

THE POTENTIALITIES OF USING HISTORICAL FICTION AND LEGENDS IN HISTORY TEACHING: A STUDY WITH PRIMARY EDUCATION PORTUGUESE STUDENTS

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Abstract:

This study is in the line of research in History Education that has revealed the importance of the pedagogic use of narratives for teaching and learning social studies, demonstrating that it improves historical understanding (Egan, 1986; Hoodless, 1998; Levstik & Pappas, 1992; Levstik, 1992). Our paper investigated how historical fiction literature and legends may contribute to the construction of the historical knowledge of primary school Portuguese students.

The narratives that were used related to the process of Christian Reconquest of territories from Muslim and formation of Portugal. They were the main sources for implementing various activities, which were complemented by the use and intersection of other sources (historical, historiographical and iconic), enabling individual and creative dialogue in the learning process of History. Two teachers training in their 4th grade classes (20 students with 9-10 years old) in one northern Portuguese urban school implemented the programme. The purpose was to find answers to the following research questions:

- *What are the potentialities of using historical fiction and legends in History teaching?*
- *What is the impact of these specific sources on students' narratives?*
- *What is the impact of historiographical and iconic sources on students' narratives?*

The students were invited to read those sources (excerpts) and to write four narratives according to the following empathetic tasks:

- 1) *Imagine that you are D. Afonso Henriques (king of Portugal). Write a letter to Egas Moniz (his tutor) telling about the latest conquests.*
- 2) *Imagine you have a foreign friend asking you to tell things about D. Afonso Henriques' times. What would you say?*
- 3) *Imagine that you would have to tell him the tale of the battle of Ourique (1139). What would you say?*
- 4) *Imagine that you are a Muslim soldier. Tell your version of the battle; or: Imagine that you are a Christian soldier. Tell your version of the battle.*

Students' narratives were analysed and categorised based on Grounded Theory methodology to reveal progression in their levels of complexity. In summary, the findings show:

- *a prevalence of fragmented narratives and mainly framed by an additive and chronological structure;*
- *some emergent narratives*
- *a few with multi-perspective point of view.*

Evident is the influence of fictional narrative and/or legends on their historical thinking when compared with the other types of sources.

Key words:

Grounded theory, Historical cognition; Historical fiction and legends, History Education; Legends – historical, Narratives, Portugal, Primary

Introduction

History tries to understand and explain the past of man in society. Humans have a genuine need to know their ancestors, how they lived in their day-to-day lives in their environmental context and with others and how they thought. This desire explains the importance of “traces” from the past that we have and their interpretation. The narration of History is signified by a discursive structure where there is a sequential organisation of past events. The narrative is an appropriate type of linguistic structure to explain historical events.

In the process of interpretation, the historian tries to understand and explain the past events, trying to place them in a context. Currently we cannot accept as valid a single narrative of history, i.e. a single interpretation. Therefore, even about specific situations, there can be numerous valid historical narratives, as long they are supported by the evidence. The historical narrative can be considered a form of design and adequate production to the description/ explanation of events, situations and historical processes. Narrative is advocated as a “narrative model” favored by Gallie (1964) and Atkinson (1978) who argue that History is a self-explanatory narrative, integrating author’s assumptions (personal, social and philosophical). This “narrative model” of History was inspired by Collingwood (1946) ideas. According to Collingwood, the historian tries to build an historical ‘frame’ which is part a narration of events, a description of situations and analysis of characters. The historian has to build a coherent framework that is endowed with disciplinary meaning and truth.

The philosopher Jörn Rüsen (2001) also discussed the complexity of the narrativist paradigm. Rusen considered that the historical narrative is synthesised in a structural unit that reflects the constituent mental operations of historical consciousness. Accordingly, this enables the formation of human identity, reinforcing the idea that historical narratives give meaning to experiences in time. So it is important that writers / historians distinguish fictional narrative from none fiction narrative. However, we need to be aware that in historiography there are also fictional elements that result in both different interpretations of the evidence and the memories, keepsakes and experiences of past times.

For Bruner (1986) narratives imply a different kind of thought from logical argumentation. Each provides a specific schema for the construction and organisation of data. Real or fictions stories follow specific criteria in their construction, including logical argumentation. In their final form they are similar being used for convincing their audiences; however “arguments convince of their truth, stories of their likeliness” (p. 11). An ever-present idea is to link the stories to realistic situations or events, especially through the characters who act in them. Bruner considers that it is important that the narrative “deals with the vicissitudes of human intentions” (1986, p. 16), highlighting the role of the “characters”, because a good story lives through them.

