

Implementation of learning strategies to enhance students' reading interest

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to increase reading interest and strengthen moral values in students of SMPN 3 Tempuling through a learning approach using illustrated fairy tales and folk tales. This strategy was designed in response to the low literacy skills and weak character building in elementary school students in rural areas. This study used the Classroom Action Research (CAR) approach model Kemmis and McTaggart which consists of four cycles: planning, action implementation, observation, and reflection. The results of the implementation showed that the application of illustrated fairy tales and local folk tales was able to significantly increase students' interest in reading, including those who were not previously fluent readers. Reading interest scores increased between 20% and 44%. The visualized stories were also able to evoke emotional responses in students and instill character values such as honesty, empathy, responsibility, and cooperation. This strategy is considered appropriate to the local socio-cultural context and able to reach all students comprehensively and inclusively. Therefore, this local story and visual media is recommended as an alternative learning approach to develop literacy and character at the elementary school level.

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Introduction

Secondary education plays a crucial role in shaping a child's character, intelligence, and morals from an early age. At this level, children are at an optimal developmental stage, beginning to develop an interest in reading and strengthening life values such as responsibility, empathy, and honesty (Fitria et al., 2024). According to Sudarsana, reading interest is a crucial factor that must be developed from an early age because reading not only broadens insight and knowledge but also shapes an individual's mindset and character. A strong interest in reading can encourage someone to actively seek information and learn independently, ultimately contributing to personal and societal progress (Sudarsana, 2014). However, the reality on the ground shows that there are obstacles that cannot be ignored. At SMPN 3 Tempuling, located in a rural area of Pegagan Hilir District, Dairi Regency, student engagement in reading activities is still low. Some students have not yet shown a strong interest in books, and one student, Nurhayati, is still at the spelling stage when reading, indicating a weak foundation for basic literacy.

On the other hand, moral values are not yet fully reflected in students' daily behavior. Attitudes such as responsibility, empathy, and honesty are still not firmly ingrained, and this appears to be influenced by environmental conditions. Support from family and community in shaping children's character is still limited. As Purwani and Mustikasari noted, the lack of parental involvement in reading activities with their children contributes to children's low interest in reading at home, which in turn impacts moral and literacy habits at school (Handoko, 2023).

In addition to environmental factors, the teaching methods used in the classroom also play a significant role in shaping students' learning experiences. Unfortunately, many classrooms still employ a one-way approach, where the teacher predominantly speaks and students only listen. This results in less interactive learning and a lack of emotional engagement. The learning media used also tend to be monotonous and disconnected from students' real lives (Mariyaningsih & Hidayati, 2018). In fact, an approach that uses illustrated stories and fairy tales originating from local culture can be a more interesting, fun, and meaningful alternative. However, we need to understand that before we use folktales or fairy tales as learning materials, we should choose ones that are appropriate for the age of the children we are teaching. According to Trimansyah, not all folktales are suitable for children to read because some folktales in Indonesia contain elements of violence, cruelty, crime, sex, and inappropriate behavior. Therefore, it is important to adapt the content of the folktales to the developmental level of the students. Aspects of development that need to be considered in writing books for children include cognitive development, moral development, emotional and personality development, and language development. "Interest in reading does not just appear, but must be cultivated through a supportive environment, the provision of appropriate reading materials, and a fun approach in introducing literacy from an early age" (BANGSAWAN, 2018).

From the statement of the Queen of the Nobles, children's interest in reading must be fostered with appropriate and interesting reading materials such as picture stories, according to Saputra, Nisa, and Jiwandono, which are able to attract children's attention while conveying important life messages visually. Picture books derived from local wisdom are books that depict the culture of the community in which children live through customs, traditions, ethical values, language, and patterns that exist in the community. Meanwhile, Rasyidi and his colleagues stated that folktales contain moral values that are relevant for character education. These stories, when conveyed in narrative and visual form, have great appeal for children and open up space for reflection and internalization of values (Bangsawan, 2024).

