

READING BETWEEN AND BEYOND THE LINES

by:

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Literature is a mirror that reflects the roots, even the core, of our country. The most loved books of people are like a lens through which to understand them deeply. Abundo (2015) stated that during the late 19th and early 20th centuries, Philippine literature flourished. It was primarily written in Spanish, English, and Tagalog. Poetry was either religious or secular during Spanish rule. The classic "Pasyon," which recounts the passion, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, is among the works of religious poetry. Other catechism materials include novenas to the saints.

Many Filipino authors have had distinguished writing careers. In the majority of their works, they examine the Filipino cultural identity in relation to social and political issues. The richness of the nation's very own folk traditions is being revived and made known to new generations as an important form of art by contemporary Filipino writers, who have continued to support the intellectual influence and Philippine literature, or Panitikang Pilipino, greatly influenced by Rizal.

Despite the many published literary works of Filipinos, less attention was given to Filipino writers before though their works are considered a major part of Philippine Literature. But as the tides continuously change, little by little, Filipinos start appreciating the works that modern Filipino writers have to offer. Padayhag (2015) mentioned that Marcelo Santos III published the book in 2012, starting with 2,000 copies; a publishing company offered to distribute copies nationwide, and the rest, as they say, is history. This boom resulted in two other bestselling books to his credit: "Mahal Mo Sya, Mahal Ka Ba?" and "Para sa Brokenhearted." Another renowned author who swept us away with his

vibrant narrative is Eros Atalia. His “Ligo na u, Lapit na Me” was so well-loved by the Filipino people that it was eventually made into a film.

In addition to this, Meadows (2012) mentioned in one of his articles entitled, “Classic Literature: Boring or Relevant,” people today crave novelty which birthed the mindset that "old" equals "boring." Unexpectedly, they are more interested in focusing on the new and the trending. Because of the so-called "millennials" that teachers are expected to teach nowadays, students frequently look for engaging, contemporary materials that they can identify with. People today are looking for something relatable; something that can be observed in daily life and can be seen happening around them.

With the Filipinos' acceptance of modern writers and their works, this does not guarantee the readers' full understanding of the text – be it in short stories or poems. Regardless of the soaring rate from 92.6% to 97.1% in 2019 done by the Functional Literacy, Education, and Mass Media Survey (FLEMMS) among Filipinos aged 10-64 years old who are considered literate on a functional level.

Contrary to the statistics, comprehension is also a problem that cannot seem to be resolved in schools. To cope with this predicament, literary pieces that will create significance in the life and experiences of the learners are chosen. Further, literature circles could also be effective to engage learners in understanding. Students were able to articulate their own ideas and build upon the thoughts of others using accountable talks and as time progressed, they were able to respond to the reading and they enjoyed doing so as stated by Nigro (2011).

Undeniably, Philippine literature is an endless pit; the wonders and depth of the words used, as well as their association with people, nature, and everything around, might have a connection with the totality or partiality of the texts.

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