



## Exploring Children's Literature Content in Indonesian Textbooks for Elementary Schools: Insights from the Merdeka Curriculum

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**Abstract:** This study aims to analyze the representation and quality of children's literature content in Indonesian language textbooks for elementary schools under the Merdeka Curriculum, a national education policy aimed at promoting student-centered learning. With particular attention to genre diversity, developmental appropriateness, and alignment with literacy goals, this research examines the extent to which these textbooks provide meaningful and engaging literary experiences for students. A qualitative content analysis method was employed, focusing on textbooks for Grades I–VI published by the Indonesian Ministry of Education in 2023. This study employs qualitative content analysis of Indonesian language textbooks for elementary schools under the Merdeka Curriculum. Data were collected through document analysis using rubrics, checklists, and BSNP-based indicators. The analysis followed Miles and Huberman's model, with validation ensured through triangulation and peer discussion. The findings indicate that literary texts are presented in various forms, including prose (fiction and nonfiction) and poetry, with realistic fiction being the most dominant genre across all grades. Lower-grade textbooks primarily feature realistic fiction and fables, while upper-grade textbooks increasingly include nonfiction texts. The alignment between literary content and learning outcomes is reflected in the variety of genres and topics relevant to students' developmental and social contexts. These results highlight the importance of designing textbooks that not only support language skills but also foster literary appreciation and character development through contextual and meaningful texts. The study's outcomes are expected to contribute to the development of more effective and engaging Indonesian language textbooks, ultimately enhancing the quality of literacy education in Indonesian elementary schools.

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## Introduction

The rationale for the Indonesian language learning outcomes at the elementary school (SD) level as outlined in the 2024 Merdeka Curriculum emphasizes the importance of a balanced integration of three foundational components of literacy: language proficiency, literary competence, and thinking abilities. These three pillars are considered inseparable and must be developed in harmony to cultivate holistic and functional literacy among young learners (Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology (MoECRT, 2022). Literacy, in this sense, extends beyond the mechanical ability to read and write. It encompasses the capacity to communicate ideas clearly, appreciate various forms of literature, and engage in reflective and critical thought.



According to the core principles of the Merdeka Curriculum, language proficiency includes both receptive skills such as listening, reading, and viewing and productive skills such as speaking, presenting, and writing. Literary competence, on the other hand, is defined as the ability to understand, appreciate, interpret, and create literary works. It involves emotional engagement, imagination, and the development of aesthetic sensitivity, enabling students not only to read literature but also to experience and respond to it meaningfully (MoECRT, 2022). The third aspect, thinking skills, consists of critical, creative, and imaginative thinking, all of which are central to literacy in the 21st century. These skills allow students to evaluate information logically, produce original ideas, and explore complex scenarios through literature (Pratiwi, 2021).

In line with these goals, the Merdeka Curriculum promotes a transformative view of literacy learning in which students are active participants rather than passive recipients. Literacy is no longer taught as a set of isolated technical skills but as an integrated set of cognitive and affective capabilities. Indonesian language learning, therefore, is not confined to linguistic exercises but includes the cultivation of empathy, values, and worldview through engagement with literature. According to Rosyidah and Setyaningrum (2023), the curriculum mandates that at every developmental phase, students should be equipped to communicate and reason with others, supported by contextualized and meaningful experiences with language and literature.

A particularly effective means of achieving this is through the incorporation of literary texts into instructional materials. Literature, with its rich and nuanced language, provides students with opportunities to encounter diverse perspectives and explore emotional landscapes. It serves as a bridge between the students' own experiences and those of the characters in the stories they read. As Rachmijati (2017) asserts, literary texts invite students to engage with the internal worlds of others, thereby developing empathy, emotional intelligence, and cultural awareness. Whether it be through poetry, short stories, fables, or folk tales, literature enables students to articulate their own feelings and thoughts in aesthetically expressive ways.

Furthermore, Damayanti and Amalia (2020) highlight that the use of literary texts in classrooms contributes significantly to vocabulary enrichment, syntactic awareness, and the development of personal voice. However, for these benefits to be fully realized, the literary works selected must be developmentally appropriate. That is, the texts should align with students' cognitive maturity, emotional sensitivity, and cultural backgrounds. This is particularly important at the elementary school level, where students are forming their early impressions of language and literature (Yuliana, 2019).

