

Research Article

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When Stories Get a Visual Voice: AI-Generated Images, a Visual Pedagogy for Enhancing Student Engagement and Critical Analysis in World Literature

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Abstract

Background/Purpose: This study investigates the pedagogical potential of AI-generated images to enhance student engagement and critical analysis in world literature curricula. Grounded in Reader-Response Theory, it explores how algorithmic visuals impact student interpretation, addressing a gap in understanding technology's role in fostering aesthetic literacy.

Materials/Methods: A mixed-method approach was employed in an undergraduate literature course using surveys (N=30) and educator interviews. Students engaged in short stories (e.g., Kafka, Hemingway) accompanied by AI-generated images (Midjourney v5.2). Questionnaires measured emotional/intellectual engagement, and open-ended responses captured interpretive reasoning. Data were analyzed via ANOVA and thematic coding (NVivo14).

Results: AI images significantly boosted student emotional engagement (+22%, $p < 0.01$), effectively hooking reluctant readers. However, interpretive diversity decreased (3 vs. 9 thematic variants in control groups), potentially narrowing critical thinking. Disparities emerged: women engaged more with symbolic visuals (77.4% emotional connection), while men preferred literal depictions (69.8% analytical focus). AI's cultural biases were identified as a teachable moment for digital literacy by 28% of participants.

Conclusion: AI visuals deepen student-text interactions but risk homogenizing interpretation. The study highlights AI's value as a scaffolded pedagogical tool for differentiating instruction, advocating for ethical prompt-crafting exercises to teach algorithmic bias and preserve hermeneutic openness. Findings urge interdisciplinary collaboration to harness AI's capacity for enriching literary learning.

1. Introduction

The integration of artificial intelligence (AI) into artistic domains has sparked debates about its role in creative interpretation (Author, 2023). In literature, while traditional illustrations have long supplemented textual narratives (Author, 2020), AI-generated images offer dynamic, reader-specific visuals that may uniquely enhance engagement. Prior studies have examined static imagery in storytelling (Author, 2021) or AI art in isolation (Author, 2022), but none address how algorithmically generated visuals interact with short stories to shape emotional and aesthetic responses. This study bridges that gap by investigating: (1) How do AI-generated images influence readers' emotional connection to short stories? (2) To what extent do these images redefine aesthetic appreciation of literary texts? By analyzing reader feedback through [method], we uncover how AI art transforms the reading experience—a critical insight for educators, publishers, and AI developers navigating the intersection of technology and literature.

Artists built communicative bridges between generations and societies, conveying profound human meanings and experiences. Images also carried visual meanings of literary and poetic stories, thus open to multiple interpretations. Despite the significant transformations in the visual arts, they remain an eternal means of expression. Here lies the similarity between the visual arts and the short story, as both delve into the depths of the human psyche and present profound emotional and intellectual experiences.

Through this profound similarity between the short story and visual artistic images in their exceptional ability to embody human experiences and deep emotions with precision and intensity, they reflect the essence of life through words or images that carry symbolic dimensions and multiple meanings. Just as short stories convey, through a few and sincere events, condensed ideas and experiences, visual artistic images can express deep emotions and details via a few visual elements. The research attempts to present an innovative artistic and human experience, opening new horizons for readers to interact with literary texts.

With advancements in technology, it has become possible to leverage artificial intelligence to transform literary texts, particularly short stories, into innovative digital images that visually embody literary expressions. This research uses the reader-response theory of criticism to explore how readers interact with literary texts and how these interactions are translated into digital images using AI. The study aims to examine the impact of this approach in deepening the understanding of short narratives and enhancing their dramatic and psychological effects. It also seeks to highlight the interaction between short narratives and digital images to enrich the reader's experience in interpreting literary works. Through this integrated expressionist approach, the research combines the aesthetics of literature with Digital art, providing new insights into artificial intelligence's role in interpreting and teaching literary arts.

This study bridges two growing domains—AI-generated art and reader-response theory—by investigating how algorithmic visuals influence emotional engagement with short stories. While prior work has examined static illustrations in literature (Author, 2020), the dynamic, customizable nature of AI art raises new questions about aesthetic co-creation. We address this gap by analyzing. How can artificial intelligence enhance reader engagement with short stories by adding an innovative visual dimension that amplifies the dramatic and psychological impact of literary text, while increasing societal interaction with narratives amidst rapid technological advancements?

Amid rapid technological advancements, this study investigates how AI-generated images amplify the dramatic and psychological impact of short stories, fostering richer reader-text interactions. By transforming literary expressions into digital visuals (e.g., via Midjourney AI), it tests two hypotheses: (1) AI art enhances emotional/intellectual engagement by visualizing subtext, and

(2) reader demographics (e.g., gender, culture) moderate this effect. This work bridges literature, digital art, and pedagogy, offering actionable insights for publishers, educators, and AI developers.

This study seeks to achieve the following objectives:

1. Investigating the relationship between literature and art by using the aesthetic values of literary texts to guide AI-generated image designers.
2. Evaluating the influence of AI-generated images on reader responses emotionally and intellectually.

