


## From Ramayana to Sinta Obong: A Comparative Literary Study for Literacy Learning in Higher Education

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### ABSTRACT

This study aims to analyze the transformation of plot, characters, characterization, setting, and themes in Ramayana by Nyoman S. Pendit and Sinta Obong by Adrian Kresna, as well as their implications for literacy education in higher education. Using a qualitative approach and a comparative literature analysis method, the study finds that although both novels share a similar ending, they differ significantly in narrative structure, conflict development, and character representation. Sinta Obong presents a modern reinterpretation by emphasizing psychological depth, introducing more complex layers of setting, and expanding emotional conflicts that do not appear in Ramayana. These transformations illustrate a process of meaning negotiation that reflects shifts in cultural and ideological values. The findings indicate that comparative literary analysis can strengthen students' critical literacy, cultural literacy, and intertextual literacy, making it highly relevant for literacy instruction in higher education.

### Keyword:

character analysis, comparative literature, critical literacy, higher education, narrative transformation, intertextual literacy

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## INTRODUCTION

Strengthening literacy in higher education is an important foundation for the development of students' critical and analytical thinking skills in understanding texts and cultural contexts. The main challenge in academic literacy today is not only related to reading and writing skills, but also the ability to connect various texts intertextually and cross-culturally. Recent studies show that good literacy correlates with students' ability to interpret texts deeply and from a broad perspective ([Gallegos, et al., 2024](#); [Mekuriaa, 2024](#); [Utomo et al., 2024](#)). However, literacy studies in higher education still tend to focus on separate textual analysis, so they have not made much use of a more comprehensive cross-cultural approach ([Rizal, et al., 2024](#)). Texts as teaching materials for literacy are not only needed to improve the ability to understand information but also to integrate diverse cultural perspectives to broaden students' interpretive horizons. In this regard, literary texts offer an alternative solution as a stimulus for students' literacy activities.

The comparative literature approach offers a theoretical framework that allows readers to understand the connections between texts and cultures more comprehensively. This has been emphasized in studies on the relationship between works from various literary traditions ([Remak, 1961](#)). The meaning of a text also becomes more complete when a literary work is placed in a broader historical and cultural context, as explained in classical literary theory studies ([Wellek & Warren, 1963](#)). Literary learning is also enriched when texts are read dialogically across cultural boundaries, as stated in modern comparative literature studies ([Bassnett, 1993](#)). Cross-cultural understanding also develops when literary works are considered in the context of global circulation, as explained in the world literature approach ([Damrosch, 2003](#)). This emphasizes the importance of involving literary text studies in literacy learning.

Studies on the relationship between local and global literature show that most analyses still focus on formal and structural aspects, thus failing to utilize the pedagogical potential of a cross-cultural approach ([Kasimov, 2024](#)). These findings reinforce the need to integrate a comparative literary approach to improve the academic literacy of university students.

Based on these needs, this study examines how a comparison between the Ramayana and Sinta Obong can enrich students' academic literacy, particularly through an understanding of universal themes in two different cultural traditions, as demonstrated in the study on the role of comparative literature in bridging cross-cultural narrative differences (Thompson & Green, 2020). The focus of this research is directed at analyzing the main intrinsic elements of the novel and the contribution of

the comparative literature approach in developing students' cultural understanding and academic literacy.

## **METHOD RESEARCH**

This study employs a qualitative research approach using a comparative literature analysis method. The qualitative approach is selected because the study seeks to explore meanings, transformation processes, and cultural contexts in literary works in depth rather than producing numerical measurements (Creswell, 2014).

This research is designed as a comparative literary study examining two novels, *Ramayana* by Nyoman S. Pedit and *Sinta Obong* by Adrian Kresna. Comparative literature enables the analysis of relationships, similarities, and differences between literary works across different periods and cultural contexts (Damono, 2009). Through this design, the study focuses on the transformation of intrinsic literary elements, including plot, characters and characterization, setting, and themes.

The primary data sources of this study are the two novels analyzed, namely *Ramayana* and *Sinta Obong*. Secondary data consist of books, journal articles, and other scholarly sources relevant to comparative literature, intertextuality, literary transformation, and literacy education in higher education. Literary texts are inherently interconnected with other texts, making theoretical references essential in intertextual analysis (Kristeva, 1980).

Data are collected through close reading and textual analysis of both novels. Close reading allows researchers to examine literary texts in detail, particularly in terms of structure, language, and meaning (Eagleton, 2003). Textual excerpts representing plot development, characterization, setting, and thematic construction are identified, recorded, and classified based on the research focus. The reading process is conducted repeatedly to capture nuances of transformation and shifts in meaning between the texts.

The data are analyzed using a comparative analysis technique by systematically juxtaposing intrinsic elements from both novels. The analysis is guided by the concepts of literary transformation and intertextuality. Literary transformation does not merely replicate earlier texts but involves reinterpretation in accordance with new ideological and cultural contexts (Teeuw, 1984). The analytical results are then synthesized to reveal processes of meaning negotiation and shifts in values reflected

in the two works.

