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Developing popular literacy grounded in local wisdom: A study of Betawi and Indonesian archipelago folktales

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Abstract: *This study examines how Betawi and other Indonesian folktales represent local wisdom and how their differences can inform popular literacy instruction. Using a descriptive qualitative approach, the study compares characters, conflicts, and cultural values in purposively selected tales through close reading. In the Betawi tale Si Pitung, the protagonist earns recognition by defending ordinary people against oppression. In the Minangkabau tale Malin Kundang, the protagonist's rejection of his mother after achieving success brings filial responsibility into focus. Read together, the tales show how communities express obligations to others through contrasting narrative choices: one celebrates a defender, while the other recounts the consequences of a son's actions. The comparison offers a basis for asking whose perspective shapes a moral judgment and how that judgment changes when a story is retold. Classroom activities such as adapting a scene into a comic or podcast can invite students to justify their interpretation and explain which cultural details they retain.*

Keywords: *popular literacy, Betawi folktales, Indonesian archipelago folktales, local wisdom, literature education.*

INTRODUCTION

Literature is a form of cultural expression that records a community's experiences, worldview, values, and identity. In education, literature is not merely an object through which to understand intrinsic elements such as theme, character, plot, setting, and message; it also serves as a medium for developing literacy, critical thinking, social sensitivity, and awareness of cultural diversity. Literature instruction should therefore involve activities that enable students to engage actively with texts, interpret meaning, connect texts to real-life contexts, and construct new meanings based on their own experiences and knowledge.

Folktales are part of a cultural heritage that develops and is passed down from generation to generation. They do more than recount stories about characters and events; they also represent values embedded in community life. These include moral, social, cultural, and religious values, leadership, courage, solidarity, responsibility, relationships between people and the environment, and community perspectives on justice and social life. Folktales can therefore be understood as cultural texts through

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which readers can recognize the identity and value systems of the communities to which they belong.

In Jakarta, Betawi folktales hold an important position as representations of local cultural identity. As a community that developed within Jakarta's social environment, the Betawi possess a diverse repertoire of stories, including Si Pitung, Si Jampang, Nyai Dasima, and various other Betawi legends and tales. These stories present distinctive social and cultural settings, including community life, social relations, injustice, courage, solidarity, and relationships between ordinary people and powerful groups. Betawi folktales are important in education because students living in Jakarta can engage in learning experiences more closely connected to their own social and cultural surroundings.

However, advances in digital technology and changing patterns of information exchange have also altered the ways younger generations engage with literature. Students today not only read printed books but also encounter stories through digital media, social media, short videos, digital comics, podcasts, blogs, storytelling platforms, and various forms of popular content. These changes show that literacy cannot be limited to the conventional ability to read and understand written texts. Literacy has expanded to include the ability to access, understand, analyze, evaluate, use, and produce different forms of text within particular social and cultural contexts.

Popular literacy is understood as literacy practice that draws on texts and forms of communication closely connected to everyday life and popular culture. Developing popular literacy does not mean replacing traditional literature with popular culture; rather, it involves making culturally valuable texts part of contextual and engaging literacy experiences for students. Folktales can be transformed or repackaged into various forms, such as popular stories, comics, infographics, digital stories, narrative videos, podcasts, or multimedia content, allowing their cultural values to be explored in ways suited to contemporary readers.

The need to develop popular literacy based on folktales also relates to the preservation of local culture. When folktales are treated as material for memorization, they risk losing their relevance for younger generations. Conversely, when they are approached as texts that can be read critically, compared, interpreted, contextualized, and reproduced in more popular forms, students can gain more meaningful learning experiences. For example, Si Pitung can be read not only to follow its plot but also to analyze how a folk hero is constructed, how injustice is represented, how communities perceive power, and how courage and solidarity can be interpreted in contemporary life. In this context, Betawi folktales offer opportunities to be reintroduced through literacy practices suited to the digital generation.

