



THE STORY OF ROBERT BRUCE AS A PEDAGOGICAL TOOL FOR GENERATING VALUE EDUCATION

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RESEARCH ARTICLE



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Abstract

The legend of Robert the Bruce and the spider is widely regarded as a powerful narrative of perseverance, resilience, and moral courage. This research paper examines the story as a pedagogical tool for value generation in education. Using a qualitative narrative analysis approach, the study identifies key moral and character values embedded in the legend and explores how these values can be cultivated among learners. The findings suggest that the story promotes perseverance, self-belief, responsibility, reflective thinking, and leadership values which are essential for holistic education (Lickona, 1991). The paper concludes that integrating such narratives into educational curricula can significantly contribute to character formation and ethical development.

Keywords: *Pedagogical Tool, Moral Narrative, Value Education, Perseverance, Resilience, Self-Belief, Reflective Thinking*

Introduction

Value education is an essential component of holistic learning. Beyond academic knowledge, education aims to shape character, instill moral principles, and prepare individuals for responsible citizenship (Lickona, 1991). In this context, stories and legends serve as effective pedagogical tools for transmitting values across generations (Bruner, 1996).

The story of Robert Bruce and the spider is not merely a historical legend but a moral narrative symbolizing determination in the face of adversity. Through the symbolic actions of the spider and the reflective response of Robert Bruce, the narrative conveys important life lessons about perseverance and resilience. This paper explores how the story contributes to value generation within educational settings and how it may function as a meaningful instructional resource for educators seeking to promote character development among learners.

Objective of the Study

The objective of this study is:

- To identify the moral and character values embedded in the story of Robert Bruce.

Research Question

This study addresses the following research question:

- What core values are reflected in the story of Robert Bruce?

Overview of the Story

Robert the Bruce (1274–1329), the King of Scotland, led the Scottish resistance during the Wars of Scottish Independence. After suffering several military defeats, he reportedly took refuge in a cave where he observed a spider attempting repeatedly to spin its web. The spider failed multiple times but persisted in its efforts until it finally succeeded. Inspired by this perseverance, Bruce regained confidence and resolved to continue his struggle. Eventually, he achieved a decisive victory at the Battle of Bannockburn (Barrow, 2005).

Although historians debate the literal accuracy of the spider legend (Barrow, 2005), its symbolic and moral significance remains powerful. The story continues to be widely used as a narrative illustration of perseverance, determination, and resilience.

Conceptual Framework: Value Generation through Storytelling

Value generation refers to the process through which individuals internalize ethical, social, and moral principles that guide behavior and decision-making (Halstead & Taylor, 2000). Storytelling has long been recognized as an effective method of moral instruction because it:

- Engages emotional understanding
- Provides relatable moral models
- Encourages reflection and ethical reasoning
- Facilitates empathy development

According to Bruner (1996), narratives shape human understanding and identity. Stories allow individuals to interpret experiences, construct meaning, and develop moral perspectives. Consequently, storytelling becomes a powerful medium for transmitting values within educational contexts.

Method of the Study

Research Design: This study adopts a qualitative descriptive research design using narrative analysis as the primary methodological approach (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000).

Data Sources: The data for this research were derived from multiple sources, including:

- Historical literature on Robert Bruce (Barrow, 2005)
- Scholarly research on value education
- Academic discussions on storytelling in educational contexts

Method of Analysis: The narrative was thematically analyzed to identify embedded values such as perseverance, responsibility, leadership, and reflective thinking. These themes were interpreted in light of character education theory (Lickona, 1991). The analysis focuses on how the symbolic elements of the story may contribute to the development of moral understanding and character formation among learners.

Findings of the Study

The thematic analysis of the narrative of Robert Bruce and the spider reveals several core moral and character values embedded in the story. These values directly address the research questions regarding the moral significance of the legend and its role in value-based education. The findings are as follows-

Table No 1: Key Values Identified in the Story of Robert Bruce

Value / Theme	Evidence from the Story	Educational Implication
Perseverance	Spider repeatedly attempts to spin its web.	Encourages persistence despite failure.
Resilience	Bruce regains determination after defeats.	Develops emotional strength to overcome setbacks.
Self-Belief	Bruce renews confidence after observing the spider.	Builds confidence and positive self-identity.
Responsibility & Commitment	Bruce continues the struggle for his nation.	Promotes civic responsibility and dedication.
Reflective Thinking	Bruce reflects on the spider's actions.	Encourages observation and critical thinking.
Leadership & Courage	Bruce resumes leadership and achieves victory.	Inspires ethical leadership and bravery.

Perseverance: One of the most prominent values reflected in the story is perseverance. The spider's repeated attempts to spin its web symbolize persistence and determination despite repeated failures. Even after multiple unsuccessful efforts, the spider continues its attempts until it finally succeeds. This symbolic act becomes a powerful motivational example for Robert Bruce.

Perseverance is widely recognized as foundational character strength in moral and character education (Lickona, 1991). Through this narrative, learners can understand that success is often achieved through sustained effort and determination. The story therefore provides a practical illustration of how perseverance can help individuals overcome obstacles and achieve their goals.

Resilience: The story also highlights the value of resilience. Robert Bruce had faced several military defeats before observing the spider. These defeats had discouraged him and weakened his confidence. However, witnessing the spider's persistence encouraged him to reconsider his situation and regain his determination.

Resilience refers to the ability to recover from setbacks and continue striving despite adversity. The story demonstrates that failure does not necessarily signify the end of a struggle but may instead provide opportunities for reflection and renewed effort. In educational contexts, teaching resilience helps learners develop emotional strength and the ability to face challenges constructively.

