



Ecological Awareness in the *Aṭfāl al-Ghābah* by Muḥammad 'Aṭīyah al-Ibrāshī': An Ecocritical Perspective

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Kesadaran Ekologis dalam *Aṭfāl al-Ghābah*
Karya Muḥammad 'Aṭīyah al-Ibrāshī: Sebuah Tinjauan Ekokritik

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Abstract

Parents play a crucial role in fostering children's empathy and care for nature. However, in the modern era, these values are often neglected, leading to future behaviors such as indifference toward environmental destruction, improper waste disposal, and the exploitation of natural resources. Literary ecocriticism offers an alternative solution through children's literature as a medium to instill ecological awareness. This study aims to explore forms of children's sensitivity to nature in the short story *Aṭfāl al-Ghābah* by Muḥammad 'Aṭīyah al-Ibrāshī, analyzed from a literary ecocritical perspective. A descriptive qualitative method was employed, with data collected through reading and note-taking, then analyzed in three stages: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. The findings indicate that children's awareness is reflected in behaviors such as obeying the deer's advice, avoiding harm to animals, rejecting exploitation, expressing joy in the forest's beauty, feeling sadness upon leaving it, and demonstrating awareness of forest preservation. This study suggests that children's literature can be an effective medium for environmental education, helping to foster a generation that respects and protects nature.

Keywords

Ecological awareness;
environment; ecocritical;
children's literature

Introduction

Children's concern for nature and the environment is a fundamental value that should be instilled by parents from an early age to help them develop empathy for their surroundings (Anh, 2019; Desmila & Yaswinda, 2022). However, in modern times, many parents neglect to teach this value. Instead, they often prefer giving children gadgets—considered more practical—rather than introducing them to the natural environment (Fajrina, 2015; Sitorus et al., 2024). Therefore, introducing children to nature and their environment from an early age is essential (Ikhwan, 2020). This is especially



important in today's context, where large-scale environmental exploitation occurs through deforestation, illegal wildlife hunting, and the use of explosives in fishing, all of which damage coral reefs and marine ecosystems (Tanjung, 2019; Yulinnas & Ardhi, 2021). These environmental issues highlight the urgent need for effective solutions.

One promising approach is introducing nature and the environment to children through literary works that appeal to their imagination (Adyanto, 2018; Nuralim & Aswan, 2019). *Aṭṭāl al-Ghābah*, a short story by Muḥammad 'Aṭīyah al-'Ibrāshī (2007), is one such literary work that can help foster children's ecological sensitivity. It narrates the friendship between three children and forest animals, promoting a sense of affection and mutual care. Interestingly, the story includes illustrations that help attract children's interest in reading.

The massive exploitation of nature has become a major topic of concern among researchers, as evidenced by numerous studies emphasizing the importance of protecting the environment. These studies convey several key messages: (1) Ecocriticism as a medium of critique—literary ecological criticism highlights human greed and environmental exploitation, which often lead to natural disasters such as landslides, floods, and fires (Anh, 2019; Ikhwan, 2020; Jainudin, 2025; Nensilianti et al., 2025; Novianti et al., 2020; Putri et al., 2019; Rini, 2018; Ulwatunnisa & Wiyatmi, 2020); (2) The harmonization between humans and nature through ecocriticism—this emphasizes the emotional connection between humans and nature, reflected in care and responsibility for the environment (Christinawati, 2019; Rahayu et al., 2020; Ramadhani et al., 2020; Syarif et al., 2021); and (3) Ecocriticism as a representation of natural beauty—literature can serve as a medium to portray the beauty of nature, which in turn can be used to raise awareness and address environmental issues, such as during the industrial revolution in the UK (Rahmayati & Rengganis, 2019; Syakir, 2018).

