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The Write Stuff

Dewi Lestari, author of the best-selling and critically acclaimed novel *Supernova*, has a confession to make: She has read little Western or Indonesian literature, not even the works of Indonesia's most famous writer, Pramoedya Ananta Toer.

Considering that the 26-year-old first-time novelist has been hailed for both her bold narrative style and her literary promise, the revelation is startling. But Lestari says Indonesia's insular and elitist literary world needs neophytes like her to introduce fresh perspectives—and more readers.

Lestari isn't leading a one-woman revolution. Other Indonesians, too, are trying to make literature more accessible. Once viewed as mere extensions of office-supply stores, bookshops have sprung up in major cities and are enjoying rising sales. Creative writing is slowly becoming an attractive profession.

Still, the fact remains that Indonesians by and large don't read. *Supernova* became a hit by selling just 14,000 copies—not much for a country of 220 million people. A recent study by the writer Ismail, who also heads the literary foundation Yayasan Indonesia, indicated that Indonesian high-school students are never asked to read anything other than textbooks; their counterparts in the United States will consume an average of 30 nontextbooks over the course of their education.

Despite a rich and diverse literary heritage, sales of novels are so slack in Indonesia that many writers get more recognition abroad than at home. Their potential readers are far more likely to turn on the TV than open a book.

If you're looking for signs of literary life in Indonesia, go along to the Aksara bookstore in Jakarta. Opened just a year ago by 30-year-old Winfred Hutabarat—mainly to satisfy his own appetite for books—it has seen sales rise by about 20% a month, and its owner is now planning a second branch.

“There is certainly a market which you can cultivate,” says Hutabarat. Still, he has few illusions about the difficulty in popularizing reading. Hutabarat believes part of the problem is that his customers never had

a chance to develop an interest in literature while at school. Literature is currently not mandatory in the national curriculum. By contrast, other countries use literature as a way of understanding the language, says John McLynn, editor of the not-for-profit publishing house Lontar. “Unless national education policy changes, the prospect for literature remains limited,” he adds.

The curriculum was a product of the New Order regime under former President Suharto, a dictator who found any criticism distasteful. Literature was one of many forms of public expression quashed by the New Order's anti-communist crusade. Scores of writers like Pramoedya were banished to prison, and their writings burned and banned.

Some restrictions issued under Suharto remain. To publish a book, you need the authorization of the attorney-general. But even today, that's still not automatic. Says McLynn: “If there's any hope for Indonesian literature, the government has to step back, regardless of what the literature expresses.”

Another hindrance to a sustained literary renaissance is evident at book launches, where the crowd is nearly always the same. Novelist Lestari says some members of this tight-knit group call her “a bastard child.” They don't like the fact that she doesn't have a background in literature, sings with a pop group, and poses happily for glossy magazines.

But for all the efforts at fostering and preserving Indonesian literature, there is a less visible threat to its growth. “Many writers become celebrities,” says publisher Winarno. “They lose sight of producing literature.” For now at least, that's the path Dewi Lestari seems to be following. Despite having expanded the audience for books, she isn't interested in other authors or even in writing another novel; her next project is a solo pop album. “It's better to diversify one creation than to put out 10 titles,” says Lestari. The “creation,” it seems, is not her writing, but herself.

Dini Djalal, Far Eastern Economic Review, November 1, 2001

- 1 What is implied about Dewi Lestari at the beginning of the article?**
- A Her commercial success is due to marketing rather than literary talent
 - B She wants to become part of the literary establishment in Indonesia
 - C Her first novel was intended as an attack on male Indonesian literature
 - D She has an unconventional background for a successful writer
- 2 What is said in connection with the current situation for literature in Indonesia?**
- A There are signs that interest in literature is on the increase
 - B Most Indonesians appear to lack the basic ability to read
 - C Reading books is rapidly becoming the country's favourite pastime
 - D Literature never had a strong position in the Indonesian area
- 3 What are we told about the relationship between education and literature in Indonesia?**
- A Many schools are now encouraging students to read novels in their spare time
 - B Indonesia is hardly any different from most other countries
 - C Students are not required to read any kind of fiction
 - D There is a general policy specifying what works should be read at school
- 4 What is said about freedom of literary expression in today's Indonesia?**
- A Being granted permission to publish a book is just an empty formality
 - B There are still certain negative effects from earlier times
 - C Outspoken writers risk being jailed by the authorities
 - D The government has declared itself neutral as regards literary content
- 5 What is suggested in the final paragraph?**
- A Only writing is hardly enough for Dewi Lestari's ego
 - B Indonesian literature can only be understood as part of the pop culture
 - C Lestari's creativity will soon manifest itself in a new book
 - D Writers without celebrity status have no future in Indonesian literature

Please turn over

William Randolph Hearst

From a review of a biography by David Nasaw

We all know how the publishing tycoon William Randolph Hearst ends his days. He is a hollow hulk of a man entombed in a Charles Addams mausoleum of art. Even his drunken harpy of a mistress has abandoned him. He shuffles toward death through Xanadu's darkened galleries, his impotence mocked by the statuary he has spent a lifetime lifting from the palaces of Europe. That, of course, was Orson Welles in the movie "Citizen Kane," but for most of us Charles Foster Kane and William Randolph Hearst are indistinguishable; they morphed into the archetype of the demagogic press baron who menaces democracy by cynical manipulation and enriches himself in the process.