Bruner (1986), based on Amélie Rotry’s ideas, distinguishes between characters, figures, people, self and individuals in a narrative. According to Amélie Rorty these characters have the functions of categories, which may be more suitable for the analysis of historical narratives, especially fictional. However, it is uncertain whether the story in a narrative is more liable to errors, inaccuracies, logical and rational than more systematic methods. Bruner ends by saying that we beautify the “hard anal, converting them into chronicle and finally into historical narrative

(in Hayden White's words). And we constitute the psychological and cultural reality in which participants in that history live. And in the end, the narrative and paradigmatic end up living side by side" (p. 43).

On the teaching of History, it is important to help students to understand what is History and its usefulness. For this, History Education must create strategies that enable students to acquire knowledge of History through the most suitable didactics/pedagogy. Historical narratives are a pedagogic resource that enhance more enjoyable and easier historical learning.

This article aims to demonstrate the pedagogical potential of fictional narratives in History teaching through a study of 4th year Portuguese students [9-10 years old] learning about the Christian Reconquest and the Formation of Portugal through historical fiction and a legend. From the exploration of these narratives and other iconic and textual historiographical sources the research intended that students could construct their own historical accounts. So, we tried to identify the influence of fictional narratives in these students construction of historical knowledge.

The narratives and teaching of history

In the last decades, several national and international studies have demonstrated the relevance of the use of narratives as a resource for the teaching and learning of History, particularly works of children's historical literature fiction. This is an appropriate strategy and facilitator of historical understanding since historical fiction present a more accessible language and a plot to illuminate an historical context. From the 1980s of the use of fiction has been an aspect of research in the use of narratives generally for teaching Social Studies and particularly for History, especially in the United States (Freeman & Levstik, 1986; 1992; Levstik & Pappas, 1992) and UK (Cooper, 1995; 2006); Cox & Hughes, 1998; Egan, 1986; Hoodless, 1998, 2002; Husbands, 1996). Some of these studies have a great impact in Portugal in History Education research related to this subject, (Roldão, 1995; Fertuzinho, 2004; Freitas & Solé, 2003a, 2003b; Parente, 2004; Solé, 2004; 2009; 2013a, 2013b; Solé, Reis & Machado, 2014) and recently in Brazil (Nascimento, 2013; Zamboni & Fonseca, 2010).

Several historical education investigations have highlighted the various possibilities for using historical narratives in the school environment. Kieran Egan (1986), has played a leading role in explaining the role of narrative in the classroom, "the story is not just some casual entertainment; it reflects a basic and powerful form in which we make sense of the world and experience" (p. 15). Through narrative students more clearly understand historical events and/or concepts. They use the field of imagination to deepen understanding about societies and people from other places and times as well as the societies in where the child livess. Contact with historical stories (narratives) often allows students to broaden their experiences and their horizons. The narrative structure both encourages and enables readers to identify aspects of the story, such as events, characters and phenomena.

On the same lines, Husbands (1996) points that in recent historiography there are claims that the story through the reconstruction of a "narrated" past, i.e. organised, around the experiences and representations of common or unknown historical actors enables "(...) the mediation of the past through the experiences recounted by those ..." (p.47). Husbands notes that the relationship between history and narration has been difficult, as the very definition of narration sits on the border between fact and fiction, between truth and falsehood, between the emotional and causal logic. Perhaps for this reason it affirms that historians and teachers still remain somewhat sceptical about the place of narrative in learning history. Accordingly, the

perspective of narration in recent historiography becomes restructured. The narrative forms are used for more comprehensive and complex ideas in order to stimulate “ways of thinking” about the past and the way it was experienced, “through the narrative, it becomes possible to address more abstract ideas about the assumptions and beliefs of past societies, on how they worked or not, and how people represent their relationships with others” (Husbands, 1996, p. 48).

Husbands warns the teacher to take care in the use of storytelling and narrative in the classroom, for example care in the selection of narratives that build. The teacher must be careful to avoid wild reactions or of emotional support for a certain account. Narration highlights powers that the storytellers and their own narratives have: to capture the imagination; of ‘giving life’ to describe characters; of creating moments of excitement and great interest. Storytellers make us laugh and cry, make us want to follow the story, conjure mental images that shape the way we think about the past: they stimulate our curiosity. The fictional elements of the narrations raise questions, require us to seek more, that we broaden our conceptions of the interpretations that the evidence allows. Used this way, the narrations raise curiosity, draw the texture of the tale, provoke and frustrate encouraging further investigation (Husbands, 1996, p. 49). The children are more excited by History content when they are presented in a narrative with villains, bad guys, battles, loves, etc. The shape of the narrative causes them to establish a more personal connection to the History content (Cooper, 1995).