While previous studies have provided valuable insights into the ecological dimensions of literature, most have focused on adult literature or general literary genres. This study distinguishes itself by specifically examining children's literature as a medium for fostering ecological awareness from an early age. Despite its crucial role in shaping values and environmental consciousness among young readers, children's literature remains relatively underexplored in the field of ecocriticism. Although several studies have highlighted the potential of children's literature in ecopedagogy, a research gap persists in analyzing how local and contemporary children's stories convey ecological themes. Therefore, this study offers a novel contribution by bridging literary ecocriticism and children's environmental education, emphasizing how narratives aimed at children can be strategically utilized to cultivate environmental ethics. Through the ecocritical analysis of selected children's texts, this research not only broadens the scope of ecocriticism but also addresses pressing educational and environmental concerns.

This study assumes that the attitude of mutual care and protection displayed by the main characters and forest creatures in the short story *Aṭṭāl al-Ghābah* by Muḥammad 'Aṭīyah al-'Ibrāshī (2007) reflects a harmonious relationship between humans and nature. This relationship also evokes emotions such as joy, sadness, and anger. It can be concluded that children's sensitivity to nature and the environment can develop when they are accustomed to interacting with the natural world from an early age.

The purpose of this study is to identify the forms of children's sensitivity to nature as portrayed in *Aṭṭāl al-Ghābah*. It focuses on children's literature as a medium to foster environmental awareness

and sensitivity. To achieve this, the study applies literary ecocriticism, a suitable theoretical framework as it emphasizes nature as an essential component of literary texts. A qualitative research method was employed (Patil, 2019), using reading and note-taking techniques to analyze the short story as the primary data source. Ultimately, this study aims to explore how children’s literature can internalize ecological values through literary narratives from an ecocritical perspective.

This research has two significant implications: theoretical and practical. At the theoretical level, it contributes to ecocriticism by highlighting how authors connect literature with nature conservation and portray nature as a vital source of life (Buell, 2005). Moreover, this study critiques the limitations of traditional literary criticism, particularly the notion that ecological messages in literature require collaboration with authorities to establish policies and programs aimed at environmental preservation (Goleman, 2011). At the practical level, the research suggests that ecocritical analysis of short stories or literary texts tends to evoke human empathy toward nature and the environment, foster mutual care and protection among living beings, and help pass on the beauty of nature to future generations. Ecocriticism also proves suitable for short stories that appeal to children’s imaginations, making it easier for them to grasp ecological messages such as the beauty of nature, human exploitation, environmental degradation, and pollution (al-Ibrāshī, 2007).

Many environmental problems today stem from the lack of parental involvement in introducing nature and ecological awareness to children. This is evident in the growing tendency of parents to allow excessive gadget use, which often leads children to become detached from their surroundings and, in some cases, experience cognitive impairments—as reported in various cases in Indonesia. Such disconnection results in a diminished sense of empathy toward the environment, potentially cultivating generations that feel little to no responsibility for nature. Raising ecological sensitivity in children has therefore become an urgent concern and a vital subject of academic inquiry, particularly through educational and cultural mediums such as literature. This study aligns with the expanding body of ecocritical literary research that views literature as a powerful tool for fostering ecological awareness. Ecocriticism, as introduced by Glotfelty and Fromm (1996) and later developed by scholars like Khomisah (2020) and Kong (2019), emphasizes the integration of nature as a central element in literary texts.

Adyanto (2018) argues that ecocriticism serves as a critical vehicle for environmental advocacy by leveraging literature to promote ecological consciousness. According to Buell (1995), addressing environmental issues through literature involves several key principles: aligning nature with literary representation, utilizing literature as a space for ecological discourse, highlighting the human-nature relationship, and instilling awareness and responsibility toward environmental preservation. Grounded in this theoretical framework, the present study explores how ecocritical elements in children’s literature, specifically in the story *Aṭfāl al-Ghābah* by Muḥammad ‘Aṭīyah al-Ibrāshī, can foster ecological sensitivity. It offers both a critique of modern-day disconnection from nature and a foundation for ecological education through narrative.

