

# Children's Reader Responses to North Maluku Folklore through Interactive YouTube-Based Literary Learning

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## Abstract

This study examines children's reader responses to North Maluku folklore presented through interactive YouTube-based literary learning. Drawing on reader-response theory, the study focuses on how students understand storylines, identify characters, interpret moral values, and express their interest in local folktales delivered through digital media. A descriptive qualitative design supported by simple descriptive statistics was employed. The participants were 40 students of SMP Muhammadiyah 1 Kota Ternate. Data were collected through questionnaires consisting of closed-ended and open-ended items after students watched three North Maluku folktales: *Tanjung Menangis Halmahera*, *Air Telaga Biru*, and *Danau Tolire*. The data were analyzed by calculating response percentages and interpreting students' written responses thematically. The findings indicate that interactive YouTube-based media can support students' engagement with local folklore. Most students showed positive responses to the visual and narrative aspects of the videos and were able to understand the storylines. Their interpretations mainly centered on moral values such as honesty, loyalty, humility, and rejection of greed and violence. The study also reveals that students' familiarity with North Maluku folklore remains partial, suggesting the need to strengthen local literary learning through digital and culturally responsive media. These findings contribute to discussions on children's literature, digital literacy, and the pedagogical use of local folklore in literary learning.

## ARTICLE HISTORY

Received : 28 February 2026

Revised : 28 Maret 2026

Accepted : 2 April 2026

## KEYWORDS

Children's literature; Digital literacy; Interactive Youtube media; North Maluku folklore; Reader response

## PUBLISHER'S NOTE

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## Introduction

Children's literature occupies an important position in literary learning because it provides children with narrative experiences through which they can encounter language, imagination, emotion, morality, and cultural identity. In educational contexts, literary texts for children are not only read as aesthetic objects but also function as cultural resources that help young readers make sense of their social environment. Folklore, in particular, is one of the most meaningful forms of children's literature because it preserves collective memory, local wisdom, moral imagination, and community values across generations. Recent studies have shown that folklore-based teaching materials can support character education, cultural awareness, and contextual learning because the stories are close to students' social and cultural lives (Andriani & Aulia, 2023; Kusmana et al., 2020; Miranda et al., 2025).

In the Indonesian context, folklore remains a significant source of local knowledge and cultural pedagogy. Indonesia's cultural diversity produces a wide range of oral traditions, legends, myths, and folktales that can be integrated into literary learning. These narratives introduce children to local landscapes, historical imagination, social norms, and ethical values embedded in particular communities. However, the pedagogical use of folklore should not merely position students as passive recipients of inherited values. Folklore learning needs to provide space for students to

interpret, question, respond to, and reconstruct meaning based on their own experiences as young readers. Agung et al., (2024) argue that folklore education can empower learners when it gives them freedom to creatively engage with local oral traditions. Similarly, Barli et al., (2024) show that local folklore can increase students' interest and motivation while also introducing character values embedded in local narratives.

The urgency of revitalizing local folklore becomes more pronounced in the digital era. Children today encounter stories not only through printed books or oral narration but also through digital platforms, audiovisual media, and social media-based storytelling. YouTube has become one of the most widely accessed platforms for learning, entertainment, and informal knowledge acquisition. In education, YouTube offers multimodal affordances through the combination of sound, image, movement, narration, subtitles, and visual effects. A scoping review by Shoufan & Mohamed (2022) indicates that YouTube has been used in diverse educational settings and can influence students' interest, motivation, engagement, skills, and learning performance when used within a structured pedagogical context. Nevertheless, YouTube is not automatically educational. Its value depends on how teachers select, frame, mediate, and discuss the content with students.

Digital storytelling provides a useful framework for understanding how folklore can be transformed into engaging learning media. Digital storytelling combines narrative structure with multimedia elements, making stories more accessible and emotionally appealing for young learner. Erylmaz & Bozkurt (2020) explain that digital storytelling has become a growing pedagogical strategy in education because it supports multimodal expression, learner engagement, and meaningful learning experiences. For children, the design of digital storytelling must consider clarity of narration, age-appropriate content, interaction, visual coherence, and emotional engagement. Aditya et al., (2024) emphasizes that digital storytelling for children requires specific design principles so that digital learning resources are not only attractive but also developmentally appropriate and pedagogically meaningful.

