Enhancing Historical Literacy and Critical Thinking through Primary Source-Based Inquiry: Evidence from the Jogja Library Center Tour

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Abstract: Enhancing Historical Literacy and Critical Thinking through Primary Source-Based Inquiry: Evidence from the Jogja Library Center Tour. **Objectives:** This study aims to analyze the implementation of the inquiry-based learning model "Yogyakarta Library Center Tour" in history learning. It utilizes old daily newspapers to improve historical literacy and its implications for developing critical thinking skills. **Methods:** This study employed an explanatory sequential mixed-methods design, focusing on history learning at SMA Negeri 9 Yogyakarta, Indonesia. The location was chosen not only because of its success in realizing the School Literacy Movement through history learning, but also because of the uniqueness of the teachers' efforts in introducing the potential of the Jogja Library Centre as a repository of primary historical sources. Data collection techniques were comprehensively conducted through tests, interviews, observations, and document analysis. Sampling involved several subjects, including 28 students in quantitative analysis and seven key informants, including the Deputy Head of the Curriculum, history teachers, and student representatives from SMA Negeri 9 Yogyakarta, in qualitative analysis. **Findings:** The application of the inquiry model in history learning can represent historical literacy pedagogy by utilizing contemporary daily newspapers, such as *Kedaulatan Rakyat, Kompas, Suara Karya, Suara Merdeka, Bernas,* and *Sinar Harapan*, which were published during the New Order and Reformation eras as primary sources. Improvements in critical thinking skills were demonstrated through N-Gain analysis in several indicators, namely chronological thinking (0.57), historical understanding (0.52), historical evaluation and interpretation (0.50), and historical research skills (0.48). **Conclusion:** This study proposes a new approach to history learning by integrating tours to local archives and utilizing old newspapers as authentic primary sources. Its significance lies in its concrete contribution to strengthening source-based history learning and supporting the School Literacy Movement contextually.

Keywords: jogja library center, historical literacy, inquiry model, critical thinking skill.

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■ INTRODUCTION

Strategies to improve critical thinking skills have become urgent in 21st-century education, where literacy is a prerequisite (Hudson et al., 2021; Mesquita-Romero et al., 2022). However, literacy in Indonesia faces complex and serious challenges. This is evidenced by the 2022 Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) report, which shows that Indonesia's literacy achievement is still low, with a score of

371 compared to the OECD average of 376 points. This problem is exacerbated by limited access to quality reading materials, especially in remote and marginalized areas (Patria, 2022). In addition, national initiatives such as the School Literacy Movement (GLS), which has been implemented by the Ministry of Education and Culture since 2015, have not demonstrated maximum effectiveness in building a sustainable literacy culture (Minsih et al., 2020). The literacy challenge is further exacerbated by the misuse of generative artificial intelligence features, including ChatGPT, which can weaken the younger generation's analytical and reflective thinking skills (Ma et al., 2024; Sujannah et al., 2025).

The complexity of this problem increases in line with global demands that emphasize the importance of critical thinking, adaptive skills, and the ability to filter information amid the rapid flow of digital data. History should be one of the subjects that can improve students' literacy, including the ability to read, interpret, and critically evaluate historical sources (Wilson et al., 2023). This process requires students' active involvement in analysing historical narratives through a multi-perspective approach, understanding the socio-political context behind events, and being able to detect bias and intent from the creators of the sources (Gentallan & Pandan, 2024). Teachers do not act as the sole authority on knowledge (Agustina et al., 2022; Falloon, 2020; Kuru, 2022), but rather as facilitators who design learning by integrating authentic primary and secondary sources (Tirado-Olivares et al., 2021). One such learning model is inquiry, which stems from a constructivist approach that allows students to enhance their knowledge through investigation and exploration (Al Mamun & Lawrie, 2023; Brookes et al., 2020; Sutiani et al., 2021; Yilmaz & Ayaz, 2021). Learning activities will be structured, involving the enhancement of knowledge based on scientific evidence, testing the validity of implicit discourse in history textbooks, and discovering new facts while forming different perspectives (Hill, 2024; Kainulainen et al., 2025). Historical sources, whether in archives, manuscripts, or other visual media, are no longer viewed as a collection of factual data that needs to be memorized but rather as study materials that require in-depth understanding and critical interpretation (Oliver & Purichia, 2018). Through an inquiry model that prioritizes historical literacy, students are encouraged to develop a reflective understanding of history while increasing their awareness of current realities through the contextual analysis and interpretation of past events.

Most history lessons are only presented with theories and factual memorization, encouraging teachers to use conventional models or lecture methods (Köse, 2022; Saefudin, 2025). However, the implementation of history learning at SMA Negeri 9 Yogyakarta has pedagogical innovations based on literacy to improve critical thinking skills. This is achieved by utilizing primary sources, such as daily newspapers from the New Order era to the Reformation era, which the Jogja Library Centre has collected, one of the regional facilities and cultural heritage sites in Yogyakarta. The "Jogja Library Center Tour" investigation model offers a cognitive understanding of the transition from the New Order era to the Reformation era, developing literacy skills in an interactive and engaging manner, while potentially enhancing historical thinking skills. This inquiry model emphasizes student involvement in questioning and evaluating the truth of historical narratives by comparing the information with authentic data obtained from primary sources such as daily newspapers. The opening dialogue process, specifically designed to trigger students' curiosity, also strengthens their exploration and critical analysis skills, enabling them to become accustomed to building arguments based on objective evidence.

