



Improving Historical Understanding Through *Storytelling Methods* in Grade IV A Students Agape Integrated Christian Elementary School Nabire

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to improve the historical understanding of grade IV A students through the application of storytelling method at Agape Terpadu Nabire Christian Elementary School. The background of this study is based on the low understanding of students towards historical material as indicated by low learning outcomes and lack of student involvement in the learning process. This study uses a Classroom Action Research (CAR) approach which is implemented in two cycles, including the planning stage, action implementation, observation, and reflection. The subjects of the study were 28 grade IV A students. Data collection techniques include observation, tests, interviews, and documentation, while data analysis is carried out descriptively qualitatively and quantitatively. The results of the study indicate that the application of the storytelling method can significantly improve students' historical understanding. This is indicated by an increase in student learning completeness from 25% in the pre-action stage to 67.86% in cycle I and increasing again to 96.42% in cycle II. In

addition, there is an increase in student activity and participation in the learning process. Thus, the storytelling method is effectively used as an alternative learning strategy to improve elementary school students' historical understanding.

ABSTRAK

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk meningkatkan pemahaman sejarah siswa kelas IV A melalui penerapan metode bercerita di SD Kristen Agape Terpadu Nabire. Latar belakang penelitian ini didasarkan pada rendahnya pemahaman siswa terhadap materi sejarah yang ditunjukkan oleh rendahnya hasil belajar dan kurangnya keterlibatan siswa dalam proses pembelajaran. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan Penelitian Tindakan Kelas (KAR) yang diimplementasikan dalam dua siklus, termasuk tahap perencanaan, pelaksanaan tindakan, observasi, dan refleksi. Subjek penelitian adalah 28 siswa kelas IV A. Teknik pengumpulan data meliputi observasi, tes, wawancara, dan dokumentasi, sedangkan analisis data dilakukan secara deskriptif kualitatif dan kuantitatif. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa penerapan metode bercerita dapat secara signifikan meningkatkan pemahaman sejarah siswa. Hal ini ditunjukkan dengan peningkatan kelengkapan belajar siswa dari

25% pada tahap pra-tindakan menjadi 67,86% pada siklus I dan meningkat lagi menjadi 96,42% pada siklus II. Selain itu, terdapat peningkatan aktivitas dan partisipasi siswa dalam proses pembelajaran. Dengan demikian, metode bercerita efektif digunakan sebagai strategi pembelajaran alternatif untuk meningkatkan pemahaman sejarah siswa sekolah dasar.

INTRODUCTION

Learning in elementary school is the main foundation in forming students' knowledge, attitudes, and skills as a basis for the next level of education (Neite, et al., 2026). At this stage, the learning process should not only focus on cognitive aspects, but also include affective and psychomotor aspects through an active, creative, and fun approach. However, in practice, learning in elementary school is still dominated by conventional methods such as lectures that tend to be teacher-centered, thus reducing student involvement in the learning process. This condition causes low student interest in learning and understanding of the material, especially in narrative subjects such as history.

Along with the development of modern educational paradigms, learning in elementary schools is required to be more innovative and contextual to increase active student engagement. Teachers need to develop learning strategies that can connect material with students' real experiences so that learning becomes more meaningful (Telussa & Tamaela, 2023). One relevant approach is the use of story-based methods that can stimulate students' imagination and emotions. This approach has been proven to increase student engagement and facilitate a deeper understanding of the material compared to traditional methods (Srisuk, et al., 2024).

Based on initial observations at Agape Terpadu Christian Elementary School, Nabire, it was found that history learning was still conducted conventionally, using lectures and assignments. Teachers tended to deliver material in a one-way manner without actively involving students in the learning process. This resulted in low student interest and attention to historical material, which was considered boring and difficult to understand. Furthermore, students showed difficulty understanding historical concepts because the material was presented abstractly without context relevant to their lives. The lack of variety in learning methods also contributed to low student participation in teaching and learning activities. Active student involvement is crucial for improving conceptual understanding. Therefore, learning innovations are needed to address these issues.