Consequently, it becomes essential to conduct a systematic analysis of the literary content in elementary Indonesian language textbooks. These materials must not only transmit knowledge but also ignite imagination and curiosity. According to Safitri (2020), the texts should be interesting, inspiring, and contextually relevant so that students can connect personally with what they read. Moreover, they should introduce students to diverse literary genres and styles, from traditional folk narratives to modern poetry, fostering a lifelong appreciation for literature.

However, findings from several previous studies indicate that the implementation of literary learning in elementary schools has not yet been optimal. Fuaduddin (2018) noted that literary materials are often presented in a superficial and fragmented manner, with an emphasis on memorizing concepts rather than understanding meaning. Meanwhile, studies on literary content in Indonesian language textbooks have generally remained broadly



descriptive, without providing an in-depth analysis of the diversity of literary genres represented in the textbooks. There is a lack of comprehensive research assessing the extent to which literary texts in Indonesian language textbooks for elementary schools represent genre diversity, contain meaningful literary elements, and align with students' developmental stages. Most existing studies only capture aspects of moral representation or character values, without integrating an analysis of literary structure and pedagogical relevance in a holistic manner.

Effective literary education therefore requires certain enabling conditions. As Fuaduddin (2018) argues, these include adequate provision of physical resources and infrastructure, the active participation of students as co-constructors of knowledge, and the presence of well-trained teachers who can facilitate engaging and dynamic discussions. Central among these is the availability of high-quality and age-appropriate literary materials, particularly in the form of textbooks.

Textbooks are among the most influential tools in shaping literacy development in schools. They serve not only as sources of information but also as guides for the types of texts students will encounter and the ways they will learn to read and interpret them. According to Suwondo, Susanto, and Praptomo (2010), textbooks typically contain a wide range of textual forms including narratives, expository texts, and literary works. However, the literary content in these materials is rarely analyzed in depth. There is often little consideration given to the diversity of genres, the complexity of literary elements such as plot, character, setting, theme, and style, or the alignment with students' psychological and developmental needs.

Given these challenges, a thorough investigation of the literary content in elementary school textbooks is necessary. This includes identifying which literary genres are represented such as prose, poetry, or drama and how their elements are presented. The goal is not merely to catalog texts but to evaluate how effectively they contribute to literacy goals including the development of imagination, empathy, and critical reflection. Only through such an inquiry can we ensure that literary education in elementary schools supports not just academic achievement but also the cultivation of well-rounded, literate, and thoughtful individuals.

Literary works are imaginative expressions that convey the author's thoughts, ideas, and perspectives on life and society. These works are generally divided into three main forms: poetry, prose, and drama. Each of these forms has its own characteristics and internal structures. Poetry, for instance, is a form of literature that emphasizes the beauty of language through word choices, imagery, figurative language, sound, rhyme, rhythm, and theme. Diction refers to the selection of words that suit the topic, purpose, and audience (KBBI, 2024). Imagery involves forming mental pictures through descriptive language (Rusli et al., 2016), while figurative language refers to expressions that go beyond literal meanings (Nafinuddin, n.d.). The elements of sound and rhyme create auditory appeal, and rhythm brings a dynamic flow. The theme conveys the central idea or message of the poem (Liondes, 2024).

Prose, on the other hand, refers to narrative texts based on fictional events created from the author's imagination. The intrinsic elements of prose include the theme, character, plot, setting, point of view, conflict, climax, and message. The theme reflects the core idea; characters are divided into major and minor roles; plot represents the sequence of events bound by cause and effect; setting involves time and place; point of view denotes how the story is told; and characterization reveals the traits and development of characters (Hairuddin & Radmila, 2017). In contrast, extrinsic elements come from outside the text and involve the



author's personal background, psychological and social conditions, national context, and even other art forms that may influence the work (Nurgiyantoro, 2004).

Drama is another major genre that is primarily intended for performance. Its elements include theme, plot, characters, character traits (such as protagonist or antagonist), setting, and message. Unlike poetry or prose, drama is incomplete without being performed. According to Lukens (2007), drama is not typically included in literary genre classifications because its full meaning unfolds only in theatrical presentation.

In the context of children's literature, genres are often classified into fiction, nonfiction, poetry, picture books, and comics. These classifications are based on both form and content. Poetry for children includes traditional lyric poems (such as lullabies or nursery rhymes), narrative poems, and personal poems. For example, Javanese traditional songs like Sluku-sluku Bathok, Cublak-cublak Suweng, and Jamuran serve as early introductions to poetic elements for children. Meanwhile, personal poetry written by adults or children often touches on themes such as nature, kindness, and religion.

