



Research Article

An Analysis of Social Issues in Alberto Florentino’s Selected Plays: Input to a Proposed Literature Teaching Model Based on See-Judge-Act Hermeneutic Cycle

Jose C. Macatangay, Ph.D.
De La Salle Lipa
jose.macatangay@dlsl.edu.ph

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ABSTRACT

The impetus behind this study was the search for a literature teaching model based on spirituality; thus, it aimed to analyze the social issues in Alberto Florentino’s one-act plays “The World is an Apple” and “Cadaver” using the lenses of literary criticism and the See-Judge-Act hermeneutic cycle. First, the plays’ themes of social issues were analyzed using literary elements. Then, Reader-response was applied to answer specific questions in the Judge and Act components. The researcher employed descriptive qualitative research using Content Analysis with the sentence as the textual unit of analysis. The themes of poverty and social injustice were highlighted in the analyzed one-act plays using literary elements such as settings, characters, conflicts, symbols, and dialogs. As a social protest genre, the literary plays presented the miserable conditions of the marginalized Filipinos in the urban slums. Through a close examination of the plays, specific questions according to the See-Judge-Act hermeneutic cycle were formulated and answered; thus, the research acknowledges the potential of adopting the See-Judge-Act for a proposed pedagogical model for teaching social protest literature to enhance Lasallian spirituality. Future researchers could validate the See-Judge-Act guide questions, study the learners’ perspectives by letting them answer questions related to the See-Judge-Act hermeneutic cycle to make the study more reader-responsive/student-centered, validate the proposed pedagogical model, and analyze the other plays of Alberto Florentino using the same research framework, the See-Judge-Act hermeneutic cycle, to attain more generalizable results.

INTRODUCTION

Different social issues such as gender inequality, LGBTQ+ rights, poverty, mental health, immigration, inequality/injustice, misinformation/disinformation/malinformation on social media, and environmental concerns, among others, beleaguer today’s Philippine society. These social issues are mostly found in the social protest genre of literature, which deals with the prevailing norms in a society where the marginalized are voiceless. Social protest literature may serve as take-off points to advocate for social change or challenge the status quo to give voice to the oppressed

members of society.

Mindfulness of social issues, understanding, and acting according to one’s faith rely heavily on the school system, specifically in the literature classroom where the teacher delivers the curriculum. The teacher can lead students to a text-based analysis of complex societal issues, raise their awareness of the issues through the eyes of faith, and propose solutions to the identified societal ills. Indeed, literature, as a field of Humanities, is an effective vehicle for teaching dif-



ferent social issues to students through textual exploration.

However, culling or dissecting social issues from a literary text may pose a bigger challenge for educators because it needs a critical analysis, especially since not all texts have social implications. The teaching of social issues is by not imposing an ideology but by allowing students to understand the different communal issues from diverse perspectives. The apathy of a self-absorbed generation hooked on social media is also a challenge to consider. Gen-Z learners treat reading literature as inconvenient, and if not, it is just an academic requirement to fulfill.

A literary text may be meaningless to students if they find it difficult to relate. For a literary text to be meaningful to students, the teacher needs to use engaging strategies anchored on an appropriate teaching model and lead the students to a critical analysis to let them interrogate the text. The students must understand that a literary text can be related to another text, linked to another medium, such as a Netflix movie watched, or connected with a real-life experience.

How, then, should a text in a literature class be considered literary that is worth reading and discussing and has the potential to integrate social realities? In 1909, writer William J. Long developed the seven literary standards, which included the spiritual value of a text referring to its capacity to inspire readers to read because it can uplift the spirit. The spiritual value is drawn from society's lessons articulated in a literary text. Therefore, a literary text can be used to navigate or connect the bridge between spirituality and social

issues. The teacher can lead the students to identify the societal pressures experienced by the characters and see how their faith in God helps them overcome those challenges, thus, enabling the students to understand the Significant Human Experience (SHE) in literature.

As a distinct spiritual way, Lasallian spirituality is rooted in the mission of the Catholic Church, which is to see the presence of Jesus Christ in the realities of the world. In the Lasallian context, seeing the realities of the world means judging things in the eyes of faith. As one of the five core Lasallian principles, faith in God "calls all students into a deeper awareness of their saving relationship with a caring and loving God." Lasallian students should respond to the conditions of impoverished people and "victims of injustice" by acting based on their understanding of these people's realities through community undertakings/engagements, justice education, and advocacies. (<https://www.cbu.edu/about/lasallian-tradition/the-five-core-lasallian-principles/>)

As a value-laden subject, Philippine Literature is a fertile ground to integrate Lasallian spirituality into teaching social issues for the students to intertwine spirituality and literature.

Using a model to analyze social protest literature and modifying such model for teaching purposes will benefit the college students enrolled in Philippine Literature classes in a Private Catholic Institution in Region IV-A. By applying the model, they will delve deeply into the literary plays that contain social issues and realities. The set of questions for each mod-



el component will be useful for the students in analyzing literary texts with social issues. Likewise, the students, through the teacher's guidance, can use the model to write an exemplar analysis guided by the set of questions.

The research was conducted to elicit the concept of Lasallian spirituality from the social protest literature that will make the students "see the social issues in the "eyes of faith" and develop concerns for the marginalized.

