Students' responses to "The Gift of the Magi" and imaginative re-creations

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ABSTRACT
Research has thus far shown that students' interest and active involvement are pivotal in the language learning process. However, there is a paucity of research examining how an English literary text can be exploited to bolster student engagement in an Indonesian EFL setting. Occupying this niche, this article focuses on the student's responses and the application of imaginative re-creation to the short story ("The Gift of the Magi"). Twenty-eight 3rd-semester English students taking the "Basic Reading Comprehension" course at a private university in Semarang (Indonesia) participated in this study. Couched under the reader-response theory, the students were asked to imaginatively recreate meanings after they read the text. The results showed that the students were actively involved and responded to the text during the learning process in various ways. Several students' responses were still very close to the original text, while the others were fairly different from the original. Throughout the learning process, the students actively interacted with texts and engaged with other learners. These interactions help to create a relaxing environment for the learners, which aids comprehension and encourages creativity in the creation of a new text. These findings shed light on the further development of students' creative writing in EFL teaching.

Keywords: EFL teaching; imaginative recreation; reader-response; short story

INTRODUCTION

Literature can express cultural and universal human values and promote the learners' possibility to develop a conversation on various matters covered in literary texts. The creative (or co-creative) role and the imaginative involvement of the literary readers enable a "dynamic interaction among reader, text and external world" (Ghasemi, 2011), and its authenticity (Arafah, 2018) can support literacy development (Tranza & Sunderland, 2009). This idea can provide interesting (González & Inés, 2010) and unpredictable readers' experiences in the text exploration, possibly providing an exciting experience for readers different from their usual learning activities (Kirkgoz, 2012). According to Langer (1997), the readers (in this case, the English learners) can experience the events in the literary text and then connect them with their own experience resulting in reflections on that experience (Beach & Swiss, 2011). Furthermore, according to Ghasemi (2011), many foreign language researchers in the 20th century have attested that using literature in the ESL and EFL is very beneficial for the students as they can experience others' lives (i.e., cultural values embedded in the literary texts) (Barnett et al., 1987).

Literary texts can be used in ESL and EFL settings, from young learners (Tso, 2015) to adult learners (Kern et al., 2005; Tso, 2014). However, English teachers must adjust the difficulty level (Erkaya, 2005; Gebre, 2016; González & Inés, 2010; Tso, 2014)() to maintain the exciting learners' experience (Lee, 2013). Dealing with text difficulty, Murphy (2013) considers "surface features of text complexity" covering "vocabulary, sentence length,

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images, relation to oral language, the density of concepts." Additionally, Nelson et al. (2012) suggest various tools (such as Lexile, DRP Analyzer, and SourceRater) to measure the text difficulty level. The suitable difficulty level ensures the learners' success in literacy since the instructors must be responsible for literacy instruction (Cronin, 2014) applied in a particular learning context.

The use of literary texts as potential resources in the ESL/ EFL learning contexts is worth considering for some reasons, such as universality, non-triviality, personal relevance, variety, interest, economy and suggestive power, and ambiguity (Hişmanoğlu, 2005), and insight of human nature (Schrijvers et al., 2019). Besides, literary texts (especially short stories) have unique attributes such as pithiness, modernism, and diversity to cause them fascinating for EFL/ESL learners (Hafiz et al., 2013). Such literature attributes allow English teachers to develop lesson plans with various learning activities to improve students' second/ foreign language skills. Similarly, short stories (literary texts) can provide an authentic model of language to help students to communicate fluently in the target language (Arafah, 2018) and to think more critically (Bobkina & Stefanova, 2016; Ceylan, 2016; Erkaya, 2005; Langer, 1997). Literary texts can also "nurture emotional intelligence and caring communication." Furthermore, learners can be interested in a good story since it can provide personal, social, intellectual, and linguistic enrichment to encourage their interest to read more (Browne, 2001; Houghton Mifflin Company, 1997). Additionally, according to Cooper et al. (2018) and Ghasemi (2011), literary language's artistic values can expand the learner's experience and increase comprehension. In a pretty similar case of the reading story to children, Morrow et al. (1990) consider that this treatment "may not be sufficient for children's literacy growth." Still, it can be an actual effort to improve their literacy skills.

However, the situation is not always as expected, as each learner has a different proficiency level in most cases. The instructors must be alert to this situation since all learners should be provided equal opportunities to succeed in their learning. Another thing that can damage students' motivation, according to Bahous et al. (2011), is uninteresting material. Teachers should remember that choosing an appropriate literary text that suits the student's level is crucial (Febriani et al., 2022). Too demanding lesson plans/ activities might damage the motivation of low-achieving or struggling learners (Tawake, 1990). Furthermore, she suggested that English teachers use literature to position themself closer to the learners and understand their difficulties in making meaning of the literary texts. Literary texts can stimulate the students' unlimited ideas and imagination (Bustamante, 2022).