The phenomenon of low reading interest among students remains a major challenge in education, both nationally and internationally. Data from the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) shows that Indonesian students' reading literacy skills are still relatively low compared to other countries in Southeast Asia. This condition indicates a gap between the national education ideal of producing a literate generation and the reality on the ground, which shows low student engagement in reading activities (Anisa et al., 2021). Several national studies confirm this phenomenon. Widyaningsih and Nugroho revealed that a high interest in reading significantly impacts elementary school students' academic achievement. However, most students show interest in reading only in recreational contexts, not academic ones. This situation suggests that the learning strategies implemented in schools have not fully internalized the habit and enjoyment of reading into learning activities (Hermawan, 2023).

On the other hand, international research by Locher, Becker, and Pfof (2019) found that the suitability of teaching materials and interactive learning approaches were key factors in fostering students' interest in reading in Germany. Similar findings were also presented by Day et al. (2024), who showed that the use of interactive e-books and metacognitive strategies in learning can increase students' motivation and engagement in reading activities. This confirms that innovative learning strategies play a strategic role in fostering sustainable reading interest. In the national context, various programs, such as the School Literacy Movement (GLS), initiated by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology of the Republic of Indonesia, have emphasized the importance of 15 minutes of daily reading in schools. However, the implementation of this program still faces obstacles, such as a lack of teacher

creativity in managing learning strategies, limited reading materials that match students' interests, and a low level of support for a literate learning environment. Therefore, research is needed that thoroughly examines the implementation of innovative learning strategies that are relevant to student characteristics and contextualized to school literacy culture (Azhar et al., 2024). Furthermore, several national studies, such as those by Adam and Fitriani, confirm that the use of interactive media, contextual approaches, and the habituation of literacy activities linked to students' personal experiences can increase their enthusiasm for reading. However, these studies are largely descriptive in nature and have not explored how learning strategies can be implemented systematically, measurably, and sustainably to foster a reading culture in schools.

Based on this background, this study aims to answer several main questions: how is learning through illustrated fairy tales and folktales planned and implemented at SMPN 3 Tempuling? Can this strategy increase students' interest in reading? And is this approach also capable of instilling moral values in students' daily lives? This study aims to describe the process of planning and implementing a learning strategy that utilizes illustrated fairy tales and folktales, analyze the increase in students' interest in reading after the strategy is implemented, and assess the extent to which moral values can be instilled through this approach. In other words, this study does not only focus on academic outcomes, but also observes how stories can shape students' characters more deeply. The expected benefits of this study are two-sided. Theoretically, this study can serve as a reference in developing literacy learning strategies integrated with local culture and enrich studies on character education in thematic learning. Meanwhile, practically, the benefits cover various parties: for students, learning becomes more enjoyable and meaningful; for teachers, this strategy can inspire in designing more innovative and contextual methods; for schools, this approach can be used as a basis for developing literacy and character programs based on local wisdom; and for other researchers, the results of this study can be a basis for similar follow-up studies in the future..

Research Methods

Basically, research methods are scientific methods used to obtain data for specific purposes and uses (Sugiyono, 2013). This study uses a qualitative approach, which aims to directly improve the quality of classroom learning. The model used in this study is the Kemmis and McTaggart model, which consists of four main stages: planning, acting, observing, and reflecting. This approach was chosen because it is in accordance with the need to develop learning strategies based on local stories and visuals, in order to increase reading interest and strengthen students' character. This study is descriptive qualitative, where data is collected through direct observation, interviews, and documentation of changes in student behavior and responses during the learning process. Data analysis techniques are carried out using a qualitative descriptive approach. (Kusumastuti & Khoiron, 2019).

Results and Discussion

The lesson begins with the teacher reading the story "Banta Barensyah" illustrated by the teacher, while students observe the illustrations while listening to the storyline. After the teacher tells the story, the teacher continues to display the story on a laptop to be watched, because there are only six students, so according to the teacher who is also a researcher, displaying the story on a laptop can still be reached by the six students because the school does not have a projector and each classroom has not been facilitated with power outlets. In this story, the character Banta is described as a brave, honest, and not easily give up figure in fighting for justice. This story touches the empathy of students towards the struggle of the main character. Meanwhile, "The Arrogant Rose" is delivered in turns by students who have been prepared, then discussed together in group discussions. Students continue to retell and practice the story in front of the class by playing roles. Here are the results.

