

# BIG BOOK MEDIA AS A LITERACY INTERVENTION IN PRIMARY CLASSROOMS: IMPROVING READING OUTCOMES

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## ABSTRACT

Reading literacy in primary school is foundational, yet classroom observations indicated that many Grade 3 students demonstrated limited participation in shared reading, weak oral reading fluency, and insufficient comprehension of narrative texts. This study aimed to improve students' reading literacy through the use of Big Book media in classroom instruction. A Classroom Action Research design following Kemmis and McTaggart was implemented in two cycles (planning, action, observation, and reflection) with 28 third-grade students. Data were collected through student-activity observations and reading literacy tests administered as pre-test and post-test in each cycle, with a minimum mastery criterion of 70. The findings show consistent improvement in reading performance and mastery. The class mean increased from 64.25 at baseline to 73.10 in Cycle I and 82.75 in Cycle II, while mastery rose from 35.71% to 64.29% and reached 89.29% by Cycle II. Observational data also indicated higher engagement, increased confidence in reading aloud, and more active participation during discussion and question-answer sessions. The study concludes that Big Book-assisted shared reading is effective for strengthening Grade 3 students' reading literacy, both cognitively (fluency and comprehension) and affectively (motivation and participation). Practically, teachers may integrate Big Books into routine literacy instruction to support interactive reading. Future research should test the approach with larger samples, comparison groups, and longer follow-up across varied text genres.

**Keywords:** Big Book; Classroom Action Research; Primary Education; Reading Literacy; Shared Reading

## INTRODUCTION

Learning in primary school plays a crucial role as the foundation for students' literacy competence. At this level, reading ability is not only a gateway to other academic domains but also a determinant of social participation and long-term cognitive development. Recent studies suggest that primary-school instruction that integrates routine reading activities, a print-rich literacy environment, and appropriate learning media can enhance vocabulary mastery and text comprehension among young learners (Saputri, 2024; Afandi et al., 2025).

Preliminary observations at Agape Integrated Christian Elementary School indicated several common challenges also reported in many primary schools: limited frequency of shared reading activities, a lack of engaging reading materials for lower grades, and wide variation in students' initial reading abilities. Similar field findings in other contexts highlight the need for instructional media that can increase motivation and active participation in reading activities. Accordingly, the initial observation underscored the urgency of implementing more structured strategies to address classroom literacy constraints. One instructional medium that has attracted growing practical and research attention is the Big Book. Big Books are characterized by large print and illustrations, narratives designed for whole-class reading, and flexible use for shared reading and interactive instruction. Development and implementation studies have reported positive effects on students' enthusiasm, early reading skills, and teachers' ability to facilitate collaborative text discussion (Agrestin et al., 2021; Sumiati et al., 2024). Evidence from various primary-school settings also indicates that Big Books can support beginning reading instruction (Muzdalifah & Subrata, 2022; Safitri et al., 2024).

Reading literacy at the primary level includes decoding, meaning-making, and reflective engagement with text; these components require sufficient textual exposure and systematic guidance (Siregar & Partha, 2020). Annas et al. (2024) emphasize that structured shared book reading and the use of high-quality picture

books can improve conceptual understanding, vocabulary, and children's academic readiness. Thus, reading literacy should be understood as an interaction among the availability of materials, sound pedagogical practices, and supportive teacher–student interaction.

Big Book media are designed to make written language accessible and enjoyable for young learners. Their clear text and attractive illustrations help students recognize words, grasp meaning, and sustain attention. Prior studies found Big Books to be feasible for use in primary-school instruction (Astuti et al., 2019), to increase student engagement during reading activities (Ramadhan & Khairunnisa, 2021), and to support reading fluency and comprehension (Damayanti, 2021).

The novelty of this study lies in implementing Big Book media within the context of Agape Integrated Christian Elementary School, which combines integrated learning with a religio-cultural school environment. Unlike many previous studies conducted in public or general primary schools, this study examines not only cognitive gains in reading fluency and comprehension but also affective changes such as students' interest, motivation, and confidence to read aloud in class. This more comprehensive perspective contributes additional evidence on the effectiveness of Big Books in developing reading literacy within a relatively underexplored school context. Therefore, the study entitled "Using Big Book Media to Improve Reading Literacy in Grade 3 at Agape Integrated Christian Elementary School" is important to address gaps in the literature while providing practical guidance for teachers regarding innovative media to strengthen early-grade reading literacy.

