

## Building Reflective Literacy for the Writing Community in East Java Schools through Book Reviews and Poetry Workshops on the Theme of Kartini

Dwi Kusumaningtyas<sup>1</sup>, Zulidyana Rusnalasari<sup>2</sup>, Pratiwi Retnaningdyah<sup>3</sup>, Ayu Saraswati<sup>4</sup>, Suyanti Umayfa<sup>5</sup>, Audrey Titalay<sup>6</sup>, Revalina Fauzia<sup>7</sup>, Brillyan Pakerti<sup>8</sup>

<sup>1\*</sup> Universitas Negeri Surabaya, Indonesia ([dwikusumaningtyas@unesa.ac.id](mailto:dwikusumaningtyas@unesa.ac.id))

<sup>2</sup> Universitas Negeri Surabaya, Indonesia ([zulidyarusnalasari@unesa.ac.id](mailto:zulidyarusnalasari@unesa.ac.id))

<sup>3</sup> Universitas Negeri Surabaya, Indonesia ([pratiwiretnaningdyah@unesa.ac.id](mailto:pratiwiretnaningdyah@unesa.ac.id))

<sup>4</sup> Universitas Negeri Surabaya, Indonesia ([ayusaraswati@unesa.ac.id](mailto:ayusaraswati@unesa.ac.id))

<sup>5</sup> Universitas Negeri Surabaya, Indonesia ([suyantiumayfa@unesa.ac.id](mailto:suyantiumayfa@unesa.ac.id))

<sup>6</sup> Universitas Negeri Surabaya, Indonesia ([audreytitalay@unesa.ac.id](mailto:audreytitalay@unesa.ac.id))

<sup>7</sup> Universitas Negeri Surabaya, Indonesia ([revalina.23044@mhs.unesa.ac.id](mailto:revalina.23044@mhs.unesa.ac.id))

<sup>8</sup> Universitas Negeri Surabaya, Indonesia ([brillyan.23087@mhs.unesa.ac.id](mailto:brillyan.23087@mhs.unesa.ac.id))



### ABSTRACT

**Keywords:**

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Cultural Education

*The community service program, Building Reflective Literacy for the Writer Community in East Java Schools through Book Review Activities and Kartini-Themed Poetry Workshops, was developed to address the limited space available for teachers and school-based writing communities to cultivate reflective literacy that embraces cultural values and gender awareness. This program aims to nurture a deeper understanding of Kartini's spirit of emancipation by encouraging participants to connect historical reflection with the realities of today's educational landscape. The activities consisted of two main components: a book review of the Kartini Trilogy featuring authors and academic speakers, and a creative workshop where participants composed reflective poems inspired by Kartini's values of struggle. Through participatory dialogue, collaborative learning, and guided creative writing, participants were invited to engage critically with the text and to express their personal interpretations through literary expression. The program resulted in heightened awareness of gender equality issues, improved appreciation of literature, and enhanced creative writing skills. It also fostered collaboration among schools, teachers, students, and literacy communities across East Java, strengthening a network committed to ongoing literacy development. The novelty of this initiative lies in its integration of cultural heritage, reflective pedagogy, and creative expression as a means of community empowerment, demonstrating that reflective literacy can serve as a meaningful pathway to reinforce educational values, cultural understanding, and social cohesion sustainably.*

## INTRODUCTION

The development of literacy in schools cannot be separated from the role of the writing community, which is the driving force for creativity and literacy culture among teachers and students. This community is an important space for collaboration, mutual learning, and the exchange of ideas. However, many writers' communities in schools still face obstacles in coaching, mentoring, and the enrichment of reflective themes in their work. According to research, literacy among students in remote areas of Surabaya remains below national standards, underscoring the urgent need for effective educational interventions (Dela Cruz, 2021). In addition, a study conducted by the Indonesian Institute for Development Studies shows that schools in remote areas often lack resources, including access to books and other educational materials, as well as a lack of teachers trained in teaching literacy skills (Santos, 2020). This creates a skills gap that affects students' ability to participate in an increasingly digitized society fully.

