



Signs in the Mark of Athena Novel Cover: A Semiotic Analysis

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Article info

Received Date: 26 May 2023

Accepted Date: 25 July 2023

Published Date: 31 January 2024

Keywords:*

Cover, Mark of Athena, Novel, Rick Riordan

Abstract*

This study aims to describe and analyze the semiotic signs found in The Mark of Athena's novel cover. This study also explains the meaning of the signs found on the cover. Cover from Rick Riordan's novel is used because the series of the book is famous and soon will be adapted to a movie by Disney star plus. There are two objectives of this study; to know the verbal and non-verbal signs found in The Mark of Athena's novel cover and to know the meaning of verbal and non-verbal signs found in the cover. In analyzing the data, the writer used the qualitative method. This study has examined verbal and non-verbal signs found in The Mark of Athena's novel cover using the theory from Saussure (1957) that divides signs into verbal and non-verbal signs. And the second theory from Barthes (1977) according to Barthes, there are two main points of meaning; denotative and connotative. Based on the theory that is used to describe the first objective of the study, this study found 15 signs on the cover; 9 verbal signs, and 6 nonverbal signs. From the 15 signs, 6 of them conceive denotative meaning and 9 of them conceive connotative meaning. It can be concluded that the mark of Athena's novel cover conceives more signs that have a hidden meaning or riddle that will make the reader interested to buy the novel.

1. Introduction

Communication is one of the activities that individuals and living creatures in the world always carried out. Humans do various kinds of communication in everyday life. It divides into two types, verbal and non-verbal communication. Communication that uses words to communicate is named verbal communication, such as face-to-face talk, listening to a lecturer, listening to the seminar even in the written media. Verbal communication in written media includes letters, emails, messages, documents, etc. (Suatra, 2021). Meanwhile, non-verbal communication uses platforms such as facial expression, body language, eye gaze, gesture, tone of voice, and appearances to communicate or deliver the message of the talk.

There are a lot of media that can be used to communicate with people. One example of media that is commonly used by people in the media of advertising. It is a medium that can be

used by companies or people to message promote and sell their product, service, or idea to the buyer. Various kinds of products can be advertised, one of them is literary works such as a book. The publisher or the company that sells the book, advertised it mainly by the cover, whether it is on online media or offline media.

Cover which usually uses verbal and non-verbal signs to communicate with the buyer is the novel cover. The novel is an art that looks to find another path to explore and entertain humans (Sani, 2021). The novel can be enjoyed by all people based on their age and preference. There are many varieties of the novel genre such as fantasy, action, romance, fable slice of life, comedy, horror, and so on. Many choices of the genre make the reader interested in reading the novel they like.

Publishers of the novel often print several novels in various languages and volumes for international and domestic markets, a novel usually published with a transparent wrapping to show the reader and make them interested to buy it. Moreover, a novel cover can also give important information about the novel. Even though there is a saying proverb saying that “don’t judge the book by its cover” the cover of novel literature has a meaning that relates to the story inside. For example, if the genre is romance, the cover will use some feminine color (e.g., pink) with the things related to romance such as rose, love pattern, or the figure of the main couple. If the genre of the novel is action, the cover may usually fill with black or white color, with some people holding a weapon and ornament of blood, and so on.

Cover on the novel was chosen as the data source of this study because the cover is an important tool as a medium of the writer of the novel to the readers and because there are a lot of signs that can be analyzed from the cover. In the previous study, Supono (2015) discussed the visual elements contained in the cover illustration of Harry Potter and The Deathly Hallows. The result of this study has shown that cover illustrations of novels contain visual elements found in the cover illustrations such as shapes, colors, and typography presenting the message of the novel.

Another thesis written by Wijaya (2021) discussed an analysis of verbal and non-verbal signs found in selected shampoo advertisements. The result of this study state that in the shampoo advertisement there are various signs found, verbal sign found in the data is the written text such as the brand of the shampoo, the ingredients, and the function. While the non-verbal data in these advertisements are such as the picture of a woman or man, the picture of ingredients, and the picture of the shampoo itself. The non-verbal signs support the verbal signs to make the shampoo advertisement more interesting as the package of advertisement.

