

: STRUCTURE :**17.0 Objectives****17.1 Introduction****17.2 Introduction to Literature****17.2.1 Views on Literature****17.2.2 Characteristics of Literature****17.2.3 Major Approaches to Criticism****17.3 Introduction to Criticism****17.3.1 Views on Literary Criticism****17.3.2 Objectives of Literary Criticism****17.3.3 Major Literary Theories****17.4 Introduction to Theory****17.4.1 Definition of Literary Theory****17.4.2 Major Literary Theories****17.5 Difference between Criticism and Literary Theory****17.6 Let Us Sum Up****17.7 Key Words****17.8 Questions****17.9 Books Suggested****Answers****17.0 OBJECTIVES**

In this unit, we shall discuss;

- the concept, definitions, characteristics of literature,
- the meaning, definitions and objectives of criticism,
- the notion of theory and have a glance at major theories.

On completing this unit, you should be able to;

- demonstrate the understanding of literature, criticism and theory,
- explain the characteristics and objectives of literature, criticism and theory,
- name major forms of literature, approaches to criticism as well as theories.

17.1 INTRODUCTION

Sometimes what looks simple and easy is actually quite complex, challenging and wide. Such is the thing with the three terms used in the title

of the unit also. If literature is an ocean of expression, imagination, creativity, criticism and theory are the navigators for a student. Hence, an understanding, knowledge and insight of these concepts are very vital for a student of literature. In this unit, we will endeavour to gain some basic knowledge about these three terms.

17.2 INTRODUCTION TO LITERATURE

In its broadest sense, literature is anything that is written and/or printed in the form of a book, magazine or pamphlet. It deals with and expresses experiences, ideas and emotions of man. Derived from the Latin word *litera*, meaning letter, the term literature is defined in Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms as a body of written works related by subject-matter, (e.g. the literature of computing), by language or place of origin (e.g. Russian Literature), or by prevailing cultural standards of merit.

17.2.1 Views on Literature :

To understand the term in a better way, have a look at some of the well-known views on literature :

- “Literature is anything that is printed, as long as it is related to the ideas and feelings of people, whether it is true or just a product of one's imagination.”–Webster
- Literature is writing which expresses and communicates thoughts, feelings and attitude towards life. – RJ Rees
- “Literature is writing that is considered by both critics and consumers to be of a high quality and cultural value, in which the creative use of language is prominent.”– Wordpress
- “Literature consists of those writing which interpret the meanings of nature and life, in words of charm and power, touched with the personality of the author, in artistic forms of permanent interest.” – Henry van Dyke
- “Great literature is simply language charged with meaning to the utmost possible degree.” – Ezra Pound
- “Literature adds to reality, it does not simply describe it. It enriches the necessary competencies that daily life requires and provides; and in this respect, it irrigates the deserts that our lives have already become.” – C. S. Lewis
- “It is in literature that the concrete outlook of humanity receives its expression.” – Alfred North Whitehead

17.2.2 Characteristics of Literature :

Based on the above views, following are the major characteristics of literature :

- It is a product of a creative imagination.
- It communicates experiences, thoughts and ideas.
- It is a criticism of life.
- It is a life-enhancing experience.

- It holds a mirror up to the nature.
- It makes familiar world unfamiliar
- It is connotative in nature.
- It requires some technical knowledge and craftsmanship.

Literature carries a great significance. In the words of Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, the famous German writer, philosopher and critic, “The decline of literature indicates the decline of a nation.” A great literature is an embodiment of a nation's customs and cultures, an artistic representation of the history of civilization and a document of society's evolution. Literature serves many purposes. It transmits values, preserves ideas and traditions. Sometimes it is also a driving force of change. A slice of life, as it is called by many; it is also a source of pleasure. Literature helps you understand the situation from other's point of view. Reading literature gives you an experience of living many lives at a time. In short, literature is an artistic representation of life, of varied human experiences, in different forms of expressions.

17.2.3 Major Forms of Literature :

Forms of literature can be divided into two in main : prose and poetry. Following are the glimpses of various forms.

