

# ***MORAL-TRANSCENDENTAL CONSTRUCTION IN SHORT STORIES BY A.A. NAVIS AND ITS IMPLICATIONS IN LITERATURE LEARNING***

***(Konstruksi Moral-Transendental dalam Cerpen-Cerpen A.A. Navis dan Implikasinya dalam Pembelajaran Sastra)***

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***Abstract:*** *The moral–transcendental dimension in A.A. Navis’s short stories deserves close attention, as it links literary appreciation with character-based literary learning. His works portray human moral and spiritual realities not only as objects of reflection but also as living expressions of ethical and religious awareness. This study seeks to describe and analyze how moral–transcendental values are constructed in Navis’s short stories and to consider their implications for literary learning. To address this aim, the research applies Kuntowijoyo’s prophetic literary theory, focusing on three core principles: transcendence, humanization, and liberation. Data were gathered through reading and note-taking, then analyzed using a semiotic–hermeneutic approach. The credibility of the data was ensured by semantic and referential validation, while reliability was supported by both intrarater and interrater checks. The findings indicate that Navis embeds moral–transcendental values within the narrative structures and symbolic language of his stories, values that can enrich literary learning as a medium for shaping character. Prophetic literature, in this sense, demonstrates its role as a transformative force. This study positions Navis’s short stories, through the prophetic perspective of Kuntowijoyo, as effective learning texts that address not only cognitive development but also humanistic and spiritual growth.*

***Keywords:*** *Kuntowijoyo; Literary Learning; Moral; Short Story; Transcendental*

## ***A. INTRODUCTION***

The moral crisis, dehumanization, and secularization that shape modern society have made literature an essential space for both reflection and transformation (Syarif, 2020: 78). Literature is not only an artistic expression; it also serves as an educational and ethical instrument that strengthens human awareness in everyday life (Sutrisno, 2015:14). Within the framework of prophetic literature, Kuntowijoyo (1999: 153) emphasizes that genuine works of literature must carry three missions: transcendence, humanization, and liberation. These three aspects form the foundation of what may be called the moral–transcendental construction of a literary text. The prophetic idea is rooted in the Islamic understanding of human beings as khalifah (vicegerents of God) on earth (Arum, 2018). It also draws on the example of the prophets, especially Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), who is regarded as *uswatun hasanah*—a noble role model for humanity (Dewantoro & Susilo, 2025). Prophetic literature is therefore closely tied to elements that go beyond the purely logical, incorporating symbolic and spiritual dimensions into its writing (Hadi W.M., 1999: 48).

In practice, however, these prophetic values are often taught deductively, with little attempt to connect them to lived realities. As a result, Islamic education based on prophetic literature has not always received the serious attention it deserves, despite its richness and potential relevance (Fitriyani & Syaifullah, 2020). Strengthening the moral–transcendental construction in literature is therefore crucial. When prophetic values are delivered through effective media, they can shape generations who are not only firmly grounded in faith but also intellectually open and socially engaged (*ulil albab*).

Every literary work, including short stories, carries values—religious, moral, social, heroic, or aesthetic (Sukirman, 2021). These values are inevitably shaped by the socio-cultural context in which human beings interact with their environment (Maula et al., 2022). In this regard, A.A. Navis emerges as a particularly critical writer (Kusnita, 2020). His stories often challenge religious practices that remain confined to ritual and fail to embrace a more comprehensive moral–transcendental outlook. For instance, in *Robohnya Surau Kami*, Navis highlights the futility of ritual piety when divorced from social piety. In *Kemarau*, he critiques passive religiosity that perpetuates injustice. Through such narratives, Navis shows how prophetic values can function as a form of social admonition while also inviting spiritual reflection.

This approach resonates with the classical Islamic principle of *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah* developed by Al-Ghazali and other scholars, which emphasizes the protection of religion, life, intellect, lineage, and property (Rayyahun & Sabbar, 2025). Transcendence, in this sense, cannot be separated from humanization, as both are needed to maintain balance in human life. For example, Bakri and Faza (2025), in their commentary on QS. Al-Hujurat: 11, underline that respect for human dignity is the foundation of social ethics and a safeguard against dehumanization.

