

Narrative Closure in Post-Reform Indonesian Bestselling Novels: A Typology of Ending Techniques

Rifqi Risnadyatul Hudha¹, Wahyudi Siswanto², Karkono³

Abstract

This study investigates how narrative closure is designed in Indonesian best-selling novels produced in the post-reform era (after 1998). Rather than treating endings as a mere point of termination, the study positions closure as a strategic narrative device that consolidates meaning, intensifies affect, and shapes readers' after-reading interpretation. Using qualitative narrative text analysis, the research focuses on the final segments of selected post-reform best-selling novels, including last chapters and attached ending materials such as epilogues, diary entries, letters, photographs, and timelines. Data were analyzed through iterative close reading and systematic coding to identify recurring closure patterns and their narrative functions. The findings yield a typology of eight dominant ending techniques: integration of past events with future projections; open transitions and cliffhanger-like continuations; reflective closure through diaries; documentary-like extensions through chronological traces and photographs; reflective and philosophical closures; motivational endings framed as tips or advice; reflective letters as intimate final address; and the repetition of past–future closure patterns across texts. Across the corpus, endings operate on a dual register: they provide sufficient completion for a given story arc while preserving interpretive space that invites contemplation, sustains emotional bonds with characters, and, in some cases, maintains anticipation for narrative continuation. The study contributes to narratology-informed scholarship on Indonesian popular fiction by offering a systematic typology of closure techniques and demonstrating that the cultural impact of best-selling novels is often concentrated in their last pages, where fictional experience is translated into durable reader reflection.

Keywords: *Narrative Closure, Ending Techniques, Post-Reform Indonesia, Indonesian Best-Selling Novels, Popular Fiction, Typology.*

Introduction

Narrative closure is not simply where a novel stops; it is where the story's meaning is consolidated, emotions are finalized, and readers evaluate whether the narrative questions posed throughout the text have been adequately answered—or intentionally left open. In narratology, endings function as a decisive compositional device that shapes the reader's final interpretation of plot, character development, and thematic direction (Genette, 1980; Abbott, 2008). In this sense, closure operates simultaneously as a structural endpoint and a rhetorical strategy: it determines not only *what* is concluded, but *how* readers remember and re-interpret the story after the last page.

This study locates narrative closure within Indonesia's post-reform era, broadly marked by cultural and political shifts following 1998. The post-authoritarian climate expanded freedom of expression and reconfigured the terrain of cultural production, including popular literature and its modes of circulation (Heryanto, 2008). In literary discussions, this period is often associated with new voices, new sensibilities, and new narrative energies that respond to rapid social change (Aveling, 2007). Within such a landscape, bestselling novels are not merely commercial objects; they are cultural texts that frequently refine storytelling techniques to sustain affect, build attachment, and keep interpretive possibilities alive beyond the narrative's final scene.

¹ A doctoral student of Indonesian Language Education Program, Universitas Negeri Malang, Indonesia, Email: rifqi.risnadyatul.2102119@students.um.ac.id, (Corresponding Author)

² Lecturer in the Indonesian Language Education Doctoral Program, Universitas Negeri Malang, Indonesia.

³ Lecturer in the Indonesian Language Education Doctoral Program, Universitas Negeri Malang, Indonesia

Yet, scholarly attention to Indonesian novels—especially in education and literary pedagogy—has more often concentrated on themes, character psychology, and classroom applicability than on the narratological mechanics of endings. For example, research has examined Indonesian novels as learning resources through character cognition and its pedagogical implications (Huda et al., 2019), explored literary works for their educational tourism potential and local-cultural learning value (Aftina et al., 2021), and analyzed contemporary character types (e.g., the “influencer”) through psychological literary studies (Narahaubun et al., 2021). These approaches confirm the educational and socio-cultural richness of Indonesian novels; however, they also signal a gap: the *ending* as a patterned technique—how closure is designed, diversified, and repeatedly deployed in bestselling Indonesian novels of the post-reform period—remains underexplored.

This gap matters because closure is not a decorative tail-piece; it is a high-stakes narrative move that governs the feeling of finality, the perception of completeness, and the residual tension a reader carries away. Theorists of closure argue that narratives achieve “endingness” by resolving salient questions, though closure may still preserve interpretive space and productive ambiguity (Carroll, 2007; Klauk, 2016; Suharti et al, 2026). Popular bestsellers, in particular, often intensify this dual function by blending resolution with devices that prolong meaning—such as reflective closures, open endings, serial hooks, or future-facing projections—thereby transforming closure into an engine of memory, anticipation, and emotional endurance.

Therefore, this article investigates narrative closure in post-reform Indonesian bestselling novels by proposing a typology of ending techniques through qualitative narrative text analysis. It addresses three guiding questions: **(1)** What recurring narrative closure techniques appear in post-reform Indonesian bestselling novels? **(2)** What functions do these techniques serve in producing resolution, suspense, reflection, and reader engagement? **(3)** What do these patterns suggest about the evolving aesthetics of popular storytelling in post-1998 Indonesia? By mapping closure techniques systematically, this study contributes to narratology-informed scholarship on Indonesian popular fiction and complements existing educational and socio-cultural readings of Indonesian novels with a focused account of how endings operate as strategic narrative design.

