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War in Turkish literature

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Abstract

Wars determine the turning points in the history of nations and find a place in literature as the main sources. War literature conveys the information to generations. It is a powerful tool for social and personal change and tightly related to the peace. This article critically discusses war literature and its role in Turkish Literature education. The war literature texts in Turkish Literature course books from Grade 9 to 12 were analysed in terms of subject, time, genre, peace, and aim of text questions. Document analysis was used in this study.

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1. Introduction

War has been a determining factor in the life of nations: “Because of the war, cultures have been altered and blended, language and moral values have changed, and social and economic structures have been transformed.” (Lehman, Braddock, Beckham, Harrison, Meyers, Sheppard, Turner, 1972: 1).

Battles which determine the turning points in the histories of nations have military, political and economic significance as they have a whole different place and significance in literatures of nations. Tragedies that take place at and behind the front are transferred to the future generations as exemplary lessons by means of literature (Duman, Güreşir, 2009: 29).

Turkish history, which is rich in wars, has also influenced Turkish literature. Echoes of wars which the Turks fought have been brought into certain works of Turkish literature.

Especially the wars after the year 1839 have had a profound effect on Turkish Literature. “The Crimean War (1853-1856), “Russo-Turkish War 1876-1877” also known as “the '93 War”, “Greco-Turkish War 1897”, “Italo-Turkish War 1911” or the “Tripolitanian war”, “Balkan War” which took place between 1912-1913, the First World War in 1914-1918, the “Independence War” in 1919-1922, the “Korean War” which Turkey entered in 1950 and finally the “Cyprian War” which took place on 1974 (Çakır, 2009: 1836).

The texts, which were written about these wars, are brought into Turkish Literature course books too. The role for Turkish literature lessons is not to teach students what to think about history but rather to give them information and aesthetic feeling so they can intelligently think about the aim and reasons of the war, genre and style of the war texts and peace.

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Turkish Literature curriculum was designed under constructivist approach in 2005. Course books prepared according to the Turkish Literature new curriculum have adopted a thematic approach at the 9th grade and the chronological approach at 10th, 11th and 12th grades. In line with this approach, “At ninth grade; within the context of examples selected from the late Turkish literature in general, it was emphasized that texts of different styles and genres would be examined, analyzed and interpreted in terms of structure, themes, language-expression and meaning. At tenth, eleventh and twelfth grades, the aim was to review the texts from different periods of Turkish literature using the method, understanding and skills acquired at ninth grade.” (Turkish Literature Curriculum).

In this study, the theme of war was examined in texts taken from Turkish Literature 9th, 10th, 11th and 12th grade course books prepared in line with the aforementioned objectives and published in 2005 by the Ministry of National Education. It was determined that, in terms of war-themed content, the Turkish Literature course books contained 9 texts at 9th grade, 9 texts at 10th grade, 4 texts at 11th grade and 6 texts at 12th grade.

2. Purpose

The purpose of this study is to identify the war literature and its role in the teaching of Turkish literature. The number of war-themed texts in Turkish literature course books, their themes, periods, genres, purposes, narrations and peace-related content are tried to be determined.

3. Method

Document analysis was used for the research. War-themed texts included in Turkish Literature course books studied at 9th, 10th, 11th and 12th grade under the 2005 curriculum as permitted by the Ministry of National Education have been examined in terms of their numbers, subjects, time periods, genres, purposes, narrations and whether they contain peace-related content. 28 war-themed texts selected from the Turkish Literature course book (9th grade-9 texts, 10th Grade-9 texts, 11th Grade-4 texts, 12th grade-6 texts) have been examined in this context.

4. Findings and Remarks

War-themed texts at 9th grade are 3 in Unit I (Fine Arts and Literature), 2 in Unit II (Texts That Express Joy and Excitement), 3 in Unit III (Event-centric Literary Texts), 1 in Unit IV (Didactic Texts).

Themes of 9th grade texts with headings such as the Battle of Manzikert, Veneration of Manzikert, Oğuzata, Independence March (Turkish National Anthem), Davet (Invitation), Vatan Yahut Silistre, Forsa, Oghuz Khan Epic (Oğuz Kağan Destanı), Bayrağımız (Our Flag) are as follows: The Battle of Manzikert (2 texts), the Battle of the Oghuzs, Independence War, freedom after the war, castle defence, being taken captive, raids, and the scene of independence after the Battle of İnönü.

The periods of war taken as subject in the texts are the year 1071 (2 texts), the Oghuz era, 1920, 1961, general war period, 1853-1856, the Ottoman Era and the Battle of İnönü.

War-themed texts are from genres of historical text (1 text), poetry (4 texts), theatre play (1 text), story (1 text), epic (1 text), didactic text (1 text).

As for the expressive style of texts, situational description, lyrical depictions of war, lyrical expression (3 texts), lyrical expression of pre-war situation, conversations during the preparations of war, epic expression, didactic expression.

