

NATURE, NATIONALISM, FAITH: MAGELANG CULTURAL IDENTITY THROUGH STUDENTS' LOCAL FOLKTALE-BASED CREATIVE WRITING

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ABSTRAK

Paradigma terbaru dalam pembelajaran *Creative Writing* menyoroti pentingnya integrasi dimensi sosiokultural dalam proses pembelajaran. Integrasi dimensi sosiokultural dapat dilakukan melalui penggunaan cerita rakyat lokal sebagai dasar dalam karya penulisan kreatif mahasiswa. Meskipun banyak penelitian terdahulu telah mengkaji penggunaan cerita rakyat lokal dalam pembelajaran penulisan kreatif, eksplorasi terkait bagaimana identitas budaya direpresentasikan melalui karya penulisan kreatif mahasiswa berbasis cerita rakyat lokal masih terbatas. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengeksplorasi identitas budaya Magelang sebagaimana direpresentasikan dalam karya penulisan kreatif mahasiswa yang diadaptasi dari cerita rakyat lokal Magelang. Penelitian ini menggunakan desain penelitian kualitatif dengan pendekatan analisis konten kualitatif untuk mengkaji representasi identitas budaya Magelang dalam cerita pendek mahasiswa yang berbasis cerita rakyat lokal. Melalui analisis 18 karya penulisan kreatif mahasiswa, hasil penelitian ini mengungkapkan tiga pola naratif dominan yang merepresentasikan identitas budaya Magelang, meliputi: narasi tentang alam, narasi tentang nasionalisme, dan narasi tentang agama. Narasi alam memandang bahwa alam sebagai tempat suci: sumber kehidupan dalam pandangan dunia masyarakat Magelang. Narasi nasionalisme menunjukkan bahwa Magelang kaya akan nilai-nilai sejarah dan nasionalisme sebagai identitas budaya dan sosial. Narasi agama menunjukkan bahwa iman dan agama merupakan salah satu nilai utama dalam identitas budaya Magelang. Melalui temuan tersebut, dapat disimpulkan bahwa penulisan kreatif mahasiswa tidak hanya berfungsi sebagai ekspresi sastra, tetapi juga sebagai media untuk melestarikan dan menegaskan kembali identitas budaya Magelang.
Kata kunci: Penulisan Kreatif, Identitas Budaya, Cerita Rakyat Lokal

ABSTRACT

The latest *Creative Writing* learning paradigm highlights the importance of the integration of sociocultural dimensions in the *Creative Writing* learning process. The integration of sociocultural dimensions can be conducted through the use of local folktales as the base in students' *Creative Writing* works. Although previous studies have examined the use of local folktales in *Creative Writing*, limited attention has been given to how cultural identities are represented through students' *Creative Writing* based on local folktales. This study aims to investigate the cultural identity of Magelang as represented in students' *Creative Writing* works adapted from Magelang local folktales. This study employed a qualitative research design with qualitative content analysis to investigate the representation of Magelang cultural identity in students' local

folktale-based Creative Writing short stories. Through the analysis of 18 students' Creative Writing works, the findings of this study reveal three dominant narrative patterns that represent Magelang's cultural identity, including: narratives of nature, narratives of nationalism, and narratives of faith. Narratives of nature highlight that nature is seen as a sacred site: a source of life in Magelang society's worldview. Narratives of nationalism show that Magelang is rich with historical values and nationalism as its cultural and societal identity. Narratives of faith show that faith and religion are one of the core values in building Magelang cultural identity. It can be concluded that the students' Creative Writing serves not only as a literary expression, but also as a medium of preserving and reaffirming Magelang cultural identity.

Keywords: Creative Writing, Cultural Identity, Local Folktales

INTRODUCTION

Creative Writing learning has undergone significant development and paradigm shifts over the past few decades. According to Pardede (2025), at the end of the 20th century the paradigm of Creative Writing focused on the use of texts, media, games, and engaging learning activities to design interactive Creative Writing in the classroom. In the early 21st century, the paradigm shifted toward students' affective aspects, such as learning anxiety, learning attitude, and students' motivation in Creative Writing. More recently, the latest trend in Creative Writing has emphasized sociocultural dimensions in Creative Writing learning (Pardede, 2025).

