wrote several stories before *The Selection* in 2007 and 2009. However, she had other ideas and started *The Selection*, which was published in 2012. This novel was her debut in the literary world, and it was a great success internationally, allowing herself to be in the top bestsellers lists of the New York Times. The book was optioned for a series; however, the author, sure of the success of her book, opted for something bigger and on April 2015, the well-known television company Warner Bros acquired the movie rights for *The Selection* movie.

On August 2014, Kiera Cass announced her book would be expanding into a series of more books. She published *The One* in 2013, and years later *The Heir* was launched. On May 3, 2016, Cass released *The Crown*. Inspired by a great force, Kiera Cass announced she would release a book on May 5, 2020 called *The Betrothed* following the story of a girl called Hollis Brite, daughter of a nobility courted by a King to be his queen. However, the girl was divided

between two paths. The story was so well acclaimed that it became a #1 New York Times bestseller, and it was in the list for several weeks. Thanks to the good reviews of *The Betrothed* and the great acclaim it garnered after its publication, she started working on a sequel titled *The Betrayed* that was released on June 29, 2021 which also received good reviews from young readers. Currently, Kiera is still living with her husband, taking care of her children and working on a new novel called *A Thousand Heartbeats*, which was set to be released on December 6, 2022.

## 2.4 Plot

America Singer was a seventeen-year-old girl who lived with her family in the dystopian society of Ilea, which was formed out of the remnants of what was once the United States after the World War III. This Society was divided into eight castes, from one to eight. The Eight were the lowest and poorest people, and the One were royalty. Just like real life, not everyone accepts the system imposed by the crown and the rebel groups born to overthrow the government. America and her family were Fives, which meant they were poor. Something important is that every caste also was required to be good in a skill, and in the case of America and her family, they were required by law to be artists or musicians.

America was also in a secret relationship with a Six called Aspen Leger. They kept it hidden because of America's family and the norms imposed by the kingdom. Both, America and Aspen faced several obstacles as Aspen was poor, which meant that if America married him, she would be even more broke than she actually was. Moreover, America's mother wanted a man from a higher status for her daughter. When the Selection was announced, America's mother decided is a good opportunity for the family to be in a better status and asked America to join the

Selection, which was a competition designed to pick a woman to become the future wife of Prince Maxon and became a princess that had to take the role of the Queen of Illea.

America stated she did not want to be part of the Selection and it was indifferent before the idea of marrying the Prince. This because of her relationship with Aspen. However, this one and her mother pushed her to apply. Not convinced with the idea of applying, and convinced she would not be chosen, but frustrated because of the necessity of her boyfriend and family, she accepted and surprisingly she was selected as a candidate with other thirty-four girls from the country. To America's surprise and dismay, Aspen decided to end things with her because he believed his status was not enough for her. Disappointed and heartbroken, America resigned herself to help her family earn a better lifestyle, but against her own wishes.

After the thirty-five girls were announced, America was transferred to the palace with the Prince Maxon and the other girls, ready to know everything they needed to do to compete. America built a relationship with the rest of the girls; however, on her first night, she had a panic attack and ran out to the garden. There she met Prince Maxon, who helped her calm down. America believed that all of the upper social class were presumptuous; however, Prince Maxon was nothing like America imagined: he was kind and compassionate even after she treated him bad. America admitted to him that she was only in the competitions for money and food, but nothing else as her heart was somewhere else. Maxon agreed to be friends with America, and she agreed to be his friend and even decided to help him to select a wife by acting as a spy of sorts.

In the palace, America learned new things and made new friends, including a girl named Marlee. However, she found several obstacles as she was one of the lowest levels among the most, and even, one girl tried to sabotage her and the other candidates in a desperate act to win.

Furthermore, America learned there were several injustices in the country; one of them was that a girl was caned and thrown out publicly of the palace after she was found kissing one of the guards. In addition, there were two groups of Rebels, Northern and Southern; the Southern attacked the castle while she was there with the other girls. All those problems made make America to becomes enraged and confused at the way things were run in the kingdom and realized what being a princess would entail in her life. This caused her to question her stay in the palace and her current life, leading to take it out on the Prince and having rebellious attitudes against him.

Passing the days, America continued observing several unfair acts, but stopped her instincts when thinking about her survival and the well-being of her family. As other girls were slowly eliminated from the Selection, America and Maxon's relationship developed for better and apologized to each other during a rebel attack while he protected her. Finally, their relationship went through many ups and downs, but it grew to the point America talked to Maxon about the awful reality she lived in and the complication of being in the lower castes. This confession moved Maxon so much, he decided to help the castes and started a food assistance program. America developed feelings for Maxon, but everything became more complicated when she saw her ex-boyfriend at the castle and found out Aspen still loved her. America was in an internal conflict at that point, as she liked Maxon, but still had feelings for Aspen. However, her troubles were more than only that, she was not sure about having what it took to be queen after everything she saw. The book concluded with her having to compete against the girls who were still in the competition and the idea of giving up to her old convictions and Aspen, or to do what it took to be by Maxon's side.

## Chapter III

### Theoretical Framework

The main objective of this chapter is to explain the methodology applied in the development of the investigation, as it explains in detail the source materials, the approach used to analyze the novel, the instruments and techniques that were applied to collect important data for the study to provide reliable results. In addition, it provides the reader with a deeper understanding of the study of social status in society. Furthermore, this chapter will show and develop the elements used by the researcher to obtain reliable results and conclusions for the investigation. Additionally, this chapter will explain the definition of quantitative, qualitative and mixed approaches, providing a little bit of context about their importance in studies, but focusing on the qualitative method, as it is the one that best suits the investigation. Finally, this section helps future researchers to have knowledge about the importance of these elements when making an investigation or thesis. This will allow the readers to understand the course of the investigation, which is to compare the situations presented in fiction and reality.

#### 3.1 Research Approach

When making an investigation, it is important to choose the most accurate method in order to gather the relevant information for the study. For these types of research, there are three principal approaches to collect and analyze information: the quantitative, qualitative, and mixed approach. Research approach, according to the Cambridge Dictionary, is defined as “a particular way of studying something in order to discover new information about it or understand it better.” In other words, it is a plan or procedure that leads to essential methods specialized to collect data, analysis, and interpretation of results.

As stated, there are three methods for the collection of data and analysis of information. The first one is the quantitative. This approach, as its name implies, uses numbers, and it is usually used to gather information based on experiments and numerical data. This approach applies several methods as experimental research, observational research, and analysis of content in order to test theories or confirm them. It is a beneficial approach for research that need information from a large group of people, as it provides a summary of the investigation in question. Although, it has a beneficial factor, the negative element that can be found by using this approach is that when having a great amount of people in the study, the researcher could lose control over the experiment or information.

The mixed method uses both, quantitative and qualitative data in the same investigation. It focuses on collecting and analyzing both methods in a single investigation. This approach is usually used when the investigator needs to gather extensive and complete information for a better understanding of research problems. It is a beneficial method when the researcher needs to see with detail the same study from different perspectives. However, even though it has a great advantage, the negative factor of this approach is that it requires a lot of attention from the investigator.

As for this investigation project, the chosen approach is the qualitative. It collects and analyzes data like text, audio, or video, leaving behind the numerical information. This method allows the researcher to ignore the rigid rules and explore in-depth the information with the target population, and it is usually used in the social subjects. The qualitative approach focuses on a small group of participants and it works based on words, descriptions, opinions, feelings, language, thoughts, or experiences in order to understand how people observe the world. One of the advantages of this type of method is it goes deeper in the topics the target population would

need explanation, as they could be complicated. In addition, the qualitative method allows the investigator to have a personal interaction with the target audience, which provides a space to obtain a deep and complete answer.

