

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background

In today's digital era, technological advancements have influenced various aspects of life, including the world of books and reading media. In the past, books were identical to text printed on paper. However, with technological progress, the definition of books has now expanded. Books no longer contain only text but can also incorporate visual images and illustrations, such as those found in children's picture storybooks (Lutfiputri, 2022). Conventional textbooks are often considered too monotonous and difficult for children aged 8–10 to understand, especially when the content lacks visual appeal. Children within this age range are more interested in media that can entertain while educating, making picture storybooks a more relevant and effective option. Ramadhani & Setyaningtyas (2021) explain that picture storybooks combine narrative flow with expressions of ideas or the author's emotions, and can be enjoyed by children aged 8–10 when the themes relate to their world. Technology has paved the way for new forms of books that emphasize visual elements, attracting readers across various age groups.

Amid the wave of modernization, folktales are often overlooked and overshadowed by digital entertainment media such as advertisements, television, and AI-based devices like smartphones and other gadgets. As a result, the messages they contain quickly fade. Therefore, books are needed as a medium to preserve folktales so that they can remain functional over time. Thus, an illustrated folktale book is introduced to inspire readers and function as a relevant medium for younger generations while introducing local cultural values in an engaging way. Through supporting visual elements, this book aims to capture the interest of children growing up in the digital age. Additionally, the book is designed to encourage awareness of local cultural heritage, especially the story of *Giri Gajah*, which may be unfamiliar to many children today. It also serves as an effort to introduce and preserve local folktales among children aged 8–10.

Folktales, as part of children's literature, play an essential role in education and character development. Afriyanti et al. (2020) note that folktales are constructs intentionally created with specific purposes, including ideological foundations. Folktales reflect the lives of the communities from which they originate and function as tools of social control. The presence of children's literature is also closely tied to ideology, aiming

to influence children's mental awareness. Illustrations in picture books play a crucial role alongside text in constructing meaning (Lutfiputri, 2022). However, the rise of interactive digital media has decreased children's interest in traditional storybooks, including local folktales such as the legend of Giri Gajah. According to Mr. Maarif, a local resident of Giri and caretaker of the Sunan Giri Mosque, the folktale of Giri Gajah remains part of oral tradition. Although some historical books mention the story generally, it has not yet been documented in a visually rich picture book. He also explained that the story has become ambiguous due to a lack of validation and the rapid spread of unverified information. Therefore, socialization through media, specifically picture books, is needed. The fact remains that the folktale of Giri Gajah still exists only in oral form, passed down from parents to children, making it vital to preserve and reintroduce these stories to the younger generation.

Gresik is a city with a rich history and culture. It became known in the 11th century for its important role in inter-island and international trade. The city serves not only as a silent witness to time but also as a meeting point of civilizations that shaped its identity. The development of Gresik is closely linked to the spread of Islam and the role of Nyai Ageng Pinatih, a wealthy widow and syahbandar (harbor master). The city's history is intertwined with the story of Jaka Samudra, who was found by Nyai Ageng Pinatih's sailors after being cast away by his parents. Jaka Samudra later earned the title Raden Paku and became the ruler of Giri Kedaton, known as Sunan Giri. Sunan Giri, also referred to as Prabu Satmoto or Sultan Ainul Yaqin, was appointed ruler in 1487 AD, a year later declared the founding year of Gresik. He ruled for 30 years, and his descendants continued governing for approximately 200 years (Sistem Informasi Geografis Potensi Wilayah Kabupaten Gresik, 2023).

Based on interviews with Mr. Maarif, Gresik was historically divided into two regions: the Gresik territory led by a regent, and the Giri Kingdom led by Sunan Giri. Geographically, Giri is a hilly area. After the fall of the Giri Kingdom, the regions merged, and Giri became composed of three hamlets: Ngajen, Kedaleman, and Giri Gajah, where the Sunan Giri tomb complex is now located. Like many places, these areas carry legends and origin stories, including the tale behind Giri Gajah. The legend began when Sunan Giri tried to calm his crying grandchild. He pointed to a large stone in the garden west of the Sunan Giri Mosque and said, "He watu, dadio gajah!" ("O stone, become an elephant!"). By Allah's permission, the stone transformed into an elephant, calming the child. Sunan

Giri later prayed for the stone to return to its original form. Since then, the hamlet has been called Giri Gajah. The stone, known as Watu

Gajah, still stands west of the tomb complex today. Sunan Giri, accompanied by Syekh Khujjah and Syekh Gerigis, his advisors and companions from Pasai, played an important role in the spread of Islam in Java. Sunan Giri established an Islamic boarding school and a mosque in Giri Kedaton around the year 1403 Saka, making the area a center for the dissemination of Islam.

