

Research Article**Literature as a Medium of Moral Education: An Analysis of Educational Values in the Short Story Anthology Heart To Me by Wa Mirna**

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ABSTRACT

Literary works play a crucial role not only as a medium of aesthetic expression but also as a vehicle for value education and character formation. This study aims to describe and analyze the moral educational values contained in the short story anthology *Heart To Me* by Wa Mirna, as well as to examine their relevance for readers within social and educational contexts. The research adopts a descriptive qualitative approach employing content analysis as its method. The research data consist of textual excerpts from the short stories that reflect moral educational values. Data were collected through careful reading and systematic note-taking, while data analysis was conducted by classifying the data according to moral value concepts related to human behavior, particularly distinctions between good and bad conduct. The findings reveal that the anthology *Heart To Me* encompasses a wide range of moral educational values, including filial piety, responsibility, ethics, friendship, empathy, honesty, resilience, courage, and compassion toward fellow human beings and other living creatures. These values are conveyed through the depiction of characters, conflicts, and events that closely reflect real-life experiences, thereby fostering readers' moral reflection and ethical awareness. The discussion emphasizes that moral values in the short stories are not merely presented in a normative manner but are contextual and applicable to everyday life. Overall, this study concludes that *Heart To Me* demonstrates strong potential as a medium for moral and character education. These findings underscore the importance of utilizing literary works in literature instruction and character education, while also opening avenues for further research on the application of moral values in literature within formal educational settings.

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1. Introduction

Literature does not merely function as entertainment or as an aesthetic artistic product; it also possesses transformative power as an educational medium, particularly in instilling moral values. In the field of education, literature is regarded as an effective means of character formation because it deeply engages readers' affective and emotional dimensions. Through characters, plot development, conflict, and narrative resolution, literary works reflect complex life values, inviting readers to contemplate and understand moral issues in a more personal and contextual manner (Syaidah et al., 2022).

Amid the current challenges of moral crisis and the degradation of character values among younger generations, the presence of literature containing moral messages has become increasingly relevant and essential. Character education that emphasizes values such as honesty, responsibility, empathy, and tolerance cannot be effectively conveyed solely through lectures or doctrinal instruction; rather, these values can be more meaningfully internalized through their representation in fictional narratives that mirror real-life situations (Yosefinus Yusanfri, 2013). Moreover, literary works are not only meant to be read and appreciated aesthetically but also offer positive benefits, including advice and moral lessons from which readers may draw wisdom (Wa Mirna, 2019).

The short story anthology *Heart To Me* by Wa Mirna is a contemporary literary work that presents narratives of inner conflict, interpersonal relationships, and individual emotional struggles in confronting life's challenges. The short stories in this anthology depict diverse characters and situations rich in moral values and life lessons, making them suitable for analysis as instructional materials for character education. The communicative narrative style and themes closely aligned with the lived realities of adolescent readers further support the relevance of this work as an object of study in moral education contexts.

Short stories are classified as literary works because they emerge from imagination that represents human life and experiences. Literature employs language as its medium of expression, whether oral or written, and conveys educational values through narrative forms. Literary works are created to communicate meaning, messages, and humanitarian values to readers across age groups, including children, adolescents, and adults (Latuconsina, 2022).

The moral educational values contained in *Heart To Me* by Wa Mirna are highly inspirational and worthy of examination and emulation by readers. The anthology comprises fifteen short stories, namely: (1) *Obor Cinta Pattimura*, (2) *Ayahku Sang Inspirator*, (3) *Perjalanan Belum Usai*, (4) *Seberkas Cahaya Putih*, (5) *Cinta Buta*, (6) *Catatan Hati Mahasiswa*, (7) *Bidadari Pilihan Ibu*, (8) *Suamiku Penyemangatku*, (9) *Kutunggu Engkau di Baitullah*, (10) *Heart To Me*, (11) *Utang Cinta*, (12) *Berlindung di Ketiak Istri*, (13) *Husnul Khotimah*, *Impianku*, (14) *Menyulam Air Mata*, and (15) *Cahaya Kata*. These fifteen stories guide readers on an emotional journey through diverse life experiences that are deeply engaging and inspirational, as the life portrayals crafted by the author serve as reflections of human existence.