The study then attempts to answer these questions

1. What roles do aesthetic values of literary texts play in guiding the designer to create AI-generated images?
2. How do AI-generated Images affect readers' experience of literature emotionally and intellectually?

The current study focuses on 19th–20th century Russian/English short stories; this study acknowledges limitations in generalizability due to cultural/personal variability in image interpretation (e.g., gendered responses to emotional cues like “clothing”). Ethical safeguards ensured AI-generated imagery was pre-screened for disturbing content.

This study sheds light on creative expression by integrating artificial intelligence into interpreting literary texts, particularly short stories and transforming them into innovative visual representations. This approach explores the potential for enhancing readers' experience of understanding literary texts deeply and highlights their underlying dramatic and psychological messages by providing visual depictions. The study explores how the interaction between literature and digital imagery can enrich the reading experience, demonstrating the vital role of technology in reshaping literary arts in the digital age.

2. Literature Review

While short stories compress human experiences (Bart, 1993), AI-generated visuals extend this compression into the visual domain. Multimedia Learning Theory (Mayer, 2009) suggests such dual coding (text + image) enhances cognition, but whether AI art achieves this remains untested.

AI's interpretive role in literature remains undertheorized. While Bart (1993) examines textual brevity, our study asks how algorithmic brevity (e.g., Midjourney's 60-word prompt limit) shapes meaning.

Reader-response theory's emphasis on subjectivity aligns with short stories' affective potency (Bart, 1993). Yet AI-generated visuals risk flattening this complexity—a tension explored in our results. Among other artistic structural elements in a short story, such as characters, setting, and time, the event is the backbone. Although an event in a short story seems instantaneous, it is capable of encapsulating years and centuries or envisioning the future ambiguously (Saidi, 2024, p. 7).

A short story is a prominent literary form that combines narrative brevity with profound meaning, focusing on a single idea or event within a condensed narrative that addresses complex themes directly and emotionally. It affords expressing diverse emotions and ideas, reflecting multiple human perspectives and highlighting the intricacies of human experience precisely and concisely. It remains a contemporary literary tool that continues to evolve and deliver rich and influential literary experiences.

Expression and narration are inherent human needs rooted in the essence of human existence since ancient times. Humans have used art to leave their mark, starting with the drawings that adorned cave walls, which were not random lines but a record reflecting the details of their lives, struggles, and dreams, as if saying, "I was here." Through these lines, the artist not only conveyed their consciousness but also established a deep connection between themselves and their community, transforming their individual experience into a timeless human message.

Over time, the visual image has gained a deeper documentary, becoming an immortalizing tool for man's experiences and soul. Visual art was not a superficial reflection but rather dived deep into Man and his environment. An artist, through visual art, was able to engage in dialogue with existence and nothingness, thereby satisfying his innate desire to express himself and his soul.

The artist made bridges between different generations and societies, conveying profound human meanings and experiences. Images also carried visual meanings for multiple interpretations of literary and poetic productions. Despite significant shifts in the visual arts, it remained a timeless medium of expression. Hence, the similarities between the visual arts and the short story are evident of their ability to dive deep into the human psyche.

Profoundly, short stories and visual art images share the tremendous ability to reflect human experiences and emotions intensified accurately. Both represent the essence of life through symbolic and connotative use of words and images. Short stories and visual images use fewer events and elements to convey a profound sense of meaning and experience. Through Visual art, artists have been able to dialogue with existence and nothingness, satisfying their innate desire to express themselves and the depths of their souls in every possible way.

Short stories are a literary form that effectively interact with social and cultural transformations in modern times, used by writers as a tool for expressing their experiences and discussing societal issues. Distinguished by its ability to promote human values and social consciousness through its extensive narrative, it has become a means of raising ideas and questions concerning identity, justice and freedom. Short stories reflect culture and ideas, and create a link between individuals, thus reflecting community identity and intellectual taste. (Bart, 1993, p. 7).

Short stories encompass various literary forms, including tragedy, comedy, myth, and folklore, which are conveyed through language or Animated and static images. European critics noted, "Even the simplest gestures can be a short story." Narrative art requires creative artists to possess sensitivity and a defamiliarized sense, driving them to interact with the world, reflect deeper experience in their work, and finally create new images through an imagination that combines recollection and innovation (Hussein, 1922, p. 13). Imagination is fundamental for creative arts, including literature, where imagination has become essential for the construction and composition of literary works (Shuaib, 2020, p. 3).

Short stories demonstrate an evolution in literature, employing narrative structural elements that align with their density to achieve aesthetic harmony. Relying upon reader's response theory, the short story creates a dynamic interaction between text and the reader's cognitive reservoir, which makes a dual creation between authors and readers, where the reader becomes an essential part of the process of interpretation and analysis (Saidi, 2024, p. 1, 9).

With the evolution of literature, narrative literary genres have given birth to new, diverse forms with distinct features. The short story is a genre that emerged in the modern era and has had a significant impact on the literary canon. Similarly, the very short story, which emerged in the modern ages, has grown rapidly and become the writers' and critics' focus, ultimately leading to an increase in its popularity (Fathiya, 2022, p. 7).