Self-Belief: Another important value embedded in the narrative is self-belief. After observing the spider's perseverance, Robert Bruce begins to believe once again in his ability to succeed. This renewed confidence motivates him to continue his struggle for Scotland's independence.

Self-belief is a crucial component of personal and moral development. When learners develop confidence in their abilities, they become more willing to attempt difficult tasks and persist in the face of challenges. The story therefore illustrates how confidence and determination can transform failure into eventual success.

Responsibility and Commitment: The narrative also reflects the values of responsibility and commitment. As the King of Scotland, Robert Bruce felt a strong sense of duty toward his people and his country. Despite facing numerous obstacles and defeats, he remained committed to the cause of national independence.

Such examples of dedication and responsibility provide meaningful models for students. When learners encounter narratives that highlight commitment to collective welfare and social responsibility, they are encouraged to develop similar attitudes in their own lives. This contributes to the development of civic values and responsible citizenship.

Reflective Thinking: The story further emphasizes the importance of reflective thinking. Bruce's observation of the spider encourages him to reflect on his own situation and reconsider his decision to abandon the struggle. Through thoughtful observation, he interprets the spider's persistence as a lesson in determination.

Reflective thinking plays a vital role in moral and intellectual development. Stories that encourage learners to interpret events and draw lessons from them foster critical thinking and ethical reasoning. The narrative of Robert Bruce therefore serves as an example of how reflection can lead to meaningful personal growth.

Leadership and Courage: The story also highlights the values of leadership and courage. After regaining confidence, Robert Bruce demonstrates strong leadership by continuing the struggle for Scotland's independence and eventually achieving victory. His actions illustrate moral courage, determination, and visionary leadership.

Leadership and courage are essential qualities for the development of responsible citizens and ethical leaders in society (Halstead & Taylor, 2000). By presenting Bruce as a determined and courageous leader, the story encourages learners to appreciate the importance of perseverance, responsibility, and moral conviction in leadership roles.

Discussion of the Findings

The findings of this study indicate that the story of Robert Bruce and the spider contains several important moral and character values that support value-based education. The themes identified as perseverance, resilience, self-belief, responsibility and commitment, reflective thinking, and leadership and courage demonstrate how historical narratives can promote ethical awareness and character development among learners.

The value of perseverance is clearly illustrated through the spider's repeated attempts to spin its web. This symbolizes determination and persistence despite repeated failures. Such narratives help learners understand that success often requires continuous effort and determination (Lickona, 1991).

Similarly, the story highlights resilience, as Robert Bruce regains determination after experiencing several defeats. This aspect of the narrative demonstrates how individuals can recover from setbacks and continue striving toward their goals. Developing resilience is essential for learners because it strengthens their emotional capacity to face challenges (Noddings, 2002).

The story also promotes self-belief, as Bruce regains confidence after observing the spider's persistence. This illustrates how belief in one's abilities can transform discouragement into motivation and encourage learners to pursue their goals with confidence (Ryan & Bohlin, 1999).

Furthermore, the narrative reflects responsibility and commitment, as Bruce continues his struggle for the independence of his nation. This example highlights the importance of civic responsibility and dedication, which are essential values in character education (Nucci & Narvaez, 2008).

Another important value identified is reflective thinking. Bruce's observation of the spider encourages him to reflect on his own situation and learn from it. Reflection helps learners develop critical thinking and moral reasoning skills (Bruner, 1996).

Finally, the story demonstrates leadership and courage. Bruce's decision to continue his struggle illustrates moral courage and responsible leadership. Such narratives inspire learners to appreciate the importance of ethical leadership and perseverance in achieving collective goals (Halstead & Taylor, 2000).

Overall, the findings suggest that storytelling can be an effective pedagogical strategy for value generation. Historical legends such as the story of Robert Bruce help learners internalize moral values and contribute to their holistic development.

Educational Implications for Value Generation

The findings of this study indicate that the story of Robert Bruce can serve as an effective pedagogical tool for promoting value-based education. Historical narratives and moral legends provide meaningful contexts through which learners can understand ethical principles and develop character strengths. The story demonstrates how perseverance, resilience, leadership, and reflective thinking can be illustrated through narrative learning.

The story of Robert Bruce offers several practical applications in educational contexts:

- **Integration into language and social studies curricula:** Teachers can incorporate the story into language and social studies lessons to illustrate historical events while simultaneously highlighting moral values such as perseverance, courage, and responsibility.
- **Use in moral instruction and character education programs:** The narrative can be used as part of character education initiatives aimed at promoting ethical awareness, resilience, and responsible behavior among students.
- **Reflective classroom discussions on perseverance and leadership:** Educators can encourage students to reflect on the experiences of Robert Bruce and discuss how persistence and determination help individuals overcome challenges.
- **Role-play and creative writing activities that encourage value internalization:** Interactive learning activities such as role-play, storytelling, and creative writing allow learners to actively engage with the narrative and internalize the moral lessons embedded in the story.
- **Development of emotional and moral reasoning:** Through guided discussions and reflective exercises, teachers can help students analyze the moral choices and leadership qualities demonstrated by Robert Bruce.

Stories such as that of Robert Bruce can significantly contribute to holistic education by nurturing ethical awareness, emotional intelligence, and critical thinking among learners (Bruner, 1996). By integrating narrative-based learning strategies into classroom teaching, educators can support the development of both intellectual and moral capacities among students.

Conclusion

The legend of Robert the Bruce remains a timeless narrative that offers valuable insights for value generation in education. It embodies perseverance, resilience, leadership, and reflective thinking qualities that are essential for character formation and moral development. When thoughtfully integrated into educational practices, such narratives can play a significant role in promoting ethical understanding and responsible citizenship among learners.

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