1.1. The Study's Context

Before diving into the See-Judge-Act analysis process, the literary elements were analyzed to determine if they contributed to the themes. The Reader-response literary theory was interwoven into the See-Judge-Act hermeneutic cycle to unpack the social issues in the two literary plays by a Filipino playwright.

The Reader-response theory recognizes the diverse backgrounds of readers when interacting with literary texts. In other words, a reader's response to a text may be influenced by his personal experiences, beliefs, and background. Moreover, the Reader-response theory does not aim to arrive at a definitive interpretation. Rather, the substance of the responses contributes to understanding a literary text.

The See-Judge-Act (SJA) hermeneutic cycle is based on the Catholic Social Teachings (CST) that motivate people to look at the social justice issues around them in the eyes of faith and respond with real actions grounded on spirituality. As applied in the

study and analysis of literary plays, the See-Judge-Act process will enable students, through the guidance of the teachers, to be aware of the social realities around them, judge the realities based on faith, and offer actions to change the existing social realities. Indeed, through SJA, literature students can become social changemakers and advocates of social change through their critical inquiry and engagement with literature.

Using the See-Judge-Act hermeneutic cycle to analyze the social issues embedded in literary texts is an alternative to the classical use of Marxism in studying a piece of literature. The Marxist model can be subsumed in the See component of the See-Judge-Act hermeneutic cycle. The former deals with the oppression of the human conditions of the lower class in a literary text; the latter also investigates the lower-class conditions but is not concerned with who their oppressors are.

Ultimately, the study's output and contribution to the literature teaching discipline is a proposed pedagogical model based on the See-Judge-Act hermeneutic cycle in teaching the social protest genre of literature. Through the model, the concept of faith can be integrated into teaching a literary text that contains social issues.

1.2. The Gaps in the Literature

The limited research and teaching resources about Filipino authors prompted the researcher to conduct the study. Thus, the study intends to narrow the gap in knowledge by exploring the works of a Filipino author and how his anthologized works can be taught using a



teaching model that awakens consciousness, looks at a situation in the light of faith, and offers a solution to the found realities in the texts. Likewise, integrating the realm of spirituality into a social protest genre of literature, as depicted in the selected one-act plays of Alberto Florentino, challenges the researcher to pursue the study.

A Filipino author who deserves a niche in Philippine Literature is Alberto Florentino (1931-2018). A Carlos Palanca awardee for a one-act play, Alberto Florentino wrote about most of his plays' urban poor, impoverished world. The plays "The World is an Apple" and "Cadaver," written in 1954, are widely read in high school and college Literature classes. "The World is an Apple" gave Florentino his Palanca Award for Literature. As mentioned in the Abstract of Carey's dissertation (2000), "The World is an Apple" is the most anthologized play of Florentino according to the Perceived Canon of Philippine Literature. Lumbera & Lumbera (1997) included in their book on Philippine Literature one of the plays of Florentino, "Cadaver," which is an honorable mention in the Palanca Awards for Literature. In the book of Lumbera & Lumbera (1997), "Cadaver" is on the reading list in Literature under the Republic.

The plays of Alberto Florentino are useful literary genres to integrate the teaching of social issues that will be an eye-opener for students to understand social realities around them, look at the realities in the eyes of faith, and act by bridging the gap between the realities and the Lasallian faith. Using the plays of Florentino in the literature classroom is in response to contextualization, which according to DepEd Order

No. 32, series of 2015, makes the curriculum relevant and meaningful to Filipino learners by relating and situating what they learn in the Philippine settings. In tertiary education, schools may teach the literary plays of Florentino in Philippine Literature classes. Teaching the plays of Florentino emphasizes teaching the literary treasures of the Philippines following the regional-based approach, from pre-colonial to 21st-century literature, whether written in foreign or native languages.

Bucjan (2016) analyzed the cultural features in Alberto Florentino's selected prized plays. Using a Reader-Oriented Approach to interpreting literature and employing qualitative research design, the author found that Florentino's plays depicted the commoner's lives, the beliefs in Christianity, love for family, and Filipinos as family-oriented people. The same author studied the plays from a different literary perspective, a poetic vision. Her analysis revealed that (1) social injustice, such as inequality, deprivation, and discrimination of equal opportunity among the poor, could be traced in the five plays; (2) the five plays depicted the sense of alienation and frustration of the protagonists; (3) the theme of friendship is present in "The World is an Apple" and "Cadaver," (4) life is full of ironies; (5) social protest is the theme of Florentino's plays, (6) the moral decadence of the virtuous protagonists because of the societal ills; and (7) the inevitability of death.

Poverty was a motif in Alberto Florentino's four selected plays, namely, "The Cadaver," "The Dancers," "Oli Impan" and "The World is an Apple." Amato et al. (2022) applied the theories of formalism and



mimesis to determine how the plays depicted poverty. The researchers revealed that poverty, a social issue in the Philippines, was portrayed in the plays' characters, settings, symbols, and conflicts. Further, through the textual analysis, the researchers found that the causes of poverty in the plays were lack of education, low income, lack of job opportunities, and social injustice. Recommendations of the study were directed to the students to read and analyze literary texts, parents to strengthen their relationship with their children, and teachers to teach values through Literature.

Paras (2021) applied pragmatic stylistics to "The World is an Apple." She analyzed the speech acts in the play and found the intended or implied meaning in the speakers' utterances was beyond words. She emphasized the significance of examining an utterance's pragmatics because of its intended meaning.

