ABSTRACT

This study is an attempt to describe the historical development of children and young adults’ in Malaysia form 1976 to 2006. It also provides a bibliographic description and quantitative analysis of Malaysian award winning children and young adults’ literature by describing frequency of book awards and writing competition, prizes and organisations involved, genres, winning authors and categories by children and young adults. This study uses a mixed approach of historical research and bibliographic study. Historical method is used to study the contents of sources, both primary and secondary such as journal articles from Dewan Sastera, Dewan Siswa, books, newspaper reports and printed programmes in order to put into chronology the events that lead up to the organisation and development of children and young adults’ literary prizes in Malaysia. Subsequently, descriptive statistics is used to describe the frequency of awards, genres, organisations involved, categories, years of awards, prizes value and the winning authors and their works. In the early years, writing competitions were mostly organised by DBP, a government agency; in this era, the private sector had overtaken the government in organising and sponsoring literary prizes. Utusan Group of Companies which started the Utusan Literary Prize in 1985 is now the most active organisation to sponsor and manage literary prizes in Malaysia, having held a total of 45 competitions. Altogether, there are 51 awards by name which had held 130 writing competitions for both children and young adults’ literature between the year 1960 and 2006. From the number of 130 writing competitions, the most number was for short stories (n=66), followed by 38 competitions for novels and 15 for poetry with the least is for drama (8) in both children and young adults’ literature prizes. Bank Rakyat had concentrated on short story and poetry while
Utusan has been concentrating on novels and short stories. Other organisations, like the Unity Department and Environment Department had only focused on short stories, so have MPH Bookstore. DBP is the organisation which had given the most awards for children’s literature over the years; that is, 16 awards out of 24 awards for children literature. Nevertheless, most of the awards had been given prior to 20 years ago. The number of young adults’ literary awards overwhelmed children’s literary awards by a ratio of 4.7:1 (82.3%). The period between 1991-2000 has the most competitions been held for both children and young adults literature. The National Book Prize had been given from 1991 till 1996 before it was terminated. Over the span of 50 years, there had been 699 writers for all the 969 winning titles of all genres which cover the writing competitions. 40.2% (n=390) of the prizes are won by authors who have won twice or more, while 59.8% (n=579) of the prizes are won by one time winners. From the 80 prizes for the four book awards; 51 (63.8%) had no winners which are attributed to not fulfilling to judges’ expectations. This phenomenon exhibits the lack of quality or the much needed improvement in quality for our children and young adult literature. Prizes value range from RM3 000 in 1982, to the present of RM20 000 for young adults’ novels. Prizes for short stories vary widely. The National Book Prize awarded RM5 000 and a certificate for the main prize and RM2 000 for each category. The MBBY-Bitara Book Award does not offer monetary prize but a certificate and a log of acknowledgement on the winning book.
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Last but not least, I am pleased with myself for having undertaken and complete this study which is very important for the development of research into children and young adults’ literature of Malaysia. With the completion of this study, I had learnt research in the true sense which will help me in my professional development.

Nor Alina Ong

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ABSTRACT</td>
<td>ii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACKNOWLEDGEMENT</td>
<td>iv</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TABLE OF CONTENTS</td>
<td>v</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LIST OF TABLES</td>
<td>xii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LIST OF FIGURES</td>
<td>xiv</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS/ ACRONYMS</td>
<td>xv</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER 1 BACKGROUND TO THE RESEARCH</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.1 Introduction</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.2 Definition of Children and Young Adults’ Literature Awards</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.3 Brief History of Children’s Literature</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.4 Purpose of Awards</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.5 Role of Literary Awards in Improving Standards</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.6 The Importance of Children’s Literature Awards to Teachers and School Libraries</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.7 Scope and Significance of The Study</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.8 Objectives</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.9 Research Questions</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.10 Limitations of the Study</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.11 Summary</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER 2 LITERATURE REVIEW</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.1 Introduction</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2 Awards from the United States of America</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2.1 American Library Association (ALA related awards)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2.2 Awards administered by International Reading Association (IRA)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
2.2.3 Awards administered by The National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE)
2.2.4 Other United States Children and Young Adults’ Literary Awards

