The Turkish Online Journal of Design, Art and Communication
E-ISSN: 2146-5193
DOI: 10.7456/tojdac

Research Article / Araştırma Makalesi

THE ROLE OF POSTER DESIGN IN EXPRESSING CULTURAL INDICATORS: A CONTEMPORARY INTERPRETATION OF NASREDDİN HODJA POSTERS

KÜLTÜREL GÖSTERGELERİN İFADE EDİLMESİNDE AFİŞ TASARIMININ ROLÜ: NASREDDİN HOCA AFİŞLERİNİN GÜNCEL YORUMU

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Received/Geliş tarihi: 06.10.2025

Benzerlik Oranı/Similarity Ratio: %2

Revision Requested/Revizyon talebi: 17.11.2025

Last revision received/Son revizyon teslimi: 21.11.2025

Accepted/Kabul tarihi: 27.12.2025

Etik Kurul İzni/ Ethics Committee Permission: There is no element in the study that requires ethics committee approval. / Çalışmada etik kurul onayı gerektiren bir unsur bulunmamaktadır.

Citation/Atıf: Bakar Fındıkcı, M. & Kartopu, S. (2026). The Role Of Poster Design In Expressing Cultural Indicators: A Contemporary Interpretation Of Nasreddin Hodja Posters. The Turkish Online Journal of Design Art and Communication, 14 (3), 401-421. https://doi.org/10.7456/tojdac.1797860

Abstract
Nasreddin Hodja, one of the most deeply rooted and beloved figures in Turkish folk culture, has been preserved through oral tradition for centuries and passed down across generations. His anecdotes, known for their simple language, strong sense of humor, and critical perspective, not only entertain but also provoke thought. Though they address ordinary events of daily life with satire and are accessible to all, these brief narratives often contain profound philosophical, ethical, and moral messages. In this respect, Nasreddin Hodja's stories reflect the cultural fabric of society, bridge the old and the new, and strengthen intergenerational bonds, maintaining their popularity to this day. This study aims to enable students to explore cultural values more deeply and reinterpret them using modern graphic design tools. By analyzing both the humorous surface and the symbolic, critical depth of the anecdotes, students are encouraged to transform these narratives into creative poster designs. In doing so, they develop a more nuanced perspective on cultural heritage and are guided to express this legacy through the aesthetics of contemporary visual language. Within this scope, 37 students enrolled in the Information Design course in the Department of Visual Communication Design at Ankara Yıldırım Beyazıt University, Faculty of Architecture and Fine Arts, participated in the study. The students' work was examined in detail through the document analysis method which is one of the qualitative research approaches within the context of visual literacy. The findings reveal how Nasreddin Hodja's cultural heritage is revived through design and how this process influences students' creativity, visual literacy, and cultural awareness skills.

Keywords: Poster, signifier, graphic design, Nasreddin Hodja.

Öz
Türk halk kültürünün en köklü ve sevilen figürlerinden biri olan Nasreddin Hoca, yüzyıllardır sözlü gelenek aracılığıyla korunmuş ve kuşaktan kuşağa aktarılmıştır. Sade dili, güçlü mizah anlayışı ve eleştirel bakışıyla öne çıkan fıkraları, yalnızca eğlence unsuru olmakla kalmayıp aynı zamanda düşündürücü nitelikler taşır. Günlük yaşamın sıradan olaylarını hiciv yoluyla ve herkesin anlayabileceği bir biçimde ele alan bu anlatılar, çoğu zaman derin felsefi, etik ve ahlaki mesajlar barındırır. Bu yönüyle Nasreddin Hoca'nın hikâyeleri toplumun kültürel dokusunu yansıtır, geçmiş ile bugünü birbirine bağlar, kuşaklar arası ilişkileri güçlendirir ve günümüzde de geçerliliğini koruyarak popülerliğini sürdürür. Bu çalışma, öğrencilerin kültürel değerleri daha derinlemesine keşfetmelerine ve onları modern grafik tasarım araçlarıyla yeniden yorumlamalarına imkân tanımayı amaçlamaktadır. Nasreddin Hoca fıkralarının hem mizahi yüzeyi hem de sembolik ve eleştirel katmanları incelenerek öğrencilerin bu anlatıları yaratıcı afiş tasarımlarına dönüştürmeleri teşvik edilmektedir. Böylelikle öğrenciler, kültürel mirasa dair daha incelikli bir bakış açısı geliştirirken, bu mirası çağdaş görsel dilin estetiğiyle ifade etme konusunda da yönlendirilmektedir. Bu kapsamda araştırmaya Ankara Yıldırım Beyazıt Üniversitesi Mimarlık ve Güzel Sanatlar Fakültesi Görsel İletişim Tasarımı Bölümü'nde Bilgilendirme Tasarımı dersi alan 37 öğrenci katılmıştır. Öğrencilerin çalışmaları nitel araştırma yöntemlerinden biri olan doküman analizi yöntemiyle ve görsel okuryazarlık bağlamında detaylı biçimde incelenmiştir. Elde edilen bulgular doğrultusunda Nasreddin Hoca'nın kültürel mirasının tasarımsal olarak nasıl yeniden hayat bulduğunu ve bu sürecin öğrencilerin yaratıcılık, görsel okuryazarlık ve kültürel farkındalık becerilerini nasıl etkilediğini ortaya koymuştur.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Afiş, Gösterge, Grafik tasarım, Nasreddin Hoca.

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INTRODUCTION

Nasreddin Hodja is a historical and symbolic folk character who has left a significant mark on both Turkish and world cultures (Asia, Europe and Balkans). Although it is uncertain whether he was a real person, he is widely believed to have lived among the people and is known for his humorous and instructive narratives. These short tales, commonly referred to as "Nasreddin Hodja anecdotes" (Özdemir, 2010, p. 28), reflect his wit, humor, and wise approach to events. Their dual function—entertaining and thought-provoking—has enabled these tales to serve not only as products of oral tradition but also as tools for cultural instruction (Karakuş, 2024, p. 239).

Karakuş (2024) emphasizes that these anecdotes are integral to national culture, mirroring the community's values, traditions, and lifestyle. In this sense, the tales both sustain the collective memory of society and play a key role in cultural transmission. Elçin (2004) notes that, due to their concise and memorable structure, anecdotes function as versatile forms of communication in oral tradition. The combination of humor, satire, critique, and moral teaching makes Nasreddin Hodja's stories powerful texts that reflect the social structure.

More than mere amusing stories, these anecdotes are sources of wisdom that embody core values, ethics, and insights into life (Arıcı, 2018, p. 603). These anecdotes highlight intelligence, justice, tolerance, honesty, and patience, aiming to make individuals reflect through humor. In doing so, they fulfill a dual function that is both entertaining and instructive. Passed down orally from generations to generation, these narratives have survived to the present day without losing public interest and have been continuously reproduced.