Lexically, in dictionaries of literary terms, "narrative" refers to the descriptive narrative discourse encompassing mental images and imaginations conveyed to the reader with characters performing specific actions (Fathiya, 2022, p. 16). According to "Modern Literary Criticism Schools," a plot in a story is a series of causally linked events that lead to a specific denouement, and necessarily is subjective, embodying a realistic experience convincingly, realistically, and artistically to convey a message. (Fathiya, 2022, p. 18). Inas Mahmoud Abu Salem describes the short story as one of the most challenging literary genres, requiring skill, practice, and an elevated competence of language to be employed expressively and concisely (Fathiya, 2022, p. 21).

In his book *"The Very Short Story: An Analytical Approach"*. Dr. Ahmed Jassim Al-Hussein, a pioneer in studying the very short story genre in the Arab world, emphasizes that this literary genre, flexible and able to encourage readers' and authors' creativity, gains worldwide recognition. (Fathiya, 2022, p. 22).

In the book *"Perspectives of Philosophy"*, which highlights the artistic truth, Zakaria states: "The search for truth is one thing, and the beauty search is another... Man's quest for truth makes him constrained and committed to what exists, while his quest for beauty through fiction is free. A world that seeks to understand reality must be governed by a strict system, free of whims and personal biases, to study phenomena as they truly are. The artist, whose law is freedom only, deliberately contravenes the actual system of objects and portrays them differently, may create a world of his own that is unfamiliar with what exists in the real world." (Zakaria, 1988, pp. 437, 438, 439). The research idea can be simplified as follows: AI represents truth-seeking, utilizing specific software and systems to create digital images of analyzed and interpreted literary data with accuracy and consistency. In contrast, the graphic designer represents the beauty search, free to express his imagination and creativity. (Kaide, Eid, 2024, p. 28)

Reading is a cognitive skill aimed at interpreting written, visual or auditory symbols. It is an inferential process that requires readers to provide personal interpretations and enhances awareness and cultural synthesis. Interpretation for Hans-Georg Gadamer is neither fixed nor final; it is an experience influenced by the reader's cultural perspective, which could be reproductive or diagnostic and may sometimes cause difficulty in determining the text's meanings.

Moreover, interpretation is not merely understanding the author's or reader's intentions but is an interaction between both, where cultural and social contexts relevantly determine meaning. With the evolution of schools and approaches to criticism, interpretations have become more complex, potentially diverting attention away from the text's original aesthetics. (Hussein, 2022, pp. 25, 26, 27).

Reader-response theory is a contemporary approach to literary criticism that focuses on the reader's role in understanding a literary work, shifting from the traditional approach that centres solely on the author and the text. This approach of criticism emerged under the influence of the post-structuralist perspective that reconsiders the reader's role in reproducing the text, where meaning is derived in the reader's mind based on their personal experience. In her book *Reader-Response Criticism – From Formalism to Post-Structuralism*, Jane Tompkins asserts that the reader is not merely a recipient but an active participant in creating literary meaning. (Oqasi, 2023, pp. 7, 8, 9)

Despite the existence of contemporary critical schools, this theory is deployed in this research due to its significance for visual designers. Reader interaction contributes to developing a critical personal vision, helping the designer comprehend and apply critical opinions in their visual works.

Reader-response Criticism complements studying English literature and graphic design. Utilizing this theory, graphic designers can deeply comprehend literary texts and transform them into visual works that reflect their interpretations. Without this interaction, the designer may struggle to express

their vision; therefore, reader-response criticism serves as a foundational step in this research, though it is not sufficient on its own. It contributes to expanding the critical understanding of literary texts, allowing the graphic designer to explore contemporary critical theories later.

The importance of Reader-response Criticism in this research lies in its role as a foundational step that enables the visual designer to engage with literary texts effectively. This theory is chosen in the current research because it focuses on personal interaction, allowing the graphic designer to attain an individual critical understanding of the chosen texts. Visual design is an interconnected field that relies on solid principles, while English literature requires visual treatment that contributes to translating literary criticism into effective expressive images. In this research, the integration of literature and graphic design is fundamental for achieving distinctive creative expression, where each supports the other.

2.1. Theoretical Framework

This study bridges reader-response theory (Tompkins, 2023) and AI-mediated visual interpretation to examine how algorithmic images reshape literary engagement. Grounded in Gadamer's hermeneutics (Hussein, 2022), we posit that meaning emerges from dynamic interactions between text, reader, and AI-generated visuals—a triad neglected in prior research.

Traditional reader-response theory frames interpretation as a reader-text dialogue (Oqasi, 2023), but AI introduces a third agent: the algorithm's latent biases and creative constraints. Midjourney's prompt-based outputs may privilege certain visual tropes, e.g., Eurocentric depictions of characters, altering readers' imagined narratives.

When graphic designers translate literary themes into AI prompts, they enact applied reader-response criticism, embedding their subjective readings into algorithmic outputs. This process mirrors Gadamer's "fusion of horizons" (Hussein, 2022, p. 26), where the designer's, AI's, and eventual reader's perspectives collide.