Levstik and Pappas (1987) tried to analyse the ability of students to demonstrate historical understanding from the retelling of a fictional story in their study carried out with elementary school children. They identified two distinct patterns: one is associated with differences of degree, children explain and elaborate pronouncedly better the historical content; on the other there is a difference in kind, sometimes younger children (second grade) include details that older (sixth grade) had not included, both people involved and more historical information. The authors draw attention to results of studies that showed the great frequency with which the children during the analysis of narratives said that their interest in History, for a given topic was to know the truth, what really happened, the point of historical research at their level. With this study, they concluded that second grade children understand and are involved in history from the use of these narratives, especially when exploring historical fiction. They were “impressed with the children’s enthusiasm, sincere interest, and depth of historical understanding as we shared historical fiction, with them” (p. 14). They also concluded, as Levstik’s (1986) study demonstrates, that the relevance of the “context in which history is presented, examined, and discussed may be a crucial factor that will decide whether elementary children come to understand and engage in history” (p. 14).

According to Barton (1996) children better understand history content in the form of narrative. He found that students are more likely to remember the events narrated in a story than the ones shown on factual documents, as the language is more accessible, not having the rigor of writing that history requires. This same idea, is conveyed by Freeman and Levstik (1988), who argue that it is very important when working with fictional narratives in the classroom to allow time for further investigation by consulting other sources, promoting new analysis, group discussions comparing the story and what they learned from investigating from other sources. They defend and reinforce the use of fiction in elementary school as an appropriate strategy, because it enables children to imagine and recreate the past as it was, to get involved and to vibrate with the characters, their conflicts and feelings. For these authors, historical fiction should also be analysed as a recreation of the past from the standpoint of historical accuracy, questioning the accuracy of the data on which the fiction is based. This investigative dimension is crucial because, as Zamboni and Fonseca (2010) said “the literary work has not committed to

explain the real, not to prove events. To interpret them, rebuild them the author appeals to the imagination, creativity and fiction” (p. 340).

According to the approach defended by the authors, literature is not intended to report the reality, but it can integrate into the fictional plot structure and narrative of real facts and can therefore serve as a source, enabling a different look from the past. Nascimento (2013) corroborates this idea of literature as a source for knowledge of the past, potentially “can serve the historian as the story did not happen, but it could have been, that is, the literature allows a different way of looking at the past” (p. 42), and perceive the reality where we live result of the construction of the man. In this same line of, Solé (2013a) states that the literature, with special emphasis on the historical fictional “explains historical contents, but where the imaginary constructed by the author of fiction, lets fill in the blanks spaces that history itself is unable to do” (p. 366). In historical fiction narratives, the authors, based on historical facts, explain the reality using an imaginary and symbolic universe, transporting the student to the fictional environment, wrapped in a plot, and managing to capture the full attention of students. They, in turn, feel involved and enthusiastic about historical fiction being, more motivated in wanting to discover additional aspects to those described in the fictional narrative. When in reading fictional stories, the students contact with longer descriptions about the past enable them to recognise that that history is open to interpretation.

The fictional narrative booster incorporates ‘a game’ with meanings exercising the imagination that will trigger in the child / reader a reflexive attitude and critique of reality. Hoodless (1998) recognizes that with the use of fictional narratives, students tend to develop a detailed knowledge about a particular period in history.

Stories which make use of time as a device are certainly an excellent stimulus and a good resource for extending children’s understanding their potential needs to be fully exploited in the classroom, encouraging children to think carefully about what is happening in the story (Hoodless, 1998, p. 110).

Legends, integrated into the oral tradition literature, are also fictional narratives, whose main function is to preserve the past narratives from generation to generation, providing to the reader the preservation of local and regional memories. This literary genre, associated with ancestral past, draws upon and values the embeded understanding and memory, as it was how society preserved its beliefs, values and culture. The opportunity for children to experience this literary genre provides them with a journey through the imagination and the impossible, an important key in the construction of memory from both a cultural and social standpoint. There are several authors who defend the use of legends also in the teaching of history, referring that allows students a better historical understanding (Cooper, 2006; Mattoso, 2002; Solé, 2013b). Cooper (2006) points out that “myths and legends help children to decode the mysterious and sometimes threatening life they are growing into” (p.124), preserve, also memory and tradition of our ancestors, and can be associated with heroic figure of a saint, martyr or hero (Solé, 2013b). According Mattoso (2002) legends should take advantage of the fascination that the children feels when read this type of narratives. It should, however, “take care to spend the fictional discourse set in a mythical time, that is an imaginary time and no history, for reporting in the historical and datable time, reconstructed from documents and registered in memory, whether contemporary, is of ancestors (Mattoso, 2002, p. 71).