In prose, the modern forms include short stories, novelettes, and novels, all written for various age groups. Children's stories are often categorized by age, from early childhood (3–5 years), middle childhood (6–9 years), to late childhood (10–12 years), with a separate category for teen literature such as chicklit and teenlit. Traditional prose includes folklore, fables, hikayat, legends, myths, humorous tales, and parables. Fables, such as Si Kancil, use animals as characters to impart moral values. Legends, like Malin Kundang, explain the origins of places or phenomena, while myths such as Nyi Roro Kidul involve supernatural beliefs. Humorous tales or "noodlehead stories," like Si Kabayan, offer comedy and social critique, and parables convey religious or ethical messages.

This study aims to analyze the representation and quality of children's literature content in Indonesian language textbooks for elementary schools under the Merdeka Curriculum, with particular attention to genre diversity, developmental appropriateness, and alignment with literacy goals.

## **Research Method**

This study employs a qualitative research design using a content analysis approach. Content analysis is appropriate for examining texts or materials in textbooks through description and interpretation. This method allows the researcher to explore meanings embedded in the text and assess their alignment with educational objectives. The subject of this research consists of Indonesian language textbooks based on the Merdeka Curriculum for elementary school grades I to VI, published by the Book Center of the Agency for Standards, Curriculum, and Assessment of Education under the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology (Kemendikbudristek). The entire content of each textbook was analyzed to ensure a comprehensive understanding of the representation and distribution of literary materials across all grade levels.

Data collection was conducted through document analysis, which involved reading, observing, and recording relevant parts of the textbooks that met the criteria for analysis (Ginanjari et al., 2025). The main focus of the research is to analyze the literary content and evaluate its alignment with the learning outcomes stated in the Merdeka Curriculum. Data analysis follows the interactive model proposed by Miles and Huberman, which includes data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing or verification (Qomaruddin & Sa'diyah, 2024).



The conformity between the material and the expected learning outcomes is assessed based on guidelines from the National Education Standards Agency (BSNP). There is an assessment rubric, checklist, and a set of indicators developed based on the official documents of the National Education Standards Agency (BSNP). These instruments are used to assess the level of conformity between the literary content in the textbooks and the learning outcomes, literacy competencies, and content standards established in the curriculum. Each indicator is designed to measure key aspects. Thus, the assessment is carried out systematically and purposefully to ensure that the materials in the textbooks not only meet the curriculum standards but also support the development of meaningful literary competence. To support the analysis process, the researcher developed analytical tables to categorize content based on indicators such as literary forms and relevance to curriculum goals. The validity of the data is ensured through triangulation by involving multiple researchers, peer discussion, and reference to relevant academic sources.

## **Results and Discussion**

This study explored the literary content featured in Indonesian language textbooks for elementary school students in Grades I through VI, all developed under the Merdeka Curriculum. The primary focus was on examining the extent to which these literary materials align with the literacy learning outcomes designated for each developmental phase. Through a comprehensive content analysis of 48 textbook chapters, eight chapters for each grade level, the study identified a diverse range of children's literature genres embedded within the instructional materials. These genres prominently include both prose and poetry, spanning fictional and nonfictional categories.

Within the fiction category, various subgenres were present, such as realistic fiction, children's fantasy, fables, and folktales. Meanwhile, nonfiction content encompassed biographical narratives featuring inspirational figures, educational texts on scientific or social topics, and encyclopedic entries designed specifically for young readers. This diversity indicates a deliberate effort by curriculum developers to expose students to a wide spectrum of literary experiences that support cognitive, affective, and moral development.

At the lower grade level (Grades I and II), the literary content in Indonesian language textbooks primarily focuses on introducing students to basic narrative forms. The analysis revealed that Grade I textbooks contain 19 literary texts, while Grade II includes 17. Most of these texts fall into the category of realistic fiction, portraying everyday life situations familiar to children, such as in the stories "Bunyi Apa", "Aku Sudah Besar", and "Teman Baru". These stories exhibit simple narrative structures consisting of characters, problems, and resolutions that are easily understood by early-stage learners. In addition, fables emerge as another prominent genre, such as "Ayo Bermain!" and "Parade Binatang", which employ animal characters to convey moral lessons such as honesty, cooperation, and courage. The inclusion of simple children's poems and illustrated texts strengthens the multimodal dimension, supporting meaning-making through visualization. This pattern aligns with the learning objectives of Phase A, which emphasize moral awareness, empathy, and the cultivation of early reading habits. However, despite the relatively good variety of genres, enrichment through digital formats such as e-storybooks and interactive comics still needs to be considered to align with the context of 21st-century literacy (Lütge, 2019).

