

BOOK REVIEWS

New Generation History: Grade 11 learner's book

(New Generation Publishers, 2015, 358 pp. ISBN 13: 978-1-920321-96-3)

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New Generation History for Grade 11 was compiled by a team of highly qualified and experienced History teaching practitioners. The book is quite impressive, learner-friendly, as well as highly attractive with a memorable front cover, riddled with photographs of some of the most important figures in modern history.

The authors of this textbook set out to address the demands of the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS) for History in Grade 11. Regarding the format of the textbook, the contents page (p. vi) is accurate, as is the index and the bibliography on p. 348. The introduction “Note to the 21st century history learner” is sufficiently descriptive. A section on “History in the South African Context” is given on p. ii and another on “History and the world of work” on pp. iii. There is also a page dedicated to historical concepts, such as cause and effect and time and chronology on p. v.

New Generation History is laid out in a well-organized fashion as it progresses through all the content specified in the official curriculum. It is abundantly equipped with descriptions, definitions and concept summaries. There are many other constructive features within this textbook, for example that a good range of media from both primary and secondary sources have been used. The sources which have been selected, which include maps, photographs, maps, cartoons and diagrams, are of the highest applicability and are also very commendable. The learner activities are appropriate and of the highest

quality and to achieve the purpose of learning History. Unfortunately, no model answers have been included at the end of the book.

New Generation History is also envisioned for inclusive education purposes, and there is no overt evidence of prejudice in terms of race, gender or religion. The examples used are very relevant in terms of teaching for non-racialism and equality. The writing style and language usage is appropriate for this grade, although there are some errors in grammar and style. These, however, are not enough to detract from the overall quality of the textbook.

In conclusion, *New Generation History's* content is reasonable, and as such, it will be a valuable resource for high school teachers of Grade 11 History. The authors approach the topics in a thought-provoking and original way, and there are ample amounts of highly enjoyable assessment activities for learners to complete. With the addition of improved editing and careful proof-reading, plus the inclusion of model answers for the exam exemplars, the textbook would have received a much more favourable review.

The shouting in the dark

(Jacana Media [Pty] Ltd, 2015, 247 pp. ISBN 978-1-4314-2233-3)

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The shouting in the dark is an excellent historical fiction book reflecting what life appeared to be like in colonial and apartheid South Africa, but particularly during the 1970s. It constructs a representation of the family life of a “white” (immigrant) family seeing South Africa through the eyes of a young “white” girl. Most historical novels that deal with the difficulties in colonial and apartheid South Africa tend to be about “Black”, “Indian” or “Coloured people. However, the author’s aim in this book is to show that South Africa was a land that was divided not only across the race boundaries, but also within families.

This book consists of sixteen sections whereby the author wishes to keep the focus on Ella, the main character's perspective. This is done so that the different stages of her story of survival are revealed to the reader as one gets to know her. Emphasis is placed on seeing life through the eyes of a "white" child growing up in colonial and apartheid South Africa. This is all carefully written to show that "white" children also felt the anguishes of apartheid, one of them being the constraint of not being able to explore the world around them and interact with all individuals living in South Africa.

The novel reveals Ella, a young girl who is from a dysfunctional home, and her struggle for recognition. Ella's father (Har) married his first wife's sister (Irene) not long after the first wife, who Ella is named after died. The sudden marriage leads to Ella's untimely birth and disability, resulting in her lack of acceptance. Ella has a poor sense of identity as she is not given the chance for self-exploration. The author captures how Ella has blossomed as a young lady, despite her challenges, and her love for the "black" teenage gardener (Phineas). This novel symbolises Ella as a young country wanting to embrace its differences and come together as one for the benefit of peace, love and happiness.

Upon reading this novel it becomes evident that the author conducted efficient research to contextualise the novel historically. Reading this novel makes one eager to inquire more about the real experiences of "white" families under a failing colonial system, and under the apartheid regime. Such a novel allows one to imagine and step into a different world of understanding historical experiences, something which school textbooks still struggle to do. It is through such a novel that learners of history can empathise with the characters of the past and in some way relate to them even though things have since changed in South Africa.

The novel narrates the experience of a child growing up in an abusive home, torn between loving outside of her race grouping and finding herself. South Africa was then divided across the social, cultural and aesthetic aspects in the 1970. However, even today the apartheid prejudices are entrenched into society and many learners are dealing with the issues that Ella experiences in the novel. Therefore a sense of empathy can be developed through this novel.

The focus of *The shouting in the dark* is on the experiences of Ella and how she wants to establish herself. Many a time parents want to enforce their ideologies and their views on life on their children, as in Ella's case. This novel shows how the young girl, through her experiences and challenges, wants to

create her own understanding of the world around her and not be repressed by her parents' ideology. Likewise, in the teaching and learning of History, learners come to class having to deal with the perceptions of History brought down on them by their elders, parents or educators. This novel can aid in the learning process for learners to challenge their thinking of what they see as "truth" according to their elders parents take.

The shouting in the dark is well written; the historical aspects, besides being thoroughly researched, are presented in an engaging manner. There is a sense of engagement or oneness with the characters and the author. The author has succeeded in offering a looking glass for readers to see the effects of colonisation and apartheid through the eyes of a child. Therefore, *The shouting in the dark* enhances the deeply rooted historical challenges placed on a young girl (Ella) in South Africa similar to what many young South Africans are still. Ella can be viewed as a symbol of South Africa who fights for equality and justice in what can be described as a dark and disturbing yet a positive outlook portrayed through this novel.