Another possibility of using literary text (i.e., short story), as Yilmaz (2015) suggested, is that combining it with computers in the language classroom positively impacts the learners' language skills development. He points out some benefits: "drawing attention, raising curiosity, cooperation and giving/receiving feedback, improving reading and writing skills, and increasing L2 motivation" (Yilmaz, 2015). Likewise, reading online literary text also can be used to vary reading stimuli for a relatively wide range of ages, starting from early-aged learners to adults, as it can "potentially improve proficiency and comprehension" in reading (Baleiro, 2010). It is also beneficial for introducing multimodality, especially computer literacy, in contrast to the EFL classroom's static and conventional method (Towndrow & Pereira, 2018). Moreover, according to McGroarty and Galvin (1985), the discussion of literary work with readers with diverse cultural backgrounds in the ESL/EFL context is "a lesson of cultural relativity" and can enrich cultural awareness. It is another benefit of using literary text for the learners as it can promote the cultural understanding of the target language they want to acquire.

As mentioned previously, motivation is one of the seminal factors in the learners' success in making meaning of the text. According to Duff and Maley (1990), three criteria support using literary texts in the language classroom such as linguistic, methodological, and motivational. Gonzales and Ines's research findings also support that learners' motivation increase indicates an active participation in various activities (Gebre, 2016; González & Inés, 2010). According to Cambria and Guthrie (2010), motivation is "the values, beliefs, and behaviors surrounding reading for an individual. Some productive values and beliefs may lead to excitement, yet other values may lead to determined hard work". Additionally, they point out that motivation deals with interest, dedication, and confidence. Students enjoy reading a text because they are interested; a dedicated student reads a text because he believes that it is essential, and a confident student reads a text as he can do it. Another main factor in student motivation is the teacher. Peers, text material, or home habits can influence motivation. Still, as the main actor in the classroom, a teacher plays an essential role in increasing learners' reading motivation (Cambria & Guthrie, 2010). Teachers must know what is best for their students in a particular situation and consider their behavior (Parry, 1996).

Considering the above review of theories and previous studies using literary text (i.e., short stories) by researchers in various parts of the globe, this research will fill the gap of using short stories to encourage the students' responses of imaginative re-creation. This paper focuses on using a short story in the reading class to produce the students' responses to the text they read

This preliminary research objective is to investigate whether using literary text (a short story entitled "The Gift of the Magi") can raise the student's involvement in the language learning process and, in turn, improve literacy.

METHOD
Design
The design applied in this research is a mixed-method, a single-case study. A mixed method was applied since both quantitative and qualitative were used. The quantitative design was applied to measure the students' reactions in the pre-, while-, and post-reading activities; the qualitative method was applied in collecting verbal data of the re-creation text produced by the students (respondents). The quantitative data were then analyzed using descriptive statistics, while verbal data were analyzed qualitatively.

Schramm in Yin (2018) asserts that a case study tries to "illuminate a decision or set of decisions" of why a study is taken, how it is implemented, and what the result is. While Creswell and Poth (2018) assert that the foundation of considering a case study is that it focuses on "developing an in-depth description and analysis of a case." The study attempted to provide an in-depth description and analysis of the phenomena in the learning process of the context in which the students learn in the specific class community of the third-semester students taking Basic Reading at the English Department of a private university in Semarang. This research was implemented through field observation with the researchers as the key instruments.

Since this study intends to investigate how readers (students/ respondents) respond to a given short story, the reader-response theory was applied. Several scholars initiated reader-response theory, such as Norman Holland, Stanley Fish, Wolfgang Iser, Hans-Robert Jauss, and Roland Barthes (Davis & Womack, 2002; French, 1987; Lumen Learning, n.d.; Nunan, 2007; Poetry Foundation, 2018) .The theory focuses on how readers create meaning after they experience (read) a text. It emphasizes the reader's role as an active agent in constructing the text rather than passively consuming it. This theory argues that a text has no meaning until a reader experiences –reads– it.

In line with the reader-response theory, the researchers asked the respondents to write texts of imaginative recreations. Imaginative recreation is the creative process of re-creating a (part of) literary text in such a way that it helps learners to expand their understanding and appreciation of a particular text and express their response to it. Imaginative re-creation covers a wide range of activities. For example, students can retell the story from a different viewpoint. They can attribute different character traits. They may use different settings or even produce different genres of literature. Other activities include writing a letter to a particular character and writing a diary based on a character's experience. The imaginative re-creation was initiated by Stratta et al. (1973) in England and was further developed by Peter Adams, Wayne Sawyer, and Ken Watson – Australian educators (Manuel & Carter, 2009).

