

## A Critical Book Review of *Negeri 5 Menara* by Ahmad Fuadi: Education, Motivation, and the Spirit of Perseverance

Suraya<sup>1</sup>, Sulthon Arif<sup>2</sup>, Maulana Raudhatul Hijazz<sup>3</sup>  
<sup>1-3</sup>*K. H. Abdul Chalim University (Indonesia)*  
[bonenosuraya@gmail.com](mailto:bonenosuraya@gmail.com)

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### Book Information

*Negeri 5 Menara* is an inspirational novel written by Ahmad Fuadi and published in 2009 by PT Gramedia Pustaka Utama. The novel belongs to the genres of education, motivation, and religious fiction, telling the story of Alif Fikri, a young boy from West Sumatra who continues his education at an Islamic boarding school called Pondok Madani. There, he meets five close friends from different regions of Indonesia who later become known as Sahibul Menara. This novel contains approximately 423 pages and uses simple, engaging language mixed with Arabic, English, and Minangkabau expressions, which strengthen the cultural and educational atmosphere of the story. As the first book in the *Negeri 5 Menara* trilogy, followed by *Ranah 3 Warna* and *Rantau 1 Muara*, the novel is inspired by the author's real-life experiences in a pesantren. Through themes of friendship, discipline, hard work, and perseverance, the novel delivers strong moral values and motivation, especially through its famous motto, "Man Jadda Wajada," which means "He who strives will succeed."

Keywords: *Negeri 5 Menara*, Ahmad Fuadi, critical book review, education, motivation

### INTRODUCTION

*Negeri 5 Menara* is one of the most influential Indonesian novels that highlights the importance of education, friendship, and perseverance in achieving dreams. Written by Ahmad Fuadi, the novel was inspired by the author's personal experiences while studying in an Islamic boarding school. This book has gained popularity because it presents meaningful life lessons through an inspiring and emotional story. The novel not only entertains readers but also motivates them to work hard and never give up on their goals. The story mainly focuses on Alif Fikri, a young boy from West Sumatra who is forced to continue his education at Pondok Madani, an Islamic boarding school far from his hometown. At first, Alif feels disappointed because he dreams of attending a public high school. However, his experiences in the pesantren change his perspective about life, education, and success. Together with his five close friends, Alif learns discipline, responsibility, and determination. The famous motto "Man Jadda Wajada," meaning "He who strives will succeed," becomes the central message of the novel. Through strong characterization and inspirational themes, *Negeri 5 Menara* successfully delivers moral values that are relevant to students and young readers around the world.

### SUMMARY OF THE BOOK

The story of *Negeri 5 Menara* begins with Alif Fikri, a teenager from Maninjau, West Sumatra, who dreams of studying at a public high school and continuing his education at a famous university. However, his mother wants him to study at an Islamic boarding school so that he can gain both religious and academic knowledge. Although Alif initially disagrees with his mother's decision, he finally accepts it and goes to Pondok Madani, a modern pesantren located in East Java. At Pondok Madani, Alif meets five students from different regions of Indonesia: Raja from Medan, Said from Surabaya, Dulmajid from

Sumenep, Atang from Bandung, and Baso from Gowa. Because they often gather under the mosque tower while discussing their dreams and future ambitions, they become known as Sahibul Menara, which means “The Owners of the Tower.” Despite coming from different cultural backgrounds, they build a strong friendship based on trust, support, and shared goals.

Life at Pondok Madani is very disciplined. The students must wake up early, attend classes, memorize lessons, and speak Arabic and English in daily communication. At first, Alif struggles to adapt to the strict environment, but gradually he becomes more responsible and hardworking. One of the most influential teachings in the pesantren is the phrase “Man Jadda Wajada.” The teachers constantly remind the students that success can only be achieved through serious effort and persistence. Throughout the story, each member of Sahibul Menara has different dreams. Raja wants to go to Europe, Said hopes to become a religious leader, Atang dreams of studying abroad, Dulmajid wishes to become successful, and Baso is known as a brilliant student with deep religious knowledge. Alif himself dreams of traveling to America someday. To motivate themselves, they often look at the clouds from under the tower and imagine different countries around the world. This activity symbolizes their hopes and determination to achieve a better future.

The novel also presents emotional moments and challenges faced by the characters. Baso, for example, must leave the pesantren to take care of his sick grandmother, showing the importance of family responsibility and sacrifice. Meanwhile, Alif continues learning that success requires patience and strong commitment. Through various struggles, the students grow emotionally, intellectually, and spiritually. At the end of the story, the dreams of Sahibul Menara slowly begin to come true. Their experiences at Pondok Madani shape them into confident and ambitious young men who are ready to face the future. The novel closes with a hopeful message that dreams are achievable if people are willing to work hard and stay consistent in their efforts. Overall, *Negeri 5 Menara* is not only a story about education but also about friendship, determination, cultural diversity, and the power of faith in reaching one’s goals.

## **CRITICAL EVALUATION**

*Negeri 5 Menara* is a highly inspiring novel that successfully combines educational values, religion, and motivation in an engaging storyline. One of the strengths of the novel is its realistic characterization. Each character has a unique personality and background, making the story more relatable and interesting for readers. The friendship among the members of Sahibul Menara also creates emotional depth and teaches important lessons about solidarity and mutual support. Another strong aspect of the novel is the motivational message conveyed through the phrase “Man Jadda Wajada.” This motto encourages readers to believe that hard work and perseverance are the keys to success. In addition, the author’s writing style is simple and easy to understand, making the novel suitable for teenagers and students. The use of Arabic and English expressions also enriches the cultural atmosphere of the story. However, the novel also has some weaknesses. Certain parts of the story feel too idealistic, especially in portraying the pesantren environment and the achievements of the characters. Some readers may find the pacing slightly slow because of detailed explanations about daily activities in the boarding school. Nevertheless, these weaknesses do not reduce the overall quality and inspirational value of the novel.

### **REFLECTION & CONCLUSION**

After reading *Negeri 5 Menara*, I learned that success cannot be achieved instantly because it requires discipline, patience, and hard work. The novel teaches readers to never stop dreaming, even when facing difficulties and limitations. I also realized the importance of friendship and support from others in reaching personal goals. The story of Alif and his friends is very inspiring because they prove that determination can bring people closer to their dreams. In conclusion, *Negeri 5 Menara* is an educational and motivational novel that provides valuable life lessons for students and young readers.