When the Kingdom of Giri Kedaton collapsed, the royal title was abolished, and the local ruler was appointed as a *penghulu* responsible for maintaining the Mosque and the Tomb of Sunan Giri. The village of Giri later relocated to a lower area, with hamlets such as Giri Gajah, Ngajen (Kajen), and Kedaton no longer functioning as royal territories but rather as parts of Gresik Regency. The hamlet of Giri Gajah itself is located near Kajen, the residence of Syekh Khujjah. The name Kajen is derived from the phrase "Khujjah Ijen," meaning that Syekh Khujjah lived alone in that place. Syekh Khujjah left behind several legacies, including Telaga Kajen, and he granted his land up to the hilltop to Sunan Giri, who was later buried in the area. The large stone believed to have transformed into an elephant lies west of the Sunan Giri Tomb complex and is known as Batu Gajah. These stones stand as witnesses to the local legend that remains an integral part of the region's folklore, known as "Watu Gajah."

According to the Gresik Department of Communication and Information (@pemkabgresik), although reading frequency and internet access are high, reading duration, number of books read, and internet usage for educational purposes remain moderate (Radar Gresik, 2023). The Regent of Gresik remarked that the city is experiencing a reading crisis, with many youth choosing PlayStation rentals, internet cafés, or coffee shops instead of reading books. Their reading habits are more influenced by digital hoaxes than real social contexts (GresikSatu.com, 2023). To address this issue, engaging media is needed, media that can increase children's awareness of local arts and culture. When designed effectively, visual-based media can preserve and spread cultural values from folktales such as Giri Gajah. The target audience of this project is children aged 8–10, as this age group has a high level of curiosity (Lastri et al., 2024). This creates an important opportunity to introduce them to local stories and cultural heritage, especially the legend of Giri Gajah.

Children in this stage are in the concrete operational phase, where logical thinking develops through interaction with physical objects (Perdana et al., 2021). In this context, the term "physical objects" refers to tangible items that children can directly see, touch, or interact with, one example being books. For instance, children can understand concepts such as quantity or comparison when working with physical materials like blocks or fruits. At this developmental stage, children tend to be more interested in concrete and real-world objects, and they require visual stimulation to help them better understand the information presented to them. Therefore, a visual approach in storytelling becomes essential for enhancing their interest and comprehension. Picture Storybooks, which combine visual elements with text, serve as a relevant solution to address this challenge, especially considering that available media for delivering folktales remain limited and are often perceived as less relevant or unappealing to children today. Traditional storybooks without engaging visual elements are more likely to be overlooked, which ultimately decreases children's reading interest and their understanding of local cultural values.

Semesta (2024) states that diverse media formats, such as illustrated folktale books, can combine education with entertainment. These media types can increase children's engagement, especially those accustomed to digital platforms (Rahma et al., 2024). A well-designed picture storybook can deliver information in a relevant and appealing way. Thus, the design of the *Giri Gajah* picture storybook is highly relevant. It introduces a unique local narrative from Giri Village and aims to preserve cultural values for younger generations. To introduce local folktales and increase children's reading interest, the development of the *Giri Gajah* Picture Storybook can be considered highly relevant. *Giri Gajah* is based on a specific folktale from *Giri Gajah Hamlet*, Giri Village, Kebomas District, Gresik Regency. This story aims not only to introduce a unique local narrative but also to preserve and transmit cultural values to the younger generation. Although many Indonesian folktales have been adapted into educational media, the *Giri Gajah* story carries its own urgency, considering that it still exists in oral form and remains relatively unknown to the wider public.

