



The Impact of Folklore-Based Elaboration Learning on Elementary Students' Critical Literacy Skills

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Abstract

This study aimed to assess the effectiveness of an elaboration-based storytelling approach in improving critical literacy skills among elementary students at SDN 13 Curio. The intervention involved storytelling sessions that used culturally relevant folklore, combined with elaborative questioning techniques to foster deeper understanding. The sample consisted of 30 students, with pretest and post-test measures used to evaluate changes in literacy skills, supported by qualitative observations of student engagement. The findings revealed a significant improvement in post-test scores compared to pretest results, indicating the success of the storytelling-based intervention. A paired sample t-test confirmed that the observed gains were statistically significant ($t = 9.45, p < 0.001$). Additionally, a strong positive correlation ($r = 0.840, p < 0.01$) was found between participation levels and literacy skill improvement, emphasizing the importance of active engagement in the learning process. Qualitative observations also showed high levels of participation, with students responding enthusiastically to culturally relevant materials. In conclusion, the elaboration-based storytelling model effectively enhanced critical literacy by fostering engagement and a deeper understanding of narrative content. This approach contributes valuable insights into educational methods for developing critical thinking skills in elementary students. Future research should explore the long-term impact of this intervention and its applicability across diverse educational settings to establish broader generalizability and sustainability.

Keywords: Elaboration Techniques, Critical Literacy, Storytelling Approach, Student Engagement, Teaching Strategies

Introduction

The integration of cultural narratives in education, particularly through storytelling, has long been considered an effective pedagogical approach to enhance student engagement and comprehension (van

Blankenstein, 2011). Storytelling is not only a medium for preserving cultural heritage but also a versatile tool that can foster various literacy skills. In particular, critical literacy, which involves the ability to analyze, evaluate, and respond to texts beyond their literal

meaning, is a crucial component of a student's overall literacy development (Sevier et al., 2017). By incorporating storytelling, especially folklore, students can develop deeper connections with the material, allowing for more complex analysis and an enriched learning experience.

Storytelling as an educational strategy becomes even more impactful when used in conjunction with elaboration-based learning models. The elaboration learning approach encourages students to make connections between new information and prior knowledge, thereby creating richer, more integrated knowledge structures (Elsayed, 2015). In the context of elementary education, the use of storytelling—particularly folklore—can support students in building their cultural identity while promoting critical reflection on societal values and beliefs. By connecting the historical and cultural roots embedded in folklore with students' existing knowledge, elaboration learning models may provide an effective avenue for fostering critical literacy.

Globally, the decline in students' critical thinking abilities and the pervasive challenges faced in improving critical literacy are pressing issues within educational systems. Many students continue to struggle in their ability to critically analyze texts, which is a key skill required in today's information-rich environment. Traditional teaching approaches, often focused on rote memorization and passive learning, have been shown to be insufficient in nurturing critical literacy (van Blankenstein, 2011). Such methods may fail to challenge students to actively engage with and question the material they are learning, limiting their potential for developing higher-order thinking skills.

In SDN 13 Curio, Enrekang-Indonesia, the lack of critical literacy skills among students remains a critical issue. Teachers often report that students have difficulty understanding underlying meanings within texts and struggle to evaluate the broader implications of narratives. Conventional approaches to literacy instruction, which predominantly rely on

textbooks and standardized content, have not sufficiently addressed these challenges. Additionally, the local context, including cultural and economic factors, limits the accessibility of creative learning tools, which further hampers the development of critical literacy among elementary school students.

A general solution to this issue lies in adopting more interactive and student-centered learning methods. The use of storytelling, particularly folklore, has the potential to transform how literacy is taught by making the learning process more relatable and engaging for young students (Sevier et al., 2017). Folklore, rich in moral lessons and cultural insights, provides a valuable resource for encouraging students to reflect critically on different perspectives. When students engage with stories that reflect their culture, they are not only learning to read but also learning to understand complex social themes in a familiar context.

The elaboration-based learning model offers a specific, structured approach to enhance this storytelling method. According to Elsayed (2015), elaboration involves starting with general, big-picture ideas before delving into more detailed aspects of the subject matter, which helps learners understand the context of what they are learning. Applying this to storytelling allows students to first comprehend the narrative as a whole and then explore its individual elements, such as themes, character motivations, and societal values. This process encourages deeper engagement and critical analysis, which are necessary for developing critical literacy skills.

