

BOOK REVIEW OF “*NORMAL IS BORING*” WRITTEN BY IRA LATHIEF

Rini Hardaniwati & Prihantoro

English Department, The Faculty of Humanities, Diponegoro University, Semarang
50275

ABSTRAK

Normal is Boring adalah buku yang ditulis oleh Ira Lathief, yang merupakan penulis buku yang sudah mengeluarkan buku dengan berbagai genre (biografi, buku remaja, buku anak, buku humor, dan lain-lain). Buku ini berisi pandangan dan cara bagaimana kita selalu berpikir kreatif dalam menjalankan aspek kehidupan. Buku ini merupakan buku ke-13 yang diterangkan dengan ringan namun tidak menghilangkan makna dan pesan yang ingin disampaikan, setelah sebelumnya menulis buku tentang anak-anak dan remaja. Buku ini menunjukkan keahlian Ira Lathief dalam menuliskan pandangan dan pemikirannya. Ira juga pintar memilih contoh atau kejadian yang mempunyai nilai untuk memacu semangat pembaca agar selalu berpikir kreatif. *Normal is Boring* bisa memberi inspirasi untuk berpikir kreatif pada pembaca karena selain dari isi tulisan, bentuk dan tampilannya pun sudah mempunyai keunikan tersendiri. Dengan konsep seperti buku anak-anak, dimana terdapat stiker yang bisa dimainkan dan dikreasikan untuk ditempel disampul buku, Ira menggambarkan filosofi dalam seluruh stiker itu. Buku ini dibaca mulai dari belakang, untuk mengajak pembaca untuk berpikir secara terbalik, dengan kata lain, berpikir beda dan kreatif.

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of Writing

Creativity is the ability to make something new. It can be ideas or real work. It can also be new work or the combination of things that already exist but deliver something that never existed. It is defined as the skill to find ideas, alternatives, or possibilities that may be useful in solving problems. In other words, creativity is an idea that can solve problems in some sort of situation or in any condition.

The book “*Normal is Boring*” gives different way to think. The writer tries to say that being normal as common human being is too boring. The writer wants to ask the readers to think out of the box and find a breakthrough for the reader’s way of living. The main point of this book is that being different is special and being different is an asset. That is why the author chooses the title of the book “*Normal is Boring*”.

The author like to review the book written by Ira Lathief because it is amazing. In the hands of a brilliant writer, this book is easy to read but full of creativity, ideas, good value, positive messages and life lesson about thinking creatively. The spirit of always think creatively in this book is simply explained simply but does not eliminate the real meaning and the message. Ira is also smart to choose valuable examples or events to drive readers the spirit to always think creatively.

1.2 Purposes of Writing

The purpose of writing this project is to review the book “*Normal is Boring*” by Ira Lathief. The review includes the strengths and weaknesses of the book. The other purpose of this project is to provide more point of views about creativity and how the ideas came. The

main purpose of doing this project is to fulfill the graduation requirements in achieving a degree S1 English Literature Department, Faculty of Humanities, Diponegoro University.

1.3 About the Author and Her works

Ira Lathief was born on 5th June 1980, in Jakarta. She got her S1 degree majoring in International Relations from Padjadjaran University in 2003. She got her master degree of Communication Management from Indonesia University in 2006. For a couple years, she becomes a journalist. A few years later, she decided to be an author. Some of her books that had been published have different genre, such as biography, teen-lit, children book, humor book and etc.

Ira's dream since her childhood was just to travel around world. There was no desire to become a great writer or a business woman. In her teenage years, she were cheerfull and passionable. She was a girl who has a lot of youth activities, life tutorial and extra-curricular activities at school. In other word, she was a person who has more than a routine daily activity.

Ira started writing as her hobby since high school. At that time she joined school magazine extracurricular. Then, she started to work as a journalists in a private television. Starting four years as a journalist, Ira decided to resign and chose to be a serious professional writer.

THE BOOK

“Normal is boring” is written by Ira Lathief, a first bachelor of International Relations from Padjajaran University in 2003. This book was designed by a designer named Hariadhi, illustrated by an illustrator named Milla Andriana, and published by PT Gramedia Pustaka Utama in 2012.