The literature review showed insufficient studies conducted on Alberto Florentino's one-act plays. The studies focused on cultural features, poetic vision, motif, and pragmatic stylistics. Like the reviewed studies, this paper analyzed the selected literary plays of Alberto Florentino by employing the qualitative approach. However, unlike the reviewed studies that dealt purely with literary criticism and linguistics, this paper delved into the social issues of the texts through the thematic analysis reinforced by the literary elements and by applying the See-Judge-Act hermeneutic cycle. Applying the See-Judge-Act hermeneutic cycle required culling out the social issues present in the texts, judging the realities from the texts in the light of the gospel, and proposing a course of action grounded on faith.

Another gap in the literature is the need for a teaching model on spirituality. Currently, limited models are being used for teaching literature, such as the Cultural, Personal Growth, and Language Model, popularized by Carter and Long (1991). In the Cultural Model, the teacher guides the students to understand and appreciate a literary text's social, political, literary, and historical contexts that differ from one's own. The Language Model looks into the subtle and creative uses of language to help students see the connections between the two big disciplines that there is language in literature. In the Personal Growth Model of literature teaching, the students should read literary texts beyond the classroom. As lifelong learners, students can apply the life lessons learned from the various literary texts. The Cultural Model is closely related to the See-Judge-Act hermeneutic cycle but may subsume only certain questions related to the historical contexts, thus, the absence of a spiritual aspect.

Sands (2018) recognized that despite the See-Judge-Act's theological orientation, it focused on more than just theological matters. According to him, when the See-Judge-Act model was applied outside the "Christian tradition" and its practices, the method started with "alleviating oppression is a form of salvation." In his article, he explored the potential applications of the See-Judge-Act for other fields, including African thought/philosophy and critical theory.

In this study, the interconnectedness of the See-Judge-Act was applied in social protest literature, a field outside theology but is closer to critical theory because it sought to uncover how the marginalized were represented in the literary plays. The challenge



of the See-Judge-Act application in literature is it requires the readers' processing skills to interpret and make meaning of the literary texts. In other words, the See-Judge-Act (SJA) hermeneutic cycle in literature is text-based and involves reading between and beyond the lines; thus, the response to the Act component may not be as tangible as other disciplines. However, the SJA is still relevant in the field of literature to address the lack of a literature teaching model that features the interface between spirituality and social issues.

1.3 Statement of the Problem

The study aims to analyze the social issues in the one-act literary plays "The World is an Apple" and "Cadaver" by Alberto Florentino using the lenses of literary criticism and a model anchored on spirituality. Specifically, it addresses the following objectives:

1. Explore the plays' social issues based on thematic categorizations using literary elements, such as settings, characters, conflicts, symbols, and dialogs;
2. Examine the plays by answering specific questions based on the See-Judge-Act hermeneutic cycle; and
3. Propose a pedagogical model anchored on the See-Judge Act hermeneutic cycle as an input to teaching social protest literature.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

2.1. Research Framework

The study was anchored to the See-Judge-Act hermeneutic cycle and the Reader-Response Literary Theory as bases for analyzing the social issues in the

literary plays "The World is an Apple" and "Cadaver" by Alberto Florentino.

The See-Judge-Act, created by Cardinal Joseph Cardijn, was based on Pope Francis' perspective. The model is a three-step process that assesses reality (See) by theological reflection (Judge) to change reality (Act). (See-Judge-Act: The Foundational, 2020). In the Lasallian tradition, the Lasallian educators share in the founder's mission through the "spirit of faith, zeal for the integral salvation of all, and communion in mission." The spirit of faith allows one to see God's loving presence in at-risk people. A person "judges and evaluates things in the light of the gospel through the spirit of faith." (Foundation Principles, n.d.)

As applied in the study of literary texts, the See-Judge-Act hermeneutic cycle is an alternative to Marxist criticism. According to Abrams (1999), Marxism treats literary texts as products of social conflicts of a particular era rather than works of art. Analyzing a text from the Marxist perspective answers an overarching question: Whom does the piece of literary work benefit-the elite or the working class? The See component of the hermeneutic cycle relates to the concepts of Marxism with questions such as: (1) How does the author portray class relations in the text? (2) What are the characters' ways of surpassing the oppressions they experienced? What does the text directly or indirectly say about oppression? (3) How are the social conflicts presented? Is the work silent about social conflict, or does it find people or events to blame? (4) Does the text end with the hope of resolving the social conflict? (Delahoyde, n.d.). However, unlike the Marxist approach to literary criticism, the



See-Judge-Act hermeneutic cycle accommodates the components of Understanding by Judging in the eyes of faith and Acting by proposing actions based on the social realities deciphered from a literary text.

The table shows the questions for the See-Judge-Act hermeneutic cycle that were answered based on the one-act plays “The World is an Apple” and “Cadaver” by Alberto Florentino.

Table 1. The See-Judge Act Hermeneutic Cycle

See-Judge-Act Hermeneutic Cycle	Questions
1. See	<i>What is happening in the text? Who are the characters involved in the situation? Who wins or loses from the situation? What factors have contributed to the situation?</i>
2. Judge	<i>What emotions are evoked based on the situation? What is ideal to be happening? How can the situation be treated in the light of one's faith? How can the situation be treated in the light of faith?</i>
3. Act	<i>What can be done to reconcile reality and the ideal based on one's faith? What courses of action could be taken? Who should be involved in the action?</i>

(The See-Judge-Act Process, n.d.)

