



STRENGTHENING CHARACTER EDUCATION THROUGH ECOLOGICAL LITERACY IN THE FOLKLORE OF THE GREAT KAPOK TREE FOR PRIMARY SCHOOL STUDENTS

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Abstract

This research is motivated by the importance of instilling awareness of the importance of protecting the environment from an early age. Strengthening character in environmental care has a positive impact on the survival of the next generation. The behaviour of not caring about the destruction of nature as a result of human actions is very dangerous if it is passed on to the younger generation, so it is necessary to strengthen the character of environmental care from an early age. This research aims to provide the right choice of literary ecological literacy material as an effort to strengthen the character of environmental care in students in elementary schools. Imaginary characters in literary works become real examples for student character development. Strengthening the character of environmental care based on moral values in folklore needs to be conveyed so that students will have character intelligence to care for their environment. This research uses descriptive qualitative methods and literature study of story narratives, character behaviour, and dialogue and monologue sequences that illustrate the value of character education. The subject of this research is the folktale *The Great Kapok Tree: A Tale of The Amazon Rain Forest* by Lynne Cherry. The findings show that *The Great Kapok Tree* folktale represents the values of environmental care in realising character strengthening including: environmental care as a system and awareness in environmental development. Thus, the folklore of *The Kapok Tree* contains the values of environmental care character education so that it can be an alternative solution for reading material on meaningful literary literacy.

Keywords: character education, ecological literay, folklore

Abstrak

Penelitian ini dilatarbelakangi pentingnya menanamkan kesadaran terhadap pentingnya menjaga lingkungan sejak dini. Penguatan karakter pada kepedulian lingkungan berdampak positif pada kelangsungan kehidupan generasi selanjutnya. Prilaku tidak peduli pada kerusakan alam sebagai

dampak ulah manusia sangat berbahaya jika diwariskan pada generasi muda nantinya sehingga perlu adanya upaya penguatan karakter peduli lingkungan sejak dini. Penelitian ini bertujuan memberikan pilihan materi literasi ekologi sastra yang tepat sebagai salah satu upaya penguatan karakter peduli lingkungan pada siswa di Sekolah Dasar. Tokoh-tokoh imajiner dalam karya sastra menjadi contoh nyata bagi pengembangan karakter siswa. Penguatan karakter peduli lingkungan berbasis nilai-nilai moral dalam cerita rakyat perlu disampaikan agar siswa nantinya memiliki kecerdasan karakter peduli terhadap lingkungannya. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode kualitatif deskriptif dan studi pustaka terhadap narasi cerita, perilaku tokoh, dan sekuen dialog maupun monolog yang menggambarkan nilai pendidikan karakter. Subjek penelitian ini adalah cerita rakyat *The Great Kapok Tree Tree: A Tale of The Amazon Rain Forest* karya Lynne Cherry. Hasil temuan menunjukkan bahwa cerita rakyat *The Great Kapok Tree* merepresentasikan nilai-nilai kepedulian lingkungan dalam mewujudkan penguatan karakter di antaranya: peduli lingkungan sebagai suatu sistem dan kesadaran dalam pembangunan lingkungan hidup. Dengan demikian, cerita rakyat *The Kapok Tree* mengandung nilai-nilai pendidikan karakter peduli lingkungan sehingga dapat menjadi solusi alternatif materi bacaan pada literasi sastra yang bermakna.

Kata kunci: Pendidikan karakter, literasi ekologi, folklor

INTRODUCTION

Humans and the environment build a relationship of mutual interaction. Humans affect the environment and humans are affected by the environment. Humans as the main factor that has the advantage of reason and mind are responsible for managing the environment. However, the fact is that humans exploit without thinking about the adverse effects of the environment. One of the efforts to build the character of caring for the environment is by strengthening character education based on ecological values from an early age. Ecological literacy through literature is a form of effort to instil ecological values early on in elementary school students. However, the selection of appropriate reading materials is an important factor. Literary works that contain nature and the environment show that literature and the environment are closely related and inseparable.

