

# Children's Historical Literacy Improvement Program for The First Graders at Brawijaya Smart School

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Submitted: January 10<sup>th</sup> 2024; Revised: March 02<sup>nd</sup> 2024; Accepted: March 06<sup>th</sup> 2024

## Keywords:

Children's literacy  
Elementary school  
Historical theme  
Malang  
The Jago Temple

**Abstract** This community service aimed to improve the historical literacy of the first-grade students at the Elementary School of BSS (Brawijaya Smart School) regarding the history of Malang. BSS Elementary School is located in Malang City, East Java. The community service activity consisted of writing and publishing a book about one of the cultural heritages of Malang, distributing it to the first graders, and organizing a storytelling performance based on the book. The community service team chose the classical history displayed in the Jago Temple, built in the 13<sup>th</sup> century during the Singhasari period. The temple is located in Malang Regency. This activity received a good response from the homeroom teacher and the first-grade students of the BSS elementary school. The students expressed their interest in learning more about the history of Malang. It can be concluded that this community service has been successful in improving the historical literacy of the students about their city.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Experts concur that fostering historical awareness among children is an important goal. Dixon & Hales (2014) explain that the purpose of history is to understand the world around us, and therefore, it is advisable to teach history from an early age. Developed countries such as Norway have been teaching young children about history. The Norwegian government, through the Framework Plan for the Content and Tasks of Kindergartens Program requires the early childhood education curriculum to include historical content. Meanwhile, the German government, through 'Das Berliner Bildungsprogramm', also requires that children be educated to understand history (Skjæveland, 2017). Cooper (2002) states that children from the age of three have an awareness of the past and have the ability to understand history in stories. They can also interpret historical stories and deduce reasoning based on those stories.

However, to the best of the authors' knowledge, no community service has organized children's literacy programs to foster early historical awareness among children. Qonitatillah et al. (2021) use animated films in their program 'The Use of Animated Film Media: Battle of Surabaya' as a Method of Learning the History of Independence to the Children of Gempolpading Pucuk

Lamongan Village'. Meanwhile, Utomo et al. (2019) use puzzles to teach local wisdom to children with their program 'Socialization of Character Education Based on Local Wisdom for Children with Puzzles in East Penfui Village, Kupang District'. Khairil et al. (2020) conducted a literacy awareness program for children at a fisherman's village, Kampung Nelayan Belawan, in Sumatra, by performing folktales of the region using hand puppets. Setyorini & Masulah (2020) trained elementary school teachers in Sidoarjo to write children's storybooks with project-based learning. Fatimah et al. (2021) developed children's literacy by setting up a library in a village called Giyanti. Putra & Widyaningsih (2020) trained teachers in Wonogiri, Central Java, to write their own children's storybooks. Anrisa et al. (2021) donated books to children in Tangerang Selatan during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic.

It can be concluded that there has never been a community service program to improve children's historical literacy in the form of writing story books, especially about the history related to where the children live. Therefore, this community service aimed to facilitate the writing and publication of a storybook and a storytelling performance based on the book for elementary school children in Malang

ISSN 2460-9447 (print), ISSN 2541-5883 (online)

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with Malang's historical background. Malang has a long history as a large and influential empire. The heyday left many traces, especially physical traces in the form of temple buildings and other ancient sites. Nowadays, these sites are better known as tourist attractions. Nonetheless, they actually have historical values that deserve to be studied by the younger generation.

For young children, the introduction to history can be done in a light and fun way, namely through picture storybooks. With story books, historical information is presented in the form of a simple narrative accompanied by interesting illustrations. As Lukens (2003) states, an illustration may give more exact information, create a mood and atmosphere by the depiction of a setting or action, or make us care about a character because the pictured dress and countenance reveal more of a person than does the text. This format is considered to be more effective in conveying the content of historical knowledge to readers with children's cognitive levels.

For this community service, the authors chose BSS (Brawijaya Smart School) Elementary School, which is located in Ketawanggede, Lowokwaru, Malang. The elementary school was selected with the consideration that BSS Elementary School has the potential to increase children's literacy with storybooks that provide information about Malang history. This school implements an active, innovative, creative, effective, and fun/joyful learning system in its curriculum. The introduction of history through children's storybooks is an effective method to support this learning system.

