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KELOMPOK PENCINTA BACAAN ANAK
I N A B B Y
Indonesian Board on Books for Young People

Untaian kata sepanjang
cita-cita rentangan
makna menjalin dunia
pembimbing putra-putri
semua bangsa bersama
kita meninggikan
harkatnya

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Mengejar Harmoni Tanpa Kehilangan Makna: Menulis Non-Fiksi dalam Balutan Cerita Fiksi

Jessica Florencia

Ada kekuatan di dalam cerita. Itu yang dikatakan oleh banyak guru saya.

"Kalau anak takut disuntik, coba pakai cerita.", "Kalau anak tidak mau minum obat, coba pakai cerita.", dan seterusnya yang serupa.

Nahasnya, sangat tidak mudah untuk meramu informasi berbau ilmiah dengan cerita yang memikat hati. Padahal, jika berhasil dilakukan, setidaknya, cerita itu dapat menjadi gerbang masuk bagi pikiran seorang anak bisa menyelam lebih dalam tentang suatu topik saintifik. Terpantik. Terbangkitkan semangatnya. Tercelikkan matanya. Menemukan suatu cakrawala baru yang menanti untuk dijelajahi. Karena pada dasarnya, setiap anak adalah pembelajar ulung. Luber dengan rasa ingin tahu.

Jadi, harus bagaimana?

Seorang guru saya yang lain pernah berujar, "Kalau tidak bisa menjelaskan suatu konsep yang sulit kepada seorang anak kecil sehingga dia dapat mengerti, artinya kamu belum mengerti." Itulah kegelisahan terbesar menulis non-fiksi yang harus disandingkan dengan cerita fiksi. Seorang penulis harus benar-benar mengenal ceruk, palung, dan punggung suatu konsep non-fiksi supaya tidak terkubur dalam-dalam oleh daya tarik magis cerita fiksi. Pemahaman idenya harus utuh dan bahkan perlu dapat menunjukkan celah-celah tersembunyi yang sulit untuk dijangkau.

Kegelisahan berikutnya adalah menemukan padanan cerita fiksi yang pas sehingga tidak mengaburkan atau bahkan menghilangkan makna. Kemewahan cerita fiksi adalah pada keleluasaannya untuk berselancar bebas. Ia bisa terjadi di negeri khayal maupun nyata. Ia bisa memilih terikat pada tradisi atau lepas bebas tanpa aturan. Akhir ceritanya tidak terbelenggu apapun. Begitu bebasnya cerita fiksi dapat melangit, ia tampak kesulitan dipertemukan dengan nuansa non-fiksi yang jauh lebih bumi, tanpa terkesan mengada-ngada.

Seperti "tumbu ketemu tutup", mungkin Filosofi Jawa inilah yang akhirnya merupakan tugas penulis yang ingin menulis cerita non-fiksi dalam balutan fiksi, apakah itu sains, teknologi, sejarah, atau geografi. Berusaha untuk menemukan pasangan yang harmonis tanpa menghilangkan makna.

Pucuk dicinta, ulam tiba. Waktu pertama kali saya berjumpa dengan dongeng rakyat Putri Sulita dan Raja Api dari daerah Bengkulu, ada dorongan yang kuat untuk menampilkan sosok Putri Sulita dan

memadankannya dengan keilmuan pertolongan pertama bagi anak-anak. Di dalam dongeng itu, Putri Sulita adalah sosok anak perempuan yang harusnya dibunuh oleh ayahnya tapi diselamatkan oleh ibunya dan dibesarkan di wilayah terpencil secara sembunyi-sembunyi. Putri Sulita kemudian menjadi seorang yang cerdas dan terampil dalam mengobati berbagai macam penyakit. Ketika ayahnya, Raja Api, akhirnya menjadi tua dan sakit keras, Putri Sulita muncul untuk menyembuhkan sang ayah dan diakui sebagai Tabib Wanita dan anak dari Raja Api.

Dongeng ini harusnya bisa menginspirasi banyak anak perempuan, tapi bukankah kita tidak perlu lagi cerita yang menorehkan luka patriarkal yang lebih dalam daripada yang sudah ada?

Dengan mempergunakan kekuatan cerita fiksi untuk bebas menentukan alur cerita, Putri Sulita dalam adaptasinya, dipilih untuk menjelma menjadi putri modern yang diperhatikan, disayang, dan dibacakan buku oleh ayahnya. Namanya pun menjadi Putri Lita.

Putri Lita yang masih kecil tetap mahir dalam mengobati luka seperti Putri Sulita dewasa, supaya terutama ia menjadi sosok kanak-kanak yang bisa membawa pesan kepada teman-temannya untuk tetap tenang berpikir di saat terjadi krisis. Keterampilan yang tidak diharapkan untuk matang pada seorang anak, tapi perlu diajarkan sedari kecil supaya memiliki ruang untuk bertumbuh pada waktunya. Putri Lita juga gemar membaca buku, sama dengan Putri Sulita yang cerdas dan rajin belajar. Kemudian, agar tidak mengkhianati cerita Putri Sulita dan kehidupan nyata, yang sejatinya tidak sempurna, cerita Putri Lita juga tetap tidak dilepaskan dari potongan kisah tragis. Setiap lembar ceritanya disusun dengan mempercayai bahwa di dalam tubuh kecil seorang anak sebenarnya ada kemampuan untuk mencerna ide-ide yang besar. Orang dewasa jangan sampai meremehkan, melainkan perlu hadir mendampingi dan percaya.

Demikianlah proses riset dan dorongan kreatif kemudian menelurkan sebuah karya. Tidak sempurna, tapi perlu dicoba. Diliputi keraguan, tapi disertai harapan. Semoga satu cerita bisa membawa lebih banyak anak untuk giat membaca dan belajar, bisa mendorong lebih banyak anak untuk berani mengarungi ilmu sains dan teknologi. Termasuk Perempuan. Lagi, mungkin bisa lebih mengusik lebih banyak ayah untuk sedikit lebih sering membacakan buku bagi putri maupun putranya.