The trustworthiness of the data in this study is ensured through several strategies commonly applied in qualitative research. *First*, theoretical triangulation is employed by applying multiple theoretical frameworks—such as comparative literature, intertextuality, and literary transformation—to interpret the data from different perspectives, thereby enhancing the credibility of the findings (Denzin, 1978). *Second*, persistent observation is conducted through repeated and intensive close readings of both novels to ensure consistency, depth, and accuracy of interpretation. Repeated engagement with the texts allows the researcher to identify stable patterns of transformation and minimize subjective bias in literary interpretation (Eagleton, 2003). *Third*, the criteria of trustworthiness in this study are aligned with the concept of credibility in qualitative research, which emphasizes coherence between data, analysis, and interpretation. Credibility is strengthened by systematically documenting analytical procedures and grounding interpretations in textual evidence (Guba & Lincoln, 1985).

The educational implications of the findings are analyzed by relating the results to the concepts of critical literacy, cultural literacy, and intertextual literacy. Critical literacy encourages readers to engage with texts reflectively and contextually, enabling deeper understanding and critical awareness (Freire, 2005). Therefore, comparative literary analysis in this study is positioned as a pedagogical strategy that is relevant for enhancing students’ critical thinking skills and cultural awareness in higher education.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

### Comparison of the Plots in *the Ramayana* and *Sinta Obong* Novels

Based on the analysis of the plot structure of the *Ramayana* novel and the plot of the *Sinta Obong* novel, it is known that there are similarities and differences in the storylines. This can be explained as shown in Table 1 below.

Table-1 Comparison of the Plots of *the Ramayana* and *Sinta Obong* Novels

Plot in the novel <i>Ramayana</i>		Plot in the novel <i>Sinta Obong</i>	
P1:	Description of the state of the Kosala Kingdom.	P1:	Ravana's desire to marry Batari Sri.
P2:	The <i>Aswamedha</i> ceremony to pray to the gods for offspring.	P2:	Batari Sri's refusal.
P3:	Dasaratha is blessed with offspring (four sons): Rama	P3:	The descent of Dewi Sinta as the incarnation of Batari Sri.
		P4:	Rahwana's desire to marry Dewi Sinta.

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	(son of Queen Kausalya); Bharata (son of Queen Keikeyi); and Laksmana & Satruguna (sons of Queen Sumitra)	P5: The contest that awarded Dewi Sinta.
		P6: Rama's victory in the contest.
		P7: The marriage of Rama and Sinta.
P4:	The period of asceticism of Rama, Bharata, Laksmana, and Satruguna, knights in a forest, led by Resi Wasista.	P8: The abduction of Dewi Sinta, who had already become Rama's wife.
P5:	Maharesi Wismamitra's request for Rama to help him destroy the demons that were disturbing his place of asceticism.	P9: The war between Ravana and Rama.
P6:	Rama's departure with Laksmana and Maharesi Wismamitra to destroy the giant.	P10: The discovery of Ravana's secret powers based on the revelation of Resi Khidir.
P7:	Rama's success in defeating the forest-ruling giant, who was the brother of Ravana (the enemy of the kingdom of Ayodhya).	P11: Ravana trapped between two mountains.
P8:	Rama's visit to the kingdom of Mitila, and his participation in a contest to become the companion of Dewi Sita.	P12: Ravana's defeat by Rama.
P9:	Rama's victory in the contest.	P13: The spread of Ravana's slander about Sinta no longer being pure.
P10:	The wedding ceremony of the four sons of the king of Ayodhya.	P14: Ravana's success in spreading slander that influenced Rama and the people of Ayodhya.
P11:	Rama's nomination as King of Ayodya, as Dasaratha's successor.	P15: Rama's doubts about the purity of Dewi Sinta.
P12:	Mantara's influence on Kaikeyi.	P16: The burning ceremony to prove Sinta's purity.
P13:	Queen Kaikeyi demands that Dasaratha fulfill his promise.	P17: Dewi Sinta's success in proving her purity.
		P18: Description of the heartache experienced by Sinta.
		P19: Dewi Sinta's escape from the kingdom of Ayodya.
		P20: Description of Dewi Sinta's pregnancy.
		P21: The birth of two twin boys, the sons of Dewi Sinta (Batwala and Ramakusya).
		P22: Rama's distress over Dewi Sinta's departure.
		P23: The Horse Offering Ceremony performed by Rama.
		P24: Rama's meeting with the twins (Batwala and Ramakusya).
		P25: The revelation that Rama is the father of Batwala and Ramakusya.