Beyond Betawi stories, folktales from different regions of the Indonesian archipelago also offer a wealth of themes and cultural values. Stories such as Malin Kundang from West Sumatra, Timun Mas from Central Java, Sangkuriang from West Java, Calon Arang from Bali/East Java, Batu Menangis from Kalimantan, and many others demonstrate the diverse ways communities across the archipelago understand human relationships with family, society, nature, power, and moral values. Comparing Betawi folktales with those from other regions can reveal that each community has distinctive cultural characteristics while also sharing universal values found across different areas.

Such comparisons can be developed through a comparative literature perspective. Comparative literature allows a work or text to be examined in relation to other works, considering connections, similarities, differences, influences, themes, structures, values, and cultural contexts. In the study of folktales, this perspective can reveal how the same theme takes on different forms and meanings depending on the cultural background of the community to which a story belongs. Through this approach, students not only become familiar with folktales as cultural heritage but also learn to engage in critical comparative reading.

For example, Si Pitung can be compared with folktales from other regions featuring characters who defend ordinary people. Comparisons may focus on characterization, forms of conflict, characters' relationships with their communities, representations of power, forms of resistance, and heroic values. The findings can then be used to question how a community constructs its concepts of 'hero,' 'justice,' and 'courage.' Literature instruction thus moves beyond simply understanding what is narrated toward analyzing how stories are constructed and why they hold particular meanings for their communities.

The connection between folktales, popular literacy, and local wisdom can also be strengthened through the concept of critical literacy. Critical literacy views reading not simply as understanding information contained in a text but also as questioning the perspectives, interests, power relations, ideologies, and social contexts underlying it. In folktale instruction, students can be encouraged to ask, for example, who is positioned as a hero and who is regarded as a villain, how communities are portrayed, which values are considered good or bad, and whether those values remain relevant to society today. Such activities can develop critical thinking while strengthening cultural literacy.

Local wisdom within folktales also plays a strategic role in character development. Values such as mutual cooperation, courage, care, responsibility, honesty, respect for others, and justice can provide material for student reflection. However, instruction should not stop at identifying 'moral values' in a normative manner. Students need opportunities to discuss whether those values remain relevant, how they can be applied today, and how social and technological changes influence the ways communities perceive them. Local wisdom is therefore treated not as something static but as cultural knowledge that can be reinterpreted in changing historical contexts.

The state of the art underpinning this study draws on developments in research on folklore and local wisdom (Danandjaja, 1997; Sibarani, 2012), transactional reader theory in literature education (Rosenblatt, 1978), critical literacy (Freire, 2000; Janks, 2010), and multiliteracies (New London Group, 1996; Cope & Kalantzis, 2009). This literature shows that folktales function as a means of cultural transmission, value formation, and literary learning, while developments in literacy theory indicate the need for instruction that considers cultural diversity, critical perspectives, and multiple modes of communication. Nevertheless, there remains scope for systematically integrating Betawi and Indonesian archipelago folktales into popular literacy practices. The novelty of this study lies in positioning folktales as resources for popular literacy grounded in local wisdom, read through a critical literacy perspective and transformed through a multiliteracies approach. Accordingly, the study focuses not only on understanding and preserving folktales but also on developing students' capacity to

read critically, understand cultural identity, and produce popular texts across different digital media.

Popular literacy grounded in local wisdom can thus provide a strategy for connecting literature, culture, education, and technological development. Betawi and Indonesian archipelago folktales have potential not only as a legacy of the past but also as sources of cultural knowledge that can be continually renewed through contemporary literacy practices. Instruction that uses these stories critically, creatively, and contextually is expected to develop students with strong literacy skills and an awareness of local cultural identity and the cultural diversity of the Indonesian archipelago.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Folktales are a form of literature closely connected to the social and cultural lives of communities. They function not only as entertainment but also as a means of transmitting knowledge, values, norms, identity, and worldviews from one generation to the next. Danandjaja (1997) explains that folklore forms part of a collective culture passed down through generations, both orally and through various forms of tradition. In this context, folktales can be viewed as cultural texts that record the experiences and social constructions of their communities. Meanwhile, Sibarani (2012) positions local wisdom as knowledge and wisdom that develop within a community and serve as guides for living. The use of folktales in literature instruction is therefore closely connected to efforts to introduce local wisdom to younger generations and preserve it.