Reflecting the Turkish people's sense of humor and life philosophy, these stories also serve as key components of cultural identity. Today, they continue to help society connect with its past and transmit traditional values to younger generations. However, the neglect or disappearance of oral narratives and traditional lifestyles may lead to the loss of this cultural richness. Therefore, preserving such traditions also means keeping cultural figures like Nasreddin Hodja alive (Şanlı, 2009, p. 268). His anecdotes are not merely for amusement; they offer social critique and propose solutions to societal issues. His wise character and tolerant approach form the essence of these tales.

Nasreddin Hodja's anecdotes, together with proverbs and idioms, are foundational elements of Turkish culture. Preserving these elements helps maintain social identity and strengthen intergenerational ties. Accordingly, this study aims to preserve traditional values, transmit Nasreddin Hodja's anecdotes to future generations, and thereby protect our cultural wealth. In this regard, the study sought to facilitate this transmission by having the students design posters based on contemporary interpretations of the Nasreddin Hodja anecdotes they selected.

THE LIFE ANDJOKES OF NASREDDİN HODJA

Although there are various accounts regarding where Nasreddin Hodja was born and lived, recent research suggests that he was born in 1208 in the village of Hortu in the Sivrihisar district of Eskişehir. He later moved to Akşehir, where he passed away (Özçelik, 2005, p. 23). He lived around Hortu and Akşehir during the time of the Anatolian Seljuk State (https://tr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nasreddin_Hoca). His father was an imam, and Nasreddin Hodja received his first religious education from him (Özçelik, 2005, p. 23). According to historical documents, he studied at a madrasa in Sivrihisar and returned to his village to serve as an imam after his father's death (https://tr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nasreddin_Hoca).

After moving to Akşehir, he had the opportunity to study with prominent scholars and mystics of the time, such as Seyyid Mahmud Hayrani and Seyyid Hacı İbrahim (Banarlı, 1998). As a disciple of Seyyid Mahmud Hayrani, he is believed to have followed paths such as Mevlevi, Yesevi, or Rifa'i Sufism (https://tr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nasreddin_Hoca). It is assumed that he served as an imam and preacher in both Akşehir and Sivrihisar (Banarlı, 1998). He died in 1284 and is buried in the Nasreddin Hodja Mausoleum in Akşehir.

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Nasreddin Hodja learned Arabic and Persian and memorized the Quran at a very young age. During his time, the madrasas in Konya and Akşehir were renowned educational centers, attracting scholars, dervishes, and travelers from all over the world. As such, the religious lodges in these cities were often full of spiritual seekers. Konya, the capital of the Anatolian Seljuk State at the time, was considered a hub of science and culture. It was in this context that Nasreddin Hodja moved to Akşehir to pursue further education (Özçelik, 2005, p. 24–25).

The cultural climate of the period in which Nasreddin Hodja lived is closely tied to the artistic, intellectual, and scholarly environment of Konya and Akşehir. This intellectual atmosphere, which flourished across the Seljuk geography, bears distinct traces in many domains from architecture and calligraphy to the madrasa tradition and the aesthetics of daily life. This rich cultural background played a significant role in shaping the symbolic elements found in Nasreddin Hodja narratives.

Konya, as one of the major capitals of the era and a center of scientific debate, Sufi thought, and artistic production, provided the milieu that nourished the wisdom, irony, and philosophical depth evident in Hodja's stories. Meanwhile, the social and economic life in Akşehir shaped the character's close relationship with the public and his tendency to express everyday humor through wit. This spatial and cultural environment makes it possible to understand the origins of the symbolic elements used in design: traditional clothing styles, architectural motifs, color preferences, typological facial features, and the transformation of narrative objects (such as the donkey, madrasa, or marketplace) into visual codes all reflect this cultural climate.

Accordingly, the artistic and scholarly environment of Konya and Akşehir provides both a historical and aesthetic foundation for the formation of Nasreddin Hodja's iconography, strengthening the historical accuracy and cultural depth of the symbolic elements used in modern poster designs.

From a design perspective, the primary reason Nasreddin Hodja's life story is significant is that his personal history simultaneously represents a cultural, social, and iconographic memory. The geography in which he lived, the clothing styles of the period, his typological appearance as perceived by the public, and the humor-based narrative tradition contribute to powerful visual indicators in poster, illustration, and graphic design works. Particularly characteristic elements such as his headgear, caftan, and friendly facial features reflect not only an individual but also the cultural identity and iconography of an era.

Therefore, Nasreddin Hodja's life story reinforces the alignment of design symbols with historical context and provides a solid foundation for understanding why the character is visualized in a particular way, which cultural codes are employed, and what type of perception is formed in the viewer. This context both preserves visual representation and enhances the cultural depth of the design.

It is possible to observe these codes in the Nasreddin Hodja anecdotes. He is traditionally depicted wearing a large turban, robe, long shirt, baggy trousers (şalvar), belt, slippers, and shoes with upturned toes. These cultural and regional garments have been documented through woodblock prints, illustrated manuscripts, and miniatures. He also wears a beard and mustache, consistent with religious customs (Özçelik, 2005, p. 31). It is observed that the students reinterpreted these visual codes as identity markers in their poster designs.

The earliest written account featuring Nasreddin Hodja appears in the Saltukname, authored by Ebû'l Hayr-î Rûmî in 1480 and held in the Topkapı Palace Library (Boratav, 2007, p. 14). His collected anecdotes have been studied and used in educational settings around the world due to their insightful messages and memorable characters. In fact, France and Germany have acknowledged his legacy, and in 1996, UNESCO declared it the "International Year of Nasreddin Hodja's Laughter." In 2022, he was also included in UNESCO's Intangible Cultural Heritage list (https://tr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nasreddin_Hoca).

Nasreddin Hodja's tales have spread from Turkistan to Hungary, and from Southern Siberia to North Africa, wherever the Turkish-Islamic civilization took root (Efe, 2004, p. 6). Today, his stories are still

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present in the cultural landscapes of many communities, including Bulgarians, Chinese, Armenians, Georgians, Italians, Russians, and Kurds. During the Ottoman Empire, collections published in Kazan played a key role in spreading his stories across Turkish-speaking regions of the Soviet Union and China. Likewise, a major printing press in Cairo, Bulak Press, helped popularize his anecdotes throughout Egypt and its surrounding areas (https://tr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nasreddin_Hoca).



Figure 1. Nasreddin Hodja in Bukhara



Figure 2. Nasreddin Hodja in Samarkand (https://tr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nasreddin_Hoca).

