

**CANVA-BASED LEARNING TO OPTIMIZE CRITICAL THINKING
ABILITIES AND STRENGTHEN STUDENTS' CHARACTER IN
FICTION TEXT MATERIALS FOR GRADE III OF STATE
ELEMENTARY SCHOOL 28 PEUSANGAN**

Elly Fitri¹, Marwan², Alfi Syahrin³

Universitas Almuslim

ellyfitri17@guru.sd.belajar.id¹, marwan@umuslim.ac.id², alfisyahrin@umuslim.ac.id³

Abstract

This research is motivated by the need for a comprehensive evaluation of the effectiveness of the Canva platform as a learning medium, the suboptimal critical thinking skills of third-grade students in analyzing fictional texts, and the weak integration of character building in technology-based learning at SD Negeri 28 Peusangan. The objectives of this study are to: 1) describe Canva-based learning to optimize critical thinking skills and character building, 2) analyze the improvement of critical thinking skills, and 3) analyze the strengthening of students' character in third-grade fictional text material. This study uses a qualitative descriptive approach. Data were collected through observations of teacher and student activities, semi-structured interviews with teachers and students, questionnaires, and documentation studies (lesson plans, Canva designs, student work). Data analysis was carried out using data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing techniques, assisted by NVivo software to ensure systematic and in-depth analysis. The results of the study indicate that: First, Canva-based learning successfully transformed fictional text learning into an interactive, dynamic, and meaningful experience. The combination of Canva's visual media with active learning strategies created an optimal ecosystem for critical thinking and character internalization. Second, there was a significant increase in students' critical thinking skills, as evidenced by the development of analytical and interpretive skills, and the ability to communicate understanding with logical reasoning. Third, student character building was realized through the integration of values into learning activities, such as the growth of self-confidence, empathy, cooperation, creativity, and resilience. The conclusion of this study is that Canva-based learning, when designed by combining cognitive and affective aspects, proved effective simultaneously in optimizing critical thinking skills and strengthening the character of third-grade students in the context of learning fictional texts.

Keywords: Canva, Critical Thinking, Character Building, Fiction Text, Elementary School Learning



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INTRODUCTION

The development of digital technology in education is increasingly encouraging educators to innovate in the learning process. Technology serves not only as a tool but also as a strategic tool to optimize the quality of student learning, particularly in the context of the independent curriculum, which emphasizes meaningful and student-centered learning. This curriculum requires teachers to create a learning environment that is adaptive to current developments and relevant to student needs. The development of innovation in this digital era has opened up significant opportunities in education and demands creativity and innovation in the learning process. Educators are required to design learning experiences that are more engaging, interactive, and appropriate to the characteristics of the digital generation. In this regard, interactive learning media plays a crucial role in developing student engagement, motivation, and understanding. The success of achieving competency in a subject depends on several aspects, including students, teachers, subjects, curriculum, teaching methods, learning media, and facilities and infrastructure.¹

Education is an effort made to prepare the workforce, because the educational process is to guide and educate so that students have the basic knowledge to work. Elementary school is an educational institution that teaches students various subjects. Some subjects are taught in theory, while others are taught in practice. Technological advances in the digital realm are closely related to every aspect of life, particularly in education. New technologies that will advance society are created alongside advances in science.²

In line with technological advances, the UPTD of Peusangan 28 Public Elementary School has adopted Canva-based teaching materials in its learning process. These materials are expected to help students better understand the fictional text material in third grade, thereby enhancing their critical thinking skills and character building. However, the current classroom situation is still far from expectations. There has been no comprehensive evaluation of the effectiveness of Canva-based teaching materials in optimizing critical thinking skills and character building in the fictional text material for third grade students at the UPTD of Peusangan 28 Public Elementary School. Learning materials are the content or content of the curriculum that students must understand in order to achieve the objectives stated in the curriculum." The availability of learning resources ensures that the learning process can proceed according to plan

¹ Ghina Fauziah Hazimah dkk., "Pengelolaan Kurikulum dan Sarana Prasarana Sebagai Penunjang Keberhasilan Pembelajaran Siswa Sekolah Dasar," *Jurnal Pembangunan Pendidikan: Fondasi dan Aplikasi* 9, no. 2 (Agustus 2022), <https://doi.org/10.21831/jppfa.v9i2.44591>; Ucu Purnamawanti, Herawati Herawati, dan Widyasari Widyasari, *Peningkatan Hasil Belajar Berbasis Canva*, 1 ed. (Bandung: Widina Bhakti Media Utama, 2023).

