



## Implementation of Story Mapping Strategy to Improve Students' Reading Comprehension of Narrative Texts

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### Abstract

This research aimed to improve eighth-grade students' understanding of narrative text using the Story Mapping Strategy at SMP PAB 8 Sampali. The research employed Classroom Action Research (CAR), conducted over two cycles that included planning, execution, observation, and reflection phases. Data collection methods comprised multiple-choice assessments, observation checklists, interviews, documentation, and field notes. Findings indicated consistent improvement in students' reading comprehension throughout the process, with average scores rising from 42.32 on the pre-test to 64.82 after the first cycle and reaching 83.04 following the second cycle. The use of the Story Mapping Strategy proved effective in aiding students to identify the main ideas and supporting details within narrative texts, while also fostering increased participation in the classroom. Consequently, this approach can be regarded as both engaging and successful in advancing students' understanding of narrative reading material.

**Keywords:** Reading Comprehension, Narrative Text, Story Mapping Strategy

### Abstrak

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk meningkatkan pemahaman siswa kelas delapan tentang teks naratif menggunakan Strategi Pemetaan Cerita di SMP PAB 8 Sampali. Penelitian ini menggunakan Penelitian Tindakan Kelas (PTK), yang dilakukan selama dua siklus yang meliputi fase perencanaan, pelaksanaan, observasi, dan refleksi. Metode pengumpulan data meliputi penilaian pilihan ganda, daftar periksa observasi, wawancara, dokumentasi, dan catatan lapangan. Temuan menunjukkan peningkatan yang konsisten dalam pemahaman membaca siswa selama proses tersebut, dengan skor rata-rata meningkat dari 42,32 pada tes awal menjadi 64,82 setelah siklus pertama dan mencapai 83,04 setelah siklus kedua. Penggunaan Strategi Pemetaan Cerita terbukti efektif dalam membantu siswa mengidentifikasi gagasan utama dan detail pendukung dalam teks naratif, sementara juga mendorong peningkatan partisipasi di dalam kelas. Akibatnya, pendekatan ini dapat dianggap menarik dan berhasil dalam memajukan pemahaman siswa tentang materi bacaan naratif.

**Kata Kunci:** Pemahaman Membaca, Teks Naratif, Strategi Pemetaan Cerita.

## Introduction

In this modern era of globalization, English has become one of the most important languages in the world. It is widely used as a universal medium of communication that connects people across nations. In Indonesia, English is categorized as a foreign language, yet it plays a vital role, especially in international communication. For this reason, English proficiency is highly valuable since it provides broader opportunities, such as access to jobs and scholarships, both at the national and international levels.

In educational institutions, English is a mandatory subject taught from junior to senior high school levels. Students are expected to cultivate four fundamental language skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Of these, reading is regarded as particularly crucial because it enables learners to broaden their understanding, acquire information, and enrich their experiences. Reading not only supports intellectual development but also helps students in understanding lessons, exploring new ideas, and finding additional references. Comprehension takes place when students can connect what they already know with the content of the text, which enables them to interpret meaning effectively. Without strong comprehension ability, students may struggle to understand the material, which will eventually affect their overall learning progress.

Preliminary observations at SMP PAB 8 Sampali revealed that many students encountered difficulties in comprehending narrative text. They often struggled to identify main idea and supporting details, faced challenges in recognizing implied meanings, and were hindered by limited vocabulary. These issues reduced their ability to engage fully with the texts. Moreover, the absence of varied strategies in reading instruction often made students less active during the learning process. This situation caused a decline in motivation, leading to disinterest and even frustration when students were required to read. Therefore, a more effective and engaging approach is needed to help students improve their reading comprehension.

Story mapping is a visual strategy used to help students organize and understand key elements of a narrative text, such as characters, setting, conflict, and resolution. Story mapping is described as an effective strategy for clarifying the structure of a story and deepening

comprehension of the text (Caldwell, 2016). By visually mapping out the plot, students can easily identify relationships between story elements and understand these parts contribute to the overall narrative. The primary function of story mapping is to facilitate a deeper understanding of narrative text and improve students' abilities to recall and analyze information from the stories they read.