Respondents
We conduct this research in a reading class in an EFL setting. The class contained 28 3rd-semester students taking the "Basic Reading Comprehension" class of batch 2019 at the English Department, Faculty of Humanities, in a private university in Semarang. The students had various reading skill levels from the pre-test conducted before the class began. Based on the preliminary observation the study, the students lacked interest, showing how they responded to comprehension questions focusing on the elements of fiction. They were still afraid of making mistakes and were still shy and unconfident. It took a long time to encourage them to respond to the comprehension questions based on the reading text given after reading for 20 minutes at the beginning of the class. Before reading by heart, we, the researchers, assigned pre-reading activities to provide background knowledge to familiarize them with the text.

Instruments
Based on the above research frameworks, we designed five sets of questions as the research instruments. They are presented in Appendices A, B, C, D, and E.

1. The first instrument (Appendix A) is a set of questions provided to be used by the respondents during pre-reading activities for their background knowledge and comprehension guide.
2. The second instrument (Appendix B) consists of ten questions asking detailed information dealing with the text. These questions were asked during the class activity.
3. The third instrument is an instruction to re-order the sentences into the proper plot order of the story. The respondents were expected to be more familiar with the story/ text and easily recall the plot order by doing this activity.
4. The fourth instrument contains four critical questions asking how the respondents react to the text/ story. The questions were to explore each respondent's responses to the text. The answers varied based on individual experiences with the text. It also introduced them to the last activity to create an imaginative text.
5. The fifth instrument is an instruction to compose a letter expressing their genuine love/ affection to someone special in their

lives. By doing this activity, the respondents were expected to express their feeling stimulated by the text they had just read.

Procedures

There are several steps in this research. First, it started with choosing the text used in the classroom. In this study, there were several considerations in selecting the text, such as (1) the topic of the text must be familiar to the students, (2) not too many difficult words, and (3) suitable for beginning-level students. By using the above criteria, the chosen text can engage them. Based on the above criteria, the short story "The Gift of the Magi" written by O. Henry (Meinke, 2017) was chosen in this study as the events in the story are relatively familiar to the students. The story is about a couple, husband and wife, who wanted to express their affection and attention by exchanging gifts. The event in the story is very familiar in the extraordinary moment of the Christmas setting. The action of exchanging gifts is universal and may happen anywhere at any time and in any culture. Each wanted to give their best present to another. The first step occurred before the class, during the course preparation.

The second step is to determine the pre-reading activity. In this step, we asked the students about their experience reading short stories in Indonesian or English and their preference for the theme/ topic or genre to explore how well they experienced reading a short story. In this step, we asked the Christian students about the Christmas celebration to let the non-Christian students get background knowledge of the event, such as "What do you usually do at Christmas?" "What does it mean to you?" or other related questions. This step took about fifteen to twenty minutes before proceeding to a question-and-answer session while going around the classroom to ask questions randomly to the students

The third step is while-reading activities. In this step, we asked the students to make five groups containing five to six students. Three groups included six students, and the rest two groups had five students. After creating the groups, they were asked to read the text "The Gift of the Magi" individually and silently for 45 minutes. Then, the students were to discuss the questions about the text containing the elements of fiction, such as characters, setting, plot, and theme. The students also discussed the questions related to reader-response theory as the framework for this research containing four questions (Appendix D). Taking only four questions at the very beginning of the study avoids the students' frustration with many questions that can be a burden for them. In the group discussion, each student had to tell their comprehension of those elements of fiction. This group discussion lasted about 35 minutes. During the discussion, one group member had to record the result of the discussion to be presented in the next class discussion phase. During this period, we went around the classroom to observe and monitor to ensure that all group members were actively involved in the discussion. We also gave feedback about the problematic words/ expressions in the text, and the elements of fiction, such as character, setting, plot, and theme, by stimulating their ideas. Instead of directly answering their questions about the fiction, we encouraged them to think creatively and gave alternative answers. Up to this period, the time had lasted for 100 minutes (one class meeting for two credits). They were asked to keep the group discussion results presented in the next step. The next step is the class discussion done the following week.

The fourth step is class discussion. In this phase, we asked the group representative to present each group's opinion in front of the class for 10 minutes. It also included questions and answers from the other four groups (audience). The presenting group let the other four groups ask as many questions as possible to answer as long as not to exceed 10 minutes of their time allotment. The class discussion lasted for 50 minutes and was followed by 10 minutes to give feedback and empowerment for their presentation and discussions.

The fifth step is the post-reading activities. The students were asked to reconstruct the events of the story. They rearranged a list of random events in the story. This activity was intended to prepare the students for the next step concerning reader-response theory.

The sixth step is the reader-response theory application that was done in the following week –the second meeting. The questions were provided to be answered individually by each class member. There were four questions regarding this issue. The questions could be made more than just four, but the questions were limited to maintain the students' interest.