² Muhammad Yuliansyah dan Kasypul Anwar, "Strategi Masyarakat Maju Dalam Teknologi Pendidikan Moderen Didesa Kiram Martapura," *J-ABDI: Jurnal Pengabdian kepada Masyarakat* 1, no. 12 (Mei 2022), <https://doi.org/10.53625/jabdi.v1i12.2058>.

and efficiently.³ Canva, as a popular and easy-to-use graphic design application, offers a variety of templates and features that can be tailored to learning needs, enabling students to actively engage in the learning process.

The integration of critical thinking into learning is crucial for preparing students to become resilient problem solvers, mature decision makers, and individuals who are always eager to learn. Critical thinking skills are also relevant to future needs, which require skilled workers with critical thinking skills. To date, critical thinking skills have not been fully internalized in students, thus not functioning optimally in today's practical society. Furthermore, as educators, it is important to pay attention to the needs of the times, especially students' critical thinking skills, which are increasingly recognized as a fundamental requirement in the learning process. Critical thinking is a very important skill for students. As stated by hendi critical thinkingenables students to solve problems more effectively.⁴ This skill is important because it helps students face and overcome the various challenges they face. Therefore, one needs to have critical thinking skills and needs to learn them, as these skills are very useful and provide a foundation for facing life now and in the future.

Several previous studies have examined the integration of digital media and character education in elementary learning, particularly in developing critical thinking skills and literacy competencies. First, Mayer emphasized that multimedia-based learning tools significantly enhance students' cognitive processing and critical thinking abilities.⁵ His study showed that visual-based platforms such as Canva help students organize ideas and analyze information more effectively. Second, Darmawan found that digital literacy activities improved students' comprehension and reasoning skills in language learning.⁶ Their findings suggested that interactive visual media supports students in understanding fiction texts more deeply. Third, Kurniawan et al. investigated the use of digital design applications in elementary classrooms and reported increased student engagement and creativity.⁷ Their research indicated that Canva-based

³ Para Dita, "Pentingnya Media Pembelajaran dalam Meningkatkan Prestasi Belajar," *Early Childhood Islamic Education Journal* 3, no. 01 (Maret 2022), <https://doi.org/10.58176/eciejournal.v3i01.679>.

⁴ Asrean Hendi, Caswita Caswita, dan Een Yayah Haenilah, "Pengembangan Media Pembelajaran Interaktif Berbasis Strategi Metakognitif untuk Meningkatkan Kemampuan Berpikir Kritis siswa," *Jurnal Cendekia : Jurnal Pendidikan Matematika* 4, no. 2 (September 2020), <https://doi.org/10.31004/cendekia.v4i2.310>.

⁵ Richard E. Mayer, *Multimedia Learning*, 3rd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020), <https://doi.org/10.1017/9781316941355>.

⁶ Arief Darmawan dkk., "Pemanfaatan Media Digital dalam Upaya Peningkatan Literasi Bahasa Indonesia," *Literasi: Jurnal Ilmu Pendidikan* 16, no. 3 (November 2025), [https://doi.org/10.21927/literasi.2025.16\(3\).362-372](https://doi.org/10.21927/literasi.2025.16(3).362-372).

