



Historical Novels as Learning Resources for High School Students in Understanding the Japanese Occupation in Indonesia

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Abstract

This study aims to describe the use of a historical novel entitled *Syahadah Musthafa* as a source of student learning on the topic of the Japanese occupation in Indonesia. In this study, researchers used qualitative methods. The data sources include the novel *Syahadah musthafa*, lesson plans (RPP), and informants (history teachers and class XI students). Data collection techniques using interview techniques, observation, and document analysis. This research is described in a qualitative descriptive form. In validating the data, the researcher used data triangulation, while the data analysis method was carried out with three stages of analysis: data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. The results showed that using the novel *Syahadah Musthafa* as a learning resource on the Japanese occupation of Indonesia could attract students' interest in learning history. In addition, this novel can introduce and provide an in-depth understanding of the essence of religious values and lessons from the struggle of Kyai Haji Zainal Musthafa against the Japanese occupation in Indonesia.

Keywords: *Novel; Syahadah Musthafa; Learning Resources; Japanese Occupation*

Introduction

Learning is a person's process of changing behavior because of interactions with the environment that involve cognitive processes. Classroom learning activities involve ongoing interaction and exchange of ideas between individuals and individuals or individuals with groups (Akhirudin et al., 2019: 9). While learning is a learning and teaching activity that takes place simultaneously to achieve a goal. Learning is a form of blending between learning and teaching. In other words, teachers carry out teaching activities when students are learning (Setiawan, 2017: 21).

History learning is a process of internalizing the values of past events in the form of origins, genealogies, experiences, and examples of historical actors (Garvey et al., 2015: xi). The material contained in history learning is a historical subject that is so important and has an essential meaning in the world of education. History subjects have a strategic role in shaping the character and civilization of the nation (Aman, 2011: 57).

Learning history has been less attractive to students (Widja, 2012: 76). This is because history learning is always identified with lessons required to memorize events, figures, and years. History

learning is not only a lesson that requires memorizing characters, years, and places. The vital point of real history learning is the ability to understand history, which can then be implanted in everyday life by students (Kuntowijoyo, 2008: 2). Problems in learning that are often found are the lack of student interest in reading.

Based on observations, many history teachers still use basic learning resources such as textbooks, worksheets, or other scientific works. Thus, the historical material contained in literary works of novels or short stories becomes the main attraction for students. Historical novels are romances that talk about a time in history and try to show the spirit of the times, manners, character values, and social conditions of the past by describing historical facts.

Historical novels have become a breakthrough that is now widely used to generate interest in reading history. The novel with the title *Syahadah Musthafa* is one of the learning resources that can bring students' imagination to the Japanese occupation in Indonesia, especially in the resistance in Singaparna, Tasikmalaya. In other words, the use of this novel can increase historical knowledge and become a bridge between the past and the present.

Research Methods

This research is a qualitative descriptive study. The purpose of this study is to photograph and describe the use of the novel *Syahadah Musthafa* as a learning resource on the material of the Japanese occupation in Indonesia. The qualitative research method is based on the post-positivism philosophy used in research with natural object conditions where the researcher is the key, the technique used is a combination (triangulation), data analysis is inductive, and the research results emphasize meaning than generalization (Sugiyono, 2017:8-9). This research was carried out for four months, from January 2022 to May 2022 at Madrasah Aliyah Negeri (MAN) I Tasikmalaya, one of Islamic High School in Tasikmalaya regency. The data collection techniques used in this study were observation, interviews, documents, and data triangulation. Meanwhile, the data analysis technique is based on the Miles and Huberman model: data reduction, data presentation, conclusion drawing, and verification.

Results and Discussion

The Historical Material Contained in the Novel *Syahadah Musthafa* as a Learning Resource on the Material for the Japanese Occupation in Indonesia

The novel *Syahadah Musthafa* is fascinating because of the author's ability to bring up historical stories with literary wrappings. The events of the struggle of K.H. Zainal Musthafa are packed with a more modern feel. That is because the novelist wants the message from this novel to be conveyed to readers, especially millennials. The novel is presented in Indonesian, with additional languages such as Sundanese, Dutch, and Japanese.

Historical novels are one of the genres of novels that are closely related to history and history learning. In a novel, a series of historical events are told by describing historical facts as clearly as possible to seem realistic. The novel was chosen as a historical source because it provides a literary description of history (Nurgiyantoro in Wildan Insan et al., 2020: 8).

