

Bible Stories and Poems: Plot, Figurative Language, Theme and Instructional Prototype

Isaias O. Cabanit, Ruben M. Ungui, Rowena P. Dato-on, Ledesma R. Layon and Nicolas Antigua

Literature means anything that is written or printed that means those writings in prose and verse which deal with themes permanent value and universal interest and are usually characterized by creativeness and imagination, by grace of expression and great emotional effect (Cabanilla et al, 2005).

According to Landy (1994), literature is the desire for pleasure. Other authors would say that literature is a “window to culture” (Lacia and Gorong et al, 2003).

Literature has been around throughout history. Most literature then as well as today come from thought and feelings of the authors. Forms of writing such as poetry, and short stories are some of the most common ways to express the author’s ideas. The study of literature is not an attempt to “pick apart” great works, but rather the attempt to understand one’s self and one’s feelings better and to gain skill in explaining what it is that impresses or disappoints anybody. It is an attempt to answer the question on what kind of works that move another person’s attention. After all, literature is just a collection of words. The difference between dislike and appreciation is often just the matter of understanding oneself, the world around him, and art to a greater extent.

Meaning is the total effect which is the sum of all the parts is what literature meant to be. A work may have made a didactic point or not, but anybody responded to it. The meaning of a work may change as one will understand more about it or experience some of what the author has written about. Therefore, meaning is how the literary selection acts on one self; what is that one feels.

Literature is generally typified according to the author’s intention to express what he/she has imagined or write about things that he/she has directly experienced. In this case, literature is classified as fiction or non-fiction. Likewise, it is sub-categorized according to its structure, whether the author would like to use language for everyday use, such as prose, or to use figurative language, such as poetry.

The taxonomy of prose and poetry is also based from its structural genre or form. Specifically, to generally dichotomize prose from poetry: prose is paragraphic, while poetry is linear or versical.

Sub-genres of prose include the novel, short story, play or drama, legends and fables, anecdote, essays, news, biography and the like. Poetry, on the other hand, is generally classified as narrative, lyric and dramatic.

Based on observations in the classroom, there are a number of students who would find literature exciting and pleasurable; there are also a lot of them who would find it difficult and uninteresting. The worse case scenario is that, upon actual experience in literature classrooms, still there are students majoring English that would not appreciate the craftsmanship and beauty of a literary piece.

Javines (2005) said that it is generally conceded that most college students now are pitifully poor in comprehension. Their answers in class are mostly in monosyllables. If they attempt to explain a monosyllabic answers; the process becomes a desperate beating around the bush with a constant groping for the proper word.

Literature is taught in every educational institution, be it in the Basic and the Higher Education of learning. For almost two decades of teaching, it has been observed that literature becomes a burden to some students, especially when this becomes mandatory per issuance of the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) Memorandum No. 59 series of 1996. This memorandum mandates that both the Philippine and the World literatures shall be offered for college students in their first two years of baccalaureate programs.

The CHED Memo becomes mandatory, if not challenging to students, in the college curriculum. With the issuance of such memorandum, the researcher is prompted to stress the use of the Bible as a rich source of literary pieces being very comprehensive or easy to understand, thus could be considered a good material to make literature classes easy to tackle in the classroom since the selection that could be culled form part of every one’s Christian life.

Conversely, in its prime intention to clear out the misconception of most students that literature is difficult to understand, this study is undertaken.

Textual analysis is used in this study, specifically using the textual interpretation of the available printed data. The researcher wants to convey to the future researchers that studying the Bible considers a delicate approach in order to have a better understanding on what the authors want to unravel. The Bible has to be studied in a very different manner as far as the textual interpretations are concerned. This means that the author considers human limitations that would not hinder the purpose of this study.

The formalistic analysis using the textual criticism is used as the main method of this study. The analyses of different elements of some literary genres in the Bible are undertaken.