Pre-Cycle Reading Interest Table

NO	Nama Siswa	Ketertarikan	Partisipasi	Antusiasme	Cerita Ulang	Skor Akhir	Kategori
1	Dionsius	80	75	78	68	75,25	75,25
2	Vernandes	76	72	70	65	70,75	70,75
3	Revaulina	74	70	68	65	69,25	69,25
4	Emelia	68	65	60	58	62,75	62,75
5	Valentino	60	58	55	50	55,75	55,75
6	Nurhayati	50	45	40	35	42,50	42,50
	Rata-rata	68.00	64.17	61.83	56.83	62,71	62,71

Reading Interest Category Score Description:

Skor Akhir	Kategori
85 - 100	Sangat Baik
70 - 84	Cukup
55 - 69	Kurang
< 55	Sangat Kurang

Reading Interest Score Formula:

$$Skor\ Akhir = \left(\frac{Ketertarikan + Partisipasi + Antusiasme + Cerita\ Ulang}{4} \right) =$$

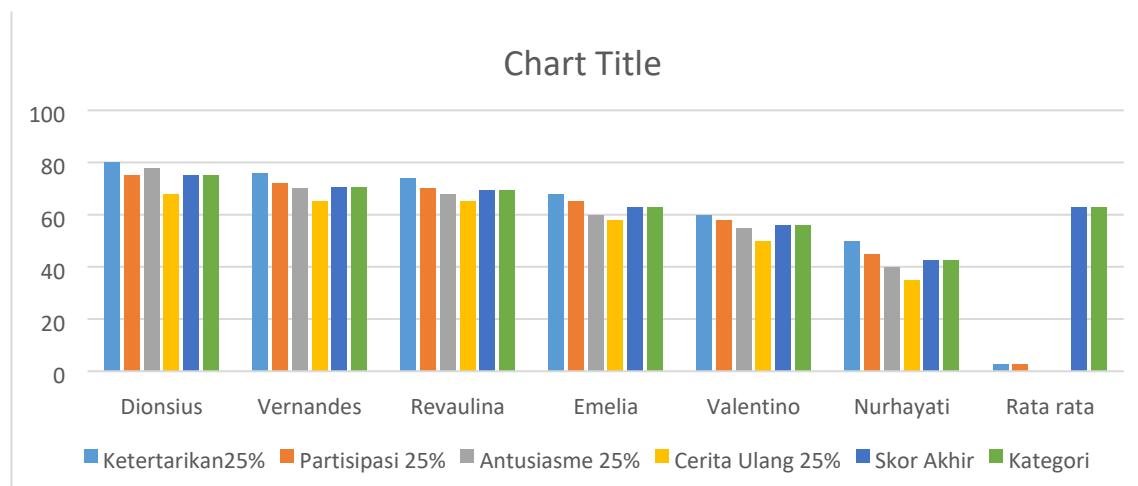
$$\text{Example for Dionsius: } Skor\ Akhir = \left(\frac{80+75+78+68}{4} \right) = 75,25$$

Table Description:

Dionsius achieved a final score of 75.25, with fairly balanced scores across the four indicators. He falls into the Fair category, indicating that his reading interest is at a good level. Vernandes scored 70.75 and also falls into the Fair category. Although there was a decline in the Retelling indicator, the level of participation and interest was still relatively high. Revaulina scored 69.25, which places her on the border between the Fair and Poor categories. She needs to improve her skills, especially in the Enthusiasm and Retelling aspects. Emelia scored 62.75, which places her in the Poor category. The decline was even across all aspects, especially Retelling, indicating that her comprehension and ability to retell the content of the reading are still low. Valentino scored 55.75 and also falls into the Poor category. He needs more guidance to increase his interest and participation in reading activities. Nurhayati recorded the lowest score, at 42.50, and is in the Very Poor category. Low scores across all indicators, especially Retelling (35), indicate a lack of interest in reading and the ability to understand the content of the story.

The overall class average for each indicator is as follows: Interest: 68.00, Participation: 64.17, Enthusiasm: 61.83, Retelling: 56.83, Final Score. Average: 62.71 Category Less. The conclusion from the Pre-cycle reading interest table is that Overall, the reading interest of students in grade 3 of SMPN 3 Tempuling is still included in the Less category. More interesting learning strategies are needed, such as the use of picture stories and folk tales, to increase students' interest and ability to understand and retell the contents of the reading.