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P14: Bharata is appointed king of Ayodhya.	P26: The whereabouts of Dewi Sinta are revealed.
P15: The exile of Rama, Sita, and Lasmana.	P27: The return of Rama and Sinta.
P16: Rama's success in defeating the forest giant (still a descendant of Ravana).	
P17: The abduction of Goddess Sita by Ravana.	
P18: The rescue of Sita.	
P19: Rama's success in rescuing Sita.	
P20: Rama's doubts about Sita's purity.	
P21: The proof of Sita's purity (the burning of Sita).	
P22: Dewi Sita's success in proving her purity.	
P23: The return of Rama, Sita, and Laksmana to the kingdom of Ayodya.	
P24: Rama's coronation as King of Ayodhya.	
P25: The <i>Aswamedha</i> ceremony, which involves releasing a horse as a sign of the desire to have children.	
P26: The <i>Aswamedha</i> ceremony, which involves releasing a horse as a sign of the desire to have children.	
P27: The birth of Rama and Sita's sons (Lawa and Kusa).	

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### **Plot Comparison: The Beginning of the Story**

Based on an analysis of the plot structure of the *Ramayana* novel and the plot of the *Sinta Obong* novel, it can be seen that there are differences in the beginning of the story. At the beginning of the *Ramayana* novel, there is an introduction/ description of

the Kosala royal family, namely the king of Kosala and his three queens who have not been blessed with children. It then tells of Dasaratha's efforts to have children by performing a ritual. The ritual was successful. Dasaratha was blessed with four sons from his three queens. He named them Rama, Laksmana, Brahmana, and Saturguna. The story then recounts the journey of the sons of the king of Kosala until they reached adulthood and became knights. To become knights, the four sons of the king underwent ascetic training led by a sage in a forest where ascetics lived. From the moment the story of the ascetic training began, conflicts began to arise one after another.

Meanwhile, at the beginning of the story, *Sinta Obong* recounts Rahwana's desire to marry Batari Sri. However, Rahwana is rejected by Batari Sri, dashing his hopes of having the woman he adores. Then Rahwana meets Dewi Sinta. Rahwana considers Dewi Sinta to be the incarnation of Batari Sri, so he is immediately attracted to her. Later in the novel, conflicts arise that lead to Sinta's abduction by Rahwana.

### **Plot Comparison: Conflict Section of the Story**

The conflict in both novels is essentially the same, namely the contest to win Dewi Sinta/Sita, the abduction of Sinta, Rama's doubts about Dewi Sinta/Sita's chastity, the power struggle over the coronation of the king of Kosala, and interference from the giants. Sinta/Sita's beauty made Rahwana/Rawana fall in love with her, so he tried various ways to get her. On the other hand, Sinta had already been married to Rama, which led to a war between Rama and Rawana/Rahwana involving the giants who were his subordinates and brothers. In addition, as Dasaratha (the king of Kosala) grew older, the people of the Kosala kingdom needed a new leader. Dasaratha had three queens, each of whom had a son with him. Thus, a royal family dispute arose over the throne.

The differences between the two novels are as follows. The *Ramayana* novel tells the story of the Mitila kingdom's contest to find a companion for Dewi Sita. The contest was held because Dewi Sita was an incarnation of a heavenly goddess and therefore not suitable to marry an ordinary man. The contest involved breaking the sacred bow owned by the kingdom of Mithila. The bow was a gift from Lord Shiva and was very strong and difficult to break, so whoever was able to break it would prove himself to be a strong warrior who would be able to protect Sita. Rama's victory in the contest not only made Dewi Sita his wife, but also caused Rama to be rebuked by Pasurama, a powerful Brahmin with a large body. Pasurama was angry that the sacred bow had been broken in the contest. However, due to Rama's humility and gentle and wise words, Pasurama's anger was appeased. This is reflected in the following excerpt.

Hearing Rama's words, Pasurama's anger slowly began to subside. He said to Rama, "You are truly powerful for having broken Batara Siwa's bow. Unfortunately... now you dare to lecture me. When your brother belittled me, you remained silent. It seems that your words can diminish my power and belittle my anger." ([pendit 2006, p.87](#))

Meanwhile, the conflict over power in the Ramayana novel concerns Dewi Keikeyi, Bharata's biological mother, who opposes Rama's coronation as heir to the throne. In the novel, it is told that Keikeyi initially agreed to Rama's coronation as king of Kosala. However, Keikeyi was influenced by Mantara, her friend, who made her become petty. Mantara reminded her that if Rama was crowned king, the position of her son Bharata would be threatened. In addition, Mantara reminded Kaikeyi of Dasartha's promise before marrying her, a promise that if Kaikeyi gave birth to a son, she would become the main queen and her son would become the heir to the throne. Finally, Kaikeyi demanded that the king fulfill his promise, not because she was evil, but because of Mantara's incitement.

Mantara bowed his head. Silently, he prepared his heart and mind so that he would not be disappointed when Kaikeyi sincerely accepted Rama's coronation as heir to the throne of Kosala. ([Pendit, 2006:100](#)).