The Rise of the Local Languages

(theresia enny angraini)

Indonesia consists of many islands and many different ethnic groups and tribes. Each of those ethnic group and tribe has their own local language. According to several sources, there are more than 700 active local languages in Indonesia with Papua Island leading with more than 250 local languages. To communicate with each other, Indonesian people are using the national language, which is Indonesian or Bahasa Indonesia, which becomes one of the reasons why many young people do not really learn or speak their local languages. There are concerned that local languages will extinct and died, especially those without the written form of the language.

In the world of children's literature, however, there is a trend lately which can be considered positive in terms of keeping the local languages alive. Several authors have become aware of the importance of preserving the local language and start writing children's books using their own local language. A few of these authors will be discussed here including a short review of their books.

Three authors writing in Javanese language (from the island of Java) can be mentioned. The first one is Galuh Larasati whose book, *Melati: Serat Kagem Ibu* (Letters to Mom), was written in Javanese using Latin/universal alphabet. The book is an epistolary novel, where a teenage girl is writing letters to her late mother who went to heaven already. She is sharing and reporting what happened in her

everyday life and how she missed her mother very much.

The second author is Paksi Raras Alit writing the book *Pengen Kaya Bapak* (Want to be like Dad, 2021) and the third one is Nurul Hikmah with her book entitled *Ndherek Langkung* (Excuse Me, 2021). These two books are interesting because not only are they using Javanese language as the media of the storytelling, but they also use Javanese alphabet or Javanese traditional script in telling their stories, in addition to the one using Latin alphabet. While Alit's book's theme is more universal, telling about how a boy wants to grow up like his Dad, Hikmah's book is presenting a more cultural habit of the Javanese people; how to behave in front of everybody else.

The last authors whose works will be discussed here are Irwan Syamsir and Humairah, who jointly wrote two books together, entitled *Pessungoq Potaq, Pettamo Randang* (Pergilah Keruh, Datanglah Jernih or Go away the muddy, welcome the clear water, 2024) and *Sammaratanna Olowilla* (Sehela Menuju Haluan or Heading to the same direction, 2025). These two books are written using Indonesian and Mandar language, which is the local language of people from Mandar, the Island of Sulawesi. These two books seems to talk about the importance of environment, especially to keep the water clean, while also a reminiscent of the lives of the authors when they were still children.

I hope that these books are just a few example of many more books written using Indonesian and local languages, which will help preserve the local languages in Indonesia.

Short bio

theresia enny angraini received her doctoral degree in Literature for Children and Young Adults from the Ohio State University, Columbus, in 2015. Besides Literature for Children and Young Adults, her other passions include Drama and African American Literature. She is now teaching at English Letters Department and Master Program in Literature, Universitas Sanata Dharma, Yogyakarta, Indonesia.



Sehari Penuh Cerita bersama Alton

Agoes Rakhman

Bulan Juni 2025 Kelompok Pencinta Bacaan Anak (KPBA) mendatangkan Mr. Alton Takiyama Chung, seorang pendongeng dari Amerika. Hari itu Sabtu, 28 Juni 2025 ruang HB Jassin di Taman Ismail Marzuki terasa berbeda. KPBA mengadakan kegiatan khusus menghadirkan Mr. Alton untuk berbagi cerita selama sehari penuh disana.

Pada pagi hari, Mr. Alton bercerita untuk pengunjung anak-anak dan orang tua, termasuk anak-anak disabilitas dari YPAC Jakarta. Dalam bercerita Mr. Alton tidak sendiri, beliau didampingi dua pendongeng Indonesia yaitu bapak Agus Remon dan Agoes Rakhman. Ada 10 cerita dari berbagai negara yang disampaikan. Kedua pendongeng Indonesia tersebut menerjemahkan cerita yang disampaikan Mr. Alton dalam Bahasa Inggris. Acara gelar cerita itu berlangsung seru hingga berakhir kira-kira pukul 11 siang. Anak-anak dan pengunjung lainpun pulang dengan wajah gembira, suasana pagi itu memang sangat menyenangkan.

Keseruan berlanjut di siang dan sore hari. Kali ini Mr. Alton memberikan workshop mendongeng yang diikuti orang tua, pemerhati dongeng dan guru. Tidak hanya bercerita saja, Mr. Alton juga memberikan teknik-teknik



mendongeng. Diikuti dengan suasana hangat, di ruang HB Jassin siang hari itu peserta mengikuti berbagai latihan dan arahan yang diberikan. Beberapa pertanyaan dari peserta juga ikut meramaikan diskusi selama pelatihan.

Waktu terus bergulir, tak terasa tiba di penghujung acara. Sore itu seluruh peserta terlihat puas setelah mendengarkan berbagai cerita sembari belajar langsung teknik mendongeng dari Mr. Alton Takiyama Chung.

Caring for the Earth, Walking with Children

By Dewi Widyastuti



Ecological issues and conditions are topics that draw attention worldwide. Despite the problems that continued to haunt the earth, efforts were continuously made to save it. Therefore, schools at different levels made an effort to promote awareness of conserving the earth through curricular and non-curricular activities, even at an early age.

Introducing ecological awareness at an early age has been promoted by various studies. Yunansah & Herlambang (2017) highlighted the need to introduce environmental awareness in formal education through eco-pedagogy. Eco-pedagogy not only develops awareness of the need to care for the earth but also develops students' character. When eco-pedagogy is applied, young learners can

actively participate in addressing ecological issues (Yunansah & Herlambang, 2017).

As part of a community service project to introduce ecological conservation at an early age through literacy, the English Letters Department of Universitas Sanata Dharma read books with children. When visiting the school, about 13 kilometres from the city centre, we offered to read a book out of three titles. The books were (1) *Polusi Dilarang masuk (Pollution No Entry)*; (2) *Cita-cita Penyelamat Bumi (The Dream of a Saviour of the Earth)*; dan (3) *Banyak Sampah, Banyak Masalah (Much Garbage, Many Problems)*. The book, entitled *Banyak Sampah, Banyak Masalah (Much Garbage, Many Problems)*, was chosen by the second-grade students to read together.

