

DIE SUID-AFRIKAANSE HISTORIESE
IN DIE
KINDER- EN JEUGVERHAAL

Verhandeling voorgelê ter voldoening
aan die vereistes vir die

M. BIBL.-GRAAD

aan die Potchefstroomse Universiteit
vir Christelike Hoër Onderwys

deur

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ABSTRACT

History as a school subject confronts a child with events, motives for action, and moral dilemmas, demanding a high level of abstract reasoning. Before the child reaches the cognitive stage of formal operations (14 years), his abstract reasoning is limited and egocentric in terms of time concept and social consciousness. To supplement this lack of abstraction, it seems necessary to enrich the teaching of history by means of substitute experiences. In an analysis of different teaching methods, it was found that abstract historical facts become more palatable to the pupil when historical novels are used to replace direct experience. The pupil thus identifies with the historical character of his own age group, and encounters history on a human level, because an emotional involvement with the facts has taken place.

If a historical novel is to be utilized successfully it must therefore be more than a feebly romanticized, and superficial account of historical facts. Such a novel should capture the exact atmosphere of a specific era. It should attain a delicate balance between fact and fiction, gripping intrigue and real life characters in order to form an emotional bridge between reality and abstract historical facts.

In reviewing South African history from 1488 to 1915, it seems that the fiction possibilities of this era have been adequately exploited. Novelists have however given preference to events of a more spectacular nature. More attention and focus has been given to novels for older children and teenagers. There is a great variety of these novels, enabling the pupil of middle childhood and adolescence to identify with the characters, thus experiencing universal needs and universal problems. The natural affinity for fantasy of early childhood has however not been utilized fully.

The historical novel concerning the history of indigenous race groups is scantily represented. This jeopardizes the employment of historical novels in promoting positive attitudes towards other races and meaningful co-existence in South Africa.