Sociocultural dimensions refer to the social and cultural aspects that influence individuals in the process of language learning. Byrd (2011), as cited in Tomak (2022), classifies social and cultural aspects into three categories: (1) cultural products, which focus on cultural products such as literature, art, crafts, songs, and dances; (2) cultural practices, which focus on cultural practices and activities; and (3) cultural perspectives, which include ideas, values, beliefs, and attitudes. Therefore, the latest paradigm of Creative Writing emphasizes how these social and cultural dimensions are integrated into the learning process, including learning activities, learning materials and media, as well as the outputs of Creative Writing.

The integration of social, cultural, and local wisdom aspects into Creative Writing holds significant potential for fostering students' cultural awareness, shaping their cultural identity, and promoting meaningful learning experiences. Damayanti et al. (2024) argue that the integration of local wisdom into Creative Writing is essential for strengthening students' understanding of social values, cultural heritage, and local traditions. Furthermore, literary works such as short stories, as outputs of Creative Writing, can serve as meaningful spaces for exploring and representing students' cultural

identity. Resti & Wibowo (2024) also highlight that the implementation of Creative Writing learning through creative and collaborative approaches can foster meaningful learning experiences for students.

To strengthen the aspects of social, cultural, and local wisdom dimensions, the outputs of Creative Writing learning can be oriented toward the creation of literary works such as short stories based on local folktales. Yakumbu et al. (2025) emphasizes that the use of folktales in Creative Writing can contribute positively to the development of students' writing skills. Folktales can also play a significant role in enhancing students' cultural understanding, fostering the internalization of valuable life lessons, strengthening students' sense of social responsibility, as well as supporting students' emotional and cognitive development (Jannah & Lebagi, 2025). Furthermore, the integration of folktale writing into Creative Writing practices may serve as an important medium for preserving and sustaining cultural heritage (Raza, 2025). To summarize, folktales can be used as pedagogical resources in enriching students' experience in Creative Writing as well as strengthening their local and cultural understanding.

Magelang is rich with local wisdom and folktales shaped by its geographical conditions, sociological situations, and historical heritages. Zayim in Dias (2024) argues that geographical conditions, including its landscape of nature, can influence people's culture: their ways of thinking and their patterns of living. Furthermore, the sociological conditions of society, reflected by social relationships and interactions, also represent the culture of the society (Setianingsih, 2024). In addition, Magelang is also rich by its historical heritage, reflected in the story of some archaeological sites located in Magelang such as Borobudur Temple, Mendut temple, etc; the story of Prince Diponegoro's struggle in Magelang; and some stories of resistance against Dutch colonialism in Magelang area. These cultural, social, and historical values are represented in the folktales that continue to live within the community and are passed down across generations.

Nevertheless, although the latest trend in Creative Writing learning emphasizes the importance of sociocultural dimensions in Creative Writing, recent studies on Creative Writing remain focused predominantly on how Creative Writing learning can improve students' linguistic aspects and writing skills. This can be seen in the studies conducted by Prabowo & Asmarani (2025), as well as Nugraheni & Priyatmojo (2025),

which explored how technological aspects such as Artificial Intelligence (AI) and social media platforms, particularly Instagram, influence students' Creative Writing process and the development of students' writing skills. Likewise, current studies related to folktales have largely concentrated on the use of folktales as learning materials or learning media in EFL settings. This can be seen in the studies conducted by Nafi'ah et al. (2026), Wahyuni et al. (2026), and Sulistinayanti et al (2025), which explored the use of folktales in developing students' worksheets, reading materials, and digital learning media in EFL settings. There remains limited research that specifically examines the outputs of students' Creative Writing work from the perspectives of literary representation and cultural identity formation.

