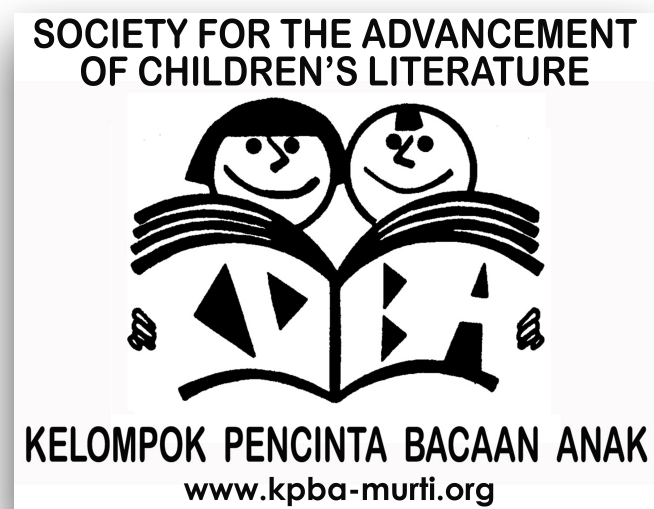
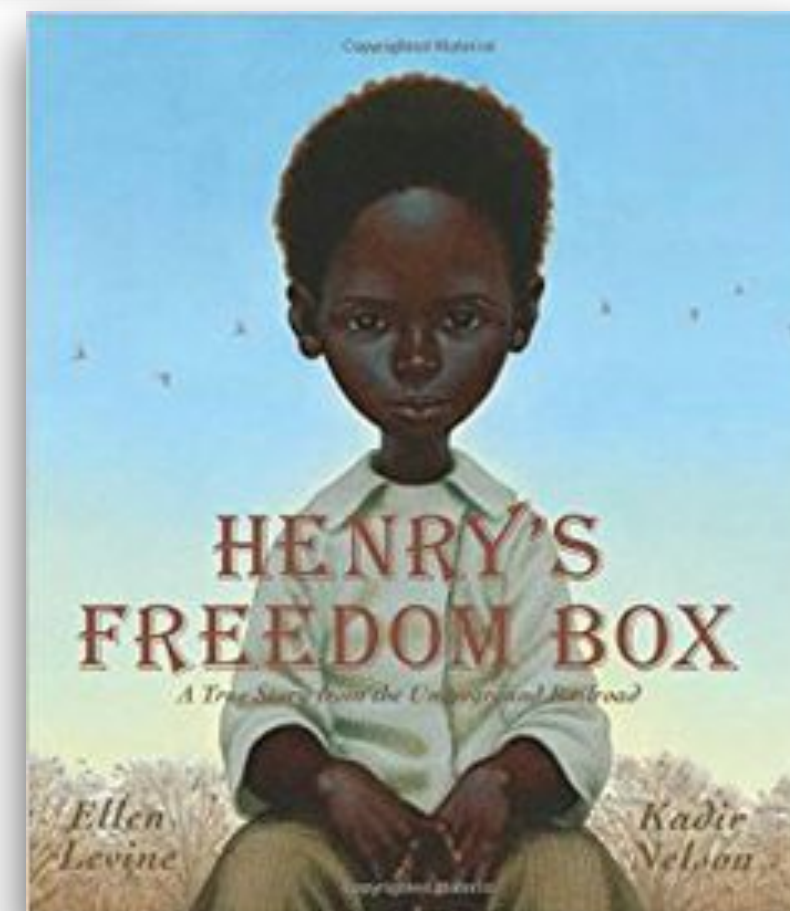