## METHOD

This study used Classroom Action Research (CAR) based on the cyclical model of Kemmis and McTaggart, which includes planning, action, observation, and reflection. CAR was selected because the study aimed to improve the reading-literacy learning process through the direct implementation of Big Book media in a real classroom setting. The model enabled the teacher–researchers to monitor changes in students' reading literacy continuously from one cycle to the next. The participants were all Grade 3 students at Agape Integrated Christian Elementary School in the current academic year ( $N = 28$ ), consisting of 14 boys and 14 girls with varied initial reading abilities. The students were selected as the research subjects because they were transitioning from beginning reading to more fluent reading, making the Big Book intervention relevant to their literacy development. The study was conducted at Agape Integrated Christian Elementary School located on Jln Christina Marta Tiahahu, Kalibobo, Nabire. The school was selected because its classroom facilities support visually assisted learning, and the classroom teacher agreed to collaborate in implementing the intervention. In addition, initial observations indicated the need for an innovative strategy to improve students' interest and achievement in reading literacy. Data collection techniques included (1) observation to monitor student activity, engagement in shared reading, and responses to Big Book media, and (2) tests to measure reading literacy before (pre-test) and after (post-test) the action in each cycle. The minimum mastery criterion was set at 70.00. The instruments consisted of (a) a student-activity observation sheet covering indicators such as attention, participation, and interaction during Big Book reading, and (b) a reading-literacy test assessing oral reading, text comprehension, and responses to questions about the Big Book stories. Data analysis used qualitative and quantitative approaches. Qualitative analysis described changes in behavior, activeness, and motivation based on observations and documentation, using data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. Quantitative analysis measured improvement by comparing mean pre-test and post-test scores in each cycle. The mastery percentage was calculated as follows:  $\text{Mastery Percentage} = (\text{Number of students achieving mastery} / N) \times 100\%$ .

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This Classroom Action Research (CAR) was conducted in Grade 3 at Agape Integrated Christian Elementary School with 28 students (14 boys and 14 girls). The intervention was implemented in two cycles using the Kemmis and McTaggart procedure—planning, action, observation, and reflection—because the study's primary goal was not only to measure outcomes, but also to systematically improve the quality of classroom practice through iterative refinement (Kemmis & McTaggart, 1988; Kemmis et al., 2014). The instructional focus was to strengthen students' reading literacy through the use of Big Book media within

a shared-reading pedagogy, in which the teacher and students interact around a large-format text and illustrations to support decoding, fluency, comprehension, and reading engagement.

### **Reading literacy as a multidimensional target in early grades**

Reading literacy in the early grades is best understood as a composite of (a) accurate word recognition and decoding, (b) fluency (rate, accuracy, and prosody), (c) comprehension and meaning making, and (d) motivational–engagement dimensions that sustain reading behaviors over time (National Reading Panel, 2000; Rasinski, 2012). For Grade 3 learners, these components are interdependent: weak decoding often constrains fluency and comprehension, while low engagement reduces practice opportunities that are essential for automaticity and vocabulary growth (Ehri, 2005; Guthrie & Wigfield, 2000). In Indonesian elementary contexts, classroom constraints such as limited attractive reading materials and uneven initial reading readiness are widely reported barriers to literacy development, making instructional media and teacher-guided interaction particularly consequential (Saputri, 2024; Siregar & Partha, 2020).

Within this conceptual frame, Big Books offer a plausible pathway to improvement because they combine enlarged print and visuals with an instructional format that enables print referencing, repeated reading, and collaborative meaning negotiation. These are mechanisms known to support emergent and early literacy acquisition (Justice & Ezell, 2002; Snow et al., 1998). Importantly, Big Book use is not merely “providing a bigger book,” but implementing a structured shared-reading routine—teacher modeling, guided participation, opportunities to read aloud, and discussion prompts that move from literal recall toward inference—so that students practice both foundational skills and higher-order comprehension processes (Duke & Pearson, 2002; Hadian et al., 2018).

### **Pre-action condition: diagnosing instructional and learner needs**

Initial observations indicated that many students were not optimally engaged during reading activities. Several students struggled to read aloud with appropriate intonation, had difficulty understanding text meaning, and were often passive when responding to teacher questions. The pre-test results showed a class mean of 64.25. Only 10 students (35.71%) met the minimum mastery criterion (70.00), while 18 students (64.29%) did not.

These baseline findings suggest a combined challenge: (1) foundational reading issues (fluency/prosody and likely decoding automaticity), and (2) comprehension and participation issues (difficulty constructing meaning and contributing verbally). Such patterns are consistent with research indicating that learners who have not yet achieved sufficient automaticity in word recognition allocate disproportionate cognitive resources to decoding, leaving fewer resources for comprehension and expressive response (Ehri, 2005; National Reading Panel, 2000). In addition, passive participation can signal low reading self-efficacy and limited classroom discourse routines that support risk-taking in oral reading—factors that influence motivation and sustained engagement (Guthrie & Wigfield, 2000).