Poetry, as an effective medium for teaching literacy and critical thinking, provides students with opportunities to articulate their ideas and emotions constructively. According to The Asia Pacific Education Review, the use of poetry in education can

improve students' interpretive and analytical abilities (Nguyen, 2019). This is important in remote areas, where a lack of adequate educational facilities and programs often limits opportunities for creative development.

The book review activity and poetry-writing workshop on the theme of Kartini were presented to build reflective literacy among the school writing community in East Java. Through the reading and discussion of the Kartini Trilogy by Prof. Dr. Wardiman Djojonegoro, participants were invited to re-understand the spirit of emancipation, the struggle for education, and the revival of thought that is relevant to the current educational context.

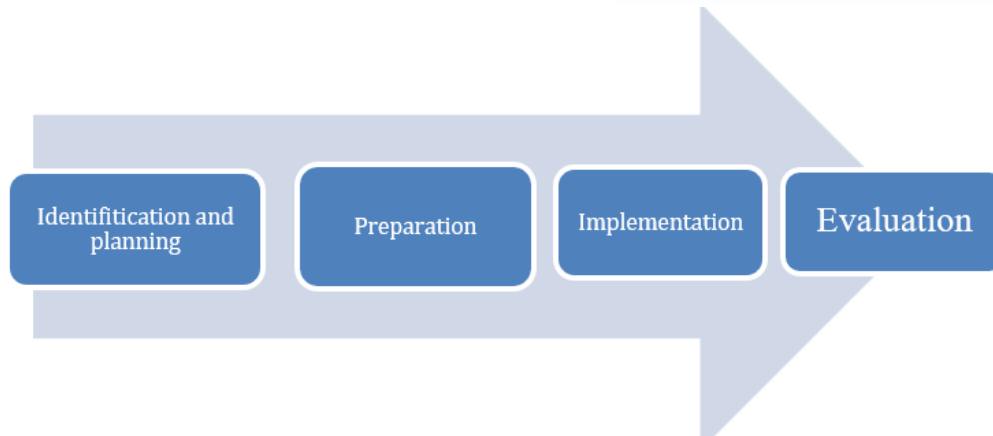
Kartini's Trilogy, as a monumental work that records R.A. Kartini's thoughts and struggles, is a source of inspiration for meaningful literacy activities. Kartini's letters, which are full of reflection and ideas of renewal, show that literacy is a deep-thinking process that fosters critical awareness of social and cultural conditions. These values need to be revived among the school writing community so that literacy practice is not only a routine activity, but also an awareness movement. Through the reading and discussion of the Kartini Trilogy by Prof. Dr. Wardiman Djojonegoro, participants were invited to re-understand the spirit of emancipation, the struggle for education, and the revival of thought that is relevant to the current educational context.

Through book review activities and Kartini-themed poetry workshops, participants from various school writing communities in East Java will gain literacy experiences that are reflective, interactive, and creative. The process of reading, discussing, and writing poetry will help them find both personal meaning and the universal value of Kartini's spirit. Thus, this activity not only strengthens writing capacity but also builds a reflective literacy network between schools.

With a focus on improving literacy skills through creative activities, this program is one of the means that helps reduce educational gaps and provides greater opportunities for students and the writing community to achieve future success. Thus, this activity is expected not only to improve the quality of education in the region but also help build a stronger and more sustainable educational community in Surabaya.

## **COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT METHOD**

Based on the solutions and output targets of the PKM program implementation plan with the partners of the Writers Community in East Java Schools, this activity uses a participatory and collaborative approach, which combines academic activities, namely book review, with practice creative.