This study aims to address the research gap outlined above by exploring how the outputs of Creative Writing learning in higher education, particularly students' short stories based on Magelang local folktales, represent the cultural identity of Magelang. The Creative Writing learning process was supported with students' field research activities, in which they interviewed local informants to obtain primary data related to Magelang local folktales. Utilizing the primary data collected from local informants, the students then produced Creative Writing works in the form of short stories. Furthermore, the students' Creative Writing short stories are examined in this study using the Qualitative Content Analysis method, with a specific focus on identifying dominant narrative patterns represented in the students' local folktales-based short stories. This study tries to give a contribution in enriching discussion on sociocultural perspective in Creative Writing and EFL learning through the analysis of students' Creative Writing works as the representation of cultural identity, as well as supporting and promoting the preservation of Magelang local culture.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employed a qualitative research design with qualitative content analysis to investigate the representation of Magelang cultural identity in students' local folktale-based Creative Writing short stories. Qualitative content analysis is a research method used to interpret and systematically analyze textual, visual, or audio data by identifying patterns, themes, or meanings (Creswell, 2012). Some procedures in qualitative content

analysis include: (1) data collection, (2) familiarization, (3) coding, (4), categorization, and (5) interpretation.

The data sources in this study were 10 students' Creative Writing works in the form of short stories based on Magelang local folktales. Participants in this study were selected purposively, specifically students whose Creative Writing works strongly narrated Magelang local folktales, including the narrative of nature, the narrative of nationalism, and the narrative of faith. The primary data consisted of words, phrases, sentences, paragraphs, dialogues, and other intrinsic elements of short stories written by students that reflected Magelang cultural identity. The secondary data were books, journal articles, and theories discussing sociocultural theory, Creative Writing studies, and Magelang cultural identity.

The data were collected through document analysis of students' short stories. The researcher read the short stories repeatedly to gain a comprehensive understanding of Magelang cultural identity narrated in the short stories. Subsequently, the researcher applied the steps in qualitative content analysis method, including familiarization, coding, categorization, and interpretation related to Magelang cultural identity towards the data.

The data were analyzed using the Miles et al. (2014) model, which consisted of data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. In addition, theoretical triangulation was employed by interpreting the findings through several related perspectives, including sociocultural theory, Creative Writing studies, and Magelang cultural identity. These triangulation processes helped strengthen the credibility and trustworthiness of this study.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Result

This section presents the findings concerning Magelang's cultural identity as represented in students' Creative Writing works. The findings reveal three dominant narrative patterns that reflect the cultural identity of Magelang, namely: (1) narratives of nature, (2) narratives of nationalism, and (3) narratives of faith. These recurring themes demonstrate how students construct and articulate their understanding of local cultural identity through Creative Writing works. A categorization of these dominant narrative patterns is presented in the table below:

Table 1. Categorization of Dominant Narrative Patterns

Narratives of Nature	Narratives of Nationalism	Narratives of Faith
Backstory of the Magic Puddle	From Hills to History: The Saga of Menoreh and Pangeran Diponegoro	The Legacy of Service: The Legend of Santren Mosque
The Legend of Giripurno Village	Walking Through History in Kampung Tulung	The Journey of a Noble Prince
The Legend of Sumur Wali	The Story of Magelang’s Young Brave Fighters	The Story of Retno Temple
The Legend of Susukan Village	Traces of Wanurejo’s Struggle	The Hidden Story of Mendut Temple
The Legend of Tuk Gong	From Hills to History: The Saga of Menoreh and Pangeran Diponegoro	The Trasan Saga: The Mystical Tale of Masjid Tiban
Unlocking the Forgotten Story of Das Gending		Bukit Rhema House of Prayer: From Dream to Icon of Tolerance
		The Sacred Shield of Nambangan