The main sources of data in this study are the representative books of the Old and New Testaments of the Bible. Only one representative book is taken to represent every division of the whole Bible. In the Old Testament, the books of Genesis, 1

Isaias O. Cabanit, Ruben M. Ungui, Rowena P. Dato-on, Ledesma R. Layon and Nicolas Antigua are with Cebu Technological University, Daanbantayan, Campus

Samuel, Job, Isaiah and Joel were taken while from the New Testament the books taken were of Luke, the Acts, Paul letter to the 1 Corinthians, first letter written by John and the book of Revelation.

More specifically, the texts for the short story are taken from the stories of *The Creation* from Genesis for Pentateuch, *The Calling of Samuel* from Samuel for History Books, *The Prodigal Son* from Luke for the Gospels, *Cornelius* from the Acts of the Apostles for the Church History. Also, the texts for the poems are taken from “*Naked I Came Forth From My Mother’s Womb*” from Job for the Books of poetry, “*Listen Now, House Of David*” from Isaiah for the Major Prophets, “*As They Come On, The Earth Quakes*” from Joel for the Minor Prophets, “*Through I Command Languages Both Human And Angelic – If I Speak Without Love*” from 1 Corinthians for Pauline Letters, “*Something Which Has Existed Since The Beginning*” from 1 John for General Epistles, and “*Holy, Holy, Holy*” from Revelation for Revelation.

1. The plot of the four (4) representative stories in the Bible followed the five (5) basic plot structures which are the **Exposition, Rising Action, Climax, Falling Action** and the **Denouement**.

2. The common figurative language used in the poetic selections from the Bible are the following, to wit; simile metaphor, apostrophe, connotation, synaesthesia and metonymy, allusion, hyperbole, personification, understatement and invocation.

3. The themes of the representative biblical literary selections are the following: belief in God, Acceptance, Understanding, obedience, love, acceptance of one’s sinfulness or acknowledging our origin as born sinners, the belief in God’s message through his prophets, the virtue of forgiveness and understanding as reflected in the Prodigal Son, the belief that Jesus was once became man and live with us once upon a time and He ruled as God.

4. Based on the findings of the study, lessons from the representative biblical literary selections are carefully designed to form part of treating the instructional prototype.

From the findings of the study, the researcher concludes that the representative biblical literary selections provide the students a better understanding toward better appreciation in the study of literature as the good bases for short stories and poetry. The selections are very easy to understand because of the use of simple language that anybody could easily grasp the theme/meaning of every selection.

The basic plot structures are accessible to locate and understand as the selections are very easy to read and understand. While the themes are very much religious in aspect since they tell about Divine Being.

This study analyzed the literary elements of the four selected short stories and six poems from the Old and New Testaments of the Bible in order to propose a instructional prototype. Specifically, the study focused on the following: plot structure analyses of the short stories (The Creation), (The Calling of Samuel), (The Prodigal Son), (Cornelius) Figurative language analyses of the poems: Naked I Came

From My Mother’s Womb, Listen Now, House of David, As They Came On, The Earth Quakes, Through I Command Languages..., Something Which Has Existed..., Holy, Holy, Holy; thematic analyses of the selections, construction of a instructional prototype.

In aesthetic consideration of the study as a major contribution, to be the first, in the addendum of the literature subjects in English, it would recommend that the following must be undertaken:

1. Better alternative to teach literature subject to the students in the college level should be conducted to revive their appreciation in the study of literature.

2. The teaching of the Bible as literature would help the students to understand better literary pieces as it would consider the Bible as the best source of literary materials using the literary genres.

3. The teaching of the Bible as Literature must be made interesting by the use of the so-called socio cultural competition in the area of: a. writing essays and poems in the understanding of the themes of the biblical literary selections, b. individual interpretative reading and role playing, c. scripture writing and dramatization.

4. There should be an evaluation that will be undertaken every end of the term to identify and determine the effectiveness of the representative biblical literary selections.

5. As a supplementary material in any literature classes, this instructional prototype is further recommended for adoption/use in literature classrooms.

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