Diagram Batang Minat Baca Prasiklus



From the bar chart we can see that the average class shows that reading interest is generally in the Less category, so it is necessary to improve more interesting and meaningful learning strategies. Series 1: Interest, Series 2: Participation, Series 3: Enthusiasm, Series 4: Retelling, Series 5: Final Score (average of four indicators), Series 6: Category (Very Good / Good / Sufficient / Less). Numbering no. 1 is (Dionsius), 2 (Vernandes), 3 (Reaulina), 4 (Emelia), 5 (Valentino), and 6 (Nurhayati).

Based on the bar chart, it can be seen that the average student reading interest tends to be in the Poor category, as reflected in the final score which is the average of four indicators, namely interest, participation, enthusiasm, and retelling ability. This result is in line with the Theory of Learning Interest proposed by Slameto, that interest has a major influence on learning success. Low interest will impact minimal student involvement in the learning process, so that learning outcomes are not optimal. When viewed from the Constructivism Theory (Piaget & Vygotsky), students will be more motivated and interested when learning is designed according to their needs, experiences, and life contexts. However, when learning strategies are less interesting, students tend to be passive and show no enthusiasm, as illustrated in the results of this study (Mutmainah et al., 2025).

Furthermore, these results also reinforce the concept of Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan), which emphasizes that intrinsic motivation is strongly influenced by a sense of connectedness, competence, and autonomy. Low student interest in reading may indicate that these motivational aspects have not been fully met in the learning process. Therefore, more innovative, interactive, and meaningful learning strategies are needed to improve reading interest indicators, including interest, participation, enthusiasm, and retelling skills. This will optimize learning outcomes, and the reading interest category can shift from Poor to Sufficient, Good, and even Very Good. (Rabbani et al., 2024).

Moral Precycle Table

No	Nama Siswa	Tanggung Jawab (25%)	Kejujuran (25%)	Empati (25%)	Kerja Sama (25%)	Skor Akhir	Kategori
1	Dionsius	78	75	72	70	73,75	Cukup
2	Vernandes	70	68	65	66	67,25	Kurang
3	Revaulina	66	65	62	64	64,25	Kurang
4	Emelia	62	60	58	60	60,00	Kurang
5	Valentino	48	46	45	47	46,50	Sangat Kurang
6	Nurhayati	40	38	35	37	37,50	Sangat Kurang
	Rata-rata	60,67	58,67	56,17	57,33	58,71	Kurang

From the table data, it can be seen that Dionsius' understanding of moral values is in the Sufficient category with the highest score (73.75), while Vernandes, Revaulina, and Emelia are in the Poor category (60–67). Meanwhile, Valentino and Nurhayati are in the Very Poor category, indicating a low understanding of moral values, especially in the aspects of empathy and responsibility. The class average of 58.71 confirms that in general, students' understanding of moral values is still in the Poor category.

These findings can be explained through Kohlberg's Theory of Moral Development, which states that moral understanding develops gradually from pre-conventional, conventional, to post-conventional levels. The low scores of students indicate that most are still in the early stages of moral development, where behavior is more influenced by adherence to rules and consequences, rather than awareness of noble values such as empathy, justice, and social responsibility. Furthermore, according to Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory, students' moral behavior is largely influenced by learning through observation, imitation, and reinforcement from the environment. Low scores on the empathy and responsibility indicators indicate the need for moral role models from teachers and the surrounding environment, so that these values can be more internalized (Galugu et al., 2024).

These results also align with Lickona's Values Education concept, which emphasizes the importance of integrating the aspects of moral knowing, moral feeling, and moral action. The low scores of students on the empathy and responsibility indicators indicate that the moral feeling aspect has not developed optimally, thus impacting weak moral action. Thus, the results of this study emphasize the need for learning strategies that are not only cognitively oriented, but also instill noble values in a contextual and applicable manner, so that students are able to understand, feel, and practice moral values in everyday life (Darwanti et al., 2025).