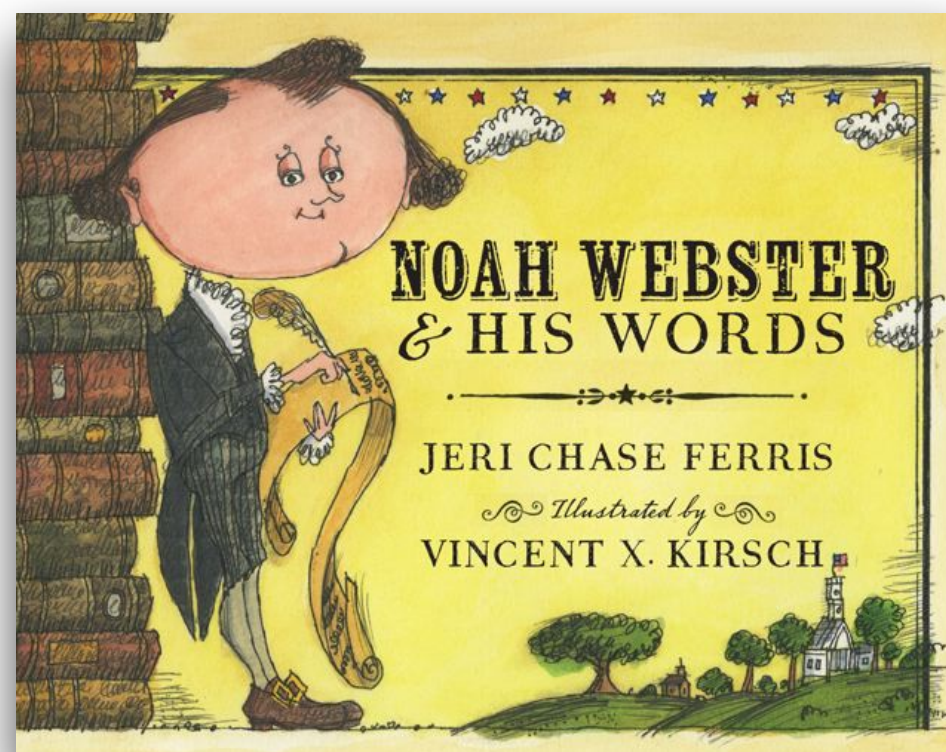
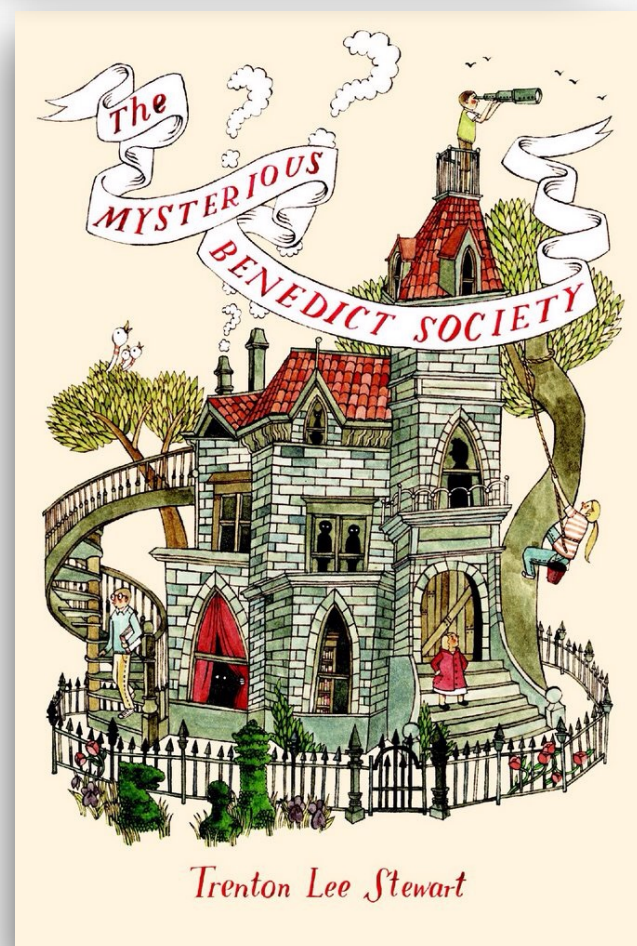
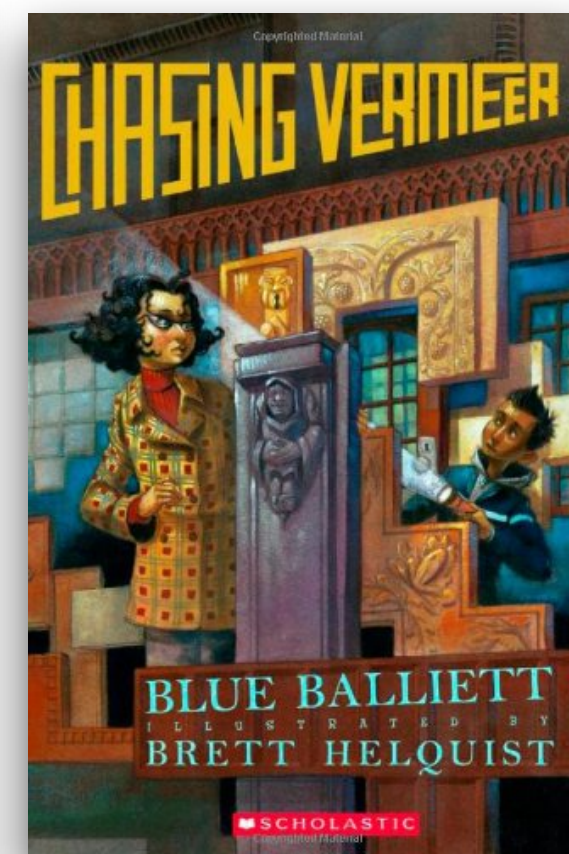