Antara paused for a moment, looking at Kaikeyi's face, which was beginning to show signs of doubt. Then he continued. "Tomorrow, the *rajasurya* ceremony will be held. Rama will be sprinkled with holy water, *abhiseka*, and thus his position as heir to the throne will be confirmed. The ceremony will be witnessed by the people of the capital city of Ayodhya. The center of attention will be on Queen Kausalya, not you. You and Bhatara will not receive any attention whatsoever. ([Pendit, 2006, p.101](#))

This then caused another conflict, because in addition to asking Bharata to become king, Kaikeyi also wanted Rama to be exiled to the Dandaka forest for fourteen years. During the exile, the character of Ravana appeared, who was said to be very fond of Dewi Sita. Ravana made every effort to get Sita, including using trickery. Finally, with his efforts, Ravana succeeded in kidnapping Sita. After Sita was rescued, a new conflict arose, namely Rama's doubts about Sita's purity.

"You have accepted me as your wife. But... because I was kidnapped and abducted by Ravana, you suspect me and think that I have been defiled by that giant." ([Pendit, 2006, p.353](#)).

In the novel *Sinta Obong*, the conflict surrounding the contest to win Dewi Sinta is not accompanied by/mentions directly the reason why/on what basis the contest was held, as is found in the novel *Ramayana*. This can be understood implicitly by connecting it to the part of the plot that tells of Sinta as the incarnation of the goddess Sri, thus making Sinta special. In the novel *Sinta Obong*, the contest itself involves the command to lift a magical bow, without breaking it as described in the novel

*Ramayana*.

The conflict over power in the novel *Sinta Obong* is also caused by one of the king's queens, Dewi Kekayi, in relation to Dasaratha's previous promise to her. However, in this novel, Dewi Kekayi is not influenced by anyone in her rejection of Rama's coronation as king. Her disapproval is purely based on jealousy and the natural instinct of a queen who wants her son, Bharata, to be king.

...immediately left again because of the promise made by King Dasaratha, Rama's father, to another of his wives named Dewi Kekayi, that her son, Raden Bharata, was the rightful heir to the throne of Ayodya, not Rama Wijaya, the son of Dewi Sukasalya" ([Kresna, 2012, p.186](#)).

In addition, in the conflict surrounding the abduction of Dewi Sinta, the novel *Sinta Obong* tells that Rahwana truly loved Sinta, so he did not want to rape or hurt her. Rahwana hoped for Sinta's sincere love because he considered her to be the incarnation of Batari Sri, the woman he once loved. If in the *Ramayana* novel Rama's doubts about Sita's purity are the final conflict, in the novel *Sinta Obong* the conflict continues until Sinta is disappointed by Rama's doubts. In the novel *Sinta Obong*, it is told that Sinta runs away to the forest because of her disappointment with Rama, who requires

Sinta to undergo a burning ceremony as proof of her purity. Sinta considers this a betrayal of Rama's loyalty and trust in her. In addition, Sinta is also said to have run away while pregnant with Rama's child. Only Hanoman knows about her pregnancy.

### **Plot Comparison: Ending**

The *Ramayana* and *Sinta Obong* novels have similarities in that they tell the story of Rahwana/Rawana's defeat by Rama with the help of his friends and relatives. It is also told that after his struggle, Rama was crowned king and lived happily with Sinta/Sita and was blessed with two children.

The difference is that in the *Ramayana* novel, the story ends with Rama's success in defeating Rawana and getting Dewi Sita back. After proving Sinta's purity, Rama is reunited with Sita. Rama is then crowned king of Kosala, to rule the capital city of Ayodya. Rama and Sinta live happily ever after and are blessed with twin sons named Lawa and Kosa. In the *Ramayana* novel, this is the final resolution of the story.

"Thus, the ceremony of Rama's coronation as king of Kosala took place solemnly and well. Upon becoming king, Rama held the *Aswamedha* ceremony, which involved releasing a horse as a sign of his desire to have children." ([Pendit, 2006, p.360](#)).

Later, Rama and Sita had twin sons named Lawa and Kusa. ([Pendit, 2006, p.360](#)).

In the novel *Sinta Obong*, Rama's victory over Rahwana is followed by Rama's doubts about Sinta's purity, which then causes Sinta to run away in disappointment. In the novel, when Sinta runs away to the forest, she is said to be pregnant. Furthermore, in the forest where Sinta fled, it is told about the birth of twin sons from Sinta's womb. The two sons are described as hating Rama, even though Rama is their biological father. Then, in the novel, the final resolution is presented in the form of the meeting between Rama, Sinta, and their twin sons. They then reunite as a happy family.

