

Analisis Semiotika Simbol dalam Laskar Pelangi Karya Andrea Hirata

Nia Kurniati¹, Lilia Putri Lestari², Sabilinnisa' Sakna³

^{1,2,3} Universitas Nurul Huda, Indonesia

Email : ^{1*}niakurniati@unuha.ac.id ²liliaputri16@gmail.com ³Sabilinnisa09@gmail.com

Abstrak.

Penelitian ini mengeksplorasi unsur semiotik dalam novel *Laskar Pelangi* karya Andrea Hirata dengan fokus pada representasi simbolik dan maknanya yang lebih dalam. Dengan menggunakan pendekatan deskriptif kualitatif, data terdiri dari bukti tekstual dari novel, dengan fokus khusus pada simbol-simbol yang berulang dan makna naratifnya. Teori semiotika Roland Barthes berfungsi sebagai kerangka analisis, membedah simbol ke dalam makna denotatif (harfiah) dan konotatif (tersirat). Pengumpulan data meliputi pembacaan teks secara cermat, mengidentifikasi unsur-unsur simbolik, dan mengelompokkannya berdasarkan relevansi tematiknya, seperti pendidikan, harapan, dan kesenjangan sosial. Analisis ini didukung oleh sumber-sumber sekunder, termasuk artikel jurnal dan tinjauan literatur, untuk memastikan interpretasi komprehensif terhadap struktur semiotik dalam teks. Temuan ini mengungkapkan bagaimana simbol-simbol tersebut berkontribusi terhadap tema-tema yang menyeluruh, memberikan pemahaman yang lebih mendalam tentang penggambaran novel mengenai isu-isu sosial. Kajian ini menyoroti pentingnya semiotika dalam memahami karya sastra dan kekuatan simbol dalam menyampaikan pesan sosial yang kompleks.

Kata kunci: Laskar Pelangi, simbol, semiotika

Semiotic Analysis of Symbols in Andrea Hirata's *Laskar Pelangi*

Abstract

*This study explores the semiotic elements in the novel *Laskar Pelangi* by Andrea Hirata, focusing on the symbolic representations and their deeper meanings. Employing a qualitative descriptive approach, the data consists of textual evidence from the novel, with a particular focus on recurring symbols and their narrative significance. Roland Barthes' semiotic theory serves as the analytical framework, dissecting symbols into their denotative (literal) and connotative (implied) meanings. Data collection involved close reading of the text, identifying symbolic elements, and categorizing them based on their thematic relevance, such as education, hope, and social inequality. The analysis was supported by secondary sources, including journal articles and literary reviews, to ensure a comprehensive interpretation of the semiotic structures within the text. The findings reveal how the symbols contribute to the overarching themes, providing a deeper understanding of the novel's portrayal of societal issues. This study highlights the significance of semiotics in understanding literary works and the power of symbols in conveying complex social messages.*

Keywords: *Laskar Pelangi*, symbols, semiotics.

1. PENDAHULUAN

Literature has long been recognized as a powerful medium for reflecting and critiquing societal values, aspirations, and challenges (Kurniati et al., 2023). It serves as a lens through which readers can explore the complexities of human experiences and the socio-cultural dynamics shaping them. Within this context, Indonesian literature has carved its space in global discourse, offering narratives that resonate with universal themes while being deeply rooted in local contexts. Among these works, *Laskar Pelangi* by Andrea Hirata stands out as a seminal piece, celebrated for its ability to encapsulate the struggles, hopes, and dreams of marginalized communities (Ganiwati, 2020). The novel's narrative, which intertwines the personal and collective aspirations of its characters, has gained international recognition, not only for its storytelling but also for its exploration of profound societal issues (Lapasau, Setiawati, & Riyanti, 2021). This research delves into the semiotic dimensions of *Laskar Pelangi*, aiming to uncover the symbolic elements that enrich its narrative and illuminate its underlying messages.

Andrea Hirata's *Laskar Pelangi* is more than just a novel; it is a tapestry of symbols and metaphors that vividly depict the intersection of cultural, economic, and social realities in Indonesia. The story is set on the island of Belitung and centers around a group of children, the titular *Laskar Pelangi* (The Rainbow Troops), whose journey of education and friendship unfolds against the backdrop of socio-economic challenges (Pangesti, Sunarko, & Linnaja, 2023). The symbols embedded in the novel, from natural phenomena like the rainbow to physical structures like the Muhammadiyah school, serve as conduits for deeper meanings, reflecting the resilience and dreams of individuals striving for a better future. These symbols are not merely ornamental but are integral to the narrative, providing insights into the lived

experiences of the characters and the broader societal dynamics at play. As such, the novel invites readers to reflect on themes such as education, hope, and social inequality, making it a rich subject for semiotic analysis (Landaburu, 2016).