Reading Interest Observation Results Table – Cycle 1

No	Nama Siswa	Ketertarikan (25%)	Partisipasi (25%)	Antusiasme (25%)	Cerita Ulang (25%)	Skor Akhir	Kategori
1	Dionsius	85	80	82	75	80,50	Baik

2	Vernandes	80	78	76	70	76,00	Baik
3	Revaulina	78	74	72	70	73,50	Cukup
4	Emelia	72	70	66	63	67,75	Cukup
5	Valentino	68	65	62	58	63,25	Cukup
6	Nurhayati	60	58	55	50	55,75	Kurang
	Rata-rata	73,83	70,83	68,83	64,33	69,45	

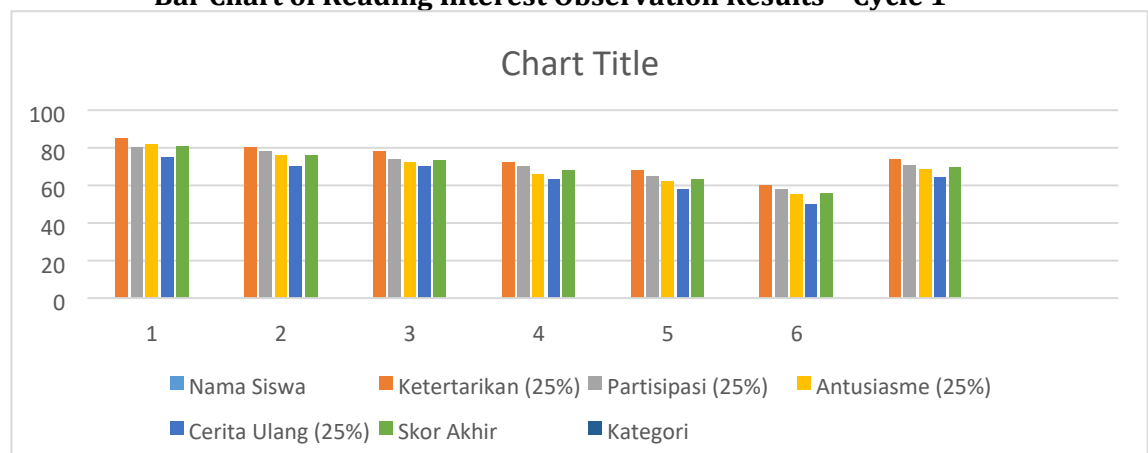
Table Description:

The results of cycle I showed an increase in student scores, with the majority falling into the Good and Sufficient categories. Revaulina, Emelia, and Valentino were approaching the Good category, while Nurhayati, although still in the Poor category with a score of 55.75, experienced a significant increase compared to her previous score (42.50). Overall, the class average increased from 62.71 to 69.45, although still in the Sufficient category. This indicates that the use of fairy tales and folktales is beginning to have a positive influence on students' reading interest.

These findings can be explained by Vygotsky's Constructivism Theory, which emphasizes the importance of scaffolding in the learning process. Fairy tales and folktales serve as contextual media that are close to students' lives, making it easier for them to construct new understandings. The increase in scores for most students reflects the support of more meaningful learning through cultural context and stories. Furthermore, based on Deci & Ryan's Learning Motivation Theory (Self-Determination Theory), the increase in students' reading interest indicates the fulfillment of basic learning needs, namely autonomy (the freedom to choose interesting stories), competence (the ability to understand simple reading content), and relatedness (connection to cultural values in fairy tales). This makes students more intrinsically motivated to read. (Nurafiffuddin & Aliyyah, 2025).

Furthermore, according to Carl Rogers' Humanistic Learning Theory, learning that touches on students' affective aspects, such as feelings of joy, entertainment, and connection to moral values in fairy tales, will increase their motivation and engagement in reading. Nurhayati's score improvement, although still low, shows that a humanistic approach through stories can help students who were previously less interested to start engaging in reading activities. Thus, the results of cycle I show that the strategy of using fairy tales and folk tales is relevant to modern learning theories, and can be continued to cycle II so that students who are still in the low category, such as Nurhayati, can achieve a better category. (Lutfi et al., 2025).