Reading aloud in front of the class would be meaningful when it was done interactively. As the story was read, questions were also asked, such as what are the effects of a pile of garbage in the neighbourhood and what can be done to sort garbage. The activities could develop ecological awareness. Students were reminded of how harmful garbage is to the environment and how important it is to handle it properly. After reading a book, students were also invited to choose another book and read it to her friends in class. Knowledge without practice would be forgotten easily. Therefore, students were invited to participate in Caring for the Earth program by planting seeds. This program encouraged students to actively participate in saving the Earth through a small manageable action. Surprisingly, students also became creative through the planting project. For example, they improvised the tools for planting by using kitchen utensils available at home. Overall, students were excited to plant the seeds. They were happy imagining that someday they would get fresh tomatoes, chillies, and eggplants.

Reference

Yunansah, H., & Herlambang, Y. T. (2017). Pendidikan Berbasis Ekopedagogik dalam Menumbuhkan Kesadaran Ekologis dan Mengembangkan Karakter Siswa Sekolah Dasar *Eduhumaniora*, 9(1), 27-34.

Dewi Widyastuti is a faculty member of the English Letters Department, Faculty of Letters, Universitas Sanata Dharma, Yogyakarta since 1998. She obtained her doctorate degree in TESOL (Teaching of English to Speakers of Other Languages) from Swinburne University of Technology, Sarawak, Malaysia. Her major research interests are on identity study and creative writing. During her doctorate study, she participated in and won some short story and poem writing competitions held by Swinburne University of Technology, Sarawak. Other than teaching, she enjoys writing stories and poems. She published her first novel, *The Flat Man*, in 2012. Some other works, such as poems and short stories, were published Universitas Sanata Dharma, Yogyakarta in collections of short stories and poems.

Rumah yang Menyimpan Dunia, Belajar dari Perpustakaan Ibu Murti Bunanta

Yulianeta

Ada rumah yang penuh perabot. Ada pula rumah yang penuh cerita.

Rumah seperti itu saya temukan ketika berkunjung bersama mahasiswa ke kediaman Ibu Murti Bunanta, penulis cerita anak yang selama puluhan tahun menjadi penggerak penting literasi anak di Indonesia melalui Kelompok Pecinta Bacaan Anak.

Kami datang dengan rasa ingin tahu yang sederhana: melihat perpustakaan pribadi beliau. Namun yang kami temukan bukan sekadar rak-rak buku. Kami menemukan sebuah dunia.

Begitu memasuki ruang perpustakaan, mata kami segera disambut oleh deretan buku cerita anak dari berbagai negara. Buku-buku bergambar dengan ilustrasi klasik berdampingan dengan cerita rakyat dari berbagai budaya, penelitian tentang sastra anak, hingga terbitan lama yang kini sulit ditemukan.

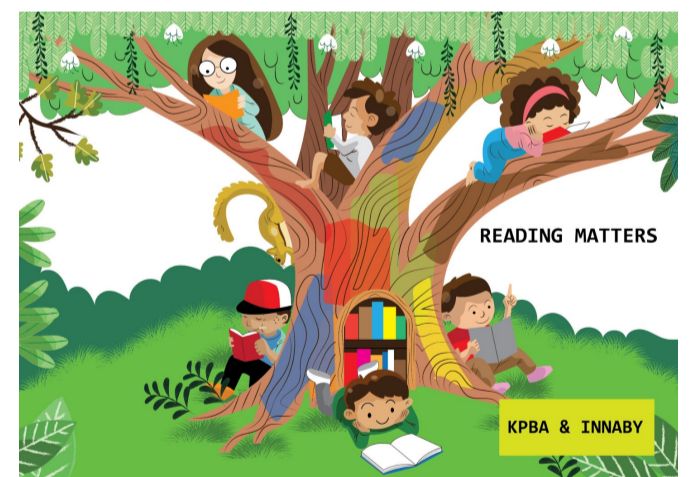
Sebagian buku tampak telah menempuh perjalanan panjang waktu. Kertasnya menguning, sampulnya sedikit aus. Tetapi semuanya dirawat dengan penuh perhatian, seperti sahabat lama yang tidak pernah ditinggalkan.

Di beberapa rak tersimpan pula manuskrip-manuskrip yang dijaga dengan hati-hati. Manuskrip itu bukan sekadar dokumen, melainkan jejak perjalanan panjang seorang penggerak literasi yang telah mengabdikan hidupnya pada dunia bacaan anak.

Perpustakaan kecil itu tidak terasa seperti koleksi pribadi. Ia lebih menyerupai peta perjalanan hidup seseorang yang mencintai buku dengan sepenuh hati.

Di ruangan lain, dekat perpustakaan kami temukan koleksi boneka yang sedang membaca dari berbagai penjuru dunia. Koleksi boneka-boneka itu seperti penjaga kecil bagi dunia cerita yang mengelilinginya. Ada tokoh-tokoh yang sangat dikenal anak-anak seperti Spider-Man, Tintin, dan Doraemon. Semuanya sedang membaca buku, seolah ikut mengingatkan bahwa dunia anak-anak selalu tumbuh bersama cerita.

Mahasiswa saya berjalan perlahan di antara rak-rak buku. Mereka membuka beberapa halaman, membaca judul-judul yang asing, lalu bertanya dengan rasa ingin tahu yang tulus. Di



tengah percakapan, Ibu Murti bercerita dengan bersemangat ketika berbicara tentang buku.

Sebagian koleksi dibawa pulang dari perjalanan ke berbagai negara. Sebagian lain diperoleh dari pameran buku internasional. Namun ada pula kisah yang jauh lebih sederhana: kebiasaan beliau berburu buku di toko buku loak.