Literature Review

Contemporary Approaches to Narrative Closure and Ending Design

Recent narratological scholarship increasingly treats endings as a technical site where interpretive authority is negotiated rather than a simple point of termination. In postclassical narratology, closure is discussed through analytical toolkits that allow researchers to isolate how endings organize perspective, information flow, and reader inference. A recent guide that synthesizes narratological concepts and operational definitions provides a useful methodological foundation for analyzing how narratives reach “endingness,” including the management of voice, focalization, and readerly construction of meaning (Jahn, 2026).

In adjacent fields, studies of endings emphasize that conclusions carry disproportionate meaning because significance is often retroactively assigned from how a story closes. A 2025 article on endings in theory and international politics articulates a broadly applicable premise: narrative conclusions become interpretive anchors that transform sequences of events into moral, analytical, or political significance (Suganami, 2025). This perspective is valuable for literary studies because it reframes closure as a meaning making device that governs how readers interpret causality, responsibility, and transformation.

Scholarship outside literary narratology also contributes actionable insights about ending design as a technique of “lasting impression.” Research on cinematic endings in data videos proposes practical guidelines for strengthening memorability and coherence at the end, suggesting that endings function as cognitive and affective “compression points” where audiences consolidate what they have learned and felt (Xu et al., 2023). Although the object differs from novels, the underlying principle converges with narratological claims: endings are designed to stabilize understanding and to intensify aftereffects.

Finally, computational studies have begun to formalize closure in terms of bookending and endpoint relatedness. Work presented in NAACL 2024 demonstrates that making the first and last sentences deliberately related can increase perceived narrative closure in story generation, indicating that closure can be modeled as a measurable relation between narrative endpoints (Brei et al., 2024). For literary analysis, this research supports a typological approach: closure techniques can be

described as recurrent design choices that link earlier narrative elements to final meaning, whether through thematic return, structural symmetry, or controlled openness.

Indonesian Popular Novels after 1998 and the Analytical Gap on Endings

In Indonesian literary studies, the post 1998 era is often discussed through shifting cultural sensibilities and the diversification of themes and character constructions in contemporary fiction. Recent local scholarship continues to demonstrate that Indonesian novels are frequently analyzed for their ideological, semiotic, and socio cultural work. For example, a 2026 study in *Jurnal Sastra Indonesia* examines masculinity myths in Indonesian novels using semiotic analysis and emphasizes how narrative content and character formation are shaped by cultural mythologies (Yusuf et al., 2026). This body of work underscores the vitality of technique sensitive reading, yet it typically foregrounds meaning at the level of representation rather than closure as a systematic set of ending techniques.

Karkono's recent publications show how contemporary Indonesian literary analysis can be anchored in rigorous textual strategy and comparative framing. A 2025 article employs hidden transcript theory to read resistance narratives in Indonesian and international texts, illustrating how novels distribute critique through narrative structure and symbolic articulation (Karkono et al., 2025). Complementarily, Karkono's co authored study on the creative process of writing a fantasy novel provides insight into how authors conceptualize narrative construction, including structural decisions such as the placement of epilogue like components and the shaping of reader experience (Addarani & Karkono, 2025). Together, these works support the argument that Indonesian fiction is deeply technique driven, which makes the lack of systematic attention to closure typologies even more consequential. Siswanto's recent collaborative research further confirms that Indonesian literary scholarship continues to engage closely with discourse, ideology, and cultural practice, often at the intersection of literature and education. A 2024 article co authored by Siswanto examines social ideology in Indonesian literary texts, reinforcing the prominence of interpretive and contextual approaches within Indonesian literary studies (Hasbi et al., 2024). In addition, a 2025 Ghâncaran article co authored by Siswanto analyzes a local cultural performance through critical tradition studies, demonstrating the continued relevance of cultural critique methods that read texts and performances as sites of meaning production (Albaburrahim et al., 2025). These trajectories are important because they establish a strong interpretive tradition, but they also highlight a structural blind spot: endings in bestselling popular novels are rarely treated as patterned narratological techniques that can be classified and compared.

Accordingly, the present study positions narrative closure in post reform Indonesian bestselling novels as a distinct research object. It complements representation oriented and pedagogy oriented analyses by focusing on how novels end through recurrent closure techniques and by building a typology that can connect ending forms to their narrative functions and reader effects. By doing so, the study aligns Indonesian popular literature research with contemporary narratological discussions that treat endings as central devices of meaning, memory, and engagement.

Methods

Research Design

This study employs a qualitative design using narrative text analysis to identify and classify recurrent narrative closure techniques in post-reform Indonesian bestselling novels (Creswell, 2013). The qualitative approach is selected because closure is a meaning making device that operates through textual strategies, reader inference, and interpretive cues embedded in the ending segments. The analysis is oriented toward building a typology, therefore it combines close reading with systematic coding to map recurring ending patterns and their narrative functions.