And the last article from Andriani et.al. (2021) discussed Verbal and Non-verbal Signs in Facial Wash Advertisements. The result of this study is the three facial wash advertisements contain verbal and nonverbal signs. And from the meaning of the signs included connotative meaning. Female models were used in two advertisements and one advertisement used a male as a model. The similarities of all these studies are first both studies analyzed about signs and the meaning of the signs. Meanwhile, the differences between the previous study and this study are, the theory that is used and the data source that is used. This study used the mark of Athena cover by Rick Riordan

The objectives of this study are to know the verbal and non-verbal signs in the mark of Athena’s novel cover and to know the meaning of the signs found, whether it conveys a denotative or connotative meaning. The mark of Athena’s novel cover was chosen because it is one of the famous books written by Rick Riordan and the cover has many signs that are interesting to be analyzed.

2. Research Methods (Bold 12)

This study will need Saussure's semiotic theory (1959) with help of the theory from Barthes (1977) about Denotative and connotative meaning. First, semiotic theory from Saussure. According to Saussure (1959: 65), there are signs everywhere, they could be words, flags, body language, and so on. Signifier and signified are two elements of sign that cannot be separated because they integrated each other.

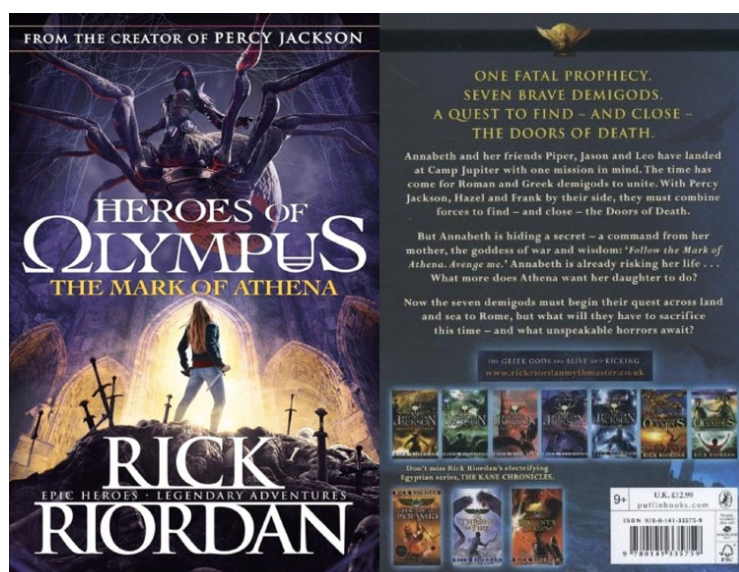
A signifier is like a sound or image of a sign and signified is the conceptual meaning of the signifier. The second theory used in this study is the theory of meaning from Barthes. There are three main points of meaning, denotative, connotative, and myth. Denotative and connotative words have different meanings. For example, the case of what we see at a glance in the novel cover is denotative. But when we see it thoroughly, we can see the deeper meaning or another meaning that is explicitly shown in the cover and it correlates with the story of the novel.

This study will only analyze the denotative and connotative meanings found in the data. The data source of this study was a novel cover, especially the cover from Rick Riordan's Novel. The data source of this study was a novel cover, especially the cover from Rick Riordan's Novel entitled *The Mark of Athena*. The observation method is used in collecting the data. Meanwhile, the data collection was done by note-taking technique namely: downloading the mark of Athena cover, paying attention to the elements of the mark of Athena cover, giving note of each sign in the mark of Athena cover, and dividing the sign into verbal and non-verbal element.

The collected data were analyzed by descriptive method. Firstly, identifying all the collected signs from the cover which consist of verbal and non-verbal signs. Second, classify the verbal and non-verbal signs into signifier and signified. Third, describe the connotative and denotative meanings of the signs. And lastly, explain the correlation of the cover to the story.

3. Discussions (Bold 12)

This study has examined verbal and non-verbal signs in the mark of Athena's novel cover using the Semiotics theory from Saussure. The study is aimed to achieve the objectives of the study: to know the verbal and non-verbal signs found in the mark of Athena novel covers by Rick Riordan and to understand the meaning of verbal and nonverbal signs in the mark of Athena novel covers by Rick Riordan, that is not merely a picture or a case but contain many meanings related to the novel. The figure of the front and back cover of the mark of Athena's novel can be seen below.