The theoretical foundation for this study lies in Roland Barthes' semiotic theory, which provides a robust framework for interpreting symbols in literature. Semiotics, the study of signs and symbols as a means of communication, enables a deeper exploration of the denotative (literal) and connotative (implied or associative) meanings embedded in texts (Bonato, 2024). Barthes' approach is particularly relevant for analyzing literary works as it acknowledges the multilayered nature of meaning, where a single symbol can evoke multiple interpretations depending on its cultural and contextual usage. For instance, in *Laskar Pelangi*, the rainbow may denote a natural phenomenon while connoting hope and aspiration for the marginalized children. By applying Barthes' semiotics, this study seeks to uncover how the symbols in the novel serve as narrative tools to address broader societal issues and how they resonate with universal themes that transcend the novel's local context.

The overarching aim of this research is to answer the central question: How do symbols in *Laskar Pelangi* reflect the themes of education, hope, and social inequality? To achieve this, the study employs a qualitative descriptive method, focusing on the novel's symbolic elements and their narrative functions (Kravchenko, 2024). It seeks to interpret the interplay between the text's symbolic layers and its thematic concerns, shedding light on the ways in which these symbols communicate the struggles and aspirations of the characters. By situating *Laskar Pelangi* within the broader framework of semiotics, this research not only contributes to the understanding of the novel but also underscores the relevance of semiotic analysis in literary studies. Through this analysis, the study aspires to provide a nuanced appreciation of Andrea Hirata's work and its enduring significance in contemporary literature (Serafini & Reid, 2024).

Beyond its narrative appeal, *Laskar Pelangi* functions as a socio-cultural artifact, capturing the realities of marginalized communities in Indonesia while also conveying universal messages of perseverance and hope. The novel's use of symbolism is particularly compelling, as it bridges the personal struggles of the characters with broader societal challenges such as poverty, limited access to education, and social stratification (Yu, Dickinger, & Egger, 2024). Through symbols like the rainbow, the tin mines, and the Muhammadiyah school, Hirata not only tells a story but also critiques systemic inequalities that perpetuate these hardships. These symbols, when analyzed semiotically, reveal layered meanings that enrich the narrative and invite readers to engage with the text on a deeper level. This study situates these symbols within the framework of Barthes' semiotic theory, demonstrating how literature can transcend its immediate context to offer insights into universal human experiences and socio-political realities. By unpacking these symbols, the research aims to highlight the enduring relevance of *Laskar Pelangi* in addressing global issues of equity, education, and empowerment (Johnson & Carter, 2020)..

2. METODE

This study employs a qualitative descriptive approach. The data consists of textual evidence from *Laskar Pelangi*, focusing on recurring symbols and their narrative significance. Roland Barthes' semiotic theory serves as the analytical framework, dissecting symbols into their denotative (literal) and connotative (implied) meanings. Data collection involved close reading of the text, identifying symbolic elements, and categorizing them based on their thematic relevance. The analysis was supported by secondary sources, including journal articles and literary reviews, to ensure a comprehensive interpretation.

3. RESULTS and DISCUSSION

The Rainbow

The rainbow, a natural phenomenon formed by the refraction of light through water droplets, is a striking visual element that carries profound symbolic significance in *Laskar Pelangi*. Denotatively, the rainbow is simply a meteorological occurrence—light bending and dispersing through water droplets to create an array of colors in the sky. However, in the context of the novel, it transcends its physical form and takes on deeper connotative meanings that reflect the emotional and psychological journeys of the characters. The rainbow appears at pivotal moments in the story, capturing the essence of the children's lives as they face numerous obstacles, yet continue to dream and strive for a better future. It serves not only

as a physical manifestation of beauty in a harsh environment but also as a symbol of possibility and promise in the face of adversity.

Within the narrative, the rainbow becomes a powerful metaphor for the hope and dreams of the children, particularly those from marginalized backgrounds who have limited access to opportunities. Despite growing up in poverty and an environment where education is a privilege few can afford, the children of Laskar Pelangi find solace and inspiration in their vision of a better future. The rainbow, often seen as a fleeting yet beautiful spectacle, reflects the fleeting yet enduring nature of their dreams. Just as the rainbow appears after a storm, symbolizing renewal and the beauty that emerges from struggle, the children's dreams represent their ability to rise above societal limitations and their relentless pursuit of personal growth. It becomes a manifestation of their aspirations to break free from the confines of their circumstances and transform their lives through education, hope, and resilience.