**Figure 1.** Implementation Method

Creative Practice Poetry Writing Workshop. The stages of the activity are as follows:

1. Identification and Planning Stage  
In the early stages, one of the activities carried out was to coordinate with schools and the writers' community (Obor) in East Java.
2. Preparation Stage  
In the next stage, namely, preparation. For this activity, the necessary preparation consists of the main reading material (the Kartini Trilogy) and the poetry-writing training module.
3. Implementation  
In this implementation stage, it began with the Kartini Trilogy Book Review, which presented speakers from academics, writers and literacy practitioners. This session aims to open a space for reflection for pesetas. Furthermore, a Poetry Writing Workshop with the theme of Kartini was carried out which was guided by the resource persons and attended participatory by each participant.
4. Evaluation  
There are 3 stages of evaluation. Evaluation of the process, evaluation of the work and evaluation of the impact of the activities that have been carried out.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Exploration of the Spirit of Emancipation in the Midst of Literacy Vibrations UNESA is a reflective and creative forum held to re-explore the values of Raden Ajeng Kartini's struggle, especially through the monumental work *The Kartini Trilogy* written by Prof. Dr. Wardiman Djojonegoro. This event combined a book review session, an in-depth discussion on the relevance of Kartini's thinking to education and gender equality today, and a Kartini-themed Poetry Writing Workshop as a means of creative expression. The following results and discussions will describe in detail the course of the event, the substance of the dissected thoughts, and the reflective and creative outputs produced by the participants from various circles.

### Results

*The Kartini Trilogy Discussion Activity: Exploring the Spirit of Emancipation in the Midst of the Vibrancy of UNESA Literacy* was opened with a solemn atmosphere and national spirit. The event began with remarks from Prof. Dr. Bambang Yulianto, Director of the Graduate

School of the State University of Surabaya, who emphasized the importance of this activity as a moment of reflection on the values of emancipation and education inherited by Raden Ajeng Kartini. In his remarks, he stated that literacy is not only the ability to read and write but also a means of fostering critical awareness and the nation's character. After the remarks, the event continued with the reading of fragments of R.A. Kartini's letters by two UNESA students, Mellya Dewi Purnamasari (English Literature, 2021) and Ashlaha Nafsiyya (Indonesian Literature, 2023). This reading presents an emotional and reflective atmosphere that leads participants to the core of Kartini's thoughts and struggles.



**Figure 2.** Reading and Discussion Kartini's Letter

Entering the book review session moderated by Herma Retno Prabayanti, S.E., M.Med.Kom with the main resource person Prof. Dr. Wardiman Djojonegoro, direct author of the *Kartini Trilogy*, as well as the Minister of Education and Culture of the Republic of Indonesia for the period 1993-1998 and the General Chairman of the Puteri Indonesia Foundation. In her presentation, she explained the writing process and the big ideas that underlie the birth of *the Kartini Trilogy*, a monumental work that records Kartini's thoughts in three main volumes. She emphasized that through the 179 letters and 11 articles in this trilogy, the public can see Kartini's intellectual and spiritual side who struggles to break through the limitations of her times for the advancement of Indonesian women. The presentation elicited participants' insights into how Kartini's ideas remain relevant in today's social and educational contexts.

The next session was filled with discussions and responses from the speakers who reviewed Kartini's letter, Dr. Sjafiatul Mardliyah, M.A., Head of the Center for Gender and Children LPPM UNESA, and Prof. Drs. Nasution, M.Hum., M.Ed., Ph.D., lecturer of S-3 Social Sciences. Both provide a reflective view of Kartini's position in the discourse on gender equality and national education. Dr. Sjafiatul Mardliyah highlighted the relevance of Kartini's struggle to strengthen women's role in modern education, while Prof. Nasution situated it within the social and cultural context of contemporary Indonesia. The discussion was interactive, with participants actively asking questions and reflections, enriching insights into Kartini's thinking from various academic and practical perspectives.

This activity was also attended by participants from various circles, including representatives of education and library offices from Surabaya, Gresik, Sidoarjo, and



Pamekasan, as well as school principals, vice principals, and librarians from universities in East Java.



