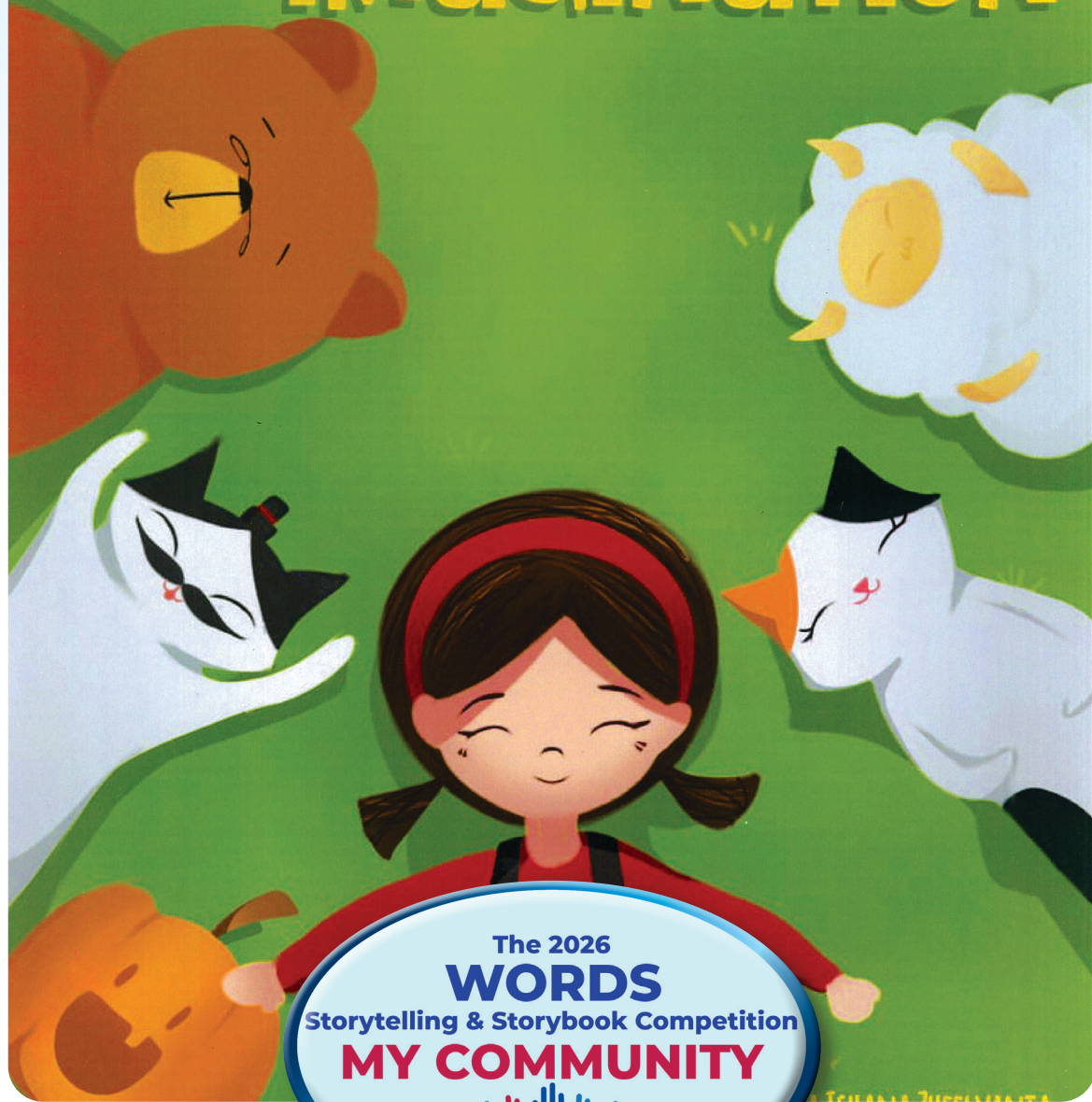
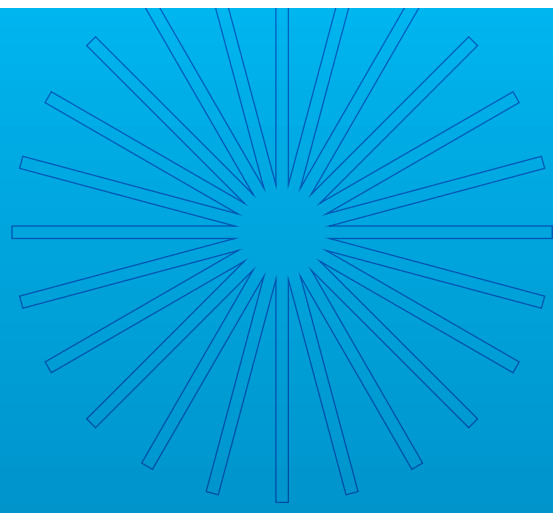


