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RESEARCH ARTICLE

Mapping Selected Filipino Historical Children's Books in the Elementary Social Studies Curriculum

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Abstract

Narrative-based learning has been widely recognized for enhancing students' engagement, historical understanding, and meaning-making in history education. However, empirical evidence regarding the extent to which historical children's literature aligns with formal curriculum requirements remains limited, particularly in elementary social studies education in the Philippines. This study investigates the curricular alignment of Filipino-authored historical children's books with the Philippine elementary social studies curriculum, focusing on Grades 5 and 6, where Philippine history constitutes the core content. Using a qualitative content analysis design, eighteen Filipino historical children's books were purposively selected and systematically analyzed through a curriculum alignment framework based on prescribed content and performance standards. Alignment was evaluated using a six-level rating scale and subsequently visualized through curriculum heat maps to reveal patterns of coverage across curriculum competencies. The findings indicate that curriculum alignment varies considerably across books. For Grade 5, two books demonstrated complete alignment, three showed high alignment, eight exhibited moderate alignment, and five lacked meaningful alignment. In contrast, no book achieved complete alignment with the Grade 6 curriculum; one showed high alignment, eight demonstrated moderate alignment, and nine exhibited no alignment. These findings suggest that although Filipino historical children's books offer valuable narrative resources for enriching history instruction, their curricular applicability remains inconsistent, particularly for upper elementary history topics. Methodologically, this study demonstrates the usefulness of curriculum heat mapping as an analytical approach for evaluating narrative-based instructional materials. The findings provide evidence to support curriculum developers, teacher educators, and classroom teachers in selecting historical literature that is both pedagogically engaging and curriculum-responsive, while contributing a transferable framework for curriculum-material alignment studies in history education.

Keywords: Curriculum alignment; Elementary education; Historical children's literature; Narrative pedagogy; Philippine history

INTRODUCTION

History education at the elementary level enables learners to understand the past as a coherent and meaningful narrative rather than as isolated facts. As a discipline, history relies on narrative to establish continuity, causality, and significance, situating events within broader social, cultural, and political contexts. Studies have shown that narrative-oriented approaches enhance engagement, comprehension, retention, historical literacy, and empathy, particularly among younger learners (Berg & Persson, 2023; Colby, 2008). Despite this, history instruction in many classrooms continues to rely heavily on expository texts and factual recall, limiting opportunities for narrative sense-making.

Narrative is central to the construction and communication of historical knowledge, enabling learners to understand temporal relationships, human agency, and historical consequences. In elementary classrooms, narrative materials support historical imagination, empathy, motivation, and comprehension, as they help organize complex events into coherent plots (Berg & Persson, 2023; Colby, 2008). Narratives also function as cultural artifacts that connect past, present, and future, and can deepen engagement when linked to students' heritage experiences (Levy, 2017). However, effective narrative use depends on access to developmentally appropriate, culturally grounded materials aligned with curriculum standards. Without such resources, narratives remain supplementary, despite their capacity to strengthen historical literacy, narrative competence, and critical analysis when integrated with broader historical inquiry (Berzins, 2023; Kindenberg, 2025). Historical literacy extends beyond factual knowledge by enabling students to interpret multiple perspectives and develop reasoned historical explanations (Lévesque & Clark, 2018). Historical narratives should not only communicate chronological events but also cultivate historical thinking through evidence, continuity and change, historical significance, and ethical dimensions (Seixas & Morton, 2013).

Elementary history teaching in the Philippine context faces persistent challenges shaped by material, pedagogical, and structural constraints. In the Philippines, history teaching is integrated in Social Studies (*Araling Panlipunan*). Particularly in grades 5 and 6 where Philippine History is emphasized, learners are expected to understand continuity, change, and historical significance. However, inadequate learning materials and limited access to narrative-oriented resources hinder effective instruction. Teacher preparation remains a major concern, as elementary teachers are trained as generalists and often lack strong content knowledge and confidence in history and historiography, leading to fragmented and surface-level teaching (Awa-ao & Roperez, 2024; David, 2024).

