

THE PHILOSOPHICAL IMPACT OF EUROPEAN FICTION ON CONTEMPORARY VIEWS OF WAR AND PEACE

O IMPACTO FILOSÓFICO DA FICÇÃO EUROPÉIA NAS VISÕES CONTEMPORÂNEAS DE GUERRA E PAZ

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Abstract: The aim of the study is to analyse the influence of fiction on the perception of war and peace in the modern world. The research employed the methods of linguistic analysis, factor analysis, and questionnaire survey. The following statistical methods were used: Mann–Whitney U test, Pearson correlation coefficient, correlation analysis. The reliability of the instruments was tested using Cronbach’s alpha coefficient. The results of the study showed that fiction has a significant impact on the perception of war and peace in the modern world. The determining role of literature in the formation of worldview consciousness of readers was also established, which emphasizes its philosophical significance. It was also established that the variety of literary works allows for the presentation of different points of view on war and peace, which contributes to the formation of different ideas and views on these topics. All this emphasizes the importance of fiction as a means of promoting awareness and cultural understanding of modern conflicts and ways to peace. Fiction plays an important role in shaping ideas about war and peace in the modern world. It conveys realistic images of conflicts and peace negotiations, but also promotes the development of empathy and understanding of different perspectives on these issues. Further research could include a more in-depth analysis of the influence of specific literary works on perceptions of war and peace, taking into account various aspects such as cultural characteristics, social context, and individual characteristics of readers.

Keywords: Fiction. The concept of peace. The concept of war. Memory. Reconciliation. Formation of worldview. Ethical influence.

Resumo: O objetivo do estudo é analisar a influência da ficção na percepção da guerra e da paz no mundo moderno. A pesquisa empregou os métodos de análise linguística, análise fatorial e levantamento por questionário. Foram utilizados os seguintes métodos estatísticos: teste U de Mann-Whitney, coeficiente de correlação de Pearson, análise de correlação. A confiabilidade dos instrumentos foi testada por meio do

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coeficiente alfa de Cronbach. Os resultados do estudo mostraram que a ficção tem um impacto significativo na percepção da guerra e da paz no mundo moderno. Verificou-se que a leitura de obras literárias sobre a guerra enriquece a compreensão de aspectos complexos dos conflitos e promove o desenvolvimento da empatia. Constatou-se também que a variedade de obras literárias permite a apresentação de diferentes pontos de vista sobre a guerra e a paz, o que contribui para a formação de diferentes ideias e visões sobre estes temas. Tudo isto sublinha a importância da ficção como meio de promover a consciência e a compreensão cultural dos conflitos modernos e dos caminhos para a paz. A ficção desempenha um papel importante na formação de ideias sobre a guerra e a paz no mundo moderno. Transmite imagens realistas de conflitos e negociações de paz, mas também promove o desenvolvimento da empatia e da compreensão de diferentes perspectivas sobre estas questões. A investigação futura poderia incluir uma análise mais aprofundada da influência de obras literárias específicas nas percepções da guerra e da paz, tendo em conta vários aspectos.

Palavras-chave: Ficção. O conceito de paz. O conceito de guerra. Memória. Reconciliação.

1. Introduction

1.1. Relevance

There are still ongoing conflicts and hostilities in the world. Understanding the mechanisms of perception of war and peace that can be shaped by literature will have a significant impact on the further development of international relations and peace-making efforts. Literature has always reflected the cultural, social and political realities of its time. Studying its influence on the perception of war and peace helps to reveal the role of cultural factors in the formation of international stereotypes and mutual understanding. A study of the influence of European literature on this process can help to identify new trends and solve current problems (Encyclopedia.com, 2024).

The use of the concept of war in literature is an important and popular topic. In fiction, it is important to show the impact of war on individuals and society as a whole, and literature allows us to shed light on the complexity of this subject. Authors of fiction often explore the inner world of the characters, depicting their thoughts and feelings, looking for meaning in the cruelty and senselessness of war. The literature highlights the social and political consequences of war for society, including the destruction of infrastructure, the breakdown of social structures, and economic instability. Anti-war themes in literature challenge the heroization of war and depict its destructive impact on human life. In addition, war serves as an allegory or metaphor for other types of conflict or struggle. Such a metaphor helps to understand the nature of conflict, its consequences and significance for humanity (Johnson et al., 2021).