Bar Chart of Reading Interest Observation Results – Cycle 1



The bar chart shows that the intervention using picture stories and folktales had a positive impact on students' reading interest. This is indicated by shifts in average scores on indicators of interest, participation, enthusiasm, and retelling ability, as well as an increase in the dominance of the Good and Adequate categories for the majority of students. This phenomenon can be explained through Vygotsky's Constructivism Theory, which emphasizes the importance of using contextual and cultural media in the learning process. Picture stories and folktales provide scaffolding that is appropriate to students' zone of proximal development (ZPD), thus helping them construct new meaning from the reading experience.

Furthermore, based on Emergent Literacy Theory, engaging, visual, and meaningful reading experiences from an early age can foster emotional engagement in students, thereby increasing their interest and enthusiasm. Visualization through illustrated stories strengthens comprehension and memory, which aligns with the results of the increased "retelling" indicator in most students. According to Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan), increased scores on the participation and enthusiasm aspects also indicate that the basic learning needs of autonomy, competence, and relatedness have been better met. Students feel free to interpret the story, are more confident in understanding the reading, and are connected to the cultural values contained within it (Fahmiah et al., 2025).

These results are also in line with Carl Rogers' Humanistic approach, which emphasizes that learning that touches on students' affective aspects will increase intrinsic motivation. Fairy tales and folktales not only convey cognitive information, but also evoke emotions, empathy, and self-identification, which ultimately strengthen reading interest. Thus, this bar chart shows that the integration of illustrated fairy tales and folktales can increase students' reading interest scores across all indicators, supporting constructivist theory, emergent literacy, learning motivation, and a humanistic approach that emphasizes the full involvement of cognitive, affective, and social aspects in learning (Qiftiyah et al., n.d.).

Moral Table of Observation Results Cycle 1

No	Nama Siswa	Tanggung Jawab (25%)	Kejujuran (25%)	Empati (25%)	Kerja Sama (25%)	Skor Akhir	Kategori
1	Dionsius	85	82	80	78	81,25	Baik
2	Vernandes	78	75	72	70	73,75	Cukup
3	Revaulina	75	72	70	68	71,25	Cukup
4	Emelia	70	68	65	66	67,25	Kurang
5	Valentino	60	58	56	55	57,25	Kurang
6	Nurhayati	55	52	50	48	51,25	Sangat Kurang
	Rata-rata	70,50	68,17	65,50	64,17	67,08	Cukup

Table Description:

Dionsius is still at the Good level with the highest score (81.25), which indicates consistency and growth. Vernandes and Revaulina are at the Adequate level, but almost reaching the Good score limit, which indicates positive progress compared to the previous cycle. Emelia and Valentino are at the Poor level, but their scores show an improvement compared to cycle I. Nurhayati is still in the Very Poor category, with a score of 51.25. However, there is an improvement from the previous score (55.75 in cycle I, 42.50 in pre-cycle). The average class score is 67.08, an improvement compared to cycle I (69.45) and much better than pre-cycle (62.71). Currently, the average class category is Adequate, approaching the Good category. Cycle II shows significant development in students' reading interest. Most students

show an improvement in scores from the previous cycle. The teaching method through picture stories and folk tales has proven successful in increasing reading interest, especially among students with low initial ability levels. However, more attention is still needed for students like Nurhayati so they can achieve more optimal progress.

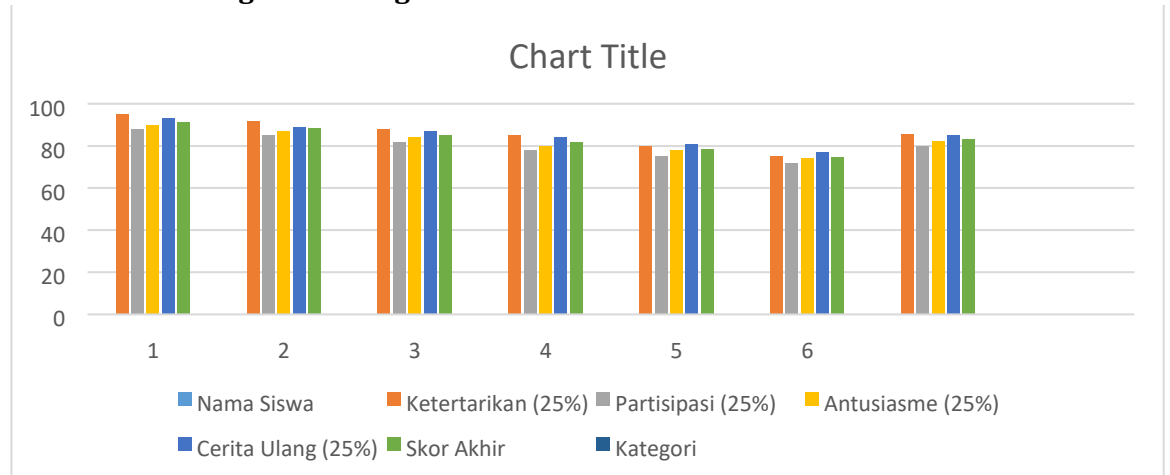
Reading Interest Observation Results Table – Cycle 2