History learning in social studies in elementary schools plays a crucial role in shaping students' historical awareness, nationalistic values, and character. Historical material not only contains facts and past events but also contains moral values relevant to students' lives. However, the narrative and chronological nature of historical material often makes it difficult for students to understand and remember the information presented. Furthermore, non-contextual history learning tends to lead students to simply memorize without understanding the meaning contained in historical events. However, a good understanding of history must be able to connect past events with present life. Research by Subakti et al. (2024) shows that using an approach that engages students' emotions and imagination can

help improve their understanding of history more deeply. Therefore, learning methods are needed that can bridge the understanding of historical concepts in an interesting and meaningful way.

storytelling method is a learning strategy that uses stories as a medium to convey learning material in an engaging and contextual manner. This method can activate students' imagination, emotions, and engagement in the learning process, making learning more lively and meaningful. Storytelling not only helps students understand the material but also instills character values through the stories told by Rusiyono & Apriani (2020). In the context of history learning, storytelling has the advantage of presenting historical events in an engaging and easy-to-understand narrative. The use of storytelling has also been shown to improve students' memory, understanding, and engagement in history learning. Thus, the storytelling method is an effective alternative solution to addressing the problems of history learning in elementary schools.

Various studies have shown that the storytelling method has a positive impact on learning, particularly in improving students' understanding and interest in learning. Research conducted by Nurdin & Suprijono (2022); Ervina et al. (2025) shows that the application of storytelling can significantly improve students' understanding of historical material. Furthermore, other research by Junaidi (2024); Junior et al. (2025) also states that storytelling can increase student engagement and create a more enjoyable learning atmosphere. Other research by Musthofa et al. (2025); Zuhriyah & Fradana (2025) shows that storytelling is effective in increasing student interest in learning because it provides more interactive and contextual learning. This method also helps students understand the material more deeply through meaningful learning experiences. However, most research still focuses on increasing interest in learning and has not specifically examined historical understanding in elementary school students, particularly in local contexts like Nabire.

The novelty of this study lies in the application of storytelling methods to improve historical understanding in grade IV A students of Agape Terpadu Christian Elementary School, Nabire, by integrating local context and student characteristics. Unlike previous studies that focused more on learning interest, this study specifically examines improving historical understanding as the primary variable. This is important because understanding is a deeper indicator of learning success than mere interest. Furthermore, this study integrates a contextual approach by utilizing stories relevant to the students' environment, thus making learning more meaningful. This approach is expected to bridge the gap between historical material and students' real lives. Thus, this study provides a new contribution to the development of history learning strategies in elementary schools, particularly in the Papua region.

The purpose of this study is to improve the historical understanding of grade IV A students through the application of the storytelling method at Agape Terpadu Nabire Christian Elementary School. In addition, this study also aims to determine the use of the storytelling method in increasing student engagement and learning outcomes. With this

research, it is hoped that teachers can obtain alternative innovative and effective learning methods in teaching history in elementary schools. The urgency of this research lies in the importance of improving the quality of history learning from an early age as an effort to shape students' character and historical awareness. If history learning is not delivered with the right method, students will lose interest and understanding of historical values. Therefore, the application of the storytelling method is a strategic solution in creating interesting, meaningful, and effective learning.

METHODOLOGY

This study uses a Classroom Action Research (CAR) approach, which aims to directly improve and enhance the quality of classroom learning. CAR was chosen because it aligns with the research objectives, namely improving students' historical understanding through the application of storytelling methods. The CAR model used refers to the concept of Kemmis and McTaggart, which consists of four main stages: planning, action, observation, and reflection, which are carried out cyclically. The research was designed in several cycles, where each cycle was evaluated to determine the increase in student understanding. The results of reflection in the previous cycle became the basis for improvements in the next cycle. Thus, CAR allows for continuous improvement of the learning process so that the research objectives can be achieved optimally.

The subjects in this study were 28 students of grade IV A consisting of male and female students with heterogeneous ability levels. The selection of subjects was based on the results of initial observations which showed that most students experienced difficulties in understanding history material, especially in social studies learning. This research was conducted at Agape Terpadu Nabire Christian Elementary School, located in Nabire Regency, Central Papua. The selection of the research location was based on the consideration that the school had real problems related to students' low understanding of history and the suboptimal use of innovative learning methods such as storytelling. Thus, this location is relevant for taking corrective actions through this research.