Structural conditions further constrain instruction, including limited class time, frequent suspensions, overcrowded classrooms, and poor facilities, especially in rural areas (Alviola, 2025; Tonalete, 2025). The rapid influence of digital media also shapes learners' attention and learning preferences, encouraging simplified historical consumption over deeper analysis (Grata & Llaneta, 2024). Although curriculum standards promote inquiry-based and meaningful learning, teachers are often overburdened and under-supported, with limited professional development opportunities. Despite these challenges, some educators adopt localized content and interactive strategies to promote historical understanding and appreciation. These conditions underscore the importance of instructional materials that can support narrative coherence and historical understanding within constrained teaching contexts. (Awa-ao & Roperez, 2024; Daud et al., 2025). Historical understanding requires learners to interpret evidence, contextualize the past, and construct meaningful historical accounts rather than simply memorize facts (Wineburg, 2001).

In 2023, the Philippine Department of Education introduced a revised national basic education curriculum aimed at reducing content overload by prioritizing depth, coherence, and essential learning competencies. Within the elementary social studies subject, which includes Philippine history, the curriculum outlines content standards that identify core historical concepts and performance standards that define expected learning outcomes. Although these reforms are designed to promote meaningful and concept-based learning, their impact in classroom practice depends largely on the availability of instructional materials that are well aligned with curricular objectives and suited to learners' developmental levels.

Textbooks remain the primary instructional resource in most public schools in the Philippines, as they provide structured coverage of required content. However, persistent challenges in textbook development and procurement—such as high production costs, prolonged review processes, and logistical constraints—have resulted in shortages and delays (Second Congressional

Commission on Education, 2024). In response, teachers are often compelled to seek alternative learning materials to support instruction. This situation highlights the need to evaluate not only the pedagogical potential of alternative materials but also their alignment with curriculum standards. Curriculum alignment is essential because meaningful learning occurs when curriculum objectives, instructional materials, learning activities, and assessment are coherently connected (Biggs & Tang, 2011).

Studies have also examined the use of narrative-based materials as alternatives or supplements to traditional instructional resources. Research on e-storybooks, storyboards, and similar media have reported positive effects on learner engagement and comprehension across subject areas. For instance, research on e-storybooks has shown improved reading performance compared to printed texts (Baclayon, 2022), while the use of storyboards has been associated with gains in students' understanding of literary content (Barlis et al., 2023). In social studies education, narrative-based materials such as big books have also been used to support history instruction, with reported improvements in student performance (Ortega & Guzman, 2023).

While these studies demonstrate the pedagogical promise of narrative-oriented materials, several limitations remain. Many focus on short-term interventions or small samples, limiting generalizability. More critically, existing research often emphasizes learning outcomes without systematically examining the alignment of narrative materials with curriculum standards. As a result, teachers lack clear guidance on how to select narrative-based resources that support mandated learning objectives, particularly in history education.

Filipino historical children's books constitute a promising yet underexamined instructional resource for elementary Philippine History. Encompassing historical fiction, creative nonfiction, biographies, and folk narratives, these texts present historical events through culturally grounded stories accessible to young learners. By foregrounding Filipino perspectives, they can support learner identification, historical continuity, and cultural significance. Their narrative structure aligns with the developmental needs of elementary learners and requires minimal technological infrastructure, allowing flexible classroom use across varied contexts.

Existing Filipino children's literature engages themes such as colonial experience, cultural identity, social justice, and Indigenous resistance, encouraging critical awareness alongside historical understanding (Aquino, 2023; Ortiz, 2008; Sy, 2024). However, their instructional value varies depending on historical accuracy, narrative perspective, and alignment with curriculum content, with some works reproducing colonized or superficial representations (Evasco, 2008; Ortiz, 2008). Despite their accessibility and pedagogical potential, these books remain largely underanalyzed as instructional materials, particularly in relation to specific elementary history curriculum standards.

Although narrative-based instructional materials show strong pedagogical potential, few studies examine their alignment with mandated curriculum standards in elementary Philippine history. Addressing this gap, the study analyzes selected Filipino historical children's books in relation to the current grades 5 and 6 social studies curricula. Recognizing children's books as educationally accessible narrative resources (Bage, 1999), the study develops curriculum heat maps to visually illustrate alignment with content and learning outcomes, supporting informed instructional decisions amid persistent shortages of appropriate learning materials.