2.3 Awards from the United Kingdom 39
2.3.1 The Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professional (CILIP) Awards
2.3.2 Awards Administered by Booktrust
2.3.3 Other United Kingdom Children and Young Adults’ Literary Awards

2.4 Awards from Canada 51
2.4.1 Canadian Library Association (CLA) related awards
2.4.2 Awards administered by Canadian Children’s Book Centre
2.4.3 Other Canadian Children and Young Adults’ Literary Awards

2.5 Awards from Australia 61
2.5.1 The Children Book Council Book of the Year Award
2.5.2 The Aurealis Awards
2.5.3 Children’s Peace Literature Award
2.5.4 Environment Award for Children’s Literature
2.5.5 YABBA Award — Young Australians’ Best Books Award
2.5.6 Dromkeen Medal
2.5.7 Ena Noel Award

2.6 Awards from New Zealand 66
2.6.1 Library and Information Association of New Zealand Aotearoa (L1ANZA) related awards
2.6.2 Children’s Literature Foundation of New Zealand
2.6.3 Other New Zealand Children and Young Adults’ Literary Awards

2.7 Other International Literary Awards 73
2.7.1 Hans Christian Andersen Medal
2.7.2 IRA Children’s Book Awards
2.8 Notable Reading lists of Children’s Literature
2.8.1 Booklist
2.8.2 The Bulletin of the Centre for Children’s Books:
2.8.3 Notable Books for Children
2.8.4 Reading Rainbow.
2.8.5 Publishers’ Weekly Children’s Bestsellers List.
2.8.6 Storylines Children’s Literature Foundation of New Zealand Notable Books List

2.9 Databases of Children’s Literature Awards
2.9.1 DAWCL
2.9.2 Children’s Literature Website
2.9.3 The Children’s Literature Web Guide.
2.9.4 Vandergrift’s Children’s Literature Page
2.9.5 Awards and Prizes Online by the Children’s Book Council
2.9.6 The San Francisco Bay Area School Ratings Website

2.10 Summary

CHAPTER 3 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY
3.1 Introduction
3.2 Research Framework
3.3 Research Methodology
3.4 Sampling and Data Collection
3.5 Data Analysis
3.6 Limitations of the Study
3.7 Summary

CHAPTER 4 A REVIEW OF CHILDREN AND YOUNG ADULT’S LITERATURE IN MALAYSIA
4.1 Introduction
4.2 A Short History of Literary Awards in Malaysia
CHAPTER 5  MALAYSIAN NATIONAL CHILDREN’S AND YOUNG ADULTS’ LITERARY AWARDS

5.1 Introduction 123
5.2 Literary Awards Organised or Administered by Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka (DBP) 124
5.3 Mobil Literary Prizes 134
   5.3.1 Mobil-MABOPA Children’s Book Award 1995 (Anugerah Buku Kanak-kanak Mobil-MABOPA 1995)
   5.3.2 Mobil-DBP Children’s Short Story Prize (Hadiah Cerpen Kanak-kanak Mobil-DBP 1998)
5.4 Esso-Gapena Literary Prizes (Hadiah Sastera Remaja Esso-Gapena) 135
5.5 Siswa-Bank Rakyat Literary Prize (Hadiah Sastera Siswa-Bank Rakyat) 143
5.6 Utusan Group Literary Prizes (Hadiah Sastera Kumpulan
CHAPTER 6
QUANTITATIVE ANALYSIS OF NATIONAL CHILDREN AND YOUNG ADULTS' AWARD WINNING LITERATURE

6.1 Introduction
6.2 Writing Competitions
   6.2.1 Frequency of Prizes and Organisations Involved
   6.2.2 Children and Young Adults Categories by Genre
6.2.3 Frequency of Prizes by Ten Year Periods.