His tales are also widely known and cherished by Turks living in places ranging from the Balkans to the Sea of Japan,including Uzbekistan, Crimea, Iraq, Iran, and Kazakhstan. His stories have been translated into German four times since 1855 (Kayayerli, 1996, p. XXIII). His name varies across regions: “Nasrdin Avanti” in East Turkistan, “Hoja Nasr” among Kazakhs, “Nasrdin Apandi” among Uzbeks, and “Molla Nasreddin” among Azerbaijanis (Efe, 2004, p. 9).

Over the years, many events have been organized to keep Nasreddin Hodja’s legacy alive. Both in Turkey and abroad, numerous magazines have been named after him. One notable example is the magazine *Molla Nasreddin*, published in Azerbaijan from 1906 to 1920. In Turkey, several magazines titled *Hoca Nasreddin* (1908), *Nasreddin Hoca* (1914, 1920, 1927), *Yeni Nasreddin Hoca* (1936), and *Yeni Hoca Nasreddin* (1940) were published. Since 1974, an international cartoon competition has been held in his name, and since 1976, a national humor story contest has taken place (Efe, 2004, p. 9).

Nasreddin Hodja’s stories have survived for centuries through oral tradition, thanks to their unique expression and humor. These anecdotes portray everyday events in a humorous light, using plain yet thought-provoking language that not only amuses but also encourages reflection. They offer philosophical, moral, and ethical messages, bridging past and present while reinforcing intergenerational ties. For these reasons, his tales continue to be embraced by all segments of society and remain culturally significant.

He is often portrayed as a wise yet humorous figure who met life’s hardships and poverty with a smile. His stories criticize selfishness and question baseless societal beliefs through satire. While inspired by everyday life, they also reflect his wit and experience (Kurgan, 1986, p. 19). A recurring motif in his stories is the donkey,an essential animal in daily life at the time. Symbolically, however, it represents stubbornness, ignorance, and crudeness (Özçelik, 2005, p. 86).

Nasreddin Hodja’s tales can often be understood on two levels: a surface-level meaning and a deeper, philosophical one. The surface-level tales rely on humor and entertainment, usually easy to grasp for the general public. These focus on his cleverness and comic misadventures, often rooted in relatable daily life. In contrast, the deeper stories carry wisdom and critical societal messages beneath their comedic surface, prompting readers to reflect and draw moral conclusions.

Each anecdote typically centers around a minor event, often providing details about the people and the setting,homes, mosques, streets, or markets. Characters include Hodja himself, his wife, neighbors, the judge (kadı), a thief, vendors, children, and customers. These tales reflect simple everyday scenarios

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(Kayayerli, 1996, p. XXI) and often reveal clues about the culture of the time,objects like robes, turbans, slippers, water jugs, oil lamps, swords, saddlebags, etc. (Şanlı, 2009, p. 270). The stories also contain the Hodja's witty remarks, with human nature at their core,highlighting foolishness, errors, weaknesses, clumsiness, faith, and worship (Özçelik, 2005, p. 83). Sometimes, Hodja pretends to be foolish to reveal injustice and wraps up the tale with a moral (Karayerli, 1996, p. XXII).

In some tales, judges and police chiefs are depicted as corrupt, favoring people or accepting bribes. These social conditions are reflected in Hodja's stories and provide insights into his era,marked by the Mongol invasions of Anatolia, power struggles among Seljuk princes, and the Karamanids' attempts to take control. His humor and subtle critiques in these tales hint at the historical and political backdrop of the time (Efe, 2004).

Hodja often uses his wit and common sense to outsmart others, displaying a sharp-tongued and clever personality. In contrast, he also plays the fool for comic effect (Boratav, 2007, p. 57). His tales typically take place in Anatolian towns and cities. Based on some stories, he is believed to have issued religious rulings and even served as a judge. He is also thought to have worked as a farmer, grocer, thread seller, olive and egg vendor, and even a healer (Özçelik, 2005, p. 30). He did not live a wealthy life and struggled financially at times,cutting wood, grinding barley, going to the market with his donkey, and selling pickles (Karayerli, 1996, p. XXII; Efe, 2004, p. 6).

Studying important cultural figures like Nasreddin Hodja in classrooms can help students understand the historical and cultural context of his stories. Books containing his tales are invaluable educational tools. Exploring where these stories originated, how they spread, and why they remain popular helps students better grasp their significance and uncover the moral, ethical, and philosophical messages embedded within.

Through this deeply local character, people have historically found optimism, hope, self-reflection, tolerance, and practical wisdom in the face of a harsh world. His stories continue to offer these values to this day (https://tr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nasreddin_Hoca). Through the study, the students learned the Nasreddin Hodja anecdotes while simultaneously reflecting on the concept in question and incorporating it into their designs.

OBJECTIVE

Technological advances, evolving lifestyles, and shifts in personal perspectives may lead to the marginalization of cultural values. Yet these values are indispensable for a society's continuity and identity formation. Therefore, it is crucial to reinterpret cultural heritage and make it visible through contemporary tools in order to build a strong bridge between past and future.

Nasreddin Hodja's anecdotes can be analyzed on two levels: those with "surface" meaning and those with "deep" meaning. The former are humorous narratives based on everyday situations that are easily understood by the public. The latter include philosophical messages beneath their humorous surfaces, often conveying moral, ethical, or social critiques. As such, these tales function as both entertaining and thought-provoking texts.

Understanding and evaluating this depth is only possible through educational and cultural engagement. Student interaction with these anecdotes allows them to comprehend not just the humor but also the embedded cultural, moral, and social messages. Integrating figures like Nasreddin Hodja into the curriculum helps students reflect more deeply on their historical origins, narrative forms, and contemporary relevance.

As an important figure in our collective memory, Nasreddin Hodja functions as a bridge between past and future, using humor to provoke thought. In line with this, the study highlights the instructive and critical elements of his anecdotes and encourages students to reinterpret these stories using modern graphic design tools.

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The main objective of this project is to familiarize students with the anecdotal tradition and the cultural value of Nasreddin Hodja, and to integrate these values into the creative design process. Students learned about the definition of anecdotes, their history, and the life and personality of Hodja. They then conducted research on selected tales and developed their own interpretations. Drawing inspiration from Nasreddin Hodja's anecdotes, they produced original poster designs, thereby transforming traditional narratives into contemporary visual expressions.

In conclusion, the student-produced posters were evaluated in terms of visual literacy, and the cultural motifs, colors, symbols, and visuals featured in these designs were analyzed in detail. This examination revealed how well students understood the narratives and how effectively they reflected the depth of the anecdotes in their designs. These analyses not only contributed to the academic assessment of the creative process but also demonstrated how cultural heritage is interpreted by today's youth.