This method is designed to observe and analyze the perception of the target audience using different instruments like interviews, focus groups, content analysis, direct information, questionnaires, and more; which is beneficial and effective when needed understanding of detailed information. “The data may take the form of field notes written by the researcher in the course of observation, interviews, audio or video recordings carried out by the researcher in natural settings or interviews, documents of various kinds and even material artifacts” (Creswell, 2002). However, the qualitative research could consume a lot of time as it needs to gather exhaustive information, and sometimes it could be very subjective for the investigation depending on the approach. Furthermore, by studying each one of the research approaches, the researcher concluded the qualitative approach could serve as the best option for the results she expects to obtain from the objectives as this method offers to gather detailed information for the analysis of the book.

### **3.2 Research Design**

In the case of this thesis, the research design guides the investigation and shows how the investigator collected the data in order to build the literary analysis and its approach. The research design usually determines the necessary instruments for the research. The researcher after having analyzed the results, will conduct the thesis under a descriptive research design. The descriptive research design is a type of design that seeks, analyzes, and presents data in order to characterize a phenomenon, situation, or population. In other words, it assists in providing

answers to the research questions: what, when, where, and how. The descriptive research could involve a one-time interaction with groups of people. In addition, it allows the investigation of the target variables to use a wide range of research techniques. Although, occasionally the qualitative data is employed for descriptive purposes, it primarily uses the quantitative data. However, for this investigation, it will be focused on the qualitative approach.

The descriptive research design is also used to observe and identify the frequency of specific problems and the need for additional actions to address the problems determined by the data studied. Additionally, it allows the possibility of pointing out areas that need more analysis and finally, it provides the target audience with the most accurate information to answer the concerns or doubts regarding the investigation for example, in this investigation, the book *The Selection*. Moreover, this kind of design provides the necessary information for the reader to comprehend the purpose and objectives of the research. One important element of this method is that the researcher does not control or change any factors when applying the descriptive method, the factors are only observed and measured. On top of that, it is necessary to analyze and choose the correct wording of questions in the interviews, surveys, or questionnaire in order to find the most accurate results.

### **3.3 Information Sources**

The Merriam Webster Dictionary defines information as “knowledge obtained from investigation, study or instruction.” This means information consists on the facts we learn from different sources. For this study to be developed and gathered important results from the instruments, it is necessary to gather information from reliable sources such as books, articles research papers, dictionaries, articles, and more. There are three types of sources categorized as:

primary, secondary and tertiary sources. In the first place, there are the primary sources, which are original materials. They are original books that were written during an event or topic, which makes them the most direct evidence of that time. These types of sources have not been modified and they could be books, diaries, letters, photographs, or interviews from that event. The difference between books and the previous elements is that books, newspapers, or autobiographies are created after the event, but always are first-hand elements, and the diaries, letters, interviews, or photographs are created when the event was occurring. One important fact about the primary sources is that they can be converted from their original format to a newer one, for example, some of them are digitized, so now many of them are available on internet. However, most of them are available in their original format, which are archives, libraries, museums, or historical sites. As the primary source of this investigation, the novel, *The Selection* by Kiera Cass is the main point of the study.

The Secondary sources are created by second-hand, which means they are from someone who did not experience the event. The University of Illinois (2006) defines that “Secondary source of information is one that was created later by someone who did not experience first-hand or participate in the events or conditions you re researching.” The secondary sources are usually articles, commentaries, textbooks, dissertations, or monographs. It is important to consider that the secondary sources are interpreted and analyzed, and are used as support, but they are not considered evidence from first-hand. Finally, tertiary sources “provide overview of topics by synthesizing information gathered from other resources. Tertiary resources often provide data in a convenient form or provide information with context by which to interpret it” (Virginia Tech Libraries, n.d.) As stated, the tertiary source presents condensed versions of materials with

references of primary or secondary sources, and they are not credited to a specific author. Some examples of tertiary sources are dictionaries, handbooks, and encyclopedias.

### **3.4 Analysis of Categories**

“Literature analysis attempts to study its subject’s themes, construction, and style. The overall aim is to gain a better understanding of a piece of literature” (Wollacott, n.d.). This means the literary analysis is an evaluation or interpretation of a written work, and for that is required to examine in detail the background and writing structures. The literary analysis is also supported by the literary elements like themes, motifs, and symbols, which are useful for the demonstration of the approach the researcher wants to explain. The literary analysis usually provides the reader with the space to understand the elements and themes from the book, and consequently, to have a specific topic of study or discussion.

The central idea of this investigation is to do a literary analysis of the book *The Selection* by studying the story, the main character’s actions, as well as the actions of the rest of the characters from a feminist point of view to understand the impact of social status in their lives at the beginning, development, and end of the story. The study will be additionally created using the qualitative method which is the more accurate for this type of thesis. Different scenarios related to the feminist ethics will be mentioned such as the patriarchal practices, the privilege historically available to men, the oppressive social orders that harm women, gender identity and the typical assumptions before women, which is related to the norms placed in the book that affected the main character and the other female figures.

#### **3.4.1 Feminism**

As part of this study, feminism is discussed to a deep understanding. As it was stated above, the Cambridge Dictionary defines feminism as “the belief that women should be allowed the same rights, power and opportunities as men and be treated in the same way, or the set of activities to achieve this state. Feminism looks for the gender equality in the social, economic and political areas. It is manifested to improve the lives of women that are traditionally confined to play a unique role like daughter, wife or mother. “Historically, feminism has evolved from the critical examination of inequality between the sexes to a more nuanced focus on the social and performative constructions of gender and sexuality” (Day, 2016).

### **3.4.2 Social Status**

As a path to comprehend how social status impacts women’s lives, it is necessary to know its definition. Britannica Encyclopedia defines social status as “the relative rank that an individual hold, with attendant rights, duties and lifestyle, in a social hierarchy based upon honour, or prestige.” It implies that social status is a term used in several areas to indicate a person’s position in society which has been common from ancient times. In fact, it is affected by many elements: education, occupation, appearance, family, culture and financial status.

### **3.4.3 Rebelliousness**

For research purposes and in simple words, rebelliousness is the act of opposing norms, being difficult to behave in the way others expect. It seems to be one of the main characteristics that exists and develops in people from a very young age. The Cambridge Dictionary adds “the act of opposing the ideas of the people in authority and planning to change the system, often using force.” This implies that usually social and political rules and systems that harm people feed the curiosity of standing firm and disobeying other’s impositions.

### **3.4.4 Social Labels**

As part of the investigation, social labels are studied and discussed as they play a big role in the story and in reality. Label in sociology is a concept used to define or identify people in social groups. For a better understanding of this category, the Cambridge Dictionary defines labels as “a word or a phrase that is used to describe the characteristics or qualities of people, activities, or things, often in a way that is unfair.” It is well known that labels in the social field can create conflicts when used to separate people based on their identity, values, or material value.