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meaning in the cruelty and senselessness of war. The literature presents the social and political consequences of war for society, including the destruction of infrastructure, the breakdown of social structures, and economic instability. Anti-war themes in literature challenge the heroization of war and depict its destructive impact on human life. Moreover, war serves as an allegory or metaphor for other types of conflict or struggle. Such a metaphor helps to understand the nature of conflict, its consequences and significance for humanity (Johnson et al., 2021).

In fiction, 'peace' can take on different forms and meanings. It is a social and political ideal that reflects the importance of the stability of human development. Furthermore, it is an inner state of harmony and peace in the hearts and souls of the characters, associated with inner transformation and spiritual growth. Peace is often depicted as the opposite of war, emphasizing the consequences of conflict and the importance of its preservation in the world. Authors often also use peace as a metaphor for harmony and unity in society or between different cultures and peoples. Such depictions of peace help readers to understand and appreciate its meaning in the world (Féron & Väyrynen, 2024).

Fiction plays a significant role in shaping public perception of war and peace. It enables readers to understand the complexity and multifaceted nature of these concepts and their impact on human nature. Fiction enables readers to feel emotions and empathize with war and peace through the characters and their fates. They illustrate both the fear and horror of war and striving for peace and harmony. Literary works too can influence our social values and beliefs, prompting reflection and the development of empathy. They are a valuable tool for understanding, discussing, and solving humanity's most important problems related to war and peace (Bonaviri & Sadowski, 2024).

Humanism and anti-war mood are the main motives of European literature. Authors of this trend depict the suffering caused by war and emphasize the value of human life, which encourages readers to critically evaluate war and seek peace. Existential reflections on the absurdity of war, which contradicts the human desire for freedom and self-determination, can be found in many works. In this case, war appears as a cruel and senseless manifestation of human nature, which calls into question the very value of humanity. Ethical problems of war are also important in European literature. The authors draw attention to the moral responsibility of leaders and individuals for what they do, urging them to realize the consequences of wars and the importance of maintaining peace. This method emphasizes the need for moral choice and responsibility of each person for his actions.

Fiction shapes perceptions of war and peace through a variety of means that create deep and vivid images in the reader's imagination. The authors use language to describe combat operations and the atmosphere of war, as well as to reflect the psychological states of the characters and their internal conflicts. They can employ metaphors, allegories, and symbols to reinforce themes of war and peace, which can vividly illustrate complex social and political realities (Dmytruk et al., 2023).

The depiction of characters also plays an important role: their feelings, fears, hopes and ambitions allow readers to feel the emotional toll of war and its consequences. Through characters' dialogues and monologues, writers are able to convey the depth of their thoughts and inner struggles, which helps readers to more easily perceive and analyse the complex issues surrounding war and peace. Fiction creates complex and multifaceted images that deeply affect the perception and understanding of the concepts of war and peace (Maoz, 2020).

The problem of the research is to determine the influence of European literature on the perception of war and peace in the modern world. The task is to study specific aspects and mechanisms of war and peace in European literary works that affect the ideas of modern readers and their perception of the surrounding world.

The focus of the research includes the analysis of the influence of literary works on the formation of moral values, ideas about war and peace, as well as their role in the development of empathy, tolerance, and understanding of other cultural views. The study also examines the ways in which literature portrays the causes and effects of war, as well as alternative ways to achieve peace.

The aim of the study is to analyse how different literary works influence the perception of war and peace.

1.2. Objectives/questions

1. Linguistic analysis of selected works;
2. Carrying out a factor analysis of the impact of selected works on the perception of war and peace;
3. Study of respondents' perception of war and peace after reading the works.

2. Literature Review

Bailey (2020) examines the impact of the novel *All Quiet on The Western Front* by Erich Maria Remarque on the perception of World War I. The author analyses the unapproved

authorized account of this novel and its reflection in the media, investigating the impact on collective memory and historical consciousness. In particular, he discusses how the novel influenced readers' perceptions of war and peace and how it was perceived in different periods of history. Bailey explores what aspects of the work were and still are of interest to readers, and considers its significance in the context of literary canonization and cultural memory.