6.3 Book Awards

6.3.1 Frequency of Prizes and Organisations Involved
6.3.2 Prizes Awarded by Genre and Category of Works.

6.4 The Prizes Offered

6.4.1 Prizes for Writing Competitions
6.4.2 Prizes for Book Awards

6.5 Prolific Writers

6.5 Summary

CHAPTER 7 CONCLUSION

7.1 Introduction

7.2 The Trend of Malaysian Children and Young Adults’ Literature Awards

7.3 The Extend of Publication and Research on Children and Young Adults’ Literature

7.4 The Organisations and Genres Involved

7.5 Children and Young Adults’ Literature and Their Genres

7.6 Ten Year Periods

7.7 Book Awards

7.8 The Winning Authors’ Works

7.9 The Prizes Offered

7.9.1 Prizes for Writing Competitions
7.9.2 Prizes for Book Awards

7.10 Significance and Recommendations

7.11 Limitations of the study

7.12 Conclusion
LIST OF TABLES

Table 2.1 Earliest Literary Awards by Country 81
Table 2.2. Number of Awards by Genres 83
Table 2.3. Number of Awards by Types 84
Table 2.4. Bodies and Agencies that Sponsor/Administer Awards 86
Table 2.5 Awards by Country 233
Table 2.6 Awards by Country and by Chronology 234
Table 2.7 Genres, Types and Organisations of Awards 235
Table 5.1 Winners for writing competitions organized by DBP from 1957-2005 127
Table 5.2 Winners for Esso- GAPENA Short Story Prize since 1979 136
Table 5.3 Winners for Esso- GAPENA Literary Prize for Young Adults’ Literature 140
Table 5.4 Winners for Siswa-Bank Rakyat Literary Prize 1987 – 1997 144
Table 5.5 Winners for short stories from Utusan Melayu-Public Bank Literary Prize from 1986-2005 152
Table 5.6 Winners for Novels for Young Adults from Utusan Melayu-Public Bank Literary Prize from 1986-2005 157
Table 5.7 Winners for Novels in English for Young Adults from Utusan Group Literary Prize 158
Table 5.8 Winners for National Book Prize from 1991-1996 161
Table 5.9 Winners for Hadiah Sastera Perdana Malaysia 165
Table 5.10 Winners for MPH Search for Young Malaysian Writers 172
Table 5.11 Winners for Peraduan Menulis Cerpen Jabatan Perpaduan (Unity Department short story writing competition) 176
Table 6.1 Literary Awards by Genre and Category of Awards 185
Table 6.2 Number of awards given by each organisation 187
Table 6.3 Literary Awards for Writing Competitions by Genres 190
Table 6.4 Cross Tabulation of Genre and Category of Literary Awards 191
Table 6.5 Book award by organiser, category and years given 193
Table 6.6 Total Prizes by Genre and Category of Works 194
Table 6.7 Number of Book Awards with Winners and without Winners 195
Table 6.8 Number of Prizes Won by Winners 198
Table 6.9 Most Prolific Authors of Award Winning Works 199
LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 2.1. Number of Awards by Country 81
Figure 2.2. Number of Awards by Genres and Types 85
Figure 6.1. Number of Awards Given by Each Organisation 189
Figure 6.2. Frequency of Prizes by Ten Year Periods 192
Figure 6.3. Winners by Genre 198
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS/ ACRONYMS

ABBY  American Booksellers Book of the Year
AIP   American Institute of Physics
ALA   American Library Association
CILIP  Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professional
CLA   Canadian Library Association
DAWCL Database of Award Winning Children’s Literature
DBP   Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka
GAPENA Gabungan Penulis Nasional
IBBY  International Board for Books for Young People
IRA   International Reading Association
LIANZA Library and Information Association of New Zealand Aotearoa
MABOPA Malaysian Association of Book Publishers
MBBY  Malaysian Board for Books for Young People
MPH   Malaysian Publishing House
NCTE  National Council of Teachers of English
PELITA Persatuan Penulis Terengganu
PUSTAKA Persatuan Perpustakaan Sekolah Kelantan
PURNAMA Centre for Development and Research in Children and Young Adults’ Literature (Pusat Penyelidikan dan Perkembangan Sastera Kanak-kanak dan Remaja)
YABBA Young Australians’ Best Books Award
YALSA Young Adults Library Services Association (United States)