In addition, in the novel *Sinta Obong*, Rahwana does not die when he is defeated by Rama, because Rahwana has the power to come back to life when he touches the ground. Rahwana's defeat was caused by an arrow given to Rama by the sage Khidir. The arrow did not have the power to kill Rahwana. However, Rahwana felt tormented because the arrow constantly pursued him. The arrow continuously attacked and hurt Rahwana. Finally, Rahwana found a crevice in a mountain that he thought would protect him. Then he entered the crevice. Unbeknownst to him, the crevice was actually the incarnation of Trikala and Kalasepati, the Kalasepati who had once been beheaded by Ravana to deceive Dewi Sinta. This was because Trikala and Kalasepati's faces resembled those of Rama and Lesmana. The mountain crevice narrowed and trapped Rahwana. Realizing that the crevice was getting narrower, Rahwana used his strength to try to free himself from it. He almost succeeded, but Hanoman followed him. Hanoman then stomped on Rahwana's head, preventing him from escaping from the mountain crevice.

### **Comparison of Characters in the *Ramayana* and *Sinta Obong* Novels**

In this discussion, we will discuss characters who are considered essential and play a significant role in the story. The discussion will focus on the similarities and differences between the characters in terms of their portrayal in the *Ramayana* and *Sinta Obong* novels. A comparison of the characters and their portrayal in the two novels can be seen in the following table.

Table 2 Comparison of Characters/Characterization in the novels *Ramayana* and *Sinta Obong*

No.	Characters/Characterization in the novel <i>Ramayana</i>	Character/Characterization in the novel <i>Sinta Obong</i>
1.	Rama: a knight from the kingdom of Kosala; handsome, brave, steadfast, intelligent, gentle, kind, calm, not easily angered, and sociable; once doubted Sita's purity and loyalty.	Rama Wijaya: Mighty, wise, cruel, chose power over his wife; once doubted Sinta's purity and loyalty.

2. Dewi Sita: a goddess of the land of Mithila, a very beautiful princess; gentle and very loyal to her husband; and a little stubborn.	Dewi Sinta: loyal, maintaining her purity from Rahwana; deeply in love with Rama; once doubted Rama; and is the biological daughter of Rahwana and Batari Tari who, at birth, was switched with a male baby from the gandrawa class by Wibisana as a gift from Batari Pertiwi.
3. Rawana: king of Alengka; tyrannical towards his people; king of all evil on earth; will do anything to get what he wants; loves Sita; and once kidnapped Sita.	Rahwana: Evil/source of anger; vengeful; and sincere in his love for Sinta; and possesses the power of immortality/eternal life; and is said to suffer from the torment of an arrow that constantly follows him. The arrow was obtained by Rama from Resi Khidir.
4. Wibisana: full of wisdom and always seeking the true truth.	Gunawan Wibisana: wise, but on the other hand, has committed treason.
5. Laksmana: Rama's younger brother from Dewi Sumitra; very loyal, accompanying Rama wherever he goes; very kind; wise, polite in speech, and prioritizing Rama's interests over his own.	Lesmana: has a chivalrous spirit; loyal to Rama. However, because he has a strong knightly spirit and is loyal to Rama, he does not care whether he is on the right or wrong side in war, namely when he is willing to fight against the kingdoms in Jawadwipa in the white horse offering ceremony desired by Rama, resulting in many casualties among innocent people.
6. Hanoman: a white monkey; son of Dewi Anjani; Rama's loyal servant, he was born and raised in heaven, educated and cared for by the gods; and is powerful and magical.	Hanuman: a hermit from among the monkeys; white in color, Hanuman is kind-hearted.
7. Bharata: Rama's younger brother, son of Dewi Kaikeyi; loves and respects his father, mothers, and siblings.	Raden Barata: Rama Wijaya's younger brother from Dewi Kekayi; a knightly spirit; kind-hearted; respects his father, mother and siblings.
8. Saturguna: son of Dewi Sumitra, Rama's younger brother, and a warrior.	Raden Satrugena, Rama's youngest younger brother from Dewi K Sumitra; chivalrous; kind-hearted; respects his father, mother, and

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siblings.

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9.	Kumbakarna: the second son of Dewi Sukesi and Begawan Wisrawa; the laziest giant; he loves to sleep for months on end and eat as much as ; very powerful; opposed Rawana when he kidnapped Sita; joined the war, not to defend Rawana, but simply because he did not want Alengka to be destroyed.	Kumbakarna, Rahwana's younger brother, also participated in the war against Rama, but he fought against Rama not to defend his brother's desires, which were considered wrong, but to defend his country, Alengka.
10.	King Dasaratha: king of Kosala; father of Rama, Laksmna, Saturguna, and Bharata; obedient to the teachings of the scriptures, wise, prudent, and generous to his people; and the way he made promises to Kaikeyi.	Raden Dasaratha: king of Kosala; father of Rama, Laksmna, Saturguna, and Bharata; wise and kind to his people; and once made a promise to Kaikeyi.
11.	Dewi Kausalya: King Dasaratha's first wife, Rama's mother; steadfast in her life.	Dewi Sukasalya: King Dasaratha's wife, Rama's mother; patient and kind-hearted.
12.	Dewi Kaikeyi: King Dasaratha's second wife, mother of Bharata; once demanded a promise from Dasaratha due to Mantara's influence.	Dewi Kekayi, wife of King Dasaratha, who demanded that her son Barata become king instead of Rama and asked for Rama to be exiled for 14 years; she was jealous and spiteful.
13.	Dewi Sumitra: the third wife of King Dasaratha, mother of Laksmna and Satruguna, steadfast in her life.	Dewi Sumitra: the third wife of King Dasaratha, mother of Laksmna and Satruguna; patient and loving.
14.	King Janaka: the adoptive father of Dewi Sita; King of Mithila; deeply loved and cherished Sita.	King Janaka, the adoptive father of Dewi Sinta, who found Dewi Sinta in a river near his hermitage.
15.	Jatayu: a garuda bird who tried to save Sita when she was kidnapped by Ravana; Jatayu's powers were not as great as Ravana's.	Jatayu: a bird that helped Sita when it spotted Ravana's journey to kidnap Sita.