"Citizen Kane" happens to be a distorted portrait of Hearst, but it has for generations suborned our perceptions because Kane was created by an artist. History has more to fear from an artist than a hack. We see Richard III as a "poisonous hunch-back'd toad," though he didn't have a hunchback at all, because Shakespeare's intent was to epitomize evil and its inevitable retribution. Welles, similarly, cannot allow his monster to depart, as he did in truth, amid light and flowers at San Simeon, entertained in his final happy years by the wittiest people in the world, attended to devotedly by Marion Davies, his movie star companion of 35 years, because that finale would suggest redemption for a man who had betrayed the socialist ideals dear to the young Welles.

David Nasaw's absorbing and ingeniously organized new biography might finally rescue Hearst from the curse of Kane. "The Chief" is not an authorized biography, but the Hearst family and the Hearst Corporation gave Nasaw, a history professor at the City University of New York, the keys to personal papers stored in a Bronx warehouse since the 1920's, and the San Simeon papers secured in a ranch bunkhouse after W.R.'s death in 1951 at the age of 88.

Nasaw was a good choice. He is a meticulous researcher and a cool analyst. His Hearst is altogether a larger, more sympathetic figure than the vindictive, humorless crypto-fascist seen by the left. He does not exculpate Hearst, the propagandist who signed up Hitler and Mussolini and flayed Franklin D. Roosevelt as a Communist dupe. He explains him and makes him human. We empathize with him as a lover in his 80's writing poems to Davies, whose descent into alcoholism all but broke his heart. We are entertained by paradox. Nasaw shows us a tyrant who is always courteous to his staff, so personally gentle he cannot bring himself to sack the hopelessly incompetent. He spends fastidious millions on his dream homes but instructs his staff to trap mice live so they can be set free on the grounds. He is a pioneer of slash-and-burn assaults on public figures who draws the line at ferreting into private lives.

Nasaw's explanation of Hearst's anti-Communism is credible, but it is harder to swallow W.R.'s response to Hitler and Mussolini. The Hearst press did report the Nazi violence, rather more than The Times of London under Geoffrey Dawson, and in a private meeting with Hitler in 1934, Hearst did make a personal appeal for the Jews. But he gravely misjudged his man. It was a singular failure that he was blind to the realities of Nazi rule and Nazi anti-Semitism. His isolationism was one of the key factors in America's fatal hesitation before the world blew up.

At the end of his examination of all the material, Nasaw confesses that Hearst's confidence in Hitler remains "baffling." The conclusion is symptomatic of the scrupulous honesty that distinguishes this biography of the most powerful publisher America has ever known: Welles got that part right.

Harold Evans, The New York Times Book Review, July 2, 2000

6 Which of the following statements about the real end of Hearst's life is true?

- A Hearst died alone and in tragic circumstances
- B Hearst's last days are well described in "Citizen Kane"
- C Hearst's death came as a relief to his family and friends
- D Hearst was well cared for by people he liked

7 Why is Richard III mentioned?

- A Neither he nor Hearst was a great believer in human kindness
- B He was treated more unfairly by Shakespeare than Hearst by Orson Welles
- C Both he and Hearst have been portrayed as more disagreeable than they were
- D He would have understood the darker side of Hearst's personality

8 What are we told about David Nasaw's book?

- A It tends to play down the importance of Hearst as a publisher
- B Its publication was disliked by the Hearst family
- C It suffers from a lack of interest in Hearst as a person
- D Its portrait of Hearst challenges some earlier views

9 How is Hearst described by Nasaw?

- A As an insensitive bully
- B As a kind-hearted dictator
- C As an unreliable charmer
- D As a power-obsessed bore

10 What is Nasaw's attitude to Hearst's political views, according to the text?

- A He finds Hearst's belief in Hitler difficult to explain
- B He regards Hearst as a firm supporter of anti-Semitism
- C He shares most of Hearst's anti-Communist ideas
- D He ignores evidence against Hearst's Nazi sympathies

11 What is the reviewer's main impression of Nasaw's book?

- A Its value is diminished by some remaining mysteries
- B It is likely to confirm the public image of Hearst
- C Nasaw has hidden nothing from his readers
- D Orson Welles would have liked it a great deal

Please turn over

And here are some shorter texts:

A Question of Climate

The long-term stability of Earth's climate system is an important question, but one that remains elusive. Despite progress in short-term weather prediction (based on improved quality and quantity of observations, faster computers and better understanding of the system dynamics), our understanding of long-term climate dynamics is still quite primitive. Part of the problem, of course, is that the further back into the past we go, the more difficult it is to reconstruct which path the climate system has followed. When we still don't know what has happened, how can we reconstruct why?