SCOPE

This study was conducted as part of the course titled "Information Design" offered by the Department of Visual Communication Design at the Faculty of Architecture and Fine Arts, Ankara Yıldırım Beyazıt University. A total of 37 students who were enrolled in the course and participated voluntarily were included in the study. Students were asked to design informational posters inspired by Nasreddin Hodja anecdotes, utilizing contemporary technologies and design tools.

All 37 students who participated in the study were at the second-year level. At this stage, students are in the process of learning basic design principles and beginning to use digital design programs such as Adobe Illustrator and Adobe Photoshop, and they have not yet taken all advanced-level courses. The fact that the participants were at the same level created a group with similar technical competencies, while this study provided them with an opportunity to strengthen their ability to interpret traditional heritage through modern tools.

While producing these posters, the Visual Communication Design students used various software programs that are considered standard in the field. They used Adobe Illustrator to work with typographic elements and create vector drawings, and Adobe Photoshop for photo editing, collage, and detailed visual compositions. In addition, for original illustrations and figure drawings in the posters, they also used Procreate, a tablet-based drawing application.

The students reinterpreted Nasreddin Hodja's traditional folk tales through a modern visual language. They creatively integrated humor, advice, and social critique which are key elements of these anecdotes, with the principles of visual communication design to produce original posters. This process not only enhanced students' awareness of cultural heritage transmission but also provided opportunities to cultivate creativity, reinforce design skills, and effectively utilize digital design tools.

The resulting poster designs were analyzed in the context of both the transmission of cultural heritage to contemporary audiences and the evaluation of visual communication competencies. In this regard, the students' reinterpretation of traditional elements through a modern graphic language serves as a significant example of transmitting cultural values to new generations.

METHOD

The study was conducted using **document analysis**, one of the qualitative research methods. The posters created by the students were examined in detail within the framework of **visual literacy**. Visual literacy refers to the ability of individuals to perceive, interpret, and construct meaning from visual messages, as well as to create new visual content based on such interpretations (Tüzel, 2010, p. 693).

The study employed the **easily accessible sampling technique, which is one of the purposive sampling methods**. This technique allows the selection of information-rich participants in alignment with the research objectives (Büyüköztürk et al., 2014; Balcı, 2004). The sample consisted of students from the Department of Visual Communication Design at Ankara Yıldırım Beyazıt University.

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DATA COLLECTION TOOL AND PROCEDURE

The primary data collection tool comprised the poster designs created by students based on Nasreddin Hodja anecdotes. These posters were collected via online platforms, following the acquisition of informed consent forms from all participants. Ethical approval for the study was granted by the Ethics Committee of Ankara Yıldırım Beyazıt University, under decision number 2024/357.

STUDY GROUP AND LIMITATIONS

The population of the research consists of Visual Communication Design departments in Türkiye. The sample, however, is limited to second-year students enrolled in the Information Design course in the Department of Visual Communication Design at Ankara Yıldırım Beyazıt University, Faculty of Architecture and Fine Arts.

DATA ANALYSIS

The collected posters were analyzed based on visual literacy criteria. The typographic elements (such as slogans, titles, and descriptions) and visual components (such as photographs, illustrations, logos, colors, and symbols) featured in the posters were evaluated under two main categories (Çitci, 2019, p. 66). Each design was interpreted in terms of its visual expressiveness, the effectiveness of message delivery, and the representation of cultural elements. To ensure the objectivity of the study, the analysis process was carried out **independently by two experts**, and the findings were documented using transcription methods. The entire research process was based on voluntary participation.

FINDINGS

Information regarding the anecdotes selected for the Nasreddin Hodja-themed posters is presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Nasreddin Hodja anecdotes used in the posters (Source: prepared by autors)

Nasreddin Hodja anecdote	Frequency	Student codes
Parayı veren düdüğü çalar	3	S_4, S_{32}, S_{35}
Hanım ipe un sermiş	3	S_5, S_{22}, S_{34}
Aynı yöne gittiğimi görmemek için	2	S_1, S_{14}
Dünyanın merkezi neresidir	2	S_2, S_{20}
Kazan doğurdu	2	S_{16}, S_{29}
Benim öleceğimi de bil	2	S_{17}, S_{25}
Gönlüm razı olmadı	2	S_{18}, S_{37}
Zaten inecektim	2	S_{21}, S_{24}
Ne olur komşu biraz da biz ölelim	1	S_3
Rüyada gözlük	1	S_6
Utancımdan buraya saklandım	1	S_7
Göle maya çalmak	1	S_8
Kim daha büyük	1	S_9
Kendisini unutmuş	1	S_{10}
Acemi bülbül	1	S_{11}
Yeni çarık	1	S_{12}
Senin için yanıyorsa bilmem	1	S_{13}
Kedi nerede	1	S_{15}
Gençlikle yaşlılığın hiç farkı yokmuş	1	S_{19}
Büyük laf	1	S_{23}
Borç para isteme	1	S_{26}
Bugünlerde ay alıp satmadım	1	S_{27}
Ye kürküm ye	1	S_{28}
Kuyuya düşen ay	1	S_{30}
Allah'ın rahmetinden kaçılmaz	1	S_{31}
El elin eşeğini türkü söyleyerek anar	1	S_{33}
Kırpıp kırpıp yıldız yaparlar	1	S_{36}
Total	37	37

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An examination of the data presented in Table 1 reveals that a total of 27 different Nasreddin Hodja anecdotes were selected by students for their posters. Among these, "Parayı Veren Düdüğü Çalar" and "Hanım İpe Un Sermiş" were the most frequently chosen anecdotes, each selected by three students. Additionally, the anecdotes "Aynı Yöne Gittiğimi Görmemek İçin", "Dünyanın Merkezi Neresidir?", "Kazan Doğurdu", "Benim Öleceğimi De Bil", "Gönlüm Razı Olmadı", and "Zaten İnecektim" were each selected by two students.

Information regarding the typographic color choices made in these posters is presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Colors used in typography (Source: prepared by autors)

Color used in typography	Frequency	Student codes
Black	15	S_1, S_2, S_3, S_5, S_7, S_8, S_9, S_{10}, S_{11}, S_{12}, S_{15}, S_{20}, S_{23}, S_{32}, S_{33}
White	12	S_1, S_6, S_8, S_{16}, S_{17}, S_{18}, S_{24}, S_{30}, S_{32}, S_{34}, S_{35}, S_{36}
Red	4	S_{11}, S_{16}, S_{25}, S_{28}
Blue	4	S_{14}, S_{18}, S_{30}, S_{31}
Pink	1	S_{27}
Brown	1	S_{16}
Grey	1	S_{16}
Line art	1	S_{29}
Total	39	39

As shown in Table 2, black (n=15) and white (n=12) were the most commonly used colors in typographic elements, making them the two most preferred colors. Red and blue followed with four instances each. Less commonly preferred colors included pink, brown, grey, and a line-art (linear) design style, each used only once.