Types of Poetry : Poetry is a type of literature that uses a creative blend of words and rhythm to create meaning. Sounds, images and ideas are presented in a concentrated manner. Listed below are the major types of poetry writing :

- **Epic :** An epic is a long poem narrating the deeds of heroic or legendary figures. Some examples are Iliad, Odyssey by Homer, Paradise Lost by Milton, The Mahabharata by Ved Vyas etc.
- **Ballad :** It is a story in the form of a poem using dialogue. It has been often orally transmitted. The Rime of the Ancient Mariner by Coleridge, The Lady of Shallot by Tennyson etc
- **Lyric :** It is a poem expressing the mood, feelings of the poet. Common lyric poems are ‘sonnet’, ‘ode’, ‘elegy’ etc. Stopping Woods by a Snowy Evening by Robert Frost, Success is Counted Sweetest by Emily Dickinson, O Captain! My Captain by Walt Whitman etc are some well-known lyrics.

With its origin in Italy in the 14 century, a sonnet is a poem of 14 lines. Some famous sonnets are Ozymandias by Shelley, Acquainted with the Night by Robert Frost, On His Blindness by Milton etc.

Ode is a formal poem. It is an address to a person or abstract entity. It is always serious in tone. Some examples are Ode to the Westwind by Shelley, Ode to Psyche by Keats, Ode to Duty by Wordsworth etc

An elegy is a poem written to commemorate or lament the death of someone. Lycidas by Milton laments the death of Edward King. In Adonis, Shelley mourns the death of Keats. Auden has written an elegy In the Memory of WB Yeats.

Types of Prose : Prose writing can be divided into two categories : Fiction and Non-Fiction. Novels, short stories, drama, one-act plays are works of fiction whereas essays, biographies, and autobiographies are the works of non-fiction. Given below is a brief explanation of them :

- **Novels :** It is a narrative with no specific rules regarding length, structure or form. Due to its flexibility, it is the most thriving form of literary writing. Tom Jones by Fielding, 1984 by George Orwell, The White Tiger by Arvind Adiga, To the Lighthouse by Virginia Woolf etc are some examples of this prose.
- **Short Stories :** As the name suggests, it is a short narrative; usually focusing on a single event with only one or two characters. After Twenty Years by O' Henry, To Build a Fire by Jack London, Lottery by Premchand etc
- **Drama :** It is basically meant for performance. More than narration, action matters more. Like other forms of literature, this too can be divided into History Play, Tragedy, Comedy, Romance etc. Macbeth by Shakespeare, Dr Faustus by Marlowe, Nagamandala by Girish Karnad etc are some examples of this genre.
- **One-Act Plays :** As indicated by its name, it is a play in one act. The narrative may be divided into various scenes. Some famous one-act plays are A Marriage Proposal by Anton Chekhov, Endgame by Samuel Beckett, A Memory of Two Mondays by Arthur Miller.
- **Essays :** A short prose composition, an essay discusses a subject or proposes an argument. Self-Reliance by Emerson, On Catching the Train by AG Gardiner, etc are some known essays. Some famous essayists in English are Francis Bacon, Addison, Steele, Hazlitt, DH Lawrence, etc.
- **Biographies :** An account of the life of a famous individual from birth to death or a significant point in life. Life of Samuel Johnson by James Boswell, Will in the World : How Shakespeare Became Shakespeare by Stephen Greenblatt, etc are the examples in this genre.
- **Autobiographies :** It is a history of one's life written by that person. My Experiments with Truth by Mahatma Gandhi, My Story by Kamala Das, Mein Kampf by Adolf Hitler, etc are some famous autobiographies.

In the initial days, literature was only written for the public to read, enjoy and appreciate. The invention of the printing press by Johannes Gutenberg in the 15th century initiated mass production of books and making dissemination of knowledge and information easier. However, it was only the first quarter of the 19th century that showed the emergence of English as an area of study. As a part of educational reforms, in 1826, a University College was established and from 1828 English was offered as a subject for study. It was only in 1831 that English Literature was introduced as a course. The study of literature requires certain skills and knowledge on the part of the students/readers and criticism performs this role.