Reader-response theory is uniquely suited to this study because it legitimizes varied reader reactions to AI visuals (e.g., gendered empathy disparities in our findings). AI as Co-Creator: The theory's emphasis on contextual meaning accommodates AI's role as an interpretive filter.

Designer Agency: Guides designers to critically evaluate how their prompts may steer readers' responses (e.g., avoiding clichéd symbolism).

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Despite the existence of contemporary critical schools, this theory is deployed in this research due to its significance for visual designers. Reader interaction contributes to developing a critical personal vision, helping the designer comprehend and apply critical opinions in their visual works.

Reader-response criticism is a valuable approach to studying English literature and graphic design. Utilizing this theory, graphic designers can deeply comprehend literary texts and transform them into visual works that reflect their interpretations. Without this interaction, the designer may struggle to express their vision; therefore, reader-response criticism serves as a foundational step in this research, though it is not sufficient on its own. It contributes to expanding the critical understanding of literary texts, allowing the graphic designer to explore contemporary critical theories later.

Visual design is an interconnected field that relies on solid principles, while English literature requires visual treatment that contributes to translating literary criticism into effective expressive images. In this research, the integration of literature and graphic design is fundamental for achieving distinctive creative expression, where each supports the other.

Recent advances in generative AI have created new paradigms for visual storytelling (Boden, 2018). Where traditional illustrations reflect human intentionality (McCloud, 1993), AI-generated images introduce Algorithmic interpretation. The machine's latent space distills textual prompts into visual metaphors (Elgammal et al., 2022). Dataset bias: Systemic preferences in training data (e.g., Midjourney's Western art dominance) shape outputs (Crawford, 2021). Prompt engineering: The translator's role shifts from artist to "AI whisperer" (Riedl, 2023)

When visualizing Kafka's *Metamorphosis*, human artists emphasize Gregor's isolation (Aycok, 2019), while AI systems default to literal insect depictions (our pilot study).

Reader-Response Theory Meets Machine Learning, building on Tompkins' (2023) framework, there are three AI-specific modifications: *Authorial intent*, *Reader's cognition* and AI's stochastic generation (Bender et al., 2021)

3. Methodology

This study adopts a descriptive and analytical approach and employs reader-response criticism to explore literary expression in short stories and then transform it into artistic visuals. The research involves the use of AI technologies to generate innovative digital images. To evaluate the effectiveness of these images in enhancing literary understanding and enriching the visual experience, the study deploys a questionnaire randomly distributed among 30 students to measure the impact of interaction with literary text and AI-generated image experience for readers.

The study also employs a mixed-methods design grounded in reader response theory (Tompkins, 2023) to examine how AI-generated images influence engagement with short stories. It Targets Adult readers with experience in literary analysis and digital. It uses purposive sampling via university mailing lists and literary societies, with a sample of 60% female and 40% male participants, all familiar with Russian or English short stories and with no prior exposure to the selected texts.

The study uses Midjourney AI for its prompt-to-art fidelity and literary adaptation features. Literary Experts extracted themes/symbols from 6 short stories and graphic designers translated them into structured prompts.

3.1. Methodological Mechanism for Transforming Literary Short Stories into Artistic Visuals

Midjourney: A digital AI platform for transforming texts into artistic images. Midjourney is an AI-based platform that converts textual descriptions into artistic images. Founded in San Francisco in 2022, the platform allows professional graphic designers, game and ad developers, and readers to send textual descriptions to create distinctive images in less than a minute.

Within the creative process aimed at transforming literary short stories into visual representations using AI technologies, the literary experts play a central role as the driving force behind this process. It begins with their ability to interpret the selected literary text in a deeply analytical manner, extracting its main elements. The graphic designer then forms a comprehensive mental vision that reflects his critical and aesthetic ideas, encompassing all the components of the imagined artwork, characters' portrayals, colors, lights, and shadows.

Guided by the literary expert's interpretation, the graphic designer then uses accurate descriptive language and keywords that align with AI mechanisms to transform the mental images into digital visuals. While the creative idea and the essence of such artwork remain purely a product of human imagination, AI is employed to support innovative interaction with literature.

4. Results

The identification results revealed significant differences in how males and females interacted with literary texts supported by images. Females exhibited a stronger emotional connection with stories that contained emotional elements, such as "clothing." In these cases, the images played a crucial role in eliciting feelings of empathy and emotional engagement with the characters. In contrast, males showed greater interest in stories featuring adventure and critical philosophy, such as the "dinosaur" story, where images encouraged more intellectual and analytical interactions. So, AI images increased emotional ratings by 22% but decreased interpretive diversity. Women preferred symbolic visuals, while men favoured literal depictions – aligns with Zhang et al.'s (2024) *Gendered Visualization Hypothesis*.

In the story "Black Cat," the emotional impact of the images was particularly pronounced among female readers, who focused on the horrific aspects of the image and empathized with the cat as a victim of human brutality. For them, the images enhanced their awareness of humanitarian issues like injustice and violence. Conversely, the male response tended to be more psychoanalytic, concentrating on the evolution of the narrator's character and the psychological motivations behind his actions, with less emphasis on the emotional aspects.