Based on the theory that is used to analyze the data found, the data collected from the mark of Athena's novel cover have been analyzed. The sign that was analyzed was the verbal data that contain in the front and back cover, the visual data such as the picture of the character in the novel, the background, and the color that is used. Based on the data source in figure 1 the number of verbal and visual signs found can be seen in table 1.

Table 1
Verbal and Visual Signs in The Mark of Athena Novel Cover

NO	DATA SOURCE	OCCURRENCES OF VERBAL SIGNS	OCCURRENCES OF VISUAL SIGNS
1	The Mark Of Athena Cover	9	6
Total		9	6

This study found 9 verbal signs and 6 visual signs on the cover. The number of verbal and nonverbal signs in the cover was quite different, because the verbal signs are used to describe the story in the novel and because it is easier for the reader to understand the verbal sign, the reader only needs to read the description that is given by the author, and the visual sign will give the imagery of the written text.

Table 2
Meaning of Verbal and Non Verbal Signs in The Mark Of Athena Cover

NO	DATA SOURCE	DENOTATIVE MEANING	CONNOTATIVE MEANING
1	The Mark Of Athena Cover	6	9
Total		6	9

The Analysis of Verbal Signs

Based on the data source above, there are verbal signs found on the cover. The data will be described as its signifier and signified in the table and the meaning of each sign.

Data 1: "Heroes of Olympus"

This sign refers to telling the reader about which series of the novel it belongs to. This sign conceives a denotative meaning. The sign only showed the name of the book series. The mark of Athena novel is the third book from the heroes of Olympus series. It can be seen from the plural noun that is used "Heroes" which means that there is not only one hero in this novel but more than two main heroes in this story.

Data 2: "The Mark of Athena"

This sign refers to telling the reader about what is the main issue in this story. The issue relates to the Goddess Athena and her "mark". The word 'mark' represents a spiritual trail of clues leading the demigod children of Athena to her sacred statue, Athena pantheons, which had been stolen by the Romans and guarded but Arachne. The mark is usually in form of a coin silver drachma given by Goddess Athena to her children. This sign conceives a connotative meaning. According to the

Greek myth, Athena is an Olympian. She is the source of knowledge in mathematics, war, and battle. But because she did not like combat, she was known as the goddess of arts, strategy, wisdom, and crafts.

Data 3: “Rick Riordan”

The sign above is the sign that has a denotative meaning. The meaning is literally what it is said and what it is shown. There is no hidden meaning behind the phrase. Rick Riordan is the pen name of the writer of this book, his real name is Richard Russell Riordan. He published this novel in 2012.

Data 4: “From the creator of Percy Jackson”

The sign found in data 4 said “from the creator of Percy Jackson” the creator of Percy Jackson is also Rick Riordan, the writer of this novel. Rick Riordan was famous for the first series of Percy Jackson which has five books. The mark of Athena is one of the Heroes of Olympus series, the continuation of the Percy Jackson series. The author put this sign so the reader can get the information about the writer and the story. This sign conceives a denotative meaning.

Data 5: “Epic heroes, legendary adventure”

This phrase is used to mention the extraordinary heroes and their adventures in the story. This sign data 5 have a denotative meaning. By saying legends, the author wants to make the reader interested to buy the novel because only ‘legend’ will enjoy this stuff. Legend refers to someone famous and admired by a lot of people or if they do something very helpful, very generous, or very successfully, they also can be called a legend. This phrase is also used to mention the extraordinary heroes and their adventures in the story. Hero is the name put to the people who have done good things for a lot of people.

Data 6: “One fatal prophecy, seven brave demigods, a quest to find- and- close the doors of death”

Data 6 is the description from the prophecy is delivered by a harpy named Ella. The prophecy said, “wisdom’s daughter walks alone, the mark of Athena burns through Rome, twins snuff out the angel’s breath, who holds the key to endless death, giants’ bane stands gold and pale”. The seven demigods are Percy, Annabeth, Jason, Piper, Leo, Hazel, and Frank. The doors of death are similar to the door of hell which was opened and let the dead monster and titan go the living world. The quest is to close the door from both sides. This sign conceives a connotative meaning because it is still unclear what is information given to the reader.

Data 7: “Annabeth and her friends, Piper, Jason, and Leo have landed at camp Jupiter with one mission in mind. The times had come for the roman and Greek demigods to unite. With Percy Jackson, hazel, and Frank by their side, they must combine forces to find and close the doors of death.”

