



Digital Tales vs Traditional Methods: Engaging Students in Creative Writing

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Abstract

Review Article

Creative writing is a vital skill that allows students to articulate ideas, emotions, and experiences through significant narratives. However, many Senior High School students struggle to come up with ideas, organize their thoughts, and stay interested in writing when traditional teaching methods are primarily used. This study explored and compared the effectiveness of Digital Tales (digital storytelling) and traditional teaching approaches in promoting student engagement and enhancing the creative writing performance of Grade 11 Senior High School students at Rizal National High School during the academic year 2025–2026. It also examined whether there were significant differences in students’ writing performance before and after exposure to the two instructional methods, and further assessed the extent of the impact of digital storytelling as a teaching intervention. The study employed a quasi-experimental pretest–posttest design involving two groups of participants: one group was taught using traditional writing instruction, while the other group was exposed to Digital Tales instruction. Data were collected through writing performance assessments conducted before and after the intervention. A validated writing rubric that looked at organization, coherence, vocabulary, and clarity of expression was used to grade students' work. The collected data were analyzed through descriptive statistics, paired-samples t-tests, independent-samples t-tests, and effect size calculations to examine both the significance and the extent of differences within and between the groups. The results indicated that both groups got better at creative writing. The experimental group that used Digital Tales, on the other hand, saw much bigger improvements in their posttest scores than the control group. The results suggest that integrating digital storytelling enhances students' engagement and ability to develop ideas, organize narratives, and express their thoughts more effectively. The research indicates that Digital Tales is an effective pedagogical approach that can enhance students' creative writing skills and engagement, offering a beneficial alternative to conventional writing instruction in Senior High School settings.

Keywords: digital storytelling, creative writing, instructional strategy, student engagement, writing performance.

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Introduction

Creative writing is an important part of language education, as it helps students express ideas and develop literacy, communication, and critical thinking skills (Hyland, 2022; Graham & Perin, 2023). However, many Senior High School students struggle with idea generation, organization, vocabulary, and coherence, leading to low writing performance and engagement (Mendoza, 2022; Santos & Rivera, 2024).

These challenges are often linked to traditional teacher-centered approaches, which focus on lectures and written tasks but may not effectively promote creativity and active participation (Alvermann, 2022; Lim & Tan, 2023). In response, digital storytelling, or digital tales, has emerged as an innovative strategy that combines writing with multimedia elements, improving students' creativity and engagement (Robin, 2022; Yang & Wu, 2023; Kearney, 2024).

In the Philippine context, despite its inclusion in the SHS curriculum, students still struggle with creative writing, and studies comparing Digital Tales and traditional methods remain limited (Reyes & Domingo, 2023; Villanueva, 2024). Thus, this study aims to compare the effectiveness of these approaches in enhancing creative writing performance and engagement among Grade 11 students at Rizal National High School.

Methodology

This study employed a quasi-experimental, non-equivalent pretest–posttest control-group design to evaluate the efficacy of the Digital Tales approach in improving the creative writing performance of Grade 11 students. The participants comprised 77 students from two intact classes at Rizal National High School for the 2025–2026 academic year. Because random assignment wasn't possible, purposive sampling was used to select respondents, ensuring that both groups were comparable.

The experimental group, composed of Grade 11–F. Taylor students were exposed to digital and multimodal writing activities through the Digital

Tales approach. These activities included digital storytelling, multimedia integration, and guided writing tasks designed to promote creativity and engagement. In contrast, the control group, consisting of Grade 11 John Locke students, received instruction using traditional teaching methods, primarily through lecture-based discussion and standard writing exercises.

To gather data, a validated writing assessment tool and rubric were administered to both groups as pretest and posttest measures. These instruments were designed to evaluate key aspects of creative writing, such as organization, content development, language use, and originality. Before the intervention, Levene's test for homogeneity of variance gave a p-value of 0.805, which means that there was no significant difference in the two groups' initial writing performance and that they were comparable.

The intervention lasted for four weeks. During this period, the experimental group actively participated in digital storytelling tasks, allowing them to express ideas through a combination of text, visuals, and other multimedia elements. Meanwhile, the control group continued with traditional writing instruction without integrating digital tools.

After the intervention, posttests were administered to both groups to measure any changes in their writing performance. The collected data were analyzed using appropriate statistical tools, including frequency counts, means, and standard deviations to describe the data, as well as paired-samples t-tests to determine within-group improvements and independent-samples t-tests to compare differences between the two groups. Levene's test was also used to verify the equality of variances. These analyses were conducted to determine whether the Digital Tales approach had a statistically significant effect on students' creative writing performance.

Throughout the research process, ethical standards were strictly observed. Informed consent was obtained from the participants, and their identities and responses were kept confidential to ensure privacy and integrity in the conduct of the study.