2.1 Summary of The Book

“Normal Is Boring” is a book of how we should always think creatively in implementing aspects of life. The book begins with the story of a creative Malaysian boy, named David Tan, who proposed her lovely girl in a creative and an unusual way. He took his girlfriend to drive a car around the city on the evening after celebrating Valentine's Day. At midnight, the car passed a giant billboard on the street, attached on a freeway. The picture attached to the billboard was a picture of David Tan, who holds the ring box with words containing a marriage proposal to his girlfriend.

The second story tells us about a story of Tukul Arwana with his talk show *“Empat Mata”* or *“Four Eyes”* that once banned to air by KPI (Komisi Penyiaran Indonesia or Indonesian Broadcasting Commission) because there was an episode that featured improper actions. Then, the show's creative team changed the name of the talk show to *“Bukan Empat Mata”* or *“Not Four Eyes”* so they can air it again on television.

The third story tells us about Sheridan Simove, a British man who shows his creativity in his work. When he ran out of ideas to write a book *“What Every Man Thinks About Apart From Sex”*, he published a book with 200 blank pages. The book achieved amazing success. As it managed to beat *“Harry Potter”* and *“The Da Vinci Code”* on Amazon.com online sales. Pricing £ 4.69, the book was bought by many people who use it as a notebook.

The fourth story tells us about an eccentric action by Sriyono, a dumpling vendor in Jakarta known for its Pink Dumpling. Sriyono wear pink outfit and ride a pink bicycle, which is his daughter's favorite color, to sell his dumpling. He hoped to see his daughter who had not seen him for so long. This action attracted much attention from the buyers who has then

spread the existence of his dumplings. From the mobile merchant dumplings, now Sriyono opened a new store with pink decoration.

The fifth story tells us about a famous director, Joko Anwar, who was a movie journalist in a prestigious English language newspaper. As a journalist, Joko often criticizes local movies that made him being despised by many local film producers and directors. His meeting with Nia Dinata, a producer and a director, managed to change the course of his life. Nia challenged Joko to make movie based on his perspective, not only becoming a movie reviewer who criticize Indonesian movies. Currently, the movies by Joko Anwar became much awaited movies at prestigious international film festivals in various countries.

REVIEW OF THE BOOK

3.1 Strengths of the Book

According to the chapter, the strengths of the book are it has a unique title, an unusual cover, different way of reading (backward), valuable messages of being creative in an easy way and interesting examples around world that are easy to understand. The author made the book for those who had interest in knowing more about creative world, so that design the book creatively.

The first strength of the book is the book has a unique title. The title "*Normal is Boring*". This means that she wants to deliver the message about creativity through the book in a unique way. She tells us that being abnormal or extra ordinary is not a mistakes. So that we should not be afraid to be different because the different people are assets, that makes them unique and special. Ira influences the readers to think differently. By being creative, Ira also tells us how the creativity makes some people like a stand up comedian Pandji Pragiwaksono, a movie director Joko Anwar, an Indonesian model Kimmi Jayanti and many more become one of the best in its field because of their creativity. Ira said that there are three ways for being creative person; think the opposite, think creatively and globally, and the last is change perspective.

The second strength of the book is the book has an unusual cover, a blank page with white color. When we buy the book, we get stickers of alphabet, number, and symbol. At the end of the book, there is a challenge for the reader, "*Beri judul buku Ini dengan versi anda sendiri dengan menempelkan stiker yang ada di buku ini.*" Which means "Give this book title in your own version, by sticking stickers provided in this book." The reader were also asked to decorate the cover creatively by sticking colorful stickers on the cover.

The third strength of the book is the different way of reading as it is read backward, like Japan's comic or a Holy Quran. This strength can make the readers realize or understand what creative is since reading backward is uncommon. Ira makes a reading backward concept to attract the reader's attention. It is proven on the internet that it attracts many people to read the book.

The fourth strength of the book is the valuable message of being creative in an easy way to deliver it. The language of the book is really simple because Ira explains everything clearly in her book. Although the topic of book is serious, she explains it in a simple language about how to thinking creative by using stories as examples. When she mentions about "Rawon Setan" which means "Devil Rawon", she explains that the food is very hot in taste. In Indonesia, the very hot taste is commonly symbolized by the word "setan" or "devil". Since we are familiar with "lombok setan" (devil chilli) or "keripik setan" (devil chips) which have a really hot taste. Some examples in the book also have valuable messages. For example, people with unique ideas and different way of thing become more powerful than a people who owns everything but less creative. If we are not willing to be extra ordinary, we will have to settle for the ordinary. For example, since the music program "*I Like Monday*" in

“*Hard Rock Café*” is unique since most people think that Monday is a very busy day people do not like. But the program has an opposite idea of loving Monday. So that it becomes a very successful program.