### **3.5 Data Collection Instruments**

In this investigation, the primary data is collected from the novel *The Selection* by doing a detailed reading and highlighting the most relevant information. Therefore, the researcher chose to collect the essential data from the book by reading and highlighting the chapters several times to understand, analyze, exemplify, and develop the information and important details the best way. To continue with the data collection, the researcher will create a table with different quotes from the novel accompanied by comments from the researcher herself. The purpose of the analysis table is to show how the various theories selected to analyze how the novel represents complicated situations for women. This with the purpose of showing the target audience that even fiction books are based on real situations. Additionally, the researcher will create a chart to examine the consequences of America’s decisions in wanting to rebel against the norms established by the Selection. As a result, the researcher looks for the target audience to understand and reflect about the fictional situations that could be constantly related to the society they live in.

### **3.5.1 Analysis Table**

As it was mentioned during the investigation, its general objective is to analyze social status to understand impact on women. Furthermore, to explain the idea of the dystopia the female characters live in and how it influences in their necessity of having social status, examine the consequences of the character's decisions like the ones America decided to take, and to evaluate the impact of social labels on women's lives. The analysis table is created under the base of the information gathered from the analysis of the novel and the theories used to explore it. The main purpose of these tables is to show how the situations and theories to analyze the book have a relation with reality. This is done with the intent of showing the target audience that fiction books are created because of situations that are usually seen day by day. As a result of this, the researcher intends to demonstrate the target audience they need to analyze the novels they usually read as they have a close relation with the society, they live in.

For investigation purposes, the investigator created an analysis table where the first column is the main objective of the research. In the second column, the researcher wrote down situations or quotes taken from the book, and finally, the third column shows the researcher's interpretation of that situation in specific. This was done in order to make a comparison between the fictional situation and the reality women live in. These tables will serve as a link between the situations of the book and the ones people live in reality.

#### **3.5.1.1 Influences of Having a Social Status Table**

In the first table, the researcher's purpose, as it was mentioned at the beginning of the investigation, is to develop the first specific objective, which is to explain the idea of the dystopia the female characters of the novel live in and how it influences in their necessity of having social

status to fit in. For this chart, the researcher needs to read the book and highlight the quotes and situations related to the dystopia topic found in the book in order to develop them under her own interpretation.

Influences of having a social status	Quote or situation	Researcher's interpretation

### 3.5.1.2 Consequences of America's Decisions

The second table will examine the consequences of America's decisions in wanting to rebel against the norms established by the Selection and even the ones established by her mother because that is not the path she wants to follow. Similar to the first table, the researcher would read the novel and extract several quotes and situations where America decided to go against the rules and decided to write them down in order to provide in the third column the interpretation of those situations based on reality.

Consequences of America's decisions	Quote or situation	Researcher's interpretation

### 3.5.1.3 Impact of Social Labels in Women's Lives

As it was mentioned during the explanation of the instruments, for the third objective, the investigator decided to create an analysis table where in the first column is the impact of social labels in women's lives. In the second column, the investigator will write down the situations and

quotes taken from the book and finally, in the third column the content related to the investigator's interpretation. This is created in order to provide a well-developed perspective on social labels found in fiction and the ones the society live in and see the comparison between them.

Impact of Social Labels in Women's Lives	Quote or situation	Researcher's interpretation

#### 3.5.1.4 Themes

During the investigation, the researcher explained the definition of themes, which basically refers to the main idea of the text and the lesson conducted by the narrative of that literary work. In this case, in the chart created by the investigator, several themes will be explained in order to provide a full understanding of the lessons related to the book. This with the purpose of create a cloud of ideas that show the target audience the novel has a deep meaning in reality.

Themes	Quote or situation	Researcher's interpretation

#### 3.5.1.5 Motifs

For the next chart, the researcher decided to explore the motifs found in the novel. As previously mentioned in the investigation, motifs play a significant role to define the nature of the

story. According to its definition, which is basically a repeating idea found in the literary work, the investigator will read the book and highlight the repetitive ideas in order to mention them in the first column, support them using the quotes written in the second column, and develop them in the third one in order to make a statement in the reader.

Motifs	Quote or situation	Researcher's interpretation

### 3.5.1.6 Symbols

In books, a symbol can range from a simple object to a big statement. It helps to understand an idea outside of the general theme that is not repetitive unlike the motif. Moreover, it can be found throughout the repetition of certain words, or an object related to the characters' lives or situations they live in. In the last chart, the researcher will show in the first column, the symbols found in the book, mention the quotes and situations where the symbols were found in the second column, and their interpretation in the third column in order to show the target audience the depth of the story.

Symbols	Quote or situation	Researcher's interpretation

## 3.6 Collection data process and data analysis

For the investigation, the researcher decided to read the book three times in order to understand the story and being familiarized with the characters, their lives, and the situations they lived in. Additionally, the researcher highlighted the ideas, quotes, situations, themes, motifs, and symbols found during the reading in order to understand them better and explain them in the investigation. The analysis of the book will allow to draw a clear image of the conclusions regarding the objectives. In addition, the exhaustive reading of the novel will allow the researcher the exploration and analysis of the characters, their actions, and consequences. This will lead to a result full of information for the investigation.

The data that will be gathered would come from some instruments created by the researcher. This was done by reading the book several times in order to collect all the necessary details. Additionally, the researcher will provide the target audience and future readers with the analysis a way of the situations in fictional novels and have an open mind regarding the different perspectives that could be found. Furthermore, the analysis of the book will allow to draw a clear image of conclusions regarding the objectives. Finally, the investigator will look for and will take external opinions, documents and information as inspirational guide. These elements would give the researcher the light to create a path for great results in the best way possible. Therefore, the sources like the book, the analysis table, and comments created by the researcher helped to complete the study in a beneficial and close way for the investigator and the target audience.

## Chapter IV

### Data Analysis

The purpose of this chapter is to analyze the book and the information gathered through the instruments in order to get the best results and conclusions for the research. Additionally, there is a brief explanation of the approach used to support the research. The analysis of the story is accompanied by the categories and themes related to the main objectives of the research, as well as an interpretation of the results gathered from the instruments. Moreover, the data analysis is supported with quotes and situations taken from the novel and the researcher's comments. Themes, motifs, and symbols found in the story will be analyzed by the investigator, as well.

#### 4.1 Approach to the Investigation

An approach serves the investigator as a path that leads to a clear conclusion, in this case, a novel. "An approach is the selections that includes a through interpretation of the literary work" (MasterClass, 2021). An approach, in literary analysis like this investigation, provides the researcher with a clear perspective to achieve the goal of the desired objectives set at the beginning. This factor helps the investigator to obtain certain criteria in order to analyze some important aspects found in the book with a new perspective. For the investigation project, the researcher concluded that the feminist approach fulfilled all the necessary requirements to obtain the best results and conclusions. "It re-examines canonical works to show how gender stereotypes are involved in their functioning. It examines and often rediscovers works by women for a possible alternative voice" (Gayatri, 2018). In other words, the feminist approach helped to acquire knowledge towards the social suppression women face in literature and to compare it with reality.

## 4.2 Theories vs Literary Work

In the following section, the researcher selected three literary theories or situations. The analysis charts show a specific set of quotes and situations the researcher obtained from the novel in order to develop the theories. The ones mentioned before will be displayed in order of appearance. Moreover, they will help to provide a clear path to see the link between fictional situations and the real ones present in society.

