

Green Narratives in the Indonesian Context: Exploring Ecological Issues and Adaptation Strategies in the Children's Book

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ABSTRACT

Children's literature serves as an effective medium for instilling various ideologies, including ecological awareness, in young readers. This study analyzes the representation of ecological issues in the children's book *Pilus Rumput Laut untuk Rasi* (2022). It evaluates its suitability for children's literature, considering its adherence to children's literature characteristics and the challenges of adapting complex topics. Using a qualitative approach with ecocritical content analysis, grounded in Glotfelty and Fromm's (1996) theoretical framework, this study identifies five main issues: local climate change, mining-induced damage, plastic pollution, environmental justice, and ecocriticism. The results indicate that the book effectively adapts complex issues through simple language, action-based narratives, a focus on hope, and strong visuals, aligning well with characteristics of intermediate-level children's literature (*Jenjang Semenjana*). However, criticisms include the potential for oversimplification of complex structural environmental justice issues and the risk of eliciting anxiety or controversy. This research contributes to filling gaps in studies on environmental issue representation within Indonesian socio-cultural contexts, the effectiveness of visual/narrative messages, and the handling of emotional dimensions in children's literature.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Ecological issues have become a global concern today. These issues include the climate crisis, pollution, deforestation, and ecosystem degradation, which threaten the sustainability of life on Earth. As environmental challenges become increasingly complex, instilling environmental awareness and ethics from an early age is crucial. Children are the future generation of the Earth, making the formation of pro-environmental attitudes,

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knowledge, and behaviors in them highly essential (Ardoin & Bowers, 2020). One of the most effective media for environmental education for children is through literature. Children's books, especially storybooks and picture books, have great potential to enhance ecological knowledge, foster caring attitudes, and encourage holistic, environmentally friendly behaviors (Aurélio et al., 2021; Darga, 2024; Hsiao & Shih, 2016; Okyay & Arabaci, 2021; Şimşek & Açar, 2023).

As time progresses and the environmental crisis becomes more acute, contemporary children's literature no longer avoids "heavy" themes once considered taboo. Many authors and publishers now explicitly address complex ecological issues, such as the climate crisis, environmental justice, and the impacts of environmental damage, while still packaging them in a relevant and easily understandable way for children (Echterling, 2016; Holyoke & Fletcher, 2024). Through engaging narratives, relatable characters, and imaginative visuals, these books strive to educate children, build empathy for nature, and motivate them to act as agents of environmental change (Karmakar, 2024; Neupane, 2023).

To better understand how literature can shape this environmental awareness, the ecocritical approach is highly relevant. This approach positions literature as a medium that not only reflects but also shapes ecological awareness and ethics by exploring the interconnected relationships between humans, nature, and culture through imaginative works (Gosetti-Ferencei, 2025; Zapf, 2009).

In this context, children's literature, with its distinct characteristics, becomes an ideal arena for instilling ecological values. These characteristics include the use of simple, communicative language, the development of rich, imaginative, and fantasy worlds, an emphasis on educational and moral values, and the closeness of themes to children's daily experiences (Hunt, 1994; N. G. O'ktamovna, 2023; Sari & Putu, 2024). The adaptive power of children's literature allows for the introduction of complex environmental concepts through metaphors, fables, and adventure stories that are not overwhelming, making it effective in advocating for an ecocentric perspective, the view that humans are an inseparable part of the ecosystem rather than its masters. This perspective encourages an understanding of interspecies interdependence (Soulioti, 2021; Yanar, 2023).

Recognizing the great potential of children's literature for environmental education, the Indonesian government has also taken an active role. One example is the dissemination of quality reading materials for children through the Indonesian Book Information System (SIBI) managed by the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education of the Republic of Indonesia. Books published through this platform can be accessed online and downloaded for free, ensuring equitable access to literacy for all Indonesian children. One of the environmentally themed books on the SIBI platform is *Pilus Rumput Laut untuk Rasi* (Adani, 2022). This book is labeled "Jenjang C" (Intermediate Reader) according to the Book Leveling Guidelines of the Center for Bookkeeping (2022). This fiction book explores ecological themes, including ocean temperature change, the impact of mining, and plastic pollution. This book was chosen as the object of research for its rich thematic content on environmental issues and its status as an official government literacy product aimed at children's education.

However, the presentation of complex environmental issues in children's books generally faces several problems. One is the risk of oversimplification or ambiguity, which can obscure the core message or make it difficult for children to grasp the story's true meaning (Evans, 2015). In addition, a lack of child identification with the characters or situations raised can reduce the message's effectiveness (Bartholomaeus, 2016). Heavy issues such as environmental damage can also provoke resistance or even controversy

from parents, teachers, or communities who worry that the content is too frightening or inappropriate for young children (Bickford & Lawson, 2020; Evans, 2015).

Another challenge is balancing the depiction of environmental problem realities with the presentation of hope and optimistic solutions, so that children do not feel anxious or despair (Evans, 2015). For example, in his study, Nizam (2016) showed that there is minimal major conflict between humans and nature in *Majalah Bobo's* short stories and that conflicts are rapidly resolved. This presents an opportunity to analyze how ecological conflict dynamics are aesthetically presented in accordance with the characteristics of children's literature.