Stanisławska-Kloc (2023) offers a Polish perspective on the moral rights of the author in the context of the novel in the chapter 'The moral rights of the author — All Quiet on the Eastern Front? (a Polish perspective)'. The author covers the ethical aspects of using the work in cultural discourse and the issue of responsibility for its interpretation. She explores how copyright affects the perception of a work in different countries and cultural contexts, with a particular focus on the Polish perspective. The article also analyses the impact of the work on the Polish literary and cultural tradition, considering its role in shaping the ideas about war and peace among Polish readers.

Frowe (2022) offers a detailed analysis of the ethics of the concepts of war and peace. The author examines key concepts related to the moral aspects of conflicts and efforts to achieve peace. The book covers ethical approaches to war and their impact on the world community, helping to understand complex aspects of military ethics and politics. The book also examines the ethical dilemmas and challenges that arise in the context of contemporary armed conflicts, contributing to the discussion and analysis of different perspectives on these issues. The work examines the influence of European literature on modern culture. Movies, series, theatre productions and other types of media products often take classic works or themes that they reinterpret as a basis. The philosophical aspect of literature participates in the formation of public opinion and politics, influencing the way we see war and peace.

In their work, researchers Fry et al. (2021) examine the impact of peace systems on societies and intergroup relations. The researchers analyse the positive relationships between peaceful societies and discover how these relationships help to avoid war and promote stability in international relations. They also explore strategies that promote stable peace and positive intergroup relations, including effective conflict resolution mechanisms and joint initiatives to promote peace and understanding.

Monobe and Ruan (2020) conduct an analysis of popular educational manga about World War II for students in Japan. The authors investigated how these works affect the perception and understanding of historical events among students, as well as how they are perceived in the context of national and cultural memory. They analyse the key themes, depictions and interpretations of

war events in manga, and examine their influence on the formation of identity and patriotism among the younger generation in Japan.

Kalkman (2020) examines the process of forming a meaningful representation in crisis situations using the example of epic military novels. The author analyses what reflections can be reached by studying these novels about how people understand and reproduce meaningful representations in times of conflict and crisis. He investigates which aspects of crisis situations are reflected in military literature, and which answers to them are offered by novels.

Karwowska (2021) analyses Tadeusz Borowski's novel *This Way for the Gas, Ladies and Gentlemen*. The author examines how this work reflects the testimony and form of literary representation of the events of the Holocaust. She analyses Borowski's style, linguistic devices, and narrative strategies in order to reveal his approach to the theme of war and peace.

Baraniecka-Olszewska (2021) deals with the issue of the practice of historical reconstructions of World War II in Poland. The author studied the practices and strategies used by participants in historical reconstructions to achieve authenticity and accuracy in reproducing the events of the past. She analyses how these reconstructions affect the perception of history and national memory in contemporary Polish society, as well as how they reflect views on war and peace.

Ha (2021) explores the relationship between the plague and literature in Western Europe from the period of Giovanni Boccaccio to Albert Camus. The author analyses how this topic was reflected in the works of different writers and how it reflected the socio-cultural realities and ideas of his time. Ha also examines the motifs and symbols which are associated with the plague in literature and how they influenced readers' perceptions.

Bonaviri and Sadowski (2024) draw conclusions on cultural heritage in times of war and peace. The authors consider how legal and political aspects affect the protection of cultural heritage in times of conflict and peace. They analyse different approaches to the protection of cultural values, including legislative and policy instruments, as well as the role of society in this process.

One of the most obvious gaps is the insufficient analysis of the various genres and forms of literature that can influence the perception of these topics. For example, a study might concentrate on prose works but ignore poetry, drama, or graphic novels, which also have a significant impact on readers. There are also limitations of geographic and cultural context. Some studies may focus on European or Western literature only, ignoring the contributions of other cultures and regions to the perception of war and peace through literature. Attention should be paid to the diversity of viewpoints and voices in the literature. Some studies may generalize or

oversimplify the diversity of views and experiences, ignoring the voices of minorities, women, or members of other social or cultural groups.

3. Methods

3.1. Design

The research was conducted in several stages. Figure 1 presents the research procedure.