Several studies have shown that applying literacy pedagogy through inquiry-based learning models has successfully increased student participation, strengthened critical thinking skills, and fostered deeper conceptual understanding (Fairuz et al., 2019; Yasdin et al., 2021). However, the inquiry model in previous studies still relied on secondary sources such as textbooks or scientific articles and historical scenarios prepared by teachers. Therefore, a standard limitation is the lack of student exposure to primary historical learning resources, such as authentic local daily newspapers (Lee King et al., 2019; Liu & Wang, 2022). In the context of history education in Indonesia, the use of daily newspapers from the New Order and Reformation eras as learning resources is a unique pedagogical innovation, as these periods were characterized by significant political dynamics, media control, and substantial changes in public discourse (Eddyono, 2020; Purwanta & Novianto, 2022). Students' direct access to original documents enables them to track the evolution of public opinion, media bias, and shifts in the narrative of power over time. This enriches the learning experience and fosters a more contextual and critical historical awareness of Indonesia's democratization process and press freedom.

This study will focus on exploring the planning, implementation, and impact of a learning model designed to develop historical thinking skills, in accordance with the learning outcomes of the *Merdeka* Curriculum. In addition, this study is expected to provide theoretical and practical contributions, particularly for history teachers, through the utilization of primary sources, such as daily newspapers, as educational media that support the improvement of literacy and historical thinking skills among students. Based on this background, the research questions in this study are as follows:

1. How is the model for searching the Jogja Library Centre's daily newspaper collection applied at SMA Negeri 9 Yogyakarta?
2. What are the implications of using primary sources from the daily newspaper collection of the Jogja Library Centre in improving students' critical thinking skills?

■ METHOD

Participants

The selection of locations was based on at least two considerations. First, the success of history teaching at State Senior High School 9 Yogyakarta in realising the School Literacy Movement Program in the context of history and achieving Phase F of History Learning Outcomes, namely historical literacy and historical research skills. Students can trace historical events through old newspapers. This is done through primary sources, such as daily newspapers from the New Order era to the Reformation era. Compared to the limitations of previous research findings on the concrete implementation of the School Literacy Movement Policy, the implementation of history learning at SMA Negeri 9 Yogyakarta, which instructs students to collect, verify, and analyze daily newspapers from the New Order to the Reformation era, is an important innovation in this study. In line with historical literacy, this process encourages students to verify information, compare sources, and assess the accuracy and perspective of circulating narratives. Second, the uniqueness of SMA Negeri 9 Yogyakarta as a School of Arts and Culture. All educational activities must be contextualised with the locality and potential of Yogyakarta to realise a conservation approach to living heritage, including history in the curriculum.

In this study, participants were divided into two groups using a mixed-methods approach. In the quantitative stage, the research participants consisted of 36 students from Class XII-3 of

SMA Negeri 9 Yogyakarta, who participated in history lessons using the inquiry model, with old newspapers as the primary source. This stage aimed to measure students' critical thinking skills before and after participating in the lessons. Meanwhile, in the qualitative stage, the participants comprised seven selected students representing three critical thinking test results categories (high, medium, and low) to obtain diverse and in-depth data about their learning experiences. In addition to the students, two other key informants were involved: the 12th-grade history teacher and the Deputy Principal for Curriculum. The subjects in the qualitative stage were selected using purposive sampling techniques, considering both inclusion and exclusion criteria, particularly those related to the informants' roles in implementing history learning and their active involvement in primary source-based history literacy activities (Emmel, 2014). The exclusion criteria in this study were determined based on the role of the research subjects in influencing the way history is taught at SMA Negeri 9 Yogyakarta, including: (1) The Deputy Principal for Curriculum provided information about the implementation and challenges of the School Literacy Movement Program, particularly the culture of reading for 15 minutes before starting lessons; (2) Grade XII history teachers played a role, especially in designing discovery-based learning models for visits to the Jogja Library Center in history lessons. In addition to considering the potential of the Jogja Library Centre, history teachers must ensure the relevance of the daily newspaper collection to the learning material and the technical feasibility of student visits. (3) Grade XII student representatives provided information about their impressions and experiences during the history learning process. The involvement of seven students is still within the ideal range recommended for small to medium-scale qualitative studies, which is between 6 and 10 participants per homogeneous group (Guest et al., 2006).

The selection of students as research subjects was based on the inclusion criterion of moderate interest in history, as determined by the researcher's observations during learning activities, including the students' active involvement and concentration during learning. In qualitative case study research, the number of subjects does not represent data saturation, but rather the depth of information obtained.

Research Design and Procedures

This study employed a mixed-methods design with an explanatory sequential model. This design began with collecting and analyzing quantitative data to measure students' critical thinking skills through pre- and post-tests in one group. Before implementing the treatment, students were administered pre-test questions (initial test) with instructions to select and analyze historical sources, including daily newspapers and online information. Furthermore, a post-test was also administered at the end of the learning process to measure the improvement of critical thinking skills through the Jogja Library Centre Tour inquiry model. In this context, a qualitative approach was also used to explore the experiences of students and teachers during the primary historical source-based learning process. This approach aimed to provide a comprehensive understanding of the influence of old newspaper-based learning on students' critical thinking skills, based on five leading indicators.

The research procedure consisted of four steps, carried out from January to February 2025. First, a pre-research visit was conducted to obtain an overview of the implementation of history and culture learning in schools in general and to observe the implementation of the Jogja Library Centre Tour learning model in the fourth week of January 2025. Second, observation of initial learning activities in the classroom, collection of

quantitative data related to students' critical thinking skills (pre-test), and interviews with the Vice Principal were conducted in the first week of February 2025. Third, observation of visits to the Jogja Library Centre and interviews with history teachers were conducted in the second week of February 2025. Fourth, the collection of information in the form of student post-tests through case studies in Student Worksheets, interviews with students about their impressions during the learning process, and the collection of other supporting data, such as learning module documents, students' worksheets, visit reports, and interviews with the Deputy Principal for Curriculum, were conducted in the third and fourth weeks of February 2025. The aspects analyzed from the documents included the content and structure of the students' worksheets, whether it contained questions that required analysis, interpretation, and evaluation; students' answers were analyzed to see their ability to identify problems, assess sources, draw conclusions, and present arguments logically; and the content of the learning module, whether it encouraged exploration of primary sources and critical discussion. Additionally, visit reports and interviews with students were analyzed to explore their reflections on the learning process and the extent to which they engaged in critical thinking. Interviews with the Deputy Principal for Curriculum also provided information on implementing the School Literacy Movement.