Despite the growing body of research on ecocriticism and environmental themes in children's literature, studies specifically examining Indonesian children's books through the lens of literary ecology remain scarce. Most existing ecocritical studies on Indonesian literature have focused on adult literary works or song lyrics (Rizam, 2016; Rohmah et al., 2019), leaving a gap in understanding how ecological issues are represented and negotiated in Indonesian children's literature. Furthermore, while international scholarship has extensively explored the relationship between children's literature and environmental education (Cutter-Mackenzie et al., 2010; Soulioti, 2021), little attention has been paid to how government-produced literacy materials in developing countries, such as those distributed through Indonesia's SIBI platform, engage with complex ecological themes for young readers. The visual dimension of children's books as an ecocritical medium also remains underexplored in the Indonesian context, despite its recognized significance in shaping children's environmental perception (Tsapiv & Andrieieva, 2024).

To address these gaps, this study examines *Pilus Rumput Laut untuk Rasi* as a case study, contributing a novel analysis of ecological representation in Indonesian state-produced children's literature. The novelty of this study lies in its integration of ecocritical content analysis with characteristics of children's literature as a dual analytical lens, enabling a simultaneous evaluation of both the ecological substance and the pedagogical appropriateness of the book's environmental messaging. Accordingly, this study is guided by the following research questions: (1) What ecological issues are represented in *Pilus Rumput Laut untuk Rasi*, and how are they presented through narrative and visual elements? (2) To what extent does the book's presentation of ecological issues align with the characteristics of children's literature for intermediate readers?

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The field of ecocriticism, also known as literary ecology, has rapidly developed as a discipline that examines the interconnection between literature, humans, and the natural environment (Glotfelty & Fromm, 1996; Zapf, 2009). Literary ecology does not merely analyze how nature is reflected in texts, but rather goes further to understand how literature can shape ecological awareness, ethics, and a harmonious relationship between humans and the ecosphere (Gosetti-Ferencei, 2025; Zapf, 2009). In the context of children's literature, this approach becomes even more crucial due to its potential to instill environmental awareness, foster empathy for nature, and introduce ecological values from an early age (E. S. Amer, 2022; Aslan & Bas, 2020). Children's literature serves as an effective medium for introducing the human-nature relationship, encouraging an ecocentric view, defined as a perspective that sees humans and other beings as interconnected and equal entities, and educating about the importance of environmental preservation (Chang, 2015; Herminingrum & Sukmawan, 2020; Soulioti, 2021; Yanar, 2023).

The characteristics of children's literature are fundamental to conveying ecological messages effectively. Children's literature is characterized by the use of simple, communicative language, the development of rich, imaginative, and fantasy worlds, an emphasis on educational and moral values, and the closeness of themes to children's daily experiences (Hunt, 1994; N. G. O'ktamovna, 2023; Sari & Putu, 2024). This distinctiveness allows for the introduction of complex environmental concepts through non-overwhelming narratives, such as animal metaphors or fables, which have proven effective in building empathy and motivation in children (Karmakar, 2024; Nekarlis & McCabe, 2019; Neupane, 2023). Children's literature experts emphasize the importance of understanding childness, which refers to the unique qualities of childhood and the child's perspective in adapting adult issues (Mallan, 2017; Nikolajeva, 2019). Effective adaptation involves narrative simplification, the use of familiar symbols and characters, and the avoidance of traumatic details, always prioritizing hope and solutions (Bossche & Geerts, 2019; Murtic, 2023; Ramos & Ramos, 2022; Soulioti, 2021).

However, presenting complex ecological issues in children's books also poses various challenges. One major problem is the risk of oversimplification or ambiguity, which can obscure the core message or make it difficult for children to grasp the meaning (Evans, 2015). Additionally, a lack of child identification with characters or situations can reduce the message's effectiveness (Bartholomaeus, 2016). Heavy issues such as environmental damage can also provoke resistance or controversy from parents or teachers who worry that the content is too frightening or inappropriate for young children (Bickford & Lawson, 2020; Evans, 2015). Maintaining a balance between depicting the reality of problems and presenting optimistic hope is a significant challenge to prevent children from feeling anxious or hopeless (Evans, 2015).

Previous research on environmental issues in children's literature continues to reveal several gaps. Nizam (2016) found that conflict between humans and nature rarely became the main conflict in *Majalah Bobo* short stories, specifically "Uang Saku Mingguan," "Jika Tersesat Jangan Panik," and "Hobi Nuni," with a tendency for rapid conflict resolution. This raises the question of whether similar trends still apply to contemporary children's books that explicitly address ecological issues. The study by Rohmah, Oktavianus, and Usman (2019) also analyzed animal metaphors in Iwan Fals' song lyrics, including "Surat Buat Wakil Rakyat," "Manusia Setengah Dewa," "Bongkar," "Siang Seberang Istana," "Bung Hatta," and "Sarjana Muda," from an ecolinguistic perspective, highlighting how language shapes human-environment interaction in the Indonesian cultural context. However, the implementation of similar studies on children's literature remains limited. Furthermore, existing literature shows a lack of longitudinal studies and direct observation methods of children's pro-environmental behavior (Liu & Green, 2024), a lack of research on children's involvement as active subjects in environmental learning (Barratt et al., 2007), and gaps in the representation and influence of socio-cultural contexts on children's reading materials from various cultures (Ardoin & Bowers, 2020; Downey & Strife, 2009). Finally, a few studies examine how visual and narrative messages in children's reading materials creatively shape environmental understanding (Cutter-Mackenzie et al., 2010).

In this context, research on *Pilus Rumput Laut untuk Rasi* becomes relevant. As a contemporary children's book published by the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education (formerly: Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology of the Republic of Indonesia) and widely accessible through SIBI, this book provides an opportunity to examine how complex ecological issues, including environmental damage and environmental justice, are presented through narrative and visuals within the

Indonesian socio-cultural context. Analysis of this book has the potential to fill research gaps regarding the effectiveness of visual narrative messages in shaping children's environmental awareness, as well as to evaluate how the book addresses challenges in conveying heavy issues while adhering to the characteristics of children's literature and promoting an ecocentric perspective.