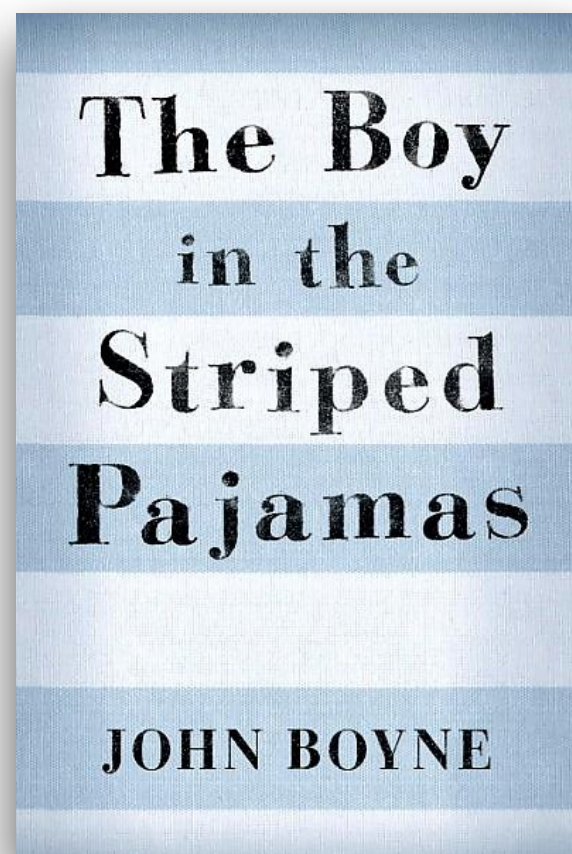
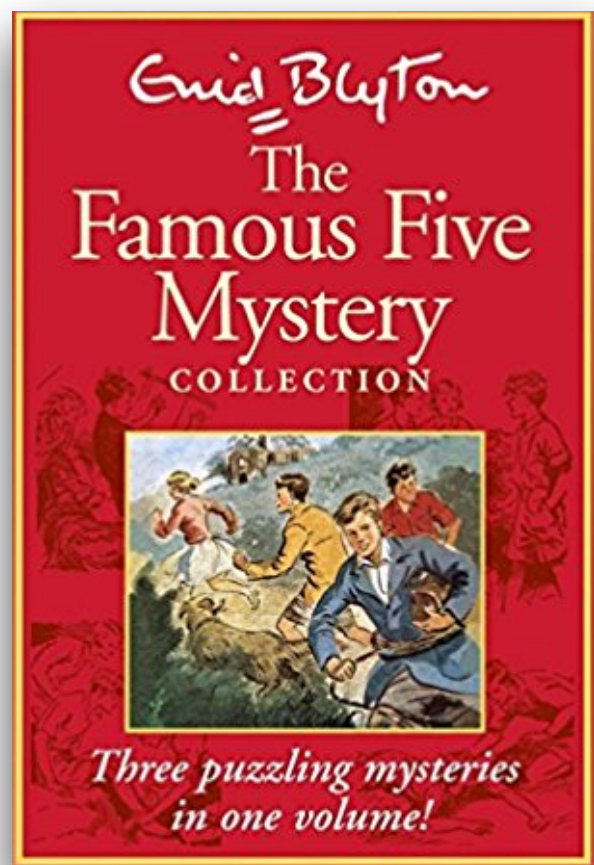