Story mapping is used as a strategy to help students identify key components of a narrative story (Hennessy, 2016). It allows students to map the plot in a clear and structured way, focusing on main parts such as character introduction, setting, conflict, story climax, and resolution (Serravallo, 2015). One strategy in story mapping involves using graphics or diagrams to illustrate the relationships between characters and events in the story, providing a visual representation that helps reinforce students' understanding of the text. This strategy also supports students in analyzing and retaining information more effectively, ultimately strengthening their reading comprehension.

In the context of learning for English Language Learners (ELL), story mapping also plays an important role in helping students understand narrative text in learning a second language. It is emphasized that story mapping can be a highly useful strategy to support reading comprehension for students who face challenges in understanding narrative text in a language they are still learning (Earl, 2018). By using visual key elements of story, ELL students can more easily identify the structure and elements of the story, even if their language ability is still developing. This helps them build connections between the text and their prior knowledge, improving their ability to analyze and recall story information, and ultimately improving their ability to discuss and write about the texts they read (Juliana, 2016). This strategy guides students to create a story mapping by noting important information as they read, including highlighting relevant parts, underlining key words or sentences, and writing questions or comments in the text margins. This not only helps students understand the structure of the story but also encourages them to interact actively with the text, improving their engagement in the reading process. By mapping out the story elements, students can more easily identify relationships between different parts and strengthen their understanding of the plot and the message the author intends to convey. Thus, story mapping not only helps organize information but also encourages

students to think critically and analyze the structure of the narrative text (Juliana, 2018).

Story Mapping is recognized as an effective instructional strategy to support students' reading comprehension of narrative text. This method enables learners to visually organize and divide essential elements such as plot, theme, characters, and events, making the text easier to follow. By presenting the story in schematic outlines, students are trained to identify and recall main idea more effectively, summarize information, and establish connections between events. Story Mapping not only assists learners in comprehending narrative text but also motivates them to participate actively in reading tasks, encouraging critical thinking and analysis. These visual outlines also act as useful references when learners are asked to write or retell the story, since they can recall the main details more effectively. In addition, story mapping not only aids in comprehension but also motivates students to actively engage in the reading process, strengthening their ability to analyze and retain information. In the context of this study, the Story Mapping Strategy was applied to improve the reading comprehension achievement of eighth-grade students at SMP PAB 8 Sampali, where the Minimum Mastery Criteria (MMC) was set at 70. Considering this benchmark, Classroom Action Research (CAR) was carried out to determine how far Story Mapping could enhance students' reading performance.

Drawing from the discussion above, the researcher plans to conduct a study titled "Improving Students' Reading Comprehension on Narrative Text Through Story Mapping Strategy at the Eighth Grade of SMP PAB 8 Sampali."

## Method

This study was conducted using CAR to address students' difficulties in understanding narrative text and to enhance their comprehension through classroom-based interventions. The research design followed the model of Kemmis and McTaggart, which consists of two cycles, each including four main stages: planning, acting, observing, and reflecting. The instruments used for data collection comprised tests, observation sheets, interviews, documentation, and field notes. Both quantitative and qualitative data were analyzed. Quantitative data were obtained from students'

test scores, while qualitative data were collected from observations, interviews, and field notes.

The research took place at SMP PAB 8 Sampali, situated at Jalan Pasar Hitam No. 68, Percut Sei Tuan, Deli Serdang, North Sumatra. The study involved 28 eighth-grade students from the 2025/2026 academic year, evenly divided between 14 males and 14 females. This research followed the framework of Kemmis and McTaggart, which structures Classroom Action Research (CAR) into two cycles. Each cycle comprised four phases of implementation and was preceded by an initial study aimed at identifying the challenges students encountered in comprehending narrative text (Juliana & Anggraini, 2024).

During the planning phase, the researcher developed lesson plans, instructional materials, worksheets, observation forms, and assessments. The first cycle utilized the text "Timun Mas," whereas the second cycle employed "Elephant and Friends." The plan for Cycle 2 was adjusted in response to the evaluation and reflections gathered from Cycle 1.

The action stage involved classroom teaching where the researcher introduced narrative text and explained how to use story mapping. Students were guided to identify narrative components such as characters, setting, conflict, climax, and resolution. They then practiced constructing story maps both individually and in groups.

In the observation phase, the researcher alongside the English teacher closely monitored students' participation, interaction, and involvement throughout the learning activities. They also documented the outcomes of both the pre-test and post-tests.