Narratives of Nature: Nature as the Sacred Entity

Narratives of nature are represented in six student short stories entitled: (1) *Backstory of the Magic Puddle*, (2) *The Legend of Giripurno Village*, (3) *The Legend of Sumur Wali*, (4) *The Legend of Susukan Village*, (5) *The Legend of Tuk Gong*, and (6) *Unlocking the Forgotten Story of Das Gending*. The six short stories share a similar narrative pattern, in which water-related elements—such as rivers, springs, and rainfall serve as the central focus of the narratives. Within these stories, water is imagined as the source of life, around which community life is organized and sustained. Rivers, springs, and rain are portrayed not merely as natural resources but as sacred entities that should be respected by people, as well as containing magical elements. The narratives emphasize the importance of maintaining a harmonious relationship with nature, represented through the water elements, and highlight the community’s responsibility to preserve and protect the natural environment. This perspective is reflected in the following quotation:

Table 2. Representation of the Narratives of Nature

Short Story	Quotation
Backstory of the Magic Puddle	When he looked closely, he saw steam coming out of the water and decided to enter the puddle. Mr. Jarwo felt the warmth of the water around him, but at the same time, a strange sensation arose that could not be explained. His heart beat faster, not because of fear, but because of his increasing curiosity. He felt the bottom of the puddle with his feet and realized there was something hard under the mud "what's in here?" he said. With both hands, he tried to dig deeper, to find out what was hidden there. Suddenly big bubbles appeared, followed by a rumbling sound that echoed from the ground. Mr. Jarwo gasped, immediately took a few steps back, his eyes widened seeing the

	water that suddenly changed color to a darker color, as if mixed with minerals or other substances from below the surface.
The Legend of Giripurno Village	Then he approached the spot, and prayed "O Allah. Help me in my journey, you are the helper, so help me to find a source of water to help this man, he is very tired and thirsty, he is badly injured, so allow me to help him O Allah." Then he dug into the spot with confidence, and suddenly a great deal of water came out of the ground at that spot. There was so much water that there was no end to it. Sunan Kalijaga's heart at that time was very happy, "Alhamdulillah Ya Allah, thank you, I believe that you will not let your servant have difficulties, thank you Ya Allah," said Sunan Kalijaga gratefully while shouting and unable to hold back his tears of emotion for the blessings he received.
The Legend of Sumur Wali	After the incident, the cleric explained to all the residents that the miracle came from the power of Allah SWT and he was just an intermediary. The people who heard this felt touched because it turned out that the power of Allah was indeed true. After the incident, the majority of residents began to believe in Islam and then began to embrace it. The spring was used by residents as a source of life and built into a well dubbed 'Sumur Wali' because of the 9 springs that appeared in the well like the number of members of the Walisongo who numbered 9 people.
The Legend of Susukan Village	Meanwhile, heavy rain had started pouring down. The villagers shut their doors tightly and pretended not to hear Mr. Jakti's desperate cries. They all had a bad feeling. The rain grew stronger. The small river near the village overflowed, flooding many homes. Seeing the danger, Prince Pasuruan quickly ordered everyone to evacuate south, to higher ground. Mr. Jakti and his family were trapped inside their big house.
The Legend of Tuk Gong	Maybe, the answer to their prayers and will, a miracle was coming. At the south of the village, the land was barren until it cracked, the big spring appeared with sparkling water. The news of the spring soon spread across the village. Cannot be denied, if the villagers were very hopeful and grateful for this situation. The spring appeared as water was flowing at the small river and provided a source of livelihood for villagers.
Unlocking the Forgotten Story of Das Gending.	"The water here is so clean, sir," Basuki remarked. "Yes, that's because the water here hasn't been polluted with waste. It's called 'Das,' meaning 'head,' as it refers to the river's origin or source. See that spot where the water looks like it's boiling? That's called the 'thok,' the underground spring where water flows to the surface and forms the river. And 'Gending' means 'river.' Combined, the name Das Gending refers to the river's head or starting point," explained Kyai, sharing the meaning behind the river's name.

The findings reveal that nature is frequently represented as a sacred entity within the students' Creative Writing works. Springs, rivers, rain, and other natural elements are portrayed not only as physical resources, but also as manifestations of magical power, blessings, and miracles. It suggests that Magelang society views nature with great respect,

a perspective shaped by past experiences and maintained in the present day. These representations reflect a cultural worldview in which the natural environment is deeply connected to social, cultural, and religious values of Magelang society.