Instrument

Before participating in the Jogja Library Centre Tour, all 12th-grade students were given case studies on historical events from the New Order to the Reformation. These case studies had to be explored and analyzed using information from the internet. Quantitative instruments used critical thinking tests, including:

Table 1. Assessment indicators in students' worksheets

Historical Thinking Indicators	Aspects Assessed	Description of Student Performance	Scale
Understanding History	Relevance of content to historical context	Presenting information that is accurate in terms of the background of events, places, and time.	1 = Not Relevant 2 = Not Very Relevant 3 = Relevant 4 = Very Relevant
	Clarity of historical narrative	Students can compose narratives that are coherent, informative, and easy to understand	
Historical analysis and interpretation	Ability to distinguish between facts and opinions	Able to distinguish between facts and opinions in historical sources	1 = Unable 2 = Less Able 3 = Able 4 = Very Able
	Ability to analyze from multiple perspectives	Demonstrates the ability to view events from various perspectives (actors, media, ideology).	
	Ability to argue interpretively	Presents logical and evidence-based interpretations.	

Historical research skills	Selection and validation of historical sources	Able to select and explain the reasons for selecting the primary and secondary sources used.	1 = Unclear 2 = Inaccurate 3 = Accurate 4 = Very sharp
	Narrative composition	Able to compose reports that include findings, analysis, and conclusions in a systematic and logical manner.	
Chronological thinking	Logical sequence of events	Present events in sequence based on time and cause-and-effect relationships.	1 = Not sequential 2 =Partially sequential 3 = Sequential 4 = Very systematic
	Use of historical time concepts (synchronic/diachronic)	Using terms and understanding of time spans, eras, periods, and historical changes appropriately.	
	Reflection on historical continuity	Demonstrating an understanding that historical events are interrelated and contribute to current developments.	

The qualitative instruments used in this study include three main elements that support in-depth data collection. First, semi-structured interviews were conducted with history teachers to explore information related to lesson planning. These interviews employed key questions that were not only directed at teachers but also designed to elicit a more comprehensive perspective from students on the implementation process of the inquiry model. Some of the interview questions for history teachers included: "What were your considerations in designing learning modules using the Yogyakarta Library Center Inquiry Model?"; "How was the Yogyakarta Library Center Inquiry Model implemented?"; "How did you evaluate students using the discovery-based learning model at the Yogyakarta Library Center?"; "What are the obstacles in implementing the Yogyakarta Library Center Inquiry Learning Model?" and "What solutions have you implemented to overcome these challenges?"

Meanwhile, interviews with students focused on gathering information about active student participation, analyzing editorials in daily newspapers, and their impressions and experiences during the learning process. Specifically, some interview questions for students included: "How did you participate in the learning process of the Yogyakarta Library Centre Tour?" and "How do you analyze daily newspapers found at the Yogyakarta Library Centre?" What are your impressions and experiences during the learning process? What challenges did you face during the learning process? What solutions did you implement to overcome your challenges during the learning process?" Second, observations of the history learning process through the Yogyakarta Library Centre model covered several important aspects. First, consider how history teachers presented material on the New Order and Reformation periods, including the strategies they used to build student interest and engagement during material delivery. Second, the formation of discussion groups is a focus, especially regarding the distribution of roles, the dynamics of cooperation between members, and the teacher's task directions. Third, during the visit to the Jogja Library Center, observations

focused on students' active participation, their ability to search for and select primary sources such as old newspapers, and teacher guidance during activities. Another important aspect is how students utilize the sources they find to analyze historical events, including the extent to which they can assess the validity and relevance of the information. Finally, the sustainability of field activities, such as follow-up discussions, presentations, or reports, and how teachers evaluate student learning outcomes, particularly in terms of critical thinking and historical literacy skills. Third, document analysis, such as student visit reports containing content reviews and multi-perspective news analysis, observation visits to observe group discussions, or presentation of visit accountability reports and interviews, plays a crucial role in producing findings that are guaranteed to be valid and credible.

The validity of the data was reviewed by two researchers who are experts in qualitative research, particularly in the field of history education. The reliability of the data was determined using source and technique triangulation. Source triangulation was used to test the validity of data collected from various respondents; for example, does the Jogja Library Center truly represent the School Literacy Movement? To determine the truth, data analysis was required, including information from the Deputy Head of Curriculum, history teachers, and representatives of 12th-grade students who were informants. Meanwhile, triangulation techniques focused on verifying data obtained from three data collection methods: observation, interviews, and document analysis, for example, to determine whether the Jogja Library Centre Tour has implications for students' critical thinking skills. In this context, the validity of information obtained from document analysis, such as student visit reports containing content reviews and multi-perspective news analysis, observation visits observing the implementation of group discussions, or the presentation of visit and

interview accountability reports, plays a crucial role in producing findings that are guaranteed to be valid and credible.

Data Analysis

This study uses primary and secondary data sources. Primary data was collected through pretest and posttest results of critical thinking skills, interviews, observations, and document analysis. Meanwhile, secondary data consisted of journal articles or supporting books related to the potential of the Yogyakarta Library Centre and the use of primary sources to improve historical literacy, which were used to enrich the research findings. After the data were collected, a comprehensive quantitative data analysis was conducted, considering the characteristics of the instruments developed as case study tests. Each question was designed to measure four indicators of historical thinking skills, namely historical understanding, historical analysis and interpretation, historical research skills, and chronological thinking, through a case study of a historical event during the New Order to the Reformation, where students in a group were instructed to sort facts and opinions, explore and analyze information from various internet sources. Two lecturers, experts in history education, tested content validity by providing input on the appropriateness of the case context, the formulation of questions, and the depth of cognitive demands that lead to higher-order thinking skills (HOTS) assessment.