This study is anchored on a culturally grounded conceptual framework informed by pantayong pananaw (a from-us-for-us perspective), an indigenous historiographical approach that emphasizes understanding history from a Filipino point of view (Salazar, 2000). In this framework, pantayong pananaw functions as a criterion for examining narrative voice, perspective, and cultural grounding in historical texts. Together with bagong kasaysayan (new history) and salaysay na may saysay para sa lahat (meaningful narratives for all) (Salazar, 1996, 2000), it provides the theoretical basis for evaluating how historical narratives are constructed, whose voices are represented, and for whom these narratives are intended.

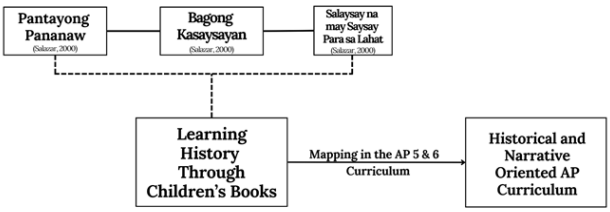
Central to the framework is the concept of kasaysayan (history), which integrates salaysay (narrative) and saysay (significance), positioning history as meaningful storytelling rather than the mere transmission of facts (Reyes, 2002). This view justifies the use of children's books as instructional resources, as their narrative form supports learners' developmental needs and enables the communication of historical meaning in accessible ways. The principle of *salaysay na may saysay para sa*

lahat (meaningful narratives for all) further emphasizes inclusivity, not only across ethnolinguistic groups but also across age groups, allowing children to meaningfully engage with history through relatable narratives.

As illustrated in Figure 1, these historiographical concepts collectively inform the pedagogical approach of learning history through children's books. The dashed connections indicate that theory underpins the selection and analysis of materials. At the operational level, this approach is implemented through a curriculum alignment checklist that examines narrative perspective, cultural grounding, historical accuracy, and correspondence with the grades 5 and 6 social studies curricula. The mapping of selected books to curriculum standards guides the interpretation of alignment and supports the development of a more historical and narrative-oriented social studies curriculum.

Figure 1

Conceptual Framework of the Study



METHOD

This study employed a qualitative research design using content analysis and curriculum mapping to examine the alignment between selected Filipino historical children's books and the current grades 5 and 6 social studies curricula of the Philippines. The primary data sources consisted of (1) selected Filipino historical children's books and (2) the official grades 5 and 6 social studies curriculum guides.

Content analysis was used to systematically examine the texts and images in the children's books in relation to curriculum standards. Following Stone et al. (1966, as cited in Krippendorff, 2019), content analysis is defined as a research technique for making inferences through the objective and systematic identification of specified characteristics within texts. Both conceptual and relational content analysis were employed. Conceptual analysis focused on the explicit presence of historical events, persons, periods, and concepts stated in the curriculum, while relational analysis examined how these elements were connected and contextualized within each narrative.

An expert-validated checklist served as the primary evaluation instrument, validated by experts in history education and curriculum studies to ensure clarity, relevance, and alignment with the study's conceptual framework. This minimized evaluator bias and avoided rigid quantification by including an "Evidence/Notes" column, which allowed researchers to justify each rating and document supporting textual or visual evidence. Items that did not sufficiently meet an indicator were marked accordingly, ensuring analytic transparency.

To ensure consistency and reliability in the evaluation process, interrater reliability was assessed among the research team members who independently applied the checklist to a subset of the selected books. After initial independent ratings, scores were compared and percentage agreement was calculated. Discrepancies were discussed and resolved through consensus, with reference to the "Evidence/Notes" column to clarify the basis for each rating. This process was repeated iteratively until a stable and shared interpretation of each checklist indicator was achieved across all evaluators. The interrater reliability procedure strengthened the internal consistency of the evaluation and minimized individual evaluator bias.

Curriculum mapping was then conducted to operationalize alignment. Adapting procedures from Clark et al. (2021) and Murphy et al., (2024), curriculum content standards were listed in the rows of a Google Sheets matrix, while children's book titles were placed in the columns. Alignment was assessed using five yes-or-no questions derived from the conceptual framework, with points assigned to indicate degrees of correspondence. Although numerical scores were used, these functioned as analytic aids rather than statistical measures, supporting qualitative interpretation. Curriculum alignment has been widely recognized as a systematic approach for examining the correspondence between intended curriculum, instructional resources, and learning outcomes (Porter, 2002).

