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Abstract for PhD Thesis: An Investigation into the Teaching of English Literature at Senior Secondary School Level, with a Particular Emphasis on the Reason for Teaching Literature, the Selection of Texts, and Methodology Used. By David Edwin Robinson

This thesis addresses three questions regarding education in South African High Schools: Why teach English literature? What English literature should be taught? How should English literature be taught?

The thesis adopts an historical perspective in that it traces the lineages of influence from Britain in particular, and explores the attitudes and concerns of the academics and teachers of South Africa as they attempt to establish a rigorous discipline regarding South Africa's literary heritage and the education curriculum. Theoretical concerns that are explored include the influence of the Cambridge School, the concepts presented by the Marxists and Cultural Materialists, and the position of Theory as it became more significant in the second half of the 20th Century. There is also recognition of scholarship deriving from the United States of America, in that the work of the New Critics and Harold Bloom are considered.

The work of significant South African critics such as Guy Butler, Mike Kirkwood and Tim Couzens is also explored, and the attempt to grapple with English in a multilingual society is considered. The curriculum documents that emerged in the post-1994 era are critiqued, and there is reference to the work of Taylor and Vinjevold.

Keywords: English literature and education; English literature and the South African curriculum; the Cambridge School; the Cultural Materialists; multilingual education