Kadang sebuah buku penting justru ditemukan di tempat yang tidak terduga, di tumpukan buku bekas yang berdebu, di pasar buku lama, atau di toko kecil yang hampir terlupakan.

Ada kegembiraan yang hampir kekanak-kanakan ketika beliau bercerita tentang "perburuan buku" itu. Kegembiraan ketika menemukan buku yang lama dicari. Atau ketika menemukan edisi lama yang nyaris hilang dari peredaran. Barangkali benar kata Neil Gaiman, "A book is a dream that you hold in your hands."

Di rumah ini, mimpi-mimpi itu tampak tersimpan di setiap rak. Di sudut lain ruangan, tersimpan map-map berisi kliping yang disusun sangat rapi. Artikel, ulasan buku, dokumentasi kegiatan literasi, hingga catatan-catatan kecil tersimpan dengan telaten. Di sana kami belajar satu hal sederhana: mencintai buku bukan hanya berarti membacanya, tetapi juga merawat ingatan tentang perjalanan pengetahuan itu sendiri.

Kami juga disambut dengan sangat hangat oleh suami beliau, Pak Bunanta, yang dengan ramah mempersilakan kami menjelajahi perpustakaan itu. Kehangatan rumah tersebut membuat kunjungan kami terasa seperti bertamu ke rumah seorang guru sekaligus sahabat lama.

Bagi mahasiswa, pengalaman ini menjadi pelajaran yang mungkin tidak selalu hadir di ruang kuliah. Mereka melihat bahwa kecintaan pada ilmu sering kali tumbuh dari ketekunan pribadi yang panjang dan sunyi.

Perpustakaan Ibu Murti Bunanta menunjukkan bahwa seseorang dapat membangun semacam “universitas kecil” di rumahnya sendiri, melalui buku, manuskrip, kliping, boneka-boneka cerita, dan gagasan yang dirawat dengan kesetiaan selama bertahun-tahun.

Ketika kami berpamitan, para mahasiswa berjalan keluar dengan mata yang masih penuh rasa ingin tahu. Mereka baru saja melihat sesuatu yang jarang ditemukan di ruang kelas: kecintaan pada buku yang hidup dalam keseharian. Dan saya diam-diam berpikir, barangkali perpustakaan tidak selalu harus besar seperti gedung. Kadang-kadang, ia cukup berupa sebuah rumah yang dibangun perlahan dari halaman-halaman yang dibaca dengan cinta. Seperti rumah Ibu Murti Bunanta itu. Rumah yang diam-diam menyimpan dunia (Yulianeta – Universitas Pendidikan Indonesia).

Yulianeta adalah Guru Besar dalam bidang Sosiologi Sastra sekaligus Wakil Dekan Bidang Pendidikan dan

Penjaminan Mutu di FPBS, Universitas Pendidikan Indonesia. Bidang kajiannya meliputi sosiologi sastra, alih wahana, sastra anak, pengajaran sastra, kajian budaya dan gender, serta pengajaran Bahasa Indonesia bagi Penutur Asing (BIPA). Ia aktif menulis karya ilmiah dan kreatif, termasuk artikel jurnal, bab buku, puisi, komik, dan naskah film animasi. Ia juga terlibat dalam berbagai kegiatan pengembangan sastra dan literasi, antara lain sebagai juri ajang ekspresi sastra nasional, termasuk Pekan Ilmiah Mahasiswa Nasional (PIMNAS), serta dalam program pelestarian manuskrip Nusantara dan penyusunan panduan pelestarian bahasa ibu di bawah koordinasi Badan Bahasa. Sebagai akademisi, ia pernah menjadi dosen tamu di berbagai universitas luar negeri, antara lain SOAS University of London, Nanzan University, Busan University, Universiti Utara Malaysia, Universiti Malaya, Guangxi University for Nationalities, dan Murmansk Arctic University.

Kesan Mahasiswa



Kami menempuh perjalanan ke ibu kota untuk berkunjung. Namun, begitu melangkah ke rumah Ibu Murti Bunanta, ruang seakan terbuka sangat luas, seolah kami diajak masuk ke lorong waktu yang menyimpan jejak-jejak cerita dari masa yang tidak kami duga.

Takjub luar biasa. Di rumah Ibu Murti Bunanta, buku-buku tidak sekadar tersusun rapi, melainkan lembaran demi lembarannya seperti menyimpan perjalanan panjang dari berbagai penjuru dunia. Setiap rak yang kami lewati terasa punya cerita sendiri. Semua sudut memiliki nama dengan rincian yang berbeda, *shelving* di dalam perpustakaan rumah ini membuat kami sebagai pembaca buku merasa sangat dihormati dengan detail-detail saat mencari dan memahami tatanan buku berdasarkan klasifikasi yang sangat sistematis.

Suatu hal yang paling membekas justru yang terlihat sederhana, padahal tidaklah sederhana: cara beliau memperlakukan buku dengan penuh hormat, seolah setiap halaman memiliki nyawa. Cara beliau merawat dan menjaga buku-buku itu membuat saya paham bahwa cinta pada ilmu tidak lahir seketika.

Rasa dari rumah ini menitipkan pesan mendalam pada lubuk hati: bahwa mencintai

ilmu adalah perjalanan panjang yang dimulai dari kesetiaan pada hal-hal kecil dan dijaga sepanjang hayat.

“Anak muda, gapailah cita-citamu, harus konsisten dan jangan lekas putus asa. Perhatikan pada dunia bahwa kita bisa.” Pesan dari Ibu Murti Bunanta sebelum langkah kami beranjak meninggalkan rumah penuh ilmu ini.

Terima kasih, Ibu Murti Bunanta dan Bapak Bunanta yang telah memperlihatkan “dunia” yang sangat menakjubkan dan memberi banyak sukacita kepada kami (*Amirush Shaffa, Alumni Pascasarjana UPI dan Pengajar BIPA*).