The seventh step is imaginative re-creation. This step stimulates the respondents' imaginative re-creation based on the short story "The Gift of the Magi" they have read and discussed previously. In this phase, we asked them to imagine as if they were in the story and acted or thought like the character. We also allowed them to include their perspective to change the perspective or point of view, the setting, or even the conflicts. As the preliminary study, we limited the question/ instruction for imaginative re-creation: to ask them to compose a love letter expressing their true love to the character –Della or Jim– and pretend to be the husband or wife.

Data Analysis

The data were collected from all activities starting from pre-reading, while-reading, post-reading, and writing imaginative text. The followings are the data analysis steps.

The data collected by the first instrument were analyzed to understand the respondents' background knowledge (schemata). The second data set was

analyzed to understand the respondents' text comprehension. The third set of data deals with the plot structure of the students' imaginative text. These data analyses were to see the respondents' comprehension of the plot and familiarity with the story. The following data set explored how the respondents responded to the text they had read. Finally, we analyzed the students' writing production in composing letters to someone special. These analyses were to answer the research questions

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION
This section provides answers to the research questions formulated for this study, i.e., (1) How is the student's comprehension of the text? (2) How do the students respond to the given text? and (3) How do the students develop their ideas and re-create the new text based on the given text?

The students' comprehension of the text
The first research question was traced from the while-reading and post-reading activities. In addition, the pre-reading activity gives students orientation or background knowledge (schemata) of the given topic. It is not directly correlated to the student's comprehension, but it provides a good text orientation. The findings are presented in the following two tables (Tables 2 and 3).

Pre-reading activities provide students with background knowledge of the learned text. In this phase, oral question-and-answer activities were done. Table 1 presents the students' responses to the set of questions. In this table, the students' responses were classified based on the peculiarities of the answers.

Table 1
Pre-reading Activities Students' Responses

No.	Students' Answers	Number	Percentage
1.	*The best gift*: Car, motorcycle, gold necklace, expensive mobile phone, *umrah* (pilgrimage to Mecca), travel abroad (South Korea, Japan, Paris, Singapore), bicycles.	23	82.1
	Reasons: It is very special as it is my first car, and shows my parent's love and attention; I love the gold necklace gift from my parents, with my initial name and diamond on it; I love my mobile phone gift as it has complete features; My *umrah* pilgrimage was very impressive as I went with family; I love to travel abroad visiting my dream city; The bicycle gift was very lovely as I can go cycling off-road.	23	82.1
	Parents	23	82.1
	17th birthday present; good achievement at school; successful in entering university.	23	82.1
	Yes, I told my parents that the gift was very impressive.	23	82.1
2.	Photo frame, traditional necklace, expensive chocolate, live music concert ticket, Barbie doll, a toy car, dine at a fancy restaurant	25	89.3
	Reasons: Birthday gift, friendship, relationship,	25	89.3
	Yes, she said that the photo frame was wonderful and she put our photos on it; The traditional necklace was very impressive as it can remind him about that place he spent in his childhood; The moment when we went to the concert was very wonderful as it was the first time she saw live music; The Barbie doll was very special as she wanted it for a long time; The eating at the fancy restaurant was very memorable as it was the first time she ate at the expensive one, and the meals were very delicious.	25	89.3
3.	If money is no problem for me, I will take my parents to visit European countries with my parents; I would take my parents to beautiful places throughout Indonesia; I would donate my money to the poor; I would build a house for my parents. I would buy a beautiful diamond ring for my mother; I would give a hajj/ *Umrah* pilgrimage present for my parents.	25	89.3
	Visiting Europe is my parents' dream; Visiting beautiful places in Indonesia is my parents' dream; The poor extremely need my money for life; House will be very precious for my parents as they live in a rented house up to now; My mother loves beautiful diamond ring; My parents will very happy if they could go for hajj/ *Umrah* pilgrimage to the holy land Mecca.	25	89.3

Q = Question; N (Number of Students) = 28

In this stage, the four question items were asked to the students. They were given four items containing a series of written questions for each item. The questions deal with giving and receiving gifts, the occasion of receiving/ giving a gift, the person giving/ receiving the gift, and the meaning of the gift. All the questions are intended to give background knowledge to the students since they would learn about the action of giving/ receiving a gift from someone special in their life.