Corpus Selection and Sampling Strategy

The corpus consists of Indonesian bestselling novels published in the post-reform period (post 1998). Texts are selected through purposive sampling based on three criteria: (1) publication in the post-reform period, (2) broad public reach indicated by bestseller status, and (3) narrative form consistent with the novel genre (not short story collections or anthologies). Bestseller status is determined using publicly verifiable indicators, such as publisher catalogues and marketing claims, major bookstore listings, and widely cited sales or reprint information reported in reputable sources. The sampling aims to represent variation in authorial style, thematic domain, and publication year while maintaining comparability as popular mainstream fiction.

The unit of analysis is the narrative ending segment of each novel. Operationally, the ending segment is defined as the final narrative portion where closure is performed, typically encompassing the final chapter and any epilogue, postscript, letters, diary entries, or other paratext-like components attached to the ending. When novels include multiple ending components (e.g., final chapter plus epilogue), all components are treated as a single ending unit to capture the full closure strategy.

Data Collection Procedures

Primary data are obtained from the novels themselves in print or authorized digital editions. Each ending segment is extracted and compiled into an analysis file for coding. Supporting metadata are recorded for each text, including title, author, publication year, edition information, and evidence used to justify bestseller inclusion (e.g., publisher statements, reprint history, or major retailer listings). This documentation is maintained to ensure transparency and auditability of the corpus.

The study develops a coding scheme to identify closure techniques inductively and deductively. Deductive coding draws on narratology-informed concepts of closure (e.g., resolution, openness, thematic return, temporal projection, and reflective summation) to create initial code families. Inductive coding is then conducted through iterative close reading to capture techniques that emerge from the corpus and may be specific to Indonesian popular fiction practices.

The typology is produced through the following steps (1) initial open coding: each ending segment is read line by line to mark textual cues that signal closure strategies (e.g., unresolved conflict cues, future oriented statements, moral or philosophical reflection, narrative time shift, media inserts such as letters or diaries), (2) axial coding and consolidation: codes are grouped into higher-order technique categories by examining similarity of narrative function and formal markers, (3) category refinement: technique categories are refined to ensure internal coherence, distinctiveness across categories, and applicability across texts, and (4) Typology finalization: the final typology is defined through clear operational indicators and exemplified by representative excerpts from the corpus (quoted selectively and briefly).

Analytic Strategy

Analysis proceeds through an interpretive, theory guided narrative text analysis grounded in postclassical narratology, specifically Jahn's narratological framework for describing narrative forms and effects (Jahn, 2026). In the first layer, each ending segment is examined to identify formal closure techniques by tracing narratological cues such as shifts in temporal order, focalization, narrative voice, and the presence of appended ending materials (e.g., epilogues, letters, diaries, timelines, photographs). These cues are coded in a structured codebook and refined iteratively through constant comparison across texts. In the second layer, the analysis moves from form to function by interpreting what each technique accomplishes in terms of closure effects, including conflict resolution, suspense continuity, reflective meaning making, emotional sealing, and sustained reader engagement. To strengthen analytic precision, each coded instance is supported by brief textual indicators and analytic memos that justify category assignment. Cross text comparison is then conducted to assess recurrence and variation by mapping techniques across novels, noting co occurrence patterns and the dominance of particular strategies in specific subgenres or publication periods. The final outcome is a typology that links technique form, textual indicators, and narratological function in a replicable analytic structure (Jahn, 2026).

Result & Discussion

The narrative text analysis of post reform Indonesian bestselling novels identified eight ending techniques that function as narrative closure devices and as strategies to deepen meaning and strengthen reader engagement. These techniques include: (1) integration of past events with future projections, (2) cliffhangers and transitions, (3) reflective diaries, (4) chronological traces and photographs, (5) reflective and philosophical closures, (6) tips or advice, (7) reflective letters, and (8) repetition of past future storytelling patterns. In the discussion section, the list is repeated with the eighth item appearing as "past events and future projections" again, indicating that the final category is treated as a repetition or reappearance of the same pattern across different texts rather than a completely distinct technique.

Integration of Past Events and Future Projections

The technique of concluding a story with reflections on the past and projections into the future relies on a combination of looking back and forecasting what's ahead to end a narrative. This technique serves a dual purpose: providing a temporarily satisfying resolution while also opening up the possibility of continuation, creating anticipation for the reader. In this sense, the story's ending provides a strong temporary closure, while also implying that the story is not truly over and that more will be revealed in the next chapter.

A powerful example can be found in the closing of the novel *Dilan: Dia adalah Dilanku Tahun 1990* by Pidi Baiq. The ending of this novel contains a deep reflection on the past love story between the main character and Dilan, while also hinting that the story is not over and will be continued in the next book. Although the ending is touching and provides closure for this chapter, Baiq also introduces a projection of the future through the statement that the story will continue in the second book. The reader receives both a temporary sense of satisfaction and a curiosity to continue reading.

Hmm...