One literary work that contains environmental awareness values is a folktale entitled *The Great Kapok Tree: A Tale of the Amazon Rain Forest* by Lynne Cherry. This folktale tells the story of the journey of a man who cut down cotton trees in the dense Amazon Forest in Brazil. For a while the man lay under a large tree, exhausted. As he drifts off to sleep, in his dreams he encounters the creatures that inhabit the forest and the tree. There was a noise in his ears, all the creatures of the forest reminded him to abandon his mission and choose to preserve the forest. At the end of the story, a little boy from the Yanomamo tribe whispered to wake him up and gave him a message to start a new life. The message of the ecological movement to save the rainforest is very strong in this story. Author Lynne Cherry's message is very strong in the story combined with illustrations of the splendour of the Amazon Forest ecosystem.

Children's literature is essential to support a child's mentality, imagination, and creativity and raise children's aspirations about literature. Ahi, Yaya and Balci (2014) revealed that children's literature is a concept that includes all storybooks, narratives, and folktales that have titles, content, or style appropriate for children. Children's literature is an important part of the

education system that helps children to fulfil their developmental, emotional, and social needs. Children's literature has five important characteristics including: (a) the plot should be short and easy to understand, (b) the topic should not be too broad, (c) the level of content should be comprehensible to children, (d) the text is simple and easy to understand, (e) there are pictures and the pictures should complement the text. Children's literature helps children experience various feelings, get to know different cultures, develop various beliefs and values, and contribute to their social, emotional, and aesthetic development.

One of the literary works is folklore. Harun (2013) and Shiukashvili (2019) explain that folklore is one of the genres of children's oral literature that comes in the form of stories that carry meaningful messages and inherent cultural identity. These stories are created and changed by many people across the timeline of different generations and carry a distinctive style that can be applied to individuals and events in the present and future. Haiyu (2018) revealed that Children in primary grades are still too young with low comprehension ability, so simple and interesting content with clear language should be selected for them. Children in the middle and upper grades gradually improve cognition and comprehension ability, so we should choose content closely related to children's lives to arouse the resonance and appropriateness of their feelings and stimulate their interest in learning. Thus, the utilisation of literary works has the opportunity to convey messages, experiences and values in a more entertaining yet meaning-rich manner.

One of the fields of science that can be related to literary works is ecology. Ecology is a science that studies the relationship between organisms and the environment, while literary ecology is a science that explores the problem of literature's relationship with the environment. Endraswara in Sari (2018), suggests that ecology comes from the Greek *oikos* means home and *logos* means science or study. Etymologically, ecology means the science of living things and their households, so literary ecology also examines literature from its ecological side. In other words, the definition of ecology is a science that studies the mutual relationship between living things and their environment on the basis of this definition, literary ecology also looks for a mutual relationship between literature and its environment. According to Prasetyo in Wijaya, et.al (2021), the relationship between humans and the environment takes place in three phases. The first phase is called human in nature, which is a phase characterised by humans depending on the environment. The second phase is called human against nature, which is the phase when humans have been able to develop science and technology so that dependence on the environment begins to decrease. Thus, humans begin to damage the environment. The third phase is the phase where humans begin to realise that environmental damage causes harm to humans themselves so that efforts to improve the environment begin to emerge. This phase is called human and nature. Furthermore, Najib (2014) revealed that based on the teachings of the Qur'an, Allah instructs humans to be friendly to the environment, always maintain and preserve the environment so that it does not become damaged, polluted and even extinct. Humans should always maintain the environment as a system and have an awareness of building the environment.

Literary works have an important value for human life, because literary works convey two values, namely ethical values and aesthetic values. This also makes literary works something that cannot be replaced by anything else. The implementation of these values contributes to the development of individual and community character, so that it can break down the noble core values that can be used as a model for shaping the nation's culture (Sugiarti, 2014). In its function, literature not only has the power to interpret the world, but also has the power to change human perception of the world. Literature may not have the power to change the environment, as the relationship between literature and the environment is not direct, but literature has the power to influence human understanding and raise awareness of nature and the environment. Ulrich Beck in Olang (2019) that we can only realise the importance of nature and the earth when its beauty and destruction are conveyed through stories in everyday life and imagination. Thus the thoughts, attitudes, and feelings built through literary narratives that arouse human emotions in maintaining, caring for, and protecting nature and the earth from the threat of ecological extinction in nature.