The purpose of this study is to identify the forms of children’s sensitivity to nature as depicted in the short story *Aṭfāl al-Ghābah* by Muḥammad ‘Aṭīyah al-Ibrāshī, analyzed through an ecocritical perspective. Within this perspective, four key concepts illustrate the relationship between humans, nature, and literature: (1) the harmonious relationship between nature and literary representation; (2) ecological-themed criticism embedded in the narrative; (3) emphasis on the human-nature connection; and (4) human awareness and responsibility in protecting the environment. These four

ecocritical concepts are relevant and serve as an appropriate framework for analyzing this study.

Ecocriticism is an interdisciplinary approach that examines the relationship between literature and the environment, particularly how literary texts reflect, critique, or reimagine human interactions with nature. This approach views the environmental crisis not merely as a scientific or political issue, but as a cultural and representational problem manifested through literary works (Dattaray & Sharma, 2018). In this context, literature is seen as a cultural product that conveys ecological values, tensions, and critiques of environmental degradation, serving as an important medium for ecological discourse (Clark, 2019).

This study adopts the ecocritical theory developed by Lawrence Buell, who defines ecocriticism as the study of the relationship between literature and the physical environment (Buell, 1995). According to Buell, a literary work that is environmentally committed should exhibit certain characteristics, such as a non-anthropocentric perspective, ethical awareness of the environment, and the portrayal of nature as an active presence rather than a mere backdrop or ornament (Pamungkas et al., 2018). He also emphasizes that literature not only reflects environmental issues but also stimulates ecological imagination and ethical responsibility among its readers (Buell, 2005). Furthermore, Buell views literary texts as reflections of the author's ecological experiences that can serve both as mirrors and critiques of environmental conditions (Rangarajan, 2018).

Based on this framework, the present study uses Buell's theory to analyze how the children's short story *Aṭfāl al-Ghābah* by Muḥammad 'Aṭīyah al-Ibrāshī fosters ecological sensitivity through its narrative structure, character interactions, and representations of nature. The analysis focuses on themes of ecological harmony, human-nature relationships, and critical responses to environmental exploitation or destruction. Thus, this study aims to highlight the role of children's literature not only as a source of entertainment but also as an educational and moral medium capable of nurturing ecological awareness from an early age.

Method

This qualitative study employs a literary ecocriticism approach (Patil, 2019), utilizing Lawrence Buell's ecocritical theory to analyze how children's literature fosters ecological awareness (Buell, 2005). The data consist of primary and secondary sources. The primary source is the Arabic short story *Aṭfāl al-Ghābah* by Muḥammad 'Aṭīyah al-Ibrāshī (2007), published by Dār al-Ma'ārif, Cairo, Egypt, on May 27, 2007. The selection of this story is based on three criteria: (1) its ecological theme focusing on the human-nature relationship; (2) its relevance as children's literature with educational value; and (3) its symbolic and descriptive portrayal of nature. Secondary sources include books, journal articles, and previous studies related to ecocriticism.

Data were collected through close reading and note-taking, emphasizing literary expressions, ecological imagery, and character interactions with the environment. The analysis follows Miles, Huberman, Saldana's (2013) interactive model: data reduction involved identifying and coding ecological elements in the text, which were then grouped into thematic categories aligned with Buell's framework; data display consisted of organizing these codes into matrices and narrative descriptions to identify patterns; and conclusions were drawn by interpreting the ecological messages embedded in the story and evaluating their significance for environmental education.

Results and Discussion

Children’s Sensitivity to Nature in the Short Story *Aṭṭāl al-Ghābah*

The short story *Aṭṭāl al-Ghābah* by Muḥammad ‘Aṭīyah al-Ibrāshī (2007) is a children’s literary work with ecological nuances. It portrays the main character’s harmonious relationship with nature, including how this bond is formed and what actions must be avoided to prevent nature’s “anger”. The character’s interactions with the natural world make this story particularly suitable for children, as it can help foster their sensitivity to nature and their surrounding environment. Moreover, the story uses clear and simple language, free from complex metaphors or figurative expressions, making it accessible to young readers. It is also accompanied by illustrations that further engage children and enhance their interest in reading.

The portrait of children’s sensitivity to nature reflects their concern and emotional connection with the natural world. The researcher identified several instances in the short story *Aṭṭāl al-Ghābah*, that illustrate a strong relationship between children and nature. These instances include respectful and improper uses of nature. The findings are presented in the table below.

