HISTORY AND PREPARATION FOR LIFE

Faith Saunders, 8 Marks Avenue, Farrar Park, Boksburg writes:

I concur with the article in the May 1993 issue of *Yesterday and Today* that History is not boring, irrelevant and of no use to me while I am studying or once I have completed my schooling (either secondary or tertiary). The skills, both complex and simple, learned during a history lesson will stand me in good stead to tackle life with more objectivity than if I had no historical education.

Being a History Didactics student at RAU I wondered how hard could it be to teach History - just give pupils facts and figures and let them regurgitate these in either tests or essays? Right? Wrong!! It was here that my Professor brought all his students face to face with the endless possibilities and skills history can provide. No one was more surprised than me to see how History, if taught correctly, can be an indispensable tool to be used by pupils not only in schooling but in life. No, I am not exaggerating! Prove it? Sure!

Let me quote from Boyce: "History consists essentially in seeing the past through the eyes of the present in the light of its problems". We as History teachers and prospective History teachers must use History as a tool to enable pupils to understand their own times. In the 'New South Africa' (to coin a phrase) we can use the results of America's 1960s race relations to examine our own race relations and guard against such discrimination, bloodshed and ill-feeling by being taught to accept the diversities within a country and work within these diversities. We can use the Holocaust to heighten the pupil's awareness of the tragedies and atrocities being committed in Bosnia-Herzegovina. What other subject teaches one to use the past to examine the present and prepare for the future with optimism? Very few - if any.

History, if taught correctly, can be used to cultivate healthy attitudes of mind and habits of though in pupils. One must remember that pumping them full of information has a short-term effect. They lose this factual knowledge but pupils do not lose values and habits. Teachers, please inculcate (not indoctrinate) sound (good) basic values!

When all the eligible citizens of this country vote on a new government one hopes that all those people understand the concept and consequences of the vote they cast. History gives us an idea of parliamentary proceedings and activities of local municipal councils. History can be used to instil intelligent patriotism - not a black country versus a white country, but our country.

History can also be used as an agent of moral instruction; cultivate historical thinking; prevent discrimination and prejudice; a way to understand our own heritage and culture; encourage positive attitudes; tolerance; enable the student to handle conflict, divergent ideas and opinions as well as discrepancies; encourage pupils to think logically and
History can also be used as an agent of moral instruction; cultivate historical thinking; prevent discrimination and prejudice; a way to understand our own heritage and culture; encourage positive attitudes; tolerance; enable the student to handle conflict, divergent ideas and opinions as well as discrepancies; encourage pupils to think logically and synthesise material and situations; encourage pupils' imagination and self-expression; orientate the pupils in time.

Who said History was not relevant and offered nothing to the pupil? I am encouraged that I have been taught what was needed to teach these vital skills to my present and prospective pupils!

---

**BOEBESPREKINGS/BOOK REVIEWS**


Clifton C. Crais het met hierdie publikasie 'n belangrike en goed gedokumenteerde bydrae tot die geskiedskrywing van die Oos-Kaap gelewer. Soos die subtitel "White Supremacy and Black Resistance in the Eastern Cape, 1770-1865" aandui, handel die boek oor byna 100 jaar van "Sturm-und-Drang" in 'n streek van ons land wat 'n deurslaggewende rol in die ontbloeie van volkerenverhoudinge en selfs die huidige rassepatroon van Suid-Afrika as geheel gespeel het.

Hierdie insiggewende en deeglik nagevorsde werk dek ook 'n tydperk van sewe Grensoorloë. As sodanig is dit 'n welkome toevoeging tot die genre van Suid-Afrikaanse streeksgeskiedenis, ten opsigte waarvan die Ooselike Provinsie tot dusver nog relatief min aandag geniet het.

Dit is verder insiggewend dat hier weer eens 'n Amerikaner is wat hom verdiep het in Suid-Afrika se grensgeskiedenis en volkerenverhoudinge. Hierdie belangstelling staan waarskynlik in verband met vergelykbare grenssituasies, wat vir Crais egter soms in die versoeningsbring om te maklik afleidings te maak.

Reeds in die eerste paragraaf van die inleiding verduidelik die outeur dat die boek in wese gaan oor die wyse waarop verskillende rassegroepe met radikaal uiteenlopende persepsies van die omringende wêreld deel gehad het aan die toestandkoming van 'n ongelyke en rasseties verdeelde koloniale samelewings. Dominasie, afhanklikheid, geweld, oorheersers en oorheersdes, 'n patriargale stelsel en paternalisme is vir Crais belangrike begrippe as hy die proses en gevolge van kolonialisme in die betrokke streek vir ons uiteensit.

Hierdie boek se tien hoofstukke is in vier logiese afdelings verdeel, elk met 'n hooftema, naamlik "Times of plenty, times of pain"; "Colonial paradoxes"; "The making of a colonial order" en "Of the conquerors and the vanquished".

Die skrywer se eerste hoofstuk gee 'n insiggewende en dikwels oorspronklike uiteensetting van die herkoms, koms en vestiging van die San, Khoi-khoi, Khoisan en die Xhosa in die Oos-Kaap. Hy bespreek eersgenoemde groep ook as "autochtones" (oerbewoners) en "hunter-gatherers". Dit is terloops hier en elders in die teks duidelik dat die outeur in die debat oor 'n algemene aanvaarbare terminologie vir die onderskeie bevolkingsgroepes nie met permanente oplossings kom nie.

Crais gaan dan voort met insiggewende maar soms vae stellings oor die wanneer en waar van die vroeë volkrebewegings in Suid-Afrika, wat ook nie altyd deur voetnote toegelig word nie. Hy meld byvoorbeeld, sonder enige verwysings:

"Sometime in the first centuries AD, and again probably during the fifteenth century, autochtones began coming into contact first with pastoralists and finally with Bantu-speaking pastoralist-cultivators. This three-fold contact, among hunters, herdsmen and cultivators, took place within the context of the movements of people in search of land, water, status and refuge and gave social and