There are three sentences in this description. First “Annabeth and her friends, Piper, Jason, and Leo have landed at camp Jupiter with one mission in mind” this sign refers to the time when Annabeth and her friends went camping Jupiter to look for Percy Jackson, her missing boyfriend, and to get information about Jason’s home. The second sentence “The times had come for roman and Greek demigod to unite” This sentence showed that the Greek and Roman demigods were not in unity before. It has a connotative meaning. According to the novel, they

have different starting points, different camps, and different cultures. Percy Jackson, as a Greek demigod, trained at camp half-blood, meanwhile Jason, as a Roman demigod, start his life in the wolf house where he met Lupa. Lupa will decide whether they are strong enough to survive or not.

The third sentence “with Percy Jackson, Hazel, and Frank by their side, they must combine forces to find and close the doors of death” showed the name of other main characters that stayed at the camp Jupiter as the representative of the camp Jupiter. The reader who already read the prequel of this novel will have more information gained by this sign. This sign conveys a connotative meaning. Percy who belongs to the camp half-blood were found in the camp Jupiter meanwhile Jason who should be staying at camp Jupiter were sent to camp half-blood. The beginning of the story started in the first and second book, the reason why the main character swamped place and was amnesia.

Data 8: “But Annabeth is hiding a secret command from her mother, the goddess of war and wisdom: follow the mark of Athena, avenge me. Annabeth is already risking her life, what more does Athena want her daughter to do?”

The description tells the reader about the main problem of the story that is also mentioned in the title of the novel. The rhetorical question directly targets the reader and poses a question about the continuation of the story. According to the novel, Annabeth is the daughter of Athena. Athena has been asking her to find her sacred statue, Athena parthenons. The mark can only be seen by Athena’s children. By the coin that was given by Athena herself. Athena asked Annabeth to avenge someone who has stolen the statue, she is a monster named Arachne. This sign has a connotative meaning. The rhetorical question directly targets the reader and poses a question about the continuation of the story and aims the curiosity of the reader to buy and read the book.

Data 9: “Now the seven demigods must begin their quest across land and sea to Rome, but what will they have to sacrifice this time and what unspeakable horrors await?”

The description tells the reader about the main problem of the story that is also mentioned in the title of the novel. The rhetorical question directly targets the reader and poses a question about the continuation of the story. The seven demigods that were mentioned in the description above are Percy Jackson, Annabeth, Jason Grace, Piper McLean, Leo Valdez, Frank Zhang, and Hazel Levesque. The quest that they need to do in this novel is to close the door of death, or the door of Tartarus, but the quest has not been fulfilled yet. On the way they went to Rome there are a lot of problems happening and the main problem is Annabeth’s mission to find the Athena Parthenon.

According to the novel, the location of the statue is under the land of Rome, the statue was stolen by a monster called Arachne. At the end of the novel, Annabeth succeeds to take the statue but there is an incident that made Annabeth and Percy fall from the monster’s lair to Tartarus. This analysis also explains the last sentence of the description which said “but what will they have to sacrifice this time and what unspeakable horrors await” these signs convey a connotative meaning.

The Analysis of Non-Verbal Signs

Data 1:



Figure 2. Visual Sign in Data 1

Data 1 showed a figure of a monster half human and half spider. She is the main villain of this story. The one who stole Athena Parthenon. She put it in her lair and lure the kids of Athena there. The verbal sign in data 2 said “the mark of Athena” mark that connects the children of Athena, in this story Annabeth, to this statue and made them meet with Arachne. According to Greek mythology, Arachne means spider in greek. She was once a human that has an amazing skill in weaving, because of this ability, she became arrogant and challenged Goddess Athena to see who is the best weaver in the world. Athena win but Arachne couldn’t accept the fact because she feels that is not fair. Therefore, Arachne stole the statue and lure the children of Athena and kill them. This sign conceives a denotative meaning.