While doing the pre-reading activities, we went around the classroom to ask the students randomly. The students answered enthusiastically because almost all (23 to 25 or 82% to 89% of students) were actively involved, while the rest (of 3-5) were kept silent. They said they had experience giving/ receiving a gift from someone special, i.e., parents, friends, boy/girlfriends. The gifts they received/ gave also varied. The variety of gifts indicates that they have been familiar with the occasion of exchanging gifts. They also explained what the gift meant to them, for example, the precious gold necklace with

the name initial on the pendant. Some also have memorable moments they spent during the *umrah* pilgrimage to the holy land of Mecca for Moslems. In addition, some have impressive traditional necklaces reminding them of a particular place they spent their childhood. Besides, they also expressed different reasons for how precious the gifts were regardless of the price, such as photo frames, Barbie dolls, and dining in the restaurant. It seemed everyone wanted to talk about their own experience. Overall, the students were very interested in the discussion, and encouraged them to speak and express their previous experiences related to the text they would learn.

While-reading Activities

In this step, the students answered the comprehension questions dealing with the story. They can answer implicitly or explicitly in the text. All the questions in this phase are related to the elements of fiction, i.e., characters, plot/ series of events, setting, or other details—the summary of the student's answers is presented in the following table 2.

Table 2
While-reading Activities Students' Responses

No.	Questions	Answer	Number (%)
1)	How much money does Della have?	$ 1.87	26 (92.3)
2)	What did Della want to do with the money?	Della wants to buy Jim a present for Christmas.	25 (89.3)
3)	What is the last name of the family? Where do they live?	Dillingham Young, A furnished flat	28 (100)
4)	What was Jim's weekly salary? Why is he making less money?	$20.00/week. It was cut from $30.00/week	26 (92.3)
5).	What are Jim and Della's two most prized possessions?	1. Jim's gold watch 2. Della's long hair	28 (100)
6).	What does Della do for extra money? How much did she get?	She cuts her hair and sells it for $20.00.	25 (89.3)
7).	What does Jim give Della as a gift?	Jim gives Della hair combs to pull her long hair back as a Christmas gift.	23 (82.1)
8).	How is the gift ironic?	This is ironic because Della has cut off all her hair and sold it to buy Jim a gift. She sacrificed her most important possession for Jim.	15 (53.6)
9)	How did Jim get the money to buy Della's gift?	Jim sold his watch	25 (89.3)
10).	How is the gift ironic?	Jim has sold his watch to buy a tortoise-shell comb for Della	15 (53)

In this phase, the students were assigned to read the text "The Gift of the Magi" silently and then discuss the provided questions with the other students in the group. All the questions in this stage deal with the comprehension question. During the group discussion, we went around the classroom to monitor the discussion and encourage the students to speak English.

As seen in Table 2, the students' correct answers range from 82.1% to 100%, except for the questions asking "How is the gift ironic?" (items 8 and 10), which have only 53.6% correct answers. It might be because the students cannot understand the term "ironic." The questions asking detail, such as items 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, and 9, were answered quite well. Especially for items 3 and 5 asking about the detail, the students responded correctly as the answer can be

found easily in the text (explicit answer). With the number of correct answers, we can conclude that they can comprehend the text well.

Apart from the number of correct answers the students could answer, the group discussion ran well. They asked each other about the answer and confirmed it with other group friends. The questions they addressed to their peers and us as the researchers were dominantly about the word/ lexical meaning. We encouraged them to find the word's meaning by looking it up in the dictionary. We recommended several e-dictionaries such as Merriam-Webster, Oxford, New Oxford American, and Longman English. Only a few students were still silent during the group discussion.

Besides finding the answer to the comprehension questions in the group discussion,

each student had to retell the story. By retelling the story within the group, each student could check their understanding and compare it to others. This activity is an exercise for oral communication in English communication. Of course, there are still mistakes they made concerning the inconsistency of the tense used to express past tense. The other friends sometimes gave feedback or correction to their friends. This activity is good as they can develop their fluency and improve their confidence in spoken communication.

After the group discussion, each group presented its discussion results in the class discussion. Each group representative presented the story events and the impressive thing they got from the story. After the presentation of each group representative, the other students in the class (the audience) were given opportunities to ask, and all the presenting group members were responsible for answering the question raised during the presentation. The questions ask students' opinions when they are in the same situation as the characters –Della and Jim– in the story "The Gift of the Magi." This activity was enjoyable since almost all students actively engaged in learning and practicing their English. This situation can be reached because the text is too difficult. Besides, the story's topic is about love, which is relatively easy for all students to participate in the discussion. Thus, teachers must consider the difficulty level suggested by Febriani et al. (2022) to maintain the learners' interest (Bahous et al., 2011).

The teacher's role in preparing and choosing the appropriate text is seminal. The class presentation and discussion ran lively, and most students participated actively in the process. It supports Gonzales and Ines' claim (2010) that using literary text in English learning is interesting. In addition, the learners can get a new horizon to their lives (Beach & Swiss, 2011) and experiences of the characters (Della and Jim's) lives (Barnett et al., 1987) while exploring a literary text (Kirkgoz, 2012). Pre-reading and while-reading activities show that the topic can attract the student's interest to match their background knowledge/ schemata before reading a given text. This is to link the students to the new text.