The data collection techniques in this study were carried out through several methods, namely: 1) Observation; Observation was used to observe the activities of teachers and students during the learning process. Observations were carried out using observation sheets that had been prepared to assess the implementation of the storytelling method and student involvement in learning. 2) Test; The test was used to measure the level of students' historical understanding before and after the implementation of the storytelling method. The test was given in the form of multiple choice questions and essays that were adjusted to the learning indicators.

The data analysis techniques in this study were descriptive, qualitative, and quantitative. Qualitative data were obtained from observations and interviews, which were analyzed by describing the learning process, student activities, and obstacles encountered during the implementation of the actions. Meanwhile, quantitative data were obtained from student comprehension tests, which were analyzed by calculating the class average score and the percentage of student learning completion. The formula used is as follows:

a. Average value:

$$\bar{x} = \frac{\sum X}{N}$$

b. Percentage of completion:

$$P = \frac{\text{Jumlah siswa tuntas}}{\text{Jumlah seluruh siswa}} \times 100\%$$

The analysis results were then compared between cycles to determine improvements in student understanding. The research was considered successful if student learning outcomes improved in accordance with the established minimum completion criteria (KKM). Therefore, this data analysis serves as the basis for drawing conclusions about the effectiveness of the storytelling method in improving students' historical understanding.

RESEARCH RESULT

1. Initial Conditions (Pre-Action)

The initial conditions before the interventions were implemented indicated that the historical understanding of grade IV A students at Agape Terpadu Nabire Christian Elementary School was still relatively low. This was evident from the pre-test results, where only 7 students (25%) achieved learning completion, while 21 students (75%) had not. The average class score obtained was 60.14%, indicating that the majority of students had not yet optimally grasped the historical material.

These low learning outcomes are caused by several factors, including the use of conventional learning methods, a lack of student involvement in the learning process, and the delivery of material that tends to be abstract and uninteresting. These findings are based on the results of initial observations conducted by researchers during the learning process, which showed that most students simply listened to the teacher's explanation without any active interaction. Furthermore, the results of interviews with the class IV A teacher revealed that the lecture method is still the main strategy in learning history. This data is also supported by the results of the student pre-test, where only 7 of 28 students (25%) achieved learning completion. Based on these three data sources, students appeared passive, lacked enthusiasm, and experienced difficulty in understanding and remembering the history material presented by the teacher.

2. Results of Cycle I

In the planning stage, the researcher developed a Learning Implementation Plan (RPP) using the storytelling method. In addition, learning media were prepared in the form of interesting historical stories, observation sheets, and test instruments to measure student understanding. The material presented was designed in narrative form to make it easier for students to understand. The implementation of the action was carried out by applying the storytelling method in history learning. The teacher delivered the material through an interesting story, using voice intonation, expressions, and a lively storyline. Students began to appear more interested and actively participated in the learning compared to the previous condition. The results of the observation showed an increase in student activity during the learning. Students began to show interest, pay attention to the story, and participate in discussions. However, there were still some students who lacked focus and did not fully understand the material. The results of the post-test in cycle I showed a significant increase,

namely 19 students (67.85%) had achieved completion, while 9 students (32.14%) had not, with an average class score of 79.10%. Based on the results of the reflection, the application of the storytelling method in cycle I had shown positive results, but there were still several shortcomings, such as less than optimal classroom management and uneven student involvement. Therefore, improvements need to be made in cycle II by increasing the variety of story delivery, interactions, and providing motivation to students.

3. Results of Cycle II

In cycle II, planning was carried out by correcting the shortcomings of cycle I. Researchers refined the lesson plan, enriched the story with more interesting elements, and added supporting media to make learning more interactive. In addition, classroom management strategies were also improved. The implementation of learning in cycle II was carried out using more interactive storytelling, directly involving students in the story, such as asking questions, asking students to retell, and relating the story to students' daily experiences. This created a more lively and enjoyable learning atmosphere. Observations showed a very significant increase in student activity and engagement. Students appeared more enthusiastic, actively asked questions, and were able to understand the material better. The results of the cycle II post-test showed a very high increase, namely 28 students (96.42%) achieved completeness and only 1 student (3.57%) who had not completed it with an average class score of 98.17%. Based on the results of reflection, the implementation of the storytelling method in cycle II had run very well and was able to significantly improve students' understanding of history. The learning completeness target had been achieved, so the research was stopped in cycle II.

