

# REENACTING THE PAST THROUGH SHORT STORY ANTHOLOGY

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**Abstract**— Reenactment is an interesting topic of discussion in history as it tries to relieve the past whether as mentality act or physical act. This research aims to design a short story anthology to reenact about Indonesian national movement. In this article, we outline the conceptualization of the short story anthology, the process of designing the short story anthology, and its implementation on the history learning at 11th grade. The design of short story anthology for history learning involves several steps, namely problem analysis, designing and validating the short story anthology, and implementing and evaluating the short story anthology. The short story anthology designed for 11th grade students in Indonesia. It was validated by two experts and proved to be valid as instructional sources for history learning. The implementation of this short story anthology was able to help students to understand the Indonesian national movement and the zeitgeist surrounding the events so that they are able to empathize with historical agents.

**Keywords**— *reenactment, short story anthology, history learning, Indonesian national movement.*

## I. INTRODUCTION

The Reenactment is ubiquitous as part of public history. The recent trend shows us that there has been more and more reenactment in society, i.e. history film [1]; [2], festival [3], historical fiction [4]; [5], and video games [7]. In reenacting the past, historical film produces a heightened sense of fidelity and verisimilitude, creating a powerfully immersive experience for the spectator, giving the experience of ‘rewitnessing the past’ [8]. Just like film, historical fiction provides the readers with the opportunity to vicariously experience the emotions of characters and creating a deeper connection between past and present historical perspectives [9]. Both film and historical fiction provide their audience with an experience in engaging and empathizing the past, while video games might differ. Even though game developer tries to reenact the past within their gameplay, so that the player will be able to sympathize with the historical figure on the game, but there will always be players ignorance that might not be able to avoid since they play for recreation and amusement [9]. Regardless on the form of reenactment, it still becomes an interesting subject for historian and history educator.

Reenactment has been a subject of discussion since R.G. Collingwood claimed in his work, *The Idea of History* (1946), that historical research is an exercise in reenactment at an intellectual level to develop a sufficient understanding

of the mental world of historical agents. For Collingwood, reenactment will enable the scholars to see the world from the perspectives of historical agents, to understand their motivations, and even to face their dilemma. Despite their obvious inauthenticity as a replication of historical experience, reenactment at least invite participants and audience to take seriously the challenge of considering historical actors as human beings [10]. However, it is historians who have most ardently protested (or ignored) the possibilities of recreational re-enactment as historiography therefore also rejected a broader possibility of reenactment in pedagogy [7].

Regardless of that, we try to embrace the possibility of reenactment in pedagogy, especially in history learning because we see that reenactment could help students in learning as stated by [9]. While Rodwell investigates the possibility of using the historical novel in learning, we try to develop our own historical short story anthology. In this article, we highlight the development of a short story anthology “Djoeang” to help students to learn about history, especially about the Indonesian national movement. This topic was chosen since it was an important topic in Indonesian history curricula that will help students to embrace their identity as a nation. This anthology was carefully designed to avoid Denning’s critic that reenactment as overly simplistic and offensively illusionary [7]. In this article, we outline the conceptualization of the short story anthology, the process of designing the short story anthology, and its implementation on the history learning at 11th grade.

## II. METHOD

The design of short story anthology for history learning involves several steps, namely problem analysis, designing and validating the short story anthology, and implementing and evaluating the short story anthology. The problem analysis including the curricula and learning material analysis as well as the analysis of students’ problem in learning history. Based on that analysis, we design an anthology of 8 short stories related to the theme of Indonesian movement history: Ciomas, Samin, Tonggak, Golongan, Warta, Wanita, Adjar, Ekspresi. The anthology itself titled ‘Djoeang’ which mean struggle that reflected the whole stories about the struggle of Indonesian during its national movement.

This anthology validated by two experts to ensure its validity and feasibility. The first expert, an Indonesian historian,

concerned about the chronology and the historical facts related to each story. The second expert, a novelist and history lecturer, concerned on the anthology as the history instructional media. After validated by two experts, the anthology was tested to a small group of seven 11th grade students at a high school, namely SMAN 1 Malang, Indonesia. Furthermore, the anthology was implemented in history learning at a 11th grade class in the same school. We make sure that students who involved in this stage differed with those who involved in the small group test. The results were used to evaluate the anthology as history learning media which support students learning Indonesian national movement history.