Indonesian Mysteries & Historical Fiction

Herdiana Hakim

Asian Festival for Children's Content
National Library, Singapore
19 May 2017





The Global Appeal



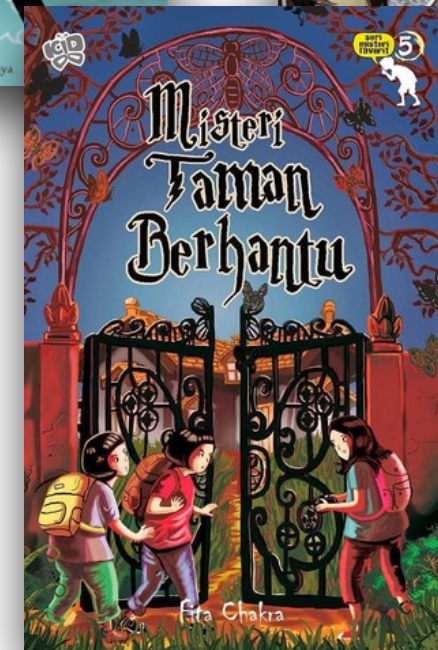
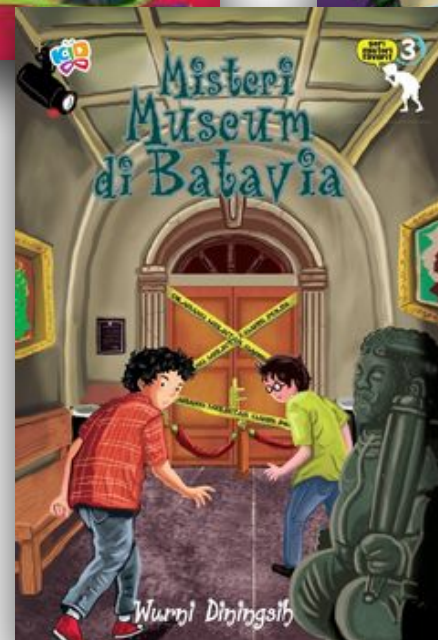
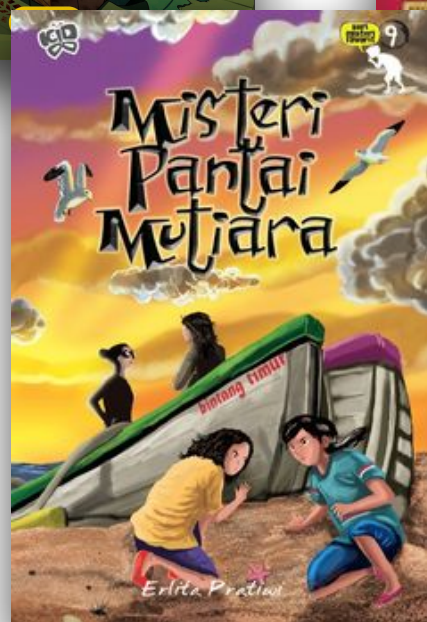
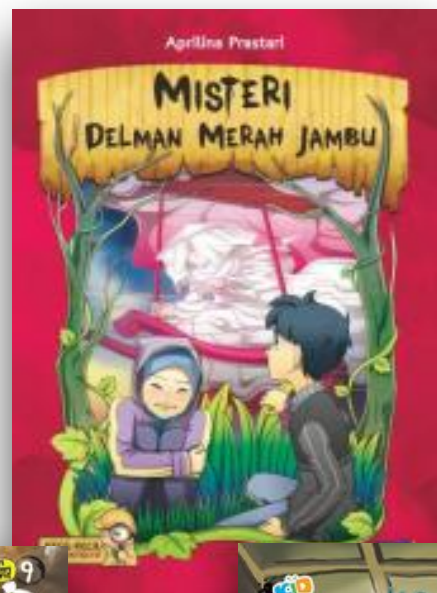
- Historical novels often dominate the Newbery Award winners. “Historical fiction has been and remains a significant genre, perhaps especially so in children’s literature.” (Hastings, 1999)

Why Do Children Love Mystery + Historical Fiction?

