



RESEARCH ARTICLE

THE LITERARY WORK OF THE NOVEL WHISTLE BLOWER BY TESS GERRITSEN IN IMPROVING THE MINDSET PROCESS AND DEVELOPING STUDENTS' GLOBAL DIVERSITY

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Abstract: This research explores how the novel *Whistleblower* by Tess Gerritsen can be utilized as a literary medium to hone students' critical thinking and develop their understanding of global diversity. Drawing on Tzvetan Todorov's narrative theory, the study analyzes the structure and suspense elements of the novel to illustrate how literary works can stimulate students' cognitive skills, particularly in terms of analytical thinking and decision-making. Furthermore, this research connects the novel's thematic and setting elements to the Pancasila Student Profile within Indonesia's Independent Curriculum, highlighting how literature can serve as a tool to cultivate global awareness and tolerance. The study emphasizes the importance of engaging learning media in the classroom and proposes that novel-based literary works, which are often more appealing to students than traditional textbooks, can be an effective medium for both mindset development and character education. The findings contribute to the promotion of literature as a valuable educational resource in 21st-century learning.

Keywords: literary work; mindset proses; global diversity

KARYA SASTRA DARI NOVEL WHISTLE BLOWER KARYA TESS GERRITSEN DALAM MENINGKATKAN PROSES POLA PIKIR DAN MENGEMBANGKAN KEANEKARAGAMAN GLOBAL PADA SISWA

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Abstrak: Penelitian ini mengkaji bagaimana novel *Whistleblower* karya Tess Gerritsen dapat dimanfaatkan sebagai media sastra untuk mengasah kemampuan berpikir kritis siswa serta menumbuhkan pemahaman terhadap keberagaman global. Dengan menggunakan teori naratif Tzvetan Todorov, penelitian ini menganalisis struktur dan elemen suspense dalam novel tersebut untuk menunjukkan bagaimana karya sastra dapat merangsang keterampilan kognitif siswa, khususnya dalam hal berpikir analitis dan pengambilan keputusan. Selain itu, penelitian ini menghubungkan tema dan latar dalam novel dengan Profil Pelajar Pancasila dalam Kurikulum Merdeka Indonesia, yang menekankan pentingnya kesadaran global dan sikap toleransi. Penelitian ini menyoroti pentingnya penggunaan media pembelajaran yang menarik di dalam kelas, dan mengusulkan bahwa karya sastra berbasis novel, yang sering kali lebih diminati siswa dibandingkan buku teks konvensional, dapat menjadi sarana efektif dalam pengembangan pola pikir dan pendidikan karakter. Temuan ini berkontribusi dalam mendorong penggunaan sastra sebagai sumber belajar yang bernilai dalam pembelajaran abad ke-21.

Kata kunci: karya sastra; proses pola pikir; keberagaman global

INTRODUCTION

Literature is a form of art that can be enjoyed by people from all walks of life. It serves not only as entertainment but also as a medium for authors to convey messages, values, and insights to readers (Wellek & Warren, 1956). Among various forms of literature, novels stand out as a popular medium that blends storytelling with moral, cultural, and emotional depth. There are numerous genres and types of novels, ranging from romance and fantasy to thriller and mystery. Some stories are crafted to provoke curiosity, challenge readers' thinking, and offer complex plots that puzzle the mind. These narratives often feature suspenseful events, unexpected twists, and character-driven mysteries that heighten readers' emotional engagement and stimulate their cognitive responses (Nurgiyantoro, 2010). Such novels encourage readers to think critically, empathize with characters, and imagine alternative realities.

In Indonesia, literary works have long been enriched by prominent authors such as Tere Liye, who has produced many notable novels including *Pulang*, *Pergi*, *Negeri Para Bedebah*, and the *Parallel World* series. These works frequently depict protagonists struggling against antagonists with dark motives—whether in the form of political conspiracies, familial threats, or multidimensional conflicts in parallel universes. The compelling narratives in these stories not only entertain but also challenge readers to think tactically and ethically.

Likewise, international literature also offers thrilling and intellectually stimulating stories. One such example is Tess Gerritsen, a well-known American author from San Diego, who has contributed significantly to the thriller and mystery genre. Her novel *Whistleblower* presents a gripping tale of danger, conspiracy, and personal resilience that invites readers to solve mysteries alongside the protagonist.