3. METHOD

This study adopts a qualitative approach with a primary focus on ecocritical content analysis. This approach was chosen to allow for a deep, holistic understanding of the representation of ecological issues, narrative and visual strategies, and the complex dynamics within the research object (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Ecocritical content analysis is specifically used to examine how nature is depicted, how human-nature relationships are explored, and what ecological values are conveyed through text and illustrations (Glottfelty & Fromm, 1996; Zapf, 2019). The main corpus of this study is the children's book titled *Pilus Rumput Laut untuk Rasi* by Nabila Adani (2022), illustrated by Salma Intifada and published by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology of the Republic of Indonesia. The selection of this book was purposeful because it is a contemporary work (2022) that explicitly explores diverse ecological themes, including the local climate crisis, environmental damage from mining, plastic pollution, and environmental justice. Its status as a book widely disseminated by the government through the Indonesian Book Information System (SIBI) and its "Jenjang C" (Intermediate Reader) label were also important considerations, allowing for an in-depth analysis of its suitability for conveying complex issues given the cognitive and emotional developmental characteristics of children at that level. The research data include all narrative text and visual elements (illustrations) contained in the book *Pilus Rumput Laut untuk Rasi*.

The main instrument in this study is a content analysis guideline specifically developed based on the framework of literary ecology, the characteristics of children's literature, principles for adapting complex issues to children, and potential problems and challenges that may arise in presenting heavy themes. This guideline comprehensively guides the researcher in identifying the types of ecological issues in the book, including climate change, environmental damage (including deforestation, land degradation, and pollution), environmental justice, and the concept of ecocentrism. Furthermore, the guideline guides the analysis of narrative and visual approaches in issue adaptation, including plot focused on individual or small community actions and story resolution, characters and their roles in facilitating empathy, the use of simple and communicative language (H. A. Afash, 2024; N. G. O'ktamovna, 2023) as well as metaphor or fable for simplification (Bossche & Geerts, 2019), and evaluation of visuals/illustrations in depicting healthy versus damaged environments. Finally, this guideline also serves as a tool to assess the book's suitability with children's literature characteristics in general (Azimova & Urakova, 2024; Hunt, 1994; Sari & Putu, 2024) and to analyze the handling of potential problems such as oversimplification or ambiguity (Evans, 2015), lack of character identification (Bartholomaeus, 2016), balance of reality and hope (Evans, 2015), and potential resistance or controversy (Bickford & Lawson, 2020).

The data collected from *Pilus Rumput Laut untuk Rasi* were analyzed using qualitative content analysis techniques through a series of systematic steps, as visualized in Figure 1. The process began with repeated readings and initial observations to gain a comprehensive understanding of the book's elements. The next stage was thematic coding, in which all

relevant text and illustration sections related to ecological issues were identified and extracted, then categorized according to the predetermined ecological issues.

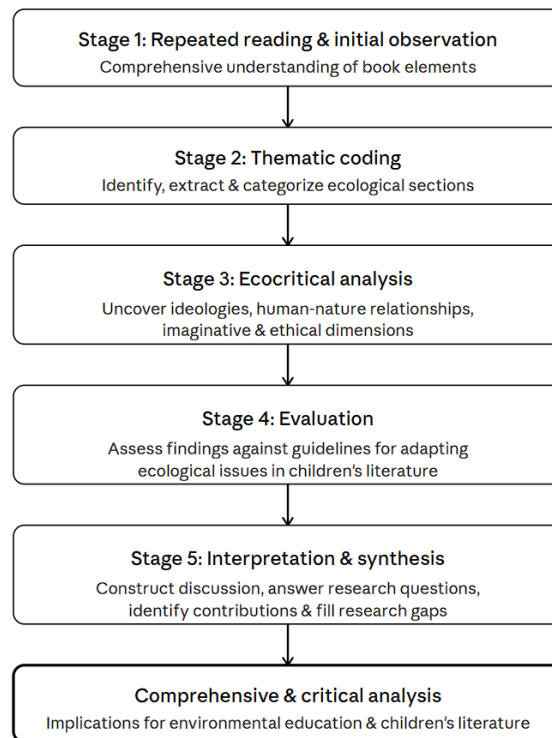


Figure 1. Analysis Process

Subsequently, an in-depth ecocritical analysis was conducted by applying an ecocritical lens to the collected data to uncover hidden messages, environmental ideologies (e.g., shifts from anthropocentrism to ecocentrism), and the complexity of human-nature relationships depicted. This analysis also included how the book implements imaginative relationships with nature, cultural-natural interactions, and ethical dimensions in its narrative and visuals (Gosetti-Ferencei, 2025; Zapf, 2009). Each finding regarding ecological issues and their presentation was then evaluated based on guidelines for adapting complex issues for children and children's literature characteristics, with an assessment of the book's success in meeting these characteristics while navigating potential problems. The final stage was interpretation and synthesis, which involved interpreting all analysis findings to construct a coherent discussion, answer research questions, and identify the book's contribution to understanding literary ecology in children's literature and filling existing research gaps. This method is expected to produce a comprehensive and critical analysis of the representation of ecological issues in *Pilus Rumput Laut untuk Rasi*, and its implications for environmental education and the development of children's literature in Indonesia.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The analysis of *Pilus Rumput Laut untuk Rasi* reveals diverse ecological issues presented through narrative and visuals. The presentation of these issues is aligned with the characteristics of children's literature for intermediate readers (*Jenjang C*). The identification of these issues, as well as how the book presents them and potential criticisms, is outlined as follows:

4.1 Representation of Ecological Issues

The book explicitly raises five main ecological issues, which are closely intertwined with the experiences of the main character and her environment. Table 1 provides an overview of these issues, which are discussed in detail below.