The urgency of this study also lies in its educational implications. Muqoyyidin (2014) argues that Islamic education ideally aims to cultivate a madani (civilized) society by integrating religious and humanistic values. Izzah (2018) adds that character-based education must nurture not only intellectual capacity but also spiritual depth and social sensitivity. Prophetic literature, in this light, brings learners closer to God and to nature while encouraging the building of a just and harmonious society (*khair al-ummah*) (Zaniyati et al., 2020: 13). Literary works, with their cultural and social elements, serve as guides for human action, embodying norms, values, and ethical rules (Sa'adah & Zulaeha, 2019).

In this regard, literary works infused with prophetic values, such as those of A.A. Navis, offer great potential as teaching material in literary learning focused on nation-building and character formation. This study addresses a gap in previous research on Navis's stories by taking the moral–transcendental construction as its main focus. Specifically, it aims to explore how Navis articulates moral–transcendental values that connect the divine with the universal dimensions of humanity, and how these values can be meaningfully applied in literary learning.

## **B. METHOD**

This study employed a qualitative descriptive approach based on Kuntowijoyo's prophetic literary theory (1999), which highlights three essential dimensions: transcendence, humanization, and liberation. A qualitative design was considered appropriate because it allows for a detailed description and interpretation of the processes involved in reading and identifying linguistic features in literary texts (Puspitorini & Hamdani, 2021).

The analysis was carried out using a semiotic–hermeneutic method. This method involves a careful reading of signs, symbols, and narrative structures in the short stories, followed by interpretation of their embedded meanings (Jabrohim, 2012: 92). Semiotics provides a lens for understanding various linguistic symbols, whether spoken or written, while hermeneutics serves to uncover the implicit meanings and their connections to broader socio-cultural contexts (Kemalasari et al., 2021). In this framework, hermeneutic reading becomes the second stage after heuristic reading, allowing the analysis to move beyond surface meanings to deeper cultural and moral significance (Lahiani, 2022).

The primary data in this study consist of selected short stories by A.A. Navis, chosen purposively for their strong representation of prophetic values. The analyzed texts are *Robohnya Surau Kami*, *Penumpang Kelas Tiga*, *Penangkapan*, *Angin dari Gunung*, *Bayang-bayang*, and *Anak Kebanggaan*. These short stories were selected because they clearly manifest the principles of transcendence, humanization, and liberation within Navis's anthologies, as noted in the appendix of the analysis. Secondary data include theoretical works, journal articles, and relevant research studies that support the interpretation and enhance the validity of the findings.

Data collection was conducted through documentation, repeated readings, and recording of relevant textual quotations. The data were then reduced and classified according to the categories of prophetic values. Content analysis with a semiotic–hermeneutic orientation was implemented in several stages: (1) reducing and organizing the data, (2) categorizing the identified signs and symbols, (3) conducting hermeneutic interpretation, and (4) synthesizing the findings to formulate the moral–transcendental constructions revealed in each short story. To ensure the trustworthiness of the study, several strategies were applied. Semantic and referential validity were used to confirm the accuracy of meaning, while reliability was maintained through intrarater checks, in which the researcher re-examined the analysis, and interrater procedures, which involved verification among team members. These steps helped to secure both the rigor and the consistency of the study's results.

## **C. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

This study focuses on analyzing the moral-transcendental construction in six short stories by A.A. Navis, using Kuntowijoyo's prophetic literary approach. Such constructions appear in the short stories as a reflection of social and spiritual life, aesthetically shaped by A.A. Navis.

## 1. Humanization (Moral) Values

The value of humanization in *Robohnya Surau Kami* emerges through Navis's criticism of religious attitudes that neglect the dimension of humanity.

*“Sebagai penjaga surau, Kakek tidak mendapat apa-apa. Ia hidup dari sedekah yang dipungutnya sekali setiap Jumat... Tapi yang paling sering diterimanya ialah ucapan terima kasih dan sedikit senyum.”* (Navis, 2005: 172)

First, the character of Grandfather is portrayed as living in poverty as a mosque caretaker who depends solely on alms. This situation indicates social injustice and a lack of societal concern for human dignity. The quotation illustrates how Grandfather survives under such limitations, dependent on alms. Humanization appears in Navis's implicit criticism of a social order that allows someone to live without economic security simply because of their devotion to the mosque.