Based on Table 2, in general, the characters and characterization in the *Ramayana* and *Sinta Obong* novels are similar in terms of character names and characterization/personality. The differences in terms of characterization and origin are found in the main characters Rama and Rama Wijaya, as well as Dewi Sita and Dewi Sinta. In addition, there are also differences in the supporting characters, such as Rahwana , and Rawana; Wibisana and Gunawan Wibisana; and Dewi Kaikeyi and

Dewi Kekayi.

The character of Rama in the *Ramayana* novel is described as having good qualities, with truth almost always surrounding him. He is also a handsome, gallant, steadfast, intelligent, gentle, brave, generous, calm, slow to anger, and sociable knight. Despite his good nature, as a human being, Rama also has flaws. He is said to have once doubted Sita's purity and loyalty. This implies that Rama was not steadfast in his heart, because Sita had actually confessed that she was still pure. Meanwhile, the character of Rama in the novel *Sinta Obong* is depicted as the opposite. He is described as Rama Wijaya, who is brave, powerful, wise, cruel, prioritizes power over his wife, and once doubted Sinta's purity and loyalty.

The character of Dewi Sita in the novel *Ramayana* is described as a beautiful goddess/princess from the land of Mithila, with a gentle nature and very loyal to her husband, but also a little stubborn. This stubbornness is shown in the incident when Sita wanted a deer, which turned out to be the incarnation of a giant, one of Ravana's minions, to trick Rama so that Ravana would have the opportunity to kidnap Sita. Even though Laksmana had warned her about the deer, Sita ignored him. Goddess Sita is also described as the adopted daughter of the king of Mithila. As a baby, she was found by the king, who then adopted her as his royal daughter. Meanwhile, the character of Sinta in the novel *Sinta Obong* is described as a beautiful and loyal princess who loves Rama deeply; she once doubted Rama; and she is the biological daughter of Ravana and Batari Tari, who was switched at birth with a male baby from the gandrawa class by Wibisana at the behest of Batari Pertiwi.

The character of Ravana in the novel *Ramayana* is described as a king who is tyrannical towards his people; the king of all evil on earth; who will stop at nothing to get what he wants; who is very fond of Sita; and who once kidnapped Sita. The difference between him and the character of Rahwana in the novel *Sinta Obong* is that Rahwana in the novel *Sinta Obong* has the supernatural power of immortality; and is said to suffer from the torment of arrows that constantly follow him. Rahwana is also described as sincerely loving Sinta because he considers her to be the incarnation of Dewi Batari Sri, a woman he once loved, but his love was unrequited.

The character Wibisana in the novel *Ramayana* is described as a figure full of wisdom who always seeks the true truth. Meanwhile, in the novel *Sinta Obong*, he is described as Gunawan Wibisana, a wise character who, on the other hand, has committed treason.

The character of Dewi Kaikeyi in the novel *Ramayana* is described as the second wife of King Dasaratha and the mother of Bharata. She is said to have demanded that Dasaratha fulfill his promise to crown Bharata as king. This was due to the influence of Mantara, her friend who incited Kaikeyi to oppose the coronation of Rama as king.

Basically, Dewi Kaikeyi agreed with Rama's selection as heir to the throne, but she became petty due to the influence of her friend. Under the influence of her friend, Kaikeyi also asked Rama and Sita to exile themselves to the forest. The difference between the character of Dewi Kekayi in the novel *Sinta Obong* is that Dewi Kekayi in that novel has been jealous and spiteful from the beginning. Kaikeyi was not influenced by anyone regarding her disapproval of Rama's coronation as king.

Other characters in both novels have similarities in terms of their names and personalities. This is evident in the characters of the royal priests; characters who help Rama when he rescues Sinta/Sita from Rawana/Rahwana, such as Hanoman and Jatayu; characters who are troublesome giants; characters in the royal family, such as King Dasaratha/Prabu Dasaratha, Bharata, and Dewi Kausalya/Sukasalya; and characters who are gods and goddesses of heaven.