Results and Discussions

Table 1. Demographic Profile of the Respondent

Profile	Particulars	Group			
		Control Group	Percent	Experimental Group	Percent
Sex	Male	34	87.18	10	26.32
	Female	5	12.82	28	73.68
Age Mean = 16.13	15 years old	1	2.56	1	2.63
	16 years old	31	79.49	32	84.21
	17 years old	7	17.95	5	13.16

Control group (N = 39)

Experimental Group (N = 38)

As shown in Table 1, the control and experimental groups share comparable age characteristics, with most of the students aged 16 and an overall mean age of 16.13. This indicates that the participants in both groups are at a relatively similar stage of cognitive, emotional, and academic development. At this age, students are typically developing more advanced writing skills and the ability to express ideas more critically and creatively, making the groups suitable for comparison in terms of creative writing performance.

A clear difference can be observed in the number of male and female students across the two groups. However, this variation reflects the actual classroom setup, in which students are already organized into intact sections before the study. Such differences are common in educational research that

uses existing classes. Despite this imbalance, it is not expected to influence the results significantly, especially since both groups were exposed to the same learning objectives, time frame, and assessment tools. As supported by Roy (2024), differences in gender composition do not necessarily result in variations in writing performance when instructional conditions are consistent.

The similarity in age further supports the comparability of the two groups, suggesting that they share a relatively equal level of readiness and learning capacity. As a result, any differences observed in the findings can be more confidently linked to the teaching approach used in the study rather than to the students' background characteristics.

Table 2. Pretest Mean Percent Score Writing Performance of the Respondents

Group	N	Mean	SD	t	p-value	Decision
Control Group	39	78.14	8.71	-0.172	0.864	Fail to reject Ho
Experimental Group	38	78.49	8.98			

p-value ≤ 0.05 is significant

Table 2 indicates that the control group obtained a mean pretest score of 78.14 with a standard deviation of 8.71. In comparison, the experimental group had a slightly higher mean score of 78.49, along with a standard deviation of 8.98. There is not much of a

difference between the mean scores when you look at them more closely. An independent-samples t-test was conducted to determine whether the difference was statistically significant. The results showed a p-value of 0.864, which is considerably higher than the

0.05 level of significance. This suggests that there is no significant difference in the writing performance of the two groups during the pretest (Roy, 2024; Ong et al., 2025).

These findings suggest that both groups had a similar level of writing proficiency before the intervention. In other words, students in both the control and experimental groups demonstrated comparable abilities in terms of organization, content, and overall writing performance at the beginning of the study. It is especially important to establish this kind of baseline equivalence in quasi-experimental research, where random assignment is not feasible. It helps ensure the two groups are evenly

matched, making it easier to compare results (Wilks et al., 2022; Tee & Samah, 2025).

The students were similar at first, so we can be sure that any differences in the posttest results were caused by the lessons, not by the students' abilities before. This suggests that we can justifiably attribute any observed enhancement in the experimental group to the implementation of the digital storytelling strategy. Previous studies (Robin, 2022; Yang & Wu, 2023) have shown that this approach can help students strengthen their creative writing skills, especially by getting them involved, expressing themselves, and generating new ideas.

Table 3. Posttest Mean Percent Score Writing Performance of the Respondents

Group	N	Mean	SD	t	p-value	Decision
Control Group	39	80.45	7.32	-4.378	< .001	Reject Ho
Experimental Group	38	87.63	7.07			

p-value ≤ 0.05 is significant

Table 3 shows the respondents' posttest writing performance following the instructional intervention. The control group recorded a mean score of 80.45 with a standard deviation of 7.32, reflecting a slight improvement from their earlier results. To examine whether this difference was statistically significant, an independent-samples t-test was performed, which resulted in a t-value of 4.378 and a p-value of < 0.001. Since this p-value is below the 0.05 level of significance, it confirms that there is a statistically significant difference in posttest writing performance between the two groups (Roy, 2024; Ong et al., 2025).

The findings show a notable improvement in performance among students who were exposed to the Digital Tales approach compared to those who received traditional writing instruction. This improvement is not only reflected in the numerical scores but also implies a meaningful enhancement in students' ability to express ideas more clearly and creatively. This finding is consistent with previous research, which shows that digital and multimodal narrative environments can increase student

engagement while also improving coherence and expressive clarity in writing (Sorlin, 2020; Lifiani, 2021; Ajabshir, 2024). By integrating multimedia elements, Digital Tales enable learners to visualize their narratives more clearly, organize event sequences more effectively, and incorporate richer, more detailed descriptions into their writing (Wilks et al., 2022; Ran et al., 2023).

The experimental group's higher posttest performance aligns with existing studies that emphasize that digital storytelling promotes deeper cognitive engagement and sustained motivation among learners. When students are more engaged and motivated, they tend to invest more effort in their writing tasks, resulting in improved outputs (Nandrajog, 2024; Jiang, 2024). In this case, Digital Tales is a good way to help students organize their thoughts, learn new words, and say what they mean more clearly. These findings highlight the effectiveness of the Digital Tales approach in enhancing the creative writing skills of Grade 11 students.



