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Connecting "Fathers and Sons" by Ivan Turgenev to Russian History

Introduction

This literature work revolves around the relationship between one generation and the next. The author uses key characters such as Nikolai Petrovich and Vassily Ivanych, portraying the roles of fathers to represent the old generation, while the young generation is depicted by Yevgeny Vassilyich and Arkady Nikolaevich, who are sons to the old generation. Moreover, the author uses the novel as a symbolic representation of major historical happenings that were taking place in Russia during this era. This paper pays high attention to the analysis of major themes that are evident in this novel, how it relates to historical context of Russia and the things that historians of Russia can learn from it. Moreover, the paper discusses how this novel relates to major historical events and processes, whether the author had a particular point of view in relation to the Russian historical events and processes, and whether his work is an accurate way of representing historical reality.

Major themes in this novel

The author's work of literature displays a number of themes to the reader. For example, the theme of love is highly displayed by numerous characters in the novel. This theme is measured in terms of successes or failures between various relationships such as mother and son, friends, sisters, father, and son, and between brothers. For example, Nikolay, Arkady's father falls in love with Feneka, while Arkady falls in love with Katya. Finally, both Nikolay and Arkady held a double ceremony, to mark the bond for their love with their spouses (Turgenev 114-117).

Consecutively, the theme of society and class is well displayed by numerous characters. Generally, the author defines the characters in his literature work based on their class in the society. Moreover, the author was aware of the adverse effects of class on the lives of people. He was against serfdom and the upper class, and employs this notion in bringing forth his characters. For example, he uses the young generation, such as Bazarov to change the society through eliminating social classes. Bazarov came from the upper class, but he was concern about the sufferings of the peasants (Turgenev 74).

Various characters also display the theme of suffering. For example, Pavel Petrovich undergoes suffering after his failed love affair (Turgenev & Max 35). Consecutively, Bazarov experience suffering after facing negation from madam Odintsova, the woman he felt loved. Moreover, the theme of pride is displayed by the young and educated generations, by their act of nihilism, which is a philosophy of pride. Additionally, the theme of nature and man is also displayed in the story. In this novel, the author reveals that no one can escape environmental determinism. For example, Bazarov's father had attached value to land and nature, for it was his source of livelihood.

Consecutively, Nikolay had problems with his farm, and this later led to the loss of money and land, and this further affected his relationships and health (Turgenev 12-13).

How this literature relates to historical contexts of Russia

The fathers and the sons in this novel involve the growing division of the two generations of the Russians. For example, during this era, the old generation attached its value and beliefs to the environment, and this was a contributing factor to the oppression and suffering of the serfs who depended on the old generation. In contrast, the young generation sought had little faith to the beliefs of their parents (old generation) and increasingly sought guidance from the Western Europe. This is the division of these two generations is well depicted by Bazarov, who is the embodiment of the widespread cultural phenomenon in the Russian youth of the 1859 (Turgenev 4).

Moreover, this work of literature is responsible to the widespread of the term nihilism, that later became widely used by most authors in Russia (Turgenev 26). In addition, this work of literature introduced the concept of dual character study, especially through the act of Bazarov, who display this role by loving Fenichka and Madame Odintsova. This character of duality later became widely used in numerous novels that were later published, such as Dostoevsky and Tolstoy. Consecutively, this work of literature became the first Russian work to gain popularity in the western world.

The ideas that historian of Russia can learn from this literature work

Russian historian can learn numerous things from this novel. For example, the concept of nihilism is widely used in this literature (Turgenev 26). The author uses characters such as Bararoz and Arkady as the revolution movements that negated the beliefs of the liberals. The Russian historians can also learn about radicals, who were the new generation that was determined to see definite actions are done in the Russian society.

How this work of literature relate to major historical events and processes in Russia

Turgenev`s work of literature relates to the historical contexts of Russian in numerous ways. For example, the story begins on May 20th 1859, which is a key date in the history of Russia (Turgenev 4). For example, between 1853 and 1856, Russia had experienced defeat in the Crimean war, and this had negatively affected it. The Russian society was characterized by a high population (serfs) that completely depended on a selected class of land-owners. Moreover, during this era, the Russian society was determined to change this feudalistic economy into a free-market economy, where the Russian society was to be freed from social classification.

An evaluation of whether the author of this work of literature held a particular point of view to these historical processes and events

The author of this literature is a typical fiction of the 19th century and thus does not have a particular point of view in relation to the historical processes and events. However, he had the potential of weaving in and out of the thoughts of any character that he uses.

An evaluation of whether this work of literature was an accurate representation of historical reality

Turgenev`s work of literature is an accurate way of representing historical reality, since she uses characters and ideas that readers can easily identify and recognize in the areas that they inhabit. For

example, the author uses characters from the middle, upper and lower classes (Turgenev 7). Moreover, the way this author uses these characters and their ideas offers modern readers a vivid and timeless depiction of the struggle between the older Russian aristocracy and the young generation`s radicalism that foreshadowed the Russian revolution.

Conclusion

It is, therefore, evident that Turgenev uses his characters to display numerous themes in his literature work, such as pride, society and class, human and nature, suffering, love among others. Moreover, his literature work also relates to the historical context of Russia, through the use of duality of characters and the use of nihilism philosophy. In addition, the Russian historians can learn numerous concepts from his novel, such as nihilism, liberals, revolutionists, and radicals. Furthermore, his literature work is an accurate way of representing historical reality.

Work cited

Turgenev Ivan, *Fathers and Sons*, translated and edited by Michael R. Kartz, Middlebury College, Norton Critical Ed. 1994.

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