Table 1. Forms of Children’s Sensitivity to Nature in *Aṭṭāl al-Ghābah*

Sensitivity Type	Sensitivity Form
Children’s love for nature	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Obeying the deer’s instructions 2. Avoiding the killing of forest animals 3. Refraining from exploitation
Children’s emotional connection to nature	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Joy in experiencing the beauty of the forest 2. Sadness when leaving the forest 3. Awareness of the importance of protecting nature

A portrait of children’s sensitivity to nature in the short story *Aṭṭāl al-Ghābah* is summarized in Table 1 with the following details. (1) Children’s love for nature—shown through obeying the deer’s instructions, avoiding the killing of forest animals, and refraining from exploitation; and (2) Children’s emotional connection to nature—reflected in their joy in experiencing the beauty of the forest, sadness when leaving the forest, and awareness of the importance of protecting nature. The following is a detailed description of this sensitivity portrait.

Children’s Love for Nature

Children’s love for nature reflects their attitude and perception toward the natural world. They view nature as something extraordinary because of its beauty, and as something that must be respected and protected. If not, nature may “respond” through disasters that harm humans. In the short story *Aṭṭāl al-Ghābah*, children’s love for nature is expressed in three key ways: obeying the deer’s instructions, avoiding the killing of forest animals, and refraining from exploitation (Mukti et al., 2020). The explanations are as follows:

1. Obeying the deer’s instructions

The main character’s obedience to the deer’s instructions in *Aṭṭāl al-Ghābah* reflects a familial bond between humans and nature. This connection emerges from prolonged interaction, fostering mutual

care, respect, and affection between humans and the natural world.

وحينما كبروا قالت لهم الغزالة في يوم من الأيام: لقد كبرتم الآن، ولا يمكنكم أن تعيشوا هنا أكثر مما عشتُم. وإني أنصح لكم أن تذهبوا وتبحثوا عن منزل صحي تعيشون فيه، وتقيمون به كما يعيش الناس في المدن، ولكن يجب أن تختاروا هذا المنزل قريبا من قصر الملك.

When they grew up, the deer said to them one day, “You have grown up now, and you can no longer live here as you have before. I advise you to go and look for a proper home where you can live and settle, just like people live in the cities. However, you must choose a home that is close to the king’s palace” (al-Ibrāshī, 2007).

Compliance with the deer’s instructions is reflected in the main character’s attitude of obeying the advice to leave the forest. The deer does not forcefully expel the character but gently advises them after a long period of living and interacting with the forest. This long-term interaction fosters a sense of kinship, prompting the character to accept the advice willingly. Their obedience reflects love and respect for the deer (al-Ibrāshī, 2007). According to Lawrence Buell’s theory, the relationship between the character and the deer illustrates a strong human–nature connection, emphasizing mutual dependence. This interaction symbolizes how humans reflect on nature as something integral to their existence. The main character’s obedience to the deer represents a human recognition of nature as family (Buell, 1995). Ultimately, this act of obedience shows the character’s love for nature—viewing it as inseparable from human life. When nature is harmed or saddened, humans also feel the impact. This interconnectedness supports Buell’s idea that environmentally committed literature evokes emotional and ethical responsibility toward nature (Buell, 2005).

2. Avoiding the killing of forest animals

The main character in the short story *Aṭfāl al-Ghābah* has lived in the forest since childhood, making the forest feel like a second home. As a result, the character grows up with a deep love and respect for nature. This is shown through their behavior, for instance, they do not disturb or harm the animals in the forest.

فسأله الأمير : كيف أستطيع أن أمر من الباب، إذا كان يحرسه أربعة من السباع؟ إني لا أستطيع أن أقاتل أربعة من السباع في وقت واحد.
فأجابه الصالح : إنك لن تحتاج إلى أن تقاتلها وتقاتلك.

The prince asked him : “How can I pass through the door if it is guarded by four beasts? I cannot fight four beasts at the same time”.