The multimodal nature of YouTube-based storytelling is particularly relevant to children's literary learning. Children do not respond only to written texts; they also interpret images, sound, character movement, colour, music, and visual sequencing. In this sense, digital literary learning requires students to activate multimodal literacy. Lim and Toh (2020) demonstrate that children's engagement with YouTube-based multimodal texts can reveal complex literacy practices, including meaning-making through visual, oral, textual, and performative modes. This suggests that when folklore is presented through interactive audiovisual media, children's responses may not be limited to plot comprehension. Their responses may also include emotional attraction, character preference, moral judgement, cultural recognition, and personal association with the places, values, or conflicts represented in the story.

To examine these responses, this study draws on reader-response theory. Reader-response theory shifts the focus of literary interpretation from the text alone to the dynamic relationship between text and reader. Meaning is not treated as something fully fixed within the text; rather, it emerges through the reader's active engagement, prior knowledge, emotion, cultural background, and interpretive choices. In literary education, this approach is important because it gives legitimacy to students' voices and recognises that children can construct meaningful interpretations from their own reading or viewing experiences. Delanoy (2024) stresses that reader-response theory remains relevant in twenty-first-century literature teaching because it supports interpretive plurality and

learner-centred literary engagement. A recent systematic review by Momeni et al., (2026) also confirms that classroom applications of reader-response approaches in primary and secondary education can foster personal connection, aesthetic engagement, empathy, identity construction, and deeper literary understanding.

In the context of YouTube-based folklore learning, reader response becomes increasingly important because children encounter literary texts through audiovisual and interactive modes. Their responses are shaped not only by the narrative content but also by the way the story is mediated digitally. A student may like a character because of moral qualities, visual representation, voice, dramatic conflict, or emotional closeness to the story. Likewise, a student may understand a moral message not simply because it is explicitly stated, but because the audiovisual presentation makes the conflict and consequences more visible. Therefore, children's responses to folklore videos should be examined as interpretive acts that combine literary understanding, moral reasoning, cultural familiarity, and digital media experience.

Although previous studies have discussed folklore as teaching material, local wisdom as character education, digital storytelling, and YouTube as learning media, studies that specifically examine children's reader responses to North Maluku folklore through interactive YouTube-based literary learning remain limited. Existing research tends to focus either on the development of folklore-based teaching materials, the moral values contained in folktales, or the general use of digital media in education. Less attention has been given to how children themselves respond to local folklore when it is presented through YouTube-based audiovisual storytelling. This gap is important because the success of digital folklore learning cannot be measured only from the availability of digital content; it must also be understood from how children receive, interpret, and emotionally engage with the stories.

North Maluku folklore offers a rich but underexplored context for this inquiry. Folktales such as *Tanjung Menangis Halmahera*, *Air Telaga Biru*, and *Danau Tolire* contain local settings, moral conflicts, character values, and cultural symbols that can introduce students to regional literary heritage. However, students' familiarity with these stories cannot be assumed, especially in an educational environment increasingly shaped by national and global digital content. Presenting North Maluku folklore through YouTube-based media may provide a bridge between local literary heritage and children's contemporary digital habits. At the same time, it raises important questions about whether students recognise the stories, understand the plot, identify moral values, and develop interest in local folklore after watching the videos.

Accordingly, this study aims to examine children's reader responses to North Maluku folklore presented through interactive YouTube-based literary learning. Specifically, the study investigates students' familiarity with selected North Maluku folktales, their interest in the visual and narrative aspects of the videos, their comprehension of the storylines, and their interpretation of characters and moral messages. By focusing on students' responses, this study seeks to contribute to the fields of children's literature, reader-response studies, digital literacy, and culturally responsive literary learning. It also offers pedagogical insight into how local folklore can be revitalised through digital media without losing its cultural and moral significance.

## Method

This study employed a descriptive qualitative design supported by simple descriptive statistics. A descriptive qualitative design is appropriate when a study aims to describe, interpret, and understand a phenomenon in its natural context without manipulating the research setting (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). In this study, the qualitative design was used to examine students' reader responses to North Maluku folklore presented through interactive YouTube-based literary learning, particularly in relation to story comprehension, character preferences, moral interpretation, and interest in local folktales. Simple descriptive statistics were used to summarise students' responses to closed-ended questionnaire items in the form of frequencies and percentages, while qualitative interpretation was used to analyse students' written responses. This combination allowed the study to present both the general tendency of students' responses and the interpretive meanings reflected in their answers.