Several possibilities are pointed out by many researchers, some cited above, in relation to the use of narrative in the teaching of History. We can systematize some tasks, from them that we can realized as:

- (a) ordering historical events; searching for the information that contains historical insight into life at the time;
- (b) investigating facts and focused content in the text and reading other sources;
- (c) investigating characteristics of certain characters in the period and relating this to the way they act in history;
- (d) making distinction between fact and fiction; looking for evidence in other non-fiction texts;
- (e) using these stories as models for writing, recounting certain episodes but, more important is recounting a different point of view, for example of one of the characters, or your own point of view.

The literature review, showing the relation of Literature and History, is a support for the teaching of history from the early years. The use of narratives in classrooms contribute to the construction of a critical and multi-perspective view of History and historical knowledge. Narrative promotes different points of view and approaches to the past, according to the perspective of the narrator / author of the book.

Below we present a study of two teacher-researchers on the use of historical fiction narrative (children's literature of historical fiction and legends) related to the *Christian Reconquest* and the *Formation of Portugal*. The research occurred in the fourth grade (9-10 years old) of a primary school in Portugal.

The Study

Methodology

This study is based on research-action-research approach integrated into an interpretative perspective applied to the study of teaching and learning processes in the classroom context (Elliot, 1993). Through this approach, the aim was to implement educational activities based on the use and exploration of fictional historical narratives for learning and historical understanding. Such action-research potentially generates practical working knowledge from the research process. Based on principles of constructivist learning perspective (Fosnot, 1999), the teacher is also a researcher. We applied in the classroom the model of class-workshop (*aula-oficina*) defended by Barca (2004) because this model helps students to understand the historical topic, since the teacher pays attention initially to the ideas /prior knowledge of the students and promote challenging tasks, using diverse strategies, aimed at building up, i.e. the construction, of knowledge.

Sample

The study was carried out in an urban school of northern Portugal, a group of 4th grade, with 20 students, 10 male and 10 female, aged between 9-10 years.

Research questions

In this study we aimed to expose the primary students (4th grade) to the use of fictional narratives and legends in the teaching of History so as to construct their own historical knowledge. We also examined the relevance and impact of this type of strategy for the development of historical knowledge and historical thinking in students. The research also aimed to highlight / emphasise the didactic / educational potential of fictional narratives for the acquisition of historical knowledge and the development of historical understanding. The following research questions focused the research:

- *What are the potentialities of using historical fiction and legends in History teaching?*
- *What is the impact of these specific sources on students' narratives?*
- *What is the relative impact of historiography and iconic sources on students' narratives?*
- *What does it contribute to the understanding of multiperspectivity in the process of Christian Reconquest in the formation of Portugal?*

Research – Description of Activities, Procedures and Data Analysis

Introduction – the fictional narratives

This paper incorporates two studies, study A (Reis, 2013) and study B (Machado, 2014), of two teacher researchers on a masters programme. Both studies evaluated the role of stories as means of teaching the content of an Environmental Studies syllabus which incorporates Portuguese History. The first study (study A) used the fictional narrative *Era uma vez um Rei conquistador* [*Was Once A Conquering King*] of José Jorge Letria (2009) and the second study (study B), the *A lenda do milagre de Ourique* [*Legend Of Ourique Miracle*] by Gentil Marques (1997).

The first fictional narrative of José Jorge Letria *Was Once A Conquering King* tells the story of D. Afonso Henriques, the first King of Portugal, from his birth until his death (1112–1185 AD). The book tells of the challenges that he had to overcome to achieve his dreams, in particular the struggle he had with his mother Teresa; describes his childhood under the guidance of the nobleman Egas Moniz, his educator, some of the achievements and important battles in the creation of Portugal. The narrative is of great value when it comes to historical fiction as it reveals details of the sentiments, feelings and thoughts of D. Afonso Henriques, with relevant historiographical connections to this formative period of Portugal's history.

The second fictional narrative, *Legend Of Ourique Miracle*, Gentil Marques' version (1997), focuses on the Battle of Ourique, 1139, which was fought between Christians and Moors in the Alentejo (South of Portugal), during the Christian reconquest process. D. Afonso Henriques had planned to conquer land in the south of Portugal and also seize cattle, slaves and other booty. Despite being out numbered by Muslim forces, according to legend, the Portuguese were able in the battle, with God's help, to capture five Moorish kings and their troops. After this resounding victory D. Afonso Henriques proclaimed himself King of Portugal (or was acclaimed by his troops still on the battlefield). Accordingly from 1140 he used the denomination Portugallensis Rex (King of Portugalian or King of the Portuguese).

