

Improving Seventh Grade Students' Reading Comprehension of Fantasy Stories Through the SQ3R Method

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Article Info	Abstract
Received: 2026-02-04 Revised: 2026-06-15 Accepted: 2026-07-8	<i>This classroom action research was conducted in response to seventh-grade students' low comprehension of fantasy story texts, particularly their difficulty identifying textual elements, tracing characters and events, and interpreting implied meanings. The study aimed to improve both the learning process and students' reading-comprehension outcomes through the Survey, Question, Read, Recite, and Review (SQ3R) method. The participants were 16 seventh-grade students at SMP Negeri 1 Karau Kuala, South Barito Regency. The study was implemented in two cycles, each comprising planning, action, observation, and reflection. Data were collected through student-activity observation sheets, reading-comprehension assessment sheets, field notes, and documentation, and were analyzed descriptively using qualitative and quantitative procedures. The findings showed progressive improvement in classroom participation and achievement. In Cycle I, the mean score for the observed attitude and activity indicators was 2.3, with a total score of 9.2. In Cycle II, the overall activity mean increased to 3.0, with a total score of 12.0. The mean reading-comprehension score increased from 55 in the pre-action stage to 65.6 in Cycle I and 72.8 in Cycle II. The percentage of students achieving mastery rose from 31% to 56% and then to 75%. These findings indicate that the structured SQ3R stages supported more active participation and improved reading comprehension in this classroom context.</i>
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1. Introduction

Reading comprehension is a fundamental component of language learning because it enables students to construct meaning, connect information across a text, and interpret both explicit and implicit messages. At the junior secondary level, students are expected not only to read fluently but also to identify main ideas, follow plot development, recognize characters and settings, infer meanings, and evaluate the message of a text. These demands become particularly important when students read fantasy stories, whose imaginative settings, unusual events,

and complex narrative sequences can attract attention while also creating comprehension difficulties.

Fantasy stories have considerable pedagogical value because they can stimulate imagination, introduce new vocabulary, and encourage students to engage with plot, character, conflict, and moral meaning. Research on fantasy-story literacy has shown that imaginative texts can support reading interest and detailed understanding when they are accompanied by appropriate instructional guidance (Mu'alimah et al., 2023). In a junior high school context, Andriani (2022) likewise reported that an engaging instructional medium could improve students' comprehension of fantasy stories. These findings suggest that the text genre itself can be motivating, but the quality of comprehension depends strongly on how students are guided to process the text.

The preliminary classroom condition at SMP Negeri 1 Karau Kuala showed that many seventh-grade students had not yet achieved the expected level of reading comprehension. Some students were not fluent readers, whereas others could read aloud but still had difficulty understanding the text as a whole. Their problems included following the plot, identifying the setting and characters, interpreting moral messages, and answering questions based on the text. Classroom observation also indicated low reading motivation, limited concentration, passive participation, and a lack of systematic reading steps. The usual activity required students to read independently and answer questions, with limited guidance on how to preview, question, organize, and review information.

One method that can provide such guidance is SQ3R, an acronym for Survey, Question, Read, Recite, and Review. Robinson (1946) introduced SQ3R as a structured study and reading procedure intended to move readers beyond passive exposure to a text. In the Survey stage, students preview the title, organization, and salient textual elements. In the Question stage, they formulate questions that give purpose to reading. During Read, they search for relevant information and build understanding. Recite requires them to restate the content in their own words, while Review encourages them to check, connect, and consolidate what they have learned. The sequence combines prediction, purposeful reading, retrieval, and reflection, all of which are relevant to comprehension of narrative texts.

Empirical studies have generally supported the use of SQ3R for reading instruction. Sakinah and Ibrahim (2023) found that the method supported elementary students' reading-comprehension performance, while Subekti (2024) reported a positive effect on fourth-grade students' comprehension in Indonesian language learning. In a related reading context, Masruddin (2016) showed that an experience-based instructional approach could strengthen reading fluency through active engagement with meaning. Ar et al. (2024) also reported improvement in junior high school reading skills after students were provided with a more engaging reading medium. Together, these studies indicate that structured and participatory reading activities can help students attend to textual information

more purposefully.

Broader Indonesian classroom research also demonstrates the value of active, contextual, and clearly sequenced learning. Masruddin and Munawir (2022) found that a structured treasure-hunt activity supported vocabulary learning and cultural knowledge among junior high school students. Munawir (2020) similarly used a staged treasure-hunt procedure to support concept mastery, while Rustan and Munawir (2020) emphasized the educational value of integrating meaningful activities into classroom learning. Although these studies addressed different subjects and learning outcomes, they reinforce the pedagogical principle that students benefit when instruction provides explicit stages, active participation, and opportunities to communicate their understanding.