Table 1.
Summary of Ecological Issues in *Pilus Rumput Laut untuk Rasi*

No	Ecological Issue	Key Theme	Page(s)
1.	Ocean temperature changes and their impact on marine ecosystems	Local climate crisis; seaweed harvest decline; coral reef sensitivity	7, 18
2.	Environmental damage due to excessive mining	Deforestation; land degradation; flooding; ocean warming	9, 27, 29
3.	Plastic pollution and threats to marine life	Plastic decomposition; marine ingestion hazard; bioplastic solution	39
4.	Environmental justice and socio-economic impact	Exploitation of mine workers; cycle of injustice; positive resolution	9, 30, 45
5.	Interconnectedness of nature and humans	Ecocentrism; marine ecosystem balance; interdependence	18, 48

The book explicitly raises five main ecological issues, which are closely intertwined with the experiences of the main character and her environment. Table 1 reveals that the ecological issues presented in *Pilus Rumput Laut untuk Rasi* span a spectrum of environmental concerns, ranging from localized phenomena such as ocean temperature change and plastic pollution to more structurally complex issues such as environmental justice and ecocentrism. Notably, the issues are not presented in isolation; rather, they are interwoven throughout the narrative, with several themes appearing across multiple pages and chapters, indicating a deliberate effort to build cumulative ecological awareness in young readers. The most narratively prominent issue is environmental damage due to excessive mining, which intersects with flooding, ocean warming, and socio-economic conflict, suggesting that the book treats this as the central ecological problem of the story. Meanwhile, the theme of ecocentrism, though appearing on fewer pages, functions as the overarching philosophical message that ties all other issues together. This distribution of themes reflects an attempt to present ecological issues not as isolated problems but as deeply interconnected challenges requiring collective human responsibility, a hallmark of the literary ecology framework proposed by Glotfelty and Fromm (1996).

4.1.1 Ocean Temperature Changes and Their Impact on Marine Ecosystems (Local Climate Crisis)

The book *Pilus Rumput Laut untuk Rasi* introduces the concept of climate change through observations of unusual weather and its direct impact on Berli's livelihood. Quotes such as, "Oh, I forgot to bring a hat for the ceremony! I dried it yesterday. It's been raining continuously for several weeks. Even though, it should be sunny these months" (p. 7), indicate weather anomalies. Kak Alin then explains the correlation between ocean temperature and marine life, "Ocean water temperature greatly affects life in it. Good ocean surface temperature for this area is between 27-31 degrees Celsius. Marine biota is very sensitive to temperature changes, even if it's only half a degree. For example, coral reefs, seaweed..." (p. 18). The direct consequence on Berli's life is seen from the statement, "Oh,

seaweed? No wonder the amount of seaweed harvested is decreasing and the results are not good" (p. 18), which confirms that temperature changes have a real impact on local resources.

4.1.2 Environmental Damage Due to Excessive Mining (Deforestation and Land Degradation)

This issue is depicted through drastic landscape changes and their impact on the community. Berli observes, "*Wow, look how brown the soil is! I remember a few years ago, this was a garden with many durian trees... The trees have been leveled to the ground*" (p. 29). The book also directly links uncontrolled mining to ocean temperature warming (p. 27) and floods that damaged Rasi's family garden (p. 9). Berli's protest with the photo upload "STOP TIN MINING" along with images of landslides, floods, and erosion (p. 29) serves as a visual representation of this damage.

4.1.3 Plastic Pollution and Threats to Marine Life

The book directly educates readers about the dangers of plastic. Berli finds that "*plastic waste pollutes the sea. Plastic can only decompose in about 50-100 years. Well, plastic dumped into the sea is mistaken for food by marine fish, but it is very dangerous for them. It can be poisonous!*" (p. 39). The book also offers a concrete solution in the form of bioplastics from seaweed, which Berli's Father mentions, "*There's a friend who makes plastic from seaweed. It's called Biopac. This plastic can easily decompose*" (p. 39).

4.1.4 Environmental Justice and Socio-Economic Impact

This issue is presented through a personal conflict between Berli and Rasi, where Rasi feels that her father's work in the mine is being protested (p. 30). Rasi's father's background of working in the mine stems from flooding caused by mining activities that damaged his family's garden (p. 9), clearly showing a cycle of suffering and environmental injustice. The narrative also highlights the exploitation of mine workers: "*the price of tin became low... Working hours became longer, but the wages of the tin workers were also cut*" (p. 45), leading to layoffs due to worker protests (p. 45). Nevertheless, the book provides a positive resolution with Rasi's Father finding a new job (p. 45).

4.1.5 Interconnectedness of Nature and Humans (Ecocentrism)

The book instills the value of ecocentrism through Kak Alin's explanation of the balance of the marine ecosystem (p. 18) and a strong concluding message, "*Everyone, everywhere, is inseparable from and highly dependent on the existence of the sea. All things in heaven and on Earth, both on land and in the sea, are created with full balance and are interconnected. Let's together protect the balance on Earth and cherish our sea!*" (p. 48). This message explicitly challenges anthropocentric views and encourages an understanding of interdependence.

4.2 Characteristics of Children's Literature in Presenting Ecological Issues

The presentation of ecological issues in *Pilus Rumput Laut untuk Rasi* demonstrates the effective application of characteristics of children's literature, making it relevant and accessible to intermediate readers. Table 2 provides an overview of these characteristics, which are discussed in detail below.