4. Recapitulation of Research Results

Overall, the research results show an increase in historical understanding through the storytelling method in class IV A students, as can be seen in the following table.

Research Stage	Number of Students	Students Complete	Percentage of Completion	Students Not Finished	Percentage of Incomplete	Class Average
Pre-Action	28	7	25%	21	75%	60.14%
Cycle I	28	19	67.86%	9	32.14%	79.10%
Cycle II	28	28	96.42%	1	3.57%	98.17%

Research Source: 2025

DISCUSSION OF RESEARCH RESULTS

The results of the pre-action phase of the study indicate that students' low historical understanding is caused by the use of conventional learning methods and a lack of active student involvement. This condition is in line with research findings by Telussa, (2020); Mutaqin, et al., (2025) which state that teacher -centered learning tends to make students passive and less able to construct knowledge independently, thus impacting low learning outcomes. In addition, the narrative and abstract nature of historical material requires a more contextual learning strategy to make it easier for elementary school students to understand. Furthermore, low student involvement in learning is also a major factor in low conceptual understanding. Students who are not actively involved tend to only memorize

without understanding the meaning of the material being studied. This is supported by research by Adam, (2024); Yusup & Mastoah, (2025) which states that students' emotional and cognitive involvement greatly influences conceptual understanding, especially in social studies learning. Therefore, learning methods are needed that can increase active student participation and link the material to real experiences.

storytelling method in cycle I showed a significant improvement in students' historical understanding. This was evident in the increasing number of students achieving learning completion and the increasing class average. Storytelling as a learning method has been proven to attract students' attention and increase their engagement in the learning process. This finding aligns with research by Maknun & Adelia (2023); Leiwakabessy & Purwonugroho (2024), which states that storytelling can increase students' motivation and interest in learning by presenting more engaging and meaningful learning. However, the results in cycle I also showed that the improvement was not optimal. Some students still did not achieve learning completion, which was caused by a lack of classroom management and unequal student engagement. This is consistent with research by Wahyuni (2022); Telussa et al. (2025), which stated that the success of a learning method is determined not only by the method itself, but also by the teacher's skills in managing the class and facilitating student interaction. Therefore, improvements in learning strategies are needed in the next cycle.

In cycle II, students' historical understanding significantly improved. This indicates that improvements made during the planning and implementation stages were able to optimize the application of the storytelling method. More active student involvement through direct interaction, such as answering questions and retelling the material, has been shown to improve their understanding of historical material. Previous research also shows that learning involving active student participation can significantly improve learning outcomes (Kiki, 2023); Yulianti, et al., (2025). In addition, the use of more interactive and contextual storytelling in cycle II created a fun and meaningful learning atmosphere. Students not only understood the material but were also able to relate it to everyday experiences. This is in accordance with constructivism theory, which states that learning will be more effective if students actively construct their own knowledge through learning experiences (Abdiyah, 2021); Lathifah, et al., (2024). Thus, the storytelling method has proven effective in improving students' historical understanding.

Overall, the results of the study showed a consistent increase from pre-action to cycle II. This increase indicates that the storytelling method is highly effective in improving students' historical understanding. This finding is in line with various studies by Yuta & Munawarah, (2024); Hartati, et al., (2025) which stated that story-based learning methods can significantly improve student learning outcomes because they involve cognitive, affective, and imaginative aspects simultaneously. Furthermore, the gradual increase indicates that the learning process carried out through cycles in CAR provides an opportunity for continuous reflection and improvement. This is in accordance with the principles of CAR which emphasize continuous improvement in learning practices. Thus, it can be concluded that the storytelling method is not only effective in improving learning outcomes, but also able to improve the quality of the learning process as a whole.

CONCLUSION

Based on the results of the classroom action research that has been carried out, it can be concluded that the application of the storytelling method has proven effective in improving the historical understanding of grade IV A students of SD Kristen Agape Terpadu Nabire. This is indicated by the gradual increase in student learning outcomes from the initial condition (pre-action) with a completion rate of 25% to 67.86% in cycle I, and increased significantly to 96.42% in cycle II. This increase is not only seen in the test results, but also in the activities and involvement of students in the learning process which become more active, enthusiastic, and participatory. Thus, the storytelling method is able to create more interesting, contextual, and meaningful learning so that it can help students understand historical material better.

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