Betawi folktales hold an important place in this context because they represent the cultural identity of Jakarta's local community. Stories such as Si Pitung contain not only narrative structures involving characters, plot, conflict, and setting but also representations of social issues, courage, solidarity, justice, and relationships between communities and power. Using Betawi folktales alongside stories from across the Indonesian archipelago enables students to understand that every community has particular ways of representing its values and social experiences. Literature instruction can therefore focus not only on understanding a work's intrinsic elements but also on examining the relationship between texts and cultural contexts.

This view can be reinforced through Rosenblatt's (1978) transactional theory of reading. According to Rosenblatt, the meaning of a literary work does not reside solely within the text but emerges through a transaction between reader and text. This meaning-making process is influenced by the reader's experiences, knowledge, and background. In folktale instruction, the theory provides a basis for giving students space to interpret stories through their own experiences and cultural knowledge. Reading folktales can thus become an active and reflective literacy experience. Students do not merely search for predetermined answers; they build understanding through interaction with the text.

Within developments in literacy, the scope of reading ability has also expanded. Reading literacy is no longer understood merely as the ability to recognize linguistic symbols and comprehend explicit information; it also includes interpreting, evaluating, reflecting on, and using information to understand different issues. This perspective makes folktales a promising resource for gradually developing reading skills. Students

can read stories to locate information, analyze cause-and-effect relationships, understand characterization, draw inferences, evaluate characters' actions, and connect the issues in stories to their own lives. Reading folktales can therefore provide a foundation for more complex literacy development.

In addition to reading literacy, folktales have the potential to develop critical literacy. Freire (2000) views reading as a process inseparable from the ability to read the world. Students therefore need to understand that texts are connected to social and cultural realities and to power. This perspective is reinforced by Janks (2010), who explains that critical literacy concerns the relationship between language, power, identity, and diversity. In folktale instruction, students can be encouraged to question how characters, communities, and conflicts are represented. For example, Si Pitung can be examined through the question of whether its central character should be seen as a hero or a rebel. These differing perspectives can help students understand that a text may produce different constructions of meaning depending on readers' perspectives and social contexts.

Critical literacy also enables students to connect folktales with contemporary issues. Values of courage, justice, solidarity, and resistance to injustice within stories can be discussed in relation to present-day social problems. Literature instruction thus moves beyond asking 'What is the story about?' to asking 'Why does the story carry a particular meaning?', 'Who benefits or is disadvantaged?', and 'How can the values in the story be interpreted in life today?' This process makes literature instruction a space for developing critical awareness.

Alongside critical literacy, folktales play an important role in developing cultural literacy. Understanding literary texts cannot be separated from the cultures that produce them. Folktales contain symbols, values, traditions, language, norms, and worldviews that represent particular communities. Sibarani (2012) emphasizes the importance of oral traditions as sources of knowledge about community values and wisdom. In education, Betawi folktales can introduce the characteristics of Betawi culture while opening up dialogue with folktales from different regions of the Indonesian archipelago. Students can identify shared values such as courage, responsibility, love, and justice while recognizing differences in how each culture represents them.

A comparative literature approach can strengthen this process. Si Pitung can, for example, be compared with other folktales in terms of characterization, conflict, moral values, power relations, social settings, and representations of heroism. Comparative activities enable students to understand that local culture forms part of a broader cultural diversity. Literature instruction can thus strengthen local identity while cultivating respect for the cultural diversity of the Indonesian archipelago.