The paper also applied the Reader-response theory, which according to Tyson (2006), considers the active role of readers in interpreting a literary text by making meaning they find in it. In the Reader-response theory, the meaning varies from reader's interpretations. (cited in <https://www.carleton.edu/departments/ENGL/Alice/CritRead.html>),

As operationalized in the study, questions in the Judge-Act hermeneutic cycle may engage the students as readers who shape the meanings of the plays “The

World is an Apple” and “Cadaver” without the teacher being didactic about the literary works. In other words, the students are the ones to connect the texts with their real-life experiences.

2.2. Research Design

This study utilized a descriptive qualitative research design using content analysis. According to Holsti (1969) (cited in <https://www.clootrack.com/knowledge>), content analysis is a research technique to make objective and systematic inferences based on the characteristics of messages. In a literary study, textual evidence enhances the content analysis.

In the content analysis of the two literary plays in the landmark texts “The World is an Apple” and “Cadaver,” a close reading was done to demystify and unveil the social realities. First, the plays' themes of social issues were analyzed thematically using literary elements, such as settings, characters, conflicts, symbols, and dialogs. Through the internal elements of the texts, the questions in the See component of the hermeneutic cycle were answered. Second, Reader-response was used to explain the plays based on the Judge-Act hermeneutic cycle.

The unit of analysis was on the sentence level or, specifically, within the lines/dialogs from the plays. The sentence-level analysis enabled the researcher to determine the presence of social issues as themes reinforced by the plays' elements.

2.3. Ethical Considerations



Since the study did not involve human participants and the materials were available online and in the public domain, proper attributions of works were observed. All sources used in the study were properly cited and listed to ensure academic integrity. Direct quotes and paraphrasing were properly attributed to the rightful owners of the materials. The analysis relied heavily on the textual evidence from the plays as corpora of the study, so every excerpt taken was properly quoted and attributed to the author. The titles of the plays were consistently set in quotation marks.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1. The Themes and How the Literary Elements of the Play Contribute to the Themes

Based on the content analysis of the literary plays, the pervasive themes that Alberto Florentino tackled in “The World is an Apple” and “Cadaver” were the different scenarios, social situations, and struggles of the commoner’s life in the poor urban setting. As a social protest playwright, Florentino portrayed poverty and social injustices that reflected the realities of poor urban human conditions. Ambato et al. (2022) found in their study of Florentino’s four selected plays, which included “The World is an Apple” and “Cadaver,” that poverty was a unifying theme.

The Theme of Poverty as Depicted in the Settings

As a literary element, the setting refers to the time and location of the story, and it can reinforce the theme of poverty through the descriptions of the place and time the story happens. In “The World is an Apple,” the play opens by describing the house as an

“*impoverished home.*” To highlight the family’s poverty, a more specific description, “*Two wooden boxes flank the doorway,*” is used. Meanwhile, in “*Cadaver,*” a more elaborate setting describes the pathetic living conditions of a family: “*The interior of a squalid, one-room dwelling located on the edge of a cemetery in Manila. The walls and roof-made of empty boxes, tarpaulin, bamboo, and cardboard patched together-threaten to collapse any minute.*” The cemetery is the setting of the play “*Cadaver*” based on these lines from Marina:

“*Torio...when we had nowhere to stay, we moved here-to their place. We put up this house on their land. They did not complain-they did not call us squatters-they did not drive us away.*”

In both literary plays, the dwelling places depict the characters’ poor living conditions. The motif or the recurrence of the houses’ locations, “*behind a portion of the Intramuros walls*” in “*The World is an Apple*” and “*one-room dwelling located on the edge of a cemetery in Manila*” in “*Cadaver*” as the settings contribute to the theme of poverty.

The Theme of Poverty as Depicted by the Characters

The characters’ actions, descriptions, thoughts, and motivations may reinforce the theme of poverty. Mario, the husband in “*The World is an Apple,*” is described as “*shabbily dressed, hair that seems to have been uncut for weeks.*” The wife, Gloria, is described as having “*long hair and a scrawny body.*” Meanwhile, in “*Cadaver,*” one of the main characters,



Carding, is described as “*a frail-bodied slow-moving man in dirty pants and T-shirt.*” The vivid physical descriptions bring to life the living conditions of the characters in the plays to depict their poverty.

In “The World is an Apple,” Pablo has a series of questions asking the difference between honest and dishonest money. He further argues that honest money cannot buy more and will not improve their conditions in a house he calls a “dungeon.” In “Cadaver,” the sick character, Torio, exposes to his innocent wife what he and Carding do for a living. Through their exchange of lines in the plays, Torio admits that he and Carding rob the dead and steals their valuables, such as rings, earrings, necklaces, watches, and even gold teeth. For him, it is easier to rob the dead because they “do not complain, report to the police, fight back, or scream.”