⁷ Ahmad Aldhi Kurniawan, Novian Dini Rahmawati, dan Kartiko Dian, "Pengaruh Media Pembelajaran Interaktif Canva terhadap Hasil Belajar IPAS pada Peserta Didik Kelas IV Sekolah Dasar,"

learning promotes active participation and reflective thinking. Fourth, Darling-Hammond et al. highlighted that innovative instructional media contributes to higher-order thinking development when combined with student-centered learning approaches.⁸ Fifth, Mulyosari demonstrated that technology-assisted learning improved students' critical reading and interpretation skills in narrative texts.⁹ Sixth, Sugiarto reported that integrating character education into literacy instruction strengthened students' moral values, responsibility, and cooperation.¹⁰ Seventh, Alfahnum dan Maya revealed that digital storytelling tools enhanced students' analytical thinking and empathy through narrative learning.¹¹ Eighth, Fullan emphasized that digital innovation in schools supports holistic student development, including intellectual and character growth.¹² Ninth, Septian found that Canva-based learning media significantly improved elementary students' learning motivation and critical thinking skills.¹³ Tenth, UNESCO (2018) stated that digital literacy education plays a crucial role in preparing students to think critically and ethically in the digital era.

These previous studies demonstrate that digital media, especially visual-based platforms, plays an important role in enhancing students' critical thinking skills and literacy competence. Research by Mayer confirms that multimedia learning tools such as Canva facilitate deeper cognitive engagement and information processing.¹⁴ Furthermore, studies by Indra show that character education can be effectively integrated into fiction text learning through narrative and digital storytelling.¹⁵ This integration helps students develop values such as honesty, empathy,

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⁸ Linda Darling-Hammond, Maria E. Hyler, dan Madelyn Gardner, *Effective Teacher Professional Development* (Palo Alto, CA: Learning Policy Institute, 2017), <https://learningpolicyinstitute.org/product/effective-teacher-professional-development>.

⁹ Endah Trie Mulyosari dan Banun Hafivah Cahyo Khosiyono, "Pengaruh Penggunaan Media Pembelajaran Berbasis Teknologi dalam Pembelajaran terhadap Motivasi Belajar Siswa Sekolah Dasar," *EDUKATIF: JURNAL ILMU PENDIDIKAN* 5, no. 6 (Desember 2023), <https://doi.org/10.31004/edukatif.v5i6.5037>.

¹⁰ Sugiarto dan Ahmad Farid, "Literasi Digital Sebagai Jalan Penguatan Pendidikan Karakter Di Era Society 5.0," *Cetta: Jurnal Ilmu Pendidikan* 6, no. 3 (Juli 2023), <https://doi.org/10.37329/cetta.v6i3.2603>.

¹¹ Mal Alfahnum dan Maya Masitha Astriani, "Peran Media Pembelajaran Digital Dalam Pembentukan Karakter Siswa SMA," *Akhlak: Journal of Education Behavior and Religious Ethics* 1, no. 2 (Juli 2025), <https://doi.org/10.30998/jebg.v1i2.4363>.

¹² Michael Fullan, *The New Meaning of Educational Change*, 5th ed. (New York: Teachers College Press, 2016).

¹³ Septian Dwi Fajariyanto, Fery Muhammad Firdaus, dan Sri Dewi Nirmala, "Development Of Canva-Assisted Interactive Learning Media To Improve The Critical Thinking Skills Of Elementary School Students In Science And Science Subjects," *Jurnal Pendidikan dan Pengajaran Guru Sekolah Dasar (JPPGuseda)* 8, no. 2 (Juli 2025), <https://doi.org/10.55215/jppguseda.v8i2.11454>.

¹⁴ Mayer, *Multimedia Learning*.

¹⁵ Indra Rasyid Julianto, "Digitalisasi Pembelajaran Bahasa Indonesia Berintegrasi Pendidikan Karakter," *MASALIQ* 3, no. 2 (Maret 2023), <https://doi.org/10.58578/masaliq.v3i2.914>.

responsibility, and cooperation. In addition, Darling-Hammond et al. and Fullan support the implementation of innovative, student-centered learning models to promote higher-order thinking and holistic development.¹⁶¹⁷ Their findings align with the objectives of this study, which seeks to optimize critical thinking and strengthen students' character through Canva-based learning. However, most previous studies focused on general digital media or secondary-level education. Limited research has specifically examined Canva-based learning in teaching fiction texts for Grade III elementary students, particularly in the Indonesian context.