Information regarding the colors used in posters is presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Colors used in posters (Source: prepared by autors)

Color used	Frequency	Student codes
Blue and shades	33	S_1, S_2, S_3, S_4, S_5, S_6, S_7, S_8,S_9, S_{11}, S_{12}, S_{13}, S_{14}, S_{15}, S_{16}, S_{17}, S_{18}, S_{19}, S_{20}, S_{21}, S_{22}, S_{23}, S_{24}, S_{25}, S_{26}, S_{28}, S_{30}, S_{31}, S_{32}, S_{34}, S_{35} S_{36}, S_{37}
White	32	S_1, S_2, S_3, S_4, S_6, S_7, S_8,S_{10}, S_{11}, S_{13}, S_{14}, S_{15}, S_{16}, S_{17}, S_{18}, S_{19}, S_{20}, S_{21}, S_{22}, S_{23}, S_{24}, S_{25}, S_{26}, S_{27}, S_{28}, S_{30}, S_{31}, S_{32}, S_{33}, S_{34}, S_{36}, S_{37}
Brown and shades	25	S_2, S_4, S_5, S_7, S_8, S_{10}, S_{12}, S_{13}, S_{14}, S_{15}, S_{18}, S_{19}, S_{20}, S_{21}, S_{22}, S_{23}, S_{24}, S_{25}, S_{28}, S_{30}, S_{31}, S_{32}, S_{34}, S_{36}, S_{37}
Green and shades	24	S_1, S_2, S_4, S_5, S_8, S_{10}, S_{11}, S_{12}, S_{13}, S_{14}, S_{15}, S_{18}, S_{19}, S_{20}, S_{21}, S_{22}, S_{23}, S_{24}, S_{25}, S_{26}, S_{27}, S_{31}, S_{32}, S_{37}
Red and shades	24	S_2, S_3, S_4, S_5, S_6, S_{10}, S_{11}, S_{14}, S_{15}, S_{16}, S_{18}, S_{19}, S_{20}, S_{21}, S_{22}, S_{23}, S_{24}, S_{25}, S_{26}, S_{28}, S_{31}, S_{32}, S_{34}, S_{37}

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Black	24	S_1, S_2, S_3, S_7, S_8, S_{11}, S_{13}, S_{14}, S_{15}, S_{16}, S_{17}, S_{19}, S_{20}, S_{22}, S_{27}, S_{28}, S_{29}, S_{30}, S_{31}, S_{32}, S_{33}, S_{34}, S_{36}, S_{37}
Orange and shades	20	S_4, S_5, S_6, S_8, S_{10}, S_{13}, S_{14}, S_{16}, S_{19}, S_{22}, S_{23}, S_{24}, S_{25}, S_{26}, S_{28}, S_{31}, S_{32}, S_{34}, S_{35} S_{36}
Yellow and shades	17	S_3, S_5, S_7, S_9,S_{10}, S_{11}, S_{12}, S_{15}, S_{18}, S_{19}, S_{21}, S_{22}, S_{27}, S_{32}, S_{34}, S_{36}, S_{37}
Purple and shades	13	S_1, S_2, S_3, S_4, S_7, S_9, S_{10}, S_{15}, S_{18}, S_{19}, S_{26}, S_{34}, S_{36}
Beige and shades	12	S_8, S_{10}, S_{13}, S_{14}, S_{15}, S_{16}, S_{29}, S_{31}, S_{32}, S_{33}, S_{34}, S_{36}
Grey	9	S_7, S_8, S_{19}, S_{24}, S_{25}, S_{29}, S_{33}, S_{34}, S_{37}
Skin tone	5	S_{19}, S_{22}, S_{30}, S_{33}, S_{34}
Pink	5	S_2, S_3, S_4, S_9, S_{27}
Total	243	243

According to Table 3, blue and its shades (n=33) and white (n=32) were the most commonly used colors in poster designs. On the other hand, grey, skin tone, and pink were the least preferred color options.

Information regarding the background colors used in posters is presented in Table 4.

Table 4. Background colors used in posters (Source: prepared by autors)

Background color	Frequency	Student codes
Blue and shades	26	S_1, S_4, S_5, S_6, S_7, S_8, S_9, S_{11}, S_{12}, S_{13}, S_{14}, S_{15}, S_{16}, S_{17}, S_{18}, S_{20}, S_{21}, S_{22}, S_{24}, S_{25}, S_{26}, S_{31}, S_{32}, S_{34} S_{36}, S_{37}
Green and shades	15	S_1, S_2, S_4, S_5, S_{10}, S_{14}, S_{18}, S_{19}, S_{21}, S_{22}, S_{24}, S_{26}, S_{31}, S_{32}, S_{37}
Orange	5	S_8, S_{23}, S_{24}, S_{28}, S_{37}
Brown	4	S_7, S_8, S_{15}, S_{34}
Yellow	3	S_{15}, S_{32}, S_{37}
Purple and shades	3	S_1, S_2, S_3
Beige and shades	3	S_{13}, S_{29}, S_{33}
Skin tone	3	S_{19}, S_{30}, S_{33}
Red	2	S_{19}, S_{26}
White	2	S_{14}, S_{19}
Pink	2	S_{27}, S_{28}
Grey	2	S_7, S_{16}
Black	2	S_{30}, S_{35}
Total	72	72

As seen in Table 4, blue and its shades (n=26) were the most preferred background colors, followed by green and its shades (n=15). The least used background colors were red, white, pink, grey, and black, each appearing only twice.

Information regarding locations depicted in posters is presented in Table 5.

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Table 5. Locations depicted in posters (Source: prepared by autors)

Location	Frequency	Student codes
Not specified	10	S_3, S_9, S_{16}, S_{17}, S_{25}, S_{27}, S_{29}, S_{30}, S_{33}, S_{35}
Meadow	8	S_1, S_2, S_5, S_{12}, S_{18}, S_{21}, S_{22}, S_{24}
Outdoor setting	6	S_{10}, S_{11}, S_{13}, S_{31}, S_{32}, S_{37}
Indoor setting	4	S_7, S_{15}, S_{28}, S_{34}
Forest	2	S_4, S_{14}
Space	2	S_{20}, S_{36}
Lakeside	1	S_8
Sea	1	S_6
Cloudy sky	1	S_6
Neighborhood	1	S_{23}
Mosque	1	S_{19}
Colorful Turkish motif	1	S_{26}
Total	38	38

Table 5 indicates that in 10 posters, the location was either not clear or not specified. The most commonly depicted specific location was a meadow (n=8). The least depicted settings were lakeside, sea, cloudy sky, neighborhood, mosque, and traditional Turkish motifs, each appearing only once. Figure-1 shows few examples.