Data 2:

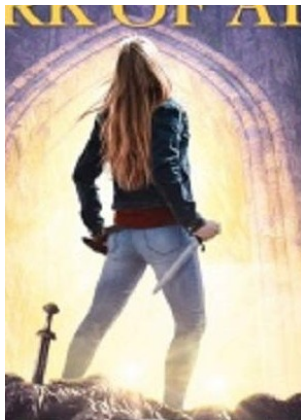


Figure 3. Visual Sign in Data 2

The figure in data 2 showed the back of a girl. She is one of the main characters in this novel. Annabeth is the daughter of Athena, the goddess that is mentioned in the title of the novel, and professor Frederick Chase. It is said that the children of Athena were born from the mind of the goddess. The cover showed that she wears a t-shirt, jacket, and jeans. The picture on the cover has already shown what Annabeth looked like according to the novel. she has long blonde hair white skin and a thin body. She also is drawn holding a golden blade. This sign conceives a connotative meaning.

From the gesture, she stands on the corpse’s body with her head holding her blade can be seen that she is confident and brave, even though she needs to beat her natural enemy, Arachne. The corpses under Annabeth’s feet are also the children of Athena, which mean they are half-sibling because they literary have the same mother. from the way Annabeth stands on the pile of corpses, with her braveness, it implies that she is different from them, she will not end up like the other children.

Annabeth receives a quest from her mother to search for Athena Parthenon, a statue of the goddess Athena. According to the novel, Annabeth kind of resent her mother, Athena, because she gave her a quest that is needed to be done alone. Annabeth just meet again with Percy at the beginning of the novel, after Percy lost for several months. And now her mother wants Annabeth to separate from Percy, and Athena asked Annabeth to kill Percy if he has become a roman. The result of this quest is that Annabeth succeeds to find the statue but has to meet Arachne and at the end of the novel she and Percy fall into Tartarus.

Data 3:

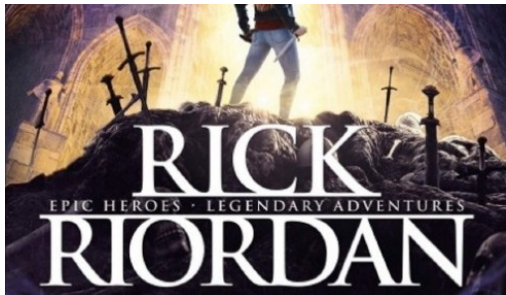


Figure 4. Visual Sign in Data 3

Data 3 showed the pile of corpses and blades, so much until it looked like a mound. Some blades belong to the corpses. According to the novel, the corpses that are drawn in the background belong to Athena's children. Athena always sends her children to the quest when they reach a certain age. Annabeth was 16 years old when she went on this quest. According to the novel, after Arachne lost the competition with goddess Athena, and was turned into a spider monster, she has a deep hatred towards Athena. But because she knew she couldn't kill a goddess, she stole Athena's most precious and sacred statue, Athena Parthenon that has half of Athena's power. This sign conceives a connotative meaning.

After that, the roman demigod started to rise, and Athena was known as Minerva in Roman mythology. But the difference is that in roman form, Athena is a virgin goddess, she didn't have any child. And based on the novel, Minerva is not as superb as Athena, that's why she didn't like this roman form. the roman demigod started to rise and develop, much more than the Greek demigod, this made God and Goddess confuse with their identity, whether they are Romans or Greece. To prevent this, Athena needs her power to recover, thus she asked her child to search for the statue, but they always failed. The novel also mentioned that all of the children of Athena were afraid of spiders because from they were kids, Arachne always gives them nightmares that made them afraid of spiders.

Data 4:



Figure 5. Visual Sign in Data 4

Data 4 showed the environment or the lair of the spider monster, Arachne. This sign conceives a connotative meaning. The background uses black color to imply the darkness inside the cave. It is a perfect place for a spider. According to the novel, Arachne's lair was inside a labyrinth under the earth's surface that is far from getting sunlight. The background also showed that the walls

are full of spiders web. Through the way Annabeth went to this lair, she mentioned that she can smell something terrible, and the closer it is to the lair the more spiders are there. Spider webs are all over the place, based on the novel, Arachne uses her special web to make a wrapping to wrap Athena Parthenon so that its power does not leak out.

Annabeth who has a brilliant brain thought about something that can be useful against Arachne. She praised how beautiful it is the wrapping around the statue, but then she mentioned that she needs an intelligent weaver to make something fabulous. Arachne feels interested in Annabeth's idea because Arachne thinks that she is the best weaver in the world. After that Annabeth make a draft of a woven that looks like a cocoon. Arachne made it with enthusiasm but not knowing that the woven that she made became a trap that wrap her body tightly, and because it was made from her special webs it is not easy to break. And Annabeth succeed to get the Athena Parthenon that was wrapped by a spider web.