The anthology *Heart To Me* was written by a lecturer in the Indonesian Language Education Program, Faculty of Tarbiyah and Teacher Training, at Abdul Muthalib Sangadji State Islamic University (UIN) Ambon. The author was born in Saparua on August 3, 1991. In addition to her role as an educator, she is actively involved in literacy initiatives and has published the solo work *Heart To Me* through Omera Pustaka. She was awarded second place in a national poetry writing competition organized by STKIP Al-Hikmah in 2019 and received the Diligent Writer award in 2020 at an international poetry competition organized by the Center for Competitions and Arts. Her works have appeared in various anthologies, including *Sio Ina* (2020) with the Ambon branch of Indonesian Women Writers (WPI), *Sio Baba* with the Maluku branch of the Indonesian Writers Forum (FLP), *Literacy Class Anthology of Language and Literature* organized by the Maluku Language Office in 2022, and *Poetry of Longing* organized by @IkutLomba. She is also actively involved in literary organizations such as Indonesian Women Writers (WPI) Ambon Branch, the Maluku regional board of the Indonesian Writers Forum (FLP) since 2025, Rumah Produktif Indonesia (RPI) Maluku, and the Young Indonesian Online Poetry Community.

Based on the background and biographical information of the author of *Heart To Me*, the study entitled "Literature as a Medium of Moral Education: An Analysis of Educational Values in the Short Story Anthology *Heart To Me* by Wa Mirna" is highly significant and merits in-depth investigation. This study is important for four primary reasons: (1) the anthology employs simple and accessible language; (2) it presents a wide range of moral educational values that readers can directly experience; (3) each short story incorporates multiple settings, enabling readers to explore diverse narrative contexts; and (4) the anthology contributes meaningfully to literature instruction in schools. Furthermore, this study is expected to reaffirm that literature serves as a vital instrument in shaping ethical and empathetic individuals through a humanistic and reflective approach.

2. Methods

2.1 Type of Research

This study employed a qualitative research method with a descriptive approach. Qualitative research aims to understand phenomena experienced by research subjects—such as behavior, perceptions, motivations, actions, and other social phenomena—holistically. Data in qualitative research are presented descriptively in the form of words and language within their natural context by utilizing various naturalistic methods (Tohirin, 2012).

In line with this view, Moleong (2016) states that qualitative research is a research procedure that produces descriptive data in the form of written or spoken words from individuals and observable behaviors. Accordingly, this study adopts a descriptive qualitative design, as it seeks to describe and interpret the object of study in depth through a literature-based analysis.

2.2 Time and Study Site

This study was conducted flexibly according to research needs, as it primarily employed a literature review method. Therefore, the research was not confined to a specific field location but was carried out through the identification and examination of various relevant written sources, including books, academic journals, and online resources related to the research focus.

2.3 Types and Sources of Data

The data used in this study consisted of primary and secondary data.

1. Primary data refer to the main data serving as the object of analysis. These data were obtained directly from the primary sources examined in accordance with the research focus (Sugiyono, 2018).
2. Secondary data functioned as supporting data used to reinforce and complement the primary data. Secondary data were obtained from various written sources, such as books, journal articles, and relevant online materials. Moleong (2016) explains that secondary data are employed to support the examination and interpretation of primary data in a more comprehensive manner.

2.4 Data Collection Techniques

Data collection techniques in this study included library research, reading techniques, and note-taking techniques.

- Library research was conducted by reviewing relevant literature, including literary theory books, journal articles, and other scholarly sources related to the research focus.
- Reading techniques involved carefully reading all relevant data sources.
- Note-taking techniques were used to record important data related to the object of study for subsequent analysis.

These techniques were applied systematically to obtain accurate and relevant data.

2.5 Data Analysis Techniques

Data analysis in this study employed a pragmatic approach. The pragmatic approach in literary studies emphasizes the role of the reader in receiving, understanding, and interpreting literary works. This approach views literary texts as a medium for conveying specific purposes to readers, such as educational, moral, religious, or other objectives (Syahfitri, 2018).

In addition, data validity in this qualitative study was ensured through data triangulation techniques. According to Lincoln and Guba, as cited in Wijaya (2018), reality in qualitative research is multiple and dynamic; therefore, data verification is necessary to ensure credibility. Sugiyono (2018) explains that triangulation is a data collection technique that combines multiple existing sources and methods. Accordingly, this study applied:

- source triangulation,
- technique triangulation, and
- time triangulation

to ensure the validity and credibility of the research findings.