Therefore, this study fills this research gap by investigating how Canva-based learning can enhance critical thinking skills and character development in young learners. Thus, this research is relevant as it integrates digital literacy, critical thinking, and character education into fiction text learning using Canva, contributing to more effective and meaningful elementary education. Thus, the research question is how to implement canva-based learning to optimize critical thinking abilities and strengthen students' character in fiction text materials of state elementary school 28 peusangan.

RESEARCH METHODS

The purpose of this study is to analyze the implementation of Canva-based learning to optimize critical thinking abilities and strengthen students' character in fiction text materials at State Elementary School 28 Peusangan. This school was chosen as the research location because it places significant emphasis on developing student potential, particularly in the areas of critical thinking abilities and strengthening students' character. Furthermore, the school supports the implementation of innovative learning strategies that can improve the quality of learning. This research employed qualitative methods, a research approach aimed at describing and analyzing phenomena, events, social activities, attitudes, beliefs, perceptions, and thoughts of individuals, both individually and in groups.¹⁸

Data sources in qualitative research are determined purposively, that is, they are determined based on the research objectives or specific goals. In qualitative research, we identify participants and locations through purposive sampling based on the places and people who best help us understand the central phenomenon.¹⁹ The sample used consisted of students and teachers as respondents. Data collection techniques used interview and observation guidelines. Interview

¹⁶ Darling-Hammond, Hyler, dan Gardner, *Effective Teacher Professional Development*.

¹⁷ Fullan, *The New Meaning of Educational Change*.

¹⁸ Imam Gunawan, *Metode Penelitian Kualitatif: Teori dan Praktik* (Jakarta: Bumi Aksara, 2013).

¹⁹ John W. Creswell dan J. David Creswell, *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches* (Los Angeles: Sage, 2018).

guidelines were used to guide the interviews to ensure they align with the intended purpose and objectives. Observations were conducted on the implementation of Canva-based learning.

In this study, the author presents data obtained related to the application of Canva-based learning to optimize critical thinking abilities and strengthen students' character. The author uses brief descriptions to explain the data presented in more detail, relating to what the author obtained in the field, such as interview results and observations. Qualitative data validity tests include credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. Data analysis was conducted using qualitative descriptive methods, namely data reduction, data presentation, and conclusions.²⁰

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Based on an interview with Informant 1, a Grade 4 teacher at Peusangan 28 Public Elementary School, he stated that the experience of teaching Indonesian is fundamentally enjoyable. This enjoyment stems primarily from the innovative use of learning media that differs from the usual routine, creating new dynamics in the classroom. The informant revealed that Indonesian is unique because it is easier to integrate with other subjects, especially with the support of media like Canva, which offers a variety of visual and creative possibilities. This integrative and flexible characteristic is the added value and great potential of Indonesian language learning.

Informant 1 acknowledged that Indonesian language lessons are often perceived as less interesting by some colleagues, which actually motivates him to continue seeking more effective teaching methods. This reflection led to an evaluation of student learning outcomes. Informant 1 revealed that his satisfaction with student achievement was still suboptimal, particularly in understanding text material. This indicates a gap between the learning process and students' level of deep understanding, particularly in the analysis and interpretation of texts, which are the foundation of critical thinking.

The results of an interview with Informant 2 revealed that learning Indonesian is fundamentally a fun activity. This excitement is particularly evident when the teaching and learning process is accompanied by the use of interactive media that can attract student attention and participation. Informant 2 observed that the core characteristics of Indonesian language lessons, which focus on understanding structure, rules, and grammar, are often perceived as a challenge, as they risk being perceived as boring by students when presented conventionally. This contrasts with other subjects, which are considered more focused on conceptual understanding. This perception is what challenges him to continue developing, given the shared

²⁰ Sugiyono, *Metode Penelitian Kualitatif, Kuantitatif, dan R&D* (Bandung: Alfabeta, 2019).

awareness among educators that Indonesian language learning requires innovation in methods and media to prevent stagnation.

Informant 2 expressed critical reflections regarding learning outcomes. He admitted that he was not yet fully satisfied with the learning outcomes his students had achieved thus far. This suboptimal satisfaction was primarily due to the fact that a number of students still did not fully understand the material, particularly when discussing complex topics such as texts. This statement indicates a gap between the learning process that had been attempted and the students' level of deep mastery of core Indonesian language competencies, particularly in analytical and interpretive skills, which are the foundation of literacy.