Data 5:

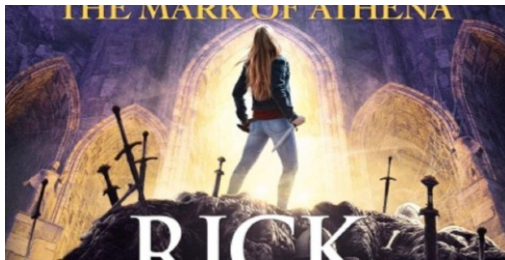


Figure 6. Visual Sign in Data 5

Data 5 is the background of the cover that showed the tunnels inside the labyrinth, where Annabeth doing her quest to look for the Athena Parthenon. Before Annabeth officially started her quest, she and Percy meet with Tiberinus and Rhea Silvia, the parents of Romulus and Remus. They offer to take Annabeth to the start of her quest as Athena told them to. Percy and Annabeth parted in front of the entrance of the Roman underground. After that Annabeth started her quest.

There are a lot of difficulties faced by Annabeth from her fear of spiders until she needs to fight giants. The tunnels looked so big with some statues. According to the novel, after the Romans brought the Athena Parthenon, they put it in an underground shrine. Arachne then attack the shrine and stole the statue. The shrine now became her lair and as time went by, it become part of the magic labyrinth. It is also said in the novel, that Arachne has two strong followers they are twin giants Otis and ephialtes. They also have a role in attacking Athena's children who tried to look for the statue.

In the background also can be seen there is a golden light coming from one of the tunnels. The source of the light comes from the Athena Parthenon statue. According to the novel, the statue had the figure of Athena made from ivory and wearing a golden toga. The right-hand holds a statue of goddess Nike and the left hand of the statue holds a shield with a snake emerging from it. Annabeth who already saw the statue said that the statue looked so much like her mother and that the condition of the statue is still good.

The Athena Parthenos is infused with Athena's power which makes it glow. The power of this statue is the source of the "mark" that can be seen by Athena's children when they do their quest. After the demigods succeed to bring back Athena Parthenons to camp half-blood, the power of the statue protects the camp and held a rising Gaea (main villain in this series) back for a while and it also can heal the gods' split personalities between Greek and roman form. This sign conceives a connotative meaning.

Data 6:



Figure 7. Visual Sign in Data 6

This sign is the front cover of the novel from the same author of the heroes of Olympus. This visual sign conceives a denotative meaning. These pictures will help the reader to know the order or the sequences of the novel. The first five covers of the other novels belong to Percy Jackson the series, the second two covers belong to the same series as this data source which is the heroes of the Olympus series. The last three covers belong to the Kane Chronicles series.

4. Novelities

This research is the first to raise the topic of semiotic sign in the mark of Athena novel cover. Focused in the verbal and non-verbal sign and the meaning of the sign as semiotic study.

5. Conclusion

After analyzing the data, this study found that the Mark of Athena novel cover contains fourteen (14) signs. Each of the signs has its signified and signifier according to Saussure theory. The signs also deliver meaning given by the author of the book. In understanding the signs, it is needed to understand the semiotic theory. This study used theory from Roland Barthes that consists of denotative and connotative meaning. After analyzing the verbal and nonverbal signs in this cover, it can be concluded that the verbal signs are more dominant than nonverbal signs, but the difference is insignificant. The author of the novel gave information about the novel through verbal and nonverbal signs, which makes the cover more interesting.

This study also finds in the denotative meanings, all the verbal and nonverbal signs represent the real meanings of the signs in the novel cover. The denotative meaning found such as the name of the author, the description that informs about the beginning of the story, a figure of a character holding their weapon, and the figure of setting where the story takes place. The signs that conceive a connotative meaning can be found in the title of the novel and description which give an ambiguous prophecy, the posture of the figure, the background of the cover, and in the term of color used in the background. There is also Greek mythology presented in those selected novel cover in the term of the name of the Greek gods and through the description of their power and their figure or symbol in the cover. It can be concluded that the mark of Athena's novel cover has verbal and non-verbal signs in it, and the signs found conceives denotative and connotative meaning. The signs will make the reader more interested to buy this novel.

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