LIMITS AND DANGERS OF AN UREFINED PROCESS APPROACH


These four publications are intended to promote a skills-based approach to teaching history by providing the teacher with a series of sources that could be used in the classroom. The idea being that the pupils should discover for themselves the significance and the meaning of historical events and issues. By concentrating on the process rather than the product an innovative strategy for discovering history rather than learning it, is supposed to be developed.

The process approach as represented in a skills-based teaching strategy is important. But it cannot be a goal in itself - it must only be utilised as a means to an end. These four publications represent useful means, but they also illustrate the inherent dangers in a completely process-dominated methodology. All four publications represent the serious danger of selectiveness in history teaching. The issues they deal with are very controversial and politically sensitive matters: land and labour. To develop a truly historical understanding of these issues they should never be isolated from the holistic historical environment of which they form part. That means that both the universal ethics of land and labour and the particular historical forces that shaped individual examples should be comprehensively studied. Isolated and emotionally loaded contemporary expressions of anger, hate, demands, claims etc. do give pupils a feeling of the emotions involved but does not promote a rational approach.

S.B.

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**NOEL MOSTERT: FRONTIERS.** The Epic of South Africa’s Creation and the Tragedy of the Xhosa People. PIMLICO, LONDON, 1992. 1355 pages. £15.

This massive narrative of the slow migration of Xhosa ancestors out of Central Africa towards the Cape and the shifting frontiers of the Eastern Cape is hailed by the publishers as a "Gibbonesque sweep" of the creation and tragedy of the Xhosa people.

It is of great value as the first modern comprehensive study of the history of the Xhosa people. But as a work of historical analysis and synthesis it is rather disappointing. It reminds one too much of the James Michener approach: putting a story together for the sake of a story and not for enlightened scholarship.

For the school teacher and pupil the book has little practical use. It is simply too vast and too general to serve a didactical purpose.

C.P.G.

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Hierdie bundeling van 'n verskeidenheid opstelle oor die Afrikaanse geskiedskrywing bevat oorwegend reeds bekende geskryke. Net vyf van die sesdien opstelle het nog nie voorheen in druk versyn nie. Soos die subtitel aandui, het sommige met die ouere geskiedskrywing te doen (Van Oordt, Preller, Du Toit Spies), die oorgrote meerderheid met die huidige stand en probleematiek van die geskiedskrywing en eintlik net een (gedeelteelik) met die toekoms. Dit handel oor die Afrikaanse geskiedskrywing maar gee enkele opstelle 'n opgaaf van die jongste ontwikkelinge in die kontinentale, veral Duitse, geskiedskrywing weer.

Dit is op die terrein van die wisselwerking met die kontinentale strominge dat prof. Van Jaarsveld sy unieke bydrae as verkenner en vertolker gelever het.