The concept of peace was also included in war-themed texts: War due to rejection of the request of the peace-willing party, peace assured after the war, freedom and peace, fighting for peace, raid for ensuring peace.

War-themed texts at 10th grade were 3 in Unit I (Turkish Literature in the course of history), 3 in Unit II (Turkish Literature in the Epic Era), 3 in Unit III. (Turkish Literature Developed under the Islamic Culture).

Themes of 10 grade texts entitled Acquisition of Independence and the Köktürk State, Song of Osman II (Genç Osman Türküsü), Bura Hiroşima (This is Hiroshima), Ergenekon Legend, Oğuz Kağan Legend, the Epic of Iliad, Battalname, Danişmendname, Leyla ile Mecnun are as follows: the Köktürk State's Independence (2 texts), the

conquest, Hiroshima atom bomb, raids, struggle to end the war, the conquest of the fortress against evil, the conquest, battle to take the girl.

The periods of war taken as subjects in the texts are the period of the Göktürk State (2 texts), 17th century, 1945, the Oghuz era, the Trojan War, 11-12th centuries (2 texts). One text which is a folktale has no definite and clear time.

War-themed texts are from genres of didactic text (1 text), poetry (2 texts), battalname (1 text), danişmendname (1 text), folktale (1 text).

The texts use wars for defensive purposes (1 text), to end the war (1 text), to destroy the evil-doer (1 text), for raids (2 texts), to take the bride (1 text) and to depict a war (2 texts).

In war-themed texts, the concept of peace was included in battles made to assure peace (2 texts).

War-themed texts at 11th grade were only 1 in Unit IV (National Literature).

Themes of 11th grade texts with headings such as Muharebeyi Kazananlar, Kızıl Elma Neresi, Ateşten Gömlek, Köprülüler are as follows: the scene of independence after the Battle, the pre-war situation, depicted in the post-war and the aim of war, the years of war, rescuing captive.

The periods of war taken as subject in the texts are the years of liberation (1920's), (3 texts) and 17th century.

War-themed texts are from genres of didactic text (1 text), poetry (2 texts), novel (1 text), theatre play (1 text).

The situation of pre-war, war and post-war was described in texts.

The texts use wars for defensive purposes (2 text), for raids (1 texts), to rescue captive (1 texts).

The concept of peace was also included in war-themed texts: Post-war objectives to be attained.

War-themed texts at 12th grade are 4 in Unit III (Texts That Express Joy and Excitement in Republic Period), 2 in Unit IV (Event-centric Literary Texts in Republic Period).

Themes of 12th grade texts with headings such as the Independence (İstiklal), Whose is This Homeland (Bu Vatan Kimin), Epic, Salty Water in My Canteen (Mataramda Tuzlu Su), An Old Wound (Eski Bir Yara), Ankara are as follows: To die for homeland, homeland defence, war against the enemy, war.

The periods of war taken as subject in the texts are the years of Egypt's occupation, general war period (2 texts), 17th century, , Independence War.

War-themed texts are from genres of poetry (4 texts), story (1 text), novel (1 text).

The reasons for war are defense (3 texts), conquest (1 text) and war against the enemy (2 texts).

The concept of peace was also included in 2 war-themed texts: Friendship, wished and long-awaited thing.

5. Conclusion

In the present study where the theme of war has been investigated in texts taken from Turkish Literature 9th, 10th, 11th and 12th grade course books prepared in 2005 by the Ministry of National Education, the highest number of war-themed texts are observed at 9th and 10th grades.

War-themed texts are in every unit at 9th and 10th grades, in the last unit at 11th grade, and in the last two units at 12th grade.

Turkish Literature course books include battles which are significant for the Turkish nation such as the battles of the Köktürk State, the Oghuz War, the Battle of Manzikert, the Ottoman Era wars, the Battle of İnönü and the Independence War. Also, there is a text dealing with the atom bomb in Hiroshima.

War-themed texts are expressed in the genre of poetry, a genre which mostly expresses joy and excitement. Poetry (12 texts), story (3 texts), didactic text (3 texts), novel (2 texts), theater play (2 texts), historic text (1 text), epic (2 texts), battalname (1 text), danişmendname (1 text), folktale (1 text). In general, a lyrical expression is present in the texts.

It has been determined that the battles are made for defensive purposes and to end the war in war-themed texts.

The concept of peace was also included in war-themed texts, if only partially:

There are numerous war-themed texts in our literature due to the fact that the Turkish History is full of battles. This phenomenon in Turkish literature has also been reflected on literature teaching. The significance of these texts are undoubtedly substantial in raising the national awareness.

Among the general objectives of the course of literature is “Giving an understanding as to how national and universal values are enriched and eternized in literary texts with artistic quality; determining the elements of national and universal culture and of thought and enjoyment in any text and artistic texts in particular; helping to understand the relationship between them”. Therefore, texts with themes such as peace and the world peace must be included in addition to war-themed texts. Peace-themed texts can be used to raise awareness on what the battle was for and what its consequences were, national identity and the importance of independence.

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