Construct validity was strengthened by testing the correlation between items and total scores using the Pearson product-moment correlation technique. Items that did not show a significant correlation ($r < 0.3$) were revised to improve the clarity of the instructions, case context, and depth of the assessment indicators. In addition, the instrument's reliability was assessed using Cronbach's Alpha method, yielding a result of 0.82, indicating high internal consistency and suitability for measuring case-

based historical thinking skills. The Shapiro-Wilk normality test indicated that the pretest and posttest data were normally distributed (p-value> 0.05), allowing for the use of a paired sample t-test to assess the difference in scores before and after the treatment. The test results showed a statistically significant difference (p-value < 0.01), indicating that the old newspaper-based learning treatment in the inquiry model improved student scores.

N-Gain analysis was used to measure the effectiveness of learning in improving critical thinking skills, showing an improvement in the moderate category for all indicators, with a value range of 0.48 to **0.57.** The validity of quantitative data was reinforced through triangulation with qualitative data, including student reflections, observations of the learning process, and analysis of learning outcome reports. The consistency between the increase in scores and the narrative of students' experiences in understanding historical sources, organizing data, and constructing evidence-based arguments confirmed that the case study test had successfully described the development of historical thinking skills authentically and measurably.

Qualitative data analysis was conducted using interactive techniques promoted by Miles and Huberman (1992), including data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. The data reduction stage was carried out by reviewing interview transcripts, observation results, and documents to identify relevant patterns and themes, which were then categorized into four main issues, namely literacy challenges due to ChatGPT misuse and teacher limitations, the potential of the Jogja Library Center as a primary historical source, the use of old newspapers as a source of historical pedagogy, and its contribution to improving students' critical thinking skills. Additionally, data presentation was conducted using simple code tables to facilitate the visualization of relationships between categories and support a more systematic analysis process.

The final stage involved drawing and verifying reflective conclusions by connecting the reduced data and presenting it through triangulation between sources and reinforcement with secondary references. This interactive approach allowed for dynamic, comprehensive, and accountable analysis, while avoiding subjective and partial data interpretation.

The coding process in this study was conducted gradually and systematically to transform raw data, in the form of interview transcripts and field notes, into meaningful analytical themes. After collecting the data, the researchers reread the transcripts and notes to identify important information units relevant to the research focus. At this stage, the researcher assigned initial codes to key quotes or statements related to history learning practices, the use of primary sources, historical literacy, and emerging obstacles. For example, student statements mentioning Wikipedia as a reference were coded as "unverified references," while field notes indicating a lack of teacher guidance in source validation were coded as "limitations of teacher guidance."

Researchers grouped these initial codes into broader categories based on relevance and similarity of meaning. At this stage, codes such as "unverified references," "use of ChatGPT," and "lack of evaluation of student references" were combined into larger categories, including "challenges in digital literacy." Similarly, findings related to student activities when accessing old newspapers or archives during library visits were categorized as "use of primary sources in history learning." Finally, researchers filtered and organized these categories into main themes that reflected the phenomenon's essence. This process resulted in four main themes: (1) literacy challenges due to ChatGPT misuse and teacher limitations, (2) the potential of the Jogja Library Center as a repository of primary historical sources, (3) the use of primary sources such as daily newspapers from the New Order to Reform eras in history

pedagogy, and (4) the contribution of learning models in improving students' critical thinking skills. The coding process facilitated the organization of complex data, ensuring that the findings were sourced directly from empirical data and interpreted consistently through an inductive approach.

■ **RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

Implementation of Historical Literacy through the Use of Primary Sources in Inquiry-Based Learning

Implementing the School Literacy Movement (GLS) is a strategic response to low literacy skills among students, with the primary objective of fostering an interest in reading while improving conceptual understanding of knowledge (Kartikasari & Nuryasana, 2022). Literacy in this context is not only a technical reading skill, but also a crucial foundation for character development and critical thinking. Individuals with strong literacy skills are generally better able to sort and evaluate information reflectively (Septiari et al., 2023). However, the effectiveness of literacy programs needs to be critically evaluated, especially the practice of reading non-textbooks for 15 minutes before class, which has become a routine. The question is, does this activity really build deep and sustainable literacy capacity? (Ansori, 2023). The Deputy Head of Curriculum at SMA Negeri 9 Yogyakarta revealed that the 15-minute reading culture has become a routine. Various conveniences in accessing AI features, such as ChatGPT, have emerged to create practical summaries without requiring actual reading and reflection on the content. In addition, teachers' limitations in consistently monitoring and evaluating students' literacy outcomes have exacerbated the situation. As a result, this creates the potential for plagiarism to flourish, hindering the development of critical thinking, which should be at the core of literacy activities.

In response to this challenge, history teachers at State Senior High School 9 in Yogyakarta developed an innovative learning program called the "Jogja Library Center Tour." In this context, a significant achievement was to enhance students' understanding of the subject matter, "The Life of the Indonesian People in the New Order and Reform Era," and how students perceive information drawn from primary sources and libraries. Before this program was implemented, analyzing daily newspapers was not part of students' learning practices at school, as it was considered less efficient compared to searching for information online. Nowadays, the learning experience is dominated by textbooks, online summaries, and instant digital platforms such as *Wikipedia* or *ChatGPT*, which, although practical, do not encourage a deep understanding of the process and validity of information sources.

Meanwhile, the Jogja Library Center was considered outdated, unattractive, and lacking a strategic position in history learning activities, which had been theoretical and instructional. The contextual approach offered by history teachers at SMA Negeri 9 Yogyakarta through direct visits and primary source search activities triggered a significant change in perspective.

Students are invited to view old newspaper collections as static historical sources and as living documents representing the traces of discourse, ideology, and socio-political constructions from the New Order to the Reformation. Through direct interaction with these archives, students realise that history is not a single narrative, but rather the result of the constructions of various actors and interests.