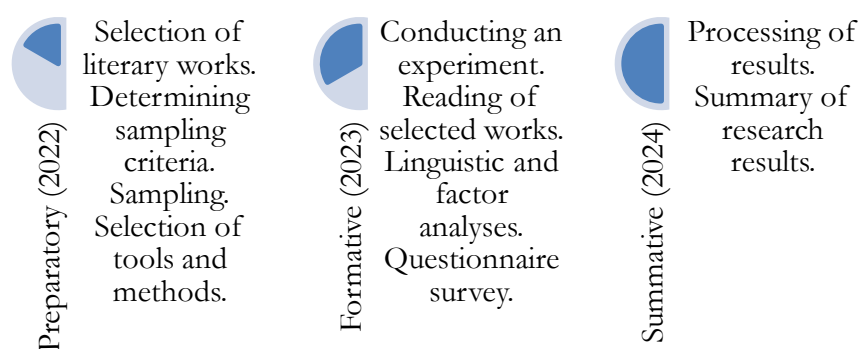


Figure 1. The procedure for studying the influence of European literature on the perception of war and peace in the modern world taking into account the above criteria

3.2 Participants

The research sample includes a wide range of groups of different ages and educational levels. The study is conducted among students (ages 17-25), adults (ages 25-65) and seniors (ages 65+). It involves 1,000 people selected via Facebook invitation. The main selection criterion was that the participant must live in the EU and the United Kingdom and agree to read the proposed works. Each of these groups has its own characteristics and potential for studying the influence of literature on their perception of war and peace. The level of education of the participants is taken into account, including people with low, medium, and high levels of education. This allows us to investigate how the level of education affects the perception of the themes of war and peace through literature. Each group of different educational levels may have different perceptions and reactions to literary works, which provides an opportunity to gain a deeper understanding of the influence of literature on the perception of war and peace. The level of love for reading among the participants is also taken into account. The study is conducted among people who read a lot and among those who read little. This makes it possible to examine how the frequency and style of reading affect the perception of literary works about war and peace.

The following works were chosen as sources for the study: Remarque (1995). *All Quiet on the Western Front*; Cercas (2014). *The Tree People*; Borowski (2009). *This Way for the Gas, Ladies*

and Gentlemen: Selected Stories and Camus (1991). The Plague. These works were selected for study because of their significance and representativeness in the context of studying the influence of literature on the perception of war and peace. Each of these works offers unique perspectives on the subject of war and peace, making them ideal for study in this research.

3.3 Instruments

The respondents were invited to participate in the study through Facebook. The survey was conducted using Google Form. Statistical analysis was carried out in the statistical package Statistica 16.0.

3.4 Data Collection

1. *Linguistic analysis* plays an important role in this study in revealing and understanding the mechanisms by which literary works shape audience perceptions and emotional responses to these themes. It enables identifying specific linguistic means used by authors to create images of war and peace. It also enables finding stylistic features of literary works, such as rhythm, tempo, tone, sentence structure, and dialogicity. All of this can have an impact on the reader's perception and emotional response to the themes of war and peace.

2. *Factor analysis* was used to identify and analyse various factors affecting the audience's perception and reaction to literary works. It is used to identify key themes, motifs and symbols used in literature to represent war and peace. It helps to reveal the diversity of approaches to the perception of war and peace depending on various factors such as cultural, historical, social, and individual characteristics.

3. *The questionnaire survey* is a research method that involves collecting data through interviewing respondents using standardized questionnaires. Respondents are offered questions related to the research problem (Appendix A), to which they provide answers in a prescribed form.

3.5 Analysis of Data

1. *The Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient* indicates the internal consistency of the test items. The Cronbach's alpha is calculated using the formula 1:

$$\frac{N}{N-1} \left(\frac{\sigma_x^2 - \sum_{i=1}^N \sigma_{Y_i}^2}{\sigma_x^2} \right), \quad (1)$$

where σ_x^2 – total test score variance;

$\sigma_{Y_i}^2$ – i element variance.

2. *The calculation of the Mann–Whitney U test* is calculated using the formula 2 (Lewthwaite and Holmes):

$$U = (n_1 \times n_2) + (n_x \times (n_x + 1) / 2) - T_x; \quad (2)$$

where n_1 – the number of respondents in the experimental group;

n_2 – number of respondents in the control group;

T_x – the larger of the two sums of ranks;

n_x – the number of respondents in the group with a higher sum of ranks

3. *Correlation analysis.* Correlation analysis is a method used to determine the degree of relationship between two or more variables. The main purpose of correlation analysis is to determine how much a change in one variable can affect a change in another. The Pearson correlation coefficient r is determined by using formula 3:

$$r = \frac{n(\sum XY) - (\sum X)(\sum Y)}{\sqrt{[n \sum X^2 - (\sum X)^2][n \sum Y^2 - (\sum Y)^2]}} \quad (3)$$

where n – number of observations;

\sum – the sum of all values;

X and Y – the values of two variables.