17.3 INTRODUCTION TO CRITICISM

Literature is all about the creative delineation of a topic and thus is usually connotative in nature. They are not self-explanatory. Criticism helps in explaining the comprehensive meaning of a literary work. Criticism is books about books or literature about literature.

Although the word criticism gives negative vibrations, it can have positive implications if expressed and understood in the right spirit. In simple words, criticism is a set of tools to understand, study, analyse, interpret and evaluate a work of art and in this case, literature. It is useful to both, the writer as well as the reader. For a writer, it is a feedback and to a reader, it is a kind of notes that unearths the implied meaning of the text. It helps a reader understand various perspectives of the author and the artistic quality of the work. The way the use of tools depends on the artisans, the method, perspective and style of criticism too depend on the critic. Every critic has his/her own standards of judgements.

The responsibility of a literary critic is to attempt to arrive at a critical understanding of the aesthetic, social, political, and cultural connotations of a text. Hence, a literary critic searches for clues in the text that can render a logical understanding of the author's intent and ideologies behind the content. Criticism requires a close reading of the text. The text can be a literary work or critical work. Thus, criticism can be about the criticism which can be called meta-criticism. The process of criticism expects a critic to critique a literary work from a particular point of view or literary theory.

The meaning and objective of the words critique and criticism are also a matter of consideration. Though they look similar apparently, in fact, they are not exactly the same. As per the Merriam-Webster dictionary,

“Critique is an alteration of an archaic word that referred generally to criticism. Critique itself dates to the early 18th century and originally referred to a piece of writing that criticized a literary or artistic work. The words criticism, critique and review overlap in meaning. Criticism usually means “the act of criticizing” or a “remark or comment that expresses disapproval,” but it can also refer to the activity of making judgments about the qualities of books, movies, etc. (as in “literary criticism”). Critique is a somewhat formal word that typically refers to a careful judgment in which someone gives an opinion about something. Review can refer to an essay analyzing a literary or artistic work, but can also sometimes imply a more casual or personal opinion.”

Judy Reeves, in her book *Writing Alone, Writing Together : A Guide for Writers and Writing Groups* states that the difference between critique and criticism is like the difference between a crystal ball and a wrecking ball. For a layman, criticism means an act of fault-finding but for a student of literature, it means to pass a judgement based on a set of approved standards as well as close and dispassionate analysis. Till recently, the term critique was used as a noun, to denote the critical examination or review of merit of something and the doer of such an act is considered to be able to make a judgement. However, now, it is also used as a verb meaning to appraise something critically expecting one to be persuasive and logical

17.3.1 Views on Literary Criticism :

Following are some well-known and varied views on literary criticism :

- A perfect judge will read each work of wit
With the same spirit that its author writ; – Pope,
- To judge of poets is only the faculty of poets and not of all poets but the best. – Ben Jonson
- Literary criticism can be no more than a reasoned account of the feeling produced upon the critic by the book he is criticising. – DH Lawrence
- Criticism must consider both what is physically present in a text and, no less importantly, what is missing in terms of the reader's system of expectations. – Yury Lotman, Ardis
- Evaluation, so readily taken for granted as the first purpose of criticism, might in practice be its least helpful starting point. – Catherine Belsey

17.3.2 Objectives of Literary Criticism :

On the basis of the deliberations done, the following can be the broad objectives of literary criticism :

- To broaden literary understanding about the author, style, structure and genre
- To evaluate literary works from various perspectives
- To place the authors on the basis of their contribution
- To help a reader choose a better option in reading
- To improve critical and interpreting abilities
- To explore various possibilities and expand imagination
- To enhance empathetic abilities

The history of criticism dates back to the Greek antiquity where Plato (427 BC), credited with the establishment of first higher learning institution in the western world, and his great disciple Aristotle (384–322 BC), the father of Western Philosophy propounded the founding principles of criticism. After that criticism journeyed extensively and developed widely in the hands of critics from the medieval era to the modern era who provided various canons to judge literature. These canons include elements of a literary work, qualities of a critic, principles, process and techniques of criticism.