The experience of searching, selecting, reading, and analyzing articles from newspapers such as *Kompas, Kedaulatan Rakyat, Suara Merdeka*, and *Sinar Harapan* enabled students to understand the importance of source criticism, distinguish between facts and opinions, and recognize media bias and framing in the

representation of an event. Meanwhile, students' perceptions of the Jogja Library Centre's existence also changed.

Based on interviews with history teachers at SMA Negeri 9 Yogyakarta, the selection of the Jogja Library Centre as an alternative literacy space was based on three primary considerations. First, the historical significance of the Jogja Library Centre, which once functioned as the Kolff Buning office during the colonial period, the Domei news office during the Japanese occupation, and is now the Provincial Library. Although it has been designated as one of Yogyakarta's cultural heritage sites, its location on Malioboro Street, the centre of tourism and culinary arts, has been neglected. This aligns with PD1'sPD1's statement: "When I visited the Jogja Library Centre, I found a quiet place with almost no visitors." *"It turns out that there is an extraordinary amount of archives there."* (Interview with PD1/2A on Thursday, February 20, 2025).

As expressed by PD1, the wealth of archives owned by the Jogja Library Center can be developed as an alternative literacy space and an authentic source of historical learning. However, systematic efforts are needed to integrate this potential into the learning process. Second, the material discussed, "Political Dynamics and Community Life from the New Order to the Reformation Era," is closely related to the content of newspapers such as *Kedaulatan Rakyat, Kompas, Suara Merdeka,* and *Sinar Harapan*, which serve as authentic sources that can trigger students' interpretations and prevent them from being fixated on a single historical narrative. History teachers emphasize that historical understanding cannot be built linearly or solely through textbooks, but requires a multi-perspective approach that includes critical evaluation of sources. This process trains students to evaluate how the media portrays figures, policies, and the context of power, so they learn not to accept information at face value. Third,

the technical aspects that facilitate access to the Jogja Library Centre from schools, both individually and in groups, support the effectiveness of field trips as part of the learning process. Using newspaper archives as a source of historical learning enhances historical literacy and strategically reduces students' dependence on instant information that is prone to plagiarism.

In this scheme, teachers can assess how students understand the content of primary sources, construct interpretations, and develop arguments based on valid data. Thus, integrating visits to the Yogyakarta Library Centre offers an alternative to conventional and static approaches to literacy, creating a pedagogical space that combines local archives, literacy skills, and critical thinking development. This strategy reinforces the role of teachers as facilitators and encourages students to become active learners who are ethically responsible in processing information. Based on the researcher's observations, this learning activity was carried out in four meetings as part of an experience-based historical inquiry model.

As an introduction, the first meeting began with the history teacher explaining the political dynamics of Indonesia during the New Order era until the Reformation. The material was deliberately presented based on a textbook published by the Ministry of Education and Culture, supported by learning materials in Student Worksheets. However, the delivery of the material was not one-way. Instead, the history teacher created a space for dialogue, inviting students to express critical perspectives on the characteristics of the New Order era, from the Reformation to the present day. The discussion was not merely an exchange of opinions, but developed into a multidimensional learning forum where students were encouraged to analyze political issues with implications for social, economic, and cultural aspects. In this context, the teacher acted as a facilitator, providing direct feedback on the arguments presented and enriching the discussion

through additional critical perspectives. This teaching strategy is reinforced through open-ended reflective questions, such as "What is the basis for your belief that the New Order regime was authoritarian?" or "How do you assess the success of the Reformation in rebuilding democracy in Indonesia?" These questions stimulate higher-order thinking skills and foster students' sensitivity to contemporary historical issues.

Figure 1. The history teacher explains the lesson

To enhance class discussions, teachers assigned students to form small groups, each of which had to select and analyze three specific issues from the New Order to the Reformation period. Two main criteria guided the topic selection process. First, emotional proximity refers to the extent to which the topic resonates with the group. Second is intellectual proximity, which refers to the availability of primary and secondary reference materials that can support in-depth analysis. To facilitate this process, students were encouraged to search for secondary sources first as a preliminary step towards source-based analysis planned for the next session. Next, the time frame or specific dates of historical events were selected. This was important because it was related to the basic considerations in exploring the daily newspapers stored at the Jogja Library Center. In this way, students learned history as a narrative of the past and developed literacy skills by utilizing archives and critical reasoning to interpret historical dynamics in context.

Figure 2. Observing articles in old newspapers

In the second meeting, the focus of learning shifted to direct exploration of primary sources through a field trip to the Jogja Library Center. In this activity, students were assigned to search for national newspaper archives, including *Kedaulatan Rakyat, Kompas, Suara Karya, Suara Merdeka, Bernas, and Sinar Harapan*. In addition, they were also directed to supplement their data search using online sources, aiming to broaden their perspectives and deepen the validation of historical arguments that had been presented previously in class. This activity was explicitly designed to strengthen students' historical literacy skills, especially in critically reading news texts and questioning narratives constructed by the media in the past. The observation results show that most students can identify historical issues thematically and formulate relevant critical questions; however, they still struggle to identify valid sources. This phenomenon is evident in their tendency to use unverified online references, such as Wikipedia, personal blogs, or social media posts, which shows a gap in their understanding of the credibility and validity of historical information. One of the leading causes of this problem is the absence of evaluation indicators that explicitly emphasize the importance of reference quality in the learning process. In addition, digital technology, which makes it easier for students to obtain information, contributes to their weak ability to filter valid sources. As a result, even

though they have the potential for critical thinking, without proper guidance in digital literacy and evaluation of sources, they tend to use information that is not academically credible. This is a challenge for history teachers in the discovery-based learning process at the Yogyakarta Central Library Centre.

Figure 3. Group discussion activity

History teachers must take a more active role in guiding information literacy. Through a mentoring approach, teachers introduce the use of accredited scientific journals and academic websites as valid sources for cross-verification. This action has proven to have a positive impact, with significant changes evident in how students reconstruct news content and construct historical interpretations. No longer merely descriptive, students are beginning to show critical awareness of the ideological position of the media and its relationship to the power structure during the New Order era.