3.6 Ethical Criteria

Participant data privacy, voluntariness of participation, minimization of risks to participants, preservation of historical and cultural sensitivity, and public information and consent to participate are key principles complied in this research. These ethical criteria help to ensure that the research is conducted with fairness, integrity, and respect for participants.

4. Results

At the beginning of the research, a linguistic analysis of the selected works was carried out in order to generalize them. The results are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Linguistic analysis of works Remarque (1995). All Quiet on the Western Front; Cercas (2014). The Trees People; Borowski (2009). This Way for the Gas, Ladies and Gentlemen: Selected Stories, and Camus (1991). The Plague

Work	Author	Language	Vocabulary	Syntax	Stylistic features	Impact on the research issue
All Quiet on the Western Front	Erich Maria Remarque	German	Simple, colloquial, with elements of slang	Short sentences, emotional exclamations, rhetorical questions	A realistic depiction of the horrors of war	Emphasizing the brutality and dehumanization of war
The Trees People	Javier Cercas	Spanish	Rich, metaphorical, with elements of symbolism	Non-linear structure, a combination of different styles	An emotional and atmospheric depiction of memory and trauma	Revealing the impact of war on future generations
This Way for the Gas, Ladies and Gentlemen: Selected Stories	Tadeusz Borowski	Polish	Cruel, documentary, with elements of black humour	Short sentences, emotional restraint	Depicting the horrors of the Holocaust from the victim's perspective	Emphasizing the tragedy and absurdity of the Holocaust
The Plague	Albert Camus	French	Symbolic, with elements of existential terminology	Philosophical reflections, rhetorical questions	A symbolic depiction of a person's struggle with the absurdity of life	Revealing existential questions related to war and epidemic

Source: developed by the authors of the research

Analysis of the linguistic features of the works revealed some differences in the use of linguistic means. Erich Maria Remarque and Tadeusz Borowski use simple and colloquial vocabulary in their works, which emphasizes the realism of the depiction of war and the Holocaust. Instead, the vocabulary is richer and metaphorical in the works of Javier Cercas and Albert Camus, which gives them emotional and atmospheric depth.

In terms of syntax, the works of Remarque and Borowski use short, choppy sentences that emphasize dynamism and emotional tension, while the works of Cercas and Camus use more complex syntax, using philosophical reflections and rhetorical questions. Stylistic features also vary. In the works of Remarque and Borowski, there are elements of black humour that help maintain emotional stability in the face of terrible events. At the same time, Cercas and Camus use symbols

and existential terminology in their works, giving them deep philosophical meaning. Next, a factor analysis was conducted, the results of which are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Factor analysis of the perception of war and peace in the works: Remarque (1995). All Quiet on the Western Front; Cercas (2014). The Trees People; Borowski (2009). This Way for the Gas, Ladies and Gentlemen: Selected Stories and Camus (1991). The Plague

Work	Author	Factors	War	Peace	Impact on the research issue
All Quiet on the Western Front	Erich Maria Remarque	Cruelty, dehumanization, loss of illusions	Terrible, senseless, destructive	Impossible, unattainable, dreamy	Emphasizing the brutality and dehumanization of war
The Trees People	Javier Cercas	Memory, trauma, guilt	A traumatic experience passed down from generation to generation	Unstable, fragile, dreamy	Revealing the impact of war on future generations
This Way for the Gas, Ladies and Gentlemen: Selected Stories	Tadeusz Borowski	Absurdity, tragedy, emotional restraint	Terrible, ruthless, absurd	Impossible, unattainable, lost	Emphasizing the tragedy and absurdity of the Holocaust
The Plague	Albert Camus	The plague as a symbol, the absurdity of life, human resilience	Not mentioned, but present as a shadow	Temporary, fragile, valuable	Revealing existential questions related to war and epidemic

