

# California history



Name: Lecturer: Course: Date: California History “ What is Wollenberg doing, assigning a work of fiction as a text for a history class? Everyone knows that history is about facts, not fiction”. The notion that a work of fiction can offer any information that bears historical truth seems impossible. The whole concept of fiction is that the content is fictitious, made-up. Therefore, a work of fiction is believed to give inaccurate and distorted data on issues history. However, a work of fiction have been said to mirror society.

If this is the purpose of fiction, what better way is there for portraying the society other than including aspects of true historical events? An analysis of the book “ Famous All Over Town” attempts to understand the value of the book as a historical source and answers the question of how well a novel may work as a historical text fore classes and how the authorship affects the authenticity of a books historical significance. The book, Famous All Over Town, has been considered to be a great contribution to Chicano literature in America and a valuable historical document. The book talks about a Mexican-American family living in an East side Los Angeles neighborhood. The historical authenticity of the book lies in the fact that it has been written in the first person point of view relaying the personal experience of the author Danny Santiago. While the book is fictitious, there is no doubt that it presents cultural truths and the social difficulties that are faced by underprivileged Chicano families in America.

In this regard, this book can be used as a historical document whose content is representative of life among the Chicano community at the time it was written. The author Danny Santiago was believed to have grown up in Los Angeles. However, several moths after the publication of the book, it was

revealed that his name was actually Daniel James and that he had grown up in Kansas City.

This revelation threatened to destroy the authenticity of its contents with many people calling it dishonest. This is because many people believe that it was based on the experience of a Mexican and his struggles through life. It is important to note that Daniel James and his wife volunteered in these neighborhoods and his point of view though removed from the social context is well informed. The use of a pseudonym should not be used to destroy the relevance of the book as an authentic representation of the minority experience in America. Books in the past have been presented as historical documents despite the fact that they had been written from a different perspectives. For example books on Africa, Asia and South America. What is vital in history is that a writer has achieved some experience in the subject matter.

Novels may work as effective material for history classes. While historical texts have been believed to be boring and flat in presenting historical facts, novels provide an entertaining perspective of history. Novels also give learners a context in which these historical events took place. This then provides the reader with a deeper understanding of history. It is one thing to say that the Chicano community go through various forms of struggles and the listing them, but another when these struggles have been brought out through characters in a novel. Therefore, the role of fiction is to enhance understanding history.

Wollenberg is not wrong in suggesting that a novel becomes a history text.

What is important is that the information provided in the text in form of history, present true accounts.