So that was my love story with Dilan when I lived in Bandung! Back then! So long ago, many years ago, though it feels like it was just yesterday.

Honestly, I still want to tell more about my story with him. There's still so much. Remembering him, I always feel such a sweet sensation. But I think for this chapter, it's enough for now. Another time, I want to tell the story of when we were dating in the second book. (Baiq: 2014: 329)

The novel's ending aims to provide temporary resolution, build expectations for the next book, and emphasize the emotional connection between the reader and the characters. The closure in this story arc is sufficient to end this part, yet it still leaves space for continuation so the reader feels satisfied while remaining curious about what comes next. Kilian (1992) emphasizes that an effective story ending must be able to offer satisfying closure while also opening up opportunities for further narrative. In this case, Baiq succeeds in setting up the reader's expectations for the continuation of the story, while still providing a conclusion that feels complete for this book.

By stating that the story will continue in the second book, this ending effectively builds reader expectations and anticipation for what follows. Sawyer (2012) explains that a good story ending often needs to leave a "hook" that makes readers want to know what happens next. Baiq uses this technique to ensure that readers remain connected to the story and its characters even after they close the book.

Furthermore, this ending reinforces the emotional connection between the reader and the characters. By delving into past memories, Baiq reminds readers of the emotional journey they've shared with the characters. Harper (2014) states that a strong story ending must be able to encapsulate the emotional journey experienced by readers, while also maintaining that emotional bond for the story's future. An ending that highlights sweet memories and past reflections serves to strengthen the reader's emotional bond with the characters, ensuring they will return to follow the story in the next book.

Overall, the technique of concluding with reflections on the past and projections into the future used in *Dilan: Dia adalah Dilanku Tahun 1990* is highly effective. It not only provides a satisfying resolution but also builds reader expectations and anticipation for the continuation of the story. Baiq successfully integrates relevant narrative theories, creating a fulfilling conclusion while paving the way for future developments.

Suspenseful Cliffhanger and Transition

The technique of ending a story with a suspenseful cliffhanger and a clear transition combines two essential aspects of storytelling: unresolved tension and a clear passage to the next part. Another term for such an ending is "cliffhanger." The main goal of this technique is to maintain the reader's interest, create strong anticipation, and ensure that readers are eager to continue with the next installment. It allows space to introduce new elements or leave the story hanging in a way that provokes curiosity.

This technique can be found in the ending of the novel *Selena* by Tere Liye. The ending of this novel is effective because it leaves the story at a suspenseful cliffhanger. There is an unanswered question about the identity of Raib's parents. This suspense intensifies the story and enhances the reader's curiosity. Additionally, the author provides a clear transition by indicating that the story will continue in the next book, *Nebula*, making this ending more impactful and fostering a sense of anticipation. The following is an excerpt from the novel's ending.

Right now, she is imprisoned, the situation is dire, and she knows she won't survive this time, time is running out—so before it's too late, she decides to tell it.

"And why has Miss Selena apologized so many times? Because she's telling us about your parents, Raib," Ali answered firmly.

I froze.

So did Seli. Silent.

"Well, unfortunately, this story must pause for twelve hours. Damn this terrible communication connection, we're like readers of a serialized book, forced to wait again. So impatient. But I'm sure something really serious is going on. We just have to wait for the connection to be restored. Once Miss Selena finishes her story, we'll know everything."

Ali slumped back into his chair.

I remained frozen.

My parents? Who?

To be continued in *Nebula* (Liye, 2021)

This ending also functions as a transition to the next novel, titled *Nebula*. By stating that the story will continue in the next book, the ending explicitly links the plot from one book to the next, ensuring continuity and cohesive story development.

The purpose of ending *Selena* with a cliffhanger and a transition is to heighten suspense and anticipation while ensuring narrative continuity. The cliffhanger creates a situation with unanswered questions, making readers curious and eager to find out what happens next. Kilian (1992) emphasized that this technique is highly effective in maintaining reader engagement, especially in works that are part of a series. By stating that the story will continue in the next book, this ending ensures that readers understand there is much more to uncover within the story. This helps maintain continuity and provides clear guidance on how the story will progress.

Furthermore, Harper (2014) explains that a good transition at the end of a story allows readers to feel directed, even if the story is not yet complete. In *Selena*, the ending not only wraps up a specific part of the narrative but also opens the door for further development in the next book, keeping readers engaged and anticipating what's to come.

According to Sawyer (2012), a cliffhanger ending also serves to strengthen the emotional bond between the reader and the characters. By leaving a major question—like the identity of Raib's parents—unanswered, readers are encouraged to stay with the characters' journey and feel emotionally invested in their fate. This type of ending, therefore, is not only a tool to sustain suspense, but also ensures that readers remain emotionally engaged with the unfolding story. Overall, the technique of ending a story with a cliffhanger and transition, as used by Tere Liye in *Selena*, is highly effective. This ending not only heightens reader tension and anticipation, but also ensures narrative continuity, keeping readers connected to the plot and characters. By applying relevant narrative theories, we can better appreciate how the author crafts an ending that stirs curiosity and maintains reader engagement while providing a seamless transition to the next book.