At the middle grade level (Grades III and IV), the analysis indicates a significant increase in both the quantity and variety of literary genres. Grade III textbooks feature 17 literary texts dominated by realistic fiction, along with the introduction of a new genre in the



form of a short fantasy comic, “Senyum dari Laut”. Meanwhile, Grade IV contains 27 texts encompassing fables, lyric poems, and educational nonfiction selections. This diversification expands students’ literary experiences, introducing more complex text forms in terms of structure and language style. For example, the folktale “Joko Kendil dan Si Gundul” integrates elements of oral tradition that strengthen local cultural literacy, while poems such as “Rayuan Pulau Kelapa” foster aesthetic sensitivity and national pride. Multimodal features become increasingly prominent at this stage, particularly through illustrated texts and comic panels that merge visual and verbal elements. This multimodal approach not only enhances reading engagement but also trains students’ ability to interpret meaning across media—an essential aspect of contemporary literacy (Fradana, 2025). Thus, the middle grades serve as a transitional phase from basic literacy toward multimodal literacy, requiring readers to understand the interrelation between text, image, and sociocultural context.

At the upper grade level (Grades V and VI), the development of literary content shows a notable shift from fiction-dominated texts to nonfiction. The Grade V textbook includes 29 literary texts, 19 of which are informational, while Grade VI features 25 texts, with 17 nonfiction selections. These nonfiction genres include biographical narratives of inspirational figures, popular science texts, and educational articles such as “Dunia Tanpa Roda” and “Pentingnya Air bagi Tubuh Kita”. The dominance of informational texts reflects the curriculum’s focus on strengthening academic literacy, critical thinking, and understanding of factual issues. Nonetheless, several literary works such as “Teman Baru Frida” and “Legenda Putri Komodo” are retained to nurture students’ affective and imaginative dimensions. The use of longer and more complex sentences demands higher analytical skills, while the reduction of illustrative elements indicates a transition from visual to independent textual literacy. This aligns with the principles of critical literacy, which emphasize deep comprehension, information evaluation, and reflection on social values embedded in texts (Halimah et al., 2020). Thus, upper-grade textbooks function not only as language learning tools but also as instruments for developing reflective thinking and social awareness.

Based on findings across the three developmental stages, it is evident that the literary content structure in Indonesian language textbooks has been systematically designed to align with students’ cognitive development. However, the success of curriculum implementation largely depends on teachers’ readiness to facilitate genre-based learning. Teachers must understand the characteristics of each genre, including structure, linguistic style, and communicative purpose, to provide appropriate scaffolding. A genre-based pedagogy (Rose, 2018) is essential because it enables teachers to explicitly teach reading and writing strategies according to text types. Furthermore, teachers’ ability to integrate digital and multimodal media is crucial for delivering learning experiences relevant to the 21st-century literacy context. Strengthening teachers’ pedagogical competence should focus on three key aspects: (1) understanding literary and nonfiction genre structures, (2) applying multimodal literacy strategies, and (3) developing rubric-based assessment activities aligned with BSNP indicators. Recent studies also highlight the importance of continuous professional development to help teachers effectively utilize children’s literature as a means of fostering character, empathy, and critical literacy in elementary education (Menna et al., 2020). Therefore, integrating diverse literary genres, multimodal media, and pedagogical readiness will create meaningful, contextual, and transformative literacy experiences for students.