This research investigates how literary works particularly suspenseful, and mystery can stimulate students' critical thinking and imagination. Engaging with complex plotlines, ambiguous characters, and rich settings can enhance students' cognitive engagement, reading comprehension, and cultural understanding. Literary texts with unpredictable timelines and multidimensional settings compel readers to pay closer attention and interpret meaning more deeply (Lukens et al., 2013).

Moreover, such literary experiences align with modern educational goals in Indonesia. Under the 2013 Curriculum and the Merdeka (Independent) Curriculum, students are expected to develop critical thinking, global awareness, and an appreciation for cultural diversity as key components of the Pancasila Student Profile (Kemendikbud, 2022). Literature can serve as a powerful tool in achieving these objectives.

American culture, as portrayed in literary works like *Whistleblower*, can serve as a gateway for Indonesian students to learn about other societies. For example, understanding the bilingual environment of California or the historical ties between the U.S. and Mexico can broaden students' global perspectives and intercultural competence (Kramsch, 1993). These insights are essential in preparing students to be globally diverse citizens who can thrive in an interconnected world.

This research, therefore, aims to explore the literary elements of Tess Gerritsen's *Whistleblower*, focusing on how the novel sharpens students' thinking processes and contributes to their understanding of global diversity. By analyzing this work, the study hopes to demonstrate the educational potential of literature in developing critical literacy and cross-cultural knowledge.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employs a qualitative descriptive method to analyze the literary structure and cultural elements depicted in the novel *Whistleblower* by Tess Gerritsen. A qualitative descriptive approach is appropriate because it allows for a comprehensive examination of narrative elements and cultural representations through direct interpretation of the text (Creswell, 2014).

The analytical framework used in this research is based on Tzvetan Todorov's structuralist theory, which provides a systematic model for dissecting literary texts. Todorov's theory includes three key components:

1. Syntactic Aspects: This involves the segmentation of narrative sequences, examining the plot structure, and identifying the main functions and narrative framework of the story.
2. Semantic Aspects: This focuses on analyzing character development and characterization, identifying the setting, and determining the overarching themes of the novel.
3. Verbal Aspects: This analyzes the dialogues and interactions between characters as part of the narrative technique and structure (Todorov, 1977).

These aspects are used to systematically deconstruct the narrative structure of the novel, allowing the researcher to trace how the plot unfolds, how characters are constructed, and how the themes are conveyed throughout the story.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Suspense Genre in Whistleblower

Tess Gerritsen's novel *Whistleblower* is a clear example of the suspense genre. The plot unfolds with the mysterious death of Victor's friend, Jerry, which becomes the catalyst for a deeper and more dangerous investigation. Victor's journey to uncover the truth behind Jerry's death brings the reader into a world of uncertainty, danger, and intrigue—hallmarks of a suspense narrative.

Suspense stories often center on how the protagonist solves problems, makes critical decisions, and faces the consequences of those decisions. The narrative structure of *Whistleblower* aligns with this model. The reader is taken on a journey filled with tension, unexpected twists, and moral dilemmas that challenge the protagonist at every step. This immersive experience encourages active engagement, as readers are invited to speculate, infer, and anticipate the next move.

One key function of suspense literature is to stimulate the reader's critical thinking and analytical skills. As the plot progresses, readers must piece together clues, evaluate characters' motives, and predict outcomes. This characteristic makes suspense fiction an effective medium for developing students' higher-order thinking skills.

Literary Engagement as a Cognitive Process

Suspense fiction is not consumed passively. Readers must engage actively, often becoming co-investigators alongside the protagonist. Consider the following excerpt from page 7 of *Whistleblower*:

"The rain was pouring down his face, icy, blinding sheets of it, rattling on the dead leaves of winter... The thud of silencer, the zing of a bullet past his cheek, told him he'd been spotted..."
This scene immediately immerses the reader in Victor's perilous situation. The vivid imagery, fast-paced action, and imminent danger trigger an adrenaline-like response and heighten curiosity: Why is Victor being chased? Who is after him? What has he discovered?

Later, on page 240, a dialogue between Polowski and Cathy intensifies the psychological tension:

"I'm one of his hopes. Maybe only his only hope."