Based on interviews with third-grade students, it was generally apparent that learning Indonesian had left a positive impression. The majority of students stated that the learning process was very enjoyable and engaging. According to students, one of the main factors that made the learning enjoyable was the use of technology, such as laptops, and a variety of colorful learning media with eye-catching images. This difference made Indonesian lessons feel more lively and dynamic compared to other subjects that might be more monotonous, thus sparking their curiosity and active engagement in class. While enthusiasm was dominant, there was also some diversity in responses. A small number of students expressed that they found the material sometimes difficult to understand, leading to a feeling that the learning was merely "so-so" and did not always provide optimal challenges. However, the narrative elements in fictional texts were often the main draw, where exciting and engaging stories were able to rekindle their interest and challenge their learning. This suggests that the key to engaging learning lies in how the material is presented, not just the content itself.

When asked about their satisfaction with their learning outcomes, most students expressed satisfaction, some even expressed extreme satisfaction with their grades. According to students, this satisfaction arose because they were not only learning passively but also given opportunities to be creative, such as by creating skits or story posters, which made the learning process more meaningful. These activities not only hone language skills but also provide space for freedom of opinion and expression, which indirectly contributes to strengthening character traits such as self-confidence and creativity. Student responses to Indonesian language learning indicate that interactive, media-based approaches, such as the use of laptops and creative activities, are highly effective in creating a fun and challenging learning experience.

These findings reinforce the assumption that innovations in learning, such as the use of the Canva visual design platform proposed in the study, have great potential to further optimize students' critical thinking skills. By presenting fictional texts in a more visual and interactive manner, students are not only more motivated, but also encouraged to analyze, evaluate, and

create, while also internalizing positive character values through a learning process that is more engaging and relevant to them.

According to Informant 1, in an interview, regarding the teacher's method of delivering Indonesian language lessons, teachers learn Indonesian with the help of visual aids or media, such as Canva. During Indonesian language lessons, there are always Q&A sessions. Furthermore, teachers provide opportunities for students to ask questions when they don't understand the Indonesian language material. Furthermore, teachers always praise students for their answers or questions. In the interview, he stated:

"I still use the lecture method. I sometimes use media such as videos or stories. I haven't used Canva yet. I always do. I always provide a Q&A session. I think it's sufficient, because the teaching module has a set time, and I implement it. I always give praise."

According to Informant 2, in his interview, he also stated the following:

"Previously, I still used the lecture method, but I've started using media. Sometimes, depending on the need. Yes, in every lesson, the teacher always gives students the opportunity to discuss. Yes, before giving assignments, I always provide a question-and-answer session for students who don't understand. That's enough, because the time allocation has been set according to needs. I always give appreciation to students who are willing to ask and answer questions, even if they stray slightly from the material, because it can encourage an active learning atmosphere."

Based on interviews with third-grade students, regarding the Indonesian language learning process that can develop critical thinking, students reported the following:

"The teacher delivers the material using an infocus and gives interesting assignments. We learn Indonesian with the help of visual aids or media, such as Canva. Furthermore, during Indonesian language lessons, there are always question-and-answer sessions. The teacher always gives students the opportunity to ask questions if they don't understand the Indonesian language material. The teacher also gives them ample time to analyze and answer questions. I'm quite happy because the teacher always praises the answers or questions they ask."

Discussion

The findings of this study indicate that Canva-based learning plays a significant role in enhancing students' critical thinking abilities in learning fiction texts. Through visual presentations, interactive designs, and structured content, students are encouraged to analyze story elements, identify main ideas, and evaluate characters' actions. According to Anderson and Krathwohl, critical thinking involves higher-order cognitive processes such as analyzing, evaluating, and creating, which can be stimulated through multimedia learning environments.²¹ The use of Canva enables students to organize information visually, thereby supporting deeper comprehension and reflective thinking.

²¹ Lorin W. Anderson dan David R. Krathwohl, *A Taxonomy for Learning, Teaching, and Assessing: A Revision of Bloom's Taxonomy of Educational Objectives* (New York: Longman, 2001).