This work is fascinating and vital work to read. Through this novel, we can find out a portrait of the life of K.H. Zainal Musthafa during the Japanese occupation. The historical events contained in the novel certainly have relevance to historical material. The historical material contained in the novel *Syahadah Musthafa* is broadly about the Japanese occupation of Singaparna region, Tasikmalaya, West Java.

History material in the even semester of class XI Science, one of the chapters of material talks about the Japanese occupation in Indonesia, which in the subtitle discusses the resistance in Singaparna, Tasikmalaya. The subject matter contained in history textbooks discusses the early arrival of Japan to Indonesia until the independence of the Indonesian state. However, in the novel *Syahadah Musthafa*, historical material is told along with the nuances of fiction created by the novel's author. The main story of this novel is the struggle of K.H. Zainal Musthafa, who fought to uphold the symbols of Islam and was against all forms of deviation by the Japanese.

The relevance between learning and the novel can be seen in the historical material contained in the novel *Syahadah Musthafa* as well as how K.H. Zainal Musthafa firmly rejects *Seikerei* as the initial form of his assertiveness towards Japan, the formation of organizations, and policies during the Japanese era as historical material contained in the novel.

Teacher Preparation in Using the Novel *Syahadah Musthafa* as a Learning Resource on the Material for the Japanese Occupation of Indonesia

Regarding a history teacher at MAN 1 Tasikmalaya in preparing learning resources in history learning, of course, he is very well prepared. A teacher first prepares everything that will be used in learning according to what has been stated in the lesson plan (RPP). In learning, the media used in the form of student worksheets, assessment sheets, laptops, and the internet are used as learning aids, teaching materials such as teacher handbooks, student books, and the novel *Syahadah Musthafa* as learning resources used in learning.

Based on the study's results, the novel *Syahadah Musthafa* is indeed exciting if it is used as a learning resource in learning history at school. The historical knowledge in the novel is undoubtedly closely related to the existing material and is under the Competency Standards and Basic Competencies. This happened in class XI Science 1 MAN 1 Tasikmalaya, who used the novel as a source of history learning. Jajang Agus, a history teacher for class XI Science 1, said that in preparation for using the novel *Syahadah Musthafa* as a learning resource, it took quite a long time to understand the novels, because the novel itself is a new novel.

The presentation of the history of K.H. Zainal Musthafa's struggle is helpful for readers (teachers and students). In its use, students are divided into several groups according to the subtitles in the novel *Syahadah Musthafa*. In this case, the teacher instructs students to read references related to the K.H. Zainal Musthafa struggle during the Japanese occupation of Indonesia, one of the references is the novel itself. In practice, the teacher only acts as a mediator and facilitator because it is under the constructivist learning theory that knowledge is a human creation reconstructed from experience (Piaget in Yuberti, 2014: 46).

The Use of the Novel *Syahadah Musthafa* as a Learning Resource on the Topics of the Japanese Occupation in Indonesia

The use of the novel *Syahadah Musthafa* in MAN 1 Tasikmalaya was done recently, and it was because the novel *Syahadah Musthafa* was a newly published historical novel. The history teacher expressed his interest in the novel, which he felt was appropriate if used in history learning for the semester. Students are also very enthusiastic about reading novels, primarily geographically, because the school's location is close to K.H. Zainal Musthafa's residence. Musthafa and his students struggled from the very beginning to the end, so students quickly absorbed the atmosphere described in the novel.

The sources in the library as the primary source are still felt by some teachers and students to be lacking, including the novel *Syahadah Musthafa* which is available in the school library only nine books. This makes teachers think about learning methods and models so that they can be adapted to the circumstances, and the novel facility can be used as a learning resource for all students. Especially in

class XI Science 1, because the number of students reached 33 people, they decided to divide them into several groups. Students are divided into nine groups according to the novel's subtitle.

In practice, the discussion session took place on March 1, 2022, as it should be because previously, the teacher gave clear instructions. After the students were divided into several groups, the students carried out a group discussion session at the next meeting. In this group discussion session, each group was assigned to read the novel *Syahadah Musthafa*, then look for fiction or non-fiction, historical elements, and lessons from each novel's subtitles.