The research was conducted at SMP Muhammadiyah 1 Kota Ternate, North Maluku. The participants were 40 junior high school students who represented school-aged readers and were considered relevant to the focus of this study on children's and adolescents' responses to literary texts. The participants were selected because they were at an educational level where folklore, moral values, and literary appreciation are commonly introduced in classroom learning. In reader-response-oriented literary learning, students are positioned as active meaning-makers who construct interpretation through their personal, cultural, and emotional engagement with the text (Momeni et al., 2026). Therefore, their responses were considered important for understanding how young readers engage with local literary texts when the texts are presented through digital audiovisual media.

**Table 1.** Research Design Summary

Component	Description
Research approach	Descriptive qualitative research supported by simple descriptive statistics
Research focus	Children's reader responses to North Maluku folklore through interactive YouTube-based literary learning
Research site	SMP Muhammadiyah 1 Kota Ternate, North Maluku
Participants	40 junior high school students
Learning media	Interactive YouTube-based folklore videos
Folktales used	<i>Tanjung Menangis Halmahera, Air Telaga Biru, and Danau Tolire</i>
Data collection technique	Questionnaire consisting of closed-ended and open-ended items
Data analysis	Percentage analysis and thematic interpretation
Main analytical perspective	Reader-response theory

The learning materials used in this study were three North Maluku folktales presented through interactive YouTube-based videos: *Tanjung Menangis Halmahera, Air Telaga Biru, and Danau Tolire*. These stories were selected because they represent local folklore from North Maluku and contain narrative elements suitable for literary learning, including plot, character conflict, local setting, and moral values. Folklore is pedagogically valuable because it contains local wisdom, cultural memory, and moral values that can support character education and culturally responsive

learning (Andriani & Aulia, 2023; Kusmana et al., 2020; Rauf & Ulya, 2025). The videos functioned as literary stimuli that enabled students to encounter local folklore through visual, auditory, and narrative modes. The use of YouTube-based media was intended to provide a learning experience closer to students' digital habits, since YouTube can support engagement and multimodal learning when it is pedagogically selected and guided (Shoufan & Mohamed, 2022).

Data were collected through a questionnaire administered after the students watched the selected folklore videos. The questionnaire consisted of ten items, combining closed-ended and open-ended questions. The closed-ended items were designed to identify students' familiarity with the stories, their interest in the visual and narrative aspects of the videos, their recognition of characters and places, and their comprehension of the storylines. The open-ended items were used to explore students' favourite characters, characters whose traits should not be emulated, moral messages identified from the stories, and their preferred folktale. The use of open-ended questions was intended to capture students' interpretive responses more flexibly, as qualitative data allow researchers to understand participants' meanings, experiences, and perspectives in greater depth.

**Table 2.** Structure of the Questionnaire

Item Number	Type of Question	Focus of Question	Purpose
1	Closed-ended	Prior familiarity with the stories	To identify whether students had heard the folktales before
2	Closed-ended	Interest in visuals and narrative	To measure students' attraction to the video presentation
3	Closed-ended	Familiarity with character names	To identify students' recognition of characters
4	Closed-ended	Understanding of the plot	To measure students' comprehension of the storyline
5	Closed-ended	Recognition of place names	To identify students' cultural and geographical familiarity
6	Closed-ended	Experience of visiting the places	To relate students' responses to their local experience
7	Open-ended	Favourite character and reason	To explore character preference and affective response
8	Open-ended	Characters not to emulate	To explore students' moral judgement
9	Open-ended	Moral messages	To identify students' interpretation of values
10	Open-ended	Favourite story and reason	To examine students' story preference and interpretive engagement

The data collection procedure was carried out in several stages. First, the researchers prepared the learning materials, questionnaire sheet, and observation focus related to students' responses during YouTube-based literary learning. Second, students were introduced to the learning activity and asked to watch the selected North Maluku folklore videos. Third, after the viewing session, students completed the questionnaire individually. Fourth, the researchers collected and organised the questionnaire responses based on closed-ended and open-ended items. The closed-ended responses were tabulated and converted into percentages, while the open-ended responses were grouped according to recurring themes, including character preference, moral judgement, story

interest, and cultural recognition. This procedure follows the logic of qualitative thematic analysis, in which researchers identify, organise, and interpret patterns of meaning across qualitative responses (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Rauf et al., 2023).