*“Kesalahan engkau, karena engkau terlalu mementingkan dirimu sendiri. Kau takut masuk neraka, karena itu kau taat sembahyang. Tapi engkau melupakan kehidupan kaummu sendiri...”* (Navis, 2005: 181)

The angel's admonition in this excerpt highlights the essence of humanization that genuine faith must be manifested in social concern. To neglect society is to betray human values. This message affirms that faith and worship should foster social responsibility, not merely an individualistic orientation.

Thus, *Robohnya Surau Kami* teaches that the value of humanization in prophetic literature underscores the importance of upholding human dignity, striving for social justice, and liberating society from suffering. This short story can serve as meaningful teaching material, as it not only sharpens literary appreciation but also instills values of empathy and social responsibility in students.

Furthermore, the value of humanization is clearly evident in the short story *Anak Kebanggaan*, through Ompi's hope that his son will one day contribute to society with his expertise. He does not merely wish for Indra Budiman to become an engineer as a source of family pride, but also so that his knowledge can be applied to building better and more beautiful houses for the people.

*“Dan kalau Ompi melihat ada orang membuat rumah, lalu ia berkata, ‘Ah sayang. Rumah-rumah orang kita masih kuno arsitekturnya. Coba kalau anakku, Indra Budiman, sudah menjadi insinyur, pastilah ia akan membantu mereka membuat rumah yang lebih indah.”* (Navis, 2005: 51)

This passage conveys the idea that education and professional achievement should not be confined to social status or prestige, but should be directed toward broader goals, humanizing humanity. The value of humanization is reflected in the belief that education

must yield tangible benefits, improving both human life and the surrounding environment. In this way, Navis emphasizes the humanitarian function of knowledge as a tool for advancing collective well-being.

*“Kau punya istri sekarang, anak juga. Kau berbahagia tentu.’ ... ‘Anakku sudah dua.’ ... ‘Ya. Sudah dua. Kau tentu sayang pada mereka. Mereka juga tentunya. Dan kau tentu bahagia.’”* (Navis, 2005: 60)

This excerpt presents an intimate dialogue about family and happiness. The characters in the story emphasize that happiness is found in the most fundamental human relationships: those with one’s spouse and children. This is a manifestation of the value of humanization, namely the recognition of human dignity through affection, care, and family life.

Humanization in this context shows that true happiness does not lie solely in material achievements or social status, but in genuine emotional bonds. Love within the family becomes a vital foundation for a more humane existence. Humanization is reflected in the appreciation of simple household happiness, which is itself part of human existence.

*“Si Dali bukan orang biasa. Sudah jadi tokoh. Bahkan tokoh luar biasa. Hidupnya selalu dalam cahaya yang bersinar terang... Makanya Si Dali terus diiringi bayang-bayang. Bayang-bayang yang banyak.”* (Navis, 2005: 669)

This excerpt underscores the value of humanization through the figure of Si Dali in the short story *Bayang-Bayang*, who is portrayed as an extraordinary character, yet never alone, for he is always accompanied by shadows. These shadows can be understood as symbols of society or of ordinary people whose lives are shaped by the influence of a prominent figure.

The value of humanization arises from the understanding that human existence never stands in isolation but is always connected to others who accompany and influence life. This stresses the importance of solidarity, social influence, and the responsibility of individuals toward their community. Humanization here lies in the awareness that humanity is bound by social interaction and responsibility. Navis implicitly critiques prominent figures who may regard themselves as noble, yet whose lives are in fact inseparable from the “shadows” of others who contribute to their very existence.

*“Mereka berangkulan dengan kedua tangan masing-masing memegang peralatan mandi, sabun, gundar gigi dan handuk.”* (Navis, 2005: 587)

The above excerpt illustrates the humanizing element in the relationships between characters in the short story *Penumpang Kelas Tiga*. A.A. Navis shows how old friendships do not fade with time, even when reunions occur in the simplest of settings. The warmth of the embrace demonstrates that humanity is not rooted in social position or status, but in sincere emotional connections among people.

The humanizing message here is that human beings need one another to complement and complete their lives. Social intimacy, a sense of brotherhood, and mutual respect form the foundation of humanity. This value teaches readers, particularly students, that in real life, one must not lose compassion and social bonds, even in the most difficult circumstances.