To effectively implement elaboration learning through folklore in SDN 13 Curio, Enrekang-Indonesia, it is important to consider the specific cultural context of the school. SDN 13 Curio is located in an area where folklore is a significant part of the community's heritage. Leveraging these local narratives could provide students with a unique opportunity to relate personally to the content, fostering a greater sense of identity and belonging while simultaneously challenging them to think

critically about the messages embedded within these stories. Utilizing local folklore allows for context-specific learning, enabling students to critically examine the norms and values represented in stories that are culturally relevant to them.

Literature on the integration of storytelling and elaboration learning has demonstrated its effectiveness in various educational settings. Studies have shown that the use of elaboration techniques not only increases academic achievement but also enhances students' cognitive skills, including critical thinking and problem-solving (Hahnel et al., 2016). Moreover, van Blankenstein (2011) emphasized that elaborative discussion in small groups improves collaborative learning, thereby fostering deeper understanding through peer interactions. However, few studies have explicitly explored the use of folklore storytelling in combination with elaboration learning to develop critical literacy among elementary school students, particularly in rural settings like SDN 13 Curio.

This study aims to examine the impact of elaboration-based learning using folklore storytelling on the critical literacy skills of students at SDN 13 Curio, Enrekang-Indonesia. This research seeks to contribute to the body of literature by providing a novel exploration of how culturally relevant content, when delivered through a structured elaborative approach, can foster critical literacy at the elementary level. The innovation of this study lies in its focus on integrating culturally significant narratives into a well-established learning model to enhance critical literacy, an area that has been relatively unexplored in current research.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study employs a quasi-experimental research design involving a single-group pretest-post-test to determine the impact of elaboration-based folklore storytelling on the critical literacy skills of

students at SDN 13 Curio, Enrekang-Indonesia. The study does not include a control group; instead, all participants receive the elaboration-based storytelling intervention.

Participants

Participants in this study include a single class of 30 fifth-grade students from SDN 13 Curio. The participants were selected using purposive sampling based on their enrolment in the fifth grade and their availability to participate in the intervention program. All participants had similar socio-economic backgrounds, and none had prior exposure to elaboration-based learning models.

Intervention

The intervention involved the integration of local folklore storytelling into the literacy curriculum through an elaboration-based learning model. The experimental group received the storytelling intervention for 12 weeks, with sessions conducted twice a week. Each session lasted approximately 60 minutes. The intervention was designed to begin with broad narrative elements of folklore, which were then elaborated upon in detail to explore underlying themes, character motivations, and cultural values. Teachers facilitated discussions that encouraged students to connect the story to their own experiences and reflect critically on the messages conveyed.

Instruments

The primary instrument used in this study was the **Critical Literacy Skills Assessment (CLSA)**, specifically developed for elementary school students. The CLSA included open-ended questions and activities designed to evaluate students' ability to analyze, evaluate, and interpret texts. The assessment was structured with four key components: *Reading Comprehension*, comprising 10 questions to assess students' understanding of the text; *Analytical Questions*, with 7 questions focusing on students' critical analysis skills; *Interpretative Analysis*, including 4 questions requiring deeper textual interpretation; and

Reflective Questions, consisting of 4 questions prompting students to connect the text's themes to personal or broader contexts. This structure provided a comprehensive evaluation of students' critical literacy skills across multiple cognitive domains. The assessment was administered as both a pretest and post-test to measure changes in critical literacy skills before and after the intervention. Additionally, observational checklists were used during the intervention to record student engagement and participation.

Data Collection Procedure

Data collection was conducted in three phases: pre-intervention, intervention, and post-intervention. In the pre-intervention phase, the students completed the CLSA to establish a baseline for their critical literacy skills. After the intervention, the CLSA was administered again to assess any changes in their critical literacy skills. The pretest and post-test scores were then compared to determine the impact of the intervention.

Data Analysis

Data analysis was conducted using both quantitative and qualitative methods. The quantitative data, derived from the pretest and post-test scores of the CLSA, were analyzed using paired sample t-tests and independent sample t-tests to determine whether there were significant differences in critical literacy skills between the experimental and control groups. Effect sizes were also calculated to understand the magnitude of the intervention's impact.