**Table 3.** Data Collection and Analysis Procedure

Stage	Activity	Output
Preparation	Preparing folklore videos, questionnaire, and observation focus	Research instruments and learning materials
Viewing activity	Students watched three North Maluku folklore videos	Students' initial engagement with digital folklore texts
Questionnaire completion	Students answered closed-ended and open-ended questions	Raw response data
Data tabulation	Closed-ended responses were counted and converted into percentages	Frequency and percentage data
Thematic grouping	Open-ended responses were grouped based on recurring themes	Themes of reader response
Interpretation	Findings were interpreted using reader-response theory	Explanation of students' literary and moral responses

Data analysis was conducted in two stages. The first stage involved calculating the frequency and percentage of students' responses to the closed-ended questionnaire items. This analysis was used to describe students' general familiarity with the stories, their level of interest in the videos, their comprehension of the plot, and their recognition of characters and settings. The second stage involved thematic interpretation of students' written responses to the open-ended questions. The researchers identified recurring themes in students' answers, such as loyalty, honesty, kindness, greed, violence, humility, and respect for moral boundaries. These themes were then interpreted using a reader-response perspective, which views students as active meaning-makers who construct understanding based on their engagement with the literary text and its digital presentation.

To support the credibility of the findings, the researchers compared students' closed-ended responses with their open-ended interpretations. For example, students' claims that they understood the storylines were examined alongside their ability to identify characters, explain moral messages, and justify their favourite stories. This comparison helped ensure that the interpretation of students' responses was not based only on numerical tendencies but also on the quality of their written reflections. In qualitative research, credibility can be strengthened by checking consistency across different forms of data and by ensuring that interpretation is grounded in participants' responses. The analysis therefore focused not merely on whether students liked the videos, but also on how they made sense of the folklore as literary and cultural texts.

Because the participants were school-aged students, the study paid attention to ethical considerations in the data collection process. The students' identities were not disclosed in the presentation of findings, and their responses were reported collectively. The research was conducted in the school context with attention to students' comfort and participation during the learning

activity. The authors should clearly state the form of permission obtained from the school, teacher, parents, or guardians before data collection if this information is required by the journal.

## Result and Discussion

### Result

The findings of this study are presented in two main parts. The first part reports students' responses to the closed-ended questionnaire items, which focused on their familiarity with the selected North Maluku folktales, their interest in the visual and narrative presentation, their recognition of characters and places, and their comprehension of the storylines. The second part presents students' responses to the open-ended items, which explored their character preferences, moral judgement, interpretation of moral messages, and favourite stories. The closed-ended responses were analysed using frequencies and percentages, while the open-ended responses were categorised thematically based on recurring patterns in students' answers.

### Students' Responses to Closed-Ended Questionnaire Items

The closed-ended questionnaire consisted of six items and was completed by all 40 respondents. These items were designed to identify students' prior familiarity with the stories, their engagement with the YouTube-based presentation, and their basic comprehension of the folklore narratives.

**Table 4.** Students' Responses to Closed-Ended Questionnaire Items

No.	Questionnaire Item	Response Category	n	%
1	Have you ever heard the stories in the video before?	Never	11	27.5
		Some	24	60.0
		All	5	12.5
2	Do you find the visuals and story interesting?	Not interesting	1	2.5
		Fairly interesting	18	45.0
		Very interesting	21	52.5
3	Have you heard the character names before?	Never	14	35.0
		Some	25	62.5
		All	1	2.5
4	Were you able to understand the plot?	Did not understand	0	0.0
		Understood	30	75.0
		Fully understood	10	25.0
5	Did you recognize the place names?	No	3	7.5
		Some	32	80.0
		All	5	12.5
6	Have you visited the places mentioned?	Never	4	10.0
		Some	35	87.5
		All	1	2.5

The data show that students' familiarity with the selected North Maluku folktales was mostly partial. A total of 24 students, or 60%, stated that they had heard some of the stories before, while 11 students, or 27.5%, had never heard them. Only 5 students, or 12.5%, reported that they had heard all the stories. This finding suggests that although the folktales belong to the local cultural context of North Maluku, they were not fully familiar to all students. The use of YouTube-based literary learning therefore provided an opportunity to reintroduce local folklore to students in a digital format.

Students also responded positively to the visual and narrative aspects of the videos. A total of 21 students, or 52.5%, considered the visuals and stories very interesting, while 18 students, or 45%, considered them fairly interesting. Only 1 student, or 2.5%, stated that the videos were not

interesting. This indicates that the audiovisual presentation of folklore was generally able to attract students' attention. The combination of narrative, image, sound, and visual movement appeared to support students' engagement with the stories.