Figure 3. Sample posters designed by students

Table 6 presents information regarding the cultural elements featured in the posters themed around Nasreddin Hodja's anecdotes.

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Table 6. Cultural elements used in the posters (Source: prepared by autors)

Cultural elements	Frequency	Student codes
Nasreddin Hodja	33	S_1, S_2, S_3, S_4, S_5, S_6, S_7, S_8, S_9, S_{11}, S_{13}, S_{14}, S_{15}, S_{16}, S_{17}, S_{18}, S_{19}, S_{20}, S_{21}, S_{22}, S_{23}, S_{24}, S_{25}, S_{26}, S_{27}, S_{28}, S_{30}, S_{31}, S_{32}, S_{34}, S_{35} S_{36}, S_{37}
Male	12	S_2, S_{10}, S_{13}, S_{14}, S_{16}, S_{18}, S_{19}, S_{21}, S_{23}, S_{26}, S_{28}, S_{31}
Donkey	6	S_1, S_2, S_4, S_{20}, S_{21}, S_{37}
Tree	4	S_{11}, S_{17}, S_{24}, S_{25}
Female	3	S_8, S_{14}, S_{34}
House	3	S_{10}, S_{31}, S_{32}
Scale	3	S_9, S_{15}, S_{26}
Kitchenware (bowl, spoon, glass, pot lid)	3	S_5, S_{28}, S_{29}
Sack	2	S_{18}, S_{34}
Child	2	S_4, S_{31}
Cauldron	2	S_{16}, S_{29}
Thorn	1	S_{12}
Foot	1	S_{12}
Red whistle	1	S_4
Glasses	1	S_6
Modern thief	1	S_7
Kitchen setting	1	S_{15}
Carpet	1	S_{15}
Saw	1	S_{17}
Hand	1	S_{33}
Indoor room	1	S_{34}
Total	81	81

An analysis of the data in Table 6 reveals that 33 students included a visual depiction of Nasreddin Hodja in their posters. Additionally, 12 students incorporated male figures. Accordingly, Nasreddin Hodja and male characters were the most commonly represented cultural elements (Figure 1, Figure 5). These were followed by donkeys, trees, female characters, and children (Figure 4, Figure 2). The least frequently featured elements included thorns, feet, red whistles, glasses, a modern thief, kitchen settings, carpets, saws, hands, and indoor rooms (Figure 3).



Figure 4. Female figure examples from the posters

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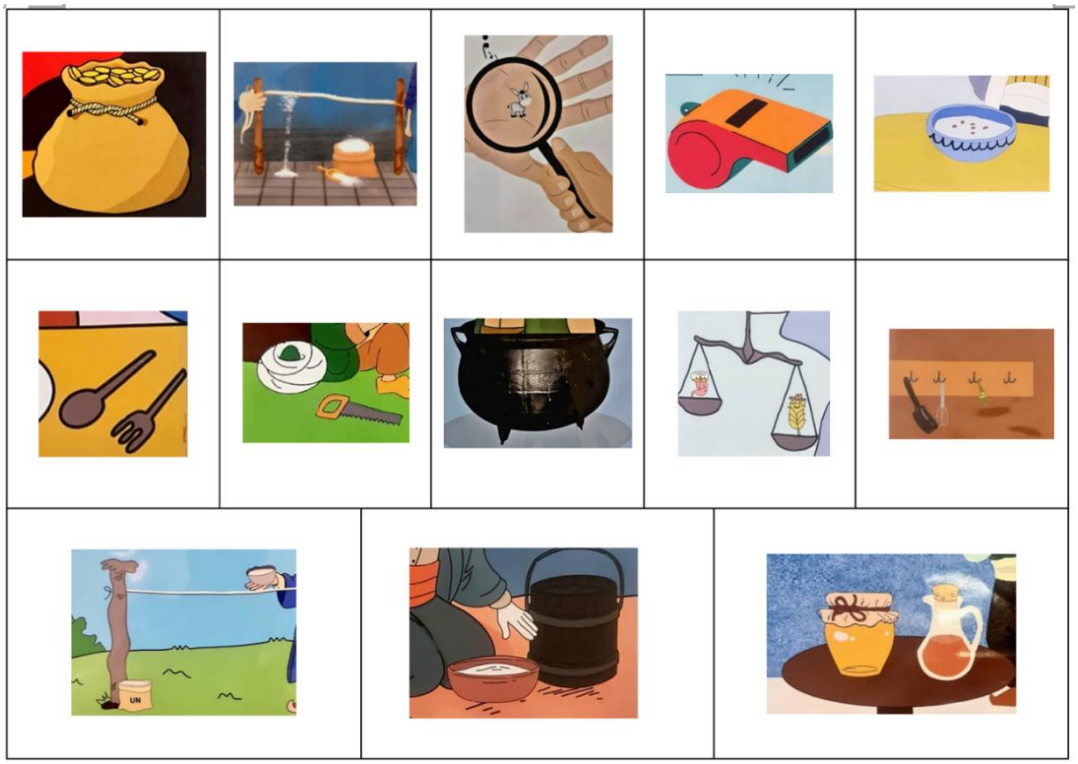


Figure 5. Examples of objects from students' drawings



Figure 6. Children figure designs on the posters

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Figure 7. Male figure designs

Nasreddin Hodja anecdotes constitute one of the cornerstones of Turkish folk culture. In this study, students were given the opportunity to express this cultural heritage through contemporary visual communication tools. The inclusion of 27 different anecdotes demonstrates that students did not confine themselves solely to widely known texts; rather, they exhibited the courage to engage with lesser-known narratives and reconstruct cultural content in creative ways.

Incorporating both well-known and obscure anecdotes enriched the overall scope of the study and allowed students to showcase their individual interpretive abilities. This diversity not only reflects creative thinking but also points to a genuine interest in cultural memory.

The color schemes used in the depiction of the Nasreddin Hodja figure in the themed posters are presented in Table 7.