17.3.3 Major Approaches to Criticism :

Listed below are some of the Approaches to Criticism to give you a bird's eye view :

- **Historical Criticism** : It is a general perception that every writer is the product of his age. Historical criticism studies the era in which the author lived and weighs the influence that time on the literary work. eg. The novels of Charles Dickens tell a lot about the Victorian era. Historical criticism assists in understanding why Dickens wrote whatever he wrote.

- **Biographical Criticism** : Biographical criticism relies heavily on the life and world of the author for a better understanding of the intent of the author and critiques, how the work is coloured by the author's experiences, beliefs and prejudices.
- **Didactic Criticism** : Teaching is one of the functions of literature. Hence, one of the ways to look at a literary work is to study the message conveyed or lessons taught through the literary work. This approach inquires into the moral value of the work and accepts or rejects it based upon its compatibility with their moral code or beliefs.
- **Structural Criticism** : This approach studies the text objectively believing that nothing is outside the text. Hence, the focal point is the form, use of symbolism and metaphor. The analysis is solely based on the content on the pages.

Till recently, criticism used to get published as an essay or in a book form or even as an article in various magazines and journals. However, with the advent of technology, modern day criticism can also be found on social media and blogs.

Thus, criticism is a kind of discourse that advances the consciousness of readers, develops a better understanding of a literary work and works as lens in valuing a literary work. Hence, in the words of Frederick C Crews, “Literary criticism is the reasoned consideration of literary works and issues.”

17.4 INTRODUCTION TO THEORY

Simply stated, a literary theory is a systematic study of the nature of literature and provides a complete set of methods for analyzing literature. Theories are, in a way, lenses used by critics to view a piece of literature.

17.4.1 Definitions of Literary Theory :

As defined in the Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms, a theory is –

A shorthand term used since the 1970s to refer to a miscellaneous body of intellectual approaches that had increasingly become interlinked and mutually reinforcing in their repudiation of humanist traditions in literary study, history, aesthetics and philosophy.

Wolfreys, Womack and Robins in their book Key Concepts in Literary Theory describes –

Theory as a loosely wielded term which has become somewhat vacuous, at least potentially so. ‘theory’ refers, in the field of literary studies, to the critical movement which has emerged in the Anglo–American university since the 1960s as a response in large part to interest within the English–speaking academic world in particular strands of continental linguistics, narratology, psychoanalysis, semiotics and philosophy.

17.4.2 Major Literary Theories :

Listed below are some major literary theories :

- **New–Criticism** : Emerged in the early 20th century, new–criticism studies the relationship between the text and the meaning. It is one

of the varieties of formalism and dominated literary scene till early 1960. Major exponents of this theory include IA Richards, TS Eliot, Cleanth Brooks, John Crowe Ransom, Allen Tate, and Robert Penn Warren and William Empson.