In terms of character recognition, 25 students, or 62.5%, stated that they had heard some of the character names before. Meanwhile, 14 students, or 35%, had never heard the character names, and only 1 student, or 2.5%, had heard all of them. This finding indicates that students' knowledge of local folklore characters was also partial. Although some characters were familiar, the majority of students did not possess complete prior knowledge of all characters presented in the three stories.

The strongest result appeared in students' comprehension of the storylines. A total of 30 students, or 75%, stated that they understood the plot, while 10 students, or 25%, stated that they fully understood it. No student reported that they did not understand the stories. This finding suggests that the YouTube-based presentation helped make the plot accessible to students. The visual and auditory elements of the videos may have assisted students in following the sequence of events, identifying conflicts, and understanding the resolution of each story.

The data also show that students were more familiar with the place names than with the complete stories or character names. A total of 32 students, or 80%, recognised some of the place names mentioned in the stories, while 5 students, or 12.5%, recognised all of them. Only 3 students, or 7.5%, did not recognise the place names. In addition, 35 students, or 87.5%, stated that they had visited some of the places mentioned in the stories. This suggests that geographical familiarity may support students' engagement with local folklore, even when they are not fully familiar with the stories themselves.

The closed-ended responses indicate three important tendencies. First, students' familiarity with North Maluku folklore was partial rather than complete. Second, students showed strong interest in the visual and narrative presentation of folklore through YouTube-based media. Third, students were able to understand the storylines, suggesting that audiovisual media can support children's access to local literary texts.

### ***Students' Responses to Open-Ended Questionnaire Items***

The open-ended questionnaire items explored students' more personal and interpretive responses to the stories. Unlike the closed-ended items, not all students answered the open-ended questions. Therefore, the analysis of these items is based only on valid responses for each question. This distinction is important because the number of responses varied across items.

Item 7 asked students to identify their favourite character and explain the reason for their choice. A total of 24 valid responses were obtained. The responses show that students tended to favour characters associated with kindness, loyalty, patience, courage, and devotion.

**Table 5.** Students' Favourite Characters and Reasons

Story	Character	n	Valid %	Main Reasons
<i>Tanjung Menangis Halmahera</i>	Baginda Ratu	7	29.2	Kind, patient, faithful to God
<i>Tanjung Menangis Halmahera</i>	Baginda Binaut	1	4.2	Greedy, tyrannical
<i>Tanjung Menangis Halmahera</i>	Baginda Nuri	1	4.2	No reason stated

<i>Tanjung Menangis Halmahera</i>	Bijak	3	12.5	Brave, strong, kind-hearted
<i>Air Telaga Biru</i>	Magohiduru	5	20.8	Devoted and willing to travel far for his beloved
<i>Air Telaga Biru</i>	Majojaru	7	29.2	Loyal and loving until the end of life
Total		24	100.0	

The data indicate that Baginda Ratu and Majojaru were the most frequently selected favourite characters, each chosen by 7 students, or 29.2% of valid responses. Baginda Ratu was admired because of her kindness, patience, and religious devotion. Majojaru was admired because of her loyalty and deep love. Magohiduru was also positively viewed by 5 students, or 20.8%, because of his devotion and willingness to struggle for his beloved. These responses suggest that students' character preferences were strongly shaped by moral and emotional qualities rather than merely by the character's narrative position.

Interestingly, one student selected Baginda Binaut as a favourite character, although the stated reason described him as greedy and tyrannical. This response may indicate either a misunderstanding of the question or a tendency to remember the antagonist because of his strong narrative presence. This finding shows that children's responses to literary characters can be complex and may require further clarification through interviews or classroom discussion.

Item 8 asked students to identify characters whose traits should not be emulated. A total of 23 valid responses were obtained. The responses show that students were able to distinguish between admirable and undesirable character traits.

**Table 6.** Characters Whose Traits Should Not Be Emulated

Story	Character	n	Valid (%)	Reasons
<i>Tanjung Menangis Halmahera</i>	Baginda Binaut	18	78.3	Greedy, power-hungry, cruel, arrogant, envious
<i>Danau Tolire</i>	Father and daughter	5	21.7	Greed and violation of moral boundaries
Total		23	100.0	

The majority of students identified Baginda Binaut as a character whose traits should not be imitated. He was associated with greed, cruelty, arrogance, envy, and abuse of power. This indicates that students were able to recognise negative moral qualities and evaluate characters based on their actions in the story. In *Danau Tolire*, five students identified the father and daughter as characters whose behaviour should not be followed. Their responses referred to moral transgression and the consequences of wrongdoing.