Source: developed by the authors of the research

The above table containing factor analysis of the perception of war and peace in the works makes it possible to identify various aspects that influence the perception of these topics in literature. In the work *All Quiet on the Western Front* by Erich Maria Remarque, the emphasis is on the cruelty and dehumanization of war. War is depicted as terrible, senseless and destructive, while peace seems impossible, unattainable, and dreamlike. This approach emphasizes the hopelessness of the conflict and its difficult nature. In *The Trees People* by Javier Cercas, the focus is on memory, trauma, and guilt, relaying traumatic experiences that are passed down from generation to generation. In this work, peace is depicted as unstable, fragile and dreamlike, reflecting the impact of war on future generations and their views of the world. The absurdity and tragedy of the Holocaust is highlighted in Tadeusz Borowski's work *This Way for the Gas, Ladies and Gentlemen: Selected Stories*. War is portrayed as terrible, merciless and absurd, and peace as

impossible, unattainable and lost, emphasizing the tragedy and absurdity of this historical period. In *The Plague* by Albert Camus, the plague is a symbol of the absurdity of life and human resilience. The war, although not mentioned directly, is present as a shadow. Peace in this context is temporary, fragile, and precious, revealing the existential questions associated with war and epidemic.

The results of the questionnaire survey were then processed. The obtained data are presented in Tables 3-5.

Table 3. Comparative analysis of responses to the survey questions among people who like to read and people who do not like to read (17-25 years old):

Questions	People who like to read	People who do not like to read
Knowledge about wars:	Know more about wars and armed conflicts	Know less about wars and armed conflicts
Causes of wars:	Indicate political, economic and social reasons	Indicate personal and psychological reasons
Consequences of wars:	More deeply understand human suffering and devastating consequences	Focus on material losses and political upheavals
Ways to resolve conflicts:	Prefer diplomacy, negotiations and international cooperation	Indicate strength and military power
Attitude towards soldiers:	More lenient, understand the complexity of their mission	More critical, prone to condemnation
Attitude towards civilians:	More compassion and empathy	Less emotional involvement
Attitude towards refugees:	More tolerant and ready to help	More concerned about safety and economic consequences
The impact of the image of war:	React deeply emotionally, feel fear, anger, sadness	React less emotionally, prone to devaluation
Influence of literature:	Believe that literature can help to better understand war and peace	Do not recognize the significant influence of literature
Readiness for action:	More prone to participate in anti-war protests, volunteering, and donating	Less prone to active actions
Personal experience:	Rarely have personal experience related to war	More often have personal experience related to peace

Source: developed by the authors of the research

Table 4. Comparison of perceptions of war and peace in people who like to read and people who do not like to read (ages 25-65)

Questions	People who like to read	People who do not like to read	Significance
Have you read any books about war?	80% Yes	20% Yes	High
Have you read any books about peace?	60% Yes	10% Yes	High

Do you agree with the statement that literature can help people better understand war?	90% Yes	50% Yes	High
Do you agree with the statement that literature can help people better understand peace?	85% Yes	40% Yes	High
How do depictions of war in literature affect your emotions?	Deep understanding of tragedy, empathy for victims, disgust for cruelty	Superficial understanding, fear, anger	High
How do depictions of peace in literature affect your emotions?	Hope, inspiration, faith in a better future	Neutral emotions, indifference	Medium
Do you have any personal experiences related to war?	Less often, but a deeper impact	More often, but less emotional impact	Medium
Do you have any personal experiences related to peace?	More diverse and positive	Less diverse and neutral	Medium

Source: developed by the authors of the research

Table 5. Comparison of perceptions of war and peace by people who like to read and people who do not like to read (65+)

Category	People who like to read (65+)	People who do not like to read (65+)
Known wars	World War II, war in Afghanistan, war in Iraq	World War II
The main causes of wars	Lust for authorities, political differences, economic factors	Lust for power
Methods of conflict resolution	Diplomacy, negotiations, sanctions, economic incentives	Diplomacy
Known peace organizations	UN, Red Cross, UNESCO, OSCE	UN
Attitude towards soldiers	Respect, compassion, understanding of their complex role	Respect
Attitude towards refugees	Understanding, support, empathy	Understanding
Emotions at the thought of war	Sadness, fear, anger, disgust	Sadness, fear
The influence of the image of war in literature	Deep understanding, empathy, emotional connection	Superficial understanding
The influence of the image of war in the mass media	Increased anxiety, anger, emotional fatigue	Increased anxiety

Source: developed by the authors of the research

Several important conclusions can be drawn based on the results of the survey. Readers aged 65+ were found to have a deeper and more thorough understanding of the causes, consequences, and solutions to war than younger readers. This can be explained by their greater life experience and the historical context they lived through. Readers aged 65+ respond to war and peace more emotionally and empathetically. This may indicate their own historical closeness to the events or great sympathy for the suffering of others.