To analyze the degree of alignment of the books' content with the content of the social studies 5 and 6 MATATAG curricula, a score guide was developed by the researchers. The lowest degree of alignment is described as "absent," with zero (0) points over eighteen (18) and is denoted with the color blue (hex code: #4285f4). The second lowest degree of alignment is described as "marginally present" with scores ranging from one (1) point to five (5) points over eighteen (18). It is denoted with the color blue-green (hex code #11b8cc). The third lowest degree of alignment is described as "slightly present" with scores ranging from six (6) points to ten

(10) points over eighteen (18). It is represented by the color yellow (hex code: #ffd966). The third highest degree of alignment is represented by the color orange (hex code: #ff8e3a); with scores ranging from eleven (11) points to fifteen (15) points over eighteen (18) and is described as "moderately present." The second highest degree of alignment is denoted with the color dark orange (hex code: #ee5000) and is described as "highly present" with scores ranging from sixteen (16) points to seventeen (17) points over eighteen (18). Lastly, the highest degree of alignment attainable by a book with eighteen (18) points over eighteen (18) is described as "completely present," represented by the color red (hex code: #ff0000). The color blue was used to denote absence because it would be the "coldest" part of a heat map, while red was chosen to signify the most alignment because it would be the "warmest."

As a qualitative study employing purposive sampling and a researcher-developed instrument, the researchers acknowledge the role of positionality in shaping the design and implementation of this study. The research team, composed of preservice teachers of social science education and a higher education faculty with an expertise in social studies education based in the Philippines, brings an insider perspective to the subject matter due to the nature of their program and profession, which is both an asset and a potential source of bias. Familiarity with Philippine historiography and the *pantayong pananaw* (a from-us-for-us perspective) framework informed the development of the checklist and the selection criteria for books, which may have favored texts aligned with a Filipino-centered historiographical lens. To mitigate evaluator bias, the checklist was subjected to expert validation by specialists in history education and curriculum studies, prior to its use, and the "Evidence/Notes" column required researchers to document and justify each rating with textual evidence. The interrater reliability procedure described above

Table 1
Selected Filipino historical children's books that were analyzed in this study

Publisher	Author/s	Title of book	Publication date	Recommended age	Price (PHP)
Adarna House	Becky Bravo	*Ang Kaibigan Kong si Mabini*	2017	9+	199.00
	Becky Bravo	*Ang Lakambini at Ako*	2016	9+	199.00
	Weng Cahiles	*Ang Maraming Ngalan ni Emilio*	2017	9+	199.00
	Virgilio S. Almario	*Ang Unang Barangay: Ang Pamumuhay ng mga Pilipino Bago Dumating ang mga Español*	2022	12+	150.00
	Rene O. Villanueva	*Dalawang Bayani ng Bansa*	2007	10+	150.00
	Russell Molina	*EDSA*	2013	8+	150.00
	Augie Rivera	*Isang Harding Papel*	2014	8+	150.00
	Liwliwa Malabed	*Matandang-matandang Buto: Ang Homo Luzonensis sa Pilipinas*	2022	12+	150.00
	Maria Bernadette Abrera, PhD and Weng Cahiles	*Mga Sasakyang Pandagat ng Pilipinas*	2024	10+	150.00
	Liwliwa Malabed	*Mga Sinaunang Hayop sa Pilipinas*	2022	12+	150.00
	Xi Zuq	*Ngumiti si Andoy*	2013	9+	150.00
	Augie Rivera	*Si Diwayen, Noong Bago Dumating ang mga Espanyol*	2001	10+	150.00
	Augie Rivera	*Si Jhun-Jhun, Noong Bago Ideklara ang Batas Militar*	2001	10+	150.00
	Augie Rivera	*Si Juanito, Noong Panahon ng mga Amerikano*	2001	10+	150.00
	Augie Rivera	*Si Pitong, Noong Panahon ng mga Hapon*	2001	10+	150.00
	Augie Rivera	*Si Segunda, Noong Panahon ng mga Espanyol*	2001	10+	150.00
Lampara Books	April Jade I. Biglaen	*Ang Supremo at ang Kuweba*	2016	8+	200.00
	Mark Anthony Angeles	*Si Andoy, Batang Tondo*	2014	8+	200.00

further reduced the influence of individual judgment. Nonetheless, we acknowledge that the selection of books and the interpretation of alignment remain shaped by the conceptual framework and the evaluator's shared academic context.