Table 7. Colors Used in the Depiction of the Nasreddin Hodja Figure (Source: prepared by autors)

Clothing item	Color	Frequency	Student codes
Turban	White	23	S_2, S_3, S_7, S_{10}, S_{11}, S_{15}, S_{16}, S_{17}, S_{18}, S_{20}, S_{21}, S_{22}, S_{23}, S_{24}, S_{25}, S_{26}, S_{28}, S_{30}, S_{31}, S_{32}, S_{34}, S_{36}, S_{37}
	Blue	6	S_4, S_5, S_6, S_8, S_{19}, S_{35}
	Pink	1	S_9
	Brown	1	S_{13}
	Cream	1	S_{14}
Total		32	32
	Red	5	S_{10}, S_{21}, S_{22}, S_{25}, S_{28}
	Orange	3	S_4, S_5, S_8

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Crest	Green	3	S_{19}, S_{24}, S_{35}
	White	2	S_{13}, S_{26}
	Yellow	1	S_{3}
	Blue	1	S_{6}
	Cream	1	S_{34}
	Brown	1	S_{23}
Total		17	17
Robe	Green	8	S_{5}, S_{8}, S_{16}, S_{18}, S_{20}, S_{23}, S_{24}, S_{31}
	Red	6	S_{2}, S_{4}, S_{15}, S_{32}, S_{35}, S_{37}
	Orange	6	S_{10}, S_{13}, S_{19}, S_{26}, S_{28}, S_{36}
	Blue	3	S_{14}, S_{21}, S_{22}
	Lilac	3	S_{3}, S_{7}, S_{9}
	Yellow	1	S_{34}
Total		27	27
Undergarment	Green	5	S_{2}, S_{4}, S_{20}, S_{32}, S_{37}
	Blue	5	S_{6}, S_{23}, S_{25}, S_{30}, S_{34}
	Yellow	4	S_{3}, S_{5}, S_{18}, S_{19}
	Orange	4	S_{3}, S_{5}, S_{18}, S_{19}
	Beige	3	S_{8}, S_{15}, S_{22}
	Red	2	S_{10}, S_{21}
	Brown	2	S_{13}, S_{24}
	Lilac	1	S_{7}
	Pink	1	S_{9}
	White	1	S_{36}
Total		28	28
Belt	White	9	S_{2}, S_{3}, S_{7}, S_{10}, S_{13}, S_{15}, S_{32}, S_{36}, S_{37}
	Orange	5	S_{8}, S_{22}, S_{23}, S_{25}, S_{26}
	Red	4	S_{5}, S_{18}, S_{20}, S_{31}
	Green	2	S_{19}, S_{20}
	Brown	2	S_{16}, S_{34}
	Lilac	1	S_{4}
Total		23	23
Trousers	Blue	9	S_{3}, S_{5}, S_{13}, S_{14}, S_{18}, S_{20}, S_{21}, S_{26}, S_{31}
	Khaki	5	S_{8}, S_{15}, S_{23}, S_{32}, S_{37}
	Brown	4	S_{19}, S_{22}, S_{24}, S_{34}
	White	2	S_{4}, S_{36}
	Black	2	S_{17}, S_{35}
	Red	1	S_{10}
	Grey	1	S_{25}
Total		24	24
Footwear	Brown	8	S_{13}, S_{18}, S_{20}, S_{21}, S_{22}, S_{31}, S_{32}, S_{37}
	Orange	4	S_{10}, S_{14}, S_{24}, S_{35}
	Black	3	$S_{15,}$ S_{19}, S_{36}
	Red	2	$S_{5,}$ S_{26}
	Blue	1	S_{34}
	Lilac	1	S_{4}
	Grey	1	S_{25}
Total		20	20

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Other	Line drawing	3	S_1, S_{17}, S_{27}
	Lilac ribbon	1	S_3
	Brown vest	1	S_{30}
	Pink beard	1	S_9
	Bird-shaped body	1	S_{11}
Total		7	7
Grand total		178	178

An analysis of the data presented in Table 7 shows that the figure of Nasreddin Hodja was categorized into the following thematic elements: turban, crest, robe, inner garment, belt, trousers, shoes, and other (Visual 6). Among these, the most frequently preferred sub-themes were white for the turban, red for the crest, green for the robe, green for the inner garment, white for the belt, blue for the trousers, and brown for the shoes. In the "other" category, linear drawings were the most commonly used element.



Figure 8. Character design samples of Nasreddin Hodja from student posters

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Yıldırımer (1989:374) notes that the oldest depiction of Nasreddin Hodja is an eighteenth-century colored miniature registered as number 2142 in the Topkapı Palace Treasury Library, in which Hodja is portrayed wearing a red turban, a short-sleeved, wide-collared caftan fastened diagonally at the front. However, Nasreddin Hodja has been depicted in various garments in books, on social media, and in cartoons. As shown in Table 7, students most frequently visualized Nasreddin Hodja with a white turban and a red cap. In religions and popular culture, the color white signifies purity, cleanliness, and sensitivity (Tanyu, 1986); in Turkish mythology, white clothing represents purity, cleanliness, and the elegance of the soul over the body (Çoruhlu, 2002, p. 200); and in Sufi understanding, white symbolizes the station of the self (Şahinler, 2010, p. 45). Based on the study's findings, it can be said that students preferred these colors to symbolize Nasreddin Hodja's sense of humor and wisdom.

In Turkish and Islamic culture, the color green holds profound spiritual and symbolic significance due to its association with the painting of tombs and sacred sites (Genç, 1996; Lings, 2003) and its connection to the cloak of Prophet Muhammad. Green symbolizes paradise, hope, and both material and spiritual prosperity (Ersoy, 2007), while also having a calming effect on the mind. The study's findings indicate that students' preference for green in depicting Nasreddin Hodja, particularly in the themes of his robe and inner garment, reflects an effort to portray Hodja not only as a source of humor but also as a wise figure and spiritual authority in the eyes of the public.

CONCLUSION

This study focused on the reinterpretation of Nasreddin Hodja anecdotes by students from a design perspective, and the resulting works were analyzed in terms of various visual elements. The findings reveal how Nasreddin Hodja's cultural heritage is revived through design and how this process influences students' creativity, visual literacy, and cultural awareness skills.

Nasreddin Hodja anecdotes are a significant part of Turkish folk culture, and this study highlights students' potential to creatively interpret cultural heritage. The selection of 27 different anecdotes demonstrates that students went beyond the well-known and popular stories, showing the courage to explore and interpret lesser-known narratives as well. The inclusion of both popular anecdotes such as "Parayı Veren Düdüğü Çalar" and "Hanım İpe Un Sermiş" alongside less familiar ones indicates that the designs extend beyond familiar stories, offering a richer cultural narrative spectrum. This diversity shows that students individually developed distinct perspectives and effectively employed their creative thinking skills.

This situation emphasizes that the anecdotes are not merely sources of entertainment; they are national in character (Karakuş, 2024: 239), transmitted through oral memory (Elçin, 2004), and have the potential to stimulate solution-oriented creative thinking skills (Temizkan, 2011: 202–211). The focus on the Nasreddin Hodja figure in students' designs demonstrates that this character conveys "national spirit, aesthetic taste, original humor, and agile intelligence" (Özkan, 1999: IV) into contemporary visual language. The presence of different characters in Hodja's anecdotes such as a judge, a physician, a teacher, or an ordinary villager (Albayrak, 2006: 419) also appeared in students' creative interpretations as distinct visual representations.