From a pedagogical standpoint, the pre-action stage also indicates that the classroom may have required (a) more explicit modeling of fluent reading, (b) clearer scaffolds for comprehension (e.g., think-alouds, vocabulary and prediction supports), and (c) more structured talk moves and group routines to distribute participation. Shared-reading interventions can address these needs by making reading a social-cognitive practice where teacher guidance and peer support help students operate within their “zone of proximal development” (Vygotsky, 1978).

### **Cycle I: introducing Big Books and establishing shared-reading routines**

In Cycle I, Big Book media were introduced as the primary instructional resource. The teacher read the story while displaying the illustrations, then guided students to read together and discuss the story’s content. Observation data indicated increased participation, although a number of students were still hesitant to contribute. The Cycle I post-test showed that the class mean improved to 73.10. Students achieving mastery increased to 18 (64.29%), while those not achieving mastery decreased to 10 (35.71%). However, the classical mastery target of 85% had not yet been achieved. The movement from a mean of 64.25 to 73.10 represents a gain of 8.85 points, alongside a substantial mastery increase from 35.71% to 64.29%. Even without variability estimates, this pattern suggests that the intervention quickly improved performance for a sizable subset of students. One plausible explanation is that the Big Book’s large print and illustrations

improved access to text for whole-class instruction, enabling more effective teacher modeling and synchronized attention to print (Adnan et al., 2019; Rahmah & Amaliya, 2022). When students can clearly see the text as the teacher reads, teachers can more easily implement print referencing (e.g., pointing to words, tracking print directionality, highlighting punctuation cues) that strengthens print concepts and word recognition (Justice & Ezell, 2002). Furthermore, shared reading with Big Books allows repeated exposure to high-frequency words and predictable language patterns. Repetition, when coupled with teacher-guided attention to form and meaning, supports orthographic mapping and vocabulary activation—both of which facilitate smoother oral reading and comprehension (Ehri, 2005; Snow et al., 1998). Indonesian classroom studies similarly report that Big Book use can increase early reading fluency and comprehension through attractive visual scaffolds and teacher-led interaction (Hadian et al., 2018; Maharani et al., 2023).

Although Cycle I gains were meaningful, the class did not reach 85% classical mastery, indicating that a group of students still required intensified or differentiated supports. In early literacy, initial improvements often reflect a “visibility and engagement effect” (students attend more when media changes), but sustained gains for struggling readers typically require more structured opportunities for practice, feedback, and explicit instruction on decoding and comprehension strategies (National Reading Panel, 2000; Duke & Pearson, 2002). The observation that some students remained hesitant is also important: reluctance to read aloud can limit opportunities for corrective feedback and fluency practice, which are essential for building prosody and confidence (Rasinski, 2012). Therefore, Cycle I reflection appropriately informed Cycle II adjustments that increased student talk time, reading turns, and small-group discussion—features aligned with evidence-based literacy instruction emphasizing active engagement, formative feedback, and interactive comprehension work (Duke & Pearson, 2002; Palincsar & Brown, 1984).

### **Cycle II: strengthening participation structures and comprehension dialogue**

Based on reflection from Cycle I, improvements were implemented in Cycle II: providing more opportunities for students to take turns reading aloud, strengthening small-group discussion, and increasing the intensity of question-and-answer activities focused on story meaning. Observations showed a substantial increase in engagement: nearly all students participated actively, demonstrated greater confidence in reading aloud, and showed improved understanding of the story. The Cycle II post-test indicated a class mean of 82.75. Students achieving mastery increased to 25 (89.29%), while those not achieving mastery decreased to 3 (10.71%). The classical mastery rate of 89.29% indicates that the success criterion was achieved.

The improvement from Cycle I (73.10) to Cycle II (82.75) indicates an additional gain of 9.65 points, and mastery moved above the 85% target. This stronger effect is consistent with a key principle in literacy interventions: the medium supports learning most effectively when paired with high-quality instructional interactions and abundant opportunities for guided practice (Duke & Pearson, 2002; National Reading Panel, 2000). In Cycle II, increased oral reading turns likely supported fluency development through repeated performance, teacher feedback, and peer modeling—elements often associated with gains in prosody, accuracy, and reading confidence (Rasinski, 2012). Small-group discussion can also enhance comprehension by enabling students to articulate ideas, ask clarifying questions, and negotiate meaning with peers. Such dialogic engagement aligns with social-constructivist views that comprehension grows through mediated discourse and shared problem solving (Vygotsky, 1978). Additionally, systematic questioning that progresses from literal recall to inferential reasoning resembles reciprocal and dialogic instructional approaches that promote deeper comprehension (Palincsar & Brown, 1984; Mol et al., 2008). Research on interactive shared reading further supports the claim that structured dialogue around texts improves vocabulary and comprehension, especially when teachers actively prompt explanation and reasoning rather than only asking recall questions (Bus et al., 1995; Mol et al., 2008).