Narratives of Nationalism: The Representation of History and National Identity

Narratives of nationalism are represented in five student short stories entitled: (1) *From Hills to History: The Saga of Menoreh and Pangeran Diponegoro*, (2) *Walking Through History in Kampung Tulung*, (3) *The Story of Magelang’s Young Brave Fighters*, (4) *Traces of Wanurejo’s Struggle*, and (5) *The Final Days of General Sudirman in Magelang*.

The five short stories narrate the history, the value of nationalism, and the struggle for independence against colonialism, all situated within the Magelang setting. These narratives draw extensively upon the portrayal of national heroes, including Prince Diponegoro and General Soedirman, as well as local figures, namely Prapto Ketjik, who participated in struggle and resistance against colonialism. In addition, one of the stories is adapted from an incident that took place in Kampung Tulung, a local place in Magelang that became the site of a battle to defend Indonesian independence against Dutch colonialism. This perspective is reflected in the following quotation:

Table 3. Representation of the Narratives of Nationalism

Short Story	Quotation
From Hills to History: The Saga of Menoreh and Pangeran Diponegoro	Pangeran Diponegoro and his troops' well-planned guerrilla tactics paid off, despite the Dutch forces' unexpected invasion and the ensuing bloody conflict. Pangeran Diponegoro and his troops were able to defeat the Dutch forces and win the war by using the guerrilla tactics that were typical of him. The Dutch forces eventually left the village of Menoreh.
Walking Through History in Kampung Tulung	The attack on Kampung Tulung left deep scars. The battlefield, once filled with chaos, fear, and confusion, turned into a place of grief and sorrow. Many fell victim to the war, both from the BKR side and among the youth fighters who bravely sought to defend their homeland. Some were wounded and others lost their lives. The surviving fighters bore not only physical but also emotional exhaustion. Although the fighting had subsided, a sense of fear and vigilance remained palpable. Memories of that tragic event are etched in the minds of the people of Kampung Tulung, worthy of remembrance as a proud tale of struggle.
The Story of Magelang’s Young Brave Fighters	All the residents of Magelang, whether young or old, man or woman, we have never received very good news like this before...that is—General Nakamura has been shot by our fighters. Or at least that was what has been circulating everywhere. It doesn’t matter though. Keep fighting, Magelang!

Traces of Wanurejo's Struggle	However, the peace was disturbed when news of the Javanese war led by Prince Diponegoro reached the far corners of the village. The atmosphere became completely changed, the whispers of anxiety and the anxious faces of the people, very chaotic for that peaceful region. The prince's followers followed up with this, "Prince will we remain silent? Or should we fight for this land?" asked Benawi Surakertika in a subtle but firm tone. Prince Tejo Kusumo was silent, then replied with firmness, " We are not staying silent. We will be joined by my brother, Diponegoro. This land must not be touched by invaders." That decisive decision marked the beginning of the great struggle of Tejo Kusumo.
The Final Days of General Sudirman in Magelang	On January 29, 1950, in the quiet town of Magelang, General Sudirman finally lost his final battle. The room fell into deep silence, replacing the tension that had once filled the air. Those who stood beside him could only bow their heads, realizing that the nation had lost not only a commander, but a symbol of unwavering courage.

The findings indicate that nationalism emerges as one of the dominant narrative themes in the students' Creative Writing works. It also serves as an important dimension of Magelang's cultural identity. Through short stories centered on historical struggles, resistance against colonialism, and the sacrifices of national and local heroes, the students reconstruct collective memories that connect local experiences with the broader narrative of Indonesian independence. The representation of figures such as Prince Diponegoro, General Soedirman, and local freedom fighters such as Prapto Ketjik reflects a strong portrayal of courage and patriotism to the nation. Furthermore, the portrayal of specific places in Magelang, including Menoreh Hill, Kampung Tulung, and Wanurejo Village demonstrates how local landscapes function not only as physical settings, but also as sites of historical memory and consciousness. These narratives suggest that nationalism is deeply rooted in the cultural memory of Magelang.