**Table 1. Influences of having a social status**

Influences of having a social status	Quote or situation	Researcher's interpretation
Economic Benefit	<p>Dad. Yeah. I really did want to help Dad. And May and Gerard. And, I supposed, even my mother. When she talked about it that way, there was nothing to smile about. Things had been strained around here for far too long. I wondered if Dad would see this as a way back to normal, if any amount of money could make things better.</p> <p>It wasn't that our situation was so precarious that we were living in fear of survival or anything. We</p>	<p>The dystopia, as its definition states, only shows the negative characteristics of a society that lives under a government that divides people into eight castes. In this case, every caste was divided, that is from the upper class to the lowest one. Consequently, the distinctions and injustices, such as the economic problems that lower castes had, were pretty obvious. Therefore, this led people like America to</p>

	<p>weren't destitute. But I guess we weren't that far off either. (Chapter 1, Page 3)</p> <p>Our caste was just three away from the bottom. We were artists. And artists and classical musicians were only three steps up from dirt. Literally. Our money was stretched as tight as a high wire, and our income was highly dependent on the changing seasons. (Chapter 1, Page 4)</p> <p>But there were things—important things—in this world that I loved. And that piece of paper seemed like a brick wall keeping me away from what I wanted. Maybe</p>	<p>consider participating in a competition that went against her beliefs and values.</p> <p>It was clear that no matter how much talent people had, their income depended on the seasons the upper castes celebrated. As one aspect of the influences of social status, the situation exhibited elements of economic power for different castes, allowing them to act as an individual society.</p> <p>Due to the difficulties of living in a low caste, women like America had to consider the fact they needed to abandon their dreams, rights, and</p>
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	<p>what I wanted was stupid. Maybe it wasn't even something I could sacrifice my dreams, no matter how much my family meant to me. Besides, I had given them so much already. (Chapter 1, Page 5)</p> <p>"I need to be here. My family needs me to be here. Even if you could let me stay for a week, that would be a blessing for them."</p> <p>"You mean you need the money?" (Chapter 11, Page 129)</p>	<p>desires, just to please others and help their families, even though, it was not something they really wanted.</p>
<p>Recognition</p>	<p>IT WAS FRIDAY, SO THE <i>Illéa Capital Report</i> would be on at eight. We weren't exactly obligated to watch, but it was unwise to miss it. Even Eights—the homeless, the wandering—would find a store or a church where they could see the <i>Report</i>. And with the Selection coming up, the <i>Report</i> was more than a</p>	<p>It was clear that women and the rest of characters in the story shared an ideology. Therefore, it did not matter the people's social and economic position, as what everyone wanted, was to be informed and to have entertainment in their lives. A programming like the one mentioned could</p>

	<p>semi-requirement. Everyone wanted to know what was happening in that department. (Chapter 4, Page 38)</p> <p>“Of course, we will be having lots of programming dedicated to meeting the young women of the Selection, not to mention specials on their lives at the palace.” (Chapter 4, Page 42)</p> <p>“Enjoy your last night as an average girl. Tomorrow, no matter what, your life will be different forever.” (Chapter 5, Page 55)</p> <p>“You’ll have to adjust to that. When you leave here, eyes will</p>	<p>offer recognition for women and their families, which meant an opportunity to have a good lifestyle and good things, besides the economic benefits.</p> <p>From these two portions of the book, it can be seen how the main character analyzed the fact that her life would not be the same after the competition. The recognition had a high price when it came to raise in the social bar. This caused America to start noticing not only that she would be followed, but also that she would be known as an important person. If they were not known in television or were not part of caste one,</p>
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	<p>be on you for the rest of your life.</p> <p>My mom still talks to some of the women she was with when she went through the Selection.</p> <p>They're all viewed as important women. Still" (Chapter 15, Page 189)</p>	<p>two, or three, they did not matter.</p>
<p>Power</p>	<p>"Participants will be housed at the lovely Illéa Palace in Angeles for the duration of their stay. The families of each participant will be <i>generously compensated</i>"—she drew out the words for effect— "for their service to the royal family." (Chapter 1, Page 7)</p> <p>"What will happen to my maids?" I asked, voicing my greatest worry. I</p>	<p>High social status entailed power. All of the power belonged to a few people from the upper castes, mainly to the royal family. Every woman who participated on <i>The Selection</i> would not only have several benefits, but also power, which meant generous and powerful compensations for them and every person that was related to one of the girls.</p> <p>Power was a synonym of protection. The power was</p>

	<p>knew I was safe. Where were they? What if one of them had been walking down the hall as the rebels made their way in?" (Chapter 13, Page 153)</p> <p>"One of the rebels got ahold of Lucy." Anne ducked her eyes for a minute. She spoke her next lines quietly. "I'm not sure they have very many women with them, if you catch my meaning."</p> <p>"Oh."</p> <p>"He was dragging her off somewhere, and she was screaming as loud as she could. In the commotion, it was hard to hear her cries. But another guard came around the corner, a real one. He took aim and fired a bullet right through the man's head. The rebel fell to the ground, pinning Lucy. She was covered in blood."</p>	<p>concentrated on the Illéa army, that was willing to protect only the palace, but also to the royal family and the girls in the competition. People like the maids or the help had to find another way to protect themselves from danger. The best example is Lucy, one of the maids, who experienced a kidnapping. She had no protection at the moment of the attacks. It was only luck that saved her from a murderer or rape. Here, the researcher can see the perspective of another female character who did not have any social influence that could help her in any way.</p>
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	(Chapter 13, Page 166)	
<p>Political Prestige</p>	<p>I rolled my eyes as she went on.</p> <p>This was the way they did it with sons. Princesses born into the royal family were sold off into marriage in an attempt to solidify our young relations with other countries. I understood why it was done—we needed allies. (Chapter 1, Page 7)</p> <p>“Who are they? What do they want?” I asked.</p> <p>“Who? The rebels?”</p> <p>I nodded.</p>	<p>A great social status also meant political prestige, relations that could help people like the upper castes to create a better environment for them. The investigator could analyze that arranged marriages were pretty common and they brought along benefits like political security, allies, help from other countries, and more. In this case, princesses could help to accomplish all the political goals.</p> <p>Women with a high social status like America, in due moment, were able to know more about the political</p>

	<p>“Depends on who you ask. And which group you’re talking about,” he answered.</p> <p>“You mean there’s more than one?”</p> <p>Maxon seemed to hesitate, unsure if this information was something I should know. (Chapter 13, Page 157, 158)</p> <p>From the corner of my eye, I noticed a waving hand, and a moment later Maxon turned as well. A man in a suit was standing there, and he clearly needed to speak to the prince. Maxon nodded, but the man hesitated, looking him and then to me, evidently questioning my presence.</p> <p>“She is fine,” Maxon said, and the man came over and knelt before him.</p>	<p>situations that were happening internally. In other words, they not only knew the “news” that were shared in television, but also important information that was is crucial for everyone in the kingdom. This meant she could prepare herself and her family for any event that could harm them or benefit them.</p>
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<p style="text-align: center;">Knowledge</p>	<p>We were in the Great Room again, starting the week with a history lesson. Well, more like a history test. This was on of those areas where it always seemed that what people knew was varied, both as far as what was fact and how informed they were. Mom always taught us orally when it came to history. We had pages and worksheets to master for English and math, but when it came to the stories that made up our past, there was very little that I knew for sure was truth. (Chapter 17, Page 208)</p> <p>“Ummm, why is it that we don’t have any of this in a book? So we could study?” There was a hint of irritation in her voice.</p> <p>Silvia shook her head. “Dear girls,</p>	<p>Knowledge was an important element that the high social status offered. Everyone in the castes had the opportunity to learn the basics in different subjects. However, those in the upper castes could afford a good education for the future.</p> <p>In this case, the researcher analyzed that not only history was an important subject, but also table matters, politics, economics, and literature were necessary in the different areas the Ones, Twos, and Threes performed in their daily life.</p> <p>As it was stated in the book, since the opportunity was on the table, people expected women from the high class, such as the ladies that were</p>