- ☑ Pique children's curiosities.
- ☑ Offer 'safe' adventures.
- ☑ Present various problem-solving strategies.
- ☑ Children as heroes.

Indonesia, Too.

Recently, stories with elements of history and mystery have become a favorite in the Indonesian children's literature scene, particularly for middle-graders.



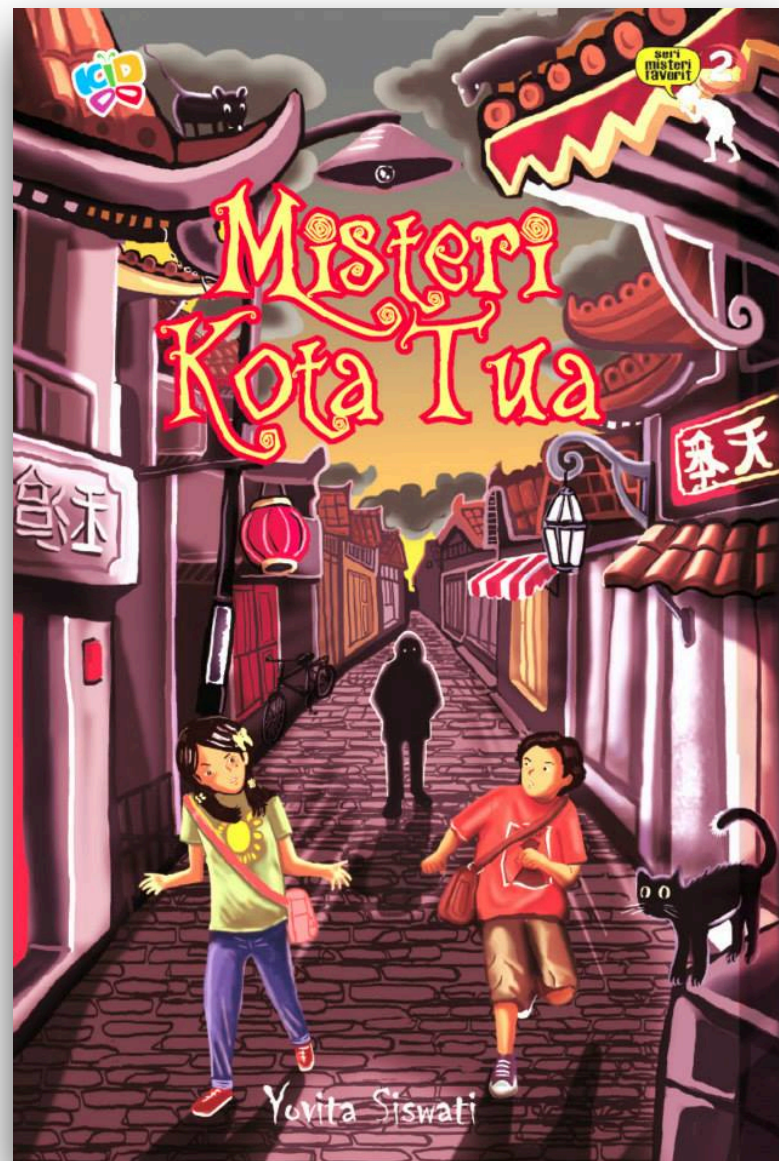
Indonesian Mysteries & Histories



260 million people
34 provinces
300 ethnic groups
700 native languages

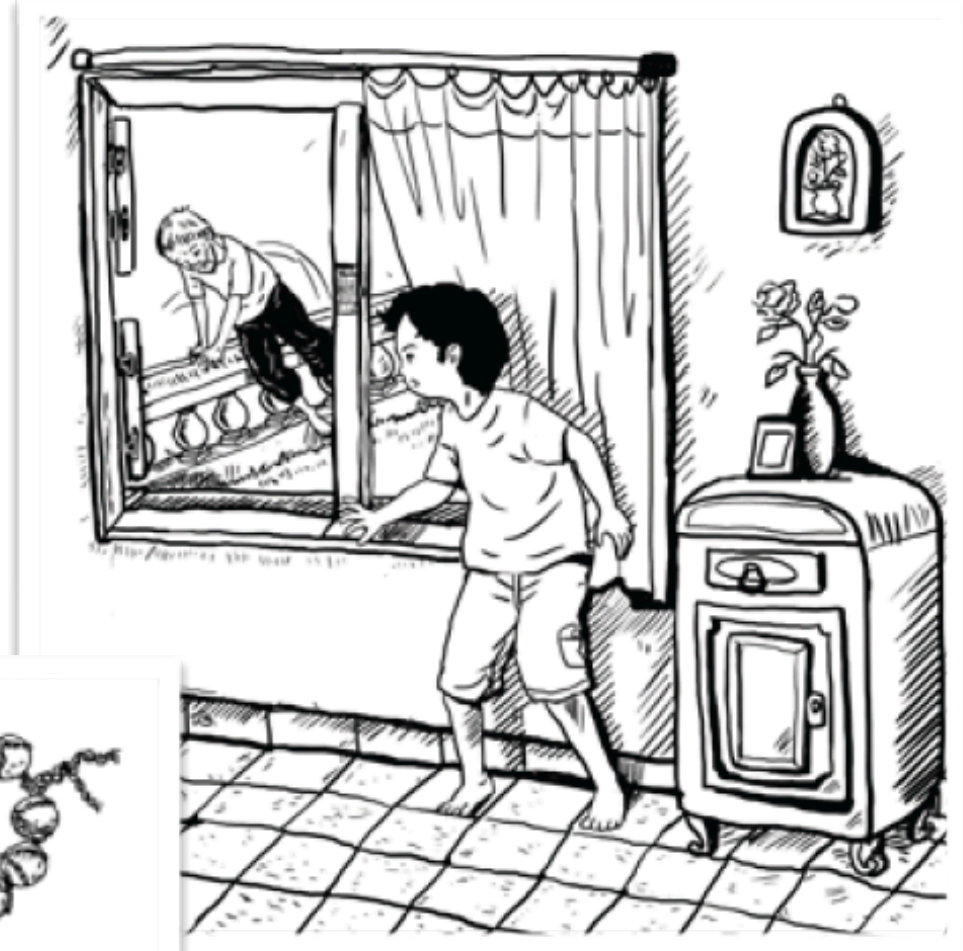
- Indonesia is a rich source for histories and mysteries!
- Stories with elements of history and mystery have the potentials of introducing the issue of multiculturalism in the vastly diverse society - without didactically imposing on the children.