12 What is the main point of the text?

- A Earth's climate in a long-term historical perspective is still largely a mystery to researchers
- B Long-term precision in weather forecasting is steadily improving
- C Weather forecasts will to a large extent have to remain qualified guesswork
- D Technological progress has made the causes of climate change increasingly clear

Children's Health

Children are often more susceptible than adults to chronic coughing, bronchitis and asthma—and researchers from the University of North Carolina think they know why. In a recent study William D. Bennett and his colleagues had children inhale harmless carnauba wax particles and measured the quantity of wax left per unit of lung surface area using a laser device. They found that children retain 35 percent more of the airborne particles they inhale on the surface of their lungs than adolescents and adults do. Similarly sized particles are extremely prevalent in urban air pollution.

13 Why, according to the text, do children suffer more than adults from chronic coughing and similar diseases?

- A Children's lungs resist polluted air less efficiently than adults'
- B Children breathe more polluted air than adults
- C Children's lungs are smaller than adults'
- D Children are less accustomed to harmful particles than adults

Victorians

A trawl through some of the broadsheet journalism written about the Victorians in the past few years reveals some tremendous, if routine, inaccuracies about the double standards of the age, chestnuts of piano legs being covered with drapery lest they inflame the sensibilities of the young, etc.

14 What is suggested in this passage about the Victorians?

- A The constant talk of their low moral standards has no ground
- B The popular picture of them is not quite truthful
- C Their taste for heavy drapery and furniture went too far
- D Their reputation as absurd moralists is well-earned

French Universities

Conservative in outlook and desperate to safeguard their own traditions in difficult circumstances, French universities are impatient to winnow out the weak students as quickly as possible, the sooner to get on with the business of being proper universities. They have simply been landed with the job of selection—later, more expensively, and more painfully for the students—that the state refuses to permit earlier.

15 What is implied here?

- A French universities have lowered their standards to achieve better results
- B Too many weak students in France are allowed to finish their university studies
- C The state sees no need to regulate the intake of students at French universities
- D University education in France is about to be reformed to suit all kinds of students

H. G. Wells

Despite the enduring popularity of much of his fiction, posterity has not been kind to the reputation of H. G. Wells. At the time of his death in 1946, he was revered by many as a prophet, a polymath whose wide knowledge and far-sighted vision could be relied upon as a guide to the rational reorganisation of public and personal life. As the years have worn, however, faith in the utopianism he preached has steadily declined until it now even looks a little quaint.

16 What are we told about H. G. Wells?

- A His once very popular novels are now hardly read at all
- B His popularity today rests on his stories, not on his philosophy
- C In his lifetime he was more respected for his ideas than for his books
- D Most people never really understood his social and political views

In the following text there are gaps which indicate that something has been left out. Study the four alternatives that correspond to each gap and decide which one best fits the gap. Then mark your choice on your answer sheet.

Did I or Didn't I?

All memories are not created equal, at least for the elderly. A study has found that they recall what they *ought to* do—say, take their medicine—but often forget whether or not they've done it, possibly over- or under-medicating themselves in the process.

“Prospective memory,” or remembering to perform actions in the future, may be difficult at first for the aged, says psychologist Gilles Einstein, PhD, of Furman University in Greenville, South Carolina. Once a task becomes routine, they get it down pat, but may then confuse doing the act with thoughts**17**..... them to do it.

Einstein asked young and older adults to press a key once during each of 11 computer tasks involving verbal, perceptual and motor skills. Unlike younger subjects, the older folks**18**..... neglected to press the key early in the experiment, then pressed it too many times towards the end—when they remembered to perform the action, they'd already done it, and did it again.

Einstein cites two sources for such errors. First, distinguishing between what you've done and what you imagined you did becomes harder with age. “A task like trying to remember your medication is ripe for**19**.....,” he notes. The elderly also tend to forget exactly *when* they performed acts, likely because the brain doesn't fully encode it.

Ironically, a note reminding subjects to press the key only confused them further: “It created more thoughts about the action, which led to more uncertainty,” says Einstein. To separate fact from**20**....., think carefully about a task as you're performing it. Advises Einstein: “Swirl a pill around your mouth slowly and you'll remember it.”

- 17** A discouraging
B allowing
C challenging
D reminding

- 18** A consistently
B probably
C seemingly
D deliberately

- 19** A memory
B ignorance
C confusion
D improvement

- 20** A lying
B fiction
C forgetting
D action

Camille Chatterjee, Psychology Today, November/December 1998

That is the end of the English test. If you have time left, go back and check your answers.