## 2. Transcendence Values

The short story *Robohnya Surau Kami* was chosen as the initial object of analysis because it is considered the most representative work in depicting Navis' social-religious criticism. This short story not only presents the story of the physical collapse of the mosque, but also symbolizes the collapse of a narrow, rigid, and individualistic way of practicing religion. Through this story, Navis voices the idea of the importance of maintaining a balance between religious rituals and social responsibility. The transcendental value in *Robohnya Surau Kami* underscores the significance of this balance. The characters, portrayed as being devout in worship, feel entitled to heaven, but the reality of the afterlife shows otherwise: God rejects worship that does not benefit others.

*"Kami yang menghadap-Mu ini adalah umat-Mu yang paling taat beribadat... Akan tetapi, Tuhanku... setelah kami Engkau panggil kemari, Engkau memasukkan kami ke neraka."* (Navis, 2005: 179)

This excerpt illustrates the claim of faith by characters who believe their acts of worship are sufficient for salvation in the afterlife. Yet, worship that is merely ritualistic is rejected by God. Transcendence here highlights the necessity of balancing ritual devotion with social engagement. The characters' claims of piety are refuted by their consignment to hell. This demonstrates that transcendence in Islam cannot be reduced to ritual activity alone; it demands active social involvement.

*"'Aku beri kau negeri yang kaya raya, tapi kau malas. Kau lebih suka beribadat saja... Tidak. Kamu semua mesti masuk neraka.'"* (Navis, 2005: 180)

This passage depicts God rebuking characters who choose only to worship while neglecting the blessings of the world. Transcendence is interpreted as an awareness of the divine mandate to manage and cultivate the world. Passive faith is not accepted. God's rebuke labeling humans as lazy despite being given a prosperous land shows transcendence as an active responsibility. Faith must be embodied in the stewardship of the world. God rejects passive and individualistic religiosity.

*"Kesalahan engkau, karena engkau terlalu mementingkan dirimu sendiri. Kau takut masuk neraka, karena itu kau taat sembahyang. Tapi engkau melupakan kehidupan kaumu sendiri..."* (Navis, 2005: 181)

This excerpt shows the angel clarifying the essence of transcendence, worship must not stop at personal interest. Transcendence means faith in God that is manifested in social

concern. The angel's words make this clear: true faith must lead to social action. Worship performed only out of fear of hell is selfish spirituality, not prophetic. Thus, Navis stresses in this story that prophetic transcendence is integrative faith, one that connects God and humanity in a balance between worldly responsibility and spiritual devotion.

Furthermore, the short story *Anak Kebanggaan* presents the character Ompi, who idolizes his son, Indra Budiman, with the hope that he will become a doctor. The story underscores Ompi's conviction that once his son becomes a doctor, he will be able to help the sick and even save lives.

*"Ah, aku lebih merasa berduka cita lagi, karena belum sanggup menghindarkan kemalangan ini. Coba kalau anakku, Indra Budiman, sudah jadi dokter, si mati ini akan pasti dapat tertolong."* (Navis, 2005: 51)

This excerpt highlights Ompi's hope that knowledge in this case, becoming a doctor, can be a means of helping others. Although it appears worldly, there is a transcendental value behind it: the belief that a child's success can be a path toward good deeds and saving lives. From a prophetic perspective, this reflects transcendence because human achievement (becoming a doctor) is not solely for social status but also as a way of performing virtuous acts regarded as worship. The interconnection between knowledge, social service, and faith in God is expressed through Ompi's hopes for his son's future.

*"Sejauh mataku memandang, sejauh aku memikir, tak sebuah jua pun mengada. Semuanya mengabur, seperti semua tak pernah ada. Tapi angin dari gunung itu berembus juga. Dan seperti angin itu juga semuanya lewat tiada berkesan. Dan aku merasa diriku tiada."* (Navis, 2005: 60)

The short story *Angin dari Gunung* carries some deeply reflective tone rich in transcendental values. The excerpt above conveys the feelings of a character who realizes his own "nothingness" when confronted with the vastness of the universe. The mountain wind becomes a metaphor for divine power: eternal, recurring, and beyond human comprehension. The character senses that human life is brief and transient, while the wind (interpreted as God's enduring presence) continues across space and time. This is the essence of transcendence in this short story, awareness of a greatness that transcends the boundaries of human perception and reason. The mountain wind symbolizes a transcendental force: present, eternal, and moving, while humans are fleeting, feeling themselves as "nothing." Transcendence is expressed here through the contemplation of human limitation in the face of nature and God.