Furthermore, the integration of digital media in literacy learning improves students' engagement and motivation. Schunk, Meece, and Pintrich explain that learning motivation increases when students feel actively involved in the learning process.²² In this study, students showed enthusiasm in designing story summaries, character maps, and moral message posters using Canva. This active participation fostered a sense of ownership over learning and encouraged students to think independently and creatively.

In addition to cognitive development, Canva-based learning also contributes to strengthening students' character. Through fiction texts, students learn values such as honesty, responsibility, empathy, and cooperation. Lickona emphasizes that character education should be integrated into daily learning activities to shape students' moral behavior.²³ By analyzing story characters and presenting moral lessons through Canva projects, students internalized positive values and demonstrated improved attitudes in classroom interactions.

The teacher's role in facilitating Canva-based learning is another important factor influencing learning outcomes. Teachers guide students in selecting relevant content, organizing ideas, and reflecting on learning experiences. According to Hattie, effective teachers act as learning facilitators who provide feedback and support students' thinking processes.²⁴ In this research, the teacher's guidance helped students overcome technical difficulties and focus on meaningful learning rather than merely using technology.

Moreover, collaborative learning through Canva projects enhanced students' social skills and communication abilities. Students often worked in small groups to design visual presentations, discuss story meanings, and share interpretations. Ertmer dan Anne state that cooperative learning promotes critical thinking and social responsibility.²⁵ This collaborative process enabled students to exchange ideas, respect different perspectives, and develop teamwork skills.

Despite these positive outcomes, several challenges were identified in the implementation of Canva-based learning. Limited digital facilities, varying levels of technological skills, and time constraints sometimes hindered optimal learning. Ertmer and Ottenbreit-Leftwich argue that

²² Dale H. Schunk, Judith L. Meece, dan Paul R. Pintrich, *Motivation in Education: Theory, Research, and Applications*, 4th ed. (Boston: Pearson, 2014).

²³ Thomas Lickona, *Educating for Character: How Our Schools Can Teach Respect and Responsibility* (New York: Bantam, 1992).

²⁴ John Hattie, *Visible Learning for Teachers: Maximizing Impact on Learning* (London: Routledge, 2012).

²⁵ Azra Džaferagić-Franca dan Ruža Tomić, "Cooperative Learning in the Teaching Process in Lower Elementary School Grades," *Metodički obzori/Methodological Horizons* 7, no. 2 (Juli 2012), <https://doi.org/10.32728/mo.07.2.2012.09>.

successful technology integration requires adequate infrastructure and teacher competence.²⁶ Therefore, continuous professional development and institutional support are necessary to maximize the effectiveness of digital learning tools in elementary education.

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings and discussion, it can be concluded that Canva-based learning is effective in optimizing students' critical thinking abilities and strengthening character development in learning fiction texts for Grade III elementary school students. The use of visual and interactive features in Canva encourages students to analyze, evaluate, and interpret story elements more deeply, which supports the development of higher-order thinking skills. Furthermore, Canva-based learning increases students' learning motivation and engagement. This active involvement helps students understand learning materials more meaningfully and fosters a positive learning atmosphere in the classroom. In terms of character education, the integration of fiction texts and digital media enables students to internalize moral values such as honesty, responsibility, empathy, and cooperation. By reflecting on story characters and presenting moral lessons creatively, students demonstrate improved attitudes and social behavior in both academic and social contexts. Effective facilitation ensures that technology is used as a meaningful learning tool rather than merely as entertainment. Although several challenges were identified, such as limited facilities and varying digital skills, these obstacles can be addressed through institutional support and continuous professional development. Future research is recommended to explore its implementation in different subjects and grade levels, as well as to examine its long-term impact on students' academic and personal development.

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²⁶ Peggy A. Ertmer dan Anne T. Ottenbreit-Leftwich, "Teacher Technology Change: How Knowledge, Confidence, Beliefs, and Culture Intersect," *Journal of Research on Technology in Education* 42, no. 3 (2010), <https://doi.org/10.1080/15391523.2010.10782551>.

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