3. Results and discussion

3.1 Results

3.1.1 Moral Educational Values in the Short Story Collection *Heart To Me* by Wa Mirna

According to Wicaksono (2017, p. 329), educational values are categorized into several types, namely religious values, moral values, social values, and cultural values. However, the present study focuses exclusively on moral educational values in order to examine notions of good and bad behavior as exemplars for readers' moral maturation. Furthermore, Wicaksono (2017, p. 326) emphasizes that educational values are closely related to literary works. Accordingly, this study employs a literary text—specifically the short story anthology *Heart To Me* by Wa Mirna—as its object of analysis to identify moral educational values as representations of human behavior.

Wicaksono defines moral values as all principles related to teachings of good and bad concerning human actions, attitudes, and character. Morality is commonly used to refer to patterns of behavior and customs of individuals or groups. Moral values encompass elements considered essential and

beneficial for humans in shaping attitudes, ethics, and virtuous character. Thus, moral values articulate behaviors that are praised or condemned, life choices that are upheld or avoided, and principles that are highly esteemed. Moral values are also closely related to ethical norms, standards of decency, and appropriate conduct in social interaction.

Based on the analysis of the short story anthology *Heart To Me*, and referring to Wicaksono's conceptualization of moral values, the moral educational values embedded in the anthology can be identified as described below.

Data 1

"My mother had called me to return home. As usual, it was my obligatory duty. She often asked me to massage her back every night before I went to sleep." (Wa Mirna, 2020, p. 2)

Data 2

"Mom... why do you always ask me to massage you? Dita is still here. She can also replace me," I complained while massaging her back (Wa Mirna, 2020, p. 3)

Moral values include devotion to one's parents. Data 1 and 2, taken from the short story *Obor Pattimura*, illustrate how a young boy named Nena feels responsible for fulfilling his duty every night by massaging his mother's back before going to sleep. Filial piety is thus reflected as a core moral educational value.

Data 3

"My father is a calm figure, broad-minded, and slightly stubborn. However, he does all of that for the well-being of his children." (Wa Mirna, 2020, p. 14)

Data 4

"My father is a very diligent, responsible, and hardworking man." (Wa Mirna, 2020, p. 14)

Data 3 and 4 reveal the moral value of responsibility embodied by a father who serves as a husband, role model, motivator, and source of inspiration for his children. His commitment to ensuring his children's education reflects a belief that education leads to a better future.

Data 5

"This journey taught me many things, one of which is that we must remain resilient and optimistic in hardship, even when challenges drain our energy and emotions." (Wa Mirna, 2020, p. 27)

Data 6

"I immediately asked Kasim to cut a few more rattan roots so that I could store the water in my empty drinking bottle." (Wa Mirna, 2020, p. 27)

Data 5 and 6 illustrate moral values related to togetherness and friendship. The mutual understanding and willingness to share among Dhea, Kasim, and Balgis demonstrate sincere adolescent friendship, characterized by mutual care and protection during their long journey through the forest.

Data 7

"For me, cleaning the house is part of faith." (Wa Mirna, 2020, p. 38)

Data 8

"Brother, I know you are very diligent, but don't overdo it. This is my task. Please rest at the dining table," said the youngest sibling. "But since childhood, I have been accustomed to household chores." (Wa Mirna, 2020, p. 38)

Data 7 and 8 from the short story *Seberkas Cahaya Putih* convey moral values related to ethics. Ethics, as moral philosophy, concerns the study of good and bad human actions in the pursuit of

happiness. Ethical conduct arises from thought and feeling. The character's diligence, humility, enthusiasm, and frugality serve as exemplary ethical behavior that can be emulated in real life.

Data 9

"Ah... why should I expect fruit that has not yet ripened?" I muttered. I had hoped for a long conversation, but instead received only a brief reply."
(Wa Mirna, 2020, p. 56)

Data 9 reflects a moral value related to managing expectations. The character's unfulfilled hope to interact with the opposite sex illustrates emotional restraint and maturity in responding to circumstances beyond one's control.

Data 10

"Wait a moment, little sister. Let me carry your belongings onto the ship first, then you can pay me," he replied politely.
(Wa Mirna, 2020, p. 58)

Data 11

"Dear, please pick up my child's pacifier that fell right under your feet," she called. I nodded and handed it back to her."
(Wa Mirna, 2020, p. 61)

Data 10 and 11 demonstrate moral values related to empathy. The narrator's actions reveal an ability to understand others' feelings and show concern for their well-being.