**Table 1. Fictional Literary Content in Indonesian Language Student Textbooks (Kurikulum Merdeka)**

No	Grade	Fiction				
		Realistic Fiction	Folktale	Traditional Story	Fables	Fantasy
1.	I	13	0	0	6	0
2.	II	8	3	0	2	1
3.	III	13	0	0	0	0
4.	IV	11	0	0	2	0
5.	V	4	0	1	1	0
6.	VI	4	0	1	1	0

**Table 2. Table of Nonfiction and Poetry Literary Content in the Bahasa Indonesia Student Textbooks of the Merdeka Curriculum**

No.	Grade	Nonfiction	Poetry	
			Modern Poetry	Traditional Poetry
1.	I	0	0	0
2.	II	0	2	1
3.	III	0	2	0
4.	IV	9	2	0
5.	V	19	0	4
6.	VI	17	2	1

The findings of this study indicate that the literary content featured in Indonesian language textbooks for elementary school students, particularly those designed under the Merdeka Curriculum, is organized in a way that reflects both progression and sensitivity to the stages of students' cognitive and emotional development. This thoughtful arrangement becomes especially apparent in the lower grades, such as Grade I and Grade II, where the types of literary texts most commonly presented include realistic fiction and fables. These genres are selected not only because they are simple and accessible, but also because they resonate with the everyday experiences of young children. Stories like *Bunyi Apa*, *Aku Sudah Besar*, and fables such as *Parade Binatang* illustrate familiar situations and often feature characters that children can relate to, including animals that speak and act like humans.

These narratives serve a dual purpose. On one hand, they entertain and engage young readers through imaginative storytelling. On the other hand, they introduce children to basic moral concepts and help them make sense of their social world. Fables, in particular, are known for their ability to present ethical lessons in an indirect but powerful way. By using animals as characters, the stories provide a degree of separation that allows children to reflect on right and wrong without feeling personally judged. Realistic fiction complements this by portraying human characters in relatable situations who learn from their experiences and make decisions that carry clear moral implications.

This kind of literature supports the development of empathy, responsibility, and critical awareness from an early age. It also aligns well with the goals of Phase A in the Merdeka Curriculum, which emphasizes learning through contextual and meaningful experiences. As noted by Ariestina and Haryanto in 2022, the outcomes for this phase are designed to help children begin recognizing values and understanding appropriate behavior in



their daily lives. The presence of concrete and familiar literary content in early-grade textbooks reflects a pedagogical approach that prioritizes emotional connection and real-world relevance. In doing so, these stories lay the groundwork for deeper literacy skills and more sophisticated moral reasoning as students progress through their education.

The predominance of realistic fiction and fables in the early grades reflects a deliberate pedagogical strategy. These genres are known for their narrative simplicity, thematic clarity, and moral orientation, which are essential for young learners who are developing foundational literacy and moral reasoning. Fables, in particular, serve a dual function by entertaining and educating children through metaphorical storytelling, often using animals as protagonists to avoid didacticism while still instilling values such as honesty, empathy, and perseverance. This is consistent with the educational principles outlined by Yunus et al. (2013), who argue that visual and metaphorical elements in literary texts enhance young readers' comprehension and motivation.

As students advance to higher grades, a shift toward structural complexity and genre diversity becomes evident. In grades III and IV, beyond realistic fiction, other literary forms such as contemporary poetry, traditional verse (*syair*), and fantasy comics are introduced. Texts like "Senyum dari Laut" signify the entry of multimodal literacy into children's literature learning. Illustrated formats and dialogue in speech balloons support visual comprehension and enhance student engagement. Multimodal literacy is crucial in today's digital era, as noted by Yunus et al. (2013), for its ability to reinforce understanding and engagement in learning. The visual representation of text in comic form not only aids decoding skills but also provides narrative context that enhances inferential thinking and imagination.

The integration of multimodal texts represents a significant shift in the way literacy is taught and experienced in the classroom. In contrast to traditional literacy instruction that focuses primarily on reading and interpreting printed words, multimodal literacy embraces a wider range of communicative modes. These include visual elements such as illustrations, color schemes, page layouts, and graphical symbols, all of which work in concert with written language to convey meaning. This shift is particularly relevant in today's digital era, where children are increasingly exposed to information through multimedia formats like videos, animations, digital comics, and interactive e-books. By reflecting these realities in educational materials, curriculum designers and educators are acknowledging that meaning-making today is no longer limited to linear, alphabetic texts but involves interpreting and producing content through multiple modes.

This approach is especially beneficial for young learners in elementary school, whose literacy abilities and cognitive strategies are still developing. Multimodal texts cater to diverse learning styles by allowing children to engage with content visually, spatially, and emotionally, in addition to linguistically. For example, picture books, graphic stories, and illustrated poems can help emerging readers decode narrative structures, infer character emotions, and build vocabulary in context. These forms of literature are not only more engaging but also more accessible, especially for students who may struggle with reading fluency or have learning differences. Moreover, multimodal texts foster creativity and imagination, as they invite students to interpret both the literal and symbolic meanings embedded in images and design elements, making the reading process more dynamic and interactive.