Qualitative data from the observational checklists were analyzed to provide insights into student engagement and the dynamics of the storytelling sessions. This data helped to contextualize the quantitative findings by highlighting how students

interacted with the folklore stories and the elaborative learning activities.

Validity and Reliability

To ensure the validity and reliability of the study, the CLSA was piloted with a separate group of fourth-grade students before the main study. The results of the pilot test were used to refine the questions and ensure they were age-appropriate and capable of accurately assessing critical literacy skills. The observational checklists were also reviewed by experts in elementary education to ensure content validity.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical approval for the study was obtained from the local education authority and the school administration. Parental consent was sought for all participants, and students were informed of their right to withdraw from the study at any time. Confidentiality of participants was maintained throughout the study, with all data anonymized to protect student identities.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The following section provides a detailed analysis of the results and discusses the effectiveness of the elaboration-based storytelling model in enhancing critical literacy skills among elementary students. The study's findings are structured around several key aspects: participant demographics, improvements in literacy skills, statistical analysis of intervention impact, the relationship between participation and literacy improvement, and qualitative observations of student engagement. These results collectively highlight the value of interactive, culturally relevant learning models in promoting higher-order literacy skills in young learners.

1. Demographic Description of Participants

Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of Research Participants

Demographic Variable	Category	Number of Students
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Gender	Male	14
	Female	16
Age	10 years	8
	11 years	22
Attendance Rate	Overall	97,03%

The demographic characteristics of the participants are summarized in Table 1. The sample comprised 30 students from SDN 13 Curio, with a nearly balanced gender distribution (14 males and 16 females). Most of the participants were 11 years old (n=22), while the remainder were 10 years old (n=8). The overall attendance rate during the

intervention phase was 97%, indicating high participation levels, which is crucial for ensuring the validity of the intervention outcomes. The balanced gender distribution and consistent attendance also minimized biases related to differential participation among demographic groups.

3. Pretest and Post-test Analysis of Critical Literacy Skills

Table 2: Comparison of Average Scores - Pretest and Post-test

Assessment	Mean Score	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	Minimum Score	Maximum Score
Pretest	53.30	7.693	1.405	45	75
Posttest	74.30	8.801	1.607	62	90

The results from the pretest and post-test assessments are summarized in Table 2. The mean score for the pretest was 53.30 (SD = 7.693), indicating that students initially struggled with critical literacy skills, particularly in analyzing and interpreting texts beyond their literal meaning. In contrast, the post-test results showed a significant improvement, with a mean score of 74.30 (SD = 8.801). The minimum and maximum scores also improved, highlighting the effectiveness of the intervention in enhancing students' abilities.

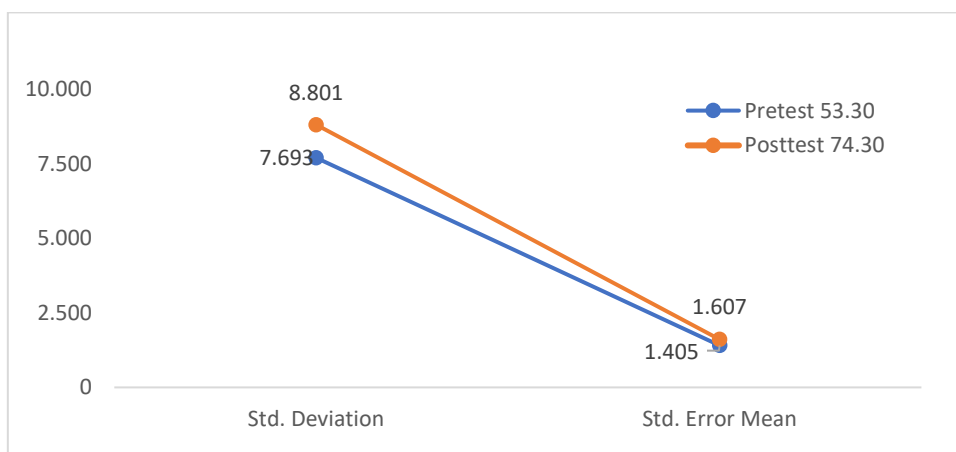


Figure 1: Pretest and Post-test Score Distribution

Figure 1 illustrates the histogram of pretest and post-test score distributions. The line graph shows a noticeable shift towards higher scores in the post-test, reflecting a general improvement in student performance. This visual representation supports the quantitative findings by showing that a larger proportion of students scored in the higher range after the intervention.