"You're trying to kill him."

"Not me. Someone else... unless I can stop it."

Such exchanges compel the reader to question characters' intentions, reassess alliances, and continuously reevaluate the narrative landscape. This process closely mirrors critical thinking practices: evaluating evidence, forming hypotheses, and revising interpretations based on new information. When students are exposed to texts like *Whistleblower*, they are not only exercising their imaginations but also enhancing analytical and inferential thinking. This is in alignment with the 2013 Indonesian Curriculum, which emphasizes the development of analytical skills and the ability to process and evaluate information critically.

Cultural Insight through Literary Settings

Whistleblower also offers rich insight into American life in the 1980s, providing students with an opportunity to understand and compare cultural contexts. For example, Cathy drives a "Datsun," an older vehicle even for that time, symbolizing her modest lifestyle and connecting readers to historical consumer trends. Research reveals that the model she drove was likely released around 1969, further anchoring the story in its era.

Cathy's profession as a makeup effects artist also reflects the technological limitations of the period. Before CGI became mainstream, makeup and prosthetics were critical in the film industry—particularly in horror production, as seen in the narrative. Cathy's skill is demonstrated when she disguises Victor with a prosthetic beard, showcasing not only the realism required in suspense fiction but also a snapshot of 1980s filmmaking.

Furthermore, *Whistleblower* explores geopolitical realities. Victor and Cathy's journey to Mexico highlights U.S.–Mexico relations during the Cold War. At that time, Mexico was undergoing economic crisis, culminating in the 1980s "Lost Decade" due to skyrocketing foreign debt. The novel, whether intentionally or not, reflects how cultural products like film and literature can promote international awareness and dialogue.

Global Diversity and Literary Education

The Indonesian Ministry of Education and Culture emphasizes Global Diversity as a key component of the national curriculum. It encourages students to:

1. Appreciate and understand other cultures.
2. Engage respectfully across cultural boundaries.
3. Reflect on intercultural experiences.

These goals align closely with what suspense literature can offer. By reading *Whistleblower*, students learn about American society, Cold War dynamics, and the professional roles of women in the 1980s. The interactions between American and Mexican settings in the novel also encourage broader geopolitical understanding.

For instance, during the Cold War, Indonesia chose to remain part of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM), refusing to side with either the United States or the Soviet Union. However, scholars such as Abu (1993) note that Indonesia maintained strategic relationships with the U.S. due to its anti-communist stance and abundance of natural resources. The United States, as a global superpower,

saw Indonesia as a valuable partner in Southeast Asia. These international dynamics can enrich students' understanding of both global history and Indonesia's role on the world stage.

By exploring the past through literature, students build connections between cultures, time periods, and political realities. They are also encouraged to uphold national identity while engaging with global perspectives—a core objective of the Pancasila Student Profile.

Film as a Complementary Learning Medium

In addition to novels, suspense films can be a powerful tool for critical thinking. With genres often overlapping, thriller, horror, mystery, students are exposed to complex plots that demand attention, analysis, and reflection. Many films also reflect historical moments, just like *Whistleblower*, and can be used to explore socio-political contexts, technological development, and artistic expression.

Films encourage visual literacy and intercultural understanding, allowing students to observe settings, behavior, and non-verbal cues from different cultures. As students navigate through plot twists, they learn to question, anticipate, and draw conclusions—essential skills in both academic and real-world problem-solving.

The analysis of *Whistleblower* by Tess Gerritsen reveals how suspense literature can serve as a multifaceted tool in English education, particularly in fostering critical thinking, cultural awareness, and global understanding. The findings underscore the value of integrating genre fiction into the curriculum not merely for entertainment, but as a rich resource for deeper learning.

Firstly, the core elements of suspense in *Whistleblower*, such as escalating tension, plot twists, and character, are inherently suited to stimulate readers' analytical thinking. As the narrative unfolds, students are invited to question motives, infer outcomes, and reassess characters' decisions, all of which align with higher-order thinking skills. This interactive reading process mirrors the cognitive tasks outlined in Bloom's taxonomy, particularly the domains of analysis, synthesis, and evaluation. Thus, suspense fiction like *Whistleblower* supports the educational aim of nurturing independent, critical thinkers.