Reflective Diary

The technique of ending a novel with a reflective diary is a narrative approach that employs the diary format to convey deep and introspective reflections from the narrator. This technique offers emotional and intellectual depth to the reader and invites them to reflect and understand the story's message and themes on a more personal and intimate level. By using this format, the author can deliver profound emotions and touch the reader's heart through sincere and honest personal notes, as if the reader is in direct conversation with the narrator. These personal reflections enrich the reading experience and leave a lasting impression, strengthening the connection between the story and the reader.

The ending of the novel *Ramah 3 Warna* by Ahmad Fuadi uses the reflective diary technique because it incorporates elements of a diary and introspection. The use of a diary as the closing format provides a personal and introspective tone, creating a sense of intimacy between the narrator and the

reader. In this novel, the diary entry allows the narrator to express thoughts and feelings in a deeper way. This ending invites the reader to reflect along with a powerful message from Kiai Rais about how to face life's storms with perseverance and patience. Below is an excerpt from that ending

- I opened the final page of my diary, which had often been my source of encouragement. On it, I had taped a photocopied snippet from my class yearbook at Pondok Madani, containing a handwritten message from Kiai Rais to us, the PM alumni. It read:
- My children...
- There will come a time when you are confronted by storms in life. They may be storms outside of you, or storms within. Face them with perseverance and patience, do not run. The storm will surely pass.
- My children...
- The most powerful storm in human history is the inner storm, the spiritual storm, the storm of the heart. This is the storm encountered on the journey to discover one's true self. It is the storm that can shatter and overthrow faith, logic, self-belief, and life's purpose. The consequences of this storm can be more severe than physical ones. Conquer the spiritual storm with faith and patience, and you will tame both this world and the hereafter.
- My children...
- When the storm comes, face it with faith and patience. Calm seas are to be enjoyed and appreciated. Stormy seas, on the other hand, are meant to be conquered—not wept over. Isn't it true that the character of a great sailor is forged by the relentless storms faced while crossing the boundless ocean? (Fuadi, 2011: 467)

The purpose of ending *Ramah 3 Warna* with a reflective diary is to deliver a profound message, increase self-awareness, and leave a lasting impression. This ending imparts a meaningful message to readers, closing the story with inspiration and a sense of renewed spirit. The diary format adds intimacy to this message delivery. Kress (1993) emphasizes that using a personal format like a diary enables the narrator to form a strong emotional bond with the reader, creating a deeper and more meaningful reading experience.

By inviting readers to reflect through personal notes, this ending helps enhance self-awareness and introspection. Harper (2014) underscores the importance of reflection in narrative to prompt readers to think about their own lives, which is realized here through Kiai Rais's message. This ending gives space for readers to consider life's challenges and how they might face them more wisely. These personal and introspective reflections leave a powerful and lasting impression, ensuring that the story's themes and messages remain memorable and impactful. Overall, the ending of *Ramah 3 Warna* using a reflective diary is highly effective in delivering a deep message, enhancing self-awareness, and leaving a strong impression. By applying relevant narrative theories, we can better appreciate how Fuadi successfully concludes this novel in a reflective and introspective way, encouraging readers not only to follow the story but also to ponder and apply its messages to their own lives.

Chronological Trail and Photos

The technique of concluding a novel with a chronological trail and photos combines chronological elements that provide historical context with the use of photographs to enhance visualization and emotional depth. This approach aims to unify historical information with visual imagery and personal reflection, creating an ending that is informative, visual, and meaningful. The use of chronology in a novel's conclusion offers additional information that enriches the story, giving readers broader context about events that influence the narrative, while photos complement this by providing strong emotional and visual impact.

The ending of the novel *99 Cahaya di Langit Eropa* by Hanum Salsabiela Rais and Rangga Almahendra employs the chronological trail and photo technique by including a timeline listing historical years and significant events. This conclusion features a series of key moments in the history of Islam in Europe, offering context for the story told throughout the novel. By presenting the history of Islam in Europe, the authors not only share their personal journey but also tie it to a broader historical narrative, adding greater depth to the story. Additionally, the photos included in the final section provide a visual dimension that reinforces the travel experiences shared in the narrative. These photographs help vividly

depict the authors' memories and experiences, adding emotional depth that makes the story more memorable for the reader. The following is an excerpt from the novel's closing section:

- Chronological Trail
- 7th Century
- 610 Revelation of the first verses of the Qur'an.
- 632 The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) passes away in Medina.
- 655 Islam spreads to Iraq and Egypt.
- 661 The establishment of the Umayyad Caliphate.
- (Rais & Almahendra, 2012: 293)

The purpose of ending *99 Cahaya di Langit Eropa* with a chronological trail and photos is to provide historical context, enhance visualization and emotion, and leave a lasting impression. This conclusion delivers important historical context, helping readers understand the historical background that influences the story. It enriches the narrative with deep and relevant information. According to Harper (2014), combining historical elements with fictional narrative can add depth and complexity to a story, making it more meaningful and informative.