No	Nama Siswa	Ketertarikan (25%)	Partisipasi (25%)	Antusiasme (25%)	Cerita Ulang (25%)	Skor Akhir	Kategori
1	Dionsius	95	88	90	93	91,50	Sangat Baik
2	Vernandes	92	85	87	89	88,25	Baik
3	Revaulina	88	82	84	87	85,25	Baik
4	Emelia	85	78	80	84	81,75	Baik
5	Valentino	80	75	78	81	78,50	Baik
6	Nurhayati	75	72	74	77	74,50	Cukup
	Rata-rata	85,83	80,00	82,17	85,17	83,29	-

Table Description:

Dionsius achieved the highest score (91.50) and was placed in the Very Good category, indicating rapid growth in reading interest. Vernandes and Revaulina also showed significant progress, with scores exceeding 85 in the Good category. Emelia and Valentino showed steady improvement compared to the previous cycle and remained in the Good category. Nurhayati, although still in the Fair category, showed significant progress compared to the results of the previous cycle (55.75 in cycle I and 51.25 in cycle II). The average class score in cycle III was 83.29, an increase from cycle II (67.08) and cycle I (69.45). This indicates that overall, students' reading interest has increased significantly, with most students now in the Good to Very Good category. In cycle III, the learning method through illustrated fairy tales and folk tales proved very effective in increasing students' reading interest. All students experienced an increase in scores, with most students achieving the Good category, and some even achieving the Very Good category. This development reflects the success of the learning intervention, which was implemented gradually and consistently.

Diagram Batang Hasil Observasi Minat Baca- Siklus 1



This graph shows that the application of illustrated story and folktale media has successfully increased students' interest in reading in general. Many students showed enthusiasm and skills in understanding and retelling the story well. Series 1: Interest, Series 2: Participation, Series 3: Enthusiasm, Series 4: Retelling, Series 5: Final Score (average of four indicators), Series 6: Category (Very Good/Good/Sufficient/Poor). Numbering no. 1 is (Dionsius), 2 (Vernandes), 3 (Reaulina), 4 (Emelia), 5 (Valentino), and 6 (Nurhayati).

Student Moral Data – Cycle 2

No	Nama Siswa	Tanggung Jawab (25%)	Kejujuran (25%)	Empati (25%)	Kerja Sama (25%)	Skor Akhir	Kategori
1	Dionsius	90	88	85	84	86,75	Sangat Baik
2	Vernandes	85	82	80	78	81,25	Baik
3	Revaulina	82	80	78	76	79,00	Baik
4	Emelia	78	75	72	70	73,75	Cukup
5	Valentino	70	68	65	62	66,25	Kurang
6	Nurhayati	65	62	60	58	61,25	Kurang
	Rata-rata	78,33	75,83	73,33	71,33	74,71	Cukup

Table Description:

Dionsius achieved the highest score of 86.75, falling into the Very Good category, reflecting a very positive and consistent moral attitude. Vernandes and Revaulina showed good progress with scores of 81.25 and 79.00, respectively, both falling into the Good category. Emelia scored 73.75, falling into the Fair category, but showing improvement compared to the previous cycle. Valentino and Nurhayati remained in the Poor category, although their scores had improved compared to the previous cycle, indicating progress. The average score for all students in cycle 2 reached 74.71, a significant increase compared to the pre-cycle stage (58.71) and cycle 2 (67.08). Overall, the results of the moral values evaluation in cycle 2 showed a clear and even improvement across almost all students. Most students have now achieved the Good category, and one student has achieved the Very Good category. The applied

learning method has proven effective in instilling moral values through a contextual and narrative approach that is relevant to students' daily lives.