The reflection phase was conducted to assess the outcomes of each cycle. The researcher and the English teacher collaboratively examined the strengths and weaknesses of the implementation, using these insights to enhance the subsequent cycle.

To gather data, several instruments were employed: comprehension tests, interviews, observation sheets, field notes, and documentation. The test consisted of 20 multiple-choice questions covering four areas: identifying main idea, recognizing supporting details, understanding vocabulary, and interpreting implied meaning. Each correct answer was given 5 points, while incorrect answers scored 0, with the highest possible score being 100.

The data collected was analyzed both qualitatively and quantitatively. Qualitative data came from observation, interviews, and field notes, while quantitative data was obtained from students' pre-test and post-test results. The analysis focused on the class mean score, the percentage of students who achieved the MMC = 70, and the improvement rate from one cycle to the next, to determine the effectiveness of the Story Mapping Strategy.

### Result and Discussion

The results of this study showed a clear improvement in students' ability to comprehend narrative text after the Story Mapping Strategy was applied. The data were obtained from the pre-test, post-test 1 in Cycle 1, and post-test 2 in Cycle 2. The scores from each stage reflected students' progress in understanding the texts, and the findings are presented as follows.

#### 1. Pre-Test in the Preliminary Study

In the preliminary test, students' comprehension was still low. Most of them experienced difficulties in identifying the main idea, supporting details, and implied meaning of the texts. Their lack of vocabulary knowledge also affected their ability to understand the material. The average score in the pre-test was only 42.32, and only a few students were able to meet the MMC = 70. These results indicated the need for an intervention through a different learning strategy.

Table 1. *Students' MMC Scores in Pre-Test*

No	Category	Value Range	Frequency	%
1	Excellent	86-100	0	0%
2	Good	70-85	0	0%
3	Satisfactory	60-69	4	14.29%
4	Poor	50-59	9	32.14%
5	Very Poor	0-49	15	53.57%

Based on the table above, it can be seen students' percentage scores in reading comprehension at narrative text entitled "Timun Mas". Of a total of 28 students, there were 4

students (14.29%) who were in the *Satisfactory* category, 9 students (32.14%) who were in the *Poor* category, and 15 students (53.57%) who were in the *Very Poor* category. This results clearly demonstrates that most students had not yet reached the Minimum Mastery Criteria indicate students' reading comprehension had still low before the implementation of the strategy. It means that students had not succeeded to achieve at the minimum Mastery Criteria.

#### 2. Post-Test 1 in Cycle 1

In Cycle 1, the researcher implemented the Story Mapping Strategy by using the narrative "Timun Mas." The mean score in post-test 1 rose to 64.82, showing an improvement compared to the pre-test. Fourteen students (50%) managed to achieve the MMC, while the rest were still below the standard. Although there was progress, many students still struggled to apply the story mapping strategy effectively, especially when dealing with complex sentence structures or unfamiliar vocabulary. Classroom observations also revealed that some students were not fully engaged in the activity, and this limited their comprehension. Therefore, reflection from Cycle I showed the need for clearer explanations, more examples, and additional practice in the next cycle.

Table 2. *Students' MMC Scores in Post-Test 1*

No	Category	Value Range	Frequency	%
1	Excellent	86-100	0	0%
2	Good	70-85	14	50%
3	Satisfactory	60-69	4	14.29%
4	Poor	50-59	9	32.14%
5	Very Poor	0-49	1	3.57%

According to the table above, the students' MMC scores in the first post-test showed that none of the students fell into the Excellent category. Fourteen students (50%) were classified as Good, 4 students (14.29%) as Satisfactory, 9 students (32.14%) as Poor, and 1 student (3.57%) as Very Poor. While half of the students met the MMC benchmark of 70, the remaining half had yet to reach this standard.

Although there was improvement compared to the pre-test, overall mastery was not attained, indicating the necessity for a second cycle.

Observations during the learning process highlighted several challenges: students often struggled to identify the main idea, comprehend complex sentence structures, and recognize implied meanings. Many of them also lacked prior knowledge of the story “*Timun Mas*” and had difficulties in applying the story mapping strategy effectively. These factors contributed to their generally low level of comprehension.