Data 12

"I endured the difficult days with an unyielding spirit. Sweating under the scorching sun did not diminish my determination to mix construction materials."
(Wa Mirna, 2020, p. 71)

Data 13

"If only there had been no COVID-19, my hands would never have touched a shovel, crowbar, or hoe." (Wa Mirna, 2020, p. 71)

Data 12 and 13 from the short story *Catatan Hati Mahasiswa* reflect ethical values such as diligence and perseverance. The character's willingness to work as a construction laborer during the COVID-19 pandemic exemplifies admirable moral conduct for young people.

Data 14

"I had drawn the map of my life together with him, but now he has chosen a different path."
(Wa Mirna, 2020, p. 77)

Data 15

"Ah... what is the point of hoping for a red rose whose thorns have already drawn blood?" I whispered to myself."
(Wa Mirna, 2020, p. 78)

Data 14 and 15 convey ethical values such as honesty, responsibility, and courage in facing emotional hardship. The character's ability to let go of the past and remain steadfast serves as a moral lesson, particularly for young people navigating life, work, and relationships.

Data 16

"I am someone who dislikes being late. If I am late, anxiety always haunts me."
(Wa Mirna, 2020, p. 99)

Data 17

"My husband always believes in my success, no matter what happens. His trust rekindles my spirit to keep striving."

(Wa Mirna, 2020, p. 100)

Data 16 and 17 from the short story *Suamiku Penyemangatku* reflect ethical values related to attentiveness and mutual support within marriage. Such behavior can serve as a model for couples seeking a harmonious and meaningful life.

Data 18

“Enough... stop hitting that cat!” shouted a woman who glared at the children cruelly beating three stray cats.”

(Wa Mirna, 2020, p. 109)

Data 18 illustrates moral values of compassion toward all of God’s creatures. The care shown by Bu Ria toward animals being mistreated reflects empathy and social responsibility that can serve as an example for communal life.

3.2 Discussion

3.2.1 Moral Education Values as a Representation of Parent–Child Relationships

The research findings indicate that the short stories in the anthology *Heart To Me* by Wa Mirna consistently represent moral education values centered on parent–child relationships, particularly within the context of filial devotion to both mother and father. This finding aligns with Wicaksono’s (2017) assertion that moral values in literary works are closely related to representations of human behavior reflecting notions of good and bad within social life. In data excerpts (1) and (2), the character Nena is portrayed as a child who fulfills his responsibility of massaging his mother’s back every night. This seemingly simple activity carries profound moral significance, as it reflects responsibility, care, and respect toward one’s parents. Within the framework of moral education, such an action transcends mere physical routine and becomes a symbolic expression of filial devotion toward parents who have nurtured and raised the child. This reinforces the argument that literature functions as a medium for the internalization of moral values through readers’ emotional engagement (Wicaksono, 2017).

Furthermore, data excerpts (3) and (4) depict the father as a responsible, hardworking figure who serves as a role model for his children. This representation illustrates that moral education in literature does not focus solely on children’s obligations but also emphasizes the role of parents in shaping the character of the next generation. Consequently, literary works serve as reflections of ideal family values that readers may draw upon as references in real-life contexts.

3.2.2 Moral Values in Friendship and Social Solidarity

Moral education values are also strongly manifested in depictions of friendship and social solidarity, as illustrated in data excerpts (5) and (6). The resilience, optimism, and mutual sharing demonstrated by the characters Dhea, Kasim, and Balgis during their journey through the forest suggest that friendship is not merely an emotional bond but also a space for learning moral values such as togetherness, empathy, and sacrifice. These findings reinforce the view that literature possesses the capacity to represent social dynamics in a contextual and humanistic manner. According to Wicaksono (2017), moral values in literary works often emerge through characters’ conflicts and experiences that closely mirror the realities of readers’ lives. In this case, the shared experience of drinking rattan water and protecting one another symbolizes sincere friendship that resonates strongly with adolescent life. The value of togetherness depicted in these short stories can function as a medium for character education, particularly in fostering social awareness and solidarity within increasingly individualistic societies. Thus, literature serves not only as a form of entertainment but also as a vehicle for moral and social reflection.