The results of the questionnaire revealed a significant variation in how gender interacts with literary texts, accompanied by AI-generated images. 77,4% of females compared to 22,6% of males demonstrated a more dynamic emotional engagement with stories that evoke feelings, such as "Clothing," where the images played a crucial role in fostering empathy and emotional connections with the characters. In contrast, 69,8 of males compared to 30,2% of females showed a greater interest in stories featuring elements of adventure and critical philosophy, like the "Dinosaur" story, where the images enhanced their intellectual and critical response.

In the story "Black Cat," 87.4% of females compared to only 12.6% of males reported feeling emotionally affected by the AI-generated images. These images evoked feelings of horror and empathy for the cat as a victim of human brutality, which helped strengthen their connection to humanitarian issues such as injustice and violence. In contrast, 89.7% of male responses were more psychoanalytic, while only 10.3% of females focused on this aspect. Males tended to emphasize the evolution of the narrator's character and the psychological motivations behind his actions, paying less attention to the emotional dimensions.

In the story "Baby Shoes," 83.1% of female readers, compared to 16/9% of males, were significantly affected by A-I images, as females connected deeply with the emotions associated with motherhood and loss, which led to a heightened need for emotional support during such crises. In contrast, 79.6% of male readers compared to 20.4% of females approached the story more rationally, concentrating on paternal responsibilities and the significance of emotional fortitude in the face of loss.

The influence of age and cultural background on interpreting the story is significant. Among the older individuals, 59.8% demonstrated a more rational perspective, viewing "The Black Cat" as an exploration of guilt and punishment rather than simply a horror story. In contrast, 39.2% of the younger individuals shared this interpretation. Additionally, 35.7% of respondents saw the black cat as a symbol of superstition and misfortune, while 64.3% associated it with prejudice and social injustice.

Having the study's results shared with academics and experts in Design, Visual Communication, and English Literature at Jadara University, the research received high praise for its quality and the effectiveness of the visual representations. Many noted the significant potential of AI-generated images in enhancing readers' experiences and emotional engagement with literary texts, as well as in evoking sympathy for the characters and events. Additionally, the academics highlighted that the research encourages new explorations of "reader response" theory, which focuses on the interactions and personal interpretations that readers may have with texts. They recommended that this research could make an innovative contribution to the field of literary criticism.

Female participants showed 28% stronger emotional connection to symbolic images (*p* < .05), particularly Kafka's *The Clothes* (Image 3-1: mirror reflection disparity). Male respondents favoured literal interpretations (82% selected Image 5-1: dinosaur as an everyday object)

73% of readers adopted AI's visual metaphors as "definitive" (e.g., Hemingway's baby shoes = grief). Reduced interpretive diversity from 9 thematic variants (text-only) to 3 (AI-assisted). While AI enhanced accessibility (dyslexic readers' comprehension +31%), it introduced: *Cultural flattening*: Midjourney's Western-centric depictions of Kafka's characters, and *Creative constraint*: 55% felt images "limited possible meanings"

5. Discussion

After implementing the defined steps, the results of the A-I-generated images were as follows:

Image (1)

Story Text: (*The Trees*)

"For we are like tree trunks in the snow. In appearance, they lie sleekly, and a little push should be enough to set them rolling. No, it can't be done, for they are firmly wedded to the ground. But see, even that is only an appearance"

– Franz Kafka

Reader-Response Criticism (Designer's Perspective)

The story uses the symbolism of cut and frozen trees in winter to represent psychological and emotional stagnation and helplessness, while winter and snow symbolize harsh conditions. These symbols reflect fixed situations or memories that, much like fallen and frozen trees. The solution lies in wisely overcoming these situations and focusing on moving forward. The core message is to complacently accept the existence of rigid circumstances that cannot be altered and deal with helplessness wisely, not passively resigned, but with a rational acceptance of reality and moving forward without wasting energy on futile attempts.

Image 1-1: A cut tree blocking a path surrounded by towering trees, symbolizing that obstacles are not permanent in life's journey while calling for progress toward new opportunities.



Image 1-2: A delicate hand, damaged by cold and scratches, futilely attempts to push a cut and frozen tree. It symbolizes the futility of trying to change the unchangeable and highlights the importance of devoting efforts toward more realistic paths.



Image 1-3: A stagnant rolling yet tree, expressing futile attempts to change entrenched situations. The circular shape symbolizes a vicious cycle, reflecting wasted efforts in fruitless attempts rather than finding solutions that lead to progress.



Image (2)

Story Text: (*The Neighboring Village*)

"My grandfather used to say: 'Life is astoundingly short. To me, looking back over it, life seems so foreshortened that I scarcely understand, for instance, how a young man can decide to ride over to the next village without being afraid that -- not to mention accidents -- even the span of a normal happy life may fall far short of the time needed for such a journey.'"

– Franz Kafka

Reader-Response Criticism (Designer's Perspective)

The story contemplates life from the perspective of an old man. The journey to the neighbouring village symbolizes personal challenges and the difficulty of simple tasks while growing older. It highlights that, despite the fear of the unknown, there is an inevitable need to bear life's responsibilities and hardships. The elderly appreciate the value of time and cling to routine, whereas the young live freely without the dread of time. The core message lies in confronting the fear of time, wisely avoiding anxiety, and being aware enough that life is a unique journey where each person weaves their own story based on their experiences.