**Figure 3.** Closing of the book discussion

### **Workshop Poetry Writing**

The activity continued with the Kartini-Themed Poetry Writing Workshop, which provided a forum for participants' creative expression. The training began with an introduction session on the concept of reflective poetry delivered by Ayu Saraswati. In this session, participants were invited to understand that writing poetry is not just about composing beautiful words, but is a process of reflection on life experiences and socio-cultural values. The facilitator provided examples of various poetic forms that depicted women's struggles and the spirit of emancipation, enabling participants to identify elements of emotion, imagination, and moral messages in literary works. The resource person invited participants to explore the values of struggle, education, and equality contained in Kartini's letters as inspiration for literary works.



**Figure 4.** Workshop Poetry Writing from Ayu Saraswati

Following the exploration of ideas, participants participated in a poetry-writing practice session guided by Dr. Zulidya Dwi Rusnalasari. At this stage, the facilitator provides technical guidance on writing, including diction, imagery, language style, and effective poetic structure. Participants then wrote poems independently with themes inspired by Kartini's values of struggle. During the writing process, the facilitator provides direct assistance and feedback to strengthen the poem's meaning, thematic integrity, and aesthetic power. Participants then wrote their own poems and took turns reading their works in front of the forum. Through this activity, Kartini's emancipation values were revived in the form of aesthetic expression and strong reflective literacy.

In a discussion with the Writers Community in Schools, consisting of teachers and supervisors of extracurricular activities in schools, participants were invited to share their experiences regarding literacy practices and creative writing that have been carried out in their respective educational environments. This activity provides a space for exchanging ideas and strategies to foster a writing culture among students, particularly in the context of literature and poetry. The teachers described the various challenges they faced in fostering interest in reading and writing, such as limited time amid a busy curriculum, a lack of student publication outlets, and limited space at school.

### **Impact Analysis and Activity Evaluation**

The UNESA Literacy Activity, centered on the *Kartini Trilogy*, successfully facilitated a critical shift in participant perspective. Post-program outcomes demonstrated a move away from a ceremonial view of Kartini toward acknowledging her as a vital intellectual figure. The event successfully broadened the definition of literacy to include critical awareness and national character-building, culminating in the Poetry Writing Workshop, where participants actively transformed intellectual concepts (emancipation, equality) into creative aesthetic expressions, signifying deep reflective learning.

### **Community Engagement and Participation Level**

The engagement level was high and highly diverse, evidenced by cross-regional participation from representatives of four Education and Library Offices, school

principals, and university librarians. The interaction quality was excellent, with participants actively engaging in questions and reflections. The creative peak was the Poetry Writing Workshop, where involvement went beyond listening to producing original creative output.

**Table 1.** Engagement Criterion

Engagement Criterion	Key Indicators	Assessment
Reach & Diversity	Representatives from 4 regional Education/Library offices, school principals, and university librarians.	High
Interaction Quality	Active questions and deep reflections during the discussion sessions.	Very Good
Creative Involvement	Independent poetry writing and public reading by participants in the workshop.	Very High

### Potential Adoption and Challenges

The primary innovation-the methodology of using reflective literary creation to internalize national values-has high potential for sustainability. The method is expected to be adopted by the attending school teachers and supervisors, particularly those in the Writers Community, by integrating it into extracurricular activities. Furthermore, the theme (emancipation and education) ensures long-term relevance.

### CONCLUSION

This program has contributed to the empowerment of participants, both students, teachers, and the literacy community, by providing a space to reflect on Kartini's values of struggle and relate them to today's social and educational context. The methods employed, such as interactive discussions, creative writing practices, and participant collaboration, proved effective in addressing real needs in the field, particularly in strengthening the culture of writing and critical thinking in academic and school environments.

The results show not only direct benefits in the form of improved writing skills and literary appreciation, but also the potential for long-term change that strengthens literacy community participation, fosters local innovation in the field of education, and strengthens social networks between educators and students. Although this activity successfully achieved most of the objectives, there were some limitations such as limited implementation time and the need for follow-up assistance for participants in developing their literary works.

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