Table 2.
Characteristics of Children’s Literature in *Pilus Rumput Laut untuk Rasi*

No	Characteristic	Description	Example (Page)
1.	Simple and communicative language	Straightforward diction and sentence structures suited to intermediate readers; complex issues simplified through character dialogue	Kak Alin explains ocean temperature and marine sensitivity (p. 18)
2.	Imaginative world close to children’s experiences	Realistic yet relatable settings; activities and social conflicts familiar to children; encourages character identification	Berli campaigns via the Instagram account “Jaga Laut” (p. 29)
3.	Focus on concrete actions	Emphasizes solutions children can take; optimistic ending prevents hopelessness; active problem-solving modeled by protagonist	Berli and Rasi commit to protecting the ocean and campaigning online (p. 48)
4.	Strong visualization	Expressive illustrations convey environmental impact without a lengthy narrative; they stimulate empathy and fill the research gap on visual messaging	Contrast between formerly green garden and barren land (p. 29)
5.	Educational and moral values	Embeds friendship, empathy, environmental responsibility, and communication; serves as a character education medium	Berli and Rasi resolve conflict through dialogue and shared responsibility (p. 47)

Table 2 illustrates that the book embodies all five key characteristics of children’s literature in its presentation of ecological issues. Across these characteristics, a consistent pattern emerges: the book systematically translates abstract, potentially overwhelming environmental concepts into emotionally accessible, visually engaging, and actionable forms for young readers. Simple, communicative language works in tandem with strong visualization to lower the cognitive barrier to complex topics, while the imaginative world constructed around familiar activities, such as social media use and beach play, ensures readers can identify with the protagonist’s experiences. The emphasis on concrete actions and educational values further ensures that the book does not leave readers in a state of ecological despair but instead channels environmental awareness into a sense of agency and moral responsibility. Taken together, these characteristics reflect a coherent pedagogical design that aligns with the goals of literary ecology, namely to foster not only ecological knowledge but also an affective and ethical relationship between young readers and the natural world (Glotfelty & Fromm, 1996; Zapf, 2009).

4.2.1 Simple and Communicative Language

The book uses easily understandable diction and straightforward sentence structures, in accordance with the cognitive development of intermediate-aged children (H. A. Afash, 2024). Scientific explanations or complex issues are simplified through familiar character dialogues, such as Berli’s conversation with Kak Alin. As illustrated in Figure 2, the quoted passage is drawn from a single page depicting one continuous scene in which Berli and Kak Alin converse on the beach. For example, when Kak Alin explains the correlation between ocean temperature and marine life, “*Ocean water temperature greatly affects life in it. Good ocean surface temperature for this area is between 27-31 degrees Celsius. Marine biota are very sensitive to temperature changes, even if it’s only half a degree. For example, coral reefs, seaweed ...*” (p. 18).

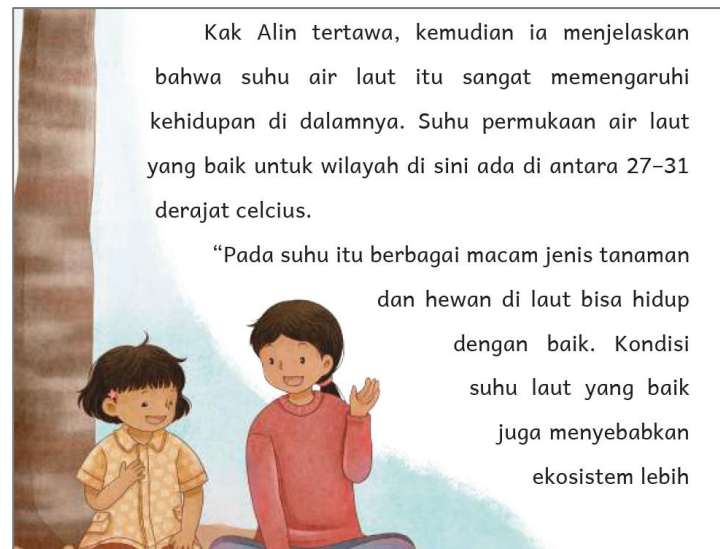


Figure 2. Page 18 of *Pilus Rumput Laut untuk Rasi*, showing Berli and Kak Alin’s conversation on the beach

Figure 2 demonstrates how the book’s layout reinforces its simple, communicative language. As visible on the page, the scientific explanation delivered by Kak Alin is not presented as a dense block of expository text but is instead embedded within a natural conversational exchange between two characters, set against an expressive illustration that occupies a substantial portion of the page. The brief, dialogue-driven sentences are distributed across the page in a manner that feels light and unhurried, preventing cognitive overload in young readers. This layout confirms that what may appear as a lengthy quotation when extracted into academic prose is, in its original context, a visually supported and dialogically mediated explanation, entirely consistent with the cognitive and aesthetic expectations of intermediate-level children’s literature.

4.2.2 Imaginative World and Closeness to Children’s World

Despite addressing realistic issues, the book builds an imaginative world that is very close to children’s experiences. Berli’s activities, such as playing on the beach, searching for starfish, or using social media for environmental campaigns, are familiar to children. The friendship conflict between Berli and Rasi also presents authentic social problems, making it easier for readers to identify with the characters and situations (Hunt, 1994; Sari & Putu, 2024). For example, Berli uses social media platforms to voice her concerns, such as “*I created an Instagram account called Jaga Laut. I uploaded this photo with a red ‘X’ mark and bold red text ‘STOP TIN MINING’*” (p. 29). This reflects how modern children interact with the world and express themselves.