- **Structuralism** : Ferdinand de Saussure, a Swiss linguist and semiotician's Course in General Linguistics (1916) changed the outlook of not only linguistics but nearly every branch of the humanities and the social sciences. It propounded the theory that the meaning of a text lies in the structures it employs. Major advocates of this theory are Ferdinand de Saussure, Roland Barthes, Jacques Derrida, Levi Strauss etc.
- **Reader–Response Theory** : Once the text is written, it no more belongs to the author. It is in the realm of the reader and the meaning of the text lies in the reaction of the reader. It is a reader that creates meaning. The promoters of this theory are by Norman Holland, Stanley Fish, Wolfgang Iser, Hans–Robert Jauss and Roland Barthes.
- **Feminist Theory** : The publication of Mary Wollstonecraft's Vindication of the Rights of Women (1792) is credited with the beginning of feminist view in literary studies. Both, male and female writers have contributed to this cause. Some famous works are John Stuart Mill's The Subjection of Women (1869), The Origin of the Family (1884) by Friedrich Engels, Virginia Woolf's A Room of One's Own (1929), The Second Sex (1949) by Simon de Beauvoir.
- **Marxist Theory** : Followers of this theory look at a literary work from the lenses of class conflict. An effort is made to understand the social and political meaning of literature. Working class is sympathized and capitalists are criticized. Marxist ideology is discussed in the works like The Communist Manifesto (1848), Preface to the Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy (1859), Das Kapital or Capital (1867) by Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels
- **Psychoanalysis** : The supporters of this theory try to study the psychological motivations of the characters or of the authors themselves. They apply the theory of Sigmund Freud, Jacques Lacan and Carl Jung.
- **Post–colonial Studies** : This theory has a historical linkage. It studies a literary work in the context of colonialism and colonial era. Major proponents of this theory are Frantz Fanon, Albert Memmi, Homi K Bhabha, Aime Cesaire, and Edward Said.
- **Eco–Criticism** : Also known as green–studies, eco–criticism studies the relationship between literature and its environment. The approach began in the USA and the UK in 1980 and 1990 respectively. Developed as a branch of eco–criticism, eco–feminism analyses the interconnection between the oppression of women and nature and draws parallels between the two.

17.5 DIFFERENCE BETWEEN CRITICISM AND LITERARY THEORY

This is a debatable topic but many opine that they are not the same. In simple words, theories are the methods to look at a literary work whereas criticism is an application of the method. Thus, the theory is understanding something and criticism is doing something. e.g. Psychoanalytic criticism uses the techniques proposed by psychoanalysis to interpret a text. Sigmund Freud, for example, in his theory of psychoanalysis listed three levels of human personality : the consciousness, the conscience and the unconscious. He emphasised the importance of unconscious. Hamlet by Shakespeare can be studied in the light of this theory. Hamlet has been considered an Oedipus tragedy. The play is about the hero's hesitation in avenging the death of his father. If it is studied from the psychoanalytic canons, it can be understood that Hamlet's hesitation in killing his uncle is caused by his own guilt. This involves his own unconscious desire to kill his father and take his place as the object of his mother's love.

To sum up, it can be concluded that literature is a creative discourse whereas criticism and theories are analytical discourses. All three activities require a great amount of observation, knowledge, skills, insight and understanding of human life.

17.6 LET US SUM UP

In this unit, a bird's eye view is given to help you understand the concept of literature, criticism and critical theory as well as their importance as a student of literature and language.

Denotatively speaking, every written content be it an article, advertisement, editorial, poem, novel or short story can be called literature. From an aesthetic point of view, every piece of writing that shows some creative use of language and carries some cultural or social value is literature. This specifically includes poems, short stories, drama, one-act plays, essays, etc. Literature not only is an expression of the culture, values, and voice of the nation in which it is written, it is also a perspective towards time and life of a nation in a particular era.

The simplest meaning of the term 'criticism' is that it is literature about literature. Its purpose is to study, evaluate and interpret the point of view of the author and to explain it to the reader. It has its tools and method to analyse a text. A literary text can be studied in the light of various critical approaches and literary theories. e.g. The Role of Chance in the Novels of Hardy is an instance of criticism.

Literary theory, on the other hand, is an inquiry into the principles of the study of literature. It tries to investigate how meanings are generated. Theorists, thus, discuss varied ways to study literature and critics study literature in the light of these theories.