By using photographs, this conclusion helps increase visualization and emotional engagement, offering a more vivid representation of the authors' experiences. These images serve not only as visual illustrations but also as tools to strengthen the emotional connection between reader and story. Sawyer (2012) explains that the use of visual elements in narrative can create a more immersive and memorable reading experience, as images possess the power to evoke emotions and memories more effectively than text alone. Overall, the technique of concluding with a chronological trail and photos, as used by Hanum Salsabiela Rais and Rangga Almahendra in *99 Cahaya di Langit Eropa*, is highly effective in providing historical context, enhancing visualization and emotional impact, and leaving a profound impression. By applying relevant narrative theories, we can better appreciate how the authors have successfully concluded the novel in an informative and meaningful way, inviting readers to reflect on the historical and emotional journey they've experienced through the book.

Reflective and Philosophical

The technique of ending a novel with a reflective and philosophical approach is a narrative method that uses deep introspection and philosophical thought to conclude the story. This approach aims to provide a satisfying narrative resolution while also inviting readers to contemplate the profound themes explored throughout the novel. In such a conclusion, the author offers readers a chance to think more deeply about various aspects of life and the values embedded in the story, as well as how these relate to real life.

The ending of the novel *Cantik Itu Luka* by Eka Kurniawan is described as reflective and philosophical because it contains a deep reflection on key concepts raised in the story, such as beauty, love, and suffering. This reflection helps readers grasp the moral and philosophical messages within the story. The conclusion offers a philosophical view of the central theme, often challenging the reader to think more deeply about life and the values discussed throughout the novel. Below is an excerpt from the novel's ending.

- Until one day, the Beautiful One asked, "Why do you want me?"
- He answered, not knowing whether he was being honest or not,
- "Because I love you."
- "Loving an ugly woman?"
- "Yes."
- "Why?"
- Since "why" is always hard to answer, he didn't answer. He could only answer "how," and that was easy. To show his love, he kept making love to her, no matter how hideous she was, how repulsive, how terrifying. Everything felt just fine, and he found a happiness he had almost never experienced in his life. The Beautiful One kept pursuing him, every time they met and made love, with the

question, "Why?" Krisan remained silent, even though he knew the answer, he refused to say it. But on the night before he was murdered, he finally answered.

- The fourth confession: "Because beauty is a wound."
- Because beauty is a wound (Kurniawan, 2014: 478).

The ending of *Cantik Itu Luka* presents a profound confession from the character Krisan about the meaning of beauty and suffering. This reflection reveals a deep philosophy linking beauty with pain, offering readers a new understanding of the novel's main theme. According to Harper (2014), a good ending should be able to encapsulate the central theme of the story in a way that invites reflection and offers emotional and intellectual closure.

The goal of ending the novel in a reflective and philosophical way is to provide narrative resolution, provoke contemplation, and reaffirm the main theme. A reflective and philosophical conclusion provides a satisfying resolution to the central conflict of the story, often in an emotional and profound manner. Sawyer (2012) emphasized that an ending that invites reflection enables readers to revisit the journey of the story and its messages, leaving a lasting and powerful impression.

This ending also reaffirms the novel's main theme, deepening the reader's understanding of the story's moral and philosophical message. Kilian (1992) explains that a story's conclusion should provide a deeper and more comprehensive meaning of the conflicts and central themes faced by the characters throughout the narrative. In *Cantik Itu Luka*, Eka Kurniawan successfully conveys a philosophy that connects beauty with suffering, challenging readers to reconsider the true meaning of concepts often regarded as simple or superficial. Overall, the reflective and philosophical ending technique used by Eka Kurniawan in *Cantik Itu Luka* is highly effective in delivering narrative closure, inspiring reflection, and reinforcing the novel's main theme. Eka Kurniawan concludes this novel in a way that is not only emotionally satisfying but also intellectually stirring, provoking deep reflection on life, values, and suffering.

Tips

The technique of ending a novel with tips is a narrative approach that incorporates practical advice and concrete steps that readers can apply. This approach aims to offer a conclusion that is useful, inspirational, and motivating, encouraging readers to implement the values or concepts from the story in their real lives. By providing clear and actionable guidance, this technique allows readers to feel more prepared to face life's challenges, making the story's conclusion more meaningful.

The novel *Cabin Notes: Catatan Inspiratif Seorang Pramugari* by Pratiwi Hidayat ends with success-oriented tips. The aim is to provide practical guidance, enhance motivation, and leave a strong impression. These tips offer specific steps readers can follow to reach their goals or overcome problems relevant to the story's theme. According to Harper (2014), an ending that includes practical guidance can help readers apply the lessons from the story in their own lives, making the narrative not only inspiring but also practically beneficial. By offering clear advice, this conclusion is designed to motivate readers to take action and pursue their goals, creating a positive and inspirational impact. Sawyer (2012) states that endings which offer concrete steps can provide readers with a sense of empowerment, making them feel capable of taking control and improving their lives after reading the story. An ending with tips ensures that readers leave the story feeling motivated and ready to act, while also leaving a lasting and meaningful impression. Below is an excerpt from the novel's conclusion.