The fifth strength of the book is the interesting example which is easy to understand. The book is really easy to understand since the author shows many real-life examples about being creative. The first example, a “labirin park” teaches us not to give up easily because we must try hard to go out from there. The author also put many motivates quotes from inspiring people, so that the readers can be highly motivated to be creative. For example, a quote from a famous person Albert Einstein, which says, “*The gift of fantasy has meant more to me than my talent for absorbing positive knowledge. Imagination is more important than knowledge.*” The second example, a creative man David Tan from Malaysia who proposes his girlfriend in a unique way by doing an extra ordinary action to show his love. The third example, a talk show “*Empat Mata*” (Four Eyes) hosted by Tukul Arwana, which was once banned to air by KPI (“*Komisi Penyiaran Indonesia*” or Indonesian Broadcasting Commission) regained its success after show's creative team changed the name of the talk show into “*Bukan Empat Mata*” or (Not Four Eyes). Fourth example is Sheridan Simove, a British man who wrote and launched a book “*What Every Man Thinks About Apart From Sex*”, with 200 blank pages which can beat “*Harry Potter*” and “*The Da Vinci Code*” on the Amazon.com online sales on LA was bought by people who use it as a notebook. The fifth example is Sriyono, a dumplings vendor in Jakarta who wears a pink outfit and a pink bicycle to sell dumplings. The sixth example is Joko Anwar, a movie journalist of Jakarta Post who often criticizes local movies that made many local film producers and directors. Since his meeting Nia Dinata, a producer and director had changed him to prove himself as a good movie maker. Joko Anwar's movies were played on prestigious international film festivals in various countries. The book focused on how creative people think, how creative ideas are invented, what creative perspective is, what the impacts for the environment, and what creative ethic is she offers the readers, the easy problem solved by giving some examples about problems that are solved with creative solutions.

3.2 Weaknesses of The Book

There are three weaknesses of this book. The writer only shows how often people being creative. There is no extra explanation or definition of what creative is, because she was only giving examples, opinions and tips. Too many blank pages in the book and the rare some pages which are written by using big font.

For the first weaknesses, although sharing examples, the writer does not explain how often someone must be creative give the whole example only show people ask one example of creativity.

For the second weaknesses, although give example, opinion, and story, the writer does not explain in detail how people became creative. It seems like she just want the readers to be triggered to be creative and find themselves the way to be creative.

For the last weaknesses, the blank pages can be useful for the readers to note something but it is a waste of space since it can be useful for giving another example or explanation.

Yet, there are no perfect things in the world. Overall, “*Normal is boring*” is an interesting book. It can motivate the readers for being more creative after read that book and some motivating stories in there.

3.3 Personal Opinion

In my personal opinion, this book is really easy to understand, especially the language that the author used. The examples of creative things were really inspiring and fun to read.

But the thing that I do not like is the way the author's plots of shining how to be creative. The book is like disordered as the examples on randomly presented from first to last topics. In addition, most of the examples are the same, even when the situation and the condition is different. For example, the book only tells about how to think differently, be unique, be extraordinary and others. In my opinion creative is not only about being different, but also about how we solve problems differently, not living differently.

CONCLUSION

"*Normal is Boring*" novel written by Ira Lathief is an interesting book because it teaches us not to be a commoner and push us to think differently, which can make us create something new in our life. As a human creation, the book has strengths and weaknesses.

The strengths of this book are a unique title, an unusual cover, a different way of reading (backward), the valuable messages and the interesting real-life examples from the people around the world about being creative. Everybody can learn how to make an interesting book if they want to be a writer someday. For students, they are able to observe how to communicate clearly using simple language. For common people, they can study how to solve problems creatively, so they will not give up easily.

The weaknesses on this book are the writer does not clearly explain in detail how to be creative. There are many blank spaces in the book that actually can be used to put some ideas or some experiences for being creative. Last but not least, the use of big fonts and the examples that were shown randomly might confusing for the readers.

As a conclusion, the writer considered that this book also teaches us how to be a creative person that dares to be different as long as it does not break the rules or laws. Moreover, the quotations from great people are hopefully inspired the readers to become more creative.

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