Narratives of Faith: The Spirit of Plurality and Tolerance

Narratives of faith are represented in seven student short stories entitled: (1) *The Legacy of Service: The Legend of Santren Mosque*, (2) *The Journey of a Noble Prince*, (3) *Retno Temple*, (4) *The Hidden Story of Mendut Temple*, (5) *The Trasan Saga: The Mystical Tale of Masjid Tiban*, (6) *Bukit Rhema House of Prayer: From Dream to Icon of Tolerance*, and (7) *The Sacred Shield of Nambangan*.

The seven short stories illustrate the presence of religious and spiritual dimensions within the social and cultural life of the Magelang society. The narratives demonstrate the influence of Hindu-Buddhist, Islamic, and Christian traditions on Magelang social and cultural life, as reflected through the representation of sacred sites and places of worship, including temples, mosques, and churches. These stories also highlight the plurality of religious life in Magelang, portraying the coexistence of diverse faith traditions as an integral aspect of Magelang cultural identity. It indicates a strong tolerance aspect within Magelang society. This perspective is represented in the following quotation:

Table 4. Representation of the Narratives of Faith

Short Story	Quotation
The Legacy of Service: The Legend of Santren Mosque	During this process, a story emerged that became a legend: the mosque they built was said to have originated from Kotagede and was “moved” by Kiai using a “kacu.” This widely circulated story left the community in awe. “Kacu,” he said gently, “can mean ‘sarwo kacukupan,’ which means that everything needed is provided by God.” This explanation made the community smile and realize that what matters most is not miracles but faith and unity.
The Journey of a Noble Prince	After choosing the decision to leave the royal life and choose to preach, he began his preaching from Wonosobo, then he traveled west to reach the Malay Peninsula which is now Malaysia, then continued to Brunei. He also continued his preaching to East Java and Central Java. After years of spreading his preaching, he chose to settle in Gunungpring, one of the areas in Magelang. He built a small and simple surau in the village of Kolokendang which he used as a place of worship and a place to share knowledge.
The Story of Retno Temple	Weru finally led the king to meet with Satan and cured the influence of the holy water. Satan refused to give the cure without a sacrifice. The fierce battle between the King and Weru against Satan ended in the defeat of Satan who was locked up by the King in the temple made by Weru. The King finally cured his wife and gave permission for Weru and Retno to marry and the temple to confine Satan was named Candi Retno to thank the king for returning his wife.
The Hidden Story of Mendut Temple	At the end of the passage, they reached a small, dimly lit chamber. Inside, a stunning golden chest sat atop a stone pedestal, surrounded by carvings of celestial beings. Opening the chest, they found a statue of the Buddha, radiating an aura of tranquillity. The statue was unlike any other—it seemed to glow faintly, and its peaceful expression evoked deep emotions.
The Trasan Saga: The Mystical Tale of Masjid Tiban	After the mosque was given to the followers, the genie followers decided to move the mosque to a more strategic and safe place for spreading Islam. They lifted the mosque by Allah’s permission up to several hundred meters from its original location, moving it to the planned spot. Then, a bedug was sounded to inform the human that the mosque had been moved to a better place. From then on, the locals named the mosque

	Masjid Tiban and it became an even bigger Islam spreading center in the new place.
Bukit Rhema House of Prayer: From Dream to Icon of Tolerance	Today, the Rhema Hill House of Prayer stands majestically as a testament to the power of faith, the importance of understanding, and the beauty of reconciliation. The seven-story building now welcomes visitors from all walks of life, offering spaces for prayer, meditation, and reflection. With beautiful ornaments and symbolic details adorning every corner, the Chicken Church invites everyone to explore and reflect on the meaning of life. What was once a source of conflict has now become a symbol of tolerance and acceptance-fulfilling Daniel Alamsyah's original vision of a place where all people can find common ground in their quest for spirituality and inner peace.
The Sacred Shield of Nambangan	When morning came, the villagers gathered at the Nambangan Site and found the yoni intact. They realized the magnitude of Ki Tambang Yudha's devotion and the depth of his sacrifice. Since that day, they have honored his legacy by performing rituals at the yoni, believing that his spirit watches over them, protecting the village from harm.