Previous research has therefore established the usefulness of SQ3R and other active-learning strategies, but several gaps remain relevant to the present study. Much of the available SQ3R research has focused on elementary students, general reading passages, or experimental comparisons. Fewer studies have documented how the method functions as a cycle-based classroom improvement strategy for seventh-grade students reading fantasy stories. In addition, studies often emphasize final test scores without reporting changes in discipline, courage, accuracy, cooperation, and participation during the learning process. The present classroom action research addresses this gap by examining both process indicators and comprehension outcomes in a specific junior high school classroom.

Accordingly, this study had two objectives: (1) to improve the quality of the learning process for reading comprehension of fantasy story texts through the SQ3R method and (2) to improve students' reading-comprehension outcomes across the pre-action stage, Cycle I, and Cycle II. The study contributes context-specific evidence regarding how the five SQ3R stages can be incorporated into Indonesian language instruction for fantasy stories. Because the study involved one class and descriptive cycle comparisons, its contribution is interpreted as evidence of classroom improvement rather than as a general causal claim.

2. Method

This study employed classroom action research organized around the recurring stages of planning, action, observation, and reflection. The cyclical structure was informed by the action-research model described by Kemmis, McTaggart, and Nixon (2014). The research consisted of a pre-action stage followed by two action cycles. The study was conducted from July to September 2025 at SMP Negeri 1 Karau Kuala, located in Teluk Betung Village, Karau Kuala District, South Barito Regency. The participants were 16 seventh-grade students with varying levels of reading ability. The actions were implemented during Indonesian language lessons.

The pre-action stage included an initial reading-comprehension assessment and classroom observation to identify students' starting performance and learning

difficulties. In each cycle, the planning stage involved preparing the teaching module, fantasy story texts, student worksheets, observation instruments, assessment materials, and supporting media such as picture sequences. The action stage implemented the SQ3R procedure. Students first surveyed the text, generated questions, read purposefully, recited important information in their own words, and reviewed their understanding. During observation, student participation and the implementation of the learning activities were recorded. Reflection was then used to identify difficulties and determine revisions for the next cycle.

Cycle I introduced the SQ3R sequence and required students to work through the five stages with teacher guidance. Reflection showed that several students still needed support in the Recite and Review stages and that participation, accuracy, and cooperation had not developed evenly. In Cycle II, the teacher provided a more structured SQ3R guide, clearer examples, closer assistance, and a fantasy text intended to be more accessible and engaging. These adjustments were based on the Cycle I reflection rather than on a change in the study objectives.

Data were collected through tests, observations, field notes, and documentation. The reading-comprehension assessment sheets were used to measure students' understanding at the pre-action stage and at the end of each cycle. The student-activity observation sheet covered four indicators: discipline, courage, accuracy, and cooperation. Field notes documented classroom events that were not fully captured by the scoring sheet, and documentation included photographs and samples of students' work. Qualitative data from observations, field notes, and documentation were described and compared across the two cycles to identify changes in participation and learning behavior. Quantitative data were summarized using mean scores, total observation scores, and the percentage of students achieving the classroom mastery criterion. No inferential statistical test was reported; therefore, the results are interpreted descriptively.

3. Results

Before the action, reading instruction was predominantly teacher-centered. Students generally listened to explanations, read the assigned text, and provided brief answers. Few students asked questions, participated in discussion, or explained their interpretation of the story. This pattern made it difficult for the teacher to determine whether students understood the text beyond isolated answers.

In Cycle I, the SQ3R sequence introduced a clearer structure for reading. Students previewed the text, formulated questions, read with a specific purpose, attempted to restate information, and reviewed their responses. The observation results showed that discipline was the strongest indicator, while courage, accuracy, and cooperation still required support. Table 1 presents the Cycle I scores reported in the original manuscript.

Table 1. Student Attitude and Activity Scores in Cycle I

No.	Observed Indicator	Mean Score
1	Discipline	2.6
2	Courage	2.2
3	Accuracy	2.2
4	Cooperation	2.2
Total score		9.2
Overall mean		2.3

The overall mean of 2.3 was categorized in the manuscript as good and complete. Nevertheless, classroom notes indicated that several students still hesitated to express opinions, did not always read carefully, and contributed unevenly to group work. The reflection therefore focused on strengthening guidance during Recite and Review, clarifying the use of the SQ3R worksheet, and increasing opportunities for students to explain their understanding.

In Cycle II, students followed the instructions more consistently and participated more actively. They appeared more attentive during reading, more willing to speak, and better able to explain the story to classmates. Recite was particularly important for encouraging oral restatement, while Review helped students return to their questions and correct incomplete understanding. Group cooperation also became more visible, although a small number of students remained less confident. The overall cycle comparison is presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Overall Student Activity Scores Across the Action Cycles

Stage	Total Score	Overall Mean	Reported Category
Cycle I	9.2	2.3	Good/complete
Cycle II	12.0	3.0	Good/complete

The comparison indicates a descriptive improvement in the observed learning process from Cycle I to Cycle II. The sequence gave students a visible structure for managing reading time, generating questions, discussing answers, and checking comprehension. Consequently, the classroom shifted from a predominantly teacher-led pattern toward greater student participation and responsibility.