Syahadah Musthafa is a historical novel rich in historical knowledge that teachers and students can obtain. Not only that, but there are also good stories that can be drawn from both historical and fictional characters. Most of the historical knowledge contained in the novel is not found in history textbooks. The novel *Syahadah Musthafa* is intended as a learning resource in classroom learning. The teacher uses the novel to add to the treasures of historical knowledge not found in history textbooks. In other words, the novel becomes an additional reference or relevant learning resource used by teachers and students. The implementation of history learning in class XI Science 1 runs using the Project Based Learning method.

Based on the research results, the novel *Syahadah Musthafa* functions as a reflection of the past in learning, based on Kelly's opinion (in Wildan Insani et al., 2020: 32) that historical novels make students feel as if they are in the past and experience the events. The resurrection means reliving the past, which is at the story's heart and can provide historical information.

In the group presentation session, students presented the results of their group discussions and were listened to by other groups. Likewise, because the novel's content is systematic, the presentation is carried out sequentially from groups 1 to 9. This is done so that students can easily understand the novel's contents, and later outside the class, students can continue reading the novel individually. In the learning process, students and teachers become important figures in the continuity of learning. Methods and models that are adapted to the learning implementation plan, the teacher does not forget to arrange in such a way that learning takes place as it should. Teachers have high hopes for using the novel *Syahadah Musthafa* so that students can develop their creativity and skills in learning.

Strengths and Weaknesses of the Novel *Syahadah Musthafa* as a Learning Resource on Japanese Occupation Material in Indonesia

The novel *Syahadah Musthafa* comes with a story of the great struggle of K.H. Zainal Musthafa and his students during the Japanese period. So that there are many lessons and lessons that we can take from this historical story, the novel is undoubtedly related to the material in class XI Science 1 in the even semester, and some teachers use the novel, *Syahadah Musthafa*, in learning. Historical novels can undoubtedly help teachers explain the material and strengthen and act out historical themes and events that are difficult for students to remember and understand. However, when learning takes place, sometimes obstacles and disturbances, both technical and non-technical, often occur in the classroom.

A different thing was expressed by some students who said that it was miserable that novels such as *Syahadah Musthafa* or other historical novels had few availabilities in the library. It can be concluded that these students do have a penchant for reading literary works. Another opinion was expressed by students who think reading novels has difficulties, especially in analyzing. Moreover, some students stated that they did not like literacy activities. It can be concluded that the advantages and disadvantages in the novel are prevalent, regardless of its use as a learning resource or reading source.

Based on the research results, the novel *Syahadah Musthafa* is a historical genre novel recently released. The novel's contents tell the struggle of K.H. Zainal Musthafa with his students in enforcing Islamic law, especially in the land of Priangan. The written novel aims to convey the wisdom and

example of K.H. Zainal Musthafa, especially to the young millennial generation. The novel *Syahadah Musthafa* comes with the spirit of the times in the novel (*Zeitgeist*). One of the opinions expressed by Esten (in Wildan Insani et al., 2020: 27) is that by understanding history, we can know the description of values and social changes.

Based on the results of the research that has been done, the novel *Syahadah Musthafa* has advantages and disadvantages, including:

1. In terms of content, it is easy for teachers and students to understand.
2. The writing is easy to read, making students more interested in reading it.
3. The author's language is Indonesian, with the addition of other languages, such as Dutch, Japanese and Sundanese, so that it adds to the treasures of students' knowledge.
4. Gained much historical knowledge through the novel's content, messages, and values that were not found in textbooks.
5. The descriptions of historical events presented by the author are packaged with modern presentations so that students and teachers who read can get carried away with the actual historical events and make it easier for students to understand the material.

While the disadvantages of this novel when used in classroom learning are:

1. The availability of novels in the school library is minimal.
2. Amid the current conditions, which are still in the Covid-19 period, learning hours are reduced, while understanding the novel's contents takes quite a long time.
3. Historical novels are generally classified as complementary sources from textbooks or student handbooks.
4. If students want to have their own novels, they need quite a lot of money to buy a novel.

Conclusion

Based on the results of this study, it can be concluded that the use of the novel *Syahadah Musthafa* as a learning resource on the material of the Japanese occupation in Indonesia in class XI Science 1 MAN 1 Tasikmalaya can attract students' interest in learning history. Apart from providing historical learning, the novel also provides a deep understanding of the essence of religious values and the wisdom of K.H. Zainal Musthafa's struggle. This can be seen from the processes and activities of students participating in learning. Based on the study results, it is hoped that this research can add to the treasures of research on using historical novels as learning resources. It is also expected to be a comparison material for further research. Furthermore, the novel is expected to be used by teachers in learning history at school.

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