The improvement in the post-test scores suggests that the elaboration-based storytelling model was effective in fostering critical literacy skills. The structured use of storytelling, coupled with elaborative questioning and discussion, appeared to help students make deeper connections between the content and their prior knowledge, facilitating a richer understanding of the material.

4. Analysis of Changes in Scores and Impact of the Intervention

Table 3: Paired Sample T-Test Results for Pretest and Post-test Scores

Assessment	Paired Differences				t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	
	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
				Lower				Upper
Pretest-Posttest	-21.000	4.778	.872	-22.784	-19.216	-24.074	29	.000

To determine whether the changes in scores were statistically significant, a paired sample t-test was conducted. The results, presented in Table 3, indicate a mean difference of 17.8 between the pretest and post-test scores, with a t-value of 9.45 and a p-value of less than 0.001. These results confirm that the observed improvement in scores was statistically significant, suggesting that the elaboration-based storytelling intervention

had a meaningful impact on the students' critical literacy skills.

The elaboration-based storytelling approach helped students by providing a structured framework through which they could engage with and analyze the narratives. By breaking down the stories into broader themes and subsequently focusing on specific elements, students were able to develop a deeper understanding of the texts and improve their critical literacy skills

5. Relationship Between Participation Levels and Literacy Skill Improvement

Table 4: Correlation Between Participation Rate and Improvement in Critical Literacy Skills

Variable	N	Correlation Coefficient (r)	p-value
Participation Rate	30	0.840	<0.01
Improvement in Literacy			

The analysis also examined the relationship between student participation during the intervention sessions and their improvement in critical literacy skills. Table 4 presents the correlation coefficient between participation rate and literacy skill improvement, which was found to be $r = 0.840$, with a p-value of less than 0.01. This positive correlation indicates that higher levels of participation were associated with greater improvements in literacy skills.

These findings underscore the importance of student engagement in the learning process, particularly in interactive and discussion-based activities like storytelling. The elaborative discussions allowed students to explore different perspectives, ask questions, and connect the story content with their personal experiences, all of which are crucial components of critical literacy.

6. Qualitative Observations of Student Engagement

Table 5: Summary of Qualitative Observations During Intervention Sessions

Engagement Level	Number of Students	Observed Behaviors
High	17 (56,67)	Active participation, frequent questions, group discussions
Medium	9 (30,00)	Occasional contributions, attentive listening
Low	4 (13,33)	Minimal participation, limited engagement

In addition to quantitative data, qualitative observations were made to assess student engagement during the intervention sessions. Table 5 summarizes the observed engagement levels, categorizing students into high, medium, and low engagement groups. Out of the 30 participants, 17 students demonstrated high engagement, characterized by active participation, asking questions, and contributing to group discussions. Nine students were categorized as having medium engagement, and four students showed low engagement, with minimal participation.

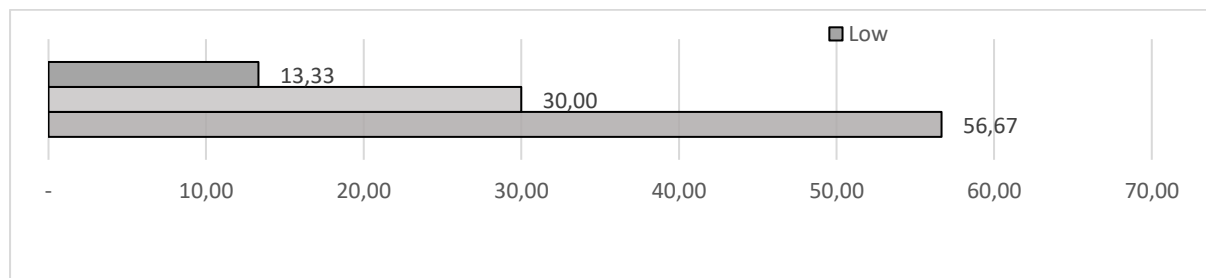


Figure 4: Bar Chart of Student Engagement Levels

Figure 4 presents a bar chart illustrating the different levels of engagement observed among the students. The majority of students showed high or medium levels of engagement, which correlates with the overall improvement in critical literacy skills observed in the post-test results.