4.2.3 Focus on Concrete Actions

The book consistently emphasizes solutions and concrete actions that children can take. Berli not only identifies problems but also actively seeks ways to contribute. The optimistic ending, with the resolution of personal conflict and a job solution for Rasi’s Father, ensures that children do not feel hopeless when facing environmental problems (Ramos & Ramos, 2022; Soulioti, 2021). For instance, after learning the cause of the sick ocean, Berli was immediately motivated to act: “Rasi and I became even more enthusiastic and promised to take good care of the ocean. We will also campaign for the importance of protecting the environment through the Jaga Laut Instagram account!” (p. 48).

4.2.4 Strong Visualization



Figure 3. Page 29 of *Pilus Rumput Laut untuk Rasi*, illustrating the contrast between the formerly green garden and the barren land resulting from tin mining.

Expressive and dynamic color illustrations play a crucial role. Images of damaged gardens, the “red X” mark on the mining area, or Berli’s sad expression when the sea is sick, effectively convey messages without requiring lengthy narratives. These visuals help children visualize environmental impacts and stimulate empathy, while also filling a gap in research related to the effectiveness of visual messages (Cutter-Mackenzie et al., 2010). For example, when Berli witnesses the impact of mining, it is depicted as “*Wow, look how brown the soil is! I remember a few years ago, this was a garden with many durian trees... The trees have been leveled to the ground*” (p. 29). As shown in Figure 3, the illustration on that page powerfully reinforces this verbal depiction by visually contrasting the formerly lush, green garden with the now barren and brown landscape, demonstrating that the illustration does not merely accompany the text but independently communicates the severity of environmental damage in a way that is immediately accessible to young readers.

4.2.5 Educational and Moral Values

The book is rich in values of friendship, empathy, environmental responsibility, courage to speak the truth, and the importance of communication, making it a powerful character education medium (H. A. Afash, 2024; Sari & Putu, 2024). As summarized in Table 3, each of these values is directly substantiated by specific textual evidence drawn from the narrative. The value of friendship is illustrated as early as pages 6–7, when Rasi unhesitatingly lends Berli her spare hat and asks only for a pack of seaweed snacks in return, to which Berli warmly responds, “For you, Rasi, what would I not do?” Empathy is demonstrated when Berli reflects, “I felt guilty” (p. 31) upon realizing that her post had unintentionally hurt classmates whose families depended on the mine, and again when she says, “I became very sad hearing it” (p. 45) after learning of the exploitation of mine workers.

The value of courage to speak the truth is embodied in Berli's act of uploading photos of environmental damage accompanied by the bold text "STOP TIN MINING" (p. 29), despite the social backlash it provoked. Environmental responsibility is conveyed through two reinforcing moments: Kak Alin's reminder to Berli and Rasi to "keep up the spirit of protecting the environment on the *Jaga Laut* account, because when nature is destroyed, it is humans who will suffer" (p. 46), and the authors' closing message to readers, "Let's together protect the balance on Earth and cherish our sea!" (p. 48). Finally, the importance of communication in resolving conflict is illustrated when Berli gathers the courage to approach Rasi, bringing her favorite seaweed snack as a peace offering and apologizing for her earlier words. The reconciliation that follows — in which Rasi also apologizes for overreacting, and both girls move forward together — demonstrates how open and honest communication fosters mutual understanding and shared responsibility (pp. 44–45).

Table 3.Educational and Moral Values in *Pilus Rumput Laut untuk Rasi*

No	Educational Value	Quotation from the Book	Page(s)
1.	Friendship	"Aih, thank you! You really are the best friend, the most super, the best in the whole world!" Rasi then lends Berli her spare hat, asking only for a pack of seaweed snack in return, to which Berli jokes: "For you, Rasi, what would I not do?"	6–7
2.	Empathy	"I felt guilty." Later, upon hearing of the exploitation suffered by mine workers: "I became very sad hearing it."	31, 45
3.	Environmental responsibility	Kak Alin reminds Berli and Rasi: "Keep up the spirit of protecting the environment on the <i>Jaga Laut</i> account, because when nature is destroyed, it is humans who will suffer." The authors close the book with: "Let's together protect the balance on Earth and cherish our sea!"	46, 48
4.	Courage to speak the truth	"I uploaded this photo with a red 'X' mark and bold red text STOP TIN MINING. I also added photos of landslides, floods, and erosion."	28
5.	Communication and conflict resolution	After Berli brings Rasi her favourite seaweed snack and apologises: "Finally, I could see Rasi smile! She also apologised, saying that she had overreacted. [...] Rasi said not to worry. Her father had now found a new and better job."	44–45

Table 3 confirms that the educational and moral values embedded in *Pilus Rumput Laut untuk Rasi* are not incidental but are consistently grounded in specific, traceable moments within the narrative. Across the five values identified, a notable pattern is that each value is conveyed not through direct moral instruction or didactic exposition, but through character action, dialogue, and emotional experience, a hallmark of effective values education in children's literature (H. A. Afash, 2024; Sari & Putu, 2024). Friendship and empathy are established early and revisited throughout the story, providing an emotional foundation for the more complex values of environmental responsibility and courage. Significantly, the value of communication and conflict resolution appears at the narrative's climax, suggesting that the book treats interpersonal dialogue not merely as a social skill but as an essential mechanism for reconciling the tension between environmental advocacy and socio-economic reality. This sequencing of values reflects a carefully constructed moral arc that moves young readers from personal affection toward broader ecological and social

responsibility, precisely the kind of affective engagement that literary ecology advocates as a pathway to environmental ethics (Glotfelty & Fromm, 1996; Zapf, 2009).

4.3 Discussions

The following discussion critically examines the findings presented before, linking them to the theoretical framework of literary ecology, the characteristics of children's literature, the principles of adapting complex issues for young readers, and the identified research gaps. Each ecological issue and its presentation are evaluated for how effectively the book addresses them within the conventions of children's literature for intermediate readers (Jenjang C), as well as the challenges of adapting heavy themes for this age group.