The community service team decided to publish a children's storybook about the Jago Temple, which represents the history of the Malang classical period at the height of the Singhasari kingdom. The method was chosen because of the educational value of books. Books provide knowledge and education for children to prepare them for future challenges and opportunities (Toha-Sarumpaet, 2010). The copies of the book were then donated to the first-grade students of BSS Elementary School. First-grade students are the youngest children in an elementary school and, therefore, are perfect candidates for early historical awareness programs. As the next generation, it is hoped that the children will be inspired to preserve the cultural heritage in Malang by this book.

Therefore, the following problems were identified and solved in this community service: 1) the need to write children's story books with historical themes of the Malang for first-grade students at the BSS elementary school, especially about the temples in Malang; 2) the need to publish and to distribute the copies of the book to the first-grade students of the BSS elementary school students; 3) the need to organize a storytelling performance based on the book for the BSS elementary school students.

## 2. METHOD

This entire program was run from May to November 2023. The community service team consisted of two lecturers who were story writers, and were assisted by two students of

the Faculty of Cultural Studies as the illustrators of the book and the storytellers in the storytelling performance. Firstly, the team conducted a survey at the BSS elementary school to investigate problems and to offer a solution to the problems. The team concluded that the students needed a literacy program to foster their historical awareness of Malang. After a joint discussion with the first-grade teacher of the elementary school, Ms. Ilviatun Navisah, the team decided to write and publish a children's story with the theme of the Jago Temple. This temple is one of the cultural heritage sites of the Greater Malang Area and is located in the nearby Malang Regency. Children can learn about the classical history of Malang through this temple. Furthermore, the temple is rich with reliefs, presenting ancient fables with excellent educational values that build children's character.

Hence, the community service was performed in the following order.

1. Conducting needs analysis through discussion with the first-grade teacher of BSS Elementary School. The topic of discussion is the teacher's need to enrich students' knowledge of local cultural history and character building.
2. Designing a historical storybook for children as the solution to the problem. The team and the teacher agreed that a children's story book would be a fun and effective learning tool.
3. Conducting field work at the Jago Temple in Malang. The trip was carried out to collect images and data about the temple, which was then supported with information from various historical references.
4. Writing a children's storybook about the Jago Temple. The script was prepared in storyboard form, then equipped with illustrations and arranged with an attractive layout.
5. Publishing a children's storybook in collaboration with one of the book publishers in Malang City.
6. Donating the storybook to the first-grade class of BSS elementary school.
7. Conducting a storytelling performance based on the book to the first-grade students of BSS elementary school. A member of the community service team acted as a storyteller in a session that was attended by 29 students and their teacher.
8. Performing evaluation through casual interviews with the first-grade class teacher and the students. The community service team asked for comments from students and the teacher about the story presented and the program.

## 3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

This community service produced results in accordance with the problems discussed in section 1 as follows:

1. The publication of a children's storybook with the

theme of the classical history of the Malang region presenting the Jago Temple

- The distribution of the copies of the children's storybook to first-grade students of the BSS Elementary School
- The storytelling performance based on the storybook

The storybook is entitled "Jalan-jalan ke Candi Jago" (Exploring the Jago Temple) and was written by the authors of this community service, Ika Nurhayani and Rosana Hariyanti. The illustration was done by Kurnia Rahmadhani, a student of the Faculty of Cultural Studies, Universitas Brawijaya. The story focuses on the main character, a little girl named Mia, who visits the Jago Temple together with her father and mother. Mia learns a lot about the reliefs on the Jago Temple's walls, especially about the animal stories or fables in it. In addition to the history of Malang, especially those related to the Jago Temple, the storybook also talks about typical East Java and Malang cuisine, namely rawon, a dark beef soup, which Mia and her family enjoy at the end of the story.

The storybook narration and storytelling performance were done in Indonesian, which made it easier for first-grade students to comprehend since they mostly use their native language to communicate. The story was composed using 22 storyboards, as shown in (Attachment 1).

The storyboard was then completed with illustrations created by Kurnia Rahmadhani, a student of the Department of Language and Literature who is talented in digital illustration. The book was published by Ma Chung Press with ISBN 978-602-9155-44-0, as shown in Figure 1.