Procedures – student writing activities

Students for studies A and B studied the fictional narratives and a dossier containing a range of iconic, historical and iconic sources upon which each was based before writing their own compositions, i.e. fictional narratives.

Table 1. Activities implemented in study A and study B – student writing tasks: fictional narratives	
Study A	Study B
On <i>Was Once A Conquering King</i>	On the <i>Legend Of Ourique Miracle</i>
1) Imagine that you are D. Afonso Henriques (king of Portugal). Write a letter to Egas Moniz (his tutor) telling about the latest conquests; 2) Imagine you have a foreign friend asking you to tell things about D. Afonso Henriques' times. What would you say?	1) Imagine that you are a Muslim soldier. Tell your version of the battle; or Imagine that you are a Christian soldier. Tell your version of the battle or Imagine that you are a Christian soldier. Tell your version of the battle. 2) Imagine that you would have to tell him the tale of the battle of Ourique (1139). What would you say?

Analysis and discussion of the data

Data Analysis: Study A

We used inductive content analysis, a model of categorising narratives, to evaluate the student's compositions. Inductive content analysis is inspired by a study presented by Samarão (2007) and Parente (2004). The narrative constructs were grouped according to the content that had a progressive logical pattern that enabled classification according to their degree of sophistication.

The categories we identified were:

1. *Fragmented Reporting*, the construction of narratives that present a story without a narrative plot, with few facts or little relevance and ordained.
2. The *Chronological report*, the information shows the events in the form of a list without an interconnection between them as well as some chronological inconsistencies.
3. The *Emerging Report*, already has a visible narrative structure with an internal logic and some historical, simple but explicit argument, describing some actions and leaving by explaining the causes of events.
4. Finally, the *Complete Narrative* presents internal logic through a coherent organizational sequence denoting historical understanding and argument based on sources provided.

Overall Findings: Study A

In terms of the structure of the two student compositions, the students collected information from the fictional narrative and the sources in the dossier. Through their working sessions they discussed and cross-reference information from the fictional narratives and their sources. Nevertheless, their compositions revealed that they were incapable of producing their own texts. Instead, they copied and pasted information from the sources.

In their narratives students revealed concern about timeframes and accurate detail, particularly in their second narrative. For example, a student asked in what years were born the Count D. Henrique and D. Teresa (father and mother of D. Afonso Henriques – 1st king of Portugal, explaining that it was important to know this to complete the story he was writing. In all compositions, the students selected in all compositions key elements present in the fictional narratives for example, the battles of S. Mamede and Ourique and Afonso Henriques childhood with Egas Moniz rather than other equally important events from their dossier of sources.

Although most students compositions were either *Fragmented Reports* in task 1- nine students and in task 2- six students or *Chronological Reports* in task 1- five students and in task 2- seven students, some presented valid items of historical knowledge but could not provide a coherent, connected narrative. These students presented historical events, integrating aspects of fictional narrative with what happened in the past. But because they could not present that knowledge in an articulated and contextualised manner, overall in their accounts they showed some confusion, loose and fragmented ideas.

Four students wrote *Emergent Reports* for tasks 1 and 2. Two or three students for both tasks wrote *Complete Narratives*, indicating that some of this age range can think at a sophisticated level when skilled in working upon historical evidence.

Analysis of a student narrative

The student narratives took the form of an epistolary letter, i.e. its genre. There was great variety in the chronological elements of the narrative, time, for example, where students 'invented' a date, without regard to specific criteria unless it coincided with the date of a battle. The analysis revealed that the students were not only restricted to what was requested, but added other elements to enrich their developing narratives such as:

- the secondary protagonists involved, with mention of the Moors;
- in their second compositions, the students referred to episodes such as the independence of the kingdom or the passage of the government to D. Afonso Henriques.

We concluded that the students, despite presenting simple and somewhat fragmented accounts, are able to present both historical knowledge and understanding and reveal their ideas when building a narrative based the workshops, either in the information in the dossier's source or in the fictional narrative.