The findings indicate that faith emerges as one of the dominant narrative themes in the students' Creative Writing works and functions as an integral component of Magelang's cultural identity. Throughout the six short stories, religious values are expressed through depictions of prayer, divine assistance, gratitude, miraculous events, revered Islamic figures, sacred sites, and the belief that nature's resources are manifestations of God's blessings. These narratives suggest that religious beliefs are closely related with local history, folklore, and collective memory, influencing how communities interpret both natural occurrences and everyday social realities. Furthermore, the stories portray a strong connection between spirituality and the natural environment, where springs, rivers, and other natural landscapes are understood not only as physical resources but also as places imbued with spiritual significance. In this context, the representation of faith reflects the religious values within Magelang society. Religion also has a role in shaping cultural life, in which local identity, people's worldview, and communal traditions are maintained and passed on through generations.

Discussion

Based on the findings presented above, narratives of nature, nationalism, and faith emerge as the dominant narrative patterns in the students' Creative Writing works. Considering that these short stories were developed from local folktales that have long circulated and

been preserved within the Magelang society, it can be interpreted that such narratives also serve as representations of Magelang's cultural identity.

Narratives of nature are represented in six student short stories based on Magelang local folktales. This finding suggests that nature is integral within the cultural life of Magelang society. Nature is represented not only as a physical environment, but also as a central element that gives meaning to human existence. Among the various natural elements, water emerges as a very significant element, reflected in the frequent representation of rivers, springs, and rainfall as core components of the narratives. The elements of water are often imagined as sacred or having magical power, and are portrayed as a blessing or other signs of God's existence.

An ecocritical perspective can also be employed to understand the narratives of nature as a dominant narrative pattern in students' Creative Writing based on Magelang local folktales. Ecocriticism examines how literature represents nature and, more importantly, explores the relationships between humans and the natural environment (Wajid, 2025). In those students' short stories, narratives of nature function not only as narrative elements, but also as a warning and a reminder to encourage harmonious coexistence with nature, environmental conservation, and the avoidance of actions that may harm the natural world. This is reflected in recurring depictions of heavy rainfall or natural disasters that emerge when humans begin to exploit or damage nature. Considering that these short stories are adapted from Magelang local folktales, it can be interpreted that the folktales themselves serve as medium for transmitting moral values and collective worldview. In this context, they communicate messages and values about the importance of protecting, respecting, and conserving nature as an essential part of Magelang cultural life (Gabriel et al., 2019).

Furthermore, the narratives of nationalism also emerge as one of the dominant narrative patterns in the students' Creative Writing works. This finding suggests that Magelang is rich with historical values and a strong sense of national identity, which also become an integral component of its cultural identity. The narratives of nationalism are strongly represented in the portrayal of national figures such as Prince Diponegoro and General Sudirman, whose historical struggles are closely associated with Magelang. Alongside these national narratives, the stories also highlight more local narratives of

nationalism through the portrayal of Prapto Ketjik, a student from Magelang who participated in the struggle against colonialism, and Kampung Tulung, which is portrayed as a site of battlefield in the defense of Indonesian independence.

These findings further demonstrate the role of literature as a medium of collective memory. Erll & Rigney (2006) argue that literature functions as a repository of collective memory by preserving past events, experiences, and historical recollections in the form of narrative stories. In the context of this study, Magelang's collective memories—embodied in stories of Prince Diponegoro, General Sudirman, Prapto Ketjik, and Kampung Tulung—have been preserved through local folktales and subsequently rearticulated by students in the form of creative short stories. This process illustrates how cultural memories are transmitted across generations, allowing the value of history and nationalism remain relevant within the modern contexts. Furthermore, it can be interpreted that the preservation of these collective memories reflects the society's effort to strengthen its regional identity. By conserving the narratives of nationalism, Magelang society reaffirm their cultural identity as a community deeply rooted in historical values and nationalism.