4.3.1 Critical Analysis of Ecological Issues and Their Alignment with Children's Literature Characteristics

Characteristics *Pilus Rumput Laut untuk Rasi* presents the complexity of ecological issues through five main focuses, which are cleverly integrated into narratives and visuals suitable for children's literature characteristics. This approach aligns with the essence of literary ecology, which views literature as a medium for shaping ecological awareness and ethics through imaginative works (Gosetti-Ferencei, 2025; Zapf, 2019). By embedding ecological concerns within a relatable narrative, the book fulfills the literary ecology framework's emphasis on the imaginative and cultural dimensions of human-nature relationships, demonstrating that children's literature can serve as a meaningful site for cultivating environmental consciousness from an early age.

The issue of climate change, often difficult for even adults to understand, is successfully simplified into a phenomenon that children can directly observe and feel. The narrative begins with observations of unusual weather ("*raining continuously. Even though it should be sunny these months,*" p. 7), an experience familiar to children in Indonesia who feel climate fluctuations. This presentation draws on the characteristics of children's literature, including its closeness to children's world and its simple, communicative language (H. A. Afash, 2024). By anchoring the climate crisis in personal and domestic experience, the book makes an otherwise overwhelming global issue feel immediate, comprehensible, and emotionally resonant for intermediate-level readers, a strategy consistent with the principle of theme simplification recommended for adapting complex issues for children (Bossche & Geerts, 2019; Murtic, 2023).

The impact of ocean temperature on biota is explained through the character of Kak Alin, a university student who becomes a trusted authority figure. "*Ocean water temperature greatly affects life in it. Good ocean surface temperature for this area is between 27-31 degrees Celsius. Marine biota are very sensitive to temperature changes, even if it's only half a degree. For example, coral reefs, seaweed...*" (p. 18). This is an implementation of the principle of theme simplification, recommended for adapting complex issues and transforming scientific concepts into facts easily digestible by intermediate readers (Bossche & Geerts, 2019; Murtic, 2023). The direct link to Berli's livelihood ("*No wonder the amount of seaweed harvested is decreasing,*" p. 18) makes this issue very concrete and personal, potentially triggering children's empathy for the environmental impact on humans.

The representation of environmental damage due to tin mining is presented visually and narratively very effectively. The transformation of a durian garden into "brown soil" and "the trees have been leveled to the ground" (p. 29) is a clear, easily understandable depiction of deforestation and land degradation for children. This visualization is crucial in

children's literature because children tend to learn through images and visual experiences (Darga, 2024; Soulioti, 2021). The use of strong, symbolic illustrations, such as the "red X" mark on the mining image (p. 29), directly conveys a message of criticism and resistance to destructive activities. This approach is consistent with the findings of Tsapiv & Andrieieva (2024), which indicates that visuals can clarify damage and emphasize positive action.

The book also effectively links mining to broader impacts, such as ocean warming (p. 27) and floods that damaged local gardens (p. 9). This shows an effort to explain ecosystem interconnectedness in the context of ecolinguistics and of literary ecology more generally. The characteristics of educational and moral values in children's literature are also very prominent here, with Berli bravely voicing protests and campaigning "STOP TIN MINING."

The issue of plastic pollution is presented with a straightforward, solution-oriented educational approach that uses simple, communicative language (Oktamovna, 2023). Information regarding the long decomposition time of plastic and its danger to fish (p. 39) is conveyed factually but within a narrative framework easily digestible by children. The book does not stop at the problem but immediately presents an innovative solution in the form of "biopac" from seaweed (p. 39). This action- and hope-focused approach is crucial in environmentally themed children's literature, as it motivates children to act rather than wallow in despair (Ramos & Ramos, 2022; Soulioti, 2021). This strategy is effective in building children's understanding of concrete solutions they can support or practice in daily life, consistent with Echterling's (2016) findings, which emphasize individual action.

The issue of environmental justice is one of the most complex yet crucial aspects in this book. The personal conflict between Berli and Rasi ("*Why did you upload content like that? I'm disappointed! I followed your account! You're protesting my father's job!*", p. 30) serves as an entry point for children to understand the dilemma between environmental preservation and economic needs. The book cleverly integrates "adult" issues such as worker exploitation (wage cuts, long working hours) and layoffs (p. 45) into the child character's experience through Rasi's narrative. This reflects an effort to bring adult themes closer to the child's world through emotionally identifiable conflicts (Hunt, 1994).

This presentation underscores the importance of the socio-cultural context, particularly for the Belitung community living amid tin mining activities. The explanation that Rasi's Father works in the mine because his garden was damaged by floods (p. 9) is a clear representation of environmental injustice, where local communities are affected by environmental degradation and are forced to take environmentally destructive jobs to survive (Ardoin & Bowers, 2020; Downey & Strife, 2009). This shows that the book does not focus solely on the physical aspects of the environment but also on the sociological and ideological dimensions of literary ecology (Rohmah et al., 2019).

The book also explicitly advocates an ecocentric perspective, challenging anthropocentric views that place humans at the top of the natural hierarchy. Through Kak Alin's explanation of the balance of the marine ecosystem (p. 18) and a strong concluding message, "*Everyone, everywhere, is inseparable from and highly dependent on the existence of the sea. All things in heaven and on Earth... are created with full balance and are interconnected. Let's together protect the balance on Earth and cherish our sea!*" (p. 48), the book instills an understanding of interdependence and shared responsibility. This message aligns with the essence of literary ecology, which encourages critical thinking about human-environment relationships and imagines more sustainable alternatives (Zapf, 2009, 2019). The use of straightforward language and direct calls to action ("*Let's together protect!*") is effective for instilling moral values in child readers.