Developments in digital technology also offer opportunities to extend folktale instruction through the concept of multiliteracies. The New London Group (1996) introduced multiliteracies by emphasizing the importance of cultural and linguistic diversity and different modes of communication in education. Cope and Kalantzis (2009) subsequently explained that meaning-making in contemporary society involves multiple forms of representation, rather than written text alone. In this context, folktales can be transformed from conventional narrative texts into various multimodal forms,

such as digital comics, podcasts, storytelling videos, infographics, popular articles, or interactive stories.

Such transformations position students not only as readers but also as text producers. Students must determine which information is relevant, select forms of representation, adapt their language to the audience, retain cultural values, and use technology to retell stories. This process shows that multiliteracies involve more than using technology in education; they entail creating meaning through multiple modes of communication.

Within this study's framework, popular literacy is positioned as a domain of practice, while critical literacy and multiliteracies serve as pedagogical approaches. Popular literacy allows folktales to engage with forms of text and media closely connected to students' lives. Folktales can be adapted into popular articles, digital educational content, podcasts, comics, videos, and other forms of popular communication. Nevertheless, this process must retain their cultural substance so that digitization does not lead to the loss of local identity and context.

Taken together, this literature indicates that Betawi and Indonesian archipelago folktales have considerable potential as learning resources that integrate reading literacy, critical literacy, cultural literacy, and multiliteracies. Reading literacy provides a foundation for understanding and interpreting texts; critical literacy encourages students to question perspectives, values, representations, and power relations; cultural literacy helps students understand identity and local wisdom; and multiliteracies provide opportunities to transform that understanding into different forms of text and media.

Folktale instruction can therefore be designed around reading, comparing, critiquing, reflecting, transforming, and publishing. This sequence connects local cultural heritage with popular literacy practices in the digital age. Ultimately, literature instruction aims to develop students who can not only understand literary works but also read culture, think critically, appreciate diversity, and produce creative texts that represent local wisdom within contemporary life.

METHOD

This study employs a descriptive qualitative approach informed by comparative literature and critical literacy perspectives. It focuses on the interpretation of texts, cultural values, representations of identity, and literacy practices found in folktales. Qualitative research enables researchers to understand phenomena through the context, meaning, and interpretation of the data under study (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The comparative literature perspective is used to identify similarities and differences in representations of characters, values, conflicts, cultural identity, and local wisdom in Betawi and Indonesian archipelago folktales.

The study's data sources consist of Betawi and Indonesian archipelago folktales selected purposively according to their representation of local wisdom, cultural identity, and social values, as well as their potential as materials for literature and literacy instruction. Betawi folktales may be represented by *Si Pitung*, while folktales from across the Indonesian archipelago are selected for cultural and social values that can be compared with those in Betawi stories. In addition to folktale texts, supporting sources

include books, scholarly journal articles, previous research, cultural documents, and credible digital sources. Folktales are understood as part of folklore containing the value systems, worldviews, norms, and identities of the communities that sustain them (Danandjaja, 1997), while local wisdom is understood as knowledge and values that develop within community life and guide interaction with social and cultural environments (Sibarani, 2012).

Data were collected through documentary study and intensive reading of folktale texts and supporting sources. Intensive reading was used to obtain in-depth textual data, while documentary study was used to gather written sources related to folktales, local wisdom, literacy, and literature education. The data were then coded according to categories such as heroic values, solidarity, justice, cultural identity, social criticism, and forms of representation of local wisdom.

Data analysis was conducted interactively through data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification. The data were then categorized according to local wisdom, cultural representation, characterization, social values, and literacy potential. During data display, the categories were organized systematically into narrative descriptions and comparisons between texts. The next stage involved drawing and verifying conclusions by interpreting relationships among the textual data, cultural contexts, comparative literature theory, critical literacy, cultural literacy, and multiliteracies.