The pious man replied : “You will not need to fight them, and they will not fight you”.
(al-Ibrāshī, 2007)

The main character’s love for nature is reflected in the interaction with the pious man in the forest. The main character asks the pious man for advice on how to pass through the area guarded by four

sleeping lions. The pious man advises the main character to leave the lions undisturbed. Following this advice, the main character passes safely without any harm, as the lions do not attack (al-Ibrāshī, 2007).

This action of not harming animals in the forest aligns with Buell’s ecocritical theory, which emphasizes the human role in protecting and preserving nature and the environment (Buell, 2005). It highlights the awareness that nature reciprocates human care: if humans protect nature, nature protects humans in return. Conversely, if humans harm nature, nature will retaliate. This is exemplified by the lions sparing the main character because he neither disturbs nor kills them first (al-Ibrāshī, 2007).

3. Refraining from exploitation

The love for nature in the short story *Aṭṭāl al-Ghābah* is also evident in the main character’s decision not to exploit the forest. In this story, exploitation is portrayed as the improper use of the forest. This is highlighted when the aunty character tries to use the forest as a means to harm the main character, which ultimately makes the main character realize that nature must be respected and used positively.

وبعد أن نام الأطفال، وتأكّدت العمّة من نومهم، تركتهم وحدهم تحت الشجرة نائمين،
حتى تأتي الحيوانات المفترسة بالغابة لتقتلهم، لأنهم صغار لا يستطيعون الدفاع عن
أنفسهم، وليس معهم من يحرسهم.

After the children had fallen asleep, and their aunt had made sure they were asleep, she left them alone under the tree, sleeping, so that the wild animals in the forest would come and kill them, because they were still small and could not defend themselves, and no one was with them to protect them (al-Ibrāshī, 2007).

The main character’s awareness of the improper use of the forest stems from the aunt’s exploitation of nature as a tool to harm the main character. The aunt uses the forest’s beauty to lure the main character into following her deeper into the forest, then exploits the ferocity of wild animals to threaten the main character’s life. The aunt’s manipulation, which takes advantage of the natural elements in the forest, successfully captures the main character’s interest, as shown by their initial enthusiasm (al-Ibrāshī, 2007).

The researcher relates the aunt’s actions to Buell’s ecocriticism, which highlights human exploitation of nature as a form of criticism. The researcher concludes that the aunt’s behavior symbolizes a critique of widespread human exploitation of nature, such as illegal logging, excessive oil and gas extraction in the Middle East, and gold mining by PT. Freeport, all of which have caused significant environmental damage and social conflicts (Setiawan, 2020).

The findings of this study show that children’s love for nature is expressed through obeying the deer’s instructions, not killing animals in the forest, and refraining from exploitation. These findings align with Buell’s theory, which highlights that such behaviors demonstrate dependence, linkage, and a symbiotic mutualism between humans and nature (Buell, 1995). Additionally, the results are supported by the theories of Oppermann (1999) and Love (2003) who explore landscapes in literature to understand the relationship between humans and their natural environment.

Furthermore, the findings resonate with other researchers who argue that humans and nature form an inseparable unit characterized by mutual love and need (Arisa et al., 2021). However, some studies suggest that ecocriticism should not be limited to themes of obedience, exploitation, and poaching alone; it can also address broader issues such as the industrial revolution by emphasizing the role of natural beauty in finding solutions (Rahmayati & Rengganis, 2019; Syakir, 2018).

Children’s love for nature, expressed through obeying the deer’s instructions, not killing animals in the forest, and avoiding exploitation, forms the foundation for them to grow into responsible and sensitive individuals toward their environment. This love is crucial in addressing ecological crises often caused by irresponsible human actions. Moreover, cultivating children’s love for nature helps prevent the consequences of nature’s “anger”, such as landslides, flash floods, food shortages, and other environmental disasters.