*"Tanpa dia, bayang-bayang itu semua sirna. Karena itu semua bayang-bayang memerlukannya. Sangat memerlukannya. Berbeda dengan orang lain, yang tidak pernah peduli dengan bayang-bayangnya sendiri. Karena mereka suka hidup bergelap-gelap di tempat gelap. Seolah-olah bayang-bayang tidak menjadi makhluk penting."* (Navis, 2005: 670)

This excerpt highlights transcendence through symbolism in the short story *Bayang-Bayang*. For the character, shadows are not merely physical phenomena but important markers of existence and connection to the source of light. The assertion that “semua bayang-bayang memerlukannya (all shadows need him)” signifies that humanity fundamentally requires transcendental light in order to live. Meanwhile, those who “hidup bergelap-gelap (live in darkness)” are portrayed as people who disregard the spiritual dimension of life. Shadows thus symbolize the spiritual dimension of human existence, inseparable from and dependent on its divine source of light. Transcendence is revealed here in the reflection that human life cannot be sustained by worldly aspects alone but requires spiritual awareness.

In this way, A.A. Navis presents transcendence through the existential reflections of characters who realize that human life is not only physical but also requires spiritual consciousness. In the context of literary learning, this short story offers students the opportunity to understand how simple symbols such as “shadows” can convey profound prophetic messages.

*“Si Dali ketemu teman lamanya di kapal Kerinci yang berlayar dari Padang ke Jakarta, sebagai penumpang kelas tiga.”* (Navis, 2005: 587)

Through *Penumpang Kelas Tiga*, A.A. Navis reminds readers of the importance of spiritual awareness. Life in this world is but a brief journey; thus, the essential matter is how humans preserve faith, morality, and good deeds as provisions for the final destination: God.

The excerpt conveys transcendence through the symbolism of the ship and its voyage. The character, a third-class passenger, is not merely undertaking a physical journey from Padang to Jakarta, but also symbolically enacting humanity’s inner journey toward its ultimate purpose. The notion of “kelas tiga (third class)” evokes humility and the impermanence of worldly existence, underscoring that humans do not hold complete control over themselves, for in essence, they are merely passengers in a transient world.

### **3. Moral-Transcendental Construction**

Based on the analysis above, the moral-transcendental construction in A.A. Navis’ short stories is built upon two main pillars: **humanization** and **transcendence**. Humanization teaches respect for human dignity, social justice, compassion, and solidarity. Transcendence emphasizes that true faith must be integrated with social action, existential awareness, and the interconnectedness of human beings with God. These two values merge to form a prophetic moral-transcendental model that is highly relevant for literary learning, as it instills both religious and social consciousness in students.

Humanization represents the concrete manifestation of morality within the social dimension. Morality is not merely abstract, but is present in real life, as reflected in A.A. Navis’ short stories: when people respect the dignity of the poor (*Robohnya Surau Kami*),

when knowledge is used to help others (*Anak Kebanggaan*), when family affection is upheld, or when brotherhood is prioritized (*Penumpang Kelas Tiga*). All these values are examples of morality within the framework of Kuntowijoyo, referred to as the value of humanization.

Meanwhile, the transcendental construction in Navis' short stories emphasizes that genuine faith is not passive and individualistic, but dynamic, integrative, and extending beyond the self in devotion to both God and fellow human beings. The essence of transcendence lies in human awareness of God's presence, commitment to the divine mandate, and the recognition that worship through ritual has no true meaning without social concern.

**Tabel 1. Moral Construction of Humanization Values**

Short Story	Main Quote	Meaning of Humanization	Value Indicators
<i>Robohnya Surau Kami</i>	"Sebagai penjaga surau, Kakek tidak mendapat apa-apa... hanya sedekah."	Criticism of social injustice; faith must be expressed in social concern.	Social empathy, respect for human dignity.
<i>Anak Kebanggaan</i>	"Rumah-rumah orang kita masih kuno... anakku akan membantu membuat rumah yang lebih indah."	Knowledge must serve the community.	Education for humanity.
<i>Anak Kebanggaan</i>	"Kau tentu sayang pada mereka... Dan kau tentu bahagia."	Human happiness lies in family affection.	Family love, emotional bonds.
<i>Bayang-bayang</i>	"Si Dali terus diiringi bayang-bayang..."	Human existence is inseparable from others.	Solidarity, social responsibility.
<i>Penumpang Kelas Tiga</i>	"Mereka berangkulan dengan kedua tangan..."	Humanity is realized in brotherhood and sincerity.	Brotherhood, social bonds.

