

THE UNIVERSITY OF ZAMBIA

SCHOOL OF HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES

DEPARTMENT OF ARTS, LANGUAGES AND LITERARY STUDIES

NAME : BANDA TRYSON BK.

COMPUTER No. : 2022076958

COURSE CODE : LIT 1100

COURSE COORDINATOR : MRS. B.M. MWALE

LECTURER : MRS. B.M. MWALE

QUESTION : ASSINGMENT TWO

DUE DATE : 25TH OCTOBER, 2023

ASSIGNMENT QUESTION:

In what ways is literature important as a source of history. Refer to one novel or novella, one poem and one play studied in the course.



Literature holds significant value as a source of history due to its ability to provide vivid insights into different time periods, cultural contexts, and individual experiences. Through the lens of storytelling, novels, novellas, poems, and plays offer unique perspectives and capture the essence of past events, societal issues, and human emotions. Let me now provide examples of how a specific novel, a poem, and a play studied in a course showcase the importance of literature as a source of history.

Starting with a Novel or Novella, "To Kill a Mockingbird" by Harper Lee. Set in the segregated American South during the Great Depression, this classic novel explores themes of racial inequality, social injustice, and moral courage. Through the eyes of young Scout Finch, a young girl, the narrative unearths the harsh realities of racism and discrimination prevalent in 1930s America (Bell-Villada, G.H. 2012). By delving into the experiences of the characters and portraying their interactions, the novel reveals the historical context and serves as a testament to the struggles faced by African Americans and the fight for civil rights. It also serves as an invaluable historical document, capturing the atmosphere of the era and the challenges faced by marginalized communities. "To Kill a Mockingbird" thus offers a compelling insight into the history of racial prejudice in the United States. (Kirk, L. 2013)

Moving on to poem, "The Waste Land" by T.S. Published in 1922, this modernist poem reflects the disillusionment and despair felt by many after the devastation of World War 1. Drawing upon various mythological, historical, and cultural references, Eliot captures the fragmented nature of post-war society. By juxtaposing different voices, imagery, and allusions, the poem reflects the fragmented state of society highlights the loss of



traditional values, social cohesion, and spiritual beliefs during that era (Rosenberg, J.D. 2017).“The Waste Land” acts as a historical document by providing an artistic representation of the post-war disillusionment prevalent in the Europe during the early 20th century. “The Waste Land” serves also as a rich source of historical context, illustrating the cultural, social, and psychological impact of one of the most significant periods in modern history (Moody, A.D. 2013).

Lastly, when it comes to plays, “Macbeth” by William Shakespeare. Set in 11th century Scotland, this tragic play explores themes of ambition, power, and the consequences of unchecked desire. It reflects the political instability, power struggles, and moral dilemmas of the medieval era (Bigsby, C.W. 2015). Through the downfall of Macbeth and the actions of other characters, Shakespeare offers of commentary on the nature of kingship, the ethics of governance, and the destructive potential of unrestrained ambition. “Macbeth” serves as an important source of historical insight, shedding light on the political climate, societal norms, and power dynamics that prevailed during Shakespeare`s time (Bradstock, A. 2015).

In conclusion, these works of literature exemplify how novels, poems, and plays can provide valuable historical contexts, offering readers and scholars a glimpse into the past. They capture the experiences, emotions, and societal dynamics of specific time periods, enriching our understanding of history beyond mere facts and figures. Through literature, we gain a deeper appreciation of the multifaceted aspects of human existence and the profound impact that historical events have on individuals and societies. Through novels like “To Kill a Mockingbird,” poems like “The Waste Land,” and



plays like “Macbeth and The Crucible,” we can explore different periods, experiences, and perspectives, ensuring that history remains alive and relevant.

REFERENCES

- Bell-Villada, G.H. (2012). *Fictionalizing History: One Hundred Years of Solitude* as Latin American Historiographical Metafiction. In *The Cambridge History of Latin American Literature* (Vol. 2, pp.937-940). Cambridge University.
- Bigsby, C.W. (2015). *The Crucible Modern American Drama, 1945-200* (Vol. 2, pp.462-470). Cambridge University Press.
- Bradstock, A. (2015). *Kingship, Lordship, & Honor in Macbeth*. In *The Oxford University Handbook of Shakespearean Tragedy* (pp.70-87). Oxford University Press.
- Goddard, H.C. (1951). Theme of *Hamlet*. *The Kenyon Review*, 13(3) 474-487. Available at: <http://doi.org/10.2307/4332782>
- Kirk, L. (2013). The politics of Childhood in *To Kill a Mockingbird*. In *The Cambridge Companion to American Civil Rights Literature* (pp.129-132). Cambridge University Press.
- Lee, Harper, (2006) Harper Perennial Modern Classic. University of California Press
- Moody, A.D. (2013). T.S. Eliot’s *Historical Consciousness and The Waste Land*. *The Review of English studies*, 64(200), 668-671. Southern Illinois University Press.
- Orwell, George. (1984). *Harcourt Brace Jovanovich*. Oxford University Press.
- Kestnbaum, C.W. (2015). Historicism and Arthur Miller’s *The Crucible*. *Journal of American Drama and Theatre*, 18(2), 1-20. Available at: <http://doi.org/10.1353/jadt.2005.0077>
- Kilgore, D.R. (2014). The Use of History in Ton Morrison’s *Beloved*. In *critical insights: Beloved* (pp.25-38). Salem Press.
- Rosenberg, J.D. (2017) *The Great Gatsby, Money, and Morality*. In *the Cambridge Companion to Scott F. Fitzgerald*. (PP.77-80). Cambridge University Press.

