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Of 'wealthy industrialists' and 'white protestant europeans' - the history of race racism as portrayed in a South African textbook

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Abstract

Using a case study, this article examines parts of a chapter in a South African grade 11 History textbook about race and racism. Framed by a multi-modal theory of sign-making and communication, I use an inductive data categorisation and analysis process. At the broadest level, the analysis of the selected texts and images shows how both the values- and skills driven aims of the curriculum are interpreted and applied in the textbook. Within this broader theme are embedded sub themes such as processes of identity formation, social categorisation, a sense of learners' agency or empowerment (or lack thereof), and modes of story-telling. The case study shows that the texts in this book tend to offer a dominant (or 'hegemonic') reading whereby the reader is viewed as someone who will uncritically accept the texts' dominant ideas. Very few opportunities are given to readers to make their own value judgements that they could base on multiple perspectives, and thus to develop critical literacy. Conclusions could be drawn about the interpretation and implementation of the History curriculum into a textbook medium.

Key words: Curriculum, history textbooks, empowerment, agency, critical literacy