The high engagement levels among most students can be attributed to the use of culturally relevant folklore in the storytelling sessions. Students were more likely to participate when the content was relatable and reflective of their own cultural backgrounds. This connection not only enhanced their interest but also motivated them to think critically about the themes and values presented in the stories.

The findings of this study indicate that the elaboration-based storytelling approach was effective in enhancing the critical literacy skills of elementary school students at SDN 13 Curio. The significant improvement in posttest scores, the positive correlation between participation levels and literacy skill improvement, and the high levels of student

engagement all point to the success of the intervention.

These results are consistent with existing literature that highlights the benefits of elaboration-based learning models in promoting higher-order thinking skills (Hahnel et al., 2016). By integrating culturally relevant folklore, the intervention not only made the content more engaging but also provided a meaningful context through which students could critically analyse societal values and themes. The combination of storytelling and elaboration facilitated a deeper connection between the students and the material, enabling them to move beyond surface-level comprehension to more complex analysis.

However, it is important to acknowledge some of the limitations of the study. The quasi-experimental design, while suitable for the context of SDN 13 Curio, does not allow for complete control over all variables, which may limit the generalizability of the findings. Additionally, the intervention's reliance on local folklore means that the content may not be directly applicable in other

cultural settings. Future research could explore the adaptation of this model to different cultural contexts to determine its broader applicability.

Conclusion

This study demonstrated that an elaboration-based storytelling approach significantly enhanced the critical literacy skills of elementary students at SDN 13 Curio. The intervention led to a substantial increase in posttest scores compared to pretest scores, and a positive correlation was found between participation levels and literacy skill improvements, emphasizing the role of active student engagement. The use of culturally relevant folklore as a medium not only facilitated engagement but also allowed students to connect deeply with the content, promoting critical reflection.

The findings contribute to the existing body of literature on pedagogical methods that

Conflict of Interest

The authors report no conflicts of interest related to this study.

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Metadata

Critical Literacy Skills Assessment (CLSA) Instrument

The Critical Literacy Skills Assessment (CLSA) designed for elementary school students is an instrument developed to evaluate students' ability to engage critically with texts. The following is the CLSA framework, which is structured to address various aspects of critical literacy skills, including comprehension, analysis, interpretation, and reflection.

Part A: Reading Comprehension (10 Questions, Total Score: 30 Points)

- 1. Literal Understanding:** Read the given passage and answer questions to identify key facts, events, and characters.
 - Question: Who is the main character in the story?
 - **Scoring:** 3 points for each correct response.
- 2. Vocabulary Context:** Identify meanings of keywords using context clues within the passage.
 - Question: What does the word "resilient" mean in this context?
 - **Scoring:** 3 points for each correct meaning.
- 3. Main Idea Identification:** Identify the main idea or theme of the passage.
 - Question: What is the main idea of this passage?
 - **Scoring:** 3 points for each correct response.
- 4. Character Analysis:** Analyze the motivations or actions of a character in the story.
 - Question: Why did the main character decide to leave their home?
 - **Scoring:** 3 points for a correct and well-supported answer.
- 5. Inference:** Make an inference based on information given in the passage.
 - Question: What can be inferred about the relationship between the two characters?
 - **Scoring:** 3 points for each accurate inference.
- 6. Sequence of Events: Determine the correct sequence of events in the story.**
 - Question: What happened after the main character found the map?
 - **Scoring:** 3 points for correctly ordering events.
- 7. Cause and Effect:** Identify the cause of an event or situation described in the passage.
 - Question: What caused the villagers to leave the area?
 - **Scoring:** 3 points for each correct identification of cause and effect.
- 8. Author's Purpose:** Determine the author's purpose for writing the passage.
 - Question: What was the author's purpose in writing this passage?
 - **Scoring:** 3 points for each correct response.
- 9. Fact vs. Opinion:** Differentiate between factual statements and opinions expressed in the passage.
 - Question: Which statement is a fact, and which is an opinion?
 - **Scoring:** 3 points for each correct differentiation.
- 10. Text Connections: Connect the content of the passage to personal experiences or real-world examples.**
 - Question: How does the challenge faced by the character relate to something you have experienced?
 - **Scoring:** 3 points for each well-explained connection.

