

A Comprehensive Study Guide to Daniel Defoe's 'The True-Born Englishman'

Daniel Defoe's "The True-Born Englishman" is a satirical poem published in 1701 that explores themes of national identity, immigration, and xenophobia in England during the early 18th century. This detailed study guide provides an in-depth analysis of the poem, offering insights into its historical context, literary devices, and enduring relevance.

Historical Context

England in the late 17th and early 18th centuries witnessed significant social and political upheaval. The Glorious Revolution of 1688 brought about a Protestant monarchy and increased foreign influence, particularly from the Dutch. This influx of immigrants and the perceived threat to English culture fueled sentiments of nativism and xenophobia.



Study Guide for Daniel Defoe's The True-Born Englishman by Course Hero

★★★★☆ 4 out of 5

Language : English

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Print length : 244 pages

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Reading age : 2 - 4 years

Grade level : Preschool and up

Item Weight : 1.74 pounds

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Literary Analysis

Structure and Form

"The True-Born Englishman" comprises 176 stanzas written in octosyllabic couplets. Its episodic structure allows Defoe to explore various aspects of national identity and immigration through a series of satirical vignettes.

Satire and Irony

Defoe employs satire to expose the absurdity and hypocrisy of his targets. He uses irony to mock those who claim to be true-born Englishmen while disregarding their own foreign ancestry.

Imagery and Language

Defoe paints vivid and often grotesque images to emphasize the shortcomings and vices of English society. His use of vulgar language and colloquialisms adds to the poem's satirical tone.

Rhetorical Devices

Defoe employs rhetorical devices such as appeals to reason, emotion, and authority to support his arguments and persuade his readers. His use of repetition, antithesis, and hyperbole reinforces his satirical intent.

Themes

National Identity

"The True-Born Englishman" questions the definition of a true Englishman. Defoe argues that national identity is fluid and inclusive, encompassing individuals from diverse backgrounds who contribute positively to society.

Immigration and Xenophobia

Defoe both critiques the xenophobic tendencies of his contemporaries and celebrates the positive contributions of immigrants. He emphasizes that England's strength lies in its diversity and its ability to embrace newcomers.

Social Hierarchy

Defoe satirizes the rigid social hierarchy of his time, mocking the upper classes for their pretensions and criticizing the oppression of the lower classes.

Characters

The True-Born Englishman

Defoe's idealized version of a true Englishman is inclusive, patriotic, and tolerant. He is a composite figure that embodies the values Defoe believes are essential for a harmonious society.

The Pretended Englishman

Defoe satirizes those who claim to be true-born Englishmen but are actually descended from foreigners. He accuses them of hypocrisy and xenophobia.

Influence and Relevance

"The True-Born Englishman" had a profound impact on English society. It helped to shape public discourse on immigration and national identity, challenging prevailing prejudices and promoting a more inclusive view of Englishness.

Modern Relevance

The poem continues to resonate in contemporary society, offering insights into the ongoing debates over immigration, multiculturalism, and national identity. It reminds us that these issues are not new and that they have been addressed in various ways throughout history.

Study Questions

1. How does Defoe use satire to expose the absurdity of xenophobia? 2. Analyze the structure of the poem and explain how it contributes to its satirical effect. 3. Discuss the role of imagery and language in conveying the poem's themes. 4. Explain how Defoe's definition of a true Englishman challenges traditional notions of national identity. 5. How does "The True-Born Englishman" reflect the social and political tensions of its time, and how does it remain relevant today?

Further Reading

* Davis, Lennard J. *Factual Fictions: The Origins of the English Novel*. University of Pennsylvania Press, 1983. * Defoe, Daniel. *The True-Born Englishman*. Edited by P.N. Furbank. Penguin Classics, 1997. * Novak, Maximillian E. *Defoe and the Nature of Man*. Oxford University Press, 1963. * Rogers, Pat. *Defoe: The Critical Heritage*. Routledge, 1995.



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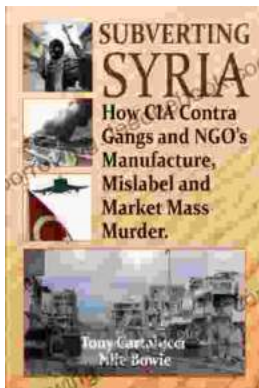
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