Post-reading Activities Students' Response.
Table 3 presents the summary of the student's answers for post-reading activities to ensure that the students understand the order of the events of the whole story and to prepare for the application of reader-response theory.

In this stage, the assignment is to re-order the random events of the story. Table 3 shows that 78% of the total students' answers are correct. This percentage is relatively good because most of them have understood the correct order of the events. The students who still made mistakes in this activity said they were not careful in identifying the events. We encouraged other students (their peers) to give feedback on their mistakes. According to Kusumaningrum et al. (2019), giving peer feedback can improve student performance in their English class. This finding is also supported by Haley (2022) that peer feedback is effective in enhancing students learning outcomes. She also found that the students learn more by thinking about each work and others' works. As Montgomery and Baker (2007) suggested, teacher feedback was provided to students who still made mistakes and explained the correct order of the events.

Table 3
Post-reading Activities Students' Response

The order of the Story Events	Number (%)
G – D – I – A – F – H – B – E – C	22 (78.6%)

Note: The random events are provided in the attachment

The Students' (Readers') Responses to the Given Text
The student's responses to the text were traced through how they reacted to the set of questions asking their response to an individual reaction. We called this activity a reader-response activity. The summary of the student's responses concerning the application of reader-response theory is presented in table 4 below. The student's answers for each question item are summarized and classified. Their responses were not exactly similar, but they were categorized into six items below each question in Table 4.

The responses summary provided in table 4 indicates that all of the students gave responses or 25 out of 28 students (or 89.3%) because three students (10.7%) were absent. There are four questions regarding the reader's response theory in this phase. The responses were classified based on their peculiarities into six categories for each item. Students could respond to each question item based on their perception after interacting with/ reading/ experiencing the text. For example, the responses to question number 2 varied from the issues of devotion, true love, sacrifice, poorness, lower-class society, and kindhearted persons. They see and think about various things after interacting with the text. Their prior experiences may influence the comprehension of the present reading text (Dole et al., 1991).

A relatively similar thing also happened in their responses to the three questions. Each answer can still be developed to further inquiry into the students' opinions. This activity can potentially improve students' creativity (Llewellyn, 2013) and critical thinking (Lipman, 1987). The discussion among the

students could also encourage their active participation in oral communication (Carrison & Ernst-Slavit, 2005). These responses are very useful in developing the idea for the following discussion about imaginative re-creation. It is also possible to ask more questions inquiring about how the readers react to a specific text for further development. The questions also can be adjusted based on the level of the learners.

Table 4
Reader-response Activities

No	Questions and Answers	Number (%)
1.	**What struck you about the story?**	25 (89.3%)
	a. The characters Della and Jim were very cool.	
	b. The story was very touching.	
	c. The poor condition does not make them lose their love.	
	d. They were very faithful.	
	e. They wanted to give the best thing to each other.	
	f. The confusion of husband and wife before the Christmas celebration	
2.	**What kinds of things did you notice?**	25 (89.3%)
	a. Devotion,	
	b. (True) Love	
	c. Sacrifice	
	d. Poorness	
	e. Lower class	
	f. Kindhearted persons	
3.	**What would you like to talk about after reading this?**	25 (89.3%)
	a. Sacrificing our belonging to the beloved one	
	b. Firmness to husband/ wife	
	c. Appreciate others	
	d. Be kind to others	
	e. The life of the lower (working) social class	
	f. Insufficient salary	
4.	**What issues did it raise for you?**	25 (89.3%)
	a. Family life	
	b. Husband-wife wonderful life	
	c. Make our family happy	
	d. A very special moment in life	
	e. A lesson in family living to be kind to husband/ wife	
	f. Life can change unexpectedly every time	

Idea Development and Imaginative Re-creation
The answer to this research question was obtained from the students' composition. We call this activity as Imaginative Re-creation. Based on the story "The Gift of the Magi" by O. Henry, the students wrote letters to Della, Jim, or anyone special to express their love. Table 5 below discusses four examples of the student's responses. There were 25 letters because three students were absent. We chose four responses to discuss because they were more or less similar. These four responses represent all responses.

Table 5
Examples of Imaginative Recreation Students' Response

Imaginative Re-creation Response
Response 1
My dearest Jim
You are [a] very kind husband. I really understand that you really want to make me happy even though you don't have enough money to buy a Christmas present. This comb is very precious for me, although I cannot use it now because I have cut my hair. But don't worry, my hair will grow fast, and you will see my beautiful hair. I am really proud of my hair, but I had to sell it to buy the watch chain. I will never doubt your true love.
With all my love
Della
Response 2
Della my Love
You are very beautiful [in] your long curly hair, but I cannot see it anymore. You shouldn't have sold it, looking you with your long hair is the best gift for me. You're my spirit in my life. I'm sorry I could not buy a gift for you [in] this Christmas

Imaginative Re-creation Response

day. I promised to find another job to earn much more money so that I can live better. Sorry for suffering you with this kind of life I give to you. Thank you very much for [a beautiful] watch chain you give as [the Christmas] gift, but sorry I have sold the watch to buy a beautiful comb for your beautiful long hair. I really adore it. I believe I can buy the same watch [some day] and see you happy.