Pengalaman luar biasa bisa berkunjung ke kediaman sekaligus surga buku cerita anak Bu Murti Bunanta. Mendapat pengalaman dan cerita buku-buku yang begitu lengkap dan tertata rapi menjadi inspirasi saya untuk dapat mengoleksi lebih banyak buku.

Buku dan naskah kuno yang dijaga dengan baik dan apik juga beragam buku cerita yang tertata berdasarkan kategori yang tidak biasa menjadi hal unik yang saya temui. Buku cerita besar ala Jepang juga menginspirasi saya untuk mengadaptasi hal tersebut sebagai media pembelajaran untuk anak-anak. Cerita-cerita pengalaman Bu Murti dalam mengoleksi buku dan naskah di perpustakaan tersebut juga membuat saya takjub akan kecintaan Bu Murti pada buku.

Hal unik lain yang tak kalah menarik adalah koleksi pajangan atau patung yang semua posenya sedang membaca buku juga membuat saya takjub karena tidak terpikirkan hal tersebut sebelumnya. Terima kasih atas pengalaman sangat berharga dapat mengenal dan berkesempatan untuk mengunjungi perpustakaan Bu Murti yang tentunya tidak dapat tergantikan oleh apa pun. (*Putri Dwi Rizkita, Mahasiswa Pascasarjana UPI*)



Bisa mengunjungi kediaman Ibu Murti dan melihat langsung kedalaman cinta beliau dalam membaca akan selalu membuat saya terpujau. Seperti masuk ke ruang harta karun, harta karun ilmu karena begitu banyak sumber literasi dari berbagai daerah di Indonesia, bahkan dari berbagai belahan negara di dunia. Kehangatan beliau dalam memperkenalkan koleksi-koleksi bacaannya dan hal lain terkait membaca juga sangat berkesan, beliau tahu betul koleksi apa saja yang beliau miliki, rasanya ingin sekali menghabiskan satu bulan untuk berkunjung mengenal keseluruhan sumber-sumber literasi tersebut, tentu saja dibutuhkan bulan-bulan dan tahun-tahun selanjutnya untuk bisa membaca sebanyak mungkin koleksi Ibu Murti. Inti sebenarnya tentu saja ingin selalu berkunjung.

Kehangatan Ibu Murti dan Pak Bunanta dalam memperkenalkan semangat literasi mengingatkan saya agar selalu menjaga semangat literasi diri dan generasi-generasi selanjutnya seperti apa yang sedang Ibu Murti dan suaminya lakukan saat kami berkunjung.

Saya ingat betul bagaimana Ibu Murti menjelaskan koleksi-koleksi bacaannya dengan sangat apik dan terperinci. Ibu Murti juga memberitahu kami tips bagaimana merawat sumber-sumber literasi tersebut agar selalu dalam keadaan baik.

Antusias dan semangat beliau akan selalu menjadi pematik semangat saya dalam terus menimba ilmu. Terima kasih banyak Ibu Murti dan suami, semoga Ibu dan keluarga besar selalu dalam keadaan sehat, berbahagia, dan dipenuhi keberkahan. Semoga semangat literasi Ibu selalu menginspirasi kami dan generasi-generasi selanjutnya. (*Mar'atushshalihah, Mahasiswa Pascasarjana UPI*).



Interview with Murti Bunanta on Children's Literature, Reading Culture, and Local Wisdom

by Victor Gotevbe



JAKARTA, Indonesia —Children's literature in Indonesia has long played a formative role in education and cultural transmission, yet its academic and social value was, for many years, treated as secondary to other literary traditions. While reading campaigns and school curricula often focused on function and instruction, fewer voices examined children's books as cultural texts that carry memory, ethics, and identity. Few scholars worked at the intersection of research, creative writing, and sustained public advocacy to address that gap.

Murti Bunanta stands among those rare figures who have shaped the field from within. Her work spans scholarship, authorship, jury service, and decades of reading-promotion initiatives that link universities, schools, libraries, and international platforms. From her early academic focus on children's literature to her extensive retellings of Indonesian folktales, she has consistently argued that stories written for children deserve the same intellectual seriousness as those written for adults.

In this interview, she reflects on a lifetime of engagement with children's literature as a cultural responsibility rather than a niche pursuit. She speaks about the loss children face when separated from their traditional stories, the role of folktales in preserving local wisdom, and the quiet power of children's books as a form of cultural exchange. She also addresses enduring challenges, including access to books, uneven reading habits, the impact of digital media, and the need for greater care in writing about difficult social realities for young readers.

Grounded in experience rather than abstraction, this conversation offers insight into how children's literature functions as scholarship, storytelling, and social practice. It presents a measured view of the field as one that shapes how societies educate, remember, and imagine their future.

You were the first scholar in Indonesia to earn a doctorate with children's literature as the core of your research. What convinced you early on that this field deserved serious academic attention at a time when it was often overlooked?

I was raised with traditional stories my mother told me and with books that I bought with pocket money given to me by my father. Later, I shared my love of reading with my children, telling and reading them stories, which convinced me of the importance of placing good-quality children's books in the hands of children from a young age. In my experience, even adults can enjoy reading children's books and take value from the stories.

Therefore, when I studied Dutch Literature for my bachelor's degree, American Studies for my master's degree, and Indonesian Culture for my doctorate degree, all of my research focused on children's literature. Academics should not overlook children's books and the field of children's literature studies.

In 1997, when I defended my dissertation in an open forum, many journalists attended and reported on it. This helped people understand that children's literature studies were not less important than adult literature studies. I am glad that today more and more academics pursue degrees in children's literature studies.

Indonesian folktales sit at the center of both your scholarship and your creative writing. In practical terms, what is lost when children grow up disconnected from their own traditional stories?