Through Picture Storybooks, children are introduced not only to engaging stories from *Giri Gajah* but also to local cultural elements that form part of their identity. This book is designed with consideration for the characteristics of children aged 8–10, a stage in which curiosity is notably high (Lastri et al., 2024). At this age, children are still in the phase of exploring the world through their senses, relying heavily on images and

illustrations to reinforce their understanding. Clear visuals and appealing colors help enhance engagement while supporting children in forming an emotional connection with the story.

The Giri Gajah Picture Storybook is also expected to serve as an effective medium for increasing reading interest among children in this age group, who tend to be more attracted to media with strong visual elements. Additionally, the development of this book aims to foster cultural awareness among children by providing them with knowledge about local history and values they may not yet be familiar with. In this way, the Giri Gajah Picture Storybook is expected to become an effective educational tool for introducing and preserving local cultural heritage for the younger generation. The design of the Giri Gajah illustrated folktale book carries a sense of novelty because it integrates visual elements that have not been widely applied in the presentation of local folktales, particularly those from Giri Gajah Hamlet, Giri Village, Kebomas District, Gresik Regency. The book will consist of 48 pages, including the cover, and will follow the predetermined book anatomy into which the concept is incorporated. It will use a hardcover with matte lamination, measuring 25×25 cm with a thickness of 1 cm.

Based on existing research, there has been no similar design project conducted at other universities, especially those focusing on folktales from Gresik. Even when illustrated folktale books do exist, they typically center on more popular stories from other regions or on entirely different themes. The uniqueness of this design lies in its local focus, the specific folktale of Giri Gajah, along with a visual approach intentionally crafted to enhance children's interest and comprehension of local culture. Through this approach, the design of this illustrated folktale book serves not only as a learning medium but also as an effective and relevant means of cultural preservation for the younger generation in the digital era.

1.2. Problem Identification

Referring to the background, the researcher selected the title "The Design Of A Giri Gajah Picture Storybook As A Medium For History Education For Children Aged 8-10 Years." The problems identified include:

- a. A questionnaire conducted with 101 children shows that 51 of them prefer watching animated educational videos over reading conventional books. This indicates that

children are more attracted to interactive and visual digital media, reducing their interest in traditional storybooks, including local folktales like *Giri Gajah*.

- b. The same questionnaire also shows that 68 out of 101 children do not know the origin story of *Giri Gajah*, yet they are highly enthusiastic about the idea of a book based on the legend.
- c. Gresik is experiencing a reading crisis, with many children and youth choosing to spend time at gaming centers, internet cafés, or coffee shops rather than reading books in schools or libraries.
- d. Linda et al. (2016) in *Children and Adolescents and Digital Media* state that the transition to digital media has reduced children's engagement with traditional media such as books and local cultural narratives. This aligns with data from NHANES showing increasing digital device usage among children (Chassiakos et al., 2016).
- e. According to Mr. Maarif, little effort has been made to present local folktales such as *Giri Gajah* through interactive media capable of capturing children's attention.

1.3. Problem Formulation

Based on the problems identified, the research question is:

- a. How can the *Giri Gajah* storybook (Village Version) be designed for children aged 8–10 years?

1.4. Research Limitations

Based on the issues described above, the limitations of this study are as follows:

- a. The design of this storybook is limited to children aged 8–10 years.
- b. The illustration style is limited to a simple and appealing visual approach, using pastel colors suitable for children.
- c. The story content is limited to a simplified narrative of the *Giri Gajah* legend without removing its cultural essence or moral values. The storybook is limited to a printed format with a maximum of 30 pages to ensure it remains engaging and easy for children to read.
- d. The book design is limited to the use of software such as Adobe Illustrator and Krita.
- e. The content presented in the story will take the form of imaginative fiction using simple and easy-to-understand language for the target audience, and will be accompanied by

historical information about Giri Gajah (such as names, locations, and related data) to introduce cultural values and local wisdom to children aged 8– 10 years.