### Comparison of the Settings in the *Ramayana* and *Sinta Obong* Novels

This discussion will explore the similarities and differences in the settings of *the Ramayana* and the *Sinta Obong* novel. The following table shows a comparison of the settings in the two novels.

Table 3 Comparison of Settings in the *Ramayana* and *Sinta Obong* Novels

Type of Setting	Setting in the <i>Ramayana</i> Novel	Setting in the Novel <i>Sinta Obong</i>
Place	The Kingdom of Kosala; the hermitage of Resi Wasista; the Kingdom of Mithila; the land of Sringgi; the Dandaka Forest; Subgai Gangga, the Kingdom of Kiskenda; Kahyangan, the Kingdom of Alengka.	The Kingdom of Ayodya; the Kingdom of Alengka; the Citarum River; Mount Gohkarna; Mount Kahyangan Suralaya; Mount Karungrungan; the Kiskenda Cave; the Kingdom of Mantili; Mount Suwelagiri; Mount Kendalisada; Kendalisada; the Dandakan Forest; the Jantaka Forest.
Time	Morning, afternoon, evening, night, months, fourteen years, sixteen years.	Thirteen years; every second; afternoon; the next day; that night; one night; several months earlier; twelve years and sixteen years; day by day; three days later

The setting in the *Ramayana* novel and the setting in the *Sinta Obong* novel are generally similar. The only difference is that the mountainous setting appears frequently in the *Sinta Obong* novel, while in the *Ramayana* novel this setting does not appear. This is because the plot of the novel *Sinta Obong* includes an event where Rahwana is trapped between two giant mountains, while the novel *Ramayana* does not include such an event. Another difference is the length of time Rama and Sita/Sinta are exiled. In the novel *Ramayana*, this event lasts for sixteen years, while in the novel

*Sinta Obong* it lasts for thirteen years.

### **Comparison of Themes in the *Ramayana* Novel and the *Sinta Obong* Novel**

In general, the themes in the *Ramayana* and *Sinta Obong* novels are about romance, specifically a love triangle involving a woman who is loved by two men, as well as the meaning of loyalty and purity in love. In addition, there is also the possibility of another theme, namely the moral theme, which relates to the idea that evil will always be defeated by good. Evil and good themselves in the *Ramayana* and *Sinta Obong* are essentially like two sides of a coin that are inseparable and contradictory. Both will always exist in this world.

### **Implications of the Study Results for Literacy Education in Higher Education**

The results of a comparative literary analysis of the plot, characters, characterization, setting, and themes of the novel *Ramayana* by Nyoman S. Pendit and *Sinta Obong* by Adrian Kresna show that the narrative and ideological transformations that occur in both texts can make an important contribution to the development of literacy education in higher education. The comparison of these two works opens up a space for literacy learning that is oriented towards deep understanding, critical analysis skills, and cultural awareness. This concept is in line with the view that literacy in higher education must go beyond surface reading skills and encourage students to develop high-level interpretive skills ([Shanahan & Shanahan, 2020](#)).

First, the differences in plot structure in the two novels can be used to develop analytical reading skills. *Ramayana* features a traditional linear plot that reflects a classical narrative form, while *Sinta Obong* uses a more reflective, fragmentary, and contemporary plot. By comparing these two plot patterns, students can be trained to understand how story structure shapes meaning. This is in line with the concept of critical literacy, which encourages readers not only to understand the text, but also to question how the text is constructed and why a particular narrative form was chosen ([Moje, 2019](#)). This learning process trains students to read texts deeply and derivatively, thereby strengthening their ability to interpret narrative transformations across time.

Second, character and characterization analysis contributes to the development of character interpretation skills and ideological awareness. The characters in *the Ramayana* are depicted within a stable mythological and moral framework, while *Sinta Obong* presents characters with more complex and human psychological layers. Students can analyze how these changes in characterization signify shifts in modern society's views on themes of love, loyalty, honor, and gender relations. This change in

character representation shows that literary texts are always in dialogue with cultural values. This is in line with the idea that literary works always interact with social and cultural contexts, resulting in the representation of certain identities ([Damrosch, 2022](#)). Thus, character-based learning can strengthen students' critical literacy, especially in understanding the representation of values and ideologies in literature.

Third, the analysis of the setting in both novels supports the development of *cultural literacy*. *Ramayana* presents an epic and religious setting that connects readers to historical and spiritual traditions, while *Sinta Obong* places the story in a contemporary setting that is familiar to modern society. This learning reinforces students' awareness that setting is not merely a physical space, but a cultural construct that reflects certain values and worldviews. [Saussy \(2020\)](#) asserts that comparative literature opens up an understanding of how texts move, change, and are negotiated in different cultural contexts. Thus, analyzing changes in setting helps students develop cultural sensitivity and the ability to read the social context in literary works.