3.2.3 Ethics, Responsibility, and Independence as Core Moral Values

Ethical values as components of moral education appear prominently in several short stories, particularly in data excerpts (7), (8), (12), and (13). The characters’ diligence, humility, perseverance, and sense of responsibility reflect work ethics and life ethics that are highly relevant to contemporary societal challenges. In data excerpts (7) and (8), household cleaning activities are positioned as expressions of faith and positive living habits. Ethics in this context are not understood merely as normative rules but as habitual practices arising from inner awareness. This perspective aligns with

moral philosophy, which posits that ethics are rooted in the integration of human cognition and emotion when determining right and wrong actions. Furthermore, data excerpts (12) and (13), set during the COVID-19 pandemic, illustrate moral values of resilience and independence. The character's work as a construction laborer demonstrates that adverse circumstances do not prevent individuals from striving honestly and responsibly. This representation strengthens literature's role as a form of contextual moral education, particularly for young generations facing social and economic uncertainty.

3.2.4 Hope, Honesty, and Courage in Confronting Life's Realities

Moral values related to hope and acceptance of life's realities are evident in data excerpts (9), (14), and (15). The characters are confronted with emotional situations that require maturity, such as restraining expectations, accepting separation, and letting go of the past. According to Wicaksono (2017), moral values in literature are often associated with life choices and characters' attitudes in dealing with inner conflicts. In this context, the characters' ability to be honest with themselves and courageous in moving forward reflects essential moral values for readers, particularly adolescents and young adults. Through such emotional conflicts, literature provides reflective spaces that help readers understand that not all hopes can be fulfilled and that moral maturity lies in how individuals respond to failure and loss. Accordingly, the short stories in *Heart To Me* function as affective and reflective moral learning media.

3.2.5 Empathy and Compassion as Foundations of Social Morality

Empathy and compassion as elements of moral education are clearly evident in data excerpts (10), (11), and (18). Simple actions such as helping to carry goods, picking up a child's pacifier, and protecting abused animals illustrate that morality is not always manifested through grand gestures but is often present in everyday acts of care. Data excerpt (18) specifically highlights compassion toward other living beings, thereby expanding the scope of moral values beyond human relationships to include human interactions with the environment and God's creations. This aligns with humanistic moral perspectives that position empathy as the foundation of harmonious social life. By portraying the character Bu Ria protecting stray cats, the author emphasizes the universality and cross-generational nature of moral values. In this regard, literature serves as a medium for cultivating readers' moral sensitivity toward the suffering of other beings.

3.2.6 Implications of the Findings for Literary and Character Education

Overall, the findings of this study reinforce Wicaksono's (2017) assertion that literary works are closely linked to value education, particularly moral education. The short stories in the *Heart To Me* anthology not only present narratives but also convey moral messages that are relevant to readers' lived experiences. These findings have significant implications for literary education. Literature can be utilized as an effective medium for character education because it presents moral values through narratives, characters, and conflicts that resonate with students' life experiences. When applied through appropriate pedagogical approaches, literary instruction can enhance not only students' literary appreciation but also shape their attitudes, ethics, and personal character.

4. Conclusion

Based on the research findings and discussion, it can be concluded that the short story anthology *Heart To Me* by Wa Mirna contains rich, diverse, and socially relevant moral education values. The identified moral values include filial piety toward parents, responsibility, ethics, friendship, empathy, resilience, honesty, courage, and compassion toward fellow human beings as well as other living creatures. These values are represented through characters, conflicts, and events that closely reflect everyday life, making them accessible and easily internalized by readers.

The main findings of this study indicate that literary works, particularly short stories, function not only as sources of entertainment or aesthetic expression but also play a strategic role as media for moral education and character formation. The implications of these findings underscore the importance of utilizing literary works within educational contexts, especially as learning resources capable of instilling ethical and humanistic values in a reflective and contextual manner.

From a theoretical perspective, this study contributes to the enrichment of the existing body of knowledge in literary studies and moral education by reinforcing the view that moral values in literature can be systematically analyzed and interpreted as representations of human behavior.

Furthermore, this research extends the field of applied literary studies by positioning literary works as educational media that are relevant to contemporary social life. For future research, it is recommended that similar studies adopt interdisciplinary approaches, such as examining the relationship between literary moral values and reader responses or their application in classroom-based literary instruction, in order to more comprehensively explore the educational impact of literary works.

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