Lastly, narratives of faith also emerge as one of the dominant themes in the students' Creative Writing works. This finding suggests that faith occupies a central position within the cultural life of Magelang society and serves as one of the main values that shape local identity. Kamraju (2025) argues that faith and religion play a crucial role in the development of societies, influencing various dimensions of life, including social relations, cultural practices, political structures, moral values, and social norms. In the students' Creative Writing works, elements of faith are represented through the narrative of religious symbols and sacred sites, including temples such as Mendut Temple and Retno Temple, mosques such as Santren Mosque and Tiban Mosque, and churches such as Bukit Rhema. In addition, the stories also portray religious figures, namely Raden Santri, whose contributions significantly influenced the development of the local community in the past and whose legacy continues to shape cultural life in the present. These representations illustrate how faith and religious values remain deeply rooted within the cultural identity of Magelang society.

The emergence of faith as dominant narratives in the students' Creative Writing works also highlights the role of literature as a medium of cultural preservation. Kobis et al. (2025) argue that folktales play a significant role in preserving cultural values and traditions, as a part of world literature. In the context of this study, the values of faith have been internalized and preserved through the students' short stories. This finding suggests that faith remains a dominant component of Magelang's cultural identity and continues to shape the community's collective worldview. Furthermore, the plurality of religious narratives represented in the students' Creative Writing also reflects the historical development of diverse religious traditions in Indonesia. It indicates that local folktales have become a medium where various faith traditions are remembered, respected, and transmitted across generations. This is further supported by the contemporary social life of modern Magelang, where interreligious tolerance continues to be maintained. The values of mutual respect, equality, and tolerance remain highly regarded within the society, and these values are reflected in local folktales that consistently portray faith as a respected and meaningful aspect of human life. Thus, the narratives of faith found in the students' Creative Writing not only preserve religious traditions, but also reaffirm the cultural values of tolerance and harmony that shape Magelang society.

CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATION

Conclusion

Based on the analysis presented above, it can be concluded that the students' Creative Writing works in the form of short stories reveal three dominant narrative patterns that can be interpreted as representations of Magelang cultural identity: narratives of nature, narratives of nationalism, and narratives of faith. Narratives of nature appear in six student short stories, portraying natural elements such as rivers, springs, and rainfall as sources of life that are regarded as sacred and worthy of respect within the community. Narratives of nationalism are represented in five short stories, highlighting patriotic figures such as Prince Diponegoro, General Sudirman, and Prapto Ketjik, as well as historical events such as the battle of Kampung Tulung, which collectively reflect the historical consciousness and nationalist values embedded in Magelang society. Meanwhile, narratives of faith emerge in seven short stories, depicting religious sites, including

temples, mosques, and churches, as representations of the religious values that continue to shape the social and cultural life of Magelang society.

Through these students' Creative Writing works, which are adapted from Magelang local folktales, it can be inferred that nature, nationalism, and faith become the strong dimensions of Magelang cultural identity. These values are not merely remnants of the past. Rather, they continue to live and evolve within modern society through local folktales and collective memories that are transmitted from one generation to the next. As such, the students' Creative Writing serves not only as a literary expression, but also as a means of preserving and reaffirming the cultural identity of Magelang across generations.

Implication

Further research on creative writing, local folktales, and cultural preservation remains necessary to be conducted to deepen the understanding among these fields. Based on the findings of this study, several potential studies can be identified. First, future studies may explore Creative Writing pedagogy through interdisciplinary approaches. Second, future studies related to local folktales can be conducted using some theoretical approaches such as sociology, psychology, postcolonialism, poststructuralism, reception theory, and gender studies. Third, studies on cultural preservation may adopt contemporary approaches, such as adaptation studies, ecranisation, or intermediality. Such research would contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of how cultural heritage can be preserved, reinterpreted, and transmitted within the society.

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