17.8 KEY WORDS

Word	Meaning/s
concept	Idea, notion, thought, perception
glance	Look, glimpse, peep
navigators	Guides, skippers
endeavour	Efforts, attempt, try
prevailing	Usual, main, fundamental
competencies	Capabilities, abilities, skills
irrigates	Waters, floods, moistens
embodiment	Personification, example, expression
evolution	Development, growth, progress
transmits	Conveys, communicates, spreads
dissemination	Distribution, broadcasting, diffusion
emergence	Appearance, rise, arrival, development
delineation	Description, definition, explanation
unearths	Extracts, uncovers, discovers, exposes
perspectives	Viewpoints, outlooks, views
aesthetic	Artistic, visual, beautiful
connotations	Meanings, implications, suggestions, associations
ideologies	Philosophies, beliefs, principles, ideas, thoughts
meta-criticism	“A criticism of criticism, the goal of which is to scrutinize systematically the terminology, logic, and structure that undergird critical and theoretical discourse in general or any particular mode of such discourse” (Henderson and Brown).
critique	Analysis, assessment, evaluation
archaic	Old, ancient, out-dated, old-fashioned
persuasive	Convincing, influential, believable
antiquity	Ancient times, olden days, antique
propounded	Advocated, submitted, offered, proposed
medieval era	In the history of Europe, the Middle Ages (or medieval period) lasted from the 5th to the 15th century. It began with the fall of the Western Roman Empire and merged into the Renaissance and the Age of Discovery.
canons	Standards, rules, norms, principles
didactic	Moral, moralistic, improving
miscellaneous	Various, varied, mixed, diverse

repudiation	Denial, rejection, refusal
wielded	Exercised, used, had, employed
vacuous	Empty, blank, vacant, hollow
continental	Mainland, inland, interior, central
narratology	the branch of knowledge or criticism that deals with the structure and function of narrative and its themes, conventions, and symbols.
psychoanalysis	Psychoanalysis is defined as a set of psychological theories and therapeutic techniques that have their origin in the work and theories of Sigmund Freud. The core idea at the center of psychoanalysis is the belief that all people possess unconscious thoughts, feelings, desires, and memories.
semiotics	the study of signs and symbols and their use or interpretation.
colonialism	Expansionism, colonization, imperialism
ecocriticism	Ecocriticism is the study of literature and the environment from an interdisciplinary point of view, where literature scholars analyze texts that illustrate environmental concerns and examine the various ways literature treats the subject of nature.
eco-feminism	Ecofeminism is a branch of feminism that sees environmentalism, and the relationship between women and the earth, as foundational to its analysis and practice. Ecofeminist thinkers draw on the concept of gender to analyse the relationships between humans and the natural world.
pseudoscientific	falsely or mistakenly claimed or regarded as being based on scientific method.

17.9 QUESTIONS

- Write an essay on literature with reference to the definition given by Salman Rushdie wherein he states, "Literature is where I go to explore the highest and lowest places in human society and in the human spirit, where I hope to find not absolute truth but the truth of the tale, of the imagination and of the heart." You can cite the examples of literary works to prove your point.
- Write a note on the concept, process and purposes of criticism on the basis of the definitions given below :
 - To understand how the artist felt, however, is not criticism; criticism is an investigation of what the work is good for. ... Criticism ... is a serious and public function; it shows the race assimilating the individual, dividing the immortal from the mortal part of a soul. – George Santayana

- “Literary criticism can be no more than a reasoned account of the feeling produced upon the critic by the book he is criticizing. Criticism can never be a science : it is, in the first place, much too personal, and in the second, it is concerned with values that science ignores. The touchstone is emotion, not reason. We judge a work of art by its effect on our sincere and vital emotion, and nothing else. All the critical twiddle–twaddle about style and form, all this pseudoscientific classifying and analyzing of books in an imitation–botanical fashion, is mere impertinence and mostly dull jargon” – DH Lawrence
3. What is criticism ? What are the main objectives of criticism ? List and define any THREE approaches to criticism.
 4. What is a literary theory ? List and define any FIVE literary theories.

17.10 BOOKS SUGGESTED

1. Prasad B, An Introduction to English Criticism,(Macmillan India Ltd)
2. Prasad B, A Background to the study of English Literature (Trinity Press, Revised Edition)
3. Rees RJ, English Literature : An Introduction for Foreign Readers (Macmillan India Ltd)
4. Barry Peter, Beginning Theory (Viva Books Private Ltd, 3rd Edition)
5. Brooker and Widdowson, A Practical Reader In Contemporary Literary Theory, (Routledge)
6. Wolfreys and Womack, Key Concepts in Literary Theory, (Rawat Publication)

Web Resources for Self–Study

1. <https://www.britannica.com/art/literature>
2. https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/subject_specific_writing/writing_in_literature/literary_theory_and_schools_of_criticism/
3. http://elibrary.bsu.az/books_400/N_92.pdf

ANSWERS

1. In its broadest sense, literature is anything that is written and/or printed in the form of a book, magazine or pamphlet. It deals with and expresses experiences, ideas, and emotions of man. Derived from the Latin word *litera*, meaning letter, the term literature is defined in Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms as a body of written works related by subject–matter, (*e.g. the literature of computing*), *by language or place of origin (e.g Russian Literature)*, or *by prevailing cultural standards of merit*.