- So how do we achieve success?
 - 1. Belief
 - 2. Vision
 - 3. Action
 - 4. Courage
 - 5. Prayer
 - 6. Reaching for the sky
- (Hidayat, 2015: 204)

The purpose of ending *Cabin Notes* with tips is to provide readers with practical guidance they can apply in their everyday lives. Kilian (1992) emphasizes the importance of providing a conclusion that not only wraps up the story, but also leaves readers with something they can carry forward and apply. In this case, the tips shared by Hidayat serve to reinforce the motivational message conveyed throughout the novel and offer readers tools they can use to pursue their own goals. Overall, the technique of concluding with tips, as used by Pratiwi Hidayat in *Cabin Notes*, is highly effective in offering practical guidance, boosting motivation, and leaving a strong and lasting impression. By employing relevant narrative theories, we can better appreciate how Hidayat concludes this novel in a way that is not only inspiring but also deeply useful and applicable to readers. This tips-based ending not only informs the reader but empowers them to apply what they've learned to their own lives.

Reflective Letter

The technique of ending a novel with a reflective letter is a narrative approach that uses the letter format to convey reflections and closure. This approach aims to provide an intimate and personal ending, allowing readers to feel an emotional closeness with the characters and story. In the novel *Dear Olivia* by Osceola Anthony, this ending is very effective in delivering a deep message through a letter written by one of the characters. The letter serves as a tool for the author to explore the feelings and thoughts of the character, leading to a deeper understanding of the themes of life and death. The letter format creates an emotional connection between the character and the reader, making the story feel more real and touching.

The novel *Dear Olivia* by Osceola Anthony closes with a reflective letter, which serves several main purposes: to convey personal reflections, strengthen the bond with readers, and provide a satisfying conclusion. The letter allows the character to express their feelings and thoughts directly and personally, giving strong emotional depth.

The letter format creates emotional intimacy between the character and the reader, making the story feel more real and touching. Kilian (1992) states that an ending capable of establishing a strong emotional bond with readers is key to creating a memorable and impactful conclusion. In the case of *Dear Olivia*, this reflective letter not only functions as a means to convey information but also as a medium to connect readers with the character's emotional journey. This reflective letter provides a meaningful and satisfying closure, concluding the story in a way that encourages readers to reflect and connect with the character's experience. Sawyer (2012) emphasizes that reflective and introspective endings invite readers to reconsider the entire story journey, giving them space to process and understand the messages conveyed. Below is an excerpt from the novel's ending.

- Dear Olivia,
- My name is Lucia, I am a friend of Keana's. Keana's mother found some letters from you asking me to reply to them as well as to explain why Keana no longer replies to your letters. Keana passed away two days after she sent you her last letter. I do not have the capacity to explain the cause of her death because Keana always asked me to keep it a secret. Thank you for being friends with her. I hope you find what you are looking for.
- Regards,
- Lucia.
- I folded the letter with a heavy heart. We never know when we will return to the Creator, but we can always prepare ourselves before the time comes. Farewell Keana, enjoy your new life (Anthony, 2017: 128).

The ending of *Dear Olivia* invites readers to think more deeply about life, friendship, and death, and offers a very intimate reflection on loss. The letter not only serves to provide closure but also challenges readers to connect with the emotional experience of the character. Thus, readers do not simply finish the story, but also carry away profound thoughts and feelings. Overall, the technique of concluding with a reflective letter used by Osceola Anthony in *Dear Olivia* is very effective in providing an intimate, personal, and reflective closure. Anthony successfully ends the novel in a way that is not only deeply satisfying but also invites readers to contemplate the major themes explored throughout the story.

Stories of the Past and Projections of the Future

The technique of ending a story with reflections on the past and projections into the future in the novel *Laskar Pelangi* by Andrea Hirata uses a narrative approach that presents reflections filled with nostalgic memories alongside projections of an uncertain future. This ending is designed to leave a deep impression of the friendship and struggles that have passed, while building a strong emotional bond between the reader and the characters. In this way, readers can feel profound emotions both when reminiscing about the beautiful past and when sensing the tension of what lies ahead.

This story ending revisits the past experiences of the members of *Laskar Pelangi*, particularly Ikal and his friends, who now face the realities of adult life that are different. The moments of nostalgia and reflection are delivered in an evocative manner, reminding readers of the long journey the characters have been through. The following excerpt illustrates how the author brings readers back to past memories with rich emotion.