Another notable aspect of the designs is students' choices of color and typography. The dominant use of black and white in typography supports both readability and adherence to traditional design conventions. At the same time, the significant use of colors such as blue, brown, and green added richness to the designs and reinforced the narrative atmosphere of the Nasreddin Hodja anecdotes.

The prominence of blue in both overall posters and background designs contributed a sense of calm and harmony while effectively reflecting the humorous tone of the anecdotes. The less frequent use of colors such as red, pink, and gray suggests that students sought a careful balance in their color choices. This balanced approach ensured that the designs were successful both aesthetically and thematically.

The dominance of black in typography enhanced the clarity and comprehensibility of the anecdotes, while the use of white text added simplicity and elegance to the designs. However, some designs

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incorporated colored text that, due to eye-straining or low-contrast combinations, created readability issues. This further underscores the importance of readability and color harmony in design work.

When evaluating the students' posters overall, the heavy use of black and white in typography enhanced the clarity of the message (Şanlı, 2009: 269), while the extensive use of colors such as blue, brown, and green referenced a traditional atmosphere reflecting Nasreddin Hodja's identity as an Anatolian figure and his life in close harmony with nature (Yıldırımer, 1989: 374). The poster designs reinforced the linguistic richness of the anecdotes, including proverbs and idiomatic expressions (Şanlı, 2009: 269), through visual storytelling, thereby contributing to the preservation of collective memory and the strengthening of cultural transmission.

The study addressed how Nasreddin Hodja's stories can be evaluated from both traditional and modern perspectives. Since the 13th century, Hodja's anecdotes have persisted in the oral tradition (Tatarlı, 1997) and later in written, theatrical (Göktaş, 2023: 16), and film/television (Göktaş, 2023: 24) formats. Nasreddin Hodja is a figure who represents liberation from social pressures and gives voice to objections that cannot be expressed in daily life (Yılmaz, 2024: 444). Today, through cartoons and social media posts (Deveci, 2017: 1221–1222), Hodja has evolved from the wise, saintly figure of the past into a more mischievous, witty, and quick-thinking character (Yılmaz, 2024: 444) who uses humor to critique systemic errors and social shortcomings (Cibavi, 2019: 31). This transformation not only allows the integration of anecdotes into contemporary topics, ensuring their presence in the memory of new generations (Deveci, 2017: 1222; Okyayuz & Bozkurt, 2022: 188) but also extends Hodja's role in supporting educational processes (Yılmaz, 2024: 448; Manav, 2016: 335–336) into digital environments.

Erdal and Erdal (2017) asked students how they would introduce Nasreddin Hodja to their grandchildren, and the majority indicated that they were familiar with him primarily through anecdotes shared in social settings. The researchers argued that this increases the risk of misinformation in the transmission of cultural heritage and emphasized that Nasreddin Hodja should be taught in schools through textbooks and made appealing to children via well-planned animations and computer games.

In this context, poster design plays a critical role in visualizing Nasreddin Hodja as a "problem-solving personality" (Okumuş, 2016: 16) and contributes to the objectives of the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage (SOKÜM) (Oğuz, 2009) by supporting cultural continuity. Consequently, as in this study, work carried out through digital poster design enhances students' visual literacy skills and inspires them to find more original avenues for artistic expression.

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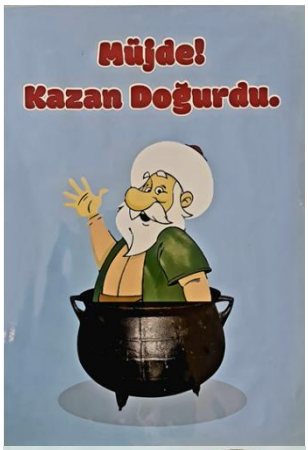
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Dairesi Yayınları.
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https://tr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nasreddin_Hoca Access Date: 09.10.2024.

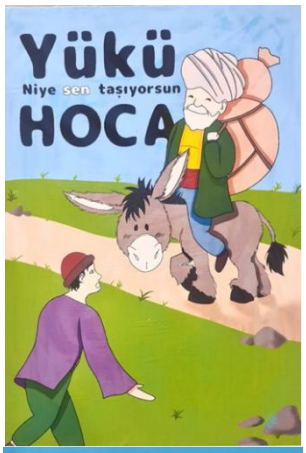
APPENDIX



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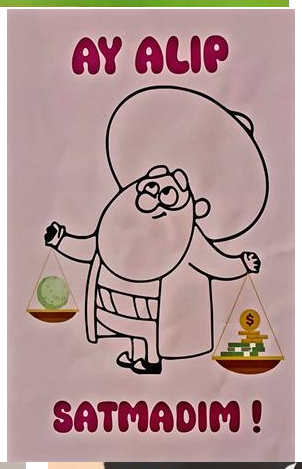






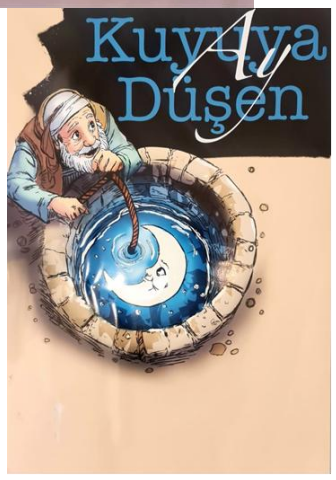












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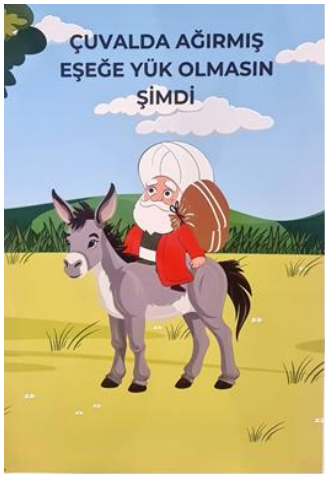


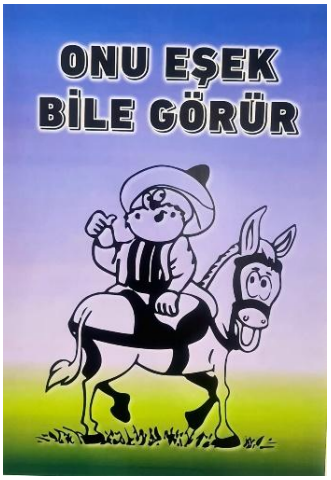














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