Yovita Siswati's Mysteries



Marketed as: “adventure story that adds your knowledge on Indonesia.”

Yovita's Mysteries



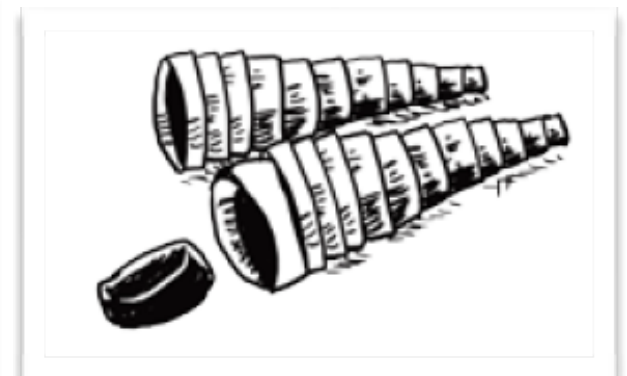
Yovita's Mysteries

- Histories presented: lesser-known “small” histories of various places in Indonesia.
- As the children explore the mysteries in their own hometown and learn about the histories of their home, they are relating the past to the present + see connections between their home and the world.



Yovita's Mysteries

- Yovita's stories offer young readers adventures rich with cultural references.
- The stories thus cannot be “moved” to a different cultural setting, since it is the culture that actually becomes the main character!