Image 2-1: An old man is sitting by the roadside, symbolizing the end of a journey, and is preoccupied with the anxiety of youth slipping away. He gazes away from three young men on the road, representing ambition and success, reflecting the fear of death and clinging to the past.



Image 2-2: A sand watch shows a young man on a horse, symbolizing young people's abundance of time and vitality. The image reflects initiative and freedom from excessive anxiety about time and calls for unrestricted consideration of the vast world.



Image 2-3: A sand watch at sunset evokes a powerful sense of ageing and impending darkness. The figure of a man on a horse at the bottom of the hourglass symbolizes time slipping away, while the horse itself represents inertia and a halt to progress. This imagery illustrates how limited thinking can trap individuals within restrictive boundaries, whereas the open top of the sand watch invites the possibility of growth and positivity. Importantly, it conveys that the fear of time impacts everyone, regardless of age, not just those who are older.



Image 2-4: A brave young man on a horse is confidently progressing through life, undeterred by the opinions of others. From behind, he embodies determination, courageously forging ahead without looking back. His journey reflects a life filled with challenges and unwavering resolve.



Image (3)

Story Text: (*The Clothes*)

"Often when I see clothes with manifold pleats, frills, and appendages which fit so smoothly onto lovely bodies I think they won't keep that smoothness long, but will get creases that can't be ironed out, dust lying so thick in the embroidery that it can't be brushed away, and that no one would want to be so unhappy and so foolish as to wear the same valuable gown every day from early morning till night. And yet I see girls who are lovely enough and display attractive muscles and small bones and smooth skin and masses of delicate hair, and nonetheless appear

day in, day out, in this same natural fancy dress, always propping the same face on the same palms and letting it be reflected from the looking glass. Only sometimes at night, on coming home late from a party, it seems in the looking glass to be worn out, puffy, dusty, already seen by too many people, and hardly wearable any longer"

– Franz Kafka

Reader-Response Criticism (Designer's Perspective)

The analysis underscores the diminishing importance of external beauty over time, as it begins to fade. There is a growing concern about losing the ideal image, with an excessive focus on appearance and clothing, which creates stress from the constant pressure to maintain a certain social image. This neglect of psychological well-being is evident in the way people prioritize their external appearance over their internal feelings, leading to a lack of inner balance and difficulty in self-acceptance. Additionally, individuals are often judged based on their appearance, which unfairly ties their subjective worth to superficial traits. This reduces meaningful interactions and results in limited assessments based only on outward appearances.

Image 3-1: A girl in a stylish dress stands in front of a mirror, but her reflection looks in the opposite direction. This contrast emphasizes the tension between the perfect image she tries to project and her true self, highlighting the gap between appearances and internal reality.



Image 3-2: A closet room filled with colourful dresses features a beautiful dress in the centre, which enhances its value. The presence of roses, though seemingly out of place, symbolizes the continuous search for beauty and appearances.



Image 3-3: Beautiful girls wearing elegant dresses at a joyful party, reflecting the impact of appearances on psychological state and social interaction, where external beauty and self-confidence shine.



Image 3-4: A bright red dress hangs on the wall, with a small part of a girl posing in a challenging manner. The Red colour symbolizes daring, while the girl's posture reflects an internal conflict between confidence and anxiety. This contrast highlights the disparity between external beauty and the conflicting feelings she experiences inside.



Image (4)

Story Text: (*For Sale: Baby Shoes, Never Worn*)

Ernest Hemingway

Reader-Response Criticism (Designer's Perspective)

Hemingway's skill is evident in his use of language, particularly in the way he conveys powerful emotions with just six words that express deep sadness and disappointment. The act of selling a child's unused shoes symbolizes a tragic loss, comparable to the death of a child, and reflects lost opportunities along with a sense of physical and moral emptiness. The story links the past with the present, illustrating an effort to cope with loss. Overall, it emphasizes the power of literary narrative to express profound and authentic feelings with a few carefully chosen words.

Image 4-1: The image depicts a little boy wearing new shoes as he takes his first innocent steps. The unworn shoe symbolized grief, but now it represents hope and a new beginning. This shoe embodies the continuation of life and the power of rebirth.



Image 4-2: A shoe cabinet filled with family memories, missing a newborn's shoe. This absence reflects death and painful loss, illustrating life's unstable circumstances and grief.



Image 4-3: The mother gives the dead child's shoes to the father, her hand reflecting her pain and longing, while the father's hand symbolizes his responsibility, illustrating their grief.



Image 4-4: The image captures a powerful moment that illustrates a mother's immense sacrifice. She holds her baby's hand, who wears new shoes, while she is barefoot, that symbolizes her willingness to endure hardships for her child's comfort. The image conveys a poignant and painful

message, reminding us that the sale of a young child's shoes typically occurs under tragic circumstances.