In today's world, we have all become global citizens. When children are disconnected from their cultural background and traditional stories, they lose their local wisdom. It is the right of children to grow up with their cultural background and traditional stories. Local wisdom teaches dignity, respect for other cultures, respect for all living beings, respect for the environment, humanity, empathy, and understanding.

One way to preserve local wisdom is through children's books. I choose to write folktales that have not been widely known, despite the richness of folktale publications in Indonesia, because the same popular folktales are rewritten and published again and again by various writers, while folktales from many other ethnic groups, approximately 300 across Indonesia, are often overlooked.

I believe that books and literature are the means through which we can share local wisdom and

communicate about human issues such as climate change, global warming, displaced children, and others.

You have written extensively about children's literature and also for children. How does your responsibility as a scholar differ from your responsibility as a storyteller addressing young readers directly?

There is no difference in responsibility between being a scholar writing academic work and being a writer or storyteller writing for children. Both require wide research and appropriate content for the target audience. Goals should be clear, materials carefully prepared, and presentations practiced in advance.

The same process applies to storytelling and writing for children. In oral storytelling, we need to rehearse and prepare a plan B if the situation differs from expectations. In writing children's stories, careful editing of language and narration is required. Most importantly, when working with and for children, adults should never underestimate them.

Through your long leadership of reading-promotion organizations, you have worked closely with schools, libraries, and policymakers. What do you see today as the most persistent obstacle to building a sustainable reading culture in Indonesia?

We still face many persistent obstacles in making Indonesia a reading society. I established an organization focused on reading promotion and building awareness of publishing good-quality books. From the beginning, I appealed to teacher-training universities and policymakers to include children's literature in teacher education, but so far, limited progress has been made.

The same situation exists in schools and libraries. Reading programs are not implemented in all schools and libraries, except in certain institutions. In addition, education levels across Indonesia are not uniform.

Children's book publishing should be supported, as not all parents can afford to buy books. Teacher training should be conducted more frequently across all regions of Indonesia. Libraries should be available everywhere, including in remote areas. Education policies should be carefully considered.

My colleagues and I continue to work together within the organization I established, doing what we can, even if the impact may seem small. I am fortunate to have received five international recognitions and one

national recognition for my dedication as a reading promoter.

Your work has taken Indonesian stories to audiences across continents. From your experience, how does children's literature function as a quiet but powerful form of cultural exchange between societies?

My books on Indonesian folktales, often known as Nusantara folktales and covering various themes, have been translated into four languages: Japanese, Mongolian, Korean, and German. They have also been published in the United States, Canada, and more recently in Singapore. All were written in English.

This shows that folktales are universal, and children can learn about similarities and differences among cultures through reading folktales. Folktale books are well received and enrich children's reading with diverse perspectives. Children everywhere need diverse books, not only folktales but also works from other genres of children's literature.

Children's books function as cultural diplomacy, helping to build understanding and peace among nations for a better future.

As an international jury member and former president of the Biennial of Illustrations Bratislava jury, you have assessed children's books from many cultural contexts. Which characteristics reliably distinguish enduring works from those that are quickly forgotten?

My involvement with the Biennial of Illustrations Bratislava began many years ago. I served as a juror nine times and as president of the jury. I later returned as an honorary speaker at a symposium celebrating the Biennial.

During my earlier involvement, illustrations were produced manually. In recent years, the Biennial has received more digital works. In my view, regardless of technique, strong illustrations are innovative, imaginative, artistic, and able to extend the meaning of the text.

The Biennial is not only a venue for illustration exhibitions and competitions but also a place for book professionals to exchange expertise and experience different cultures through illustrations.

Several of your books have been translated into multiple languages and adapted for children with special needs. How central is accessibility to your understanding of quality in children's publishing?

Good-quality books are essential in children's

publishing. Publishers should produce quality books for all children, including children with special needs.

As a writer, reading promoter, and researcher, I continue to donate my books to many schools, including schools for children with special needs. I have also conducted workshops for teachers on how to use books effectively.

I am glad to see teachers becoming creative, encouraging children to write their own stories based on my folktale retellings, create new drawings inspired by the original illustrations, make key holders of story characters, and even produce T-shirts featuring artwork by talented children with special needs.

Digital media increasingly shapes how children engage with stories. Rather than resisting this shift, how can literature remain relevant without losing depth or imagination?

Even in the digital era, parents, teachers, and educators must help children find joy in reading books, encourage curiosity, and connect stories to real life. Books should be available in family and school libraries.

Teachers and parents must actively serve as readers who are ready to discuss books with children, so children understand that mobile phones are not

the only way to engage with stories. Family bonding should begin with books.

After decades as a scholar, author, and advocate, what guiding principle continues to shape your decisions and commitments in the field of children's literature?

Many important issues can be addressed through children's literature and books for young adults, including climate change, environmental preservation, narcotics misuse, corruption, displaced children caused by conflict and war, disaster mitigation, sexual crime, neglected children, imprisoned parents, discrimination, and trauma healing. Writing about these issues is a form of resistance.

Indonesian writers still need to learn how to handle these issues carefully and wisely in children's literature. Such books can help children heal and avoid becoming perpetrators, yet few of these topics are currently addressed in Indonesian publishing. Some folktales relate to these issues, but many remain unpublished.

Another ongoing concern is Indonesia's reading habit. Research in children's literature should be expanded, writing and editing skills strengthened, and collaboration between government and non-

government institutions increased. National and international events should be organized more frequently to exchange expertise and experience.

I hope for the best. I simply do what I can with the support of the members of the organization I established.

We can make oral traditions more dynamic through new creations and activities such as story theater, readers' theater, hand and finger puppet theater, wall-hanging stories, grass wayang theater, cloth wayang theater, kamishibai, stick puppets, and other forms that support the continuation of oral traditions.

The primary resources for these activities are books and children's literature. I am pleased that in Indonesia today, many young and talented writers are producing strong works across a wide range of genres, with several titles translated into other languages. International book fairs are held regularly, the number of publishing houses continues to grow, and some have gained international recognition. In addition, many non-profit organizations now work actively to promote reading across different parts of Indonesia. Government-funded residency programs also support this work. I hope these positive initiatives continue and develop in a sustained and meaningful way.