These responses demonstrate that students did not merely watch the stories passively. They were able to make evaluative judgements about characters and distinguish between positive and negative conduct. This finding is important because it shows that folklore presented through YouTube-based media can stimulate moral reflection among young readers.

Item 9 asked students whether they could identify moral messages from the stories. A total of 20 valid responses were recorded for this item. Among these responses, 15 students stated that they could identify moral messages, while 5 students did not provide moral interpretations.

**Table 7.** Students' Identification of Moral Messages

Response	n	Valid %	Moral Messages Identified
Yes	15	75.0	Do not be greedy; do not oppress others; do not hate siblings over power; do not take revenge
No	5	25.0	No moral message stated
Total	20	100.0	

The data show that most students who answered this item were able to identify moral messages from the stories. Their responses centred on the rejection of greed, oppression, hatred, revenge, and abuse of power. These moral messages were especially connected to the conflicts and consequences experienced by the characters. Students' answers suggest that they understood folklore not only as entertainment but also as a medium for moral reflection.

However, the fact that only 20 out of 40 students provided valid responses to this question should be noted. This may indicate that some students needed more time, clearer instruction, or guided discussion to formulate moral interpretations in written form. Therefore, while the findings suggest students' ability to identify moral values, they also point to the need for stronger facilitation in literary response activities.

Item 10 asked students to mention their favourite story and explain the reason for their choice. A total of 24 valid responses were obtained. The responses show that students' preferences were shaped by emotional appeal, moral content, cultural familiarity, and narrative uniqueness.

**Table 8.** Students' Favorite Stories and Reasons

Story Title	n	Valid %	Reasons
<i>Tanjung Menangis Halmahera</i>	6	25.0	Engaging, teaches humility, not overly dramatic
<i>Air Telaga Biru</i>	9	37.5	Tragic, portrays loyalty, teaches the value of keeping promises
<i>Danau Tolire</i>	9	37.5	Originates from the region, teaches not to do wrong, contains the white crocodile motif
Total	24	100.0	

The data indicate that *Air Telaga Biru* and *Danau Tolire* were the most preferred stories, each selected by 9 students, or 37.5% of valid responses. Students who chose *Air Telaga Biru* were attracted to its tragic love story, loyalty, and promise-keeping values. Meanwhile, those who chose *Danau Tolire* were interested in its local origin, moral warning, and distinctive white crocodile motif. *Tanjung Menangis Halmahera* was selected by 6 students, or 25%, mainly because it was engaging and taught humility.

These responses show that students' story preferences were influenced by both affective and cultural factors. Stories that evoked emotion, contained strong moral conflict, or were connected to familiar local places tended to attract students' attention. This supports the idea that local folklore can become meaningful for students when it is presented in a form that allows emotional, moral, and cultural engagement.

The findings reveal several important patterns in students' reader responses to North Maluku folklore presented through interactive YouTube-based literary learning. First, students' prior familiarity with the selected folktales was limited and mostly partial. Although many students recognised some stories, characters, or places, only a small number were familiar with all of them. This indicates that local folklore still needs to be strengthened in school-based literary learning. Second, students showed positive responses to the YouTube-based presentation. Most students found the visuals and narratives interesting, and all students stated that they understood or fully understood the storylines. This suggests that audiovisual media can help make folklore more accessible and engaging for young readers. Third, students' open-ended responses show that they were able to interpret characters and moral values. They admired characters associated with kindness, loyalty, patience, courage, and devotion, while rejecting characters associated with greed, cruelty, arrogance, and moral transgression. Their responses indicate that they were not merely identifying plot elements but also constructing moral and emotional meanings from the stories. Fourth, students' favorite stories were influenced by emotional appeal, moral content, and cultural familiarity. *Air Telaga Biru* and *Danau Tolire* received the highest number of preferences among valid responses, suggesting that stories with tragic, moral, or locally recognisable elements may be more memorable for students. The results indicate that interactive YouTube-based literary learning can provide a meaningful medium for introducing North Maluku folklore to students. The findings also suggest that students can engage with local folktales as active readers or viewers who interpret characters, evaluate moral actions, and connect stories to cultural and emotional experiences.

### **Discussion**

The findings of this study show that interactive YouTube-based literary learning can function as a meaningful bridge between children's digital habits and the preservation of local folklore. The students' responses indicate that North Maluku folklore is not entirely absent from their cultural memory, but their familiarity with the stories remains partial. Most students had heard only some of the stories, characters, or place names, while only a small number were familiar with all three folktales. This finding is important because it suggests that local folklore continues to exist around students' cultural environment, yet it is no longer automatically internalised as part of their everyday literary experience. In this sense, the issue is not merely whether folklore is available, but whether it is pedagogically reactivated in forms that are accessible, attractive, and meaningful to contemporary young readers.