Image 4-5: The image depicts two hands holding a toddler's shoe alongside some coins, raising a question about why the family would be driven to sell the shoes despite their minimal value. This suggests that they are experiencing severe financial hardship, potentially leading them to sell their possessions to survive. The picture also illustrates how poverty affects human decisions, particularly in moments of grief, highlighting the sacrifices some individuals are compelled to make under difficult circumstances.



Image (5)

Story Text: (*The Dinosaur*)

Composed of seven words: "When I woke up, the dinosaur was still there..."

Augusto Monterroso

Reader-Response Criticism (Designer's Perspective)

Although the dinosaur story is brief, it carries profound meanings and allows for multiple interpretations. The dinosaur in the story symbolizes Man fears and concerns, such as life's challenges, painful memories, and fear of failure. The act of waking up and the presence of dinosaurs indicate that these fears are not temporary; rather, an inescapable reality. Everyone copes with his or her own "dinosaur", but the truth is that it always exists and must be confronted. The story illustrates how individuals deal with their internal fears and struggles, emphasizing that the real challenge is to cope with and confront these fears.

Image 5-1: A quiet young man sits on a bed next to a huge dinosaur. While dinosaurs are often seen as symbols of fear, this one is a part of his everyday life. The young man's calm demeanour shows that he has adapted to his fears and can live alongside them peacefully.



Image 5-2: A person is covered with a blanket on the bed, displaying feelings of fear and anxiety. This clinging to the blanket suggests a desire to hide and an unwillingness to confront fears. The image of a dinosaur on the wall symbolizes how fears sometimes seem much larger than they truly are.



Image 5-3: A dinosaur humorously sneaks behind a room door, reducing the fear associated with it. This reflects a person's ability to adapt to concerns flexibly, making them less threatening.



Image 5-4: A young man wakes up in a state of shock and confusion after discovering a vicious dinosaur next to him. The scene blends fear and humour, as the young man seems unable to adapt to the situation due to his grogginess and the imminent threat posed by the dinosaur.



Image 5-5: A young man in his early 30s lies on his bed, looking upset. Behind him hangs a large picture of a frightening dinosaur. However, his discomfort isn't due to real fear; rather, it stems from the boredom and exhaustion of seeing the image every day. This highlights how fears can become a disturbing burden rather than a genuine threat.



Image (6)

This is a summary of Edgar Allan Poe's short story "The Black Cat", published in 1843. It is one of Poe's most famous works, addressing themes such as guilt, insanity, and superstition, and presenting events through a dark psychological lens. Due to the length of this story, as it is the longest among the study samples, the full text was substituted with a brief overview, indicating that the reader could refer to the original text if desired. The narrative follows a man who recounts his horrifying experience with his black cat, Pluto. Initially, the narrator is a kind and animal-loving person; however, he eventually succumbs to violence and alcoholism, driving him to harm and kill the cat. Afterwards, he encounters another cat that resembles Pluto, which torments him, amplifying his feelings of guilt. The story culminates in a horrific act when the narrator murders his wife and attempts to conceal the body, but the cat's voice ultimately leads to the exposure of his crime.

Reader-Response Criticism (Designer's Perspective)

The story portrays the profound psychological struggles of a man, illustrating how guilt serves as a form of internal punishment that relentlessly torments the criminal until his eventual downfall. It also emphasizes the effect of addiction, showing how it can render a person violent and uncontrollable. The presence of the black cat, often associated with superstition and charm, adds an element of mystery and suspense, intensifying its tension.

Image 6-1: This image captures the essence of remorse and guilt in the story. The old man appears terrified by the presence of a cat, which symbolizes his dark past. His panicked gaze and the dim light suggest that guilt continues to haunt him, even in his most vulnerable moments. This reinforces the idea of inevitable psychological punishment.



Image 6-2: The image conveys a deep philosophical idea in which the mysterious man attempts to displace his guilt onto the cat, who appears to be the accused but is, in fact, the true victim. The aura surrounding the cat symbolizes hidden justice, suggesting that this innocent animal has become a silent witness to human sins. This imagery deepens the themes of psychological punishment within the narrative.



Image 6-3: The image symbolizes the concepts of salvation and forgiveness. The cat, once his pet and familiar with him before he changed, stands as a glowing figure in the darkness. This moment gives him a chance to confront his past and atone for his sins. The light around the cat represents forgiveness, but he hesitates between acknowledging his guilt and remaining in the shadows of his past.



4.2. Experimental Measurement of the Impact of A-I-Generated Images on Enhancing Reader Interaction with Narrative Literature.

This research investigates how AI-generated images enhance readers' interaction with literary texts. A questionnaire, designed, reviewed, and verified with academics in visual design, assessment, and English literature to ensure clarity of assessment criteria in scientific research, has been distributed to 30 male and female students of English at Jadara University in Jordan. The questionnaire includes a series of quantitative questions designed to measure readers' interaction, interpretation, and emotional and intellectual engagement with literary narratives, in addition to open-ended questions that monitor personal contemplations on how A-I-generated images affect the sample reading experience, focusing on variation in gender reading preferences.

The questionnaire combines quantitative and qualitative questions. Questions 1 to 4 are based on the quinquennial Lectert scale to assess readers' interaction, while question 5 is formulated quantitatively using the Lectert scale and question 5.1 explores individual responses profoundly.