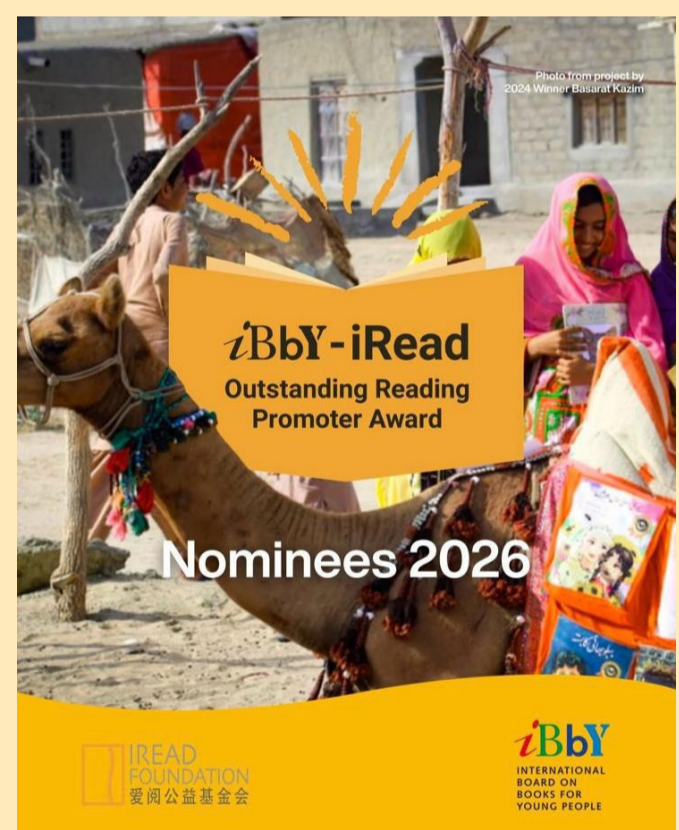
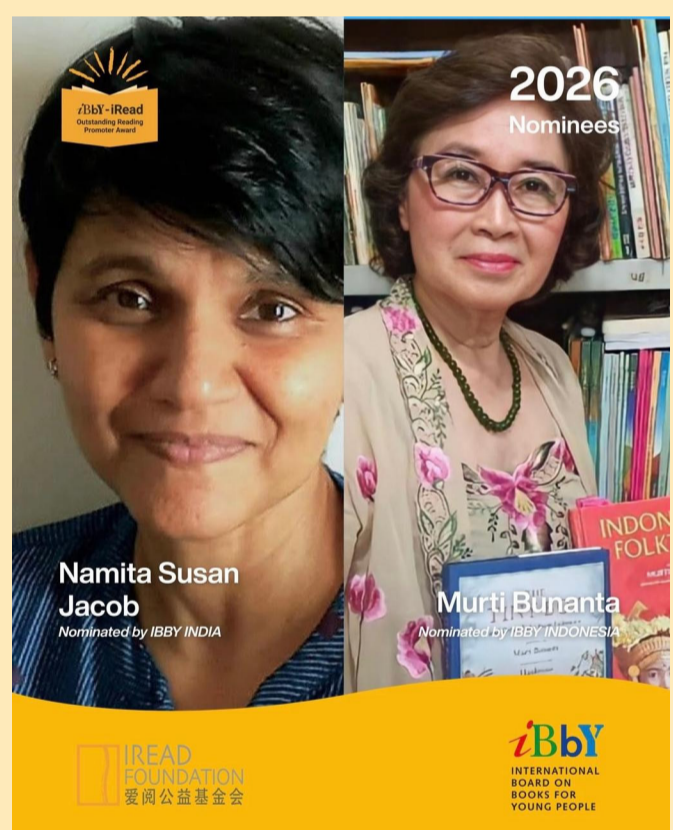
Outstanding Reading Promoter Award Nominees

We are proud to reveal the 11 exceptional candidates nominated by IBBY Sections worldwide for the 2026 IBBY-iRead Outstanding Reading Promoter Award.

Established by the Shenzhen iRead Foundation and IBBY, this prestigious award honors individuals with lifelong dedication to expanding children's reading, advocating for reading policies, and innovating access to books.

The 2026 Nominees:

- Verónica Parodi (Nominated by IBBY Argentina)
- Nianzu Li (Nominated by IBBY China)
- Despina Heracleous (Nominated by IBBY Cyprus)
- Kirsten Boie (Nominated by IBBY Germany)
- Namita Jacob (Nominated by IBBY India)
- Murti Bunanta (Nominated by IBBY Indonesia)
- Ali Asghar Seidabadi (Nominated by IBBY Iran)
- Maria Consuelo Doble (Nominated by IBBY Philippines)
- Maurício Corrêa Leite (Nominated by IBBY Portugal)
- Slavko Pregl (Nominated by IBBY Slovenia)
- Zulfiya Seytniyazova (Nominated by IBBY Uzbekistan)



The board members of KPBA/INABBY get together regularly to evaluate the programs that have been done and discuss the next initiative which will be organized

Total Works Submitted
to Date
280,718
works

14th

Honeybee Illustration Contest

Entry period

From March 8th through
July 8th, 2026



Purpose

Through the drawing of honey bees, we want more people to reflect on the importance of the "natural environment," "sociability," and "life". We hold this contest with that intention.