This research aims to utilise and explore the values of environmental care contained in folklore that can be used as a reference in strengthening character education through school literacy activities in formal education environments both in elementary schools. Finally, character education has a very important role to strengthen the mental and character of the next generation to be in line with the purpose of education, which is to form good character. According to Chandra et.al (2019), character education is a deliberate effort to develop good character based on core virtues that are objectively good for individuals and society. Character is directed to shape behaviour that is in accordance with the moral character of the nation. Character education must be directed towards the formation of personality and positive social attitudes, so that students can apply them in social life. Environmental care character education is an attitude and action to prevent damage to the natural environment around it and strive to repair existing damage. Habituation of awareness and concern for preserving the environment must begin early, one of which is through literary ecological literacy.

Specifically, the purpose of this study is to determine the role of the folklore *The Great Kapok Tree: A Tale of The Amazon Rain Forest* as a reference for ecological literacy in the realm of education. The urgency of this research is to provide an alternative choice of reading material that contains values of environmental awareness or ecological literacy. In the realm of ecological literacy, protecting and caring for the environment is one of the indicators of character education. Thus, the selection of reading materials on environmental themes can help students to care more about the environment. Folktales with a natural setting contain many educational values that can be a guide to behaviour for learners so that a sense of love for nature will automatically be embedded in themselves.

RESEARCH METHODS

The research method used is descriptive qualitative method. According to Cresswell

(2014), qualitative research is an approach to exploring and knowing the meaning given by individuals or groups to a social or human problem. Emzir (2013) explains that qualitative methods are analyses that can involve a type of analysis, in which the content of communication (conversations, written texts, interviews, photography and so on) is categorised and classified. In this case, qualitative research produces analytical procedures that do not use statistical analysis procedures or other quantification methods.

The data in this study are about character education through ecological literacy in the folklore of *The Great Kapok Tree Tree: A Tale of The Amazon Rain Forest* by Lynne Cherry. While the data source is the research subject from which the data is obtained, there are two types of data: primary and secondary data. Primary data is the main data that is processed directly from the source without going through intermediaries. While secondary data is data that serves to enrich, sharpen the analysis taken from journals, magazines and books of literary criticism.

Data collection procedures in research activities consist of two elements, namely: (1) Data collection techniques and (2) Data collection instruments. Documents can be in the form of writings, images, or monumental works of a person. To conduct this research, the data collected is done by means of reading and understanding the content of folklore in depth to find data that shows the existence of the problem. Classifying the quotes in the folktale that represent the character education of environmental care in the folktale *The Great Kapok Tree Tree: A Tale of the Amazon Rain Forest*. Conducting a literature study to obtain secondary data as complementary data on strengthening character education and ecological literacy in folklore. The instrument of this research is the researcher himself who is assisted by work analysis tables based on the research sub-focus. The table used to classify the form of character education values through ecological literacy in the folklore of *The Great Kapok Tree Tree: A Tale of The Amazon Rain Forest*. The data that has been found in this research is described and grouped and then analysed by identifying each element without ignoring the context, counting the frequency of its occurrence, interpreting, and describing the contribution of the work of fiction as a whole.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The folktale *The Great Kapok Tree: A Tale of the Amazon Rain Forest* by Lynne Cherry is a literary work rich in environmental ecological values. The study of literary ecology is very appropriate in analysing the relationship between literature and the natural environment as a form of environmental values in the folklore of *The Great Kapok Tree*. The concept of ecology consists of three phases, namely 1). human in nature phase, namely the phase with the characteristics of humans very dependent on their lives from the environment, 2) human against nature phase, namely the phase of humans being able to develop science and technology so that dependence on the environment begins to decrease. and 3). human and nature phase, namely humans begin to realize that environmental damage causes harm to humans themselves so that efforts begin to improve the environment.