From a pedagogical perspective, the inclusion of multimodal texts also enables teachers to create more inclusive and responsive learning environments. It empowers them to





differentiate instruction based on students' needs and to incorporate a range of activities that blend visual literacy, verbal communication, and critical thinking. In this way, classrooms become spaces where various forms of expression are equally valued and where students are encouraged to communicate their understanding not just through words but also through drawings, diagrams, and digital media. Ultimately, this transformation in literacy instruction aligns with broader educational goals of the Merdeka Curriculum, which emphasizes learner-centered approaches and holistic development. It reinforces the idea that literacy is not a fixed skill set, but a dynamic process of meaning-making that evolves with changes in technology, culture, and society. In grade IV, literary content not only expands in form and genre but also begins to incorporate nonfiction texts that support science and health literacy, such as "Dunia Tanpa Roda" and "Pentingnya Air bagi Tubuh Kita." The inclusion of informational texts reflects the curriculum's effort to prepare students for critical and analytical thinking. Sadiyah et al. (2023) assert that the presence of nonfiction texts in Indonesian language textbooks plays a vital role in fostering reflective thinking and raising awareness of social and scientific issues. This integration of nonfictional content also aligns with international trends in curriculum design, which emphasize the importance of balancing literary and informational texts to support comprehensive literacy development.

The inclusion of nonfiction at this stage also introduces students to expository structures, such as cause-and-effect, compare-and-contrast, and sequential order, which are crucial for academic success in later years. Exposure to these structures equips students with the tools to comprehend and produce more complex texts, thus preparing them for higher-order literacy tasks. Furthermore, nonfiction texts grounded in real-world issues provide meaningful contexts for inquiry-based learning, encouraging students to ask questions, seek evidence, and form reasoned conclusions.

This transition peaks in grades V and VI, where nonfiction texts become predominant. Contents such as book review techniques, short scientific articles, and biographical narratives aim to build informational literacy and conceptual understanding. However, fictional texts such as the folktale "Darman dan Darmin" or the legend "Putri Komodo" remain present to preserve the aesthetic and emotional dimensions of learning. This indicates that although the literacy orientation shifts toward factual and analytical domains, the Merdeka Curriculum maintains a balance by incorporating humanistic and cultural elements.

The increased focus on nonfiction in upper grades corresponds with the cognitive maturity of students at this stage. According to Piagetian developmental theory, children around the ages of 10–12 begin to demonstrate formal operational thinking, which includes the ability to reason abstractly, engage in hypothetical-deductive reasoning, and evaluate multiple perspectives. The curriculum's progression from narrative to expository texts supports this developmental trajectory by introducing texts that require deeper comprehension and synthesis skills.

Despite the dominance of nonfiction, the continued presence of literary texts is significant. Folktales and legends serve not only to entertain but also to convey cultural heritage and ethical frameworks that are central to students' identity formation. For instance, the inclusion of regional stories from Java, Betawi, and Flores introduces students to the linguistic, social, and historical diversity of Indonesia. This exposure promotes intercultural understanding and national unity, core goals of the Merdeka Curriculum.

Overall, the results of this study align with the findings of Lestari et al. (2023), who state that the genre-based approach in the Merdeka Curriculum has begun to be implemented, although the joint construction of text (JCoT) component is not yet fully applied.



Additionally, the inclusion of local cultural content in folktales and legends from various Indonesian regions demonstrates an explicit effort to instill national identity and strengthen Pancasila character values. This corresponds with Lukitaning and Mustofa (2023), who emphasize that the reinforcement of local culture in textbooks, including in English language teaching, is a key feature of the Merdeka approach.

The presence of poems, pantun (traditional quatrains), and syair (lyric poetry) illustrates that the Merdeka Curriculum not only emphasizes cognitive development but also provides space for artistic expression and children's aesthetic development. This supports the argument that literacy encompasses more than technical reading and writing skills, extending to affective, reflective, and creative dimensions that are essential to holistic human development. Literature, in this context, becomes a medium through which children can explore emotions, experiment with language, and develop a sense of beauty and empathy.

