

***THE LITTLE MERMAID (2023): SWIMMING AGAINST THE CURRENT OF
RACIAL STEREOTYPES IN INDONESIA***

A Research Paper

Submitted as Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for Sarjana Sastra Degree



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Sebuah skripsi yang diajukan untuk memenuhi salah satu syarat memperoleh gelar Sarjana
Sastra pada Fakultas Pendidikan Bahasa dan Sastra

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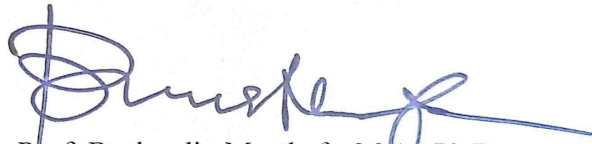
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TABLE OF CONTENT

THE LITTLE MERMAID (2023): SWIMMING AGAINST THE CURRENT OF RACIAL STEREOTYPES IN INDONESIA	1
PAGE OF APPROVAL	2
THE LITTLE MERMAID (2023): SWIMMING AGAINST THE CURRENT OF RACIAL STEREOTYPES IN INDONESIA	2
TABLE OF CONTENT	3
Abstract	4
INTRODUCTION	5
METHODOLOGY	8
Research Design	8
Data Collection	9
Justification for Qualitative Approach	10
Data Analysis	11
FINDINGS	11
Viewing Experience of Animated Films	11
Perceptions of Live-Action Adaptations	15
Discussion on Indonesian Society's View of Mermaids and the Influence of Skin Color	17
Factors Influencing Children's Perception of Identity Beyond Race	21
DISCUSSION	23
CONCLUSION	26
REFERENCES	27
ATTACHMENT	29

THE LITTLE MERMAID (2023): SWIMMING AGAINST THE CURRENT OF RACIAL STEREOTYPES IN INDONESIA

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Abstract

This research investigates how race is portrayed in the live-action version of *The Little Mermaid* (2023), a beloved Disney film, and how Indonesian audiences interpret these representations. The study employs a qualitative approach, including focus group discussions and an optional online survey, to explore how the movie's portrayal of race affects Indonesian teenagers' perceptions of race and identity. Children's films have a significant impact on shaping young audiences' perceptions of social and cultural norms, including race and identity. This study investigates the portrayal of race in the 2023 live-action adaptation of Disney's *The Little Mermaid*, focusing on its reception among Indonesian audiences. By employing Reader's Response theory and Critical Race Theory, the research explores how Indonesian viewers interpret and react to the racial representation of Ariel, portrayed by Black actress Halle Bailey, in a society still grappling with the remnants of colonialism and persistent racial stereotypes.

The study employed qualitative methods, including focus group discussions and optional online surveys, targeting Indonesian teenagers aged 13 to 18 from diverse backgrounds. Thematic analysis of the data identify patterns and themes related to the participants' emotional responses, personal identification with characters, and the perceived impact of racial representation on their self-perception and understanding of race. Initial findings reveal mixed reactions to Ariel's racial change, with some respondents expressing disappointment due to their pre-existing image of Ariel as a fair-skinned character with red hair. However, others emphasize the importance of storyline consistency over character appearance, acknowledging the positive step towards inclusivity. This research aims to provide insights into how diverse racial portrayals in children's media influence Indonesian teenagers' racial attitudes and identity development. It underscores the need for more inclusive content in media to foster positive racial attitudes and self-esteem among younger audiences. The study also contributes to the broader discourse on diversity and representation in children's media, highlighting the potential for media to challenge or reinforce racial stereotypes in different cultural contexts.

Keywords: Disney films; Diversity; Racial portrayal; Racial stereotypes; and Representation.

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