The pre-action assessment showed a mean score of 55, and 31% of the students achieved the classroom mastery criterion. This initial result was consistent with the observed difficulties in identifying narrative elements and interpreting the content of fantasy stories. After Cycle I, the mean score increased to 65.6 and the mastery percentage increased to 56%. Students began to use Survey and Question to establish a reading purpose and to search for relevant information during Read. However, some students still found it difficult to restate the text independently and to review the completeness of their answers.

Following the Cycle II revisions, the mean score increased to 72.8 and the mastery percentage reached 75%. Students were more able to focus on the text, answer comprehension questions, and restate the story using their own words. Table 3 summarizes the reported results.

Table 3. Reading-Comprehension Outcomes by Stage

Stage	Mean Score	Students Achieving Mastery
Pre-action	55.0	31%
Cycle I	65.6	56%
Cycle II	72.8	75%

Overall, the results show a consistent descriptive pattern of improvement across the three stages. Because the study did not include a comparison group or inferential analysis, the results should be understood as improvement observed during the classroom action process rather than as proof of effectiveness beyond this class.

4. Discussion

The findings indicate that the SQ3R method supported improvement in both classroom participation and reading-comprehension outcomes. The changes can be understood in relation to the structure of the method. Survey helped students form an initial representation of the fantasy text by attending to its title, organization, and visible clues. Question transformed reading into a purposeful search rather than an undirected activity. Read required students to locate information, while Recite required retrieval and reformulation in their own words. Review then provided an opportunity to identify missing or inaccurate understanding. This sequence is consistent with Robinson's (1946) conception of active and organized study.

The increase in students' mean scores and mastery percentages is broadly consistent with previous SQ3R research. Sakinah and Ibrahim (2023) and Subekti (2024) reported improved reading-comprehension performance after students received structured SQ3R instruction. The present study extends that pattern to fantasy story texts among seventh-grade students in a classroom action research setting. The result also aligns with Mu'alimah et al. (2023), who emphasized the literacy potential of fantasy stories, and with Andriani (2022), who showed that students' comprehension of fantasy narratives can improve when instruction increases engagement with the text.

The observed improvement in discipline, courage, accuracy, and cooperation also deserves attention. Reading comprehension is not only an individual test outcome; it is influenced by whether students attend to instructions, ask questions, verify information, and communicate interpretations. Recite encouraged students to explain content publicly, while group work created opportunities to compare answers. Similar principles appear in Indonesian studies using active and contextual approaches. Masruddin and Munawir (2022) showed that a clearly

staged activity could increase student involvement in vocabulary learning. Munawir (2020) likewise used an active sequence to develop concept mastery, and Rustan and Munawir (2020) argued for integrating meaningful activities into classroom instruction. These studies support the interpretation that participation improves when students understand what to do at each stage and have a concrete reason to interact with the learning material.

The reading results also correspond with work by Masruddin (2016), who found that active engagement with language experience supported reading fluency, and by Ar et al. (2024), who reported improvement in junior high school reading through an engaging reading medium. Although fluency, reading skills, and comprehension are not identical constructs, these studies collectively indicate that reading development is strengthened when students interact with texts through structured guidance rather than passive repetition.

Nevertheless, the present findings should be interpreted cautiously. First, the study involved only 16 students in one school. Second, classroom action research is designed to improve local practice and does not establish the same level of causal evidence as a controlled experiment. Third, the study lasted only two cycles, and no delayed assessment was reported. Fourth, the original manuscript does not specify the validation of the instruments, the minimum mastery score, the number of meetings, or the individual Cycle II indicator scores. These limitations restrict replication and reduce the precision with which the improvement can be evaluated.

Despite these limitations, the study offers a practical contribution. It demonstrates how SQ3R can be adapted to fantasy-story instruction and how process observations can be used alongside achievement data to guide reflection. The main pedagogical implication is that teachers should explicitly model each SQ3R stage, provide written prompts during early implementation, and gradually transfer responsibility to students. The method is most useful when the text, questions, group organization, and review activities are matched to students' reading level and when observation results are used to revise instruction.

5. Conclusion

This classroom action research found progressive improvement after the SQ3R method was implemented in two cycles. The learning process became more active and structured, as reflected in the increase in the overall observation mean from 2.3 in Cycle I to 3.0 in Cycle II. Students showed stronger discipline, participation, accuracy, and cooperation, although some students still required support in expressing their understanding confidently.

Reading-comprehension outcomes also improved across the action stages. The mean score increased from 55 in the pre-action stage to 65.6 in Cycle I and 72.8 in Cycle II, while the mastery percentage increased from 31% to 56% and then to 75%. These results indicate that SQ3R was associated with improved comprehension of fantasy story texts in the participating class. The conclusion is

limited to this classroom context because the study used a small sample, descriptive analysis, and no comparison group.

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