RISHTA ISHANA ZHEELVANIA

- FOREST OF IMAGINATION -

FOREST OF IMAGINATION





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These storybooks have been lightly
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Foreword

The seventeen stories presented in this book came from a collaborative process between students and their teachers— both their home institution teacher (co-teacher) and the Fulbright English Teaching Assistant (ETA) serving in their schools. At the heart of the collaborative process is the desire to foster understanding and to bridge differences. The schools where they taught were selected through a collaborative process between AMINEF, the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education, and the Ministry of Religious Affairs to host the ETAs. Indeed, everything about this program underlines cooperation between all parties involved.

After a long selection and preparation process, the ETAs served in Indonesia for eight months. They came from various states in the US, from New York to California, Vermont to Louisiana - some from urban areas, others more rural. Together, they represent the rich landscape of places and cultures in America. Likewise, in Indonesia, the ETAs were exposed to and experienced life in various places and cultures. They co-taught English in various areas, spreading from Padang, Jambi, Lampung, Kulon Progo, Kudus, Sidoarjo, Praya, Palangkaraya, Makassar, and Kendari.

Over the eight months the ETAs, co-teachers, and students, in essence, serve as cultural ambassadors to one another. They forged friendships beyond the classroom walls and invested their time and energy in the communities. And this year's theme for the WORDS Storybook competition is indeed "My Community".

The stories you are about to read here were written by the stars of each school. The authors won a local competition organized by the ETAs and the co-teachers. They then worked intensively on their books and on how to best narrate the stories. In April, the students, co-teachers, and ETAs were invited to Jakarta to celebrate their journey – from beginning to learn English to becoming authors and, subsequently, storytellers.

The students performed confidently in front of a panel of four prominent judges who are all Fulbrighters from Indonesia and the US: Ahmad Fuadi, an author of best-selling novels including "Negeri 5 Menara" and a prominent public speaker; Anna Grundström, a performing artist and independent researcher based in Brooklyn, New York; Azalia Muchransyah, filmmaker, scholar, and lecturer at BINUS University; and Douglas Ramage, AMINEF Board Member and founding Managing Director of Bower-GroupAsia Indonesia.

The third place went to Clarintha Glory Amungin Allokendek from SMK Raden Umar Said Kudus with "Hannah The One-Man Team" whose story reminded us of the importance of collaboration with others. Putri Permata Sari from SMK 9 Padang's story "The Pursuit of Happiness", won second place. It is a beautiful story about self-acceptance and creating a community of your own.

In first place was Florencia Kirana Wilman from SMK 6 Padang, with her story "The Day Coffee Called Us Home." Ms. Wilman presented a powerful reminder that, amid disasters and challenges, communities can work together and find solutions. Her story showed that sometimes what the community needs is one person to plow the way, helping each other, and others will follow.

The WORDS Competition is a celebration for all: the students, the ETAs, and the co-teachers. It is a celebration of a new, and hopefully lasting, connection among people. And AMINEF is proud to have been part of these connections.

Dr. Sandra Hamid

Executive Director, AMINEF

About the WORDS Competition

WORDS is a national English-language competition that brings together one student from each Fulbright ETA host school. Launched as a speech and talent contest in 2007, it evolved into a storytelling and storybook competition in 2018.

Finalists first win their school-level competition, which Fulbright ETAs organize in collaboration with the co-teachers. ETAs support students through brainstorming sessions, workshops, and performance feedback.

A highlight of the AMINEF year, the WORDS Competition allows 10th and 11th graders to showcase their storytelling skills, English proficiency, and cultural insights. In 2026, seventeen finalists will bring the theme **“My Community”** to life through their original stories.








There was a kid named Jenny who loved to draw.
She would draw anywhere, everywhere she could!
Sometimes paper wasn't enough for her,
so she would do something very naughty.
She would draw on the walls and floors.
Her imagination never ran dry.

Jenny was mostly at her grandma's house because her parents were out of town, but it wasn't always that fun when her grandparents were busy.

"Hmph. Everyone is always so busy. No one wants to play with me," Jenny sulked.





She walked to her room searching for a toy. Her eyes wandered to a blank white wall in front of her.

“I haven’t drawn on this wall yet!” she thought.

Then she drew a brand new door, complete with a window beside it.

“This is perfect! I just need something to finish my house!” she said as she crouched down, searching for more crayons.

Suddenly, a blinding light came from the door. She looked back up, realizing how real the door looked.

Debating whether to enter or not, she thought, “*Well, what’s the worst that can happen?*”

Almost immediately, she fell, but was cushioned by branches.