**Tabel 2. Transcendental Construction of Transcendence Values**

Short Story	Main Quote	Meaning of Transcendence	Value Indicators
<i>Robohnya Surau Kami</i>	"Kami yang menghadap-Mu ini umat paling taat... tapi Engkau memasukkan kami ke neraka."	Ritual worship without social concern is rejected by God.	Integrated faith and social charity.
<i>Robohnya Surau Kami</i>	"Aku beri kau negeri kaya raya, tapi kau malas..."	True faith requires managing divine trust.	Divine mandate, productive work.
<i>Anak Kebanggaan</i>	"Coba kalau anakku... sudah jadi dokter, si mati ini pasti tertolong."	Success must be a means for good deeds.	Knowledge as worship.
<i>Angin dari Gunung</i>	"Sejauh mataku memandang... aku merasa diriku tiada."	Awareness of human limitation before God.	Spiritual reflection.
<i>Bayang-bayang</i>	"Semua bayang-bayang memerlukannya... orang suka hidup bergelap-gelap."	Shadows symbolize the soul's need for divine light.	Spiritual awareness.
<i>Penumpang Kelas Tiga</i>	"Si Dali ketemu teman lamanya... sebagai penumpang kelas tiga."	Life is a transient journey toward God.	Humility, impermanence of the world

#### 4. Implications for Literary Learning

Overall, these six short stories demonstrate that A.A. Navis successfully instilled prophetic values that remain relevant across generations. The implications for literature education in high schools are significant. His works can be used to sharpen students' skills in symbolic interpretation, cultivate spiritual sensitivity, nurture human empathy, and foster critical attitudes toward social injustice. By incorporating Navis' works into the classroom, literature becomes not merely reading material, but also a medium for the transformation of values shaping a generation that is faithful, empathetic, and courageous in upholding truth.

A.A. Navis' short stories hold strong relevance for high school literature instruction because they are rich in values of transcendence and humanization. *Robohnya Surau Kami* teaches students to interpret the collapse of the mosque as a critique of ritualistic religiosity devoid of social concern, thereby fostering the awareness that true worship must lead to solidarity. *Anak Kebanggaan* guides students to understand education as a path of service rather than mere prestige, framing knowledge as both a humanitarian instrument and a spiritual pursuit.

In *Angin dari Gunung*, students are invited to reflect on human transience before divine power and to appreciate simple family happiness as the foundation of humanity. *Bayang-bayang* trains students in interpreting symbols and raises awareness that a relationship with God cannot be separated from social responsibility. *Penumpang Kelas Tiga* conveys values of solidarity, brotherhood, and humility, which can be instilled through discussions of life's journey as a metaphor for the human spiritual journey.

Meanwhile, *Penangkapan* presents sharp social criticism of injustice, making it valuable teaching material for fostering critical thinking, courage, and concern for human dignity. Thus, literature learning through Navis' works not only develops textual comprehension, but also shapes students' religious, empathetic, and critical character.

#### **D. CONCLUSION**

This study shows that A.A. Navis's short stories are built upon a moral-transcendental construction that integrates two central pillars: transcendence and humanization. Transcendence appears in the awareness that worship is meaningless if detached from social responsibility, in the call to manage divine trust in the world, and in the constant reminder of the human condition before God. Humanization, on the other hand, is reflected in Navis's critique of injustice, his emphasis on human dignity, the importance of family love, and the values of solidarity and brotherhood.

The findings suggest that prophetic literature is not only a source of aesthetic pleasure but also a vehicle for moral and spiritual guidance. Within the context of teaching, Navis's works can serve as valuable resources for character-based literary learning. They offer opportunities for students to engage in interpretation while at the same time nurturing religious awareness, empathy, social sensitivity, and critical reasoning. In this way,

literary learning can play a holistic role by combining cognitive, affective, and spiritual growth.

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