### III. FINDING AND DISCUSSION

#### A. *Reenactment: the Idea behind the Short Story Anthology Design*

The reenactment is not something new. In some cases, role-playing history serves to celebrate or commemorate an event from early Greek theater to the miracle plays of the Middle Ages, to a modern theater [11]. Yet, the discussion about reenactment has risen up since English historian R.G. Collingwood mention it in his magnum opus *The Idea of History* (1946). For Collingwood, the reenactment of the past in present is the past itself so far that is knowable by historians [12]. In this sense, the historian must entertain their mind to reenact the past in their own mind so that they will be able to understand the past from the perspective of the historical agents. Therefore, it requires historical empathy.

Empathy is essential in history, especially history learning. It is an important skill for students to learn [13]. Historical empathy is important since it plays a role in the process of adductive, inferential thinking that allows the historian to make sense of past actions [14]. Students will be able to develop their historical empathy trough reenactment. By reenacting the past, they could understand the past “from within”, understand why historical agents acted in one or another way, understand their motivations, or even their dilemma.

In this research, we try to bring students back to the past, in their mind, as if they were witnessing the past by reading short story anthology. The short stories in this research were carefully written to embrace students’ mind into an imaginative adventure of the Indonesian national movement. Therefore, this short story anthology is a medium of reenactment

Short stories in this research were part of historical fiction. The writing of historical fiction can be a valuable adjunct to the work of historians in their discipline [15]. Historical fiction, i.e. short story, contains a narrative that is a social act, an engagement between the author and the reader, often embracing real and enduring social and personal contradictions, such as injustice and betrayal, love and revenge, dream and disillusion [16]. Therefore, this such fiction would provide the students with a new experience in learning which is more personal engagement with the past in a fun way, not as serious as the history textbook.

A novel as historical fiction might serve as a good instructional source in history learning, but a novel has a

long narrative so that requires a long time to read. For some teachers, especially in Indonesia, it might be a problem since there are a lot of topics that must be learned by students with limited time. Therefore, we design short story anthology. The anthology in this research consists of eight different stories related to different events about Indonesian national movement so that students could choose which story that he or she wants to read related to the topic. Reading a short story doesn’t need a long time. Students could read a single story in 15-20 minutes. By reading those stories, students reenact the past. The events on Indonesian national movement were brought back to their mind.

#### B. *Designing the Short Story Anthology*

There are two history subject on the current Indonesian curricula, namely Indonesian history which compulsory subject for all high school students and history which is elective. The topic of Indonesian national movement has occurred in both subjects. That is because the topic relates to the notion of national identity and citizenship.

The idea behind designing the short story anthology came from students’ problem in learning history, especially on the topic of Indonesian national movement. The movement which occurred at the beginning of 20th century involves many historical figures, places, organizations, and series of events which made the students felt difficult to learn. On the other hand, the history textbook does not provide a good and enjoyable narrative of the topic. However, according to the curricula, this topic is important and a compulsory topic to be learned by students. Therefore, we try to design a short story anthology that could help students to learn about the topic.

Djoelang, the short story anthology in this research, consist of eight different stories related to the Indonesian national movement. The first story, Ciomas, narrates about social movement on Ciomas in 1886 which caused by the extensive penetration of Dutch colonial politic. The second story, Samin, narrates about Samin, a charismatic local leader, who did peaceful movement against the Dutch. The third story, Tonggak, narrates about Boedi Oetomo which considered as the first Indonesian movement organization. The fourth story, Golongan, narrates about the factions at Sarekat Islam which was the greatest Indonesian movement organization during the first quarter of the 20th century. The fifth story, Warta, narrates about the development of local press during the Dutch colonial period. The sixth story, Wanita, narrates about women who got limited access to education in the Dutch colonial period. The seventh story, Adjar, narrates about the founding of Taman Siswa school by the prominent Indonesian movement leader Ki Hajar Dewantara. The last story, Ekspresi, narrates about the founding of INS Kayutanam School which dedicated to teaching local students.

Those stories were carefully written based on historical sources to keep the accuracy of important historical facts. However, there was also imagination on those stories as part of the reenactment of the past to help the students understand about the Indonesian national movement history.

The anthology printed in A5 size art paper. In the back cover of the anthology, there was a QR code to download its digital version. The layout of this anthology was carefully designed to make the reader enjoy reading this anthology

book. In addition, we also inserted a small textbox which contains important historical facts which related to every story.