“Ouch! What is this, a forest?” she said, brushing leaves off her dress.

Suddenly, a rustle came from the bushes. Scared but curious, Jenny moved toward it and...

“Oh? A cat with a mustache?”

“OHOHO!
Jenny, you came! Welcome!
Just in case you forgot about me,
I’m Mr. Goldie.”

“Mr. Goldie?” Jenny was completely and utterly confused. “Yes! You drew me a week ago! Let me show you my house!” Mr. Goldie said.



As they walked, they passed wonders Jenny had once drawn, all living together. The cloud-sheep watered farms lifted by paper birds. Nearby, a group of fluffy caterpillars lounged lazily, waving their tiny legs toward Jenny. Jenny chuckled and waved back.

Then the street lamps along the path began to light one by one, bowing their light towards a house at the end of the road.



“Let’s go! That house is mine!”
said Mr. Goldie.

As the door
opened...

"Uh... why is everything in your house upside down and floating? The sofa's on the ceiling, and there's a floating cup of tea?" Jenny asked, feeling quite confused.

"Oh, Jenny dear, you only drew the outside of my house! How am I supposed to know what the inside is like? Come meet Mrs. Goldie in the dining room!"

On the way to the dining room, Jenny had to duck and dive around the hovering things.



At the dining table, Jenny saw Mrs. Goldie mending a torn paper bird.

"Mrs. Goldie? What are you doing?" Jenny asked.

"Hi, Jenny. In this neighborhood, we make sure no one stays broken," Mrs. Goldie responded as she carefully glued the torn bird.

Jenny stayed beside Mrs. Goldie for a while, watching her work.

Suddenly, the sky began to rumble.

“Oh, Jenny dear~ dinner’s ready!”

“Oh gosh—that’s my grandma! I have to go back!” Jenny gasped, running outside.



Jenny kept running toward the door where she had fallen. Soon after, Mr. and Mrs. Goldie and everyone else ran after her.



“Oh no, no, no! I cannot reach the door! It’s too high up!” Jenny gasped frantically.

“What door, Jenny?” they asked in unison.

“That door up there,” Jenny pointed high in the air.

“I can’t possibly make it up there on my own.”

“Because you know... I give myself very good advice. But I very seldom follow it. That explains the trouble that I’m always in.”

“Jenny, there’s one thing that’s good about having friends—help! I’m a caterpillar, I can lift you up!” the caterpillar said.

“We can lift you too!” the cloud-sheep offered.

Everyone in the forest began working together to help Jenny get to the door. After much wobbling and swaying, Jenny *finally* reached the doorknob and returned to her room.

Before leaving, Jenny waved thanks to all her kind friends, and then she closed the door.



About the Author

**Rishta Ishana
Zheelvania**
SMA NU Al Ma'ruf Kudus



Hi! My name is Rishta Ishana Zheelvania, but you can call me Rishta. I am 14 years old, and I am from Kudus in Central Java. I am currently a first-year student at SMA NU Al-Ma'ruf Kudus. I've always had a thing for anime, K-pop, dancing, and listening to music. I am also very interested in world-building or building fictional worlds from scratch.

I'm manifesting a future where I become a successful daughter for both my parents while also learning new things from all around the world!

About AMINEF

The American Indonesian Exchange Foundation (AMINEF) is the binational Fulbright Commission for Indonesia. AMINEF's many educational exchange programs have increased mutual understanding between the United States and Indonesia and strengthened the ties that unite our two countries.

Since 1952, more than 3,500 Indonesians and 1,400 Americans have participated in exchanges. Annually, 80-100 Indonesians travel to the US through Fulbright grants for degree study, teaching, research, or non-degree professional fellowships. Similarly, up to 60 Americans receive Fulbright support to contribute their expertise in teaching, research, or as Specialists, offering insights to Indonesian institutions.

For detailed information on degree scholarships and non-degree fellowships available to Indonesians and Americans, visit the AMINEF website at www.aminef.or.id.

About the Fulbright English Teaching Assistant (ETA) Program and ETA in Indonesia

The Fulbright English Teaching Assistant (ETA) Program, one of the US State Department-funded Fulbright programs in many countries worldwide, places recent college graduates and young professionals as English teaching assistants in primary and secondary schools or universities overseas.

The program helps improve international students' English-language abilities and knowledge of the US while increasing the US student's language skills and knowledge of the many host countries worldwide.

In Indonesia, the Fulbright ETAs are placed in high schools (SMA, SMK, and Madrasah) that assist local English teachers. The program has been running for over two decades, since 2004, affecting thousands of Indonesian students and their communities across the archipelago. AMINEF works closely with the Indonesian Ministries of Primary and Secondary Education and Religious Affairs to administer the Fulbright ETA program in Indonesia.






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