Children’s Emotional Connection to Nature

Children’s emotional connection with nature develops through prolonged interaction, fostering feelings such as joy, sadness, anger, and more. Ecocriticism relates closely to human emotions by employing critical approaches (Shoba & Nagaraj, 2013). The researcher identified key emotional responses in the story: joy in the beauty of the forest, sadness when leaving the forest, and an awareness of the need to protect nature. The explanation is as follows:

1. Joy in experiencing the beauty of the forest

The emotion in the short story *Aṭṭāl al-Ghābah* is expressed through the main character’s joy over the forest’s preserved natural beauty. This beauty refers to the lush forest, home to various flora and fauna, and far from the hustle and bustle of surrounding communities.

وفي يوم من الأيام كان الأميران يلعبان مع أختهما الأميرة في حدائق القصر بعد خروج الملك، فشوقتهم عمتهم وحببت إليهم الذهاب معها إلى الغابة للعب فيها، ووعدتهم أن تريهم أشياء جميلة، وألعاباً لذيذة سارة تحت الأشجار هناك.

One day, the two princes were playing with their sister, the princess, in the palace gardens after the king had gone out. Their aunt enticed them and made them eager to go with her to the forest to play. She promised to show them beautiful things and delightful, enjoyable games under the trees there (al-Ibrāshī, 2007).

Children’s joy in nature is shown through the main character’s admiration for the forest’s beauty, which remains pristine and vibrant. The forest is considered a very beautiful place due to its rich diversity of living beings and the presence of many mysteries. The main character’s enthusiasm for the forest grows stronger when their aunt tells them about it and plans to take them for a walk (al-Ibrāshī, 2007).

Referring to Buell’s concept, the character’s admiration for natural beauty relates to the ontological aspect that connects literature with nature’s beauty (Buell, 1995; Pan, 2018). This beauty raises human awareness of the need to protect and preserve the natural environment. This perspective gives rise to a green culture that reflects harmony between nature, humans, and literary texts. In *Aṭṭāl*

al-Ghābah, nature is represented by the forest with its diverse flora and fauna; humans are depicted through the main character’s admiration for the forest’s beauty, and the text conveys ecological themes through its narrative (al-Ibrāshī, 2007).

2. Sadness when leaving the forest

The emotion of sadness in *Aṭfāl al-Ghābah*’s short story arises from the separation of humans from nature, which they see as an integral part of themselves. The story describes the close interaction and bond between the main character and the deer, highlighting their togetherness.

وقد ودعتهم الغزالة وودعوها والدموع في أعينهم. وسارت معهم حتى خرجوا من الغابة.

The deer bid them farewell, and they also said goodbye to her, with tears in their eyes. She walked with them until they left the forest (al-Ibrāshī, 2007).

The main character’s emotions are deeply shown when the deer leads the family out of the forest. When the deer says goodbye, both the deer and the main character shed tears. The main character regards the deer as a second father and protector who cared for them while in the forest (al-Ibrāshī, 2007). These emotions also contribute to the social development of the main character, making them more sensitive to their surroundings (Daud et al., 2021). Igayanti et al (2019) support this view, stating that emotional interactions between humans and nature develop through prolonged contact. The main character understands that the deer, who cared for them in the forest, also feels sadness, yet they are willing to leave. This sensitivity is shown by their decision to leave the forest both for the deer’s sake and their own well-being (al-Ibrāshī, 2007, 2007).

3. Awareness of the importance of protecting nature

The emotional connection between children and nature is also reflected in the main character’s awareness of the importance of protecting nature. This protection is evident as nature provides comfort and freedom, allowing the main characters to live safely in the forest.

واستمرت الغزالة تخدمهم نهارا وتحرسهم ليلا حتى لا يقرب منهم عدو، ولا يمسهم أحد بسوء.

The deer continued to serve them during the day and guard them at night so that no enemy would come near them, and no harm would touch them (al-Ibrāshī, 2007).

There is a clear ecological value that highlights nature’s role in protecting humans. The deer safeguard the main character from various dangers by accompanying them day and night, while the trees provide shade during hot weather, shelter from heavy rainstorms, and protection from the scorching sun. This allows the main character to live freely and safely in the forest. The main character’s awareness of nature’s protection is evident through two behaviors shown by nature itself. First, the protective presence of the deer ensures safety from wild animals, giving the main character peace of mind. Second, the plants offer a comfortable refuge, shielding the main character from storms and heat (al-Ibrāshī, 2007).