A concrete example of this transformation can be seen in the group's analysis of the 1984 Tanjung Priok Incident. The group found that this event received limited coverage in the mainstream media. They interpreted this finding as a strong indication of the New Order regime's restrictions on press freedom. They explained that media censorship was a political tool to control public discourse and suppress international opinion. This type of analysis demonstrates significant progress in the students' thinking, and they did not merely memorize events. However, they were able to connect media dynamics with state strategies in

shaping political reality. Therefore, the visit to the Jogja Library Centre enriched their historical knowledge and was crucial in fostering students' critical awareness of the production of historical knowledge and the importance of interpreting the past through a multi-perspective lens.

In the third meeting, learning shifted to the interpretation stage, where students were asked to analyze the content of the news articles they had collected previously. Each group was directed to identify the differences between factual statements and opinions in the news texts, as well as to compile narrative summaries and analyze the construction of the messages: *who shaped the narrative, for what purpose, and in what context of power.* This interpretation process was not singular, but instead expressed from each group's perspective, resulting in diverse interpretations of the same source. One group chose an article from the May 28, 2000, edition of Kedaulatan Rakyat entitled "Papuan Youth Leave the Republic of Indonesia." This article analyzed the political tensions between the central government and the Papuan people at the beginning of the Reformation era. In their critical interpretation, the students highlighted that although the news emphasized the government's efforts to maintain national integrity, the cultural aspects and the Papuan people's right to self-determination were ignored. This analysis demonstrates the students' ability not only to accept media narratives passively but also to question the actors of power behind the news and understand how the media contributes to the reproduction of state ideology.

More than just conceptual interpretation, students began to demonstrate their ability to engage in historical reflection, correlating past political dynamics with contemporary situations. Some students even attempted to link policy patterns during the New Order era with post-Reform political practices, particularly in terms of ethnic conflict management and the role of the media in shaping the dominant discourse. In their

reflections, students understand that even though the system of government has formally changed, practices such as control over public narratives or the marginalisation of certain groups can still be found, albeit in more subtle forms. Thus, the activities in this meeting succeeded in elevating history learning from a mere process of memorizing chronology to a means of developing critical awareness. Through this approach, students not only learned about historical events but also gained insight into history, as they could connect past events with power structures that remain relevant in the current context.

The fourth meeting was an opportunity to present the results of the students' analysis of the news. Each group presented its exploration and interpretation to the class. These presentations not only served as a forum for sharing knowledge but also as a space for testing arguments, as students had to be able to respond to questions and criticism openly. The presentation assessment was based on four primary indicators: (1) depth of interpretation of news content, (2) accuracy in selecting and evaluating information sources, (3) coherent and logical analysis structure, and (4) creativity in presentation and mastery of the material presented. This activity successfully created a more contextual historical dialogue atmosphere, as evidenced by the teacher's evaluative notes and written reflections on the process. Students actively expressed their views and responded critically to the arguments of other groups. The history teacher played a strategic role as a discussion moderator, helping to clarify misunderstandings and redirecting the conversation to the historical framework.

At the end of the session, the teacher asked students to reflect on their experiences during the visit to the Jogja Library Center. From the observations made, it was revealed that many students initially viewed the Jogja Library Center as a closed and unattractive space, primarily due to its location in a commercial and tourist area that is not typically associated with educational activities. However, after the inquiry-based visit process, the students' perspectives changed.

Some students realised that the place contained authentic primary sources rich in historical value, which could be critically utilized in the learning process. This change demonstrates that contextual approaches and direct experiences have the transformative power to shape students' perceptions of public spaces as meaningful learning environments. In a reflective interview, one student mentioned that visiting the Jogja Library Center was a fun and meaningful experience. This shows deep emotional and cognitive engagement—two important elements in shaping learning motivation and critical thinking skills. During the process, teachers consistently monitored not only the final results but also the dynamics of dialogue, student interactions with primary sources, and how they constructed meaning from the historical texts analyzed. This monitoring is evidence of a formative approach that assesses the process rather than just the product.

Through implementing these four stages of activities, history teachers at the secondary school level have successfully developed a historical literacy model that encourages the development of historical thinking skills. In the context of the *Merdeka Curriculum*, historical thinking skills encompass 13 learning objectives that cover an understanding of the dimensions of humanity, space, and time, as well as the ability to think chronologically and contextually (Ridwan & Marta, 2022). The inquiry-based model, which utilizes visits to the Jogja Library Centre, concretely achieves Phase F learning outcomes in History, particularly in the "Historical Process Skills." At this stage, students are trained to read and analyze primary sources in old newspaper archives, cross-verify their findings through online sources and textbooks, and systematically compile historical reports in both digital and non-digital formats. This learning model provides space to strengthen historical competence and

shape students as active, reflective, and responsible subjects in understanding, interpreting, and critically reconstructing past realities.

In a broader context, this transformation reflects the success of participatory and experience-based learning approaches. Students are not merely recipients of information, but active participants in constructing historical meaning. Libraries have evolved from repositories for storing books to public spaces that support reflective and evidence-based learning processes. Pedagogically, this strengthens the position of primary sources and archives as an important part of the historical literacy infrastructure, which has been marginalized in conventional learning practices. Therefore, the "Jogja Library Center Tour" model improves students' historical thinking skills and successfully creates a paradigm shift in understanding historical sources and learning spaces.

Improving Historical Thinking Skills

As mentioned, historical literacy will open opportunities to improve 21st-century skills, including historical thinking skills (Silalahi et al., 2022). In line with efforts to improve critical thinking skills through various problem-solving activities, such as identifying, defining, analyzing, comparing, and improving, history education must be overhauled (Burgos-Videla et al., 2025; Gibson et al., 2025). Various perspectives suggest that the conceptual definition of historical thinking skills cannot be understood as the ability to use historical information to understand the past, but rather involves various elements (Meral & Karakuþ-Yýlmaz, 2022; Zaim Najmi Mohd Rahim et al., 2019). Before participating in this learning program, most students demonstrated limitations in critically evaluating sources, particularly when working with newspaper archives as historical artifacts. This was due to two main factors: first, students' limited exposure to non-textbook primary sources, such as historical print media articles, which were considered impractical; and second, a curriculum that did not emphasize the evaluative dimension in selecting valid references.