Next, we analysed in greater detail and depth one narrative construction answering the second question that asked to the students:

2) *Imagine you have a friend of another nationality and he asks you to tell the history of Portugal in the time of D. Afonso Henriques. What would you say?*

The analysis below reveals the elements in a third category *Emerging Reporting* composition:

Table 1. Analysis of the structure of a narrative of a student

Introduction	D. Afonso Henriques was the first king of Portugal . He was born in 1109 and died in 1185 . D. Afonso Henriques won the battle of S. Mamede against his mother and the Galician armies of Fernao Peres de Trava next to castle Guimaraes , he also won the Ourique against the five Moorish kings. D. Afonso Henriques became a Knight when he was 14 years old, and he won his first battle when he was 19 years old	Historical-event reveals historical knowledge. Precise notion of time and space-use of temporal and spatial markers . Uses historical information from the fictional narrative.
Development	His childhood was spent with Egas Moniz . The conde D. Henrique died when Afonso Henriques was only 3 years old. Egas Moniz was like a second father to him , since his mother D. Teresa went to Galicia. Egas Moniz gave him advice as to the battles in the future in which he would conquer and offered him a wooden sword while still a child . Formerly the kingdom was called Condado Portucalense. D. Afonso Henriques signed the contract of Peace with D. Afonso VII . The Pope took 36 years to acknowledge D. Afonso Henriques King of Portugal.	Uses information from the fictional narrative emotive expressions. Establishing causal relationships . Lists relevant historical events. Integrate information from classroom discussion expressed by a student.
Conclusion	D. Afonso Henriques lived for 76 years and contributed much to the history of Portugal .	Presents a personal thought and historical arguments.

This narrative is rich in many aspects. The student selects information from various sources, first, making some links with the fictional narrative (Egas Moniz was like a second father to him [...] and offered him a wooden sword as a child.). Second, the author collected information from a statement by a student in one of the project's sessions ("D. Afonso Henriques married Mafalda or Matilde, because at that time Mafalda and Matilde was the same."). Finally, the remaining factual information in the construction of the narratives referred to some sources from the dossier, revealing the descriptive use use of evidence. In the construction of his narrative, the student was able to organise information and finally present the main points in response to the question, although copying information coming from various sources.

Data Analysis: Study B

In the second research study (study B), the researcher teacher requested the construction of two narratives (task 1 and task 2) taking into account the *Legend of the Ourique Miracle* and, based on the legend itself, a dossier of various historical, iconic and historiographical sources

for the students to consult/study during the sessions. The first task to write a narrative asked the students to create an imaginary story about the Battle of Ourique, choosing a participant army and describing its role in the battle. They had to choose one of the following questions:

- *Imagine that you are a Moorish soldier, tell your version of the battle? Or*
- *Imagine that you are a Christian soldier of the army D. Afonso Henriques, tell your version of the battle?*

For the first narrative (task 1), they wrote from the perspective either a Moorish or a Christian soldier involved in the battle:

- *Imagine that you are a Muslim soldier. Tell your version of the battle; or: Imagine that you are a Christian soldier. Tell your version of the battle. Imagine that you are a Christian soldier of the army D. Afonso Henriques, how you tell your version of the battle?*

Their second empathic task was related to the Legend of the Ourique miracle:

- *Imagine you have to recount the Legend of the Ourique Miracle to a foreign boy of a different nationality, what would you say?*
- In both narratives, we tried to analyse the fictional impact on the construction of historical knowledge, looking for evidence on which the students based the construction of their narratives.

As with Study A, the two narratives were subjected to an inductive content analysis to identify, quantify and group them at different levels of narrative sophistication:

1. *Fragmented;*
2. *Copy-paste;*
3. *Descriptive;*
4. *Complete-Explanatory.*

The analytical criteria we used to classify the narratives were:

1. *Fragmented* that are
 - without logical structure, consisting of loose and / or incomplete sentences;
 - little historical accuracy – the fictional dominates the historical;
 - they include material disconnected from the historical subject matter.
2. *Copy-paste*
 - Incoherent and incomplete narratives ;
 - little coherent structure with unrelated phrases;
 - some loose/incomplete sections;
 - limited historical detail;
 - copying from the provided historical documents, information or legend
3. *Descriptive* texts without links between the events with
 - a visible logical structure;
 - some incomplete expressions
 - little organized information;

4. *Complete-Explanatory* with

- an internal logic structure;
- historical information well organised;
- a coherent sequence;
- good historical understanding of the event, with visible distinction between the real and the fictional.

Overall Findings: Study B

Analysis revealed the extent and nature of sophisticated thinking in the students' two narratives.

In the first task – writing an account from either a Moorish or Christian perspective – *Descriptive* narratives dominate (10 students) while for task 2 telling the *Legend of the Miracle of Ourique*, most compositions fell into the category of *Complete-Explanatory* narratives (7 students).

There was an increase in the number of students who achieved more sophisticated levels of historical thought in the second task. This suggested a more complex construction and elaboration of ideas, which may be explained by the ease of integrating this narrative with the evidence from different sources (legends, historiographical texts, iconic sources), proceeding with the crossing fertilisation of information in the construction of accounts, clearly distinguishing the historical from the fictional.