With love- Jim

Response 3

Dear my Love, Della

I'm really sorry [for] I can't buy a tortoise-shell comb that you dreamt of. I wanted to buy it for a long time, but unfortunately, my salary was cut off this month. My salary is only enough to buy food and to pay for the house rent. I promise someday I would buy one for your beautiful long hair. Please, forgive me for this. You've been very kind to me, my dear—a wife who always gives full attention to me. I will work harder to earn money for our future. Thank you very much for such a beautiful life we spent together.

With love

Jim

Response 4

Dear my beloved Mom,

We've been passing three years since my dad died. Our time was very hard sometime[s], without him beside us. You worked so hard to earn money for us to survive. I understand that this life really [burden] you. Sometimes, I want to quit [from] my study and find [a] job to help you earn money so that you don't need to work such a hard day and night. But you always tell me that I have to continue my study so that I can find a better job for my future. You never complain [about] how hard this life is. You always cover your pain and don't want me to see you hurt. I remember how hard you worked to make money for me to enter university two years ago. Actually, at that time, I wanted to find [a] job and not to continue study [at] to university, but you insisted me to register in the university. Now I am here, continuing my study. I have to study hard so that I can finish my study as soon as possible. Hopefully, I can find [a] job soon after my graduation so that you don't have to work. You are [a] very precious spirit for me. I want to be with you forever. My dear mom, sorry because sometimes I disappoint you, but I don't really mean it. Please forgive me for the mistakes I've made.

My dearest Mom, please accept this white rose as [a] symbol of my love [on] in this very special day… Happy mother's Day, my dear Mom. I love you with all my heart and soul.

Your loving Barbie
Dian

Imaginative Re-creation

In this phase, the students composed a letter to one of the characters (Della and Jim) or someone special in their lives related to the gift or something precious that a person has given/ received. The student's responses in the previous stage (reader-response) are beneficial in developing their imagination and creativity. We discuss four striking students' works in letters to show how they developed their ideas.

In the students' responses 1 to 3, the topics remain relatively consistent with the story. They used the topic of giving a gift to each other, Jim or Della. In response 1, the student writer acting as Della expressed her appreciation for her husband's gift/ the tortoise-shell comb, for her long and beautiful hair even though she could not use it because she had cut it. She tried to reassure Jim not to worry about her hair because her beautiful hair would soon grow back, and she could use his beautiful tortoise-shell comb. She was thankful for the gift and convinced Jim that she never doubted his true love.

In response 2, the student presented the Christmas gift by Jim to his wife, Della. However, there is still a bit of an inconsistent idea in this letter composition. Initially, he said he could not buy a gift, but later, he purchased a beautiful comb for her beautiful hair. It might be a slip of the idea. On the other side, he also expressed his sorry for the situation that probably made Della suffer. He also appreciated Della's gift, a beautiful watch chain, even though he could not wear it as he had sold his watch. Jim also promised to find another good job to earn much more money for a better life.

Similar to the previous response 2, the context is still about the Christmas gift, but Jim felt sorry in this response letter because he could not buy a beautiful comb for Della as he had not enough money. He also promised that someday he would buy a beautiful tortoise-shell comb and find a better job to get a better salary to live better. He appreciated Della for being a kind wife during their time together.

Compared to the three previous responses, response 4's setting differs from the original story.

The student writer still wrote on the giving gift context, but the location differed. She creatively changed the characters and the setting from the Christmas context to mother's day, and the characters were changed from husband-and-wife relations into mother-daughter relations. In this letter, she expressed her idea of appreciating her mother's hard work after her father died three years before. A very simple and (might be) cheap but very expressive and awe-inspiring gift –a white rose– was presented for her mother, who had been tough to survive and earn money for their life. She beautifully expressed his appreciation for her mother, whom she pictured as a super mother. In her letter, she also admitted that she wanted to quit her study because she did not want to burden her mother, but her mother kept supporting her to continue and finish her study for a better life. This letter is awe-inspiring and sounds very different from the original.

Aside from the creative idea, from the four examples of imaginative re-creation responses, there are still grammatical mistakes made by the students dealing with articles, prepositions, and spelling (in the phrase "someday" should be someday). However, the emphasis is on the students' idea development. These errors need feedback to improve their writing (Ferris, 1999) even though it is not the focus of this study. To avoid students' grammatical mistakes in writing, Dizon and Gayed (2021) suggest using Grammarly, automated writing assistance, while writing.