The positive responses to the visual and narrative aspects of the videos demonstrate that students' engagement with folklore was strengthened when the stories were mediated through audiovisual and multimodal forms. More than half of the respondents considered the videos very interesting, and nearly all others considered them fairly interesting. This finding supports the argument that digital storytelling can transform literary learning from a text-centred activity into a multisensory interpretive experience. Digital storytelling allows learners to encounter narrative through image, sound, movement, voice, colour, and sequencing, all of which contribute to meaning-making. Recent studies on digital storytelling have shown that multimodal presentation can support learners' emotions, motivation, digital literacy, and narrative engagement, especially when the learning material is designed for young or school-aged learners (Chen Hsieh, 2024; Djonov et al., 2021; Eroglu & Okur, 2021; Kaptan & Cakir, 2025). Therefore, the students' interest in the YouTube-

based folklore videos should not be read simply as attraction to technology, but as evidence that literary meaning becomes more accessible when oral-local narratives are translated into multimodal digital forms.

The students' strong comprehension of the storylines further confirms that audiovisual media can help children follow the narrative structure of folklore. All students reported that they understood or fully understood the plots. This is significant because folklore often contains symbolic characters, local place references, moral conflict, and culturally embedded meanings that may be difficult to grasp when presented only as printed text. Through YouTube-based storytelling, the sequence of events, emotional tone, conflict, and consequences of characters' actions become more visible. This supports the idea that digital media can scaffold literary comprehension by making abstract narrative elements more concrete. However, the finding should be interpreted carefully. It does not mean that YouTube automatically improves literary literacy; rather, it suggests that carefully selected and pedagogically guided video narratives can support students' initial access to literary meaning.

From a reader-response perspective, the most important contribution of this study lies in how students moved from watching stories to evaluating characters and interpreting moral values. Their responses show that they did not remain passive viewers. They selected favourite characters, rejected negative traits, and identified moral messages such as loyalty, humility, kindness, rejection of greed, and avoidance of revenge. This confirms the central premise of reader-response theory: literary meaning is not produced by the text alone, but emerges through the reader's encounter with the text, shaped by emotion, memory, prior knowledge, and moral imagination (Collins et al., 2020; Currie et al., 2008; F. Hanson, 2015; Shifflet-Chila et al., 2016). Recent work by Bist & Kandel (2024) similarly shows that reader-response approaches can enhance literary comprehension by giving learners interpretive agency in responding to literary texts. In the present study, students' answers reveal that they were not simply recalling plot events; they were making moral and affective judgments about what kinds of behaviour should be admired or rejected.

The students' preference for characters such as Baginda Ratu, Majojaru, Magohiduru, and Bijak indicates that children's literary responses are deeply connected to moral-emotional identification. Characters were liked not only because they were central to the plot, but because they embodied values that students considered admirable: patience, loyalty, courage, devotion, and kindness. Conversely, Baginda Binaut was rejected because students associated him with greed, cruelty, arrogance, and abuse of power. These findings suggest that children read folklore through an ethical lens. They do not merely ask "what happened in the story?" but also "which actions are right?", "which characters deserve sympathy?", and "which behaviour should not be followed?" This is where folklore becomes pedagogically powerful: it gives children a narrative space to rehearse moral judgement without turning literary learning into direct moral instruction.

At the same time, the varied responses in the open-ended items reveal that children's interpretation requires facilitation. Not all respondents answered the open-ended questions, and some responses were brief or incomplete. This suggests that while students can understand the stories, their ability to articulate interpretation in written form still needs instructional support. Literary response activities should therefore be accompanied by guided discussion, reflective questions, small-group dialogue, or response journals. Without such mediation, YouTube-based learning may remain at the level of attention and enjoyment. With appropriate facilitation, however,

it can become a space for critical and reflective literary engagement. This point is crucial for teachers: the pedagogical value of YouTube does not lie in the platform itself, but in how the teacher frames the viewing experience, activates students' responses, and transforms audiovisual exposure into interpretive conversation.