Moreover, the novel's historical and cultural contexts enrich students' global literacy. By situating the narrative in the United States and Mexico during the 1980s, *Whistleblower* provides a platform for cross-cultural exploration. Students gain insight into American daily life, Cold War geopolitics, and the socio-economic landscape of Latin America. These elements correspond with the competencies emphasized in Indonesia's 2013 Curriculum, especially the cultivation of global diversity awareness and intercultural communication. The portrayal of Cathy's profession as a makeup effects artist and the use of era-specific references like the Datsun also help students visualize and compare different lifestyles across time and culture.

In addition, the suspense genre fosters media literacy and engagement when paired with suspense films. Like novels, suspense films require audiences to interpret visual and narrative cues, make predictions, and evaluate outcomes. These multimodal texts cater to varied learning preferences and can enhance understanding when used alongside written literature. This multimodal approach supports holistic learning, providing multiple entry points for students to access complex ideas and develop their interpretive skills.

From a pedagogical standpoint, suspense literature can be strategically used to fulfill the objectives of the Pancasila Student Profile. By reading and analyzing texts like *Whistleblower*, students practice empathy, critical reflection, and open-mindedness—key attributes in becoming globally competent citizens. The ability to understand different worldviews while maintaining a strong national identity is crucial in today's interconnected world, and literary texts serve as valuable instruments in this process.

Finally, incorporating contemporary fiction into the classroom helps bridge the gap between traditional literature and students' real-life experiences. Stories that evoke curiosity and emotional engagement are more likely to sustain interest and motivation, making learning more meaningful and enjoyable.

CONCLUSIONS

The novel *Whistleblower* by Tess Gerritsen is a clear example of a suspense literary work. This is evident from the functional elements (FU) employed by the author, particularly the narrative structure that centers on the death of a character. This death becomes a catalyst for the protagonist's journey, influencing their thoughts, actions, and decisions, as well as those of other supporting characters. The storyline guides readers through the protagonist's efforts to escape from antagonistic forces, engaging the audience in an intense emotional experience. However, because the identity of the antagonist is known from the outset, the story does not fall into the mystery genre, which typically involves an unresolved question about the perpetrator's identity.

Just as mathematicians sharpen their logical reasoning through calculations and problem-solving, students can enhance their critical thinking through engaging with suspense literature. As outlined in the first discussion point, suspense stories challenge readers to anticipate outcomes, evaluate characters' decisions, and mentally map out potential next steps in the plot. This mental exercise fosters analytical skills, particularly for students who prefer literary media over numerical tasks. Aligned with the objectives of the 2013 Curriculum, which emphasizes the development of analytical capabilities, suspense novels offer a compelling and enjoyable way for students to improve their cognitive processing skills.

Furthermore, the use of suspense as an educational medium can be extended beyond novels to other forms of art, such as films and stage plays. These genres, too, often feature suspenseful narratives that require viewers to engage deeply with plot developments and character strategies. Watching or analyzing suspenseful films and dramas can train students to think critically, predict outcomes, and reflect on possible scenarios—skills that are essential in both academic and real-life problem solving.

Set in Northern California during the 1980s, *Whistleblower* also provides valuable insights into the historical, political, and cultural climate of the United States during that era. This aligns with the Pancasila Student Profile outlined in the Independent Curriculum, specifically the aspect of Global Diversity. Through this novel, students can explore the economic and political landscape of the U.S. in the 1980s, including its diplomatic relations with countries like Mexico and Indonesia. Such knowledge fosters global awareness and cultural tolerance, as students are exposed to differences in governance, societal values, and international relationships.

This study further reveals historical parallels, such as how both Indonesia and Mexico received economic aid from the United States during the 1980s. Understanding these geopolitical dynamics helps students to appreciate the role of global powers and encourages them to reflect on Indonesia's position within the global community. Literature, film, and drama not only expand students' cultural understanding but also offer them opportunities to compare foreign contexts with their own, enriching their worldview and promoting empathy and intercultural sensitivity.

In conclusion, suspense literary works like *Whistleblower* are powerful tools in education. They not only enhance students' analytical skills but also contribute to character development and global competence. Whether through reading novels, watching films, or exploring drama, students can engage deeply with content that sharpens their mindset and fosters tolerance, critical thinking, and cultural appreciation.

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