

An Analysis of Selected Literature Books Prescribed
for Kenya Secondary Schools with Reference to their Underlying
Moral Values. Margaret W. Kungu.

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NAIROBI EVANGELICAL GRADUATE
SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY


AN ANALYSIS OF SELECTED LITERATURE BOOKS
PRESCRIBED FOR KENYA SECONDARY SCHOOLS WITH
REFERENCE TO THEIR UNDERLYING
MORAL VALUES


BY
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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to examine the extent of wholesome moral values in selected novels prescribed for Literature in Kenyan secondary schools. Attempt was made to note what the moral basis of the wholesome values was. Two research questions, from which two hypotheses were formulated, guided this study.

The study was designed as a literary research. Data, related to wholesome and unwholesome values, were obtained by studying five novels: Things Fall Apart, No Longer at Ease, The River Between, The Concubine, and Mine Boy. The results were applied to the two hypotheses.

The results showed that there is a significant extent of wholesome values in the novels studied. The wholesome values tended to be founded on traditional morality rather than on secular morality.

Dedicated
to
The Kung'u Family
Present and Future
Kung'u, Lulu, Ciiku...

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Every society has ideals to which it aspires. In Kenya, these ideals are stated in the national philosophy. Among the various ideals, there are three which relate to morality. These three ideals are religious freedom, social justice and human dignity including the freedom of conscience (Second University in Kenya 1981, 5). These ideals do not come to human beings naturally. An organized system of inculcating them is necessary. The earlier they are instilled in an individual, the sooner they become part of the principles he lives by. In the transmission of such ideals, education plays a very significant role.

Statement of the Problem

The Kenyan educational system is guided by six objectives. The educational objectives are condensed from the ideals expressed in the national philosophy. As the national philosophy touches on morality, so do the educational objectives. The specific educational objective which touches on morality emphasizes the development of a high sense of justice and morality (Report of the Presidential Working Party 1988, 11) in the individual. To achieve this educational objective, and eventually to realize the national philosophy, it is necessary that the whole learning atmosphere (the physical, the social and the academic) be conducive to this.

One important factor in the pursuit of academic excellence is the choice of textbooks. Textbooks complement and supplement what teachers transmit to students. With respect to the subject of Literature, textbook selection calls for great care. Literature books exert a powerful appeal on an individual. The reader participates in the actions emotionally, intellectually and volitionally. This interaction can significantly influence the extent to which students are drawn to pursue an upright moral life. Literature books can thus contribute to or detract from the adoption of moral ideals in the student.

Modern writers are normally very bold in portraying human depravity. This does not often encourage pursuit of high moral ideals. To many writers though, this is not moral corruption but realism. A Christian teacher observes, "In its depiction of post-Christian world, much modern literature portrays themes of existential meaninglessness and moral relativity" (Pell 1989,7). Christian values no longer govern people's lives. Writers decide what meaning to give to life. They choose what moral standards should govern the people's lives. This point of view is gradually taking root in Africa and surfacing in Literature books.

This study seeks to examine if selected Literature books prescribed for Kenyan secondary schools in a period of 30 years portray moral relativity or not. It attempts to examine the underlying morality in the following five novels. .

Things Fall Apart

No longer at Ease

The River Between

The Concubine

Mine Boy

The type of morality depicted in the novels has potential for encouraging or hindering the development of a high sense of morality in students.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to adapt the approaches of Kidner (1959), Downey (1986) and Ryken (1986) in an attempt to determine underlying morality in the five novels mentioned above.

Research Questions

This study seeks to answer the following two questions with regard to morality:

1. To what extent do the Literature books reflect wholesome moral values?
2. If wholesome moral values exist, on what moral foundation are they based?

Research Hypotheses

Hypothesis 1

The Literature books studied will tend to reflect an insignificant extent of wholesome moral values.

This is based on the fact that values change with time and circumstances. Given that moral degeneration is easier than moral