For this study, the researchers acquired or borrowed Filipino historical children's books that:

1. Clearly specify in the title or description a historical event, individual, institution, artifact, and/or era addressed in the grades 5 and 6 social studies curricula;
2. are promoted and composed for an audience under the age of 12;
3. are accessible in the Philippines; and
4. are composed in Filipino or incorporate both Filipino and English language (in the case of bilingual books).

The researchers have identified and listed 18 children's books that fulfill these criteria in Table 1. Along with the titles are the authors, publishers, publication dates, recommended ages, and prices (in Philippine pesos) of these books.

After purchasing or borrowing the children's books, we utilized the developed and validated checklist to assess how well the content aligned with the grades 5 and 6 social studies curricula. After reading the children's books at least four (4) times, evaluating them using the questions found in the checklist, and completing the checklist, the number of check marks were tallied, which corresponded to a qualitative rating in our score guide. If a children's book scores 18 points out of 18, it receives a completely present rating to show that the children's book is perfectly aligned to the content of the curricula and promotes a narrative-oriented and historical approach to teaching Key Stage 2 learners about Philippine history. These ratings were presented in a curriculum heat map, which is a kind of curriculum map that gauges the presence of a variable in the curriculum. In this case, the new variable being assessed is the alignment of the content of the children's book to the content of the grades 5 and 6 social studies curricula.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This section discusses the results of the mapping of the selected Filipino historical children's book. Data from the checklists and heat map analyses were consolidated into thematic categories based on the degree of presence: Completely Present, Highly Present, Moderately Present, Slightly Present, Marginally Present, and Absent. Each category is followed by an interpretation of its significance to curriculum alignment. The results of the checklist evaluation of the selected Filipino historical children's books and their alignment to the grades 5 and 6 social studies curricula are presented in Tables 2 and 3.

Table 2
Degree of Presence of Selected Filipino Historical Children's Books with the Philippine Grade 5 Social Studies Curriculum

Storybook Title	Score	Degree of Presence
Ang Kaibigan Kong si Mabini	14/18	Moderately present
Ang Lakambini at Ako	13/18	Moderately present
Ang Maraming Ngalan ni Emilio	14/18	Moderately present
Ang Unang Barangay: Ang Pamumuhay ng mga Pilipino Bago Dumating ang mga Español	18/18	Completely present
Dalawang Bayani ng Bansa	16/18	Highly present
EDSA	0/18	Absent
Isang Harding Papel	0/18	Absent
Matandang-matandang Buto: Ang Homo Luzonensis sa Pilipinas	18/18	Completely present
Mga Sasakyang Pandagat ng Pilipinas	17/18	Highly present
Mga Sinaunang Hayop sa Pilipinas	17/18	Highly present
Ngumiti si Andoy	11/18	Moderately present
Si Diwayen, Noong Bago Dumating ang mga Espanyol	15/18	Moderately present
Si Jhun-Jhun, Noong Bago Ideklara ang Batas Militar	0/18	Absent
Si Juanito, Noong Panahon ng mga Amerikano	0/18	Absent
Si Pitong, Noong Panahon ng mga Hapon	0/18	Absent
Si Segunda, Noong Panahon ng mga Espanyol	15/18	Moderately present
Ang Supremo at ang Kuweba	14/18	Moderately present
Si Andoy, Batang Tondo	14/18	Moderately present

Table 3
Degree of Presence of Selected Filipino Historical Children's Books with the Philippine Grade 6 Social Studies Curriculum