Fourth, the transformation of themes in both novels has direct implications for critical literacy education. Classic themes such as loyalty, honor, and truth in *the Ramayana* are recontextualized in *Sinta Obong* into themes of female resistance, trauma, and criticism of patriarchy. By comparing these two thematic approaches, students can be trained to understand that the meaning of literature is not static but continues to change with the times. This supports the view that readers must be trained to see texts as arenas for negotiating meaning rather than mere conveyors of a single message ([Allen, 2021](#)). Learning activities such as thematic discussions, critical essay writing, and cross-analysis can strengthen students' critical literacy and evaluative skills regarding social discourse.

Overall, a comparative analysis of the two texts reinforces the concept of intertextual literacy, which is the ability to understand a text through its relationship with other texts. Intertextuality as a theoretical foundation states that every text is a mosaic of quotations and the result of the transformation of previous texts ([Kristeva, 1980](#); [Allen, 2021](#)). By utilizing this principle in learning, students can be trained to recognize intertextual relationships, understand the dynamics of adaptation, and identify changes in meaning when classical texts are reinterpreted in a modern framework. This approach is pedagogically very important for higher education because it encourages students to become reflective readers who are able to connect knowledge, social context, and personal experience with literary texts.

Thus, the results of comparative literary studies of *the Ramayana* and *Sinta Obong* not only enrich students' understanding of cross-era literary dynamics, but also form a strategic basis for developing high-level literacy that includes critical literacy, cultural literacy, and intertextual literacy. This learning process supports the direction

of modern literacy education, which emphasizes deep understanding, critical analysis, intertextual dialogue, and students' reflective abilities regarding cultural changes.

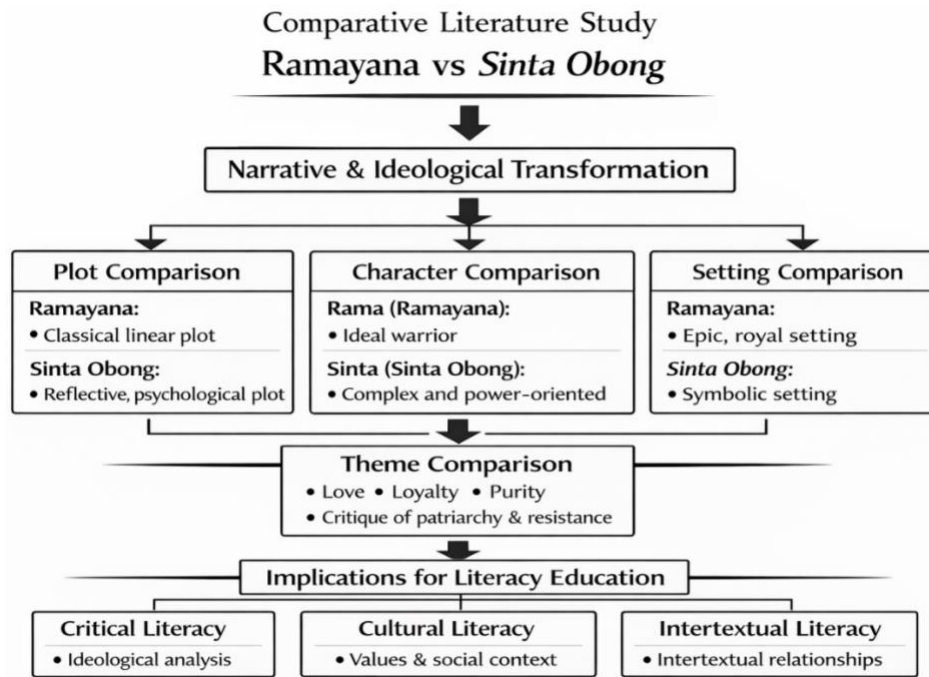


Figure 1. Results and Discussion of Comparative Literary Studies From Ramayana to Sinta Obong.

## CONCLUSION

Based on the results and discussion, it can be concluded that the stories in *the Ramayana* and *Sinta Obong* both end with the happiness of Rama and Sinta/Sita, but the two differ in the sequence of events, the development of the conflict, and the storytelling strategy. The *Ramayana* presents a classic linear plot that ends with the proof of Sita's purity, while *Sinta Obong* presents Rahwana's sincere love and Sinta's escape due to her disappointment in Rama. The conflict of the contest is not explained in detail in this modern version, and Sinta's abduction develops in a more complex manner. Although the characters have similar names, their characterizations are different, as are their settings, with *Sinta Obong* emphasizing mountains and variations in the length of exile. These findings show that the transformation of the plot, characters, setting, and themes in both novels presents a reinterpretation of the cultural and ideological values of the " " which is relevant to contemporary social dynamics. This is an important basis for the development of literacy education in higher education, as it helps students understand texts as a space for negotiating meaning while encouraging critical, reflective, and contextual reading skills.

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