	<p>history isn't something you study. It's something you should just know." (Chapter 17, Page 211)</p>	<p>competing, to know everything for in the a future one of them could be a queen.</p>
<p>Respect</p>	<p>I focused on his mother. She looked serene. She sat up in her chair, too, but not in an icy way. I realized that, unlike the king and Prince Maxon, she hadn't grown up in the palace. She was a celebrated Daughter of Illéa. She might have been someone like me. (Chapter 4, Page 40)</p> <p>"Queen Amberly is the best queen ever. She's so beautiful and smart. Every time I see her on TV, I want to be just like her," May said with a sigh. (Chapter 5, Page 54)</p>	<p>Respect was a basis; however, not everyone had it in the castes. The queen, at first hand, was only a girl from the Four caste. However, once she became the King's wife, she gained the respect of everyone in the country. It is clear that a high status could definitely buy the respect from others, without the need of knowing them, and even make other women wish to be like that person. In this case, the queen is a clear example. The more high-status women had, the more respected they were around people.</p>

	<p>“Well, sometimes I wish that the Twos had an idea about what it felt like to be treated the way they treat us.”</p> <p>I nodded. I’d never really thought of myself being on the same level as a Four, but I guess we were in similar place. If you weren’t a Two or Three, it was just varying shades of bad. (Chapter 8, Page 84)</p>	<p>In this case, it is pretty obvious that respect and treatment were not equitable for the castes.</p> <p>The upper class called all of the shots, but the lowest class had no opportunity to set their own rules in the social path nor to ask for good treatment.</p> <p>However, America was is one of the characters that learned that power could be used for good or evil and if she was is in the competition, she could change the injustices her people lived along the way and to teach the royal family that everyone deserved respect.</p>
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*Table 1 provides fragments or quotes from the book The Selection alongside influences of social status and the researcher’s interpretation. Source: Researcher’s creation.*

**Table 2. Consequences of America's Decisions**

Consequences of America's Decisions	Quote or situation	Researcher's interpretation
<p style="text-align: center;">Enemies</p>	<p>“But we know castes mean nothing in the Selection, and it seems Lady America is not to be overlooked. Upon landing in Angeles, Lady Singer was the crowd darling at the airport, stopping to take pictures, sign autographs, and simply speak to anyone there. Miss America Singer is not afraid to get her hands dirty, a quality that may believe our next princess needs.”</p> <p>Nearly everyone turned to look at me. I could see it in their eyes, the same look I'd gotten from Emmica and Samantha. Suddenly those stares made sense. My</p>	<p>America's character and attitude were completely different from the others.</p> <p>Usually, women have to be delicate, demure, quiet, and they must follow the rules, and sometimes because of that, they forget about everyone else and only think about being the perfect girl according to the standards set by others. Here, the researcher understood that the protagonist had a voice, did not like the way she should follow the rules, and her actions sometimes were impulsive, but with good intentions. However, because of America's decisions and</p>

	<p>intentions didn't matter.</p> <p>They didn't know I want this. In their eyes, I was a threat. And I could see they wanted me gone. (Chapter 9, Page 102)</p>	<p>actions, she gained enemies as she was in a competition and every girl was after the same goal, that is the prince, the crown, and a better lifestyle, no matter at what cost.</p>
<p>Relationships</p>	<p>My breath was caught in my throat. I'd just walked into the very situation I feared.</p> <p>No guards, no cameras, no one to stop him from doing whatever we wanted.</p> <p>Knee-jerk reaction. Literally.</p> <p>I kned His Majesty in the thigh. Hard. (Chapter 12, Page 145)</p>	<p>As stated, sometimes, America went against the rules, and she tended to forget that this could bring consequences. Her fear to lose herself or her value led her to do things that could affect her relationships, like the one she had with the Prince. In this case, the preconceived idea that men can do whatever they want with women, affected America. Therefore, her fear to be treated like an object pushed her to hit the prince and to put at risk her opportunity to help her family.</p>

	<p>“She was treated for some cuts, but no one ever really saw to her mind. She’s a little jittery now but tries to hide it as best she can. And it’s not just for her sake, but her father’s. He’s so proud that his daughter is good enough to be a maid. She doesn’t want to let him down.”</p> <p>I promised myself that, if I could help it, Lucy wouldn’t have to go through that again.</p>	<p>America showed how much she cared about her maids and did not share the idea that maids were only meant to be seen and not heard. Here, America saw the girls who worked for her, as her equals and as her friends. For her, it did not matter who was in the highest position, as she thought her maids deserved help and to be treated with respect and security. The researcher considered that in this case, America’s relationship with them grew for the better. Moreover, this could help her in the future, as she did not hesitate in thinking the caste system only worked as something absurd and unfair for the rest of women and people, in general.</p>
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	<p>Maxon made a playfully exhausted sigh. I was so busy arguing, I didn't hear the whispers until they were practically in front us. Celeste, Emmica, and Tiny were heading past us toward their rooms.</p> <p>"Ladies," Maxon said, and gave a small head nod.</p> <p>I supposed it was foolish to think no one would see us together. (Chapter 15, Page 185)</p>	<p>The relationship between America and the rest of contestants, except Marlee, was tense. The impulsive decision of becoming Maxon's friend and spending time with him could provoke several consequences for her during the competition. This because the rest of the girls could choose to sabotage her or push her to do something that could make her look like a bad person for the rest of the people, including Maxon.</p>
<p>Social Critic</p>	<p>My name was hanging above a bar holding a week's worth of dresses. I guessed princesses-in-training didn't wear pants. (Chapter 9, Page 93)</p> <p>But whatever their opinion, I</p>	<p>As explained during the investigation, women are expected to be perfect, princess material for the people that surrounds them because the world is always watching. Besides only becoming a wife, there is a</p>

	<p>wasn't going down quietly. (Chapter 13, Page 150)</p> <p>"If she cries, I want to wear pants for a week," I offered. (Chapter 12, Page 137)</p> <p>Was I the only one who saw how flawed I was? I was unrefined. I didn't have it in me to be bossy or overly organized. I was selfish and had a horrible temper, and I didn't like being in front of people. And I wasn't brave. You had to be brave to take this job. And that's what this was. Not just a marriage, but a position. (Chapter 16, Page 201)</p>	<p>social position and an image a woman has to accomplish correctly. However, America was an exceptional girl who thought she could not perform in that role in specific. She was a girl who did not realize she was in the center of the scenario and that everything she did, could become a critic. It is clear there was no space for a woman to make mistakes or say something incorrect in front of everybody. However, America was not well aware of that, she was not interested in trying to do an effort to be perfect. Despite she needed to follow the rules, she was very stubborn and persistent. She did not want to lose her individuality, or her pants as she requested in a bet. She just</p>
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		wanted to be herself, even though that could cost her a lot.
Expulsion	<p>“Excuse me, dear, are you going to keep crying?” he asked, sounding very put out by the thought.</p> <p>“Don’t call me that! I am no more dear to you than the thirty-four other strangers you have here in your cage.”</p> <p>(Chapter 10, Page 114)</p> <p>Prince Maxon surveyed the room and found me. Our eyes met for a moment, and he smiled. I wasn’t expecting that. I was thinking that he’d probably changed his opinion of how to act toward me in the night, and I’d be called out in front of everyone for my behavior.</p>	<p>Whenever women decide to take a rebellious attitude, there are consequences and, in this case, the protagonist was not afraid of showing her short temper and speaking her mind.</p> <p>The problem in that situation and in general, was that she was risking everything and so, she could be expelled from the competition that was helping her and her family. The competition was the only way to get the benefits and the lifestyle they aimed to, because of the government’s injustice they were constantly trying to survive.</p>

