

Langues Littérature et Culture Etrangères (LLCE)
DST d'LLCE

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« Arts et débats d'idées »

Part 1:

"American Art and social protest in the 1930s"

The first document, A, is an image of a lithography made by Thomas Hart Benton in 1939. The name of the lithography is *Prodigal Son*, and its dimensions are thirty-five by twenty-five comma five centimetres. The second document, B, is an extract of the fifth chapter from the novel *The Grapes of Wrath*, written in 1939 by John Steinbeck. The third document, C, is an extract from an article written on the twelfth of July 2011 and its name is *Art and activism: 1930s and Today*. The Extract is from the www.huffpost.com website and was posted by Paul Boden. How does art denounce social protest of the 1930s? First, we are going analyse how art denounces social protest. Then, analyse how literature also denounces social protest. Finally, we will conclude.

In document A, in the foreground, we can see, a human figure that looks like a thoughtful man, next to him is a suitcase held together by two ropes and at his feet is a fallen tree, the tree could represent the end of young lives due to the current situation: the dust bowls. The man appears to be looking to his right. On his right is a house that is in ruins, missing rooftop tiles, no windows or doors, part of a wall is missing, ... Close to the house is the skeleton of what appears to be a woman's body, due to the long hair, the presence of the skeleton could either mean the future of the man in the center of the picture, or the previous person living in the ruined house. In the background, on the runway that is cutting the lithograph in two, there is a car facing forwards. This document can easily be linked the second document. In document B, the owners of a fifty-thousand-acre land, and the tenants, who work that land. In document A, the man seems to have just arrived whereas, in document B, it is Tenants that are expelled from the land they used to live on. In both documents A and B, the character give a feeling of dissatisfaction, the man looking at the house in ruins leaves the impression of having been fooled, the other ones feel that it is unjust to be expelled from the soil on which they were born.

Document C, analyses how artists from the 1930s up to nowadays, 2011, see themselves in society and what they generally put in their art. Where document C may seem completely different from B or A, is that B and A represent an angle of the life of the 1930 where document C will give an overview of the society of artists. Document A gives a small, yet powerful, idea

of the situation that the low class workers were confronted to, whereas some of the document C explains that in the 1930, about ninety-nine percent of its artists “sullied” their art with political content. In document B, a dialog between the owners and the tenants, that are being expelled, fits with the part of the great depression in document C.

Finally, all three documents are a form of art, although, document C does not denounce but analyse and give an overview of art from the nineteen-thirties to 2011. Document A and B express their point in different ways. The first one is in a visual way, using a lithography whereas the second one tells a story using words. Art in all its different forms can fully express an opinion, a story and can even mix politics into the final result. One can think, how does art do to be so expressing.

Word count: 604 words

Part 2:

Original version (English)
“Sure”, cried the tenant men, “but it’s our land. We measured it and broke it up. We were born on it, and we got killed on it, died on it. Even if it’s not good, it’s still ours. That’s what makes it ours – being born on it, working on it, dying on it. That makes ownership, not a paper with numbers on it.” “We’re sorry. It’s not us. It’s the monster. The bank isn’t like a man.” “Yes, but the bank is only made of men.” “No, you’re wrong there – quite wrong there. The bank is something else than men. [...]” (1.9-15)
Translated version (French)
« Bien sûre », dit le locataire, « mais c’est tout de même notre terre. Nous l’avons calculée et divisée. On est nés, été tués, et mort dessus. Même si ce n’est pas une terre de qualité, c’est tout de même la nôtre. C’est ce qui fait qu’elle nous appartienne – être nés, travaillé, et mort dessus. C’est ce qui fait l’appartenance, pas un vulgaire papier avec des chiffres. » « Nous sommes navrés. Ce n’est pas nous. C’est le monstre. La banque n’est pas comme un homme. » « Oui mais la banque est uniquement constituée d’hommes. » « Non, vous vous trompez – vous vous trompez vraiment. La banque est autre chose qu’un homme. [...] » (1.9-15)

John Steinbeck, *The Grapes of Wrath*, chapter 5, 1939