Comparative analysis examined elements of Betawi and Indonesian archipelago folktales, particularly representations of characters, conflicts, heroic values, local wisdom, cultural identity, and criticism of social issues. Reading literacy is developed through understanding explicit information, drawing inferences, interpreting meaning, and evaluating story content. Critical literacy is developed through questioning characters' perspectives, dominant values, constructions of heroism, and issues of justice and power. Cultural literacy is developed through identifying the language, traditions, values, symbols, and community identities represented in stories. Meanwhile, multiliteracies are developed by transforming folktale texts into multimodal forms such as popular articles, digital comics, infographics, podcasts, storytelling videos, or other digital media. The concept of multiliteracies recognizes that meaning-making occurs through multiple modes and forms of communication and is not limited to written texts (The New London Group, 1996; Cope & Kalantzis, 2009).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Result

Local wisdom in Si Pitung and Malin Kundang

In the Betawi tale Si Pitung, the conflict begins with the oppression of ordinary people. Pitung intervenes on their behalf. The people he defends remember him for this act of solidarity, which gives courage a specific meaning in the story: it entails taking a risk on another person's behalf.

In the Minangkabau tale Malin Kundang, the decisive encounter takes place within a family. Having achieved success, Malin rejects his mother. The consequences of that rejection give filial responsibility its force in the story. His rise in social standing matters because it changes how he treats the person to whom he owes care.

Table 1. Character, conflict, and local values in Si Pitung and Malin Kundang

Aspect	Si Pitung (Betawi)	Malin Kundang (Minangkabau)
Central character	Pitung, a defender of ordinary people	Malin, a son who gains wealth and status
Social ties	Acts on behalf of people facing oppression	Distances himself from his family after achieving success
Conflict	Resistance to injustice	Rejection of his mother
Moral judgment	Recognition for defending others	Consequences for denying a family tie
Local values	Courage, justice, and solidarity	Filial respect and humility
Question for readers	Who regards Pitung as a hero, and why?	Whose perspective shapes the judgment of Malin?

Table 1 shows how the tales arrive at moral judgments through different narrative paths. In Si Pitung, the community's recognition follows an act of resistance. In Malin Kundang, the consequences of the son's refusal to acknowledge his mother reveal the obligation he has breached. Both tales judge the protagonist through his treatment of others, but the relationships at stake differ: one concerns a community facing injustice, the other a mother and son.

Community relationships and moral responsibility

The comparison identifies the relationship between the protagonist and other people as a central basis for moral evaluation. Pitung's actions acquire meaning through their consequences for ordinary people. The narrative associates courage with a willingness to confront oppression on their behalf. Solidarity therefore appears as an action embedded in a social conflict. This connection makes the character's relationship with the community essential to understanding why his conduct receives recognition.

Malin Kundang presents responsibility through the bond between a son and his mother. His success establishes the circumstances in which that bond is tested. When he rejects his mother, the narrative connects a change in social position with a failure to acknowledge a continuing obligation. Humility and filial respect emerge through the consequences of this decision. The story thus makes the treatment of a family member a measure by which personal achievement is evaluated.

Across the two tales, individual status does not provide a sufficient basis for moral worth. Pitung gains recognition through his actions toward others, while Malin's success is accompanied by a breakdown in family responsibility. This shared concern with social obligations links the tales despite their different conflicts. Table 1 makes this relationship visible by aligning social ties, conflict, and moral judgment within the same comparison.

Narrative conflict and the construction of character

The conflicts produce contrasting character models. Pitung occupies the position of a defender whose intervention responds to a collective grievance. Malin occupies the position of a son whose decision exposes a breach of responsibility. In the first narrative, the relationship between action and recognition supports an exemplary figure. In the second, the relationship between action and consequence gives the character a cautionary function. These differences explain how stories can communicate values through both admired conduct and conduct that attracts condemnation.

Perspective also affects the interpretation of Pitung's actions. Community recognition gives his resistance a positive meaning, whereas the position of those whose authority he challenges permits a different assessment. The analysis therefore identifies a tension between judgments based on social order and judgments based on solidarity. Examining that tension requires attention to who tells the story and whose interests the account makes visible.