	(Chapter 11, Page 125)	
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*Table 2 provides fragments or quotes from the book The Selection alongside consequences of America's decisions and the researcher's interpretation. Source: Researcher's creation.*

**Table 3. Impact of Social Labels in Women's Lives**

Impact of Social Labels in Women's Lives	Quote or situation	Researcher's interpretation
Economic	<p>"Well that's not all. You can accept your own work now and go alone and... you can keep half of whatever you make."</p> <p>She sorts of grimaced and she said it.</p> <p>My eyes popped open.</p> <p>"<i>But</i> only if you sign up for the Selection." (Chapter 3, Page 26)</p>	<p>In the country of Illéa, as in real life, there were not balanced gender relations. In the case of the novel, the protagonist was under a negative label, as only men were the providers.</p> <p>However, under a condition that went against her wishes, America was able to gain her own money, but only if she followed a rule that could cause her to lose a part of her way of living.</p>
Physical Appearance	<p>"Don't worry. I'll be home soon enough."</p> <p>"Yeah, right! You're the most</p>	<p>For every woman, physical appearance is an important fact that social labels have promoted</p>

	<p>beautiful girl in Illéa. He'll love you!"</p> <p>Why did everyone think it all came down to beauty? Maybe it did. (Chapter 7, Page 75)</p> <p>A swarm parted, and I saw rows of mirrors with people working on girl's hair and painting their nails. Clothes hung on racks, and people were shouting things like "I found the dye!" and "That makes her look pudgy." (Chapter 9, Page 89)</p> <p>I couldn't help thinking that there was some actual weight to it. Someone had written an editorial in a magazine about the look of a princess. I didn't get to read the article myself, but Emmica and some of the others did. According to her, it</p>	<p>on a large scale. In fact, they have affected every girl in the world. As the protagonist experienced, she knew that in order to become "someone" in that kind of world surrounded by exotic and external elements, women had to sacrifice their physical appearance. To be considered, it was necessary to look like a princess, someone who was actually worthy of being in front of a camera. That it, they must have the perfect hair, perfect face, perfect body, and perfect manners, someone who could not make a tiny mistake that made her look as if she did not fit in the standards settled by others, who thought physical appearance was everything in a woman.</p>
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	<p>was about Maxon needing to find someone who actually looked regal and photographed well with him, someone who would like nice on a stamp.” (Chapter 17, Page 213)</p>	
<p>Psychological</p>	<p>“The right thing? Aspen, you made me believe we could do it. You made me love you. And then you talked me into this damn contest. Do you know they’re practically shipping me off to be one of Maxon’s playthings?” (Chapter 6, Page 69)</p> <p>“About last night. Let me explain. When they came to prep us, to get us ready to come here, there was a man who told me that I was never to turn you down. No matter what you asked for. Not ever.”</p>	<p>A woman should only think about accomplishing goals that others set for her. In fact, what it was in her mind was not worthy of being listened to. America was usually being told to obey the rules, no matter how demeaning or complicated they were. They even tried to brainwash her regarding what she should think. In these parts of the book, the researcher analyzed how difficult, it was for the protagonist to digest the idea of becoming an object that was not able to speak or behave in a way that made her feel like</p>

	<p>He was dumbfounded. “What?”</p> <p>“He made it sound like you might ask for certain things. And you said yourself that you hadn’t been around many women. After eighteen years... and then you sent the cameras away. I just got scared when you got that close to me.”</p> <p>(Chapter 13, Page 154)</p>	<p>a true woman, who was free of thinking they way she wanted to without being told the opposite.</p>
<p>Opinions and Actions</p>	<p>“One more thing,” Skinny said with his hand on the door. “This isn’t exactly a rule, but it would be unwise of you to ignore it. When you are invited to do something with Prince Maxon, you do not refuse. No matter what it is. Dinner, outings, kisses-more than kisses-anything. Do not turn him down.” (Chapter 6, Page 64)</p> <p>“Do whatever they tell you. Try</p>	<p>Since ancient times, women had been told how to behave, what to do, and how to act. They were unable to have the power of choosing how to express themselves and how to act towards their emotions or decisions. In the novel, it was clear that every woman should “behave correctly,” and smile as if nothing could affect them and do everything others told them to do no matter how</p>

	<p>to stop sulking and be happy. Behave. Smile. Keep us posted. Oh! I just knew you'd turn out to be special." (Chapter 7, Page 76)</p> <p>Yet another mistake on my part. That giggle caught the attention of Silvia, who was walking in the door.</p> <p>"Tsk-tsk. A lady never raises her voice above a gentle whisper." (Chapter 11, Page 123)</p> <p>"Please know that I will be reporting any missteps on your part to the royal family." (Chapter 11, Page 124)</p>	<p>uncomfortable or horribly immoral it could be for them. Instead of being celebrated for being honest and pure with themselves, every girl in the story and even in the real world, are not allow to make any missteps or build her own path in life without someone telling them to do it. Everything that a woman does is under a microscope and a reflector is ready to show that she is not able to be a robot.</p>
<p>Freedom</p>	<p>"But we want to make them really pull for you. And that won't happen unless they can get to know you. So, we'll do a</p>	<p>To become the queen, the women who were in the competition had to sacrifice their freedom. This kind of</p>

	<p>little interview here, and you do your best on the <i>Reports</i>, and then don't be shy when you see us around the palace. We aren't here every day, but we'll be around."</p> <p>"Okay," I said meekly. I really didn't want to talk to camera crews. It all felt so intrusive. (Chapter 9, Page 94)</p> <p>"Some of us were born here. Mary was born in the castle, and her parents are still here. I was an orphan, taken in because the palace needed staff." She straightened her dress as if she could rub off this piece of her history that seemed to bother her. "Lucy was sold to the palace." (Chapter 13, Page 164)</p>	<p>things happen in real life, as well. Social labels in women create a big impact on their freedom, as the protagonist of the story experienced herself. She had to be seen by everyone, even if it was against her wishes and thought it was intrusive. That was how the laws worked in Illéa and in real life, freedom is not an option available for all women.</p>
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*Table 3 shows fragments or quotes from the book The Selection alongside consequences of Impact of Social Labels in Women and the researcher's interpretation. Source: Researcher's creation.*

### 4.3 Themes, Motifs and Symbols

Additionally, to the literary theories, the next section of the investigation will explain the themes, motifs, and symbols found to be able to carry out a further analysis of the novel. Each one of the mentioned elements will be explained individually, as in that way the researcher will describe important aspects of the book that could be seen as little details. For that, the investigator created an analysis chart with the aspects, quotes or situations from the book and the researcher's interpretation in order to have a deep perspective regarding the context of the novel.