According to Rushdi, “Literature is where I go to explore the highest and lowest places in human society and in the human spirit, where I hope to find not absolute truth but the truth of the tale, of the imagination and of the heart.”

Rushdi conveys the following things in the above definition :

- a. Literature *helps explore the highest and lowest places in human society.*
- b. Literature *helps explore the highest and lowest places in the human spirit.*
- c. His expectations as a reader are *to find not absolute truth but the truth of the tale, of the imagination and of the heart.*

Explanation :

- a. **Literature helps explore the highest and lowest places in human society :** Literature is considered to be a mirror of society. Society is the source of inspiration for the situation, story as well as the characters. Every society has good and evil elements and literature reflects on these elements. eg. Shakespeare's Historical dramas talk about the things happening in royal palaces whereas the novels of Charles Dickens talks about the orphanages.
- b. **Literature helps explore the highest and lowest places in the human spirit :** Literature is about society and the people living in society. There are saints and demons, good-natured persons and evil-minded human-beings too. Literature offers glimpses in the life and mindset of all of them. eg. In the epic, the Mahabharata, there are the Pandavas, who suffer and sacrifice for friends and family members, as well as the Kauravas who try all the possible malevolence to take undeserved assets and favours.
- c. **His expectations as a reader are to find not absolute truth but the truth of the tale, of the imagination and of the heart :** Every work of art is the product of a writer's creative imagination. Literature gives the semblance of reality. Actually, every story is an expression of the writer's perception and the truth that s/he wanted to convey. eg. *Pygmalion* by GB Shaw talks about the state of education and woman in the Victorian Society. The picture portrayed by him in this play is his truth, his imagination. As a reader, one should try to understand the writer's point of view.

Thus, literature, according to the definition given, gives an opportunity to visit good places and bad places; to meet virtuous as well as corrupt people and to taste sweet, sour and bitter flavors of life.

2. Criticism is an analysis and evaluation of a literary work. It is done to appreciate the qualities the aesthetic value as well as assist a reader in understanding and appreciating a literary work. Varied meanings and objectives of this activity are given by many critics. Here, two definitions are under consideration.

The first definition by George Santayana conveys the following things about literary criticism :

- Criticism is an investigation of what the work is good for.

– **Concept of Criticism**

Criticism, as understood by a layman, is not a negative or fault-finding activity. It is an effort to analyse and assess the qualities that highlight the value to a literary work. A critic, through criticism, assists a reader in appreciating the value a literary work.

- Criticism is a serious and public function. – **Purpose of Criticism**

Criticism is a serious activity and is carried out for a reader who would like to and need to understand the aesthetic qualities of a literary work. It is published either in the form of an article, a book or as a chapter in a book.

- Criticism shows the race assimilating the individual, dividing the immortal from the mortal part of a soul. – **Purpose of Criticism**

Here the author is personifying a literary work. There can be certain things about a literary work which are likely to be forgotten by readers but there are certain things which make a literary work immortal. The purpose and objective of an act of criticism are to divide the immortal aspects from the mortal ones.

- We judge a work of art by its effect on our sincere and vital emotion, and nothing else. – **Process of Criticism**

This point offers the view of George Santayana and talks about how and what happens when a critic initiates the process of criticism. According to Santayana, criticism is a subjective activity as it is an outcome of the effect of reading on emotions which should be sincere. In short, a critic should express sincerely whatever he felt while reading.