However, this study also indicates that the successful implementation of literary content in the Merdeka Curriculum depends heavily on teachers' capacity to present materials contextually and interactively. As noted by Judijanto et al. (2024), a primary challenge in implementing the Merdeka Curriculum is teachers' readiness to utilize the curriculum's flexibility to develop meaningful literature- and culture-based learning. Therefore, teacher training is needed not only to understand textbook content but also to adopt pedagogical strategies such as the genre-based approach, the use of multimodal texts, and scaffolding in building meaning collaboratively with students.

One critical area for improvement is professional development that enables teachers to integrate genre pedagogy with critical literacy practices. This includes guiding students to question text assumptions, explore diverse viewpoints, and connect textual themes to their lived experiences. Teachers also need support in differentiating instruction, designing interdisciplinary projects, and creating culturally responsive classroom environments that reflect the diverse realities of Indonesian learners.

The implications of these findings highlight the importance of providing systematic support for teachers and curriculum developers to continuously evaluate and update literary content to remain relevant to students' learning needs. Furthermore, follow-up studies that examine the actual classroom implementation of textbooks, including teacher-student interactions in interpreting literary texts, are essential to gain a comprehensive understanding of the effectiveness of literacy approaches within the Merdeka Curriculum.

Such research could include ethnographic classroom observations, interviews with teachers and students, and assessments of student literacy outcomes. These methods would help identify best practices and areas where curricular materials or teaching strategies need refinement. In addition, comparative studies between schools with varying resources and teacher training levels could shed light on the equity of curriculum implementation across different contexts.

In conclusion, this study affirms that the literary content embedded in the Indonesian language textbooks under the Merdeka Curriculum represents a thoughtful and structured progression aligned with student development. The curriculum balances literary and informational texts, honors cultural diversity, and incorporates modern literacy practices such as multimodality. To maximize its impact, however, it must be supported by robust teacher training, consistent evaluation, and inclusive pedagogical strategies that ensure all students benefit from the richness of literary education.



## **Conclusion**

Overall, realistic fiction emerges as the most consistently presented literary genre across Grades I to VI in the Indonesian language textbooks based on the Merdeka Curriculum. This prevalence aligns with the developmental needs of elementary school students, who benefit from narratives that closely reflect everyday experiences and help them make sense of the world around them in a concrete and relatable manner. The presence of other literary genres such as fables, which teach moral lessons through anthropomorphic animal characters; fairy tales, which stimulate imagination and convey cultural values; poetry, both traditional and modern, which enhances linguistic sensitivity; and folktales, which preserve and transmit local wisdom further enriches students' emotional, cultural, and aesthetic development.

As students progress through the grade levels, there is a noticeable shift in emphasis from fictional to nonfictional texts, indicating a curricular intention to gradually foster students' ability to engage with factual information, critical thinking, and informational literacy. This progression also reflects the educational goal of preparing students to navigate real-world knowledge while still nurturing their empathy, creativity, and appreciation for diverse forms of literature.

## **Recommendation**

Based on the findings of the literary genre analysis in Indonesian language textbooks under the Merdeka Curriculum, several follow-up recommendations can be proposed for teachers, textbook authors, and future researchers.

For teachers, it is essential to move beyond merely delivering the content of the texts and develop a deeper understanding of each literary genre's characteristics. Teachers are encouraged to apply a genre-based pedagogy that explicitly guides students in exploring text structures, moral values, and socio-cultural contexts embedded within literary works. The integration of digital and multimodal media such as videos, interactive comics, or e-storybooks should also be strengthened to enhance student engagement and reading motivation. Continuous professional development programs are recommended to help teachers connect literary learning with critical literacy and character education.

For textbook authors, greater attention should be given to ensuring genre diversity and representativeness so that literary selections reflect the richness of Indonesian children's experiences. Beyond including traditional genres such as folktales, fables, and poetry, authors are encouraged to incorporate contemporary and digital literary forms that align with 21st-century literacy demands. Text development should consider a balance between aesthetic, educational, and cognitive aspects appropriate for each developmental phase. Moreover, pedagogical notes or activity suggestions would be valuable additions to guide teachers in applying the texts effectively in classroom contexts.

For future researchers, subsequent studies could extend the analysis by examining students' responses to different literary genres, evaluating the effectiveness of genre-based teaching approaches, or exploring how multimodal texts contribute to literacy competence. Comparative research across grade levels or international curricula may also provide valuable insights into best practices for integrating children's literature in primary education. Additionally, incorporating perspectives on digital literacy and ecoliteracy into genre analysis would offer a more comprehensive understanding of how literary education can address contemporary educational challenges



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