Table 4. Comparison of the Mean Difference of the Posttest and Pretest Writing Performance of the Respondents

Group	N	Mean Gain	SD	t	p-value	Decision
Control Group	39	2.31	5.11	-5.099	< .001	Reject Ho
Experimental Group	38	9.14	6.58			

p-value ≤ 0.05 is significant

The control group recorded a mean gain score of 2.31 with a standard deviation of 5.11, suggesting only a slight improvement in writing performance following traditional instruction. This suggests that conventional methods alone provide limited opportunities for sustained engagement and expressive development in narrative writing (Habermas, 2022; Patel et al., 2022).

In comparison, the experimental group obtained a considerably higher mean gain score of 9.14 with a standard deviation of 6.58, indicating a marked improvement. The difference between the two groups was found to be statistically significant ($p < 0.001$), suggesting that students exposed to Digital Tales demonstrated greater progress than those who were taught using traditional methods.

The substantial improvement in the experimental group can be attributed to the interactive and multimodal features of Digital Tales,

which help students develop ideas, maintain narrative coherence, enrich vocabulary, and express themselves more clearly (Lifiani, 2021; Wilks et al., 2022; Ran et al., 2023). The digital environment lets students change, rearrange, and improve their work with pictures and sounds, which makes it easier to understand and improves the quality of their writing (Ajabshir, 2024; Nation, 2025).

These findings also align with previous research suggesting that digital storytelling approaches enhance student motivation and engagement, prompting students to invest more effort in planning, drafting, and refining their work, which ultimately results in improved learning outcomes (Şahin & Çoban, 2020; Chen, 2023; Nandrajog, 2024). Overall, the results indicate that Digital Tales is an effective strategy for developing creative writing skills among Grade 11 students.

Table 5. Effect of Digital Approach on the Writing Performance of the Respondents

Group	N	Mean Gain	Mean Difference	t	p-value	Cohen's d
Control Group	39	2.31	-6.83	-5.099	< .001	-1.160
Experimental Group	38	9.14				

p-value ≤ 0.05 is significant

Cohen's d: small effect size = around 0.2

medium effect size = around 0.5

large effect size = around 0.8 or higher

To measure the impact of the digital teaching approach, Cohen's d was calculated and found to be 1.160, indicating a large effect size. This shows that the difference in writing performance between the control and experimental groups was not only statistically significant but also represented a meaningful improvement in students' abilities (Şahin & Çoban, 2020; Chen, 2023).

Students in the Experimental Group demonstrated greater depth in writing, with clearer organization of ideas, more detailed explanations, richer vocabulary, and stronger creativity than those in the Control Group. These results suggest that Digital Tales helped learners generate ideas more effectively, elaborate their thoughts, and present narratives with greater clarity and coherence (Lifiani, 2021; Wilks et al., 2022; Ran et al., 2023).

The large effect size confirms that Digital Tales is a highly effective strategy for enhancing Grade 11 students' writing performance. By combining technology, creativity, and narrative construction, it supports both cognitive and expressive aspects of writing, resulting in significant learning gains (Nandrajog, 2024; Jiang, 2024).

Based on the study's results, it can be concluded that the digital teaching approach, especially through Digital Tales, is more effective than traditional writing instruction in enhancing the writing performance of Grade 11 students. Since both the control and experimental groups had similar abilities at the start, the comparison between the two approaches is considered reliable. However, as the intervention progressed, a clear difference started to emerge. Students who were exposed to the digital approach showed greater improvement in their writing, especially in how they organized their ideas, expressed their thoughts clearly, used appropriate vocabulary, and developed more coherent narratives.

On the other hand, those taught using traditional methods showed only slight improvement, suggesting that such approaches may not be sufficient to enhance writing skills in a short period significantly. What stands out, though, is the noticeable progress of the Experimental Group, whose gains were not only statistically significant

but also evident in the quality of their written outputs. This suggests that the digital teaching approach did more than improve scores. It actually helped students become better writers.

The study points to the value of integrating digital and multimodal strategies in teaching writing. While it may not completely replace traditional methods, it clearly offers a more engaging and effective way to support students' writing development.

Based on the findings of the study, it is recommended that the digital teaching approach, especially using Digital Tales, be incorporated into English writing instruction, as it has demonstrated effectiveness in enhancing students' writing performance. Teachers are encouraged to incorporate digital and multimodal activities across various writing tasks to enhance students' engagement, creativity, and overall skills. To support this, participation in training and seminars on technology-integrated teaching is essential to strengthen teachers' competence in using such approaches effectively.

Moreover, school administrators should ensure the availability of necessary digital resources and promote a supportive environment for innovative teaching practices. Continuous improvement of writing assessment tools is also recommended to measure students' progress accurately. Finally, future studies may be conducted to further explore the effectiveness of the digital approach across different contexts and learning areas, ensuring its wider applicability in education.

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