

From Adventure Books to the Quran: The Transformative Power of Storytelling

👤 BY: WAN NUR MADIHA (/BY/WAN-NUR-MADIHA) SOURCE: ISLAMICITY (/SOURCE/ISLAMICITY) © JAN 29, 2025
 (HTTPS://WWW.ISLAMICITY.ORG/103987/FROM-ADVENTURE-BOOKS-TO-THE-QURAN-THE-TRANSFORMATIVE-POWER-OF-STORYTELLING/) 🗨️ NO COMMENTS (HTTPS://WWW.ISLAMICITY.ORG/103987/FROM-ADVENTURE-BOOKS-TO-THE-QURAN-THE-TRANSFORMATIVE-POWER-OF-STORYTELLING/#RESPOND)



Donate Now!



Growing up, I had a fascination with books and enjoyed reading immensely, especially books on adventure and discovery. I spent countless hours poring over books such as Enid Blyton's *The Famous Five* series and classics such as Frances Hodgson Burnett's *The Secret Garden*.

This passion for reading motivated me to pursue my education in English and drove me to become a literary scholar. Every literary work I encountered presented me with different lives, experiences, and issues that I needed to unpack, discover, and understand.

After nearly a decade of teaching at the International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM) and engaging with young people about various literary works, the importance and urgency of reading literature has never been more apparent to me.

Nonetheless, I now better understand the implications of the persuasive power of storytelling, especially on impressionable young minds, for good or otherwise.

Storytelling is a powerfully persuasive way of conveying ideas to people. In the Holy Quran, storytelling is arguably one of the most significant styles of narration. Many surahs of the Quran use stories to impart Divine wisdom, deliver lessons, inspire, and comfort Muslims in times of hardship.

Many of these stories tell us about the Prophets in Islam and their challenges in guiding their people toward the worship of Allah S.W.T. For instance, Surah al-Qasas tells us the story of Prophet Musa a.s. and Firaun, while Surah al-Imran and Surah Maryam depict Maryam's virtuousness and Prophet Isa a.s.'s miraculous birth. Through these narratives, readers learn about qualities such as patience, perseverance, and redemption.

Beyond Revealed Knowledge, storytelling is intrinsic to the human experience, and it has been a beloved activity throughout humanity's short history.

Earlier hunter-gatherer and pre-literate societies relied on storytelling to communicate important information concerning their immediate surroundings and to preserve and transmit important cultural information such as their histories, traditions, and mores through myths, parables, legends, folktales, and proverbs. Storytelling evokes emotional responses from people, making it an effective way to share ideas.

Today, storytelling takes shape in many forms such as literature, television, theatre, and film, becoming a big part of popular culture. Humans continue to create and share stories with one another, highlighting the importance of literature in enabling and fostering human connection.

As a prominent form of storytelling today, literature mirrors humanity's joys, flaws, doubts, beauty, and complexities. It includes various genres such as prose, poetry, and drama, which often reflect the social, cultural, and historical contexts in which they were produced.

Authors explore a multitude of themes such as identity, gender, race, and nationhood, often challenging societal norms and beliefs. Literary works offer a window into the realities and convictions of their authors. In this way, literature plays a pivotal role in shaping civilizations by engaging with universal and particular human experiences.



Through literature, readers encounter various viewpoints and perspectives, thus experiencing the various conditions of being human. Being privy to the worldviews of others, especially those from different cultures, helps encourage empathy, broaden understanding of peoples and cultures, and increase our acceptance of others.

In this way, literature can help foreground the Islamic principle of respecting differences and celebrating diversity among the children of Prophet Adam a.s. and Hawwa a.s. This can be seen in the following verse:

O humanity! Indeed, We created you from a male and a female, and made you into peoples and tribes so that you may get to know one another. Surely the most noble of you in the sight of Allah is the most righteous among you. Allah is truly All-Knowing, All-Aware. (al-Hujurat, verse 13)
<https://www.islamicity.org/quransearch/?q=49%3A13>

Furthermore, reading literature cultivates critical thinking skills by encouraging readers to ask uncomfortable and difficult questions about the assumptions underpinning the world we live in. It also helps us challenge deeply held beliefs in our society and understand the nuances of human conflicts.