Nine students chose to tell the battle as Moorish soldier, while seven chose the Christian soldier role. Three compositions did not take any perspective either implicitly or explicitly. Analysis took into account the presence of fictional elements of legend and imagination of students in portraying the battle.

Narratives were in three categories; *Fragmented*, *Descriptive* and *Complete-Explanatory* – the category *Copy-Paste* did not apply.

Analysis of student narratives

The majority of narratives were *Descriptive* (10 students), exemplified in the following excerpt from the narrative constructed by a student from the Moorish soldier's perspective:

I am Zechariah and fought in the Battle of Ourique. In this battle I have slain twenty-two warriors. They gave a good fight, but I was able to better them. I survived with immense wounds. (...) My kings, when they saw that we were losing, fled. I was, along with the armies of the kings, behind them. Unfortunately for me and for the kings, we have lost the battle but I managed to escape. (Student H)

In this narrative is visible a coherent organizational sequence of ideas and apparently good historical understanding as:

- the student chooses a Muslim name for identity.
- recounts the horror of war, mentioning injuries and deaths, using euphemisms: 'They gave a good fight, but I was able to better them'.
- reports historical facts about losing the battle by Muslims: 'My kings, when they saw that we were losing, fled.'

The author demonstrates understanding and interpretation of the Ourique legend and the sources explored in the sessions, making an allusion to the fictional account.

The only two *Complete-Explanatory* narratives have a visible internal structure with a coherent structure. They distinguish the real from the fictional, as can be seen in the following example of a version from the perspective of a Christian soldier:

My name is Eduardo. I am a Moorish soldier and lost the battle of Ourique against the Christian soldiers of King Afonso Henriques. I lost because one of our kings, Ishmael, ran away and his soldiers left behind also fled. "We" were alone and had no courage to face them because they had faith in God and we do not. D. Afonso Henriques won this battle of Ourique and the S. Mamede.

"We" thought about getting even when they were asleep, we would kill them with rifle butts. And so was the battle of Ourique for us in history. I killed 24 Christian soldiers but I was sad that we lost with so much effort. I was wounded in the arm; on the leg; in the stomach and head. And so, I will take refuge in an abandoned house somewhere yonder and I will never join the Moorish armies. And so ends the life of a Moorish soldier. (Student E)

The second narrative produced by the students answered the following question: *Imagine you have to recount the Legend of the Ourique Miracle to a boy of a different nationality, what would you say?*

For this exercise, the students had to mobilise the knowledge acquired during the sessions, selecting what was most meaningful and relevant from the legend and perhaps adding other elements to their narrative.

Considering the categorisation model of the narratives presented above, in this activity there were more narratives in the *Complete-explanatory* category (7 students) emphasising that the students interpreted the sources provided (legend and dossier), producing valid inferences, thus making a visible distinction between the fictional and historical, as we can see in the following narrative:

In the summer of 1139 D. Afonso Henriques conquered Ourique from the Moors but we do not know for certain where the battle was. When D. Afonso Henriques was asleep, John Fernandes de Sousa agreed to tell him that he had a visit to lift their hopes. The visitor was an old man who told him that alone he had to leave the camp to visit the adjacent hermitage. D. Afonso Henriques came out of his tent and saw Jesus and the angels who told him that he would win the battle. When he returned to the camp told his soldiers to prepare for battle. D. Afonso Henriques had already won the battle of S. Mamede and was waiting to win this one. That day D. Afonso Henriques was victorious. He saw his army defeat the enemy kings who fled with their armies. D. Afonso Henriques was proclaimed King by his soldiers for the 1st time. D. Afonso Henriques was able to add five coronets to the flag of Portugal that represent the five defeated Moorish kings. (Student E)

In this narrative, the student managed to combine the essential parts of the legend, referring to the various doubts about the exact location of Ourique and add fictional elements associated with Ourique miracle myth that tells us that D. Afonso Henriques was helped by God (see Jesus, angels ...). In this narrative, the student interprets the various sources, produced inferences, revealed an appropriate use of historical evidence, explains decisions taken during the battle and subsequently, for example, when he said: *D. Afonso Henriques was able to add*

five coronets to the flag of Portugal that represent the five defeated Moorish kings. N.b. in reality the coronets were integrated in the flag of Portugal by D. Sancho I.

Conclusion

The article presents a set of reflections that take into account the main objective of the study to evaluate the knowledge and understanding that Portuguese primary school students developed from their interpretation of fiction literature and historical legends about the process of Christian Reconquest in the formation of Portugal.