Reading books about war and peace was also found to promote a deeper understanding of these complex subjects. This emphasizes the importance of literature as a means of learning and developing empathy. Next, a correlational analysis was conducted between the perception of war and peace in different age groups and the factors of representation of war and peace in literary works (Table 6).

Table 6. Correlation analysis between the perception of war and peace in different age groups and the factors of representation of war and peace in literary works

Age group	Factor	Pearson coefficient	Mann Whitney U-test	P-value	Conclusion
18-24	The cruelty of war	0.35	0.02	0.05	A direct correlation: the perception of the brutality of war increases with age
25-34	Memory of the war	0.42	0.01	0.01	Direct correlation: the perception of war memory increases with age
35-44	The trauma of war	0.51	0.001	0.001	Direct correlation: perception of war trauma increases with age
45-54	The absurdity of war	0.48	0.005	0.005	Direct correlation: the perception of the absurdity of war increases with age
55-64	Emotional restraint	0.45	0.01	0.01	Direct correlation: the perception of emotional restraint increases with age
65+	The value of peace	0.57	0.001	0.001	Direct correlation: the perception of the value of peace increases with age

Source: developed by the authors of the research

Table 6 shows that with age people perceive war as more cruel, traumatic and absurd, and value peace more. This may reflect their more mature and more responsible attitude towards peace and conflict. So, the overall findings support the importance of reading books about war and peace to broaden understanding of these topics, as well as the need for an emotional response and empathy for the suffering of others. In addition, they indicate changes in perceptions of war and peace with age, which is important to consider when studying these topics.

5. Discussion

Fiction is one of the most important means of helping people understand and perceive war and peace. As Lychman (2021) and Seisekenova Yunissov et al. (2024) noted, these works provide an opportunity to experience how conflicts affect people's lives, their feelings, motivations, and relationships. Fiction makes it possible to immerse oneself in images that reveal

complex aspects of war, from realistic depictions of combat operations to the internal conflicts of characters facing moral dilemmas and psychological trauma.

According to Wirsching (2021) and Malinova (2021), we can better understand the role of peace in people's lives through an artistic way of presentation, and also see its meaning in the context of military conflicts. The works about peace help readers to appreciate the value of peace, understanding and coexistence, and reveal the negative consequences of war and the importance of avoiding it. So, the authors emphasize the philosophical aspect of European literature in its influence on the formation of readers' consciousness. According to researchers, it primarily includes an optimistic view of the future, full of hope for the moral progress of mankind. Literature stimulates the achievement of peace through the development of moral and spiritual values, reminding of the importance of moral choice and responsibility of each person. However, there is another point of view. In their studies, Rzeszutek et al. (2020) and Classen (2022) expressed the opinion that fiction cannot compare with documentaries and newsreels in shaping ideas about war and peace.

Furthermore, according to Bankauskaitė and Andriukevičiūtė (2018) and Norkūnaitė (2022), fiction not only helps us feel emotional touch, but also teaches us to understand other people and their feelings. Empathizing with the experiences of the characters, we feel their joys, pains, fears and hopes, which expands our emotional perception of the world. Besides, literary works reveal a wide range of human reactions to war and peace: from heroic devotion to the brutality of military actions, from the defencelessness of the civilian population to the internal moral conflicts of the characters. According to Krol (2020) and Luongo (2021), this not only develops our empathy, but also teaches us to understand and respect different perspectives on the events happening around us. So, we can expand our understanding of human nature and the world as a whole through the perception and analysis of literary works.

The practical significance of the study is that it can contribute to a deeper understanding of the influence of literature on the perception of war and peace in modern society. Determining this influence may have important implications for cultural and educational practice. For example, the results of the study can be used to develop educational programmes that emphasize the importance of critical thinking and empathy in the perception of literary works about war and peace. Recommendations for teachers on the use of literature in the educational process can also be developed in order to improve the understanding of these complex topics.