The Theme of Poverty as Reinforced by the Conflict

As a literary tool, conflict refers to the characters’ struggles between and among themselves and in the society where they exist. The man vs. man conflict, specifically, the husband vs. wife conflict, is obvious at the start of the play “The World is an Apple,” with money as the source of argument between the characters. The characters’ conflict emanates from the husband’s lack of money to give his wife for their sick child’s treatment. It is payday, so the wife demands money from her husband, yet the latter cannot give any amount. He cannot admit to his wife that he has already lost his job for stealing an apple.

The Theme of Social Injustice as Reinforced by the Conflict

The conflict between man vs. society manifests in the exchange of lines between Torio and Carding in “Cadaver” when the former blames the latter for sending Marina to the dispensary to call the doctor. Torio believes the doctor will not bother to see and cure him because he is not a congressman; he is sure he will not be treated. He is affirmed when Marina comes. According to Marina, she tries hard to convince the doctor, but she fails. The doctor wants to bring the sick person, Torio, to the dispensary. Torio, who, from the start, knew that the doctor would not come, makes fun of his condition by saying that the doctor is afraid to treat him, thinking he might beg money from him:

“The doctor’s afraid that instead of paying him, I would beg money from him. If he came, I would have really begged from him.”

In “The World is an Apple,” the theme of social injustice as a social issue is shown when Mario admits to Gloria that stealing an apple costs him his job. Mario, who works in an apple factory, loses his job for stealing an apple he would like to give his child, who prefers a red to a green apple, when he takes her for a walk one day. The man vs. man or, specifically, the wife vs. husband conflict is demonstrated in the exchange of lines below, with the couple arguing about why Mario loses his job.

MARIO (sits down): Could I have guessed they would do that for one apple? When there were



millions of them? (pause). We were hauling them to the warehouse. I saw one roll out of a broken crate. It was that big (demonstrates). It looked so delicious. Suddenly I found myself putting it in my lunch bag.

GLORIA: That's the trouble with you, when you think of your own stomach, you think of nothing else!

MARIO (rises): I was not thinking of myself!

The Theme of Social Injustice as Reinforced by the Literary Symbols

Symbols reflect a literary text's theme by delivering its ideas and concepts. As a symbol of social status, the apple magnifies poverty and social injustice. An apple known as a forbidden fruit symbolizes the fall of man in the story of Adam and Eve when the snake tempted the latter to eat the fruit to gain the world. In the play, Mario's stealing the apple costs him his job. The apple tempts Mario to steal for a good cause, but it is still an act of stealing. An adage says, "The end does not justify the means." For Gloria, "*Filching an apple is a small reason to kick a man out of his work.*" Mario explains to Gloria that the company removed him from work because they wanted to "bring their men in." Mario refuses when told to protest, fearing his records may be exposed.

The cadaver or a dead body in the play symbolizes the lack of job opportunities for the characters Torio and Carding, so they dig the grave and steal the valuables worn by the dead as their source of income. Torio hates the dead, so he robs them because, according to him, "*nothing worries them. They lie there day and*

night, sleeping like babies, mocking our sufferings!" Torio, who died in the end, would be a cadaver.

His cadaver symbolizes social injustice. He receives no medical treatment for his sickness because he is poor. Had the doctor responded to Marina's request to visit Torio, he could have been saved from dying. The cadaver also represents social inequality. The cadaver of the rich people is robbed because even to their death, they wear expensive valuables. Torio's cadaver wearing simple clothes would rot. It is not even sure if he would be given a decent burial.

The Theme of Social Injustice as Reinforced by the Dialogs of the Characters

The realistic lines or dialogs of the characters in the plays depict another theme related to social injustice as a social reality, which is the lack of job opportunities for the marginalized, as demonstrated in the following dialogs of the characters in "The World is an Apple":

MARIO: *They would do anything to keep out. (holds her arm). But don't worry. I'll find another job. It isn't really so hard to look for a job nowadays. (From this point, he avoids her eyes). You know, I've been job-hunting for a week now. And I think I have found a good job.*

GLORIA: *There you go lying again. MARIO Believe me. I'm not lying this time.*

GLORIA: *(crosses to the center). You're always lying – I can't tell when you're telling the truth.*

For Mario, it is easy to find a new job, but Gloria



doubts it. The following exchange validates Gloria's doubts, with a new character named Pablo entering the scene:

PABLO: It's all right, Mario. You'd better tell her everything. She's bound to know later. Tell her what you told me: that you no longer believe in the way she wanted you to live. Tell her. (Mario turns his back on them).

GLORIA (crosses to Mario). Mario... is this what you meant by another job? Oh, Mario ... you promised me you were through with him. You said you'd go straight ... and never go back to that kind of life...

MARIO (turns around and holds her arm, stammering). Gloria ... you ... you must try to understand ... I tried ... I tried long and hard ... but I could not lift us out of this kind of life ...

Mario would go back to his old ways of earning with Pablo that Gloria abhorred:

GLORIA: (pulls away from him). You're going! I can see that you want to go with him. Ohhhhh (cries). You'll leave me here again, wondering whether you'll be shot in the head or sent to jail!

In "The World is an Apple," the lack of job opportunities tempts Mario to reunite with Pablo again and engage in their illegal ways of earning a living. Despite Gloria's summon to stop Mario from going with Pablo, her husband disobeys her.

MARIO (firmly): Gloria, I'm going with him.

GLORIA: Don't Mario, don't ...

MARIO: You can't make me stop now. I've thought

about this since last week.

GLORIA: No, no Mario, no ... (holds fast to him).