1.5. Design Objectives

Based on the identified problems, the design objectives of this study are as follows:

- a. To develop an Picture Storybook containing a local legend with appealing visuals and content that can compete with the attraction of digital media, thereby restoring children's interest in traditional folktales
- b. To compile and design the Picture Storybook "*Giri Gajah*" based on the version from Giri Village in an educational and easy-to-understand format, fulfilling the informational needs of children aged 8–10 years who may not yet be familiar with the origin of the legend.
- c. To provide an alternative literacy medium that is engaging and educational, beyond non-educational activities (such as gaming or hanging out), as a contribution to addressing the reading crisis among students and youth in Gresik Regency.
- d. To create an Picture Storybook that remains relevant to technological developments and the visual media preferences of children today, ensuring that traditional media can still compete with interactive digital experiences.
- e. To present an interactive medium in the form of an Picture Storybook packaged in a fun, enjoyable, and informative manner to enhance children's understanding and interest in local folktales, particularly the Giri Gajah legend.

1.6. Benefits of Design Results

Based on the identified issues, the expected benefits of this design are as follows:

- a. Children can recognize and appreciate local cultural heritage through the *Giri Gajah* legend presented in an engaging and easy-to-understand format.
- b. The book helps children understand and apply cultural and moral values in their daily lives, such as the importance of respecting others, caring for the environment, and honoring traditions.
- c. The appealing and easy-to-understand illustrations can increase children's reading interest, encouraging them to explore other educational and inspiring stories.

1.7. Design Framework

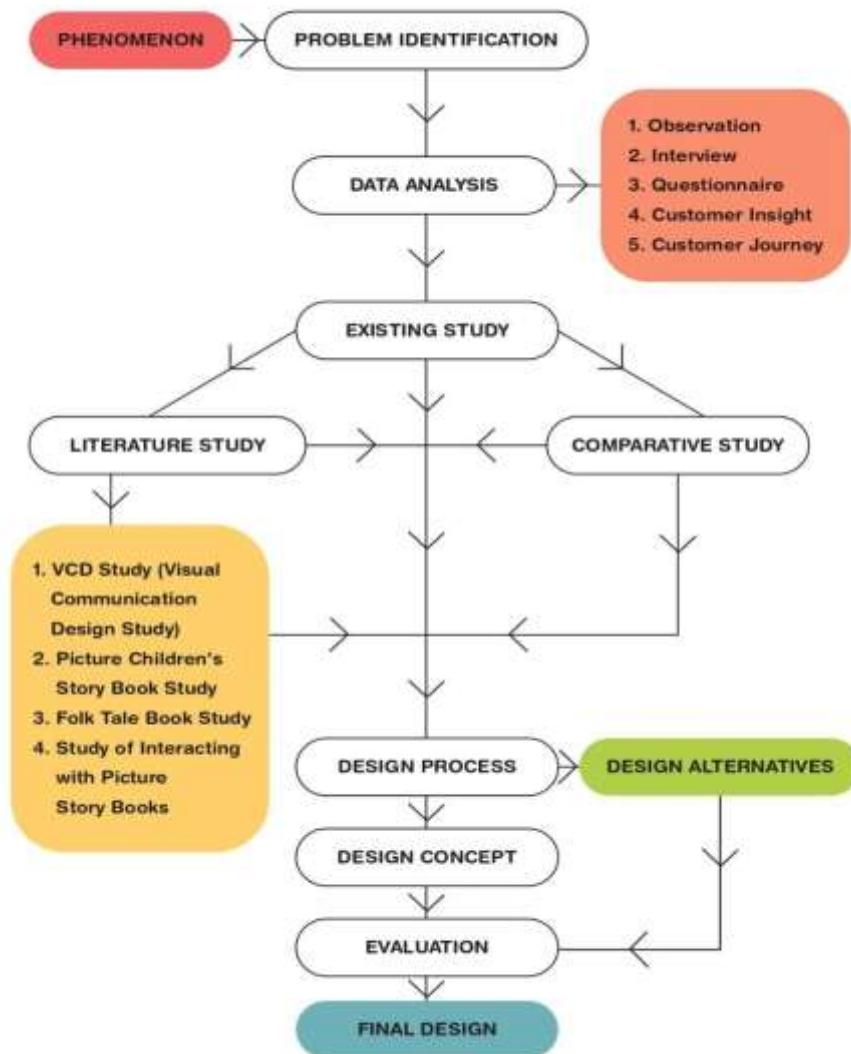


Figure 1.0. Design Framework of the Giri Gajah Picture Storybook as an Educational Media for Introducing History to Children Aged 8–10 Years, 2024
(Source: Personal Documentation)