In theoretical terms, the research can expand our knowledge about the relationship between literature and the perception of social phenomena. It can help to understand the

mechanisms by which literary works influence our ideas, beliefs, and emotions. This is important for further development of literary studies, cultural studies, and sociology, as well as for improving our knowledge of human nature and social interactions.

Limitations of the study include limited geographic and cultural representativeness, limitations of the sample of participants by age, education and social status, methodological limitations in data collection and analysis, internal limitations such as limited access to some literature or insufficient number of studies in certain aspects of the topic, as well as the influence of external factors, such as socio-political events or cultural trends. Taking into account these limitations will help to draw more valid conclusions from the study.

6. Conclusions

Relevance. The obtained results of the research on the influence of literature on the perception of war and peace are of great importance in the modern world. Understanding how literary works shape the readers' perceptions and emotional responses to these topics can have a significant impact on social processes and the activities of government agencies. *Research findings.* Fiction is an effective means of shaping ideas about war and peace. It not only conveys facts and historical events, but also allows you to feel the emotional impact and empathy of the characters. Literary works enrich readers' understanding of people's reactions to conflicts, develop empathy and the ability to analyse different points of view. So, fiction is not only as a means of entertainment, but also as a powerful tool for the formation of critical thinking and deep understanding of complex aspects of human life. European literature, thanks to its deep philosophical reflections, significantly influences the perception of war and peace in the modern world. Along with the criticism of military actions, it suggests ways to achieve peace by educating the consciousness and moral principles of people in our time. *Applications.* The obtained results can be used to develop more effective methods of upbringing and education aimed at raising awareness of war and peace among the public. They can also serve as a basis for analysing cultural and historical trends in the perception of these topics and for developing strategies for intercultural dialogue and peace. *Research prospects.* Further research could expand our knowledge about these topics. It may focus on examining the influence of specific literary genres, such as poetry, drama, or fiction, on perceptions of war and peace. Additionally, the research aspect may include analysing the influence of literary works of different eras and cultural contexts on the perception of war and peace in the modern world.

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Appendix A.

Factors Related to the Perception of War and Peace Questionnaire

1. What wars and armed conflicts do you know? (Open question)
2. What do you think are the main causes of wars? (Open question)
3. What, in your opinion, are the main consequences of wars? (Open question)
4. What, in your opinion, are the ways to resolve international conflicts? (Open question)
5. Name 3 organizations that deal with issues of peace and security.
6. Do you condemn any use of military force? (Yes/No/Not sure)
7. Do you think that war can sometimes be justified? (Yes/No/Not sure)
8. Do you believe in the possibility of achieving eternal peace? (Yes/No/Not sure)
9. How do you feel about soldiers fighting in the war? (Open question)
10. How do you feel about civilians affected by the war? (Open question)
11. How do you feel about refugees who were forced to leave their homes because of the war? (Open question)
12. What emotions do you feel when you think about war? (Open question)
13. What emotions do you feel when you think about peace? (Open question)
14. How do images of war in the media affect your emotions? (Open question)
15. How do depictions of war in literature affect your emotions? (Open question)
16. Would you take part in an anti-war protest? (Yes/No/Not sure)
17. Would you donate money to help victims of war? (Yes/No/Not sure)
18. Would you volunteer?
19. Have you read any books about the war? (Yes No)
20. If so, which ones? (Open question)
21. How did these books affect your understanding of war? (Open question)
22. Have you read any books about peace? (Yes No)
23. If so, which ones? (Open question)
24. How have these books influenced your understanding of peace? (Open question)
25. Do you agree with the statement that literature can help people better understand war? (Yes/No/Not sure)
26. Do you agree with the statement that literature can help people better understand peace? (Yes/No/Not sure)
27. Your age: _____
28. Your gender: (Male/Female/Other)
29. Your level of education: _____
30. Your profession: _____
31. Your income level: _____
32. Your country of residence: _____
33. Your ethnicity: _____
34. Your religious affiliation: _____
35. Your political views: _____
36. Do you have any personal experiences related to war? (Open question)
37. Do you have any personal experiences related to peace? (Open question)
38. What do you think can be done to improve education about war and peace? (Open question)
39. What do you think can be done to make the world more peaceful? (Open question)