George Orwell's *Animal Farm* (1945), for example, employs allegory to expose how power and corruption can fester among those who supposedly represent our interests and how their greed further exacerbates inequalities and social injustices. Yet, for those without a moral compass or those with certain tendencies, Orwell's book can quickly become a manifesto.

Consequently, literature is an important mode of expression because it has the ability to shape societal attitudes and beliefs. Literature's ability to raise awareness about important issues—such as racism, environmental degradation, and moral decline—makes it a catalyst for social change. Its influence extends beyond the page; it inspires meaningful discourse and collective action that shapes beliefs and traditions within a society.



Therefore, one of the ways in which literature influences society is by molding the beliefs and traditions of a culture.

However, the affective and influential nature of literature renders it a powerful conduit for transmitting implicit biases. In his analysis of decolonization, English Literature, and Islamization of Knowledge, Mahmudul Hasan argues that English Literature is arguably the most culturally charged and value-laden Western discipline.

This assertion foregrounds the extent to which literary canons such as English and American Literature have historically perpetuated hegemonic ideologies such as Eurocentrism, Communism, or Cultural Imperialism.

A stark example of this can be seen in how the British Empire introduced a Western education model, which included the study of English Literature in the Indian subcontinent, as a means to further enhance their colonial project in the region. English literary works were strategically employed to incite and facilitate the erasure of the country's spiritual and cultural heritage.


Whilst popular writing has evolved over the years to be more inclusive and politically conscious, it often advances dominant and hegemonic ideologies. Furthermore, it is important to note that some literary works may also promote moral ambiguity by blurring ethical lines and challenging moral frameworks.

One such work explores alienation, discrimination, and Otherness through the lens of a protagonist who randomly murders passersby. While these themes have sparked much scholarly debate, the moral gravity of the protagonist's heinous crimes remains under-explored. This reveals a tendency within certain literary works to prioritize philosophical exploration over ethical and moral clarity.

This complexity found in literary texts is both a strength and a source of potential misunderstanding, misinformation, and misinterpretation. Unfortunately, many literary works also promote secular ideas that may contradict Islamic teachings and principles.

This may present challenges for Muslim readers of literature when trying to reconcile their Islamic beliefs with the stories they read. The persuasive power of stories can also shape opinions. It is, therefore, essential to approach literature through a lens tempered by Islamic teachings and principles.




 While some people might argue for avoiding literature altogether to eliminate such risks, <https://www.facebook.com/share/shares.php?u=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.islamicity.org%2F103987%2Ffrom-adventure-books-to-the-quran-the-transformative-power-of-storytelling%2F> prevent people from reaping the benefits of reading literature.

It also does not train Muslims to be more aware of how to handle concerning literary texts. A more sustainable approach lies in cultivating informed and discerning Muslim readers equipped to critically navigate any literary work.

Currently, following the trend to decolonize learning and education, many scholars, from the Global South, are rethinking and reassessing Western educational frameworks. Similarly, there is a growing number of Muslim literary scholars who are promoting and advocating the reading of literature using an Islamic framework.

The simplest way of defining this is the incorporation of spiritual, philosophical, and

 moral principles in how literary texts are interpreted. Despite the many different epistemological and ontological approaches to reading literature through an Islamic lens,

the core idea of Islamization of literature chiefly revolves around the concept of Tawhid (Oneness of God). Tawhid is a foundational principle of Islam and the most important

one of all. This is because the concept of Tawhid is the affirmation of our faith and steadfastness of belief.