In Malin Kundang, the mother–son relationship organizes the moral conflict. Reading the story through this relationship directs attention to recognition, care, and the responsibilities associated with family ties. Comparing it with Si Pitung shifts the analytical focus from a general list of virtues to the specific relationships through which those virtues become meaningful. The values identified here belong to the narratives examined and require attention to the particular versions used in any subsequent analysis.

Textual features relevant to literacy activities

The comparison provides three connected objects for reading. Character actions offer information that readers can identify and trace. Conflicts require interpretation of motives, obligations, and consequences. Moral judgments invite evaluation of the perspective through which events are presented. These objects arise from the narrative comparison and provide a basis for developing classroom questions at different levels of complexity.

The tales also provide material for cultural comparison because their central relationships direct attention to different social settings. Students can examine the community solidarity represented in Si Pitung alongside the family obligation represented in Malin Kundang. Such a comparison can preserve the particular focus of each story while identifying a shared concern with responsibility toward others. These are interpretive possibilities derived from the texts. Their effects on student learning require classroom investigation.

Discussion

Interpreting local wisdom through comparison

Reading the tales together clarifies Sibarani's (2012) account of local wisdom as knowledge that guides social relationships. Naming courage and filial respect gives only a partial account of what the stories convey. A reader must also identify who needs protection, who owes care, and what happens when the protagonist acts. This gives concrete form to Danandjaja's (1997) account of the social function of folklore. The contrast belongs to these two narratives and should not be generalized to all Betawi or Minangkabau tales.

A teacher might begin by asking students to locate the moment when each protagonist's standing changes, then ask which details support their judgment of his conduct. In Rosenblatt's (1978) account of reading, interpretation emerges through the reader's encounter with the text. Asking students to explain why they admire Pitung or condemn Malin makes their own assumptions available for discussion while keeping their claims open to examination against the story.

Perspective and critical literacy

Pitung's resistance offers a way to examine how the storyteller's position shapes a judgment. People whom Pitung defends may call him a hero, while those whose authority he challenges may regard him as a threat. Students might retell the same confrontation from each position and identify the details that change their assessment. They can then ask whose experience carries the most weight in Malin Kundang. Such questions connect the reading of a narrative to the reading of social relations that Freire (2000) describes.

Adapting folktales for popular literacy

A digital comic or podcast gives students a specific interpretive decision to make. A comic about Pitung's intervention might show the confrontation from the viewpoint of someone he defends. A podcast about Malin's return might give his mother the opening voice. In each case, students can identify the passage that guided their choice and explain what their adaptation leads the audience to notice about the conflict.

These adaptations apply the New London Group's (1996) account of multiliteracies to a practical question: how does a shift from narration to image or voice change the representation of a cultural value? Comparing an adaptation with the tale gives teachers a way to discuss both the student's reading and the consequences of a change in perspective.

The analysis identifies possibilities for instruction from the folktales themselves. Whether these activities develop students' reading, critical, or cultural literacy would require classroom evidence, including students' explanations of their choices and the adaptations they produce.

Connecting narrative evidence with cultural interpretation

The findings suggest that teaching local wisdom benefits from sustained attention to narrative circumstances. Asking students to identify a value such as courage provides an initial vocabulary, but interpretation becomes more precise when students explain the action that expresses the value, the relationship involved, and its consequences. Sibarani's (2012) account of local wisdom as knowledge embedded in community life supports this emphasis on social relationships. In Si Pitung, solidarity becomes intelligible through the needs of the people defended. In Malin Kundang, filial respect becomes intelligible through the obligation that the protagonist fails to acknowledge.

Danandjaja's (1997) account of folklore as collective cultural expression also helps explain why moral evaluation matters in these narratives. Community recognition and narrative consequences give form to judgments about acceptable conduct. Classroom discussion can examine how those judgments are produced and transmitted. Care is needed when moving from a particular tale to a claim about an entire culture. The contrast between these two stories offers a starting point for comparison, while broader claims would require a larger and clearly documented collection of texts.

