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**BUILDING THE STUDENTS' CHARACTERS THROUGH  
MORAL VALUES CONTAINED IN THE STORY OF AJISAKA,  
A FOLKTALE FROM CENTRAL JAVA**

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***Abstract***

Folktales are important media which can be used to build the students' characters, as they are rich of moral values. One of well-known folktales in Central Java is the story of Ajisaka. This story is the origin of Javanese letters named Dhentawiyanjana or Carakan Letters (*ha, na, ca, ra, ka*, and so forth). There are four characters contained in this story, namely Ajisaka, his faithful followers (Dora and Sembada), and Prabu Dewatacengkar, from whom this story is harvesting moral values. This article analyses some moral values contained in the story of Ajisaka, a folktale from Central Java, to build the students' characters. There are some characters of the students which are expected to be built after they read or listen to the story of Ajisaka. The moral values contained are about leadership, bravery, helpfulness, faithfulness, honesty, and responsibility.

**Keywords:** Students' characters, moral values, folktale, Ajisaka

**INTRODUCTION**

Ideally, character building is the most important goal in education. Widiyati (2017: 35) suggests teachers to adapt local wisdom as teaching materials and include it in teaching and learning process. The students are expected to achieve some experiences from the joyful learning process so that they can be tough and competent in global competition. The teachers should create positive atmosphere in maximizing their roles in building the students' character. Learning media are the message, too (Kellner, 2006: 108). This statement is due to the fact that the contents are the media in transforming message. Besides, the media themselves have peculiarity in the process of information distribution.

In the term of genre or text type, folktales belong to narrative or fictional short story. Ryan (2010: 125) states that narrative has a subject and comprises the doer of the action and the voice of the story teller. Meanwhile, Mutiara and Urip Tanggoro (2015: 21) define a short story as fictional work of

prose which is shorter than a novel in its length. Moreover, it usually contains only few characters. Thus, a short story deals with only one central theme, one main character, and one plot. It focuses only on a single effect conveyed in few significant scenes. "There is often little action, hardly any character development, but we get a snapshot of life." Furthermore, it serves us a certain impression of the world in which we live.

Indonesia has many folktales which are rich of moral values. One of them is the story of Ajisaka which comes from Central Java. This story is the origin of Javanese letters named Dhentawiyanjana or Carakan Letters (*ha, na, ca, ra, ka; da, ta, sa, wa, la; pa, dha, ja, ya, nya; ma, ga, ba, tha, nga*). Actually, these Javanese letters are still taught at elementary schools, junior high schools, and senior high schools. It is one of materials in Javanese language subject. Unfortunately, the history behind its origin is never explained to the students, so that most of Javanese students still feel unfamiliar with the story of Ajisaka.

This article analyses some moral values contained in the story of Ajisaka, a folktale from Central Java, to build the students' characters. It starts with the story of Ajisaka itself which is often retold in story telling competitions. Then, it continues with the intrinsic elements of the story which explores its character, setting, conflict, plot, and theme. Finally, it ends with the moral values contained in the story.

## **DISCUSSION**

### **The Story of Ajisaka**

Once upon a time, there was a young man named Ajisaka in Medang Kawit, Majethi village, Central Java. He was a strong man who liked to help other people. He had a great supernatural power, a magical creese, a powerful turban, and two faithful followers named Dora and Sembada.

One day, Ajisaka wanted to wander. He chose Dora to accompany him, while Sembada was left to keep his magical creese in Kendeng Mount. "Sembada, please keep this magical creese. Remember, don't give it to anybody, except me," Ajisaka said. "Yes. I will remember that," Sembada replied.

On their wandering, Ajisaka heard a news about the cruelty of a king named Prabu Dewatacengkar. He liked to eat human flesh. He always requested a victim every day. Ajisaka went to Medang Kamulan Kingdom to meet Prabu Dewatacengkar. Prabu Dewatacengkar was a giant. His body was huge and scary. His face was ugly, but Ajisaka did not feel afraid of him. Prabu Dewatacengkar asked Ajisaka to be his meal. "Before you eat me, can I ask one thing?" Ajisaka asked. "What do you want? Just say it!" Prabu

Dewatacengkar replied. "I just want to ask a piece of land as wide as my turban," Ajisaka showed his turban.

Prabu Dewatacengkar agreed, but there was a miracle. When the turban was pulled, it seemed longer and longer. Prabu Dewatacengkar kept going back to pull Ajisaka's turban. Finally, he arrived on the edge of south sea. Ajisaka pulled out the turban until Prabu Dewatacengkar fell into the sea and transformed into a crocodile.

After that, Ajisaka was appointed as a king of Medang Kamulan Kingdom. He commanded the kingdom wisely. One day, Ajisaka instructed Dora to go to Kendeng Mount to take his magical creese which he entrusted to Sembada. At Kendeng Mount, Dora met Sembada and told him what Ajisaka said. Unfortunately, Sembada refused it and said that Ajisaka told him not to give the creese to anyone except Ajisaka himself.

They argued their opinion. Both of them actually were right, as they both carried on what their leader said. Consequently, they were fighting to defend their opinion. Both of them were powerful. They killed each other and then both of them were dead.