The findings of this study indicate that children’s emotional connection to nature is expressed

through joy over the beauty of the forest, sadness when leaving the forest, and awareness of nature's protection. These results align with Buell's theory, which describes emotional connection as an intimate relationship between humans and nature (Buell, 1995). The findings are further supported by Oppermann's theory, which explains that intimate relationships involve harmonious interactions where human emotions such as pleasure, sadness, anger, and concern are closely tied to nature (Oppermann, 1999). Additionally, these findings correspond with various studies emphasizing the emotional bond between humans and nature, highlighting human care and responsibility for the environment alongside nature's role in protecting humans from potential disasters (Christinawati, 2019; Rahayu, 2020; Ramadhani et al., 2020; Syarif et al., 2021; Uniawati, 2014).

The findings of this study differ from research by Soleha & Ratnaningdyah (2019) which emphasizes that emotional relationships also involve spiritual values connecting humans, nature, and God, as reflected in Rumi's poetry. This spirituality is expressed through four aspects: human relationships, the meaning of life, the purpose of life, and transcendence (Irawan, 2017). In this study, the child's emotional connection—expressed through joy at the forest's beauty, sadness when leaving it, and awareness of nature's protection—fosters a personality characterized by empathy toward nature and the environment. This empathetic personality is crucial for children as they grow, helping them to socialize, cooperate, and support others, especially during natural disasters. Furthermore, it encourages children to develop a critical awareness of nature as a place that must be protected and preserved.

This study reveal that the ecological elements embedded in *Aṭfāl al-Ghābah* by Muḥammad 'Aṭīyah al-Ibrāshī not only depict a harmonious relationship between humans and nature but also promote values of environmental responsibility that can be nurtured from an early age. In an educational context, this story serves as a valuable pedagogical tool for children's literacy, fostering both reading comprehension and critical ecological awareness. Illustrated stories like this are especially effective in early childhood education due to their strong visual and narrative appeal in conveying moral and environmental messages. Therefore, children's literature such as *Aṭfāl al-Ghābah* makes a significant practical contribution to education by supporting sustainable development goals through an integrated literacy approach grounded in ecological values. Incorporating this story into literacy classrooms provides a meaningful, enjoyable, and contextual way to introduce environmental conservation, enriching children's literacy cognitively, affectively, and ethically.

Conclusion

The analysis of children's sensitivity in the short story *Aṭfāl al-Ghābah* by Muḥammad 'Aṭīyah al-Ibrāshī, viewed through Lawrence Buell's ecocritical lens, provides clear answers to the research questions. Children's ecological sensitivity is portrayed through their obedience to the deer's instructions, avoidance of harming animals, refusal to exploit nature, joy at the forest's beauty, sadness upon leaving it, and awareness of the need to protect the environment. This study reflects the researcher's interpretation of literary ecology within the story, demonstrating how Arabic children's literature can instill environmental values through imaginative storytelling. However, this research is limited in that it does not directly propose practical solutions to current environmental problems and focuses primarily on character development related to ecological awareness. Despite this limitation, the study plays a vital role in fostering children's sensitivity to nature by engaging them emotionally

and imaginatively. It shows that literary ecology effectively reveals ideals of reforestation and green consciousness embedded in the author’s narrative.

Furthermore, this research highlights the educational potential of children’s literature as a valuable resource for environmental education. Stories like *Aṭfāl al-Ghābah* can be integrated into early childhood and elementary curricula to nurture environmental ethics, empathy for nature, and ecological literacy from an early age. Thus, green storytelling functions not only as entertainment but also as a transformative pedagogical tool. In conclusion, further exploration of green themes in Arabic children’s literature is strongly encouraged. Integrating literary ecology with educational initiatives, especially through collaborative efforts, can enhance literature’s role in addressing global environmental challenges. Cultivating “green literature” for children will make a significant contribution to ecological awareness and sustainable development worldwide.

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