

Why literature



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

Mario Vargas Llosa, born in 1936, is a Peruvian writer, politician, novelist and essayist. He is considered to be one of Latin America's most significant writers. Llosa rose to fame in the early 1960s with novels such as *The Green House*, *Time of the Hero*, and *The Conversation in the Cathedral* (Pesonen). One of Llosa's more recent pieces, *Why Literature?*, calls for the need for more literacy as well as a call to acquire more interest in literature throughout the world. He argues that literature is crucial in the development of the mind, the making of a solid foundation for knowledge in the life of the learner, and for increasing democratic ideals (Llosa).

Llosa begins his essay by arguing that literature is more than just a casual hobby that one practices, but instead is the key way that humans learn to communicate with each other. He is insinuating that if one has the desire to communicate with his fellow man, literature must be present in their everyday life. Llosa then begins to shift his concern and states that literature is the foundation for knowledge in the life of the learner (Llosa 2). He writes, "In today's world, this totalizing and living knowledge of a human being may be found only in literature" (Llosa 2). According to Llosa, this is information that all human beings can relate to due to the abundance of fictional literature. Fiction exists in order to serve a greater reason aside from the other branches of the humanities such as philosophy and history. It is there to enrich through the imagination of human life. (Llosa 3).

Llosa also believes that literature is a "link" that induces an exchange of ideas between human beings. This enrichment brings us to various states which transports us to different eras and allows us to have dreams of our own. Llosa concludes that due to a lack of literacy, crude and rudimentary

language is causing many human beings to be unable to express themselves (Llosa 5). Llosa also argues that reading literature is an irreplaceable activity for the development of citizens in a democratic society. He reminds us that a free society must constantly analyze the world, and the best way to do that is to read good literature (Llosa 8).

In Llosa's first point, it is true that literature is an essential part of literacy, but it is not true that literature is absolutely crucial in developing the mind. One can develop their mind by learning through videos or illustrations. This proves that written text is not the only way to develop one's mind. Another example that supports this way of thinking has to do with blind people. Blind people cannot enjoy reading literature so they have to learn by sounds and touch, which are indeed forms of developing one's mind without literature.

In Llosa's second point, he states that literature is the foundation for knowledge. This could not possibly be true because there are a variety of learning tools such as listening to music, watching videos and looking at pictures that can be used as the basis for knowledge. The quote, "a picture is worth a thousand words" is a quote that reveals that even though there are no words in a picture, it can be understood as if a thousand words were written. The main point in this quote is that one can use pictures as a body of knowledge as opposed to having to depend on literature as the sole basis for the foundation for knowledge. Lastly, Llosa's final point is not entirely true because a society can develop and prosper by analyzing the world in many ways other than through literature.

All in all, Mario Vargas Llosa uses his piece “ Why Literature?” to express his concern with the troubles of modern literacy and man’s evident lack of attention in literature. Llosa explains in depth how literature connects human beings and is used as a body of knowledge to aid in the development of the mind and facilitates the development of democratic ideals in our society. Llosa has many points that are valid; however, his points can be interpreted in a variety of different ways to draw different understandings of what he is trying to say.

Works Cited

Llosa, Mario Vargas. The Premature Obituary of the Book. Why Literature? 3 May 2001. 12 January 2010 .

Pesonen, Ari. Mario Vargas Llosa (1936-). 23 June 2008. 12 January 2010.