The anthology was validated by two experts before implemented in the school. The first expert, a historian, concern about the historical facts and chronology relates to each story. There were some advice from him related to the historical accuracy, i.e. the name of a place on a certain time that might differ from now like Bogor which was Buitenzorg at the beginning of 20th century. He appreciates that the short story anthology, the event it was rich with imagination, could still maintain some key points of historical accuracy. The fruitful narratives would bring history into a popular form that might be interesting for the students.

it was a historical fiction, it contains many historical facts to help students understand the past.

The anthology helps students to embrace the historical situation and empathize with historical agents. Students become immersed in characters moving through time and place and begin to absorb the historical details in the story without even realizing they are being instructed when they read the past as outlined in a historical fiction [17]. Historical fiction will keep the interest of students, form lasting impressions and foster more authentic learning than a history textbook [15]. The strength of historical fiction is in the plot and the language used so that students won't feel stress by reading it, instead they found it fun and engaging.

The anthology in this research is unlike the history textbook which seen history as a science that requires an analytical response by students. The anthology consists of eight interesting stories with plot twists that make students feel curious about the plot. This curiosity motivates them to read and learn about history. As [18] argued, activities with historical literature, including historical fiction, can nurture creativity and create an environment conducive to the development of higher-order and critical thinking skills, as well as motivate students to discover the past and how it connects to life today.

The implementation of the anthology in the history learning at SMAN 1 Lawang helps students to learn about the Indonesian national movement. They embrace the past, feel the curiosity of what was happened in the past, reenact the past and empathize with the historical agents. Moreover, the anthology motivated students to learn about history.

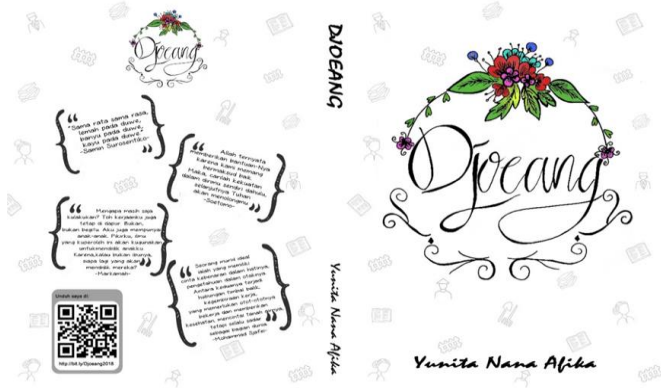


Fig. 1. The Anthology Cover

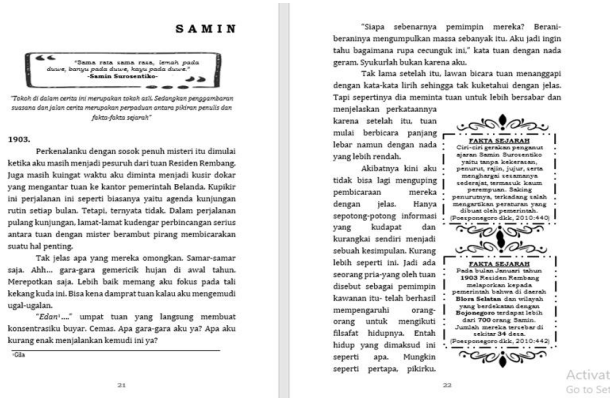


Fig. 2. The Anthology Layout

The second validator was a novelist and history lecturer. He gave some advice regarding the anthology, i.e. the cover should represent the stories and the anthology should be printed or published digitally to reach broader audiences. Overall, either the first or the second expert stated that the short story anthology was valid and could be use as an instructional source in history learning.

### C. Implementing and Evaluating the Short Story Anthology

The short story anthology was implemented in history learning at SMAN 1 Lawang, Malang. The students were interested in reading the anthology. It gave them a new experience of learning and reenacting the past. Even though

## IV. CONCLUSION

Reenactment involves an act of reliving the past in the present. Short story anthology as presented in this research is an attempt of reenactment, especially related to history learning. The design and development of the short story anthology are to help students learn about history, especially on Indonesian national movement history, in a fun and engaging way. The anthology titled "Djoelang" was valid as an instructional source in history learning and implemented in the school. Students were able to reenact the past by reading this anthology. It also motivated them to learn about history.

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