In general practice, the history learning process is stuck in a descriptive-narrative approach, where students are directed more towards memorizing facts than evaluating the dynamics of historical information production. Archival exploration activities at the Jogja Library Center offer a valuable space for students to actively practice source criticism skills. Students are assigned to search for news published during the New Order and Reformation periods, then compare representations of events from various print media, such as *Kedaulatan Rakyat, Kompas, Suara Karya, Suara Merdeka, Bernas,* and *Sinar Harapan*. This approach requires students to ask critical questions: Who produced this information? In what context of power was this text written? Who benefits from this narrative? These questions serve as important entry points for understanding history through critical discourse analysis, which aims to uncover the hidden ideology underlying media narratives.

Figure 4. Visit format

News Content……………………………
Analysis………………………………….

In addition, source criticism skills are related to higher-order thinking skills and are metacognitive in nature, as they involve students' awareness of how they evaluate, select, and interpret information.

This study significantly enhanced students' ability to identify source bias, comprehend the nuances of political representation in texts, and construct alternative interpretations through data triangulation. This ability directly reflects the achievement of indicators in the "Historical Process Skills" domain required by the *Merdeka* Curriculum, particularly in mastering historical analysis's chronological, causal, and multiperspective aspects.

This finding aligns with research conducted by Ruli Seftiana Aziza and Nana Supriyatna (2021), which suggests that involving students in the learning process can expand opportunities to develop historical thinking skills (Aziza & Supriatna, 2021). Furthermore, the history teacher's assessment indicators for the Jogja Library Centre Tour activities can be used as a reference to determine the extent of improvement in students' critical thinking skills.

Table 2. Pretest and posttest results

Critical Thinking Indicator	Pretest (Mean)	Post-Test (Mean)	N-Gain	Categories
Historical Understanding	45.2	73.8	0.52	Moderate
Historical Analysis and Interpretation	40.5	70.1	0.50	Moderate
Historical Research Skills	38.9	68.4	0.48	Moderate
Chronological Thinking	42.1	75.3	0.57	Moderate

Historical Understanding

Based on data presented in Table 2, the historical understanding indicator significantly increased from a pretest average score of 45.2 to 73.8 on the posttest, with an N-Gain value of 0.52, which falls into the moderate category. These findings reflect that using old newspapers as primary sources in history learning can help students understand the context of past events in a more concrete and relevant way.

The primary source-based learning model has been proven to encourage students to actively engage in reading, connecting, and understanding historical narratives as a whole, not only as information but as constructions of events with specific backgrounds, perspectives, and dynamics. This improvement is inseparable from the strategy of history teachers who provide students with space to independently search for and validate the truth of sources, as a first step in developing critical historical understanding.

However, teachers continue to emphasize the quality of analysis as the basis for assessment, so students are required not only to understand the content of the text but also to consider various aspects that underlie the emergence of a particular case in a particular newspaper. This includes the context the event, cause-and-effect relationships, the author's point of view, and the institutional interests of the media publishing the news.

One concrete example of this learning is when students are asked to analyze a news article, "Papuan Youth Leaves the Republic of Indonesia," published in the Kedaulatan Rakyat newspaper on May 28, 2000. In this activity, students compiled news content in a structured manner, then analyzed it based on the event's background, the figures and parties involved, the differences between the facts and the author's opinions, and the newspaper's orientation and political interests. This approach not only strengthened students' understanding of history

but also shaped their sensitivity to media narratives and the production of historical knowledge, making students more reflective about how history is constructed and conveyed in the public sphere.

Historical Analysis and Interpretation

The historical analysis and interpretation indicator showed a significant increase in score from 40.5 to 70.1, with an N-Gain of 0.50, which is classified as moderate. This increase reflects progress in students' ability to identify, interpret, and examine various perspectives in historical news narratives, especially those from primary sources such as old newspapers. However, these results also indicate that some students still need intensive guidance in comparing various sources and understanding the biases that may be contained within them. To reduce subjective tendencies in historical interpretation, students are equipped with critical analysis indicators, such as news content description, synchronic and diachronic context relevance, identification of actors involved, differentiation between facts and opinions, and analysis of the ideological orientation of the media used.

History teachers encourage students to enrich their analysis with additional references from digital media, as long as these sources meet scientific validity standards. This approach trains students in triangulating sources, an important skill for avoiding biased and one-sided interpretations. Through the Jogja Library Centre Tour inquiry model, students are introduced to primary source-based historical research methodologies and trained to question the narratives in textbooks or materials provided by teachers.

The fourth meeting in this learning process was a crucial moment, when students formally presented the results of their analysis of old newspapers in groups. This presentation assesses content comprehension and emphasizes argumentative skills and depth of interpretation, as demonstrated through intergroup discussions.

This discussion forum serves as a space for dialogic learning, where students are expected to present and defend their historical claims based on substantial evidence, while responding to alternative perspectives from other groups.

In the context of historical literacy, constructing and presenting evidence-based arguments are key indicators of historical thinking (Evagorou et al., 2023; Jimola & Olaniyan, 2021). This discussion process encourages students to not only understand the narrative of events but also to assess the credibility of sources, explore author bias, and uncover the political interests behind news publications. For example, when one group concluded that national media coverage of the 1984 Tanjung Priok Incident tended to cover up human rights violations, another group responded by comparing the narrative with reports from foreign media or international human rights documents. Such activities encourage students to cross-check sources, understand the dynamics of historical narratives, and consider the ideological context of the media.