#### 4.3.1 Themes

**Table 4. Themes**

Themes	Quote or situation	Researcher's interpretation
Family	<p>"Daddy! Don't cry." I fell into his arms.</p> <p>"Listen to me, kitten. Win or lose, you'll always be a princess to me."</p> <p>"Oh, Daddy." I finally started to cry. That was all it took to unleash the fear, the sadness, the worry, the nerves-the one sentence that meant none of it mattered. (Chapter 7, Page 76)</p>	<p>Family was an important element in the protagonist's life.</p> <p>It fact her family was her secure place and the center of her life.</p> <p>Family, in the story, worked as an impulse for America and several women in the competition in order to fight for a position in the Selection. To support the idea, it is clear that throughout the book, it can be seen how America's main</p>

	<p>It was too much to bear, to be loved that much. I'd be surrounded by scores of guards at the palace, but I couldn't imagine a place safer than my father's arms. (Chapter 7, Page 76)</p> <p>The only thing I really wanted was something that made this place feel like less of a palace. If my family were running around somewhere, or if I wasn't so done up. I couldn't ask for my family to visit. (Chapter 12, Page 137)</p> <p>I turned and caught the briefest of moments in Maxon's life. His mother, the beautiful Queen Amberly, pushed some stray</p>	<p>reason for doing everything she could to stay in the palace was her family and her necessity to help them. Even though, they told her it did not matter if she won or lost, for America, it the main reason fundamental to give her family a decent life.</p> <p>For America the only thing that matters was is her family; however, during her stay in the place, she noticed that the royal family was is like any other family. Besides the richness and power, she started to see seeing them as real human beings who cared about each other. That moment actually showed her how family was is the center of everything that surrounded her.</p>
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	<p>hairs back into place. He straightened his jacket and said something to her. She gave a reassuring nod, and Maxon smiled. (Chapter 14, Page 175)</p>	
<p>Femininity</p>	<p>“I know it sounds harsh, but this isn’t a game to be taken lightly. Someone in this room will be the next princess of Illéa. It is no small task. You must endeavor to elevate yourselves, no matter your previous station.” (Chapter 11, Page 124)</p> <p>How many times had she survived attacks now? We got</p>	<p>It is clear femininity was a delicate theme in the story as the country did not have equal gender relations. On the contrary, it was clear that women were expected to act in certain way to be considered as perfect material. Women, in the story, were valued only for their beauty and not for their way to think or act. In this part of the story, it was clear they were seen only as objects to get alliances and behave like a trophy.</p> <p>However, in the last fragment, it was clear that there was one</p>

	<p>reports that these happened several times a year. That had to be unnerving. The odds were getting slimmer and slimmer for her... and her husband... and her only child. Surely, eventually, the rebels would figure out the right alignment of circumstances to get what they wanted. Yet she stood there, her chin set, her still face wearing a quiet calm. (Chapter 13, Page 151)</p>	<p>shining light that showed how a woman could stand out among so many men. The Queen Amberly showed America how her calm face and fearlessness was a great example of true feminism. Even though, she faced a difficult moment with her family, there was no such thing as damsel in distress, as she was willing to stand firm along with her family in order to protect them and the country.</p>
<p>Society</p>	<p>Aspen was a Dix. Sixes were servants and only a step up from Sevens in that they were better educated and trained for indoor work. Aspen was smarter than anyone knew and devastatingly handsome, but it was atypical for a woman to marry down. A man from a lower caste could ask for your hand, but it was</p>	<p>Society, in the story, was a completely unjust for the majority of the characters. Because of the caste system, the majority of the people had to live with limits in most of the areas. The society practically demanded people how to act, who to love, what jobs they could have, and what kind of</p>

	<p>rare to get a yes. (Chapter 2, Page 15)</p>	<p>education they could have. Except for the Ones, Twos, and Threes, Illéa was not a good place for people to live in.</p>
<p>Competition</p>	<p>“The recent census has confirmed that a single woman between the ages of sixteen and twenty currently resided in your home. We would like to make you aware of an upcoming opportunity to honor the great nation of Illéa.” (Chapter 1, Page 6)</p> <p>“Our beloved prince, Maxon Schreave,” Mom continued, “is coming of age this month as he ventures into this new part of his life, he hopes to move forward with a partner, to marry a true Daughter of Illéa. If your eligible daughter, sister, or charge is interested in possibly</p>	<p>In Illéa, the competition for women from sixteen to twenty years old was not a joke. It was a way for them to obtain a getaway from the tough life they and their families were living. It was well explained that every girl had to participate in the first part of the selection, even if it was against her wishes. The country of Illéa demanded the Selection to be an important way to demonstrate that the country stood by itself and that it could be “beneficial” for everyone. In that way, the determination, in several of the contestants, was high.</p>

	<p>becoming the bride of Prince Maxon and the adored princess of Illéa, please fill out the enclosed form and return it to your local Province Services Office.” (Chapter 1, Page 7)</p> <p>I tried to focus on those faces, holding my head high. I was determined to do this well. I would be the best of us, the Highest of the Lows. It gave me a sense of purpose. America Singer: the champion of the lower castes. (Chapter 7, Page 72)</p>	
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*Table 4 shows fragments or quotes from the book The Selection alongside themes of the book and the researcher’s interpretation. Source: Researcher’s creation.*

### 4.3.2 Motifs

**Table 5. Motifs**

Motifs	Quote or situation	Researcher’s interpretation
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<p>The Garden</p>	<p>I was staggering quite a bit, but I didn't care if I looked less than grateful. I just needed to be outside. I let myself feel the warm air on my skin, the grass beneath my toes. Somehow even things in nature seemed to be bred into something extravagant here. (Chapter 10, Page 113)</p> <p>"I don't understand," I said as he led me to a bench -our bench- and let me sit facing the lights of the palace. (Chapter 15, Page 186)</p>	<p>Something that was clear at the beginning of the story and competition, was that the contestants were not able to leave the palace or go anywhere without permission. Therefore, the palace started to be seen by America as a golden cage, at least until she went to the garden and suddenly, that little spot became her secure and favorite space to think, talk, and feel free.</p>
<p>Clothes</p>	<p>I'd gone through most of this process in a robe, and once they were done fixing me up, I was led over to the racks of clothes. My name was hanging above a bar holding a week's worth of dresses. I guessed princesses-in-training didn't wear pants.</p>	<p>Clothes were an important element in the story, as it was showed that it was necessary to follow a dress code to be differentiated from the castes. In this case, as mentioned in the book, princesses could not wear use clothes that did not look</p>

	(Chapter 9, Page 93)	feminine.
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*Table 5 illustrates some fragments or quotes from the book The Selection alongside motifs of the book and the researcher’s interpretation. Source: Researcher’s creation.*

### 4.3.3 Symbols

**Table 6. Symbols**

Symbols	Quote or situation	Researcher’s interpretation
Aspen’s Pennies Jar	<p>From time to time, when he had anything at all, he’d give me a penny to pay for my song. If he managed to scrounge up a penny, I wanted him to give it to his family. There was no doubt they needed every last one. But then, having these pennies-since I couldn’t bear to spend them-was like having a reminder of everything Aspen was willing to do for me, of everything I meant to him.</p> <p>Back in my room, I pulled my tiny jar of pennies out from its</p>	<p>Aspen’s pennies jar was a reminder of several things. It reminded America of a love promise made by Aspen.</p> <p>Basically, it represented what he was willing to do for their relationship. Moreover, it also was a symbol of the difficulties the castes had to go through because of the injustice in the country of Illéa.</p>

	<p>hiding spot and listened to the happy sound of the newest one hitting its neighbors. (Chapter 2, Page 24)</p>	
<p>The Tree House</p>	<p>I opened my window and looked out into our little patch of backyard. There wasn't much of a moon out, so I had to let my eyes adjust before I moved. Across the lawn, the tree house stood barely silhouetted in the night. When we were younger, Kota would tie up sheets to the branches so it looked like a ship. (Chapter 1, Page 11)</p>	<p>The tree house was a remainder of America's first safe place, her sanctuary; the place that helped her to escape from the reality of Illéa's injustice before she found her place in the garden.</p>

*Table 6 shows some fragments or quotes from the book The Selection alongside symbols of the book and the researcher's interpretation. Source: Researcher's creation.*

## **Chapter V**

### **Conclusions and Recommendations**

In this chapter, the conclusions gathered through the investigation are going to be provided and explained. The research questions mentioned in Chapter I will be analyzed one by one in order to explain how the investigator gathered results and came to the conclusions. Furthermore, the investigator will provide the target audience with a brief description of how it was possible to accomplish the goal of the research. In addition, it will be mentioned some recommendations the investigator seems necessary, as a contribution for future theses or written works.