The findings also highlight the importance of local place attachment in literary learning. Many students recognised some of the place names and had visited some of the locations mentioned in the stories. This geographical familiarity likely strengthened their connection to the folklore. When students encounter stories linked to places they know or have visited, literature becomes less distant and more embodied. Folklore then functions not only as narrative heritage, but also as cultural mapping: it connects students' imagination to landscapes, names, memories, and collective identity. Recent studies on local wisdom and folklore-based education emphasise that culturally grounded learning materials can strengthen identity, character, and cultural literacy because students encounter values through narratives rooted in their own communities (Amponsah, 2023; Parhan & Dwiputra, 2023; Rauf et al., 2024; Sakti et al., 2024). In this study, North Maluku folklore becomes a medium through which students recognise that local stories are not relics of the past, but living cultural resources that can still speak to their present learning experience.

The preference for *Air Telaga Biru* and *Danau Tolire* also shows that students are attracted to stories that combine emotional intensity, moral consequence, and local specificity. *Air Telaga Biru* appealed to students because of its tragic tone, loyalty, and promise-keeping value, while *Danau Tolire* attracted them because of its regional proximity, moral warning, and distinctive white crocodile motif. These preferences suggest that children's engagement with folklore is shaped by the intersection of affective appeal and cultural recognition. A story becomes memorable when it touches emotion, offers moral clarity, and remains anchored in a recognisable cultural world. This supports broader findings that folklore can serve as a powerful educational medium because it encodes values, norms, and collective memory in narrative form (Amponsah, 2023; Michalopoulos & Xue, 2021; Rauf, 2017). The "gong" of folklore-based literary learning, therefore, is not simply that students learn old stories through new media, but that they rediscover local identity through a medium they already inhabit (Rauf & Raemon, 2024).

Nevertheless, this study also points to a necessary caution. The positive responses to YouTube-based folklore learning should not lead to technological romanticism. YouTube is an open platform where educational, commercial, entertainment, and potentially inappropriate content coexist. Recent studies on YouTube in educational contexts show that its pedagogical usefulness depends on content quality, instructional purpose, and the alignment between platform affordances and learning goals (Greeves & Oz, 2024). Therefore, using YouTube for literary learning requires teacher curation, contextualisation, and critical digital literacy. In the context of children's literature, this means that teachers should not only ask whether a video is attractive, but whether it is age-appropriate, culturally accurate, ethically sound, and capable of stimulating meaningful interpretation.

This study contributes to children's literature and digital literacy studies by showing that interactive YouTube-based media can help reanimate local folklore in school literary learning. The students' responses reveal three important layers of meaning-making: cognitive comprehension of plot, affective engagement with characters and stories, and moral-cultural interpretation of values. These layers show that children's reader responses to digital folklore are not shallow or merely

entertainment-oriented. When guided pedagogically, children can use digital narratives to interpret literary meaning, evaluate moral actions, and reconnect with local cultural heritage. The deeper implication is that the future of local folklore in education does not depend on preserving it only in traditional forms, nor on replacing tradition with technology. It depends on the ability of educators to create a dialogic meeting point between ancestral narratives and children's contemporary media worlds. In that meeting point, folklore becomes not only something remembered, but something re-read, re-felt, and re-owned by the younger generation.

## Conclusion

This study shows that interactive YouTube-based literary learning can provide a meaningful medium for introducing North Maluku folklore to school-aged readers. Through the presentation of *Tanjung Menangis Halmahera*, *Air Telaga Biru*, and *Danau Tolire*, students were able to engage with local folktales not only as entertainment, but also as literary texts containing cultural memory, character values, and moral reflection. The findings indicate that students' prior familiarity with the selected folktales was mostly partial, suggesting that local folklore still requires stronger pedagogical revitalisation in school-based literary learning.

The students' responses also demonstrate that audiovisual storytelling can support their engagement and comprehension. Most students found the visual and narrative presentation interesting, and all respondents stated that they understood or fully understood the storylines. More importantly, their open-ended responses revealed that they were able to evaluate characters and identify moral messages related to loyalty, kindness, humility, rejection of greed, and avoidance of harmful conduct. These responses confirm that children can act as active meaning-makers when local folklore is presented through media that are close to their digital experiences.

The study contributes to children's literature, reader-response studies, and digital literacy by showing how local folklore can be reintroduced through interactive YouTube-based media without detaching it from its cultural and moral significance. Pedagogically, the findings suggest that teachers can use curated YouTube folklore videos as entry points for literary discussion, character education, and culturally responsive learning. However, the study is limited by its small sample size, single-school context, and reliance on questionnaire data. Future research should involve broader participants, classroom observation, interviews, and comparative learning designs to examine more deeply how digital media shapes children's literary interpretation and cultural literacy.

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