The rainbow, appearing at key moments throughout the story, serves as both a visual and thematic representation of the hope that propels the characters forward in their journey. Each time it appears, it signals moments of growth, realization, or unity among the children, reinforcing the message that hope, no matter how fragile or distant it may seem, is a driving force in their lives. As a recurring motif, the rainbow acts as a reminder of the power of optimism in the face of adversity, offering a visual cue to the emotional and psychological perseverance of the characters. It encapsulates the novel's overarching theme of hope amidst hardship, making it a central symbol that enriches the story and deepens the reader's understanding of the characters' inner strength and determination to overcome the difficulties they face. Through this symbolism, the rainbow elevates Laskar Pelangi from a simple tale of childhood into a profound commentary on human aspiration, survival, and the transformative power of education.

The Muhammadiyah School

The Muhammadiyah School, a modest educational institution located in Belitung, occupies a central and transformative role in Laskar Pelangi. Denotatively, it is a simple school where children come to learn, much like any other educational institution. However, its significance in the novel far exceeds its basic function as a place for academic instruction. It embodies the resilience and determination of both the teachers and students who, despite facing numerous hardships, continue to pursue knowledge. The school stands as a symbol of hope in an environment where opportunities for education are scarce, and resources are limited. It is within the walls of this humble school that the children of Belitung begin to see the potential for their own futures, despite the overwhelming challenges posed by their socio-economic conditions.

Connotatively, the Muhammadiyah School represents more than just an educational institution; it symbolizes the transformative power of education in the lives of marginalized communities. For the children in Laskar Pelangi, the school is a space where they can transcend their circumstances, break free from the constraints imposed by poverty, and access the opportunities that education provides. It is within these modest classrooms that they learn not only academic subjects but also the values of perseverance, hard work, and the importance of dreaming beyond their immediate environment. Education becomes a tool of empowerment that allows these children to envision a life different from the one they were born into. The school's role as a sanctuary for growth and hope cannot be overstated; it is the foundation upon which the characters build their futures, and it is through their education that they seek to reshape their destinies.

Through its portrayal of the Muhammadiyah School, Laskar Pelangi highlights the critical role that education plays in breaking the cycle of poverty and inequality. The novel underscores the idea that education is not just about learning facts or skills, but about fostering a sense of social mobility and the potential for change. The school becomes a symbol of social justice, offering the children of Belitung a fighting chance to rise above the limitations imposed by their socio-economic status. By focusing on the characters' journey through education, the novel reinforces the transformative power that knowledge holds as an agent of social change that can open doors to new opportunities and better prospects. For the children, the school is a beacon of possibility, offering them the tools to challenge their current realities and create new futures. It is in this space that they nurture their dreams and aspirations, serving as a reminder that even the most humble beginnings can lead to extraordinary transformations (Miller, 2020).

The Tin Mines

The tin mines in Belitung are a crucial aspect of the region's economy, but they also serve as a stark reminder of the harsh realities faced by the local community. Denotatively, the mines represent a significant industry that generates wealth by exploiting the natural resources of the island. As a primary source of income for many families, the mining industry is a driving force behind the economic structure of Belitung. The extraction of tin provides employment opportunities and contributes to the livelihood of the population, but it also reveals the uneven distribution of wealth and the limitations of the local economy. While the mines generate profit, the benefits are not equally shared, and the wealth generated from this

resource often does not reach the community members in meaningful ways. The mines are a source of livelihood for some, but they also perpetuate the inequalities that exist in the region, becoming a symbol of both economic dependence and the exploitation of the natural environment.

Connotatively, the tin mines symbolize the economic disparity and environmental degradation that result from the relentless exploitation of natural resources. The novel uses the mines to highlight the systemic issues that trap the community in a cycle of poverty and inequality. In Laskar Pelangi, the mines are not merely an economic activity; they are a representation of the forces that hinder progress and keep the local population entrenched in their socio-economic conditions. While the industry may bring wealth to a few, it also leaves behind deep environmental scars and contributes to a widening gap between the rich and the poor. The mining process, which often involves hazardous and unsustainable practices, brings about environmental degradation that affects the land, air, and water, further harming the livelihoods of those living in the area. The mining industry, therefore, symbolizes the short-term gains that come at the expense of long-term sustainability and the well-being of the community.