#### **5.1 Purpose of the Conclusion**

The purpose of the conclusion is to analyze in detail, after an extensive study and acquired knowledge, the impact of social status on women. The analysis was conducted under the feminist approach, which helped the researcher to follow the correct path and have the necessary guidelines to accomplish the desired objective. The main goal of the investigator, with this research, was to provide women with an open perspective of how fictitious situations are mostly related to the reality they live. The investigation does not have as intention to create conflicts, but to allow women to draw a clear image in every book they read, and thus they can observe the social labels and status and make a comparison with the ones they have experienced in their life.

#### **5.2 Conclusions**

For the investigation to have a clear path to be completed, there were set one general objective and three specific ones. The objectives represent the questions and intentions the

researcher had when decided to start the project. These objectives offer the description of the purpose the investigator intended to accomplish. Following the next sections, they will be mentioned again in order to explain how they helped to complete the analysis with success and how they were carried out during the investigation.

### **5.2.1 To explain the idea of the dystopia the female characters live in and how it influences in their necessity of having social status.**

At the beginning of the investigation and in the middle of it, social status is a theme mentioned in literary works, but it is usually ignored when it surrounds a woman. The dystopia is not so far from the reality women live. Actually, each woman is defined by the social status they have, and unfortunately, this social status does not change. However, it shows the injustice of those elements that surrounds it and how it affects women. Therefore, women feel the constant need to leave behind their beliefs, dreams, goals, and even their families, so they can obtain those “benefits” that should be for everyone in order to be accepted in society. These kinds of injustices cause serious internal and external conflicts in women, as they are constantly thinking how they can get the perfect position in society.

As a strategy to comprehend and analyze the impact of social status and its influence in women, a comparison chart was created. This chart showed several fictitious situations or quotes extracted from the book chosen for the investigation. In addition, these quotes were subjected into an analysis by the researcher and then, they were subjected to interpretation. From it, the investigator was able to conclude that social status offered several features like economic benefits, power, recognition, knowledge, and respect that could help people to achieve goals in life and have a better lifestyle. Additionally, in most of the cases, women faced challenges that

are difficult to get over without sacrifice something important in their lives. However, these situations also showed that it was important for people to start breaking those boundaries and rules that affected women and them, in general.

### **5.2.2 To examine the consequences of America's decisions in wanting to rebel against the norms established by the Selection.**

Many times, it has been mentioned, how women are affected by the rules established by others; consequently, because they cannot be themselves. Moreover, it has been stated how every action can have a reaction, like rebelliousness or actions done without thinking. This was the case of America, a character who showed that not everyone can follow the norms to make everyone happy. Nevertheless, this does not mean it will not have consequences. For this objective, the investigator created another chart with aspects such as quotes extracted from the book that were subjected to interpretation in order to have a better perspective of the impact that decisions taken out of the box can cause to women in fiction and in reality.

It is important to mention that in this part of the paper; the researcher was able to realize that not everyone is willing to paint out of the lines and get their hands dirty. Additionally, how the actions of a woman like America could affect her surroundings, as well as like her relationships and her social life. This because the world is not used to accept the idea of a woman standing firm and thinking for herself without listening to the rules that others have imposed and are negative. From this, the researcher concluded that even though some women are decided to break the rules for their own good, the majority of them are under vigilance and they could be criticized in a cruel way, as they do not want to obey norms that usually affect them in a negative way.

### **5.2.3 To evaluate the impact of social labels on women's lives.**

As stated during the investigation, women are always the target of social labels. It does not matter how hard they fight to be seen as something else out of those labels, people are always decided to judge based on old standards set long time ago, Nevertheless, this affects women in several areas of their lives, such as like the psychological and the physical area, their opinions, actions, and even their freedom, in extreme cases. Women are usually being told what to do and how to behave, how to dress, and how to speak just because the labels people stipulate. Thanks to the chart created by the investigator and the quotes and situations she extracted from the book, there was a clear image of the negative impact these social labels have on women not only in fiction, but in real life. In several novels, it is stated that people expect women to be treated like an object. However, this is a topic difficult to digest for women, who actually live that specific situation in their daily lives. It is true social labels affect everyone, but the hardest ones are specially for the feminine gender. These charts are a proof those labels are a problem that should be considered. This analysis provided the target audience with viewpoints they may not have considered before and now they can be deemed as the story represents, as a big social issue the feminine characters went through.

### **5.3 Restatement of the Research Question**

As it was stated in the first chapter of this investigation, the research question was What is the impact of social status and norms on women and how it affects their lives? During this research, the investigator was able to analyze how social status has impact on women. The analysis was supported by comparison charts created by the investigator, which provided valuable information about the fictitious situations and the ones women live in real life. From this

investigation, the researcher concluded the social status has a deep impact on women from all ages. In other words, women are under the influence of social labels and status; therefore, they have to face many challenges and complicated situations day by day. However, the study has also demonstrated that the norms established by society can be faced in order for women to create their own path out of the standards set for them. Long time ago, it was a challenge for a woman to raise her voice against something that was negative for her when it came to society. However, nowadays women are able to see the injustice of social status and are not afraid to express their opinions. With the help of a new perspective and approaches, women can now develop strong beliefs and opinions regarding the social status.

#### **5.4 Recommendations**

After concluding the investigation project, the researcher considers important to provide recommendations that could help future investigators, in order to facilitate their writing experience. All suggestions about how researches can be developed and improved will be mentioned and explained in this section based on the researcher's experience along the project. First, one of the main elements to take into consideration is the quantity of information that needs to be obtained. It is necessary to gather trustful information, so coherent ideas can draw a pattern that helps future researchers to complete their projects. Furthermore, it is important to have in mind the objectives set for the research during the whole process and do not change them once they are already created.

As a second point, researchers should consider necessary to know the fields that are necessary and they want to explore. Additionally, they must pay attention to all the details those fields have and analyze them carefully in order to be familiarized with the information that will

be analyzed and explored. For this, it is important to read the information as many times as needed, take notes and possibly, create a chart that helps to follow the correct path during the investigation.

Third, future researchers should consider the time where they are more productive. Additionally, they should create a schedule before starting the research and draw a path to follow for the development of the project. For example, in a calendar or notebook created by the researcher, set a goal for each day or week that will help them to feel organized for each chapter or section they could build. Finally, this investigation will not only benefit the target audience. It could be beneficial to different social groups and future researchers as it could inspire them to create a well-developed project.

As a final recommendation for future researchers who would like to inspire their projects on *The Selection*, multiple approaches can be used to analyze it. Depending on their objectives, their project would benefit several target audiences. Besides the approach chosen for this investigation which was the feminist approach, there are also the socio-cultural and psychological approaches which could help to study the behaviors of people based on the society they live in.

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