1. SYNOPSIS

The Great Kapok Tree folktale depicts the lives of creatures that inhabit the wilds of the Amazon rainforest. The story goes that a man was ordered to cut down trees in the Amazon Rainforest. After working to cut down the trees, the man felt tired and decided to rest under the Kapok tree to fall asleep. When the man fell asleep, the creatures living in the Amazon Rainforest came to him and whispered about their unrest when their environment was being destroyed. Snakes, monkeys, bees, birds, even jaguars and other animals also expressed their sadness. They asked the man not to continue cutting down trees for the safety of animals, the environment and also humans in the future. When the man woke up from his sleep, he looked around and thought that this forest was so beautiful. Many animals lived there, which also looked very beautiful and peaceful. He was hesitant to continue cutting down trees, so he put down his axe and left the forest.

2. ECOLOGICAL CONCEPT IN THE FOLKLORE OF THE GREAT KAPOK TREE

In the concept of ecology consists of three phases including:

1). Human in nature phase, namely the phase with the characteristics of humans very dependent on their lives from the environment.

Forests are a source of life for living things

The Punan tribe, both men and women, go to the interior of the forest for a long time to collect food such as sago palm, tubers, honey, and fruits. (The Great Kapok Tree: p. 12).

The quote above explains that the Punan tribe gathers foodstuffs from sago trees, honey, and fruits as their source of food. Thus, the forest with all its contents is a source of life for humans.

Forests are a source of life for animals and other living things. Like forests there are sources of food and income for animals and humans. (The Great Kapok Tree: p. 15).

Through this quote, it is explained that the forest is a miracle because since ancient times people have really utilised and cared for everything in the forest. Until the forest becomes a source of food, income and life for all living things that are there. Not only humans who utilise the forest but also animals will continue to regenerate so that these animals do not become extinct.

A boa constrictor lived in the Kapok tree. He slithered down its trunk to where the man was sleeping. He looked at the gash the ax had made in the tree. Then the huge snake slid very close to the man and hissed in his ear: "Senhor, this tree is a tree of miracles. It is my home, where generations of my ancestors have lived. Do not chop it down." (The Great Kapok Tree: p. 4).

The above quote tells us that a man tried to cut down the Kapok tree, but he felt tired and rested under it. Unbeknownst to him, there was another creature, in this case a snake, also living there. Unbeknownst to him, the snake was also resting in the shade of the tree. Without the tree, animals would lose their habitat, and humans could no longer rest under the tree.

The next quote explains that the forest is the environment on earth where all living things fulfil their needs and survive.

"Senhor, my hive is in the Kapok tree, and I fly from tree to tree and flower to flower collecting pollen. In this way, I pollinate the trees and flowers throughout the rainforest. You see, all living things depend on each other." (The Great Kapok Tree: p.6)

The environment is home to all creatures on this earth, all living things depend on each other. Although not all creatures on earth have the same shape and type, each creature is created with different advantages. So, every existing creature needs each other for its life.

2) Human against nature phase is the phase when humans have been able to develop science and technology so that dependence on the environment begins to decrease.

Humans destroy forests without thinking about the future of the next generation.

"The unstriped anteaters said to the sleeping man: "Senhor, you are chopping down this tree with no thought for the future. And surely you know that what happens tomorrow depends upon what you do today. The big man tells you to chop down a beautiful tree. He does not think of his own children, who tomorrow must live in a world without trees" (The Great Kapok Tree: p.17)

Forests are the centre of life for living things including humans, plants and animals. The dependency relationship between living things and the existence of forests is very close, which should make humans protect forests. Forests are not only ecosystems for today but must also be preserved and maintained for future generations.

3). Human and nature phase in which humans begin to realise that environmental damage causes harm to humans themselves so that efforts to improve the environment begin to emerge.

Environmental damage can harm the lives of living things.

"A troupe of monkeys scampered down from the canopy of the Kapok tree. They chattered to the sleeping man: "Senhor, we have seen the ways of man. You chop down one tree, then come back for another and another. The roots of these great trees will wither and die, and there will be nothing left to hold the earth in place. When the heavy rains come, the soil will be washed away and the forest will become a desert." (The Great Kapok Tree: p.9).