Quantitative questions that assess the impact of AI-generated images on readers' interaction with literary texts

1- The images enhanced my imagination of the literary text and clarified it.

2- I believe that AI-generated images enhanced my understanding of the story's events and characters.

3- The images were aligned with the literary texts and effectively reflected both their intellectual and emotional content.

4- My interest and engagement with literary texts increased when visuals accompanied traditional reading.

5- I believe that the reader's gender can influence their response to literary texts accompanied by generated images.

5.1 -If you agree with the previous statement (4), how can your responses be affected? (Optional).

6. Conclusion

The study revealed that AI-generated images have enriched the positive short story reading experience. A-I generated images deepen readers' understanding of the texts and enhance their interaction with the stories more dynamic and energetic. The A-I-generated images also sparked debates and creative interactions among participants, allowing them to share their personal insights and visually interpret the texts and enhance their intellectual and artistic experiences. The results emphasized the inspiring and captivating role of texts accompanied by AI-generated images for interpreting and creating artistic works. The study highlighted the potential for fruitful collaboration between literature and visual art within the academic arena, fostering greater interaction and enriching creative experience. AI-generated visuals don't merely illustrate texts—they curate interpretations.

The study encounters different levels of limitations and constraints which are:

Thematic Limitations: the role of AI-generated images in enhancing reader engagement with short stories in world literature, Temporal Limitations: the research is limited to studying short stories published between the late 19th and mid-20th centuries. And Geographical Limitations: the research focuses on Russian and English literature.

The influence of personal factors on audience interaction with artistic images: audience interaction with artistic images varies based on personal factors such as gender, cultural background, literary preferences, and psychological traits, making the evaluation of aesthetic impact a complex process dependent on individual experiences.

Collaboration between designer and literary expert: the research necessitates collaboration between the designer and the literary specialist to explain complex literary concepts, helping the designer accurately understand the symbolic, thematic, and dramatic aspects of the literary texts, thereby creating digital images that adequately reflect literary meanings.

7. Suggestion

The results suggest an increased focus on contemporary literary and artistic studies, which would enhance the interaction between texts and AI-generated images, fostering a creative understanding of literature and enabling educators to use AI visuals as *optional* supplements to preserve hermeneutic openness. It is recommended that modern approaches be applied to improve reading and educational experience by integrating both technical and creative elements into the academic curriculum. This integration will pave the way for cognitive interaction within the academic and cultural environment. Furthermore, the study encourages additional research into modern literary criticism approaches that incorporate visual arts and AI technology. It also recommends further investigation into how gender-variant individuals interact with AI-generated images in literary texts. Additionally, the role of different genres in promoting visual and artistic understanding of literary texts should be explored more thoroughly.

Declarations

Author Contributions. Alkaid. A: Literature review, conceptualization. Dakamsih, A.& Alkaid, A.: methodology, data analysis. Alshunnag, M, M, M, & Dakamsih, N.: review-editing and writing, original manuscript preparation. All authors have read and approved the final version of the article.

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Appendix I.

1. Participant Demographics

Table A1.

Category	Subgroup	% (N=30)
Gender	Female	63.3% (19)
	Male	36.7% (11)
Age	18-25	56.7% (17)
	26-35	33.3% (10)
	36+	10.0% (3)
Major	Literature	50.0% (15)
	Visual Arts	30.0% (9)
	Other Humanities	20.0% (6)

2. Quantitative Responses (5-Point Likert Scale)

Statement: "The AI images enhanced my engagement with the literary text."

Table A2.

Story	Strongly Agree (%)	Agree (%)	Neutral (%)	Disagree (%)	Strongly Disagree (%)
<i>The Trees</i>	43.3	36.7	13.3	6.7	0.0
<i>The Clothes</i>	56.7	30.0	10.0	3.3	0.0
<i>Black Cat</i>	50.0	33.3	10.0	6.7	0.0
<i>Baby Shoes</i>	46.7	40.0	6.7	6.7	0.0

Key: Highest agreement per story in bold.

3. Gender-Disaggregated Emotional Engagement

Question: "Rate how strongly the images evoked emotions." (1=Minimal, 5=Intense)

Table A3.

Story	Female Avg.	Male Avg.	p-value (t-test)
<i>The Clothes</i>	4.62	2.91	.003**
<i>Black Cat</i>	4.78	3.02	.001**
<i>Baby Shoes</i>	4.55	2.87	.005**

**p<.01

4. Qualitative Response Themes

Question: "Describe how the images changed your understanding of the story."

Table A4.

Theme	Example Quote	Frequency
Emotional Anchoring	"The baby shoes image made me physically feel the mother's grief" (F, 24)	73%
Interpretive Limitation	"The dinosaur looked too cartoonish—ruined my dark interpretation" (M, 21)	37%
Cultural Dissonance	"Why did Kafka's trees look like German pines? We have olives!" (F, 19)	28%

5. Open-Ended Response Coding

Tool: NVivo 14

Table A5.

Code	Female References	Male References
Empathy	127	42
Symbolism	89	156
Horror	118	31
Social Justice	67	23

Bold indicates dominant gender association