Storybook Title	Score	Degree of Presence
Ang Kaibigan Kong si Mabini	0/18	Absent
Ang Lakambini at Ako	13/18	Moderately present
Ang Maraming Ngalan ni Emilio	14/18	Moderately present
Ang Unang Barangay: Ang Pamumuhay ng mga Pilipino Bago Dumating ang mga Español	0/18	Absent
Dalawang Bayani ng Bansa	16/18	Highly present
EDSA	14/18	Moderately present
Isang Harding Papel	15/18	Moderately present
Matandang-matandang Buto: Ang Homo Luzonensis sa Pilipinas	0/18	Absent
Mga Sasakyang Pandagat ng Pilipinas	0/18	Absent
Mga Sinaunang Hayop sa Pilipinas	0/18	Absent
Ngumiti si Andoy	11/18	Moderately present
Si Diwayen, Noong Bago Dumating ang mga Espanyol	0/18	Absent
Si Jhun-Jhun, Noong Bago Ideklara ang Batas Militar	14/18	Moderately Present
Si Juanito, Noong Panahon ng mga Amerikano	15/18	Moderately present
Si Pitong, Noong Panahon ng mga Hapon	15/18	Moderately present
Si Segunda, Noong Panahon ng mga Espanyol	0/18	Absent
Ang Supremo at ang Kuweba	0/18	Absent
Si Andoy, Batang Tondo	0/18	Absent

Tables 2 and 3 show the degree of presence of the selected Filipino historical children's books in the grade 5 social studies curriculum based on curriculum mapping. Results indicate that only two books achieved the highest degree of presence: *Ang Unang Barangay: Ang Pamumuhay ng mga Pilipino Bago Dumating ang mga Español* and *Matandang-matandang Buto: Ang Homo Luzonensis sa Pilipinas*. Both obtained the maximum score of eighteen (18) points, indicating complete alignment with the grade 5 social studies MATATAG curriculum.

Matandang-matandang Buto demonstrates strong alignment with first-quarter topics on the peopling of the Philippines and early human–environment interaction. Its high score is attributed to its effective integration of an engaging narrative with evidence-based archaeological content, including references to discoveries in Callao Cave and the identification of Homo luzonensis by the team of Dr. Armand Mijares (Détroit et al., 2019), supported by properly cited primary sources. In contrast, *Ang Unang Barangay* prioritizes content coverage over narrative depth but remains closely aligned with curriculum standards. The book highlights the existence of organized precolonial societies, challenging colonial narratives by presenting barangays as complex communities with established governance, trade networks, and social systems. This perspective aligns with pantayong pananaw (a from-us-for-us perspective), emphasizing a Filipino-centered understanding of history.

Books with a completely present degree of alignment are highly recommended by the researchers as supplementary instructional materials. Following the various studies that incorporated children's books in teaching social studies such as Baclayon's (2022) electronic storybooks, Barlis et al.'s (2023) storyboards, and Ortega and De Guzman's (2023) big book, we believe that using *Matandang-matandang Buto* and *Ang Unang Barangay* in teaching topics like *Interaksyon ng Tao*, *Lipunan at Kapaligiran* (Human-Society-Environment Interaction) and *Pangkapaligiran at Kalidad ng Pamumuhay ng Tao* (Environmental and Human Quality of Life) from the first quarter of grade 5 social studies curriculum and *Ugnayan ng Sinaunang Bayang Pilipino sa Ilang Piling bansa sa Asya* (The Relations of the Ancient Filipino Nation with Selected Countries in Asia) from the second quarter of the same curriculum can result in positive outcomes, including the promotion of narrative-oriented approach in learning Philippine history.

Books classified as highly present obtained scores of sixteen (16) or seventeen (17) in the checklist, as reflected in the curriculum heat maps. These include *Mga Sinaunang Hayop sa Pilipinas* and *Mga Sasakyang Pandagat ng Pilipinas* for grade 5 social studies, and *Dalawang Bayani ng Bansa* for grade 6. Although these books aligned well with key curriculum topics and satisfied most indicators, they did not achieve perfect scores due to the absence of cited experts or bibliographic

references. For example, *Dalawang Bayani ng Bansa* centers on the lives of José Rizal and Andrés Bonifacio, and supports the development of chronological thinking by presenting their life events in a clear sequence. In contrast, *Mga Sinaunang Hayop sa Pilipinas* and *Mga Sasakyang Pandagat ng Pilipinas* emphasize factual content rather than narrative structure, as they lack plot and character-driven storytelling. Nonetheless, these books extend textbook discussions and are suitable for guided storytelling, enrichment, and processing activities when mediated by the teacher.