MARIO: (loosens her hold). You take good care of yourself and our child. I'll take good care of myself. Don't wait up for me. I'll come home very late.

In "Cadaver," the lack of job opportunities forces Torio and Carding to steal from the dead in the cemetery where they live. The exchange of lines between the characters manifests the social reality, the lack of available employment that forces marginalized people to do illegal, even risky jobs to survive:

Torio: I rub the dead around us.

Marina: What! You mean-

Torio: I was one of those who open the graves of the dead.

Marina: And you stole...from them!

Torio: Yes! And why not! Rich people are always buried with something valuable on them: rings, earrings, necklaces, watches-and gold teeth! Why let such treasures rot under the ground while above that ground, people like us are starving?

To summarize, the themes of poverty and social injustice issues, such as the lack of job opportunities, employment discrimination, and the unavailability of medical services to the marginalized, through the plays' literary elements, such as settings, characters, symbols, conflicts, and characters' dialogs, were unpacked from the plays. This finding was aligned with the study of Bucjan, who found that social injustices such as inequality, deprivation, and discrimination among the people experiencing poverty were depicted



in the plays of Alberto Florentino. The finding was also related to Ambato et al., who disclosed in their literary study of Florentino’s selected plays that poverty, a social issue, was caused by social injustice, lack of job opportunities, lack of income, and lack of education.

The social issues, such as poverty and social injustice depicted in the literary plays “The World is an Apple” and “Cadaver,” written during the Literature under the Republic, still happen in the post-modern world. Based on the Philippine Statistics Authority’s (PSA) December 17, 2021, press release on the poverty incidence among the population, an estimated 23.7 percent of Filipinos had a per capita income that was insufficient for their everyday needs (<https://psa.gov.ph/poverty-press-releases>). In response to the United Nations’ Sustainable Development Goals (UNSDGs), the UN-Philippines has identified several targets for Goal 1 to eradicate poverty by 2030 (<https://philippines.un.org/en/sdgs/1>).

3.2. Answering Specific Questions Based on the See-Judge-Act Hermeneutic Cycle

Table 2 presents the application of the See-Judge-Act hermeneutic cycle in “The World is an Apple.” A question for each component of See-Judge-Act is answered by the researcher.

Table 2. The World is an Apple

See-Judge-Act Component	Question	Expected Answer
See	What is happening in the text?	Triggered by his incapacity to afford an apple for his daughter, Mario, influenced by Pablo, decided to return to his old ways of earning. Despite Gloria’s warning and refusal, Mario was determined to go with Pablo.
	Who are the characters involved in the situation?	The people involved are the main characters in the play: Mario, Gloria, and Pablo.

	Who wins or loses from the situation?	Being the bad influencer, Pablo gains from the situation by successfully convincing Mario to go with him. Mario’s family loses from the situation because of his vulnerability to succumbing to the temptation of earning dishonestly, and his decision may put his family at risk.
	What factors have contributed to the situation?	The lack of job opportunities for marginalized Filipinos who are not degree holders is one factor that contributed to the situation in the play.
Judge	What emotions are evoked based on the situation?	The family’s situation in the play evokes a feeling of sadness, especially when the daughter wants an apple, but the father can only afford a banana. It was indeed a heart-breaking scenario. Mario’s removal from his job for pilfering an apple could evoke a feeling of sympathy and pity, knowing that he was removed for a petty reason because the management wanted other people they know to fill in his job. It may also evoke a feeling of anger in the existing system.
	What is ideal to be happening?	No family should be left behind. Every family should have a decent house, and every family member can eat thrice daily. The children should be studying, and there is a decent job for the head of the family. Social and health services should be inclusive and accessible, and tangible and sustainable programs for the urban poor should be available.
	How can the situation be treated in the light of one’s faith?	The situation shows Mario’s lack of faith. In the bible, Jesus once told his disciples that nothing was impossible if they had a small faith and could even move a mountain. If Mario had a little faith in God, he could have overcome the family’s situation by looking for a decent job.
	How can the situation be treated in the tradition of the Lasallian faith?	One of the three values fundamental to Lasallian identity is the spirit of faith. The miserable situation of Mario and his family, if gleaned from the “eyes of faith” of the Lasallian principle, would call for discovering God’s active presence in their life and trusting in God’s presence and providence that things will change by discerning God’s will.
Act	What can be done to reconcile the reality and the ideal based on one’s faith?	To bridge the gap between the realities depicted in the play, such as poverty, social injustice, and lack of employment for the marginalized, and the ideal, which is equal opportunities for everyone, people could turn to their faith by trusting the loving presence of God; that with hard work and perseverance, their situations will change in God’s perfect timing.
	What courses of action could be taken?	Initially, there is a need to determine the causes of poverty based on poverty and subsistence incidence. The government could identify solutions aside from the 4Ps based on the data. The solutions must be sustainable income-generating programs and not dole out like the current practice of 4Ps.
	Who should be involved in the actions?	There should be a collaboration between the government and the church. The government should be responsible for the needs analysis and determining the appropriate courses of action. From the end of the local church, it could identify the poorest communities in the Archdiocese and, from there, involve some NGOs and Catholic schools to brainstorm on possible solutions to alleviate poverty and, at the same time, strengthen the faith of its flock.