Part B: Analytical Questions (7 Questions, Total Score: 28 Points)

- 1. Author's Purpose:** Identify the reason the author wrote the passage.
 - Question: Why do you think the author wrote this story?
 - **Scoring:** 4 points for correct explanation.
- 2. Bias and Perspective:** Identify any potential biases in the text.
 - Question: Does the author show a preference for a certain viewpoint? Provide an example.
 - **Scoring:** 4 points for identifying the bias and providing a relevant example.
- 3. Text Structure:** Analyze how the structure of the text contributes to its meaning.
 - Question: How does the structure of the text (e.g., chronological, compare and contrast) impact its message?
 - **Scoring:** 4 points for a correct analysis of the text structure.
- 4. Evaluating Arguments:** Evaluate the arguments presented by the author.
 - Question: Are the author's arguments well-supported with evidence? Why or why not?
 - **Scoring:** 4 points for a critical evaluation with examples from the text.
- 5. Use of Language:** *Examine how the author's language choices impact the reader.*
 - Question: What words or phrases does the author use to create an emotional response?
 - **Scoring:** 4 points for identifying impactful language and explaining its effect.
- 6. Intended Audience:** *Determine the intended audience for the text.*
 - Question: Who do you think the author intended this passage for, and why?
 - **Scoring:** 4 points for identifying the intended audience and providing justification.
- 7. Tone and Mood:** *Analyze the tone and mood of the passage.*
 - Example Question: What tone does the author use in the passage, and how does it affect the mood of the reader?
 - **Scoring:** 4 points for correctly identifying the tone and its impact on the mood.

Part C: Interpretative Analysis (4 Questions, Total Score: 21 Points)

- 1. Text Interpretation:** *Draw conclusions and interpret the deeper meaning of specific sections of the text.*
 - Question: What do you think is the message behind the actions of the main character?
 - **Scoring:** 5 points for thoughtful interpretation.
- 2. Connecting Ideas:** *Make connections between the text and personal experiences or other materials previously read.*
 - Question: How is the problem faced by the character similar to something you've experienced?
 - **Scoring:** 5 points for a coherent connection.
- 3. Analyzing Themes:** *Identify and analyze the central theme or themes of the text.*
 - Example Question: What theme do you think the author is trying to convey through the events of the story? Explain your reasoning.
 - **Scoring:** 5 points for correctly identifying the theme and supporting the answer with evidence from the text.
- 4. Character Motivation:** *Examine the motivations behind a character's actions and how they affect the story.*
 - Question: Why do you think the character made that decision? How did it influence the outcome of the story?
 - **Scoring:** 6 points for correctly interpreting the character's motivation and explaining its effect on the narrative.

Part D: Reflective Questions (4 Questions, Total Score: 21 Points)

1. **Personal Reflection:** *Reflect on how the story could apply to real life.*
 - Question: What lesson can we learn from this story, and how can it apply to our community?
 - Scoring: 5 points for an insightful and well-explained reflection.
2. **Critical Questioning:** *Ask your own questions about the text that reflect a deeper engagement.*
 - Prompt: What else would you like to know about the story, and why?
 - Scoring: 5 points for relevant, critical questions.
3. **Emotional Response:** *Reflect on your emotions during a particular scene in the story.*
 - Question: How did you feel when the main character faced a significant challenge, and why did you react this way?
 - Scoring: 5 points for a well-articulated emotional response with reasoning.
4. **Application to Personal Values:** *Reflect on how the story's themes relate to your own personal values or beliefs.*
 - Question: How does the story's theme align or conflict with your personal values? Explain with examples.
 - Scoring: 6 points for a clear explanation and thoughtful analysis connecting the story to personal values.

Scoring and Evaluation

- **Total Possible Score: 100 Points**
- **Criteria for Evaluation:**
 - **Emerging:** 0-50 points – Student demonstrates basic comprehension with limited ability to engage critically.
 - **Proficient:** 51-70 points – Student shows moderate comprehension and some analytical skills.
 - **Advanced:** 71-100 points – Student demonstrates a strong ability to critically analyze, interpret, and reflect on the text.

Administration Notes

- **Duration:** The assessment should take approximately 45-60 minutes.
- **Mode:** Can be administered either individually or in small groups.
- **Materials:** Text passages, questions printed or presented digitally, and writing/drawing tools.