The symbolism of the tin mines contrasts sharply with the hopeful visions of the school and the rainbow, which represent the potential for change, growth, and hope. While the rainbow and the school embody the themes of education, aspiration, and progress, the mines emphasize the societal forces that impede these ideals. The mines are a tangible reminder of how natural resources are often extracted without regard for the environmental or social costs, underscoring the novel's critique of such exploitation. They reveal the entrenched systems of power and inequality that prevent meaningful social change, making it difficult for individuals to break free from the economic and social constraints they face. The juxtaposition of the mines with the more uplifting symbols in the novel highlights the struggle between hope and the harsh realities of a society that is shaped by both ambition and exploitation. The tin mines, therefore, serve not only as a symbol of economic activity but also as a critique of the structural inequities that limit the potential for societal transformation.

The Kites

The kite, a simple yet evocative symbol in Laskar Pelangi, holds significant meaning within the narrative. Denotatively, it is merely a traditional toy constructed from paper or fabric and flown on a string, a familiar sight in many cultures. However, in the context of the novel, the kite represents much more than just a playful object. It becomes a powerful symbol of freedom and aspiration, mirroring the dreams and desires of the children in Belitung. Despite the societal constraints and economic hardships that the characters face, the kite offers them a sense of liberation, allowing them to transcend their immediate circumstances and envision a future filled with possibility. The imagery of the kite, soaring high in the sky, evokes the idea that even in a world constrained by poverty, the human spirit can still reach for greater heights.

The connotative meaning of the kite in Laskar Pelangi ties closely to the theme of hope, representing the characters' resilience and their refusal to be confined by their environment. The children, particularly Ikal and his friends, view the kite not only as a source of enjoyment but as a symbol of the possibility of overcoming obstacles. Just as a kite rises higher with the right wind, the children believe that education can be the force that elevates them from the harsh realities of their lives. The kite becomes a visual metaphor for their dreams, fragile yet soaring, constantly fighting against the tug of social limitations. This symbolism reinforces the idea that, much like the kite, their aspirations are vulnerable but still capable of flying high despite the constraints around them.

Additionally, the kite functions as a symbol of connection and unity among the characters. In the novel, the children often come together to build and fly their kites, an activity that strengthens their bond and shared sense of purpose. The act of flying a kite becomes more than a solitary endeavor; it is a communal experience that brings the children together, symbolizing their collective hope for a better future. It is during these moments of shared joy and effort that the characters feel a sense of freedom, escaping the confines of their challenging circumstances. This collective engagement in an otherwise simple activity highlights the importance of solidarity and mutual support, showing that the children, united by their dreams, can defy the limitations placed on them by society.

Finally, the kite also serves as a metaphor for personal and social transformation. Throughout Laskar Pelangi, the children's journey of education is symbolized by the act of flying the kite, as it represents the liberation of the mind and spirit. Just as a kite rises higher with skill and determination, the children's knowledge and self-awareness allow them to break free from the chains of poverty and ignorance. The symbolism of the kite suggests that, even in the face of societal and economic challenges, individuals can rise above their circumstances through resilience, hope, and education. By weaving the kite into the fabric of the narrative, Andrea Hirata emphasizes the theme of transformation, where education and aspiration work together to uplift individuals and, by extension, society. The kite, fragile yet capable of soaring high, embodies the belief that even the smallest dreams, when nurtured and pursued, can take

flight and change the course of one's life

4. KESIMPULAN

In conclusion, the semiotic analysis of *Laskar Pelangi* highlights the powerful role that symbols play in enriching the narrative and deepening the reader's understanding of the novel's themes. Through symbols such as the rainbow, the Muhammadiyah school, and the tin mines, Andrea Hirata masterfully weaves together elements that not only enhance the story's emotional depth but also reflect critical societal issues, such as poverty, inequality, and the transformative power of education. These symbols offer profound insights into the characters' struggles and aspirations, serving as metaphors for hope, resilience, and the challenges of overcoming societal limitations. This analysis demonstrates how semiotics can unlock deeper layers of meaning in literature, allowing readers to engage with the text on a more complex and reflective level.

As a recommendation, future research on *Laskar Pelangi* could explore the interplay between cultural context and semiotic symbols in greater depth, examining how the local socio-political environment shapes the meanings of these symbols. Additionally, applying semiotic theory to other Indonesian literary works could offer a broader understanding of how symbolism functions within the context of Indonesian society and culture. By examining other novels through a semiotic lens, scholars can gain further insights into the ways in which literature serves as a mirror to social issues, empowering readers to think critically about their own societal values and aspirations.

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