The See component is text-based, where the answers to the questions could be provided only after reading “The World is an Apple.” In other words, ana-



lyzing the literary elements and how they reinforce the themes instigates the next step for the Judge-Act components. The questions in the Judge component consider the role of the readers/students as active consumers who make meaning found in the literary texts as they read. The Act component of the hermeneutic cycle features questions that call for actions based on the situation. Furthermore, the questions in the Act component allow the readers to evaluate and interpret the text based on their personal experiences and previous knowledge.

In the Judge and Act components, spirituality, specifically the Lasallian spirituality, can be emphasized when contextualizing the model. This can be done by relating the question to the core of Lasallian principles such as “faith in God” and “concern for the poor and social justice.” The students could further be led to the discussion on UN-SDGs- No Poverty (SDG #1) and Reduced Inequalities (SDG #10).

Table 3. Cadaver

Table 3 depicts the analysis of the play “Cadaver” based on the See-Judge-Act hermeneutic cycle. The researcher provides the expected answer for every question on the See-Judge-Act component.

See-Judge-Act Component	Question	Expected Answer
See	What is happening in the text?	Torio, resentful of the rich because they were buried with expensive jewelry, is on his deathbed. The doctor refuses to visit him because he has no money to pay. He admits to his wife, Marina, that he and Carding are earning money by stealing from the tombs of rich people.
	Who are the characters involved in the situation?	The people involved are the main characters in the play: Torio, Marina, and Carding.
	Who wins or loses from the situation?	The underprivileged characters of the play, deprived of life’s basic needs and lack access to basic social services, are the ones losing from the situation in the play.
	What factors have contributed to the situation?	One factor that contributed to the situation in the play is the lack of basic social and health services for marginalized Filipinos.

Judge	What emotions are evoked based on the situation?	The situation of Torio with Marina as his wife and Carding as his friend evokes a feeling of pity. In desperation to support his family, Torio loses his rationality, so he does not see anything wrong with robbing the dead of their valuables.
	What is ideal to be happening?	Everyone should live in a society with social justice, and every Filipino should live a decent life with basic social and health services. Mobility should not depend on wealth and education.
	How can the situation be treated in the light of one’s faith?	The poverty-stricken situation shows Torio’s lack of faith in God. Had he shown a little faith by trusting his life in God, he could not have engaged in stealing from the corpse in the cemetery.
	How can the situation be treated in the Lasallian tradition of faith?	If gleaned from the “eyes of faith” of the Lasallian principle, the situation of Torio would call for discovering God’s active presence in his life by trusting in God’s presence and providence that things will change by discerning God’s will.
Act	What can be done to reconcile the reality and the ideal based on one’s faith?	To bridge the gap between the realities depicted in the play, such as poverty and social injustice for the marginalized, people could turn to their faith by trusting the loving presence of God that with hard work and perseverance, their situations will change in God’s perfect timing.
	What actions could be taken?	There is a need to review the government’s targets to end poverty in all its forms by 2030. A review could include identifying where the government is (current status) based on the targets, what was done, and what needs to be done.
	Who should be involved in the actions?	The review of the 2030 targets on SDG #1, End poverty in all its forms, should be a multisectoral dialog/consultation to represent the voices of all the sectors of society.

For the readers/students to answer the questions in the See component, they must read and understand the play “Cadaver” to know how the literary elements, such as settings, characters, conflicts, symbols, characters’ lines/dialogs contribute to the themes of poverty and social injustice. In the second set of questions for the Judge component, the students apply the Reader-response, which considers their role as active readers who make sense of the text based on experiences and background. The Act component of the hermeneutic cycle provides questions that call for courses of action based on the identified situations in the plays and, thus, conforms also to the Reader-response theory. Courses of action may include but are not limited to advocacies, community engagements, information dissemination, and justice education advocacies that address social issues. The proposed course of action



can be the basis for decision-making to alleviate societal problems in the texts read.

Woodruff and Griffin (2017) underscored the Reader response theory’s importance for teachers and students. Teachers can use the Reader-response approach to “inspire students to become habitual, passionate readers.” They can engage the students in the world of reading by letting them apply their prior knowledge and personal experiences in interpreting the text.

The connection between the Reader-response approach and the Judge-Act component will highlight the reader-text transaction, where the reader or, specifically, the student will express his/her emotions, perspectives, and even his/her advocacies to address social issues.

3.3. The Output of the Study

In this study, the internal elements of the plays were analyzed closely to determine if they contributed to the themes. The output of the study, borne of the analysis of social issues in the literary plays “The World is an Apple” and “Cadaver,” is a proposed pedagogical model for teaching literary texts with social issues in Philippine Literature. The model, anchored to the See-Judge-Act process with guide questions for each component, is recommended for the teacher to teach literary plays or fiction texts that belong to social protest literature or those that depict social issues. The model’s flexibility allows for its utilization for several purposes in a literature class. The model can be used for the students to scaffold a written analysis

of a literary text of a social protest genre.