The activity was completed with the storytelling performance, i.e., reading aloud this children's storybook to first-grade students of BSS Elementary School. The storytelling performance was carried out by the community service student assistant, Retania Christianisa, a student at the Department of Language and Literature, Faculty of Cultural Studies, Universitas Brawijaya. Retania has some experience teaching students in preschool and elementary school and, therefore, has good communication skills with children. This event was attended by 29 children and the first-grade class teacher, Ms. Ilviatun Nafisah M.Pd.I., as shown in Figure 2. Each student received a printed storybook, so they could listen to the story told by Retania while looking at the illustrations in the book.

The community service ended with a question-and-answer session with the class teacher and the first-grade students to collect data about their responses to the storybook and the storytelling performance, as shown in Figure 3. The students gave various comments during the Q and A session. Some students stated that they were new to the Jago Temple and wanted to visit it. Others thought that the story was very interesting and the illustrations were attractive.

Responses of the students proved that the community service was successful in improving the literacy of the first-grade students in BSS about the classical history of Malang from the storybook about the visit of Mia and her

parents to the Jago Temple. In addition, they were all very excited to read the books by themselves during and after the storytelling performance. The class teacher, Ms. Ilviatun Navisah, also expressed that the book inspired children to

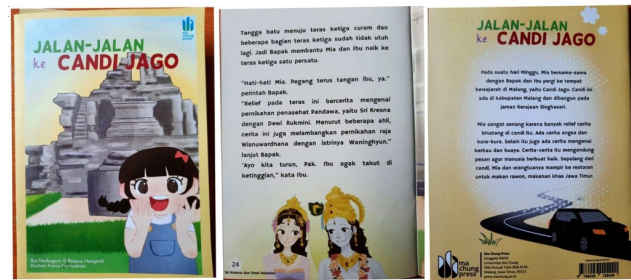


Figure 1 . Published storybook



Figure 2 . Retania christianisa reading the stories to the children



Figure 3 . Interactive Q and A with students led by one of the authors

The community service has been successful in offering solutions to improve children's literacy and foster early historical awareness of first-grade students of BSS Elementary School. This was done by combining writing and publishing a storybook about Malang history, donating the book to the first-grade class, and conducting a storytelling performance based on the book. No previous organizers of community service programs have done this before.

Putra & Widyaningsih (2020) and Setyorini & Masalah (2020) did not write the storybook themselves since



they trained elementary school teachers to write it. By writing the storybook themselves, the authors of the current community service were able to fulfill the specific need of the first-grade students of BSS Elementary School, which was the need for a literacy program about the history of Malang. Moreover, by conducting a storytelling performance based on the written and published storybook, the authors have done more than Anrisa et al. (2021), who only donated books to their targeted children, and Fatimah et al. (2021), who set up a children's library. Moreover, Khairil et al. (2020) performed a storytelling performance for children with hand puppets, but they did not write the books themselves and, therefore, could not tailor the books based on the specific needs of the children.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the community service project was able to improve the literacy of first-grade students of BSS Elementary School about Malang history, especially on the classical history of Malang represented by the Jago Temple. The community service activity was successful due to the novelty of methods that were never applied by previous similar children's literacy programs. First, the authors wrote and published a storybook on the historical theme themselves. Second, the authors donated the book to the target community, the first-grade students of the BSS Elementary School. Third, the authors conducted storytelling performance based on the storybook. These methods ensure that the problems and the needs of the target community are answered and solved. Moreover, the donated copies of the books can still be used by the class teacher of next year's first-grade students and further increase the beneficiaries of this community service. By fostering early historical awareness, the authors hope that the children will play an important role in helping preserve the historical heritages and sites in the Malang Greater Area in the future.

For the next community program manager, it is recommended to explore the theme of Malang's diverse cultural and historical heritage. Malang has a rich and long history that spans from the classical period to the colonial and independence times. These historical periods have left behind various cultural sites that can be appreciated and conserved by the younger generation.

#### ACKNOWLEDGMENT

The authors would like to offer sincere gratitude to the Faculty of Cultural Studies which provided funding for this community service through the DPP SPP grant.

#### CONFLICT OF INTERESTS



The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest.