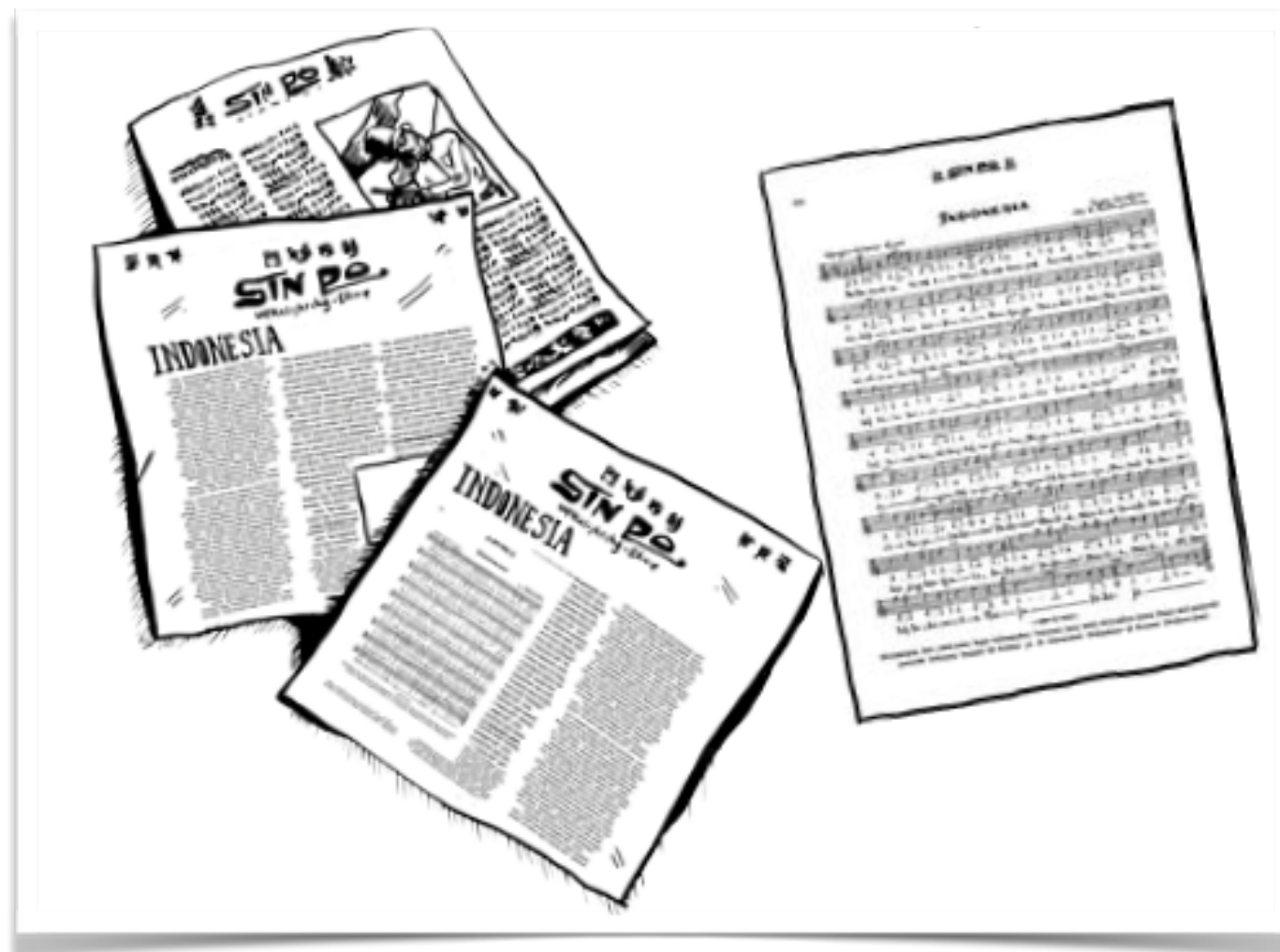
Mysteries and Histories in Yovita's Books

- Elements of mystery: All the unsolved problems...
Also: Kerkhoff - an old Dutch cemetery where the children end up being chased by a “ghost”.
- Elements of histories:
Kampung Afrika - a village of Dutch soldiers of African descendants who went back to the Netherlands after Indonesia's independence in 1945.