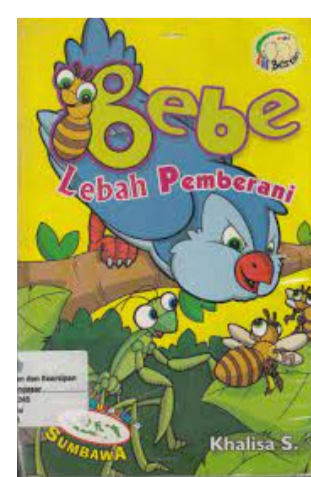
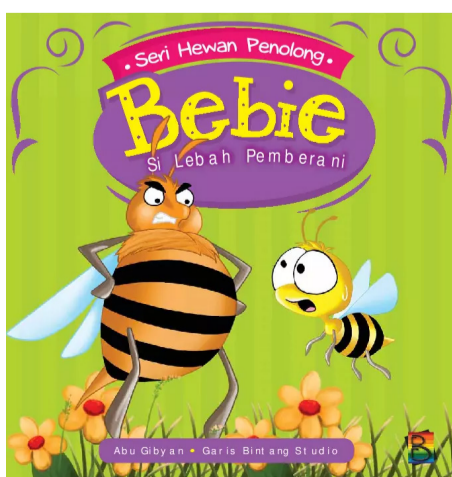
Let's Draw a Honey Bee and Regenerate the Forest

For every submission received, we will carry out an activity to plant one sapling, both domestically in Japan and overseas.



How to Apply

For more information, please visit the 2D barcode!



Peluncuran Buku Petualangan Nenek Surti & Diskusi Tanggung Mempertahankan Diri Menulis Fantasi Humor

COME &
JOIN US!



Bersama:



Murti Bunanta
Spesialis sastra anak, ahli
cerita rakyat anak, dan
penulis pemenang
penghargaan internasional.

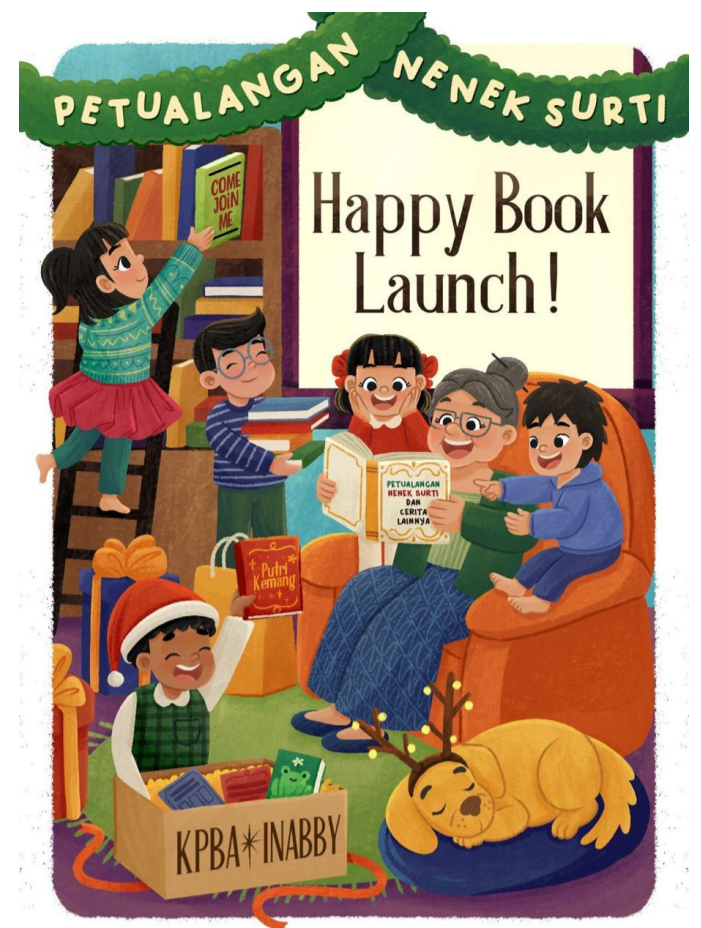


M. Rizal Abdi
Editorial Designer +
Illustrator

Rabu, 22 April 2026 | Pkl. 13.30- 15.30 WIB
di Gramedia Jalma, Jl. Melawai 3 No.12-18, Jakarta Selatan

Petualangan Nenek Surti, sebuah antologi 12 cerita pendek Tidak mengikuti trend buku humor untuk anak yang sudah terbit. Humor dalam buku ini dikemas dalam berbagai genre: Fantasi, fiksi realistis, cerita puisi (verse poem) dan cerita petualangan Peluncuran Nenek Surti* untuk berdiskusi, *berbagi dan menginspirasi'para penulis, calon penulis, akademisi, ilustrator, guru, orang tua, komunitas literasi, pendidik, pendongeng, mahasiswa, anak dan remaja dan para pembaca lainnya;

- 1) Apa perbedaan keempat genre humor dalam buku ini
- 2) Mengapa 12 cerita ini dapat digunakan sebagai Pembelajaran Mendalam (Deep Learning) Apa unsur Deep Learning?
- 3) Buku ini juga sebuah contoh untuk tanggung 'mempertahankan diri ketika seseorang menghadapi hal yang tidak nyaman dengan menuliskan secara humor
- 4) Penyajian dua belas cerita ini dapat dimanfaat untuk Read Aloud yang ceritanya disampaikan dengan wajar dan tidak berlebihan
- 5) Diskusi untuk siapa saja untuk mencintai membaca, menulis, dan *melambungkan imajinasi



Book Launch

Book launch of two Murti's new books, Anthology of humorous short stories in different genre (Petualangan Nenek Surti - The Adventure of Grandma Surti) and Silent Books for reading campaign in the format of pocket book for children (Come Join Me) This book meant to encourage more children and adults to be avid readers, explore the materials of reading and produce good writing.

Jessica Florencia is a Medical Doctor, working in the field of medical laboratory. Writing has been a part of her journey to promote health literacy. She reads almost all genres depending on her mood. Children's books find a way to her heart again after she has her own younglings. She believes the power of reading good books in children's lives, thus she writes children's book. She loves science as much as she loves art. She thinks that children's books presenting harmony between the two are example of good books, thus she tried to write that kind of book. By doing so, she finds a new outlet to promote health literacy to younger generations in a much more fun way!