Observation notes that students became more willing to read aloud and participate. This affective shift is not secondary; it can be a causal mechanism for cognitive improvement because engagement increases time-on-task and the quantity of meaningful reading practice (Guthrie & Wigfield, 2000). Big Books may contribute to this engagement through their novelty, visual appeal, and shared attention dynamics. In practical terms, the large illustrations help students anticipate story events, activate background knowledge, and reduce comprehension barriers, which can make students more confident to speak and read (Hadian et

al., 2018; Sumiati et al., 2024). The findings are also consistent with Indonesian studies reporting that Big Book implementation increases students' interest, motivation, and active involvement—especially when teachers emphasize interactive storytelling, word pointing, and collaborative discussion (Maharani et al., 2023; Ramadhan & Khairunnisa, 2021). In faith-based integrated settings, the social climate and value-oriented classroom routines may further support respectful listening and peer encouragement, which can lower anxiety associated with oral reading and thereby expand participation.

Table 1. Summary of learning outcomes and an additional interpretive lens

Phase	Mean Score	Students Achieving Mastery	Mastery Percentage
Pre-Action	64.25	10	35.71%
Cycle I	73.10	18	64.29%
Cycle II	82.75	25	89.29%

Source: Research data (2025).

Across the intervention, the mean score increased by 18.50 points (from 64.25 to 82.75), and mastery improved by 53.58 percentage points (from 35.71% to 89.29%). As an additional descriptive indicator, a normalized gain (N-gain) can be computed to contextualize improvement relative to the maximum possible score. Using the common formula  $g = (post - pre)/(100 - pre)$ , the pre-to-Cycle II gain is approximately  $(82.75 - 64.25)/(100 - 64.25) = 18.50/35.75 \approx 0.52$ , which is commonly interpreted as a moderate learning gain in classroom contexts. This calculation does not replace inferential statistics, but it strengthens the descriptive claim that the improvement was educationally meaningful given the short, two-cycle CAR timeframe.

### Implications for classroom practice and school-level literacy planning

For teachers, the study indicates that Big Books are most impactful when used with a structured shared-reading routine: explicit modeling, print referencing, guided choral reading, paired or small-group talk, and comprehension questioning that progresses from literal to inferential levels (Hadian et al., 2018; Duke & Pearson, 2002). Teachers should also consider differentiated supports for the remaining non-mastered students (10.71% in Cycle II), such as additional decoding practice with high-frequency words, assisted repeated reading, and targeted vocabulary pre-teaching (National Reading Panel, 2000; Ehri, 2005).

For schools, results support investment in classroom-based literacy media and professional development focused on interactive reading pedagogy. A practical model is to integrate Big Book sessions into a consistent literacy block, rotate titles that align with thematic learning, and pair Big Books with take-home smaller copies or follow-up worksheets to consolidate vocabulary and comprehension (Sumiati et al., 2024). In integrated Christian schools, book selections can also be aligned with character and values education while still maintaining rigorous literacy objectives.

### Limitations and future research directions

As with most CAR designs, the study's strength lies in improving practice in a real classroom, but it has limitations for broad causal generalization. The sample is one class in one school, without a control group, and the intervention spans only two cycles, so results should be interpreted as strong classroom-level evidence rather than population-level proof. Future studies could adopt quasi-experimental designs to compare Big Book shared reading with alternative approaches, add delayed post-tests to examine retention, and use richer literacy measures (fluency rate, error analysis, comprehension subskills) to identify which components improved most (National Reading Panel, 2000; Snow et al., 1998). Qualitative analyses of classroom discourse (types of questions, student talk moves) would also clarify which interaction patterns best predict literacy gains (Mol et al., 2008; Palincsar & Brown, 1984).

### CONCLUSION

This classroom action research (Kemmis & McTaggart, two cycles) aimed to improve Grade III students' reading literacy through the use of Big Book media in daily reading instruction. The core findings indicate consistent gains in students' literacy achievement and classroom engagement: the class mean increased from 64.25 at baseline to 73.10 in Cycle I and 82.75 in Cycle II, while the proportion of students

meeting the KKM (70) rose markedly to 89.29% by the end of Cycle II; observational data also showed improved willingness to read aloud, more active participation, higher motivation, and better comprehension of story content. The study contributes theoretically by reinforcing shared-reading and multimodal literacy perspectives that emphasize the role of enlarged print, visual scaffolds, and guided discussion in supporting early reading development; practically and for policy, it offers actionable evidence that Big Books can serve as an effective, classroom-feasible medium for strengthening reading literacy in primary schools when combined with iterative teacher reflection and instructional refinement. Future research should test Big Book interventions with larger and more diverse samples using comparative or quasi-experimental designs, examine longer-term retention and transfer to other texts, and explore variations such as culturally contextualized stories, differentiated Big Book activities, and digital/interactive Big Book formats.

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