Therefore, it would be the best filter when reading literature. A reading centered on

Tawhid encourages readers to interpret themes and issues in literary texts by emphasizing the unity of everything for the submission to the Power and Mercy of Allah

S.W.T. In her article, "The Study of Literature from a Tawhidic Perspective" (2018), Aimillia

Mond Ramli explains that Syed Naquib al-Attas' concept of Islamization focuses on

positioning literature in its proper relation to *adab*.

Alimilla argues that the study of [English] literature necessitates a comparative approach

 that puts the worship of Allah S.W.T. and Islamic values first. The strategies to manifest

this comparative approach are numerous as more and more Muslim scholars of learning and literature continue to problematize how literature can be approached effectively.

The <https://www.islamicity.org/103987/> to engage with literature through

an Islamic lens. Ultimately, the most crucial point is that the reading of any literary work

must be accompanied by a critical examination of its content and intent. Islamic



transformative- approaches to literature should then privilege the act of *tadabbur* (reflection) on what the power- deeper meanings found in a literary text are and how they align with Islam and human of- experience, storytelling%2F)

MENU

This will ensure that exploration of literary texts corresponds with Islamic spiritual and moral integrity.



(<https://www.islamicity.org/103987/from-adventure-books-to-the-quran-the-transformative-power-of-storytelling/#respond>), [Featured](https://www.islamicity.org/Explore/Topics/Faith/) (<https://www.islamicity.org/Explore/Featured/>), [Highlights](https://www.islamicity.org/Explore/Highlights/) (<https://www.islamicity.org/Explore/Highlights/>) [Topics: Decolonization Of Literature](https://www.islamicity.org/Topics/Decolonization-Of-Literature/) (<https://www.islamicity.org/Topics/Decolonization-Of-Literature/>), [Islamic Literature](https://www.islamicity.org/Topics/Islamic-Literature/) (<https://www.islamicity.org/Topics/Islamic-Literature/>), [Muslim Scholars](https://www.islamicity.org/Topics/Muslim-Scholars/) (<https://www.islamicity.org/Topics/Muslim-Scholars/>), [Storytelling](https://www.islamicity.org/Topics/Storytelling/) (<https://www.islamicity.org/Topics/Storytelling/>), [Tawhid And Literature](https://www.islamicity.org/Topics/Tawhid-And-Literature/) (<https://www.islamicity.org/Topics/Tawhid-And-Literature/>)

RELATED SUGGESTIONS



(<https://www.islamicity.org/103098/against-genocide-a-call-to-vote-for-truth>)



(<https://www.islamicity.org/102940/history-of-islam-and-science-%E2%80%A0A-History-of>)



(<https://www.islamicity.org/103919/islamic-age-of-science-changed-history-%E2%80%A0How>)



(<https://www.islamicity.org/108366/muslim-faith-robotics-%E2%80%A0The-Role-of>)

+ COMMENTS DISCLAIMER & RULES OF ENGAGEMENT



0 Comments

 Login ▼

G

Start the discussion...

LOG IN WITH

OR SIGN UP WITH DISQUS 

Name



Share

Best Newest Oldest

Be the first to comment.

[Subscribe](#)

[Privacy](#)

[Do Not Sell My Data](#)



[f](https://www.facebook.com/islamicity) (https://www.facebook.com/islamicity) [t](https://twitter.com/islamicity) (https://twitter.com/islamicity) [v](https://www.youtube.com/user/islamicitytv) (https://www.youtube.com/user/islamicitytv) [p](https://www.pinterest.com/islamicity/) (https://www.pinterest.com/islamicity/) [i](https://instagram.com/islamicity/) (https://instagram.com/islamicity/)

[About Us \(/about-islamicity\)](#) | [Submit Content \(/contribute/\)](#) | [Newsletter \(/bulletin/\)](#) | [Sponsorship Ads \(/sponsorship\)](#) | [Privacy Policy \(/privacy-policy\)](#) | [Contact Us \(/Feedback/\)](#)

© 1995 - 2025 IslamiCity. All Rights Reserved

IslamiCity™ is a registered trademark of HADI, a nonprofit 501 (c)(3) organization. (EIN: 95-4348674)