Through the above quote, it is explained that strong tree roots can maintain soil stability and groundwater supply so that it does not become a disaster in the form of floods and landslides. Therefore, the forest is very influential for the environment. If one by one the forest is cut down and then there is nothing left, it will have a considerable impact such as causing global warming, flooding, extinct animals and the forest will become a desert.

3. CHARACTER EDUCATION FOR ENVIRONMENTAL CARE THROUGH THE FOLKLORE OF THE GREAT KAPOK TREE

Table 1. Forms of Environmental Care Character Education

No	Indicator	Foklore Quotations	Character Education of Environmental Care Analysis
1.	Maintain the environment as a system	<p><i>Forests are a source of life for animals and other living things. Like forests there are sources of food and income for animals and humans. (The Great Kapok Tree: p. 15).</i></p>	<p>Forest is an ecosystem that is a source of life for living things including humans, animals and plants. Humans must maintain and care for the preservation of forests as a form of maintaining the sustainability of the source of life of living things so that they do not become extinct.</p>
		<p><i>“The unstriped anteaters said to the sleeping man: “Senhor, you are chopping down this tree with no thought for the future. And surely you know that what happens tomorrow depends upon what you do today. The big man tells you to chop down a beautiful tree. He does not think of his own children, who tomorrow must live in a world without trees” (The Great Kapok Tree: p.17)</i></p>	<p>Forests are the centre of life for living things. Forests are not only ecosystems for today but must also be preserved and maintained for future generations.</p>
2.	Have an awareness of building a living environment	<p><i>A bright and small tree frog crawled along the edge of a leaf. In a squeaky voice he piped in the man's ear: "Senhor, a ruined rain forest means ruined lives... many ruined lives. You will leave many of us homeless if you chop down this great Kapok tree.” (The Great Kapok Tree: p. 13).</i></p>	<p>Forests are rich and diverse ecosystems, providing homes for a wide variety of plants and animals. Almost every plant and animal in the rainforest has an important role in maintaining the balance of the ecosystem. If left unchecked, they can have devastating effects on the creatures that live in them.</p> <p>It is important to protect rainforests and ensure they</p>

			<p>remain healthy and balanced. Nature and the environment are important elements that support the lives of humans and other animals. If nature is not kept in balance, there will be damage and adverse effects. The adverse effects of nature will also affect humans.</p>
		<p><i>Senhor, do you know what we animals and humans need in order to live? Oxygen. And, Senhor, do you know what trees produce? Oxygen! If you cut down the forests you will destroy that which gives us all life." (The Great Kapok Tree: p.16)</i></p>	<p>Trees provide oxygen through their metabolism and release it through their leaves, provide wooden building materials with their trunks, provide food through their fruits, and can prevent floods, prevent landslides with their roots. Their existence means a lot to the lives of all living things on earth.</p>
		<p><i>"...you must not cut down this tree. We have flown over the rain forest and seen what happens once you begin to chop down the trees. Many people settle on the land. They set fires to clear the underbrush, and soon the forest disappears. Where once there was life and beauty only black and smoldering ruins remain." (The Great Kapok Tree: p.8)</i></p>	<p>The destruction of forest ecosystems, often referred to as forest degradation, is coupled with the cutting down of forests to clear land for plantations, settlements, agriculture, and others. When forests are cleared, this causes the soil to absorb too much sunlight and become very dry and arid. So the nutrients in the soil easily evaporate. In addition, rain can wash away the remaining nutrients from the soil.</p>

CONCLUSION

Forests have an important role in human life because they have the benefits of oxygen, clean air and plants that can be consumed. Forests that are so fertile and still very beautiful are occupied by various kinds of animals ranging from snakes, tigers, birds, monkeys etc. In addition, various kinds of plants live there and are still very fertile. This forest is still very beautiful, not many people have visited it. Because not many animals and plants in the forest are extinct. In addition, various animals find food and ecosystems in the forest. Thus, there are still many species of animals that are still alive and regenerating.

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