Books classified as moderately present demonstrated partial alignment, either meeting the reliability or content indicator, but not both consistently. Some examples are *Ang Maraming Ngalan ni Emilio, Si Diwayen, Si Andoy, Batang Tondo, Ang Lakambini at Ako, Ngumiti si Andoy, Ang Kaibigan Kong si Mabini, Si Segunda*, and A*ng Supremo at ang Kuweba. Isang Harding Papel* scored moderately not because it aligned well with the content but because it displayed the use of primary sources and cited experts in its content. On the other hand, *Ang Lakambini at Ako* and *Si Segunda* scored moderately in both indicators.

Several books scored higher in grade 6 because they included events that occurred after the Philippine Revolution, such as the American occupation, Japanese occupation, and the *Batas Militar* (martial law) period. These books are S*i Jhun-Jhun, Si Juanito, Si Pitong*, and EDSA. Others received the same score in both curricula, such as *Ang Maraming Ngalan ni Emilio, Ang Lakambini at Ako*, and *Ngumiti si Andoy.*

Additionally, the results indicate that several books earned points for reliability even when their content did not align with specific curriculum topics. For example, Matandang-matandang Buto was rated as completely present for grade 5, but only moderately present for grade 6 due to content misalignment, despite the consistent quality and reliability of its sources. A similar pattern was observed for *Ang Unang Barangay*, which did not align with grade 6 topics but retained high reliability. Books from the *Batang Historyador series*—such as *Si Diwayen, Si Segunda, Si Juanito, Si Pitong, and Si Jhun-Jhun*—were likewise rated favorably because of their use of primary sources and expert citations. These texts provide micro-historical accounts often absent from grand historical narratives and, with appropriate classroom processing, can foster reflection and historical empathy (Kindenberg, 2026), even if they do not strongly support chronological thinking.

Several books, including EDSA, *Si Jhun-Jhun, Si Juanito, Si Pitong, Si Diwayen, Si Andoy, Ang Kaibigan Kong si Mabini, Si Segunda,* and *Ang Supremo at ang Kuweba*, received lower alignment scores because they did not correspond to specific curriculum topics across any quarter. Nevertheless, they remained slightly present due to their factual accuracy and use of credible sources. While we do not recommend slightly present books for direct classroom instruction, they may be suggested to learners with strong interest in particular historical themes to engage them more in learning history even outside the classroom (Maloney, 2022).

No books were rated as marginally present or received zero scores, as all selections met predefined criteria related to language, target age, and relevance to Philippine history. However, many titles appeared as absent in the heat maps because they failed to align with any curriculum topic, which is the main endeavor in this study.

Most books addressed only one curriculum topic, which reflects the inherent limitations and strengths of the children's book format. Compared with textbooks, children's books show lower curriculum alignment but higher engagement. While textbooks offer broader coverage, storybooks promote emotional connection and retention. Thus, books with complete or high alignment are suitable for instruction, moderately aligned books for post-discussion processing, and slightly aligned books for enrichment and reflection.

Children's Books as Instructional Materials

Analysis of the checklists and heat maps shows that most children's books address only one topic in the social studies curriculum. While it may appear feasible to cover multiple topics, focusing on a single theme allows authors to simplify complex historical content for young readers. Children's books are also produced more quickly than textbooks, an important consideration given the Philippine Department of Education's recurring difficulties in providing timely and updated learning materials (Second Congressional Commission on Education, 2024). Although textbooks demonstrate stronger curriculum alignment, their dense textual format often limits student engagement (Awa-ao & Roperez, 2024).

In contrast, children's storybooks present focused and accessible narratives that are easier for learners to follow. For instance, *Si Segunda* centers on the everyday life of a young Filipino girl named Segunda and her

pursuit of education rather than attempting to narrate the entirety of the Philippines under Spanish colonial rule. Such micro-narratives, particularly when supported by teacher-guided discussion, can meaningfully contribute to historical understanding (Devine et al., 2014) and align with pantayong pananaw (a from-us-for-us perspective) by foregrounding lived Filipino experiences. Most of the selected books focus on major historical periods such as the Philippines under the Spanish colonial rule, the Katipunan and the 1896 Philippine Revolution, and the 1986 People Power Revolution—events that have significantly shaped Filipino society. Introducing these narratives at an early age may help foster historical awareness and civic responsibility (Haste & Bermudez, 2017).