The above discussion shows how the students can develop ideas based on the story to create different imaginative events and stories. The ideas can align with the story or other creative stories but still have similarities. As seen from the four students' creative responses, the reinvention and re-creation of the story can vary, depending on the student's creativity. This activity can also prove how a story (literary work) can stimulate the students' ideas to create a story that is almost similar or even absolutely different from the original text. Gabrielsen et al. (2019) also found that "reading literary texts is strongly connected to students' writing, focusing on generic text features that are relevant for texts across the same genre."

As previously stated by some researchers who have conducted studies in a similar field, such as Arafah (2018), Kirkgoz (2012), and Langer in Beach and Swiss (2011), using literary texts (i.e., short stories) is worth considering by teachers in their English classes to develop the student's interest. However, the previous studies only focused on reading comprehension and rarely explored the students' responses in creative writing. Following Stratta's ideas (1973), our research has shown that combining literary reading with imaginative re-creation (creative writing) is possible and worthwhile for teachers. The teaching practice does not stop at reading comprehension level but continue to produce another new creative text by the students. It can also improve the student's engagement and motivation in learning English.

CONCLUSION

The application of literary text (The Give of the Magi) in the language classroom in this study shows that it can encourage the learners' involvement in the learning process. The students are more active in pre-reading activities to give background knowledge and stimulate vocabulary from the beginning of the process. This stage also functions as an icebreaker to make the learners more relaxed in learning. While reading activities also provide the students with a rich opportunity to discuss the comprehension question. The discussion among the learners enables them to learn from each other. The vital thing to consider is that high-achieving learners should be spread evenly into different groups so that the low-achieving students can benefit from them.

The application of reader-response theory and imaginative recreation frameworks in reading a short story is worth considering to improve learners' involvement in the learning process. During the learning process, the learners actively interact with text and other learners in the language. These interactions also create a relaxing situation that easily enables the learner's comprehension and stimulates creativity in re-creating new text.

It is essential to consider that text difficulty should meet the learner's level to maintain their interest in a particular literary text. It is crucial because the inappropriate difficulty level can damage the students' interest in the texts. Teachers have to encourage them to participate in the learning process actively. Teachers must provide extra time to give feedback on the student's writing to improve their writing from time to time. It is also possible to develop imaginative recreation activities by varying and creating another genre of literature, i.e., poem or short drama scenario texts. In this research, only one short story was used. Subsequent research needs to investigate various genres of literature in English learning.

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APPENDIX

Appendix A: Pre-reading Activity and Comprehension Questions

A Short Story Unit - "The Gift of the Magi" (By: O. Henry) (*Gift of the Magi*, 2009)
Part One: Pre-reading activity/Journal Entries
Directions: Be prepared to express your answer orally when your teacher randomly asks you. You may prepare by writing your answer on your sheet to guide you in an oral question and answer session.
1). What was the best gift you ever RECEIVED? Why? Who gave it to you? What was the occasion? Did you ever tell the person how much the gift meant to you?
2). What was the best gift you ever GAVE someone? Why? Who you gave the gift for? What was the occasion? Did the person ever tell you how much the gift meant to him/her?
3). If money is not a problem, what is the best gift you would give someone? Who would you give it to? Why do you think it would be such a great gift for the person?

Appendix B: While-reading activities (Comprehension Questions)

Directions: Answer each question in complete sentences.
1). How much money does Della have?
2). What did Della want to do with the money?
3). What is the last name of the family? Where do they live?
4). What was Jim's weekly salary? Why is he making less money?
5). What are Jim and Della's two most prized possessions?
6). What does Della do for extra money? How much money did she get?
7). What does Jim give Della as a gift?
8). How is the gift ironic?
9) How did Jim get the money to buy Della's gift?
10). How is the gift ironic?

Appendix C: post-reading activity

Re-order the following events of the story
This is the answer sheet. The students were given a blank table

Events	Order
a. Della shops for Jim's Christmas present.	4
b. Jim sees Della's haircut.	7
c. Della gives Jim his Christmas present.	9
d. Della decides to sell her hair.	2
e. Jim gives Della the combs.	8
f. Della buys a watch chain for Jim.	5
g. Della has saved only $1.87 to buy Jim a Christmas present.	1
h. Jim arrives home from work.	6
i. Della sells her hair for $20.	3

Appendix D: Reader-Response Questions Sheet

1. What struck you about the story?
2. What kinds of things did you notice?
3. What would you like to talk about after reading this?
4. What issues did it raise for you?

Appendix E: Imaginative Re-Creation Instruction
Compose a letter showing your true love and affection to someone you feel very special in your life. It could be anyone, your father, mother, boyfriend, or girlfriend.