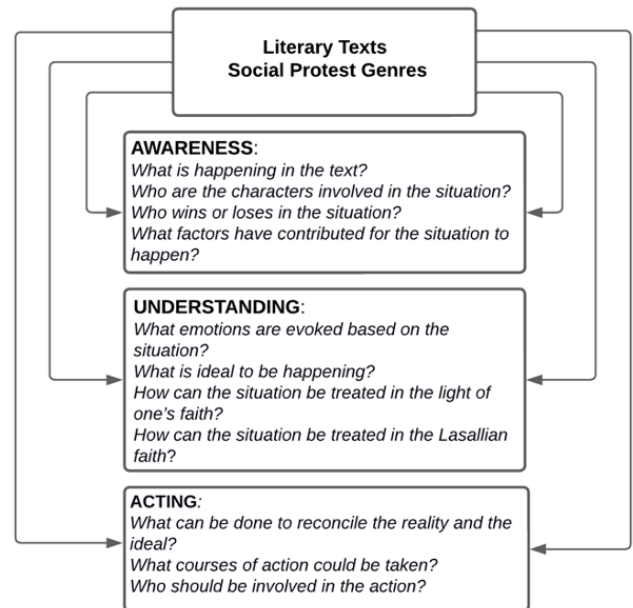


Figure 1. The proposed model (AUA-model)

The proposed model, which adopted the See-Judge-Act hermeneutic cycle and the guide questions for each component, is called AUA or Awareness, Understanding, and Acting. The AUA model, which shows the interconnectedness of the three components, aims to address the interface of social realities and spirituality because it integrates faith into the teaching of social protest literature. The model uses terms within students’ familiar vocabulary for easy recall. Instead of the See component in the verb form, the model uses Awareness in the noun form. In the Awareness phase, the students are expected to immerse in the text by knowing the situation, why it is happening, and who gains or loses from it. The Judge phase is termed Understanding which focuses on reading the situations based on faith and Lasallian tradition. Here, the concept of spirituality focuses on Lasallian spirituality through the question: “How can the situation be treated in the Lasallian faith?” Finally, the Act compo-



ment is called Acting, where the students should offer courses of action on the identified situation. The Lasallian spirituality also applies to this component because the proposed actions must be anchored at least on two “core principles: faith in the presence of God and concern for the poor and social justice.”

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The study analyzed the social issues in Alberto Florentino’s one-act plays “The World is an Apple” and “Cadaver” by (1) delving into the plays’ themes on social issues using the literary elements of settings, characters, conflicts, symbols, and dialogs (2) examining the plays by answering specific questions based on the See-Judge-Act hermeneutic cycle, and (3) proposing a pedagogical model for teaching the genre of social protest literature.

The study highlighted the themes of poverty and social injustice as reinforced by literary elements such as settings, characters, conflicts, symbols, and dialogs. As a social protest genre of literature, the literary plays successfully presented the miserable conditions of the marginalized Filipinos in the urban slums through the powerful use of literature as the voice for the marginalized.

The study recognizes the potential applicability of the See-Judge-Act hermeneutic cycle as a lens for analyzing social issues in the social protest genre of literature and as a model for literature teaching. The See component of the hermeneutic cycle depicts the poverty-stricken lives of small families and their friends forced by unfortunate situations to engage in illegal jobs to earn and survive. The Judge component

evokes in the readers of each play a feeling of pity towards the characters deprived of basic social and health services; they experienced poverty and lacked faith in God because their lives were focused on their everyday survival. The Act component allows the readers of the play to read beyond the texts by offering courses of action to alleviate poverty and reduce social inequalities. Doing so may reconcile the gap between reality and the ideal.

In conclusion, social issues in the selected Philippine plays of the social protest genre of literature used for this study can be analyzed using the plays’ literary elements and the Reader-response approach to engage the readers by going beyond the texts’ inherent meanings. Moreover, the See-Judge-Act hermeneutic component as a lens for analyzing social issues in the social protest genre of literature is a helpful guide in interrogating the literary plays, enabling students to understand the different social issues, develop critical thinking skills, foster empathy, and offer sustainable solutions; thus, integrating the concept of Lasallian spirituality into the analysis and teaching of social issues in literature. The social issues reflected in the texts are social realities students must understand and be mindful of to develop a social innovation mindset and be a Lasallian who is keen on social issues and with compassion for the plight of “the least, the last, and the lost.”

As a preliminary step in identifying a literature-teaching model on spirituality, the researcher offers a proposed pedagogical model known as AUA or Awareness, Understanding, and Acting based on the See-Judge-Act hermeneutic cycle to teach the social



protest genre of literature or any literary texts depicting social issues. The proposed model may enhance the understanding of Lasallian spirituality in the context of social realities in the Philippines.

This study has identified some limitations to be considered for further studies. First, the questions based on the See-Judge-Act hermeneutic cycle were formulated by the researcher and did not undergo content validation by experts. Second, the answers to the questions, as indicated in the study, were the researcher's interpretations and opinions based on the texts analyzed for the study. Third, since the study focuses on analyzing literary plays, the output of the study, which is the proposed literature pedagogical model adopting the See-Judge-Act version, necessitates validation to make it scientific and worth recommending and utilizing for classroom teaching.

Despite the study's limitations, future researchers could conduct follow-up studies to (1) validate the See-Judge-Act guide questions, (2) focus on the learners' perspectives by answering questions on the See-Judge-Act hermeneutic cycle to make the study reader-responsive/student-centered and to determine the impact of the model on learning (3) validate the proposed pedagogical model, and (4) analyze the other plays of Alberto Florentino using the same research framework, the See-Judge-Act hermeneutic cycle, to attain more generalizable results.

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