- "Apparently he and his friends were participating in some kind of student art festival. His face in the photo was scribbled all over, but he called that art?!!!"
- We bowed our heads, afraid to comment.
- "According to him, that's face painting art, yes, face painting art, what is that... gothic! Yes gothic! He called it gothic face painting art! And he was very proud of those scribbles!"
- She approached us, who were sitting with our heads down around the old marble table. We shrank back.
- "Kids these days, Malay youth!!!"
- Ikal's mother clenched her fists, we were scared, she brandished a kitchen knife, we froze, her voice rose.
- "He called that art??? Ha! Art!! Maybe he wanted to know my opinion about his art!!!"
- She was truly furious, her anger immeasurable. For the second time, she spat red betel juice out the window like flying arrows.
- "My opinion is that his face looks exactly like the face of someone who never prays at all!"
- Hearing that, Kucai, who was chewing on a sagon, lost control. He tried hard to hold back laughter but failed, so the shredded coconut sagon flew onto Mahar's face, messing up the talented writer's hair tuft. Kucai repeatedly apologized to Ikal's mother, not to Mahar, but his head nodded respectfully towards Nur Zaman.
- (Hirata, 2005: 455-456)

This novel's ending provides a temporary resolution to the story. By leaving behind sweet memories and teasing situations, Andrea Hirata successfully closes this chapter of the story while leaving a lasting impression on the reader. Kilian (1992) emphasizes that an effective story ending must provide satisfying closure but still leave room for readers to imagine the characters' future. Thus, the ending of *Laskar Pelangi* not only offers resolution but also maintains emotional connection, in line with what Sawyer (2012) describes regarding the importance of a "hook" in story endings to keep readers engaged with the characters.

Moreover, through this warm and nostalgic reflection, Hirata succeeds in making readers recall shared experiences with the characters, thereby strengthening the emotional bond at the story's conclusion. Harper (2014) states that a strong ending should summarize the emotional journey of both readers and characters while preserving that emotional connection for the future. Hirata achieves this by presenting moments of togetherness and humor that remind readers of the long journey traveled by *Laskar Pelangi*. Overall, the technique of concluding with reflections on the past and projections of the future used by Andrea Hirata in *Laskar Pelangi* is very effective in providing satisfying closure while opening space for readers to continue remembering and contemplating the fate of the characters in the future. By using smart narrative techniques, Hirata ensures that readers remain connected to the story even though the novel has ended.

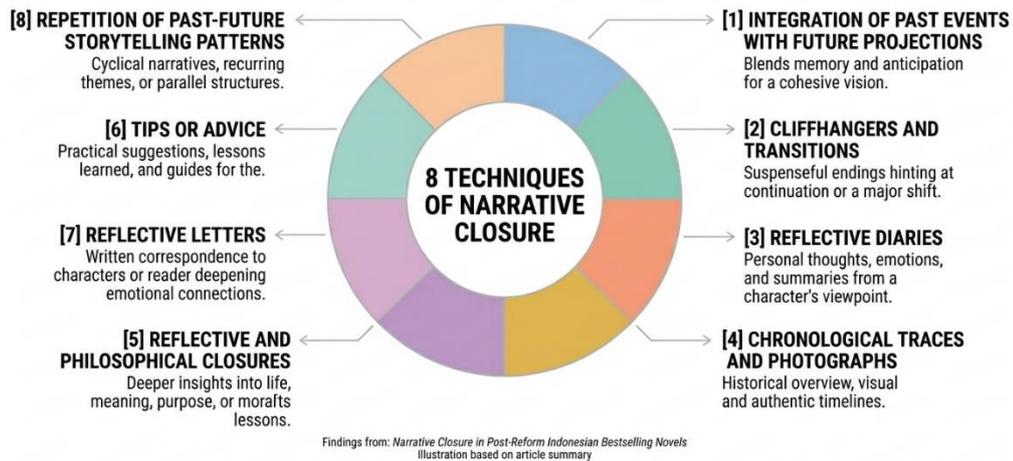


Figure 1. A typology of narrative closure techniques in post-reform Indonesian Bestselling Novels

Conclusion

This study demonstrates that narrative closure in post-reform Indonesian best-selling novels functions as a deliberate narrative design rather than a conventional stopping point. In the cultural climate that followed 1998, popular authors appear to capitalize on expanded expressive space to craft endings that do more than resolve plot events. These endings consolidate the reader's affective journey while simultaneously inviting interpretive work, thereby producing a reading experience that is emotionally engaging and intellectually reflective. The analysis identifies a typology of eight dominant closure techniques, including the integration of past events with future projections, open transitions that sustain anticipation, reflective closure through diaries and letters, documentary-like extensions such as chronological traces and photographs, philosophical reflection, and explicitly motivational endings. Collectively, these techniques reveal that closure operates on two levels at once: it provides narrative completion for a given story arc, yet it also preserves contemplative space in which readers can negotiate meaning, revisit emotional residues, and translate textual experience into personal reflection. Accordingly, closure in post-reform Indonesian popular fiction can be understood as a strategic meeting point between fictional experience and readers' lived horizons. It is where narrative meaning is compressed, emotional bonds are reaffirmed, and the story's relevance is projected beyond the page. By offering a typology of ending techniques, this study contributes a focused narratological account of how Indonesian bestsellers "engineer" endings and suggests that the last pages of popular novels are central to their cultural impact, not peripheral to it.

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