In the first case study (Study A) the teacher-research used the literary narrative *Was Once a Conquering King* of José Jorge Letria. The study illuminated the pedagogical potential of using this source type and how this strategy enables the construction of historical knowledge. Through fictional narrative, students attempted to compare the fictional with the factual, reflecting this in their narratives. Here students depart from fictional narratives and confront the historical information present in historical documentary sources. They identify what really happened, i.e. they distinguish the factual from the fictional.

Both student narratives denoted a concern to use the sources provided, although analysis of their narrative indicate that the majority cannot produce their own texts, i.e. they copy and paste the information from their sources in their compositions. In addition, in their work students pay close attention to their timeframes. Most students with an interest in Portugal's past wish to learn details of the various events in its history. However, when asked to construct their own accounts the students combine limited information with simple and imaginative ideas, apparently unable to draw upon historical knowledge they may have acquired from their sources. All of the student narratives include an imaginative dimension. However, they reveal some confusion, distortions and inaccuracies with regard to historical detail. Analysis of the construction of the student narratives reveals that they tend to remember best the key elements that are present in fictional narrative. In this case, the battles of S. Mamede and Ourique and Afonso Henriques childhood with Egas Moniz, rather than other equally important events.

We can conclude that despite the students' ideas being vague and sometimes incomplete, they are able to build and organize their historical knowledge in a shaped narrative from the fictional narrative and the dossier of sources provided.

Analysis of the second case study (study B), based on the *Legend of the Miracle of Ourique*, showed that most narratives in both the Moorish and Christian versions were in segments with little or no connecting argument. In the second narrative the student mostly copied from the sources, i.e. scissors and paste. However analysis showed that students could recognize and distinguish the real from the fictional. It was clear that the students were able to build their historical knowledge through exploration of the legend. Note that a considerable number of students were able to produce more complex second narratives at a more sophisticated level, and in the second narrative there was seven *Complete-Explanatory* compositions. However, the questions may have influenced the form their narratives took. We noted that type of task determines the complexity of the narrative construction. Empathetic tasks promote the inclusion of fictional elements (action, description, narration) as well as the retellings of historical events; historical explanation with the inclusion of historical facts drawn from textual and iconic sources. This enabled a significant number of students to construct *Complete-Explanatory* narratives.

In conclusion, the teacher plays a key role because he or she must create favorable environments for the learner to analytically interpret the emotional dimension of sources. Thus,

the teacher selection, use and exploration of fictional narratives when combined with historic, iconic or historiographical sources helps in the construction and operation of historical thinking, either orally or in writing.

So, the research study suggested that the use of fictional works in History teaching adds value to learning as it provides students with an enriched teaching-learning process. Contemporary teaching of History has a range of different approaches. So, the teacher can draw on new pedagogy and resources, adapting to their lesson plans accordingly to enable pupils to improve both knowledge and understanding, i.e. how to think historically. However, narrative composition in the form this paper suggest my not be appropriate to the teaching of all historical content as Egan (1986) suggests.

The use of stories / narratives is often perceived as being a superficial pedagogic approach and as such as been little explored as a learning process. Through this study we indicate that narrative composition has enormous potential for the teaching of history. But it is important in the use of complementary sources to identify what is a 'real' and what is a 'fictional' narrative. To VanSledright and Brophy (1992), children tend to build narratives based on what they liked in the fictional narrative, including or not historical facts. Imagination is present in the narratives that construct, involving fanciful texts, sometimes in an attempt to assess changes in their knowledge and historical thinking. Student narratives based on both historical information and information extracted from historical sources help develop the historical imagination. As such, it is a means of building historical understanding as shown in *Complete-Explanatory* compositions.

We can conclude that historical fiction literature interrelated several areas: history, fiction and literature Solé (2013a). It has enormous potential for the teaching of History, Social Studies and the Mother Language, drawing on stories, legends and related literature. However, we do not advocate the curriculum in the early years should be organised through stories as suggested by Egan (1986) and Bage (2003), although we recognize the enormous potential that this strategy has for developing the historical understanding of children. Historical fiction, with its strong historiographical component integrates and enhances students' understanding of the past, restores the landscape of history; informs students about the interpretive nature of history; shows how authors and artists [illustrators] deal with historical issues. Presenting multiple perspectives through the narrator's point of view or the characters, introduces children to the notion of multi perspective historical knowledge. It shows that history is not flat or uni-dimensional that in a single narrative integrates various interpretations. It also promotes historical significance and historical empathy as it highlights what the author of historical fictions considers to be most significant and important. This can be contrasted with the historiography of the historical topic as fiction can more easily represent other times, actions and thorough of protagonists for students to assimilate and understand.

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