Lately, Ajisaka went to Kendeng Mount to see what happened. He was so shocked and sad when he saw both of his faithful followers had been dead. To give an honour to Dora and Sembada, he carved Javanese letters on a stone, named Dhentawiyanjana. The letters are also popular as Carakan Letters.

ha na ca ra ka	There were two followers
da ta sa wa la	They were fighting
pa dha ja ya nya	Both of them were strong
ma ga ba tha nga	They were dead

### **The Intrinsic Elements**

According to Mutiara and Urip Tanggoro (2015: 23), there are five elements which should be contained in a great short story. They are character, setting, conflict, plot, and theme. The character means persons who take part in the action of the short story. The setting covers the time and the place in which the short story happens. It may comprise landscape, scenery, buildings, seasons or weather to provide a strong sense. The conflict describes a struggle between two characters or among characters in the short story. The plot is a series of events or actions connected with the central conflict. The theme is the idea or belief conveyed in the short story.

The story of Ajisaka has heroic theme. It tells a journey of a hero, named Ajisaka. For the people in Medang Kamulan, Ajisaka is their hero as he has saved their lives from the cruelty of a giant named Prabu Dewatacengkar. Furthermore, this story has four characters, namely Ajisaka, Dora, Sembada,

and Prabu Dewatacengkar. Three of them are protagonist characters. They are Ajisaka and his faithful followers (Dora and Sembada). Meanwhile, there is only one antagonist character. He is Prabu Dewatacengkar. The story takes place in Central Java, which covers three places as its setting. The first place is Medang Kawit, Majethi village. The second place is Kendeng Mount. The third place is Medang Kamulan Kingdom. However, this story has sad ending which is a kind of tragedy.

### **The Moral Values**

There are some characters of the students which are expected to be built after they read or listen to the story of Ajisaka. They are leadership, bravery, helpfulness, faithfulness, honesty, and responsibility.

#### **1. Leadership**

From the main character of the story, which is Ajisaka, the students can learn about leadership. Although Ajisaka is still young, he can lead wisely. He has two followers who are very faithful. They are Dora and Sembada. For both of them, Ajisaka is a great leader. After killing a cruel giant, named Prabu Dewatacengkar, Ajisaka is then appointed as a king of Medang Kamulan Kingdom. He is very responsible and wise so that the people there love him as their king so much.

#### **2. Bravery**

The students can learn about bravery also from the character of Ajisaka. He refuses comfort, but he does not mind wandering in his life. Ajisaka also looks very brave when he has to fight Prabu Dewatacengkar. Eventhough Prabu Dewatacengkar is a cruel giant, Ajisaka does not feel afraid of him at all. Ajisaka is so brave that he is successful in killing Prabudewatacengkar.

#### **3. Helpfulness**

The students can learn how to be helpful from protagonist characters of this story. They are Ajisaka and his faithful followers: Dora and Sembada. Although Ajisaka does not know the people in Medang Kamulan, he cares about them and would like to help them. He saves them from the cruelty of Prabu Dewatacengkar. He does not mind sacrificing his life to help them. Furthermore, from Dora and Sembada, the students can learn about helpfulness, too. They both will always help Ajisaka anytime, anywhere, anyhow. They also do not mind sacrificing their lives for him.

#### **4. Faithfulness**

From Dora and Sembada, the students can learn about faithfulness as well. Both Dora and Sembada are Ajisaka's followers who are very faithful. Dora does his duty in accompanying Ajisaka to wander.

Meanwhile, Sembada does his duty in keeping Ajisaka's magical creese in Kendeng Mount. They both never betray Ajisaka and always fulfil what Ajisaka commands them to do. They both are always obedient, even till their death, when they have to kill each other.

5. Honesty

Not only faithful, both Dora and Sembada are also honest. The students can learn about honesty from both of them. When Sembada is commanded to keep Ajisaka's magical creese in Kendeng Maount, he really keeps it with all of his heart. He never uses the creese for his own need. Even when Dora asks him to give him the creese, he rejects. Dora also tells the truth as Ajisaka really commands him to take the magical creese. Both Dora and Sembada never lie in both what they say and what they do.

6. Responsibility

The students can learn about responsibility from all protagonist characters of this story: Ajisaka, Dora, and Sembada. Each of them is really responsible in doing their duty: as a leader or king and as followers. They never neglect what they have to do, even till death do them part. Ajisaka always respect both Dora and Sembada although they both are his followers. Evenmore, Ajisaka gives an honour to both of them when he finds their dead bodies by carving Javanese letters on a stone to commemorate their sacrifice.

## CONCLUSION

There is no specific subject at school which is designed to build the students' characters. However, they can be built by telling the students folktales. This is due to the fact that folktales contain moral values. The story of Ajisaka, a folktale from Central Java, is the origin of Javanese letters named Dhentawiyanjana or Carakan Letters (*ha, na, ca, ra, ka; da, ta, sa, wa, la; pa, dha, ja, ya, nya; ma, ga, ba, tha, nga*). In Javanese language subject, these letters are still taught, but unfortunately the students only learn how to write and read these letters. The history behind these Javanese letters is never retold to the students. This is the teachers' responsibility to retell this story especially to the students in Central Java. They should know the folktale well and be familiar with it. The story of Ajisaka is rich of moral values, such as leadership, bravery, helpfulness, faithfulness, honesty, and responsibility, through which the teachers can build the students' characters.

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