Developing interpretations through textual comparison

A comparative reading sequence can begin with a common question about responsibility. Students identify whom each protagonist affects, describe the action

involved, and locate the narrative detail that supports their account. They then compare the basis of praise or condemnation in the two stories. Using the same questions across both texts helps make differences visible and gives students a consistent basis for explaining their conclusions. Table 1 can support this process as an initial comparison that students test against the versions they read.

Rosenblatt's (1978) transactional theory provides a way to understand the role of students' experiences in this activity. Readers may bring different expectations about loyalty, success, authority, and care to the stories. Inviting them to explain those expectations can clarify why interpretations vary. Teachers can then ask students to return to the narrative and distinguish an observation about a character's action from an evaluation shaped by their own experience. This process gives personal response an accountable relationship with textual evidence.

Critical questions about authority and moral judgment

The tension surrounding Pitung's resistance makes authority a concrete subject for critical reading. Students can ask who benefits from existing arrangements, whose suffering is represented, and which actions the narrator treats as legitimate. They can compare the language used to describe the same action from different positions. Freire's (2000) account of reading in relation to social life supports this movement between the narrative and questions about how power shapes interpretation.

Malin Kundang offers a related opportunity to examine how narrative emphasis organizes judgment. Students can consider how the mother's experience is presented, how Malin's changed circumstances are described, and which details make his refusal morally significant. A comparison of perspectives should remain grounded in the available text. If students invent an alternative voice for an adaptation, they can identify that contribution and explain how it changes the audience's understanding of the conflict.

Designing and evaluating multimodal adaptations

The New London Group's (1996) account of multiliteracies supports the use of different modes to develop and communicate an interpretation. An adaptation into a digital comic requires choices about framing, sequence, and the relationship between image and dialogue. A podcast requires choices about narration, pacing, and whose voice listeners hear. These choices can become subjects of analysis because each affects how the protagonist, conflict, and cultural value are represented.

An instructional sequence can connect close reading, comparison, interpretation, adaptation, and reflection. After explaining a comparison between the tales, students choose a scene and decide which relationship or value to emphasize. They produce an adaptation for a specified audience and provide a brief explanation of the textual details behind their decisions. Peer feedback can examine whether the audience can follow the conflict and whether the adaptation communicates the intended interpretation. Students can then revise the work in response to that feedback.

Assessment can focus on the accuracy of the reading, the relevance of supporting details, the explanation of cultural context, and the relationship between creative decisions and intended meaning. These criteria make the interpretation visible

alongside the finished product. A technically polished comic or recording would still require an explanation of how it represents the story. Conversely, a simple production can demonstrate a carefully supported reading when the student explains the purpose and effects of each major choice.

Scope of the interpretation and further investigation

The proposed activities follow from textual analysis and constitute pedagogical implications. Evaluating their effectiveness would require implementation with students and evidence of how their interpretations develop. Relevant material could include initial written responses, classroom discussion, completed adaptations, and reflective explanations. Comparing these materials could help establish whether students become more precise in supporting claims or more attentive to differences in perspective.

Further textual work should specify the editions or recorded versions of the tales and explain the passages selected for comparison. Folktales circulate in multiple forms, so the treatment of a character or event may vary across tellings. A broader corpus would allow researchers to examine whether the patterns identified here recur in other narratives. This would strengthen the connection between claims about Indonesian folktales and the particular evidence on which those claims rest.

CONCLUSION

This study identifies contrasting representations of social responsibility in Si Pitung and Malin Kundang. Pitung's defense of ordinary people associates courage with solidarity and justice, while Malin's rejection of his mother brings filial respect and humility into focus. Comparing character actions, conflicts, and moral judgments shows how these values acquire meaning through particular relationships.

The comparison provides a basis for literature instruction that connects close reading with critical questions and multimodal adaptation. Students can support interpretations with narrative details, examine how perspective shapes judgment, and explain the cultural implications of their creative choices. These pedagogical possibilities require classroom investigation to establish their effects on learning. Further research should also document the folktale versions examined and extend the comparison to a broader corpus.

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