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## ATTACHMENT

### Attachment 1. Samples from the storyboards

Pages	Storyboards	Narration or Illustration
1	A page with an illustration	<p>Illustration: Dad, Mom, and Mia are in a car on their way to the Jago temple. Dad and Mm are in the front seat, with Dad driving. Mia is in the back seat. They look excited (Figure 1).</p>
		
<p>Figure 1 . Illustration Dad, Mom, and Mia are in a car</p>		
2	Mia, Dad, and Mom are getting ready to go to the Jago Temple on Sunday.	<p>This week, Mia woke up early in the morning without being helped by her mom. Usually, Mom has to wake Mia up on Sundays because Mia wakes up at noon. But today is the day Mia has been waiting for because they are going to Candi Jago! Mia has long asked Mom to take her on a tour of Candi Jago. But it is only today that Mom and Dad are able to take Mia there.</p> <p>“Come on, Dad, Mom, here we go!” shouts Mia happily.</p> <p>“Yes, be patient, dear. I will take the car out from the garage first,” Dad says.</p>
3	Dad, Mom, and Mia depart and finally arrive at Jago Temple.	<p>Dad, Mom, and Mia depart by car from their home in Malang City at 8 am. They have to leave early in the morning because the Jago Temple is located outside the city of Malang, namely in Tumpang, Malang Regency. The streets on that day were not too crowded, and an hour later, they arrived in front of the Jago Temple. The stone temple looks nice and magnificent from the outside! Around the temple, there is a beautiful green garden.</p>
4	A page with an illustration	<p>Illustration: Dad, Mom, and Mia standing in front of the Jago Temple (Figure 2).</p>
		
<p>Figure 2 . Illustration Dad, Mom, and Mia standing in front of the Jago Temple</p>		

## Continuation of Attachment 1.

- 5-6 Dad, Mom, and Mia enter the temple compound. After parking the car, the three of them head to the small building where the temple caretaker stations. The caretaker is very friendly and very excited! "Good morning, Sir, Mam, and little one. Welcome to the Jago Temple," says the caretaker. Since there is no entrance fee, Mom gives a voluntary donation and buys a guidebook about the temple. "The Jago Temple was built during the Singhasari kingdom in the 13th century. Singhasari was a big kingdom located in the now Singosari area, Malang Regency," says Dad while reading the guidebook. "Singhasari had a king named Ken Arok, right, Dad?" asks Mia. "Wow, Mia is smart," says Mom. "Yes, that's right, Ken Arok was the founder of the Singhasari kingdom. But this temple was built to commemorate the fourth king of Singhasari, Wisnuwardhana," continues Dad.
- 7 A page with an illustration. Illustration: Jago Temple from the front side (Figure 3).

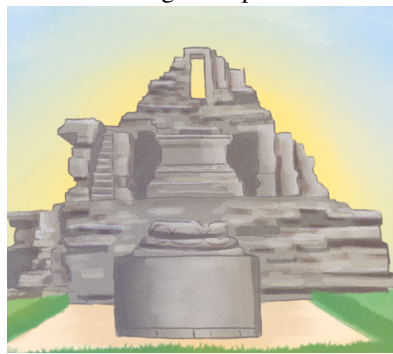


Figure 3 . Illustration Jago Temple from the front side

- 8 Mom, Dad, and Mia are in front of the temple, watching it closely. Dad, Mom, and Mia stand in front of the temple. "Look, Mia, this temple consists of three levels," says Mother. "Why is that, Mom?" asked Mia. "Because the shape of this temple resembles a stepped punden. The shape of the stepped punden building is a characteristic of Indonesian ancestors," says Dad. "It looks like steps or a multilevel trap like what we see now," continues Dad.
- 9-21 not shown
- 22 On the way home, Dad, Mom, and Mia stop by a restaurant selling rawon for lunch. On the way back, they stop by a restaurant to eat rawon. Rawon is a beef soup with black broth, which is a typical East Java food. The soup is black because it uses a spice called kluwek. It is delicious, and Mia eats it all the way out. What a great day!
23. A page with an illustration Illustration: A picture of a bowl of rawon (Figure 4).



Figure 4 . Illustration a picture of a bowl of rawon