### 3. Post-Test 2 in Cycle 2

Improvements were made to Cycle 2 after the lesson plan was revised. In this cycle, the story “*Elephant and Friends*” was used, and group work was emphasized to encourage more active participation. The results showed a significant improvement, with the average score reaching 83.04. Nearly all students managed to pass the MMC. Students demonstrated better comprehension, were able to identify the main idea and details more accurately and applied the story mapping strategy with greater confidence. Observational data also showed that students were more engaged and motivated during the learning activities.

Table 3. *Students’ MMC Scores in Post-Test 2*

No	Category	Value Range	Frequency	%
1	Excellent	86-100	10	35.71%
2	Good	70-85	17	60.71%
3	Satisfactory	60-69	1	3.57%
4	Poor	50-59	0	0%
5	Very Poor	0-49	0	0%

Referring to the table above, the students’ MMC scores in the first post-test demonstrate notable progress in reading comprehension. Specifically, 60.71% of the students (10 individuals) achieved an Excellent rating, 35.71% (17 students) were categorized as Good, and only one student (3.57%) fell into the Satisfactory category. There were no students classified under Poor or Very Poor. These results suggest that the Story Mapping Strategy effectively enhanced students’ understanding of narrative texts. By offering a visual structure, the

strategy assisted students in organizing information, identifying the story’s framework, and recalling key details. This outcome supports prior studies indicating that story mapping helps learners deconstruct complex texts into smaller, more manageable segments, thereby facilitating comprehension.

Furthermore, the use of story mapping improved students’ classroom participation. By highlighting key points, underlining important sentences, and creating visual story structures, students became more active readers. They not only understood the text better but also showed greater enthusiasm for reading activities. These results confirm that story mapping can serve as an engaging and practical approach to improve reading comprehension, especially for students who often find narrative text difficult

English is a challenging subject for junior high school students, and complex vocabulary and sentence structures often make it difficult for them to understand the content of the text. To address these issues, structured guidance through reading strategies such as story mapping is essential. This strategy helps students identify the key elements of a narrative (characters, setting, conflict, climax, and resolution), making comprehension easier.

In Cycle 1, after receiving special guidance on how to apply story mapping, students showed progress. The average score improved to 64.82, with 50% of students achieving the MMC. Although some students were still unable to meet the criteria, their comprehension improved compared to the pre-test. In Cycle 2, after the researcher revised and improved the implementation, students achieved even better results. The mean score rose to 83.04, with almost all students surpassing the MMC.

Interviews with students after Cycle 2 indicated that story mapping helped them focus on important points in the text, recall information more effectively, and enjoy reading activities. Students felt more active, as they could visualize story elements and connect them to their prior knowledge. The English teacher also responded positively, noting that students were more engaged and confident in reading activities (Juliana & Pasaribu, 2023).

Overall, both quantitative and qualitative data demonstrated significant improvement. Students’ scores improved consistently from pre-test to post-tests, and their classroom participation and motivation also improved.

Thus, the use of the Story Mapping Strategy proved to be an effective way to improve students' reading comprehension of narrative text at SMP PAB 8 Sampali.

### Conclusion

This study aimed to improve students' understanding of English narrative text using the Story Mapping Strategy. The research applied CAR, which was carried out in two cycles, with each cycle consisting of four meetings. In the cycle 1, the text "Timun Mas" was utilized, while in cycle 2, the story "Elephant and Friends" was selected. Revisions in Cycle 2 were made based on the reflection from Cycle 1, which included providing clearer guidance, more systematic examples, and collaborative learning tasks. The study took place in the 2025/2026 academic year.

The results demonstrated a steady improvement in students' reading

comprehension. In the pre-test, only a few students managed to reach the MMC = 70, while most of them were still below the standard. After cycle 1, the average score improved to 64.82, with half of the students achieving the MMC. Further progress was evident in cycle 2, where the average score rose to 83.04 and nearly all students successfully met the MMC.

Classroom observations, interviews, and field notes also showed that students became more active and engaged during the learning process. They showed greater interest in reading, were more capable of identifying key elements of narratives, and applied the story mapping strategy with confidence. These findings confirm that the Story Mapping Strategy can be considered an effective and engaging method to improve students' reading comprehension of narrative text.

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### Curriculum Vitae

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Second Researcher: Juliana is an English lecturer at the English Education Department, Faculty of Social Science and Education, Universitas of Potensi Utama