Furthermore, the structured discussion format in this forum requires students to construct arguments systematically: formulating claims, supporting them with concrete evidence, anticipating counterarguments, and providing rational responses. This process reflects the practice of professional historians, in which interpretations are constructed based on dominant narratives and through critical analysis of traces of past documentation.

This aligns with the disciplinary literacy approach in history education, where students are trained to "think like historians" by developing the ability to assess, construct, and convey evidence-based arguments (Monte-Sano, 2016). Students' reflections after the discussion showed that they were increasingly aware of the importance of using credible primary and secondary sources in constructing historical claims.

They are no longer satisfied with normative answers or personal assumptions, but have begun to develop a scientific attitude, analytical rigour, and awareness of the complexity of history. Thus, the historical analysis and interpretation indicators experienced quantitative improvement and showed qualitative development in the students' more reflective and critical thinking about the historical narratives they encountered.

Historical Research Skills

The historical research skills indicator recorded the lowest score compared to other critical thinking indicators, both in the pretest (38.9) and posttest (68.4), with an N-Gain of 0.48, which is classified as moderate. Although there was an increase, these findings indicate that students' ability to design research questions, search for primary data, and organise historical information systematically is still not optimal. These limitations are likely due to students' lack of experience in conducting independent historical research and their limited technical skills, such as document analysis, archive searching, and evidence-based data processing.

Through implementing the Jogja Library Center Tour learning model, history teachers sought to introduce innovative approaches to improve students' research skills. In the initial stage, students were free to determine, in groups, the policy topics they wanted to analyze, based on either emotional affinity or intellectual interest. This process is followed by exploring primary sources at the Jogja Library Centre and searching for information from valid digital sources to enrich their perspectives. The selection of sources is not done randomly. However, it is guided by considerations of the accuracy and contextual relevance of news in old newspapers, including analysis of facts and opinions, as well as the author's subjectivity level.

The next step is to write an analysis report in the students' worksheets format, prepared by the SMA Negeri 9 Yogyakarta history teacher. Overall, this learning model refers to the historical research method developed by Kuntowijoyo, which emphasizes the importance of understanding the process of historical events (structure) rather than simply memorizing historical facts (surface narrative). In this case, students are taught to explore how an event is represented in newspapers, not just what is reported. This approach seeks to shift learning from a mere procedural approach to a more in-depth and reflective interpretive practice (Dere & Gökçýnar, 2020).

The presentation of group analysis results in a class forum serves to test the findings obtained by students. This forum is open and dialogical, where other groups can respond to, expand on, and even challenge the interpretations presented by the presenters. This discussion serves as a space to practice historical research skills in a real-world context, training students to construct arguments based on diverse sources and developing scientific and ethical attitudes in reconstructing the past. In line with this, students also learn that every historical source carries certain biases and interests, thus requiring the ability to read critically and compare various versions of historical narratives (Ofianto et al., 2023). Through this process, historical research skills are improved technically and conceptually by instilling the understanding that history results from interpretation, not just data collection.

Chronological Thinking

The chronological thinking indicator showed the highest improvement in students' critical thinking skills, with a pretest score of 42.1 and a posttest score of 75.3, as well as an N-Gain of 0.57, which is classified as moderately high. These findings confirm that the Jogja Library Center Tour is a highly effective learning model for fostering students' understanding of the chronology of historical events in a logical and structured manner. By tracing the chronology through old newspapers from the New Order to the Reformation era, students memorize a series of years or policies and understand the cause-and-

effect relationship between events in a broader context.

This inquiry model begins with the history teacher explaining various important policies across regimes, followed by students' assignments to search for and verify historical information through a combination of primary sources (newspapers) and secondary sources that are academically accountable. Students are prohibited from using references such as Wikipedia or personal blogs whose validity cannot be confirmed. The focus of teaching is no longer on memorizing chronology, but on a deep understanding of the dynamics of power, information control, and the formation of public discourse. For example, when analysing reports on the 1984 Tanjung Priok Incident, students noted the lack of critical coverage in the national media, which prompted reflective questions about narrative control by an authoritarian state. From these questions, they realise that history is not a neutral and static entity but a product of power structures often constructed to maintain political legitimacy. This awareness leads students to draw connections to the present, such as the control of social media, news censorship, or framing issues by media owned by the elite.

In this context, history teachers act as critical facilitators, allowing students to choose the issues to be analyzed while emphasizing the importance of external source criticism (validity, origin, and time of publication) and internal (content, perspective, and political interests). Compiling field reports ultimately not only trains students to think chronologically but also integrates synchronic and diachronic analysis, which reflects a professional historical approach to understanding the interrelationships between the past, the present, and their impact on the future.

■ CONCLUSION

History education at State Senior High School 9, Yogyakarta, demonstrates pedagogical innovation by developing an inquiry-based learning model that utilizes primary sources from the New Order era to the Reformation era, including daily newspapers. These archives were obtained from the Jogja Library Centre, a regional facility in Yogyakarta that provides authentic sources that have not been fully utilized in formal education.

This approach has proven effective in improving students' historical literacy and critical thinking skills by providing contextual, authentic, and locally based learning experiences. This learning model encourages students' ability to critically interpret, evaluate, and compare historical narratives and minimises the tendency for plagiarism that often occurs in secondary text-based literacy activities.

These findings highlight the urgency of strengthening primary source-based pedagogical practices to respond to the national literacy crisis, characterized by weak critical reading skills and low historical appreciation. Although this study has limitations, such as its limited scope to a single school, potential bias in assessing learning outcomes, and challenges in student access and digital literacy, these findings still make an important contribution.

The study was conducted over a short period, so it cannot fully represent the long-term implications of changes in students' historical literacy and critical thinking skills. In addition, the results of this study have implications not only for schools but also for external institutions such as libraries and archives. These institutions can play a more active role as educational partners by providing open access, curating relevant sources, and offering information literacy programs that can support primary source-based learning at various levels of education. Therefore, further longitudinal research is needed to examine the sustainable impact of integrating libraries and archives into history learning as part of a national effort to overcome the literacy crisis.

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