Mysteries and Histories in Yovita's Books

- Elements of histories: As Beno and Sari learn about the significant role of the Chinese-Indonesians in the nation's history.
e.g. Sin Po, the Chinese newspaper in Malay that first printed the national anthem "Indonesia Raya" and spread the term "Indonesia" after independence.



Child Agency

- Children's agency: 'the new paradigm of childhood' (James, Jenks, & Prout, 2002; James & James, 2008; Kehily, 2009).
- Reacting against perception that childhood is a period of socialization where children merely accept what society imposes upon them.
- Prout & James (2005: 8): "Children are and must be seen as active in the construction and determination of their own social lives, the lives of those around them and of the societies in which they live."
- Thus, in this paradigm, children's agency is defined as "the capacity of individuals to act independently." (James & James, 2008: 9)



Child Agency in Mysteries and Historical Fiction

- Child agency can be closely related to the genre of mystery, history, and adventure, because the child characters are often portrayed as curious and resourceful (thus they are able to solve the mysteries and catch the bad guys).
- The issue of child agency matters within the Indonesian context: Children in Indonesia do not have much space to exercise their autonomy. It's a communitarian society with heavy emphasis on obeying parents and other authoritative figures.
- Children's voices + opinions are rarely heard. However, in Yovita's stories, not only children are given voices, they also actively take decisions and steer the course of actions that impact on solving of the case.

Child Agency: Resourceful + Independent

- In Misteri Kampung Hitam, Julia is pictured as a brave little girl who lives in an old house in Purworejo. She fearlessly says that if there's a bad guy breaking into her home, she will fight him with a broomstick!
- As they set out to solve mysteries, Julia + Arkan reveal how they employ critical and rational thinking. When they encounter “a ghost” in the Dutch cemetery, they suspect it is not real.



Child Agency: Resourceful + Independent

- In Misteri Kota Tua, Sari is portrayed as a five-grader whose both parents work and often leave her alone at home. She is fearless and independent (cooks and cleans by herself).
- Faced with a series of mysterious things, the child characters do not tell their parents and express their wish of solving the mysteries themselves. They are also resourceful in solving the case by gathering information from libraries, museums, and history survivors.



Multiculturalism

- Multicultural dimensions in Yovita's mysteries: rich cultural references (culture, food, history of places, people).
- The presence of characters of diverse ethnicities: Sundanese, Javanese, Betawinese, Chinese Indonesian... who also come from various walks of life (the grassroots, the haves, the educated, the uneducated).
- The child characters also represent the multicultural Indonesia.



How Yovita's Stories Introduce Multicultural Issues in a Deeper Level

- In Misteri Kampung Hitam: the children find out about the African soldiers who were misplaced and marginalized, since they were paid soldiers who fought for another country. During the chaos after Indonesian independence, the soldiers were “treated like prisoners”. As Julia and Arkan strive for returning the Africans’ diamond, they learn to value histories and people from different background and cultures.
- In Misteri Kota Tua, Beno and Sari learn about the law that put the Chinese-Indonesians at disadvantage: they were banned from doing business and segregated. Here, readers are taken to empathize with the ethnic group labelled as rich and exclusive. As the story reveals, many Chinese-Indonesians live in poverty and assimilate with the local cultures.



Significant Intersection Between Historical Fiction & Multicultural Children's Literature



- One of the important qualities of a good historical fiction is “a concern with how ordinary people were affected by the political and social climate of the time.” (Collins & Graham, 2012: 10)
- “The ultimate goals for using multicultural literature in the curriculum are to challenge the dominant ideologies, affirm the values and experiences of historically underrepresented cultures, foster acceptance and appreciation of cultural diversity, develop sensitivity to social inequalities, and encourage transformation of the self and society.” (Cai, 2002: 134)

“In today’s world, where ‘walls’ seem to be built towards anything new or different, stories employing misteries and histories offer potential opportunities to present multicultural perspectives to our young readers, as well as encourage their agency in making the world a better place.”



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