4.3.2 Critical Evaluation

Although *Pilus Rumput Laut untuk Rasi* demonstrates significant success in addressing complex ecological issues, critical analysis also reveals potential problems and criticisms in its handling of these issues, especially for intermediate readers. These challenges relate to the dilemma between presenting an honest reality and maintaining children's psychological suitability, as highlighted by Evans (2015). Specifically, the book navigates a tension that is inherent to environmentally themed children's literature: the need to convey the urgency and gravity of ecological problems without overwhelming young readers with a sense of helplessness or fear—a condition scholars have termed “ecophobia” (Bickford & Lawson, 2020). How successfully the book manages this tension across its five ecological themes is the central concern of the critical evaluation that follows.

The book attempts to simplify highly complex environmental justice issues, including worker exploitation and layoffs. However, details such as “the price of tin became low” or “wages were cut to cover losses” (p. 45) may still be too abstract for the concrete operational understanding of intermediate-level children. Although its presentation through Rasi's personal narrative (Berli's friend) aids emotional conveyance, a deep understanding of the economic dynamics and structural injustice that cause the situation may not be fully grasped by children without guidance. The rapid resolution at the end of the story, where Rasi's Father immediately finds a new job (p. 45), while aiming to provide hope and a happy ending (Soulioti, 2021), risks presenting a less complete or overly idealistic picture of socio-economic realities. This can be considered a form of oversimplification that, instead of building a critical understanding of systemic root causes, might instead give the impression that such complex problems can be resolved easily and instantly in the real world. This is a point at which the book might slightly deviate from its goal of promoting literary ecology to encourage critical thinking about more sustainable alternatives, as the solutions offered feel less structurally comprehensive.

The realistic personal conflict between Berli and Rasi, stemming from differing views on mining (“Hey, Berli! Why did you upload content like that? ... You're protesting my father's job!” – p. 30), is a strong narrative element that underscores the complexity of environmental issues. The scene of “unfriendly shouts” from the miners' children (p. 30-31) also adds a realistic dimension to social conflict. Although the book successfully resolves this conflict personally through dialogue and empathy, the emotional intensity of peer rejection and group shouting can potentially trigger anxiety or confusion in very sensitive children, especially if they struggle to process real social conflicts.

In a broader context, the presentation of the tin mining issue, which is a significant livelihood in Belitung, with the narrative “STOP TIN MINING,” could potentially cause resistance or controversy from parents or communities whose livelihoods depend on that sector. Concerns that the book is too “judgmental” or does not fully understand the dilemmas of local communities may arise, as described by Bickford & Lawson (2020) and Evans (2015) regarding the challenges of books with heavy themes. Although the book attempts to show the difficulties miners face (through Rasi's character), the main focus of criticism remains the mining activity itself. The balance between depicting the reality of environmental problems and avoiding ecophobia is a complicated challenge. This book chooses an optimistic path through personal resolution and a focus on alternative solutions. However, the tension between the reality of social conflict and the need for children's hope persists.

From this exposition, the analysis affirms that *Pilus Rumput Laut untuk Rasi* is a relevant work in the study of children's literary ecology, which not only successfully adapts complex ecological issues but also effectively utilizes the characteristics of children's literature to instill environmental awareness, albeit with some critical notes regarding the nuanced presentation of heavy issues.

5. CONCLUSION

This study aimed to analyze the representation of ecological issues in a contemporary Indonesian children's book, specifically *Pilus Rumput Laut untuk Rasi*, and to evaluate how these issues are presented in accordance with children's literature characteristics and in ways that overcome the challenges of presenting heavy themes. The analysis shows that the book effectively integrates complex ecological issues through narratives and visuals tailored to the intermediate reader level. Specifically, *Pilus Rumput Laut untuk Rasi* presents five main ecological issues: climate change (local-scale impacts on ocean temperature and seaweed harvest), environmental damage from excessive mining (deforestation and land degradation), plastic pollution, environmental justice and socio-economic impacts, and the interconnectedness of nature and humans (ecocentrism). The presentation of these issues aligns closely with the characteristics of children's literature, including simple, communicative language, closeness to the child's imaginative world, emphasis on action and hope, and strong visuals to build understanding and empathy. The book successfully instills educational and moral values, teaching children about environmental issues in concrete, relatable ways.

Nevertheless, critical analysis also identified some potential problems. The simplification of structural environmental justice issues, such as mine worker exploitation and layoffs, although aimed at maintaining optimism, risks presenting a reality that is less complete or too idealistic for readers. Additionally, the depicted social conflicts, although realistic, may trigger anxiety in sensitive children or spark controversy within relevant communities, highlighting the challenges of balancing reality and hope in children's literature with heavy themes. This study implies that *Pilus Rumput Laut untuk Rasi* can serve as a valuable model for authors and publishers in Indonesia in adapting complex ecological issues. It is important to continue understanding "childness" and the child's perspective, while balancing the depth of issues with children's psychological comfort. For educators and parents, this book offers an effective tool for environmental education, but it is recommended that guidance be provided when discussing more complex and sensitive issues.

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Authors' Contribution

Reza Sukma Nugraha conceived the main conceptual ideas, designed the analysis framework, and performed the data analysis. Gun Gun Gun validated the data and revised the manuscript for grammatical accuracy. Eva Farhah assisted in collecting the research data and contributed to the analysis. Khabibi Muhammad Luthfi provided conceptual contributions to the analysis and substantively edited the manuscript.

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