This study shows that the use of illustrated stories and folktales as a learning strategy has a significant impact on improving students' reading interest and moral values at SMPN 3 Tempuling. In the pre-cycle stage, the average student reading interest was 62.71, which is classified as Poor. Among the six students studied, only two students, Dionsius and Vernandes, were in the Sufficient category, while the rest were in the Poor or Very Poor categories. For example, Nurhayati obtained a score of only 42.50, indicating very low reading interest and reading skills that were still in the spelling stage. After the implementation of the actions in the first cycle, there was a significant improvement, where the class average rose to 69.45. Students such as Dionsius and Vernandes showed progress to enter the Good category, while Revaulina, Emelia, and Valentino were in the Sufficient category. Nurhayati also showed progress from Very Poor to 55.75 or the Poor category. This improvement indicates that the application of illustrated stories and folktales began to attract students' interest and arouse their interest in reading activities. However, these results still indicate that some students still need further intervention, especially in their retelling skills. In cycle II, the learning strategy was improved by selecting more appropriate stories, such as the folktale "Banta Barensyah" and the fairy tale "The Arrogant Rose." The impact was significant, with the average reading interest score soaring to 83.29, which falls into the Good category. Almost all students experienced an increase in their scores. Dionsius achieved a score of 91.50 (Very Good category), while Vernandes, Revaulina, Emelia, and Valentino all fell into the Good category. Even Nurhayati, who previously had a very low score, now achieved 74.50, or the Fair category, indicating good progress. This shows that visual media in the form of stories close to students' lives is very effective in increasing their enthusiasm for reading, participation, and their ability to understand and retell the story.

There was also progress in the students' moral values. In the pre-cycle phase, the average student moral value was only 58.71, which is categorized as Poor. Only Dionsius was in the Sufficient category, while the other five students were classified as Poor and Very Poor. The highest scores were still dominated by the aspects of responsibility and cooperation, although the indicators of empathy and honesty were still very low, especially for Nurhayati and Valentino. In the first cycle, the average class score increased to 67.08, indicating progress from the pre-cycle. Dionsius scored Good with a score of 81.25, while other students began to show improvements in the aspects of empathy and cooperation. More visible progress occurred in the second cycle, where the average score increased to 74.71, which is close to the Fair category but also close to Good. Dionsius showed remarkable growth to reach 86.75 (the Very Good category), Vernandes and Revaulina also received the Good category, while Emelia was in the Sufficient category. Meanwhile, Valentino and Nurhayati remained in the Poor category, but their scores improved compared to the previous cycle. This proves that folktales that touch on students' emotions and social aspects are effective in instilling moral values, especially when presented visually and contextually. The characters in the stories serve as concrete examples for students in understanding the concepts of responsibility, empathy, honesty, and cooperation.

Conclusion

Based on the discussion above, it can be concluded that this strategy has proven to be effective, applicable, and inclusive. Even students with low abilities, such as Nurhayati, who initially struggled with reading and lacked motivation to learn, showed significant improvements in their reading interest and understanding of moral values after participating in folklore- and picture-story-based learning. The engaging and contextual approach made them feel more confident and motivated to actively participate. Furthermore, students with medium and high abilities, such as Valentino, Emelia, and Reva, also showed steady progress in literacy skills and deepened their understanding of character values. Their involvement in group discussions and reflective activities helped strengthen their appreciation of the moral

messages contained in the stories. Thus, this learning strategy not only improves students' academics but also their social-emotional aspects, making it an appropriate method for implementation in schools with limited resources and varying student abilities. In terms of numbers, the growth in students' reading interest ranged from 20% to 44%, as can be seen from the change in scores between the pre-cycle and final cycle stages. So from this method it can be concluded that the application of local folk tales such as "Banta Barensyah" and "The Arrogant Rose" enriches cultural understanding and increases interest in reading, as well as instilling good moral values, so that learning becomes more meaningful and relevant to their daily lives.

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