The books also vary in narrative form. Some employ traditional plots and characters, such as *Matandang-matandang Buto*, while others, like *Ang Unang Barangay,* function as informational picture books. Although the latter may lack fictional storytelling elements, they ensure factual reliability and provide clear visual representations of historical life, supporting learners' comprehension of past social structures.

Implications for Teaching Elementary Social Studies

Overall, the eighteen (18) children's books examined in this study have the potential to support a more historical and narrative-oriented approach to teaching elementary social studies, consistent with the principle of s*alaysay na may saysay para sa lahat* (meaningful narratives for all). However, the extent to which they do so varies across titles. When used strategically, these books can serve as effective entry points for critical discussions of Philippine history. For example, lessons on the Philippine Martial Law period may begin with Isang Harding Papel, which presents historical conditions through the experiences of a child character. This narrative approach helps make the past more tangible, allowing learners to view historical events through perspectives they can relate to and understand (Kindenberg, 2026)

Picture books that do not rely on fictional characters can also function as effective instructional materials. Titles such *as Ang Unang Barangay: Ang Pamumuhay ng mga Pilipino Bago Dumating ang mga Español* condense extensive textbook content into visually rich representations of precolonial life, supporting comprehension and discussion. Ultimately, the use of these storybooks depends on the teacher, who serves as the curriculum implementer and best understands learners' needs. Teachers may select and integrate these materials in ways that best support learning objectives in grades 5 and 6 social studies curricula of the Philippines.

CONCLUSIONS

Persistent shortages of appropriate instructional materials continue to constrain the teaching of Philippine history at the elementary level (Awa-ao & Roperez, 2024), while delays in textbook production remain unresolved, with the last procurement of grades 5 and 6 social studies textbooks dating back to 2012–2013 (Second Congressional Commission on Education, 2024). Despite the rollout of the MATATAG curriculum, updated textbooks have yet to be made available. Although international literature consistently demonstrates the effectiveness of storytelling in history and social studies instruction across multiple formats (Fettig et al., 2016; Green et al., 2004; Kim et al., 2006; Smeda et al., 2014), such findings are largely situated outside the Philippine context.

Guided by *pantayong pananaw* (a from-us-for-us perspective), *bagong kasaysayan* (new history), and *salaysay na may saysay para sa lahat* (meaningful narratives for all) (Salazar, 2000), this study examined the curriculum alignment of eighteen Filipino-authored historical children's books written in Filipino with the grades 5 and 6 Philippine social studies curricula. Using expert-validated checklists and curriculum heat maps, the analysis found that only two titles demonstrated complete alignment, while a limited number were highly aligned and most exhibited moderate alignment. These findings indicate that, although alignment is often partial, Filipino historical children's books can function as viable supplementary instructional resources that support narrative-oriented and culturally grounded history teaching. However, the generally low level of full alignment suggests structural limitations in their systematic integration within the current curriculum.

The analysis further revealed a concentration of narratives within the *pamayanan* (community) and bansa (nation) periods of Salazar's (2000) tripartite periodization, particularly around the Philippine Martial Law and the 1986 EDSA People Power Revolution. These thematic emphases suggest the potential of children's literature to support early civic awareness and critical engagement with national history. At the same time, the findings underscore a shortage of Filipino-language historical children's books closely aligned with Key Stage 2 curriculum standards.

This study is limited to the grades 5 and 6 social studies curricula in the Philippines, and a purposive sample of eighteen texts. Future research may refine and validate curriculum-alignment tools for broader educational use, extend analyses to children's books written in other Philippine languages or beyond or a cross-country comparative analysis, and examine classroom implementation practices. Empirical studies on how teachers integrate historical children's books and how such materials affect learners' historical understanding, engagement, and critical thinking would further strengthen Philippine-based or cross-country studies on narrative approaches to history education.

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