The next definition by DH Lawrence offers another perspective to the act of criticism. Following things are expressed in the definition.

- Criticism is a reasoned account of the feeling produced upon the critic by the book. – **Concept of Criticism**

According to Lawrence, criticism is a rational activity. Much like Santayana, Lawrence too believes that emotions play a role but he adds that the critic is required to explain these emotions through the evidence from the literary work. Hence, he calls it a reasoned account of the feelings produced upon the critic.

- Criticism can never be a science: it is, in the first place, much too personal, and in the second, it is concerned with values that science ignores. – **Concept of Criticism**

Though Lawrence calls criticism a reasoned activity, he does not consider it a science for two reasons.

1. Criticism is a subjective activity as it is an outcome of the effect produced upon the critic on the reading the literary work. One critic may appreciate a literary work or an author whereas the other might disapprove a style or techniques. eg. Plato considered every work of art a slavish imitation and twice removed from reality whereas Aristotle approved the imitation and called it a creative imitation. Later on, Dryden stated, “It is not enough that

Aristotle has said so, for Aristotle drew his models of tragedy from Sophocles and Euripides; and he has seen ours, he might have changed his mind.” Thus, the standards of judgments can vary from critic to critic.

2. Criticism is concerned with values. While analyzing a literary work, the critic usually looks for the ethical, aesthetic, affective, social, historical, and existential meaning whereas in science there is no consideration for this affective domain. Science, on the other hand, would only take into account cognitive domain.
- The touchstone is emotion, not reason. All the critical twiddle-twaddle about style and form, all this pseudoscientific classifying and analyzing of books in an imitation-botanical fashion, is a mere impertinence and mostly dull jargon. – **Concept of Criticism**

Elaborating further on the concept of criticism, Lawrence states that the way a touchstone is used to judge the quality of gold, a touchstone can also be used to judge the quality of the work of art. This touchstone can only be emotions. All the other discussion, classifications, methods and approaches to study literature is a futile exercise

3. Literature is all about the creative delineation of a topic and thus is usually connotative in nature. They are not self-explanatory. Criticism helps in explaining the comprehensive meaning of a literary work. Criticism is books about books or literature about literature.

The responsibility of a literary critic is to attempt to arrive at a critical understanding of the aesthetic, social, political, and cultural connotations of a text. Hence, a literary critic searches for clues in the text that can render a logical understanding of the author's intent and ideologies behind the content. Criticism requires a close reading of the text. The text can be a literary work or critical work. Thus, criticism can be about the criticism which can be called meta-criticism. The process of criticism expects a critic to critique a literary work from a particular point of view or literary theory.

Objectives of Criticism :

- To broaden the literary understanding of the author, style, structure, and genre.
- To evaluate literary works from various perspectives.
- To place the authors on the basis of their contribution.
- To help a reader choose a better option in reading.
- To improve critical and interpreting abilities.
- To explore various possibilities and expand the imagination.
- To enhance empathetic abilities.
- **Historical Criticism:** It is a general perception that every writer is the product of his age. Historical criticism studies the era in which the author lived and weighs the influence that time on the literary work. eg. The novels of Charles Dickens tell a lot about the Victorian

era. Historical criticism assists in understanding why Dickens wrote whatever he wrote.

- **Biographical Criticism:** Biographical criticism relies heavily on the life and world of the author for a better understanding of the intent of the author and critiques, how the work is coloured by the author's experiences, beliefs, and prejudices.
 - **Didactic Criticism:** Teaching is one of the functions of literature. Hence, one of the ways to look at a literary work is to study the message conveyed or lessons taught through the literary work. This approach inquires into the moral value of the work and accepts or rejects it based upon its compatibility with their moral code or beliefs.
4. A literary theory is a systematic study of the nature of literature and provides a complete set of methods for analyzing literature. Theories are, in a way, lenses used by critics to view a piece of literature.
- **New-Criticism:** Emerged in the early 20th century, new-criticism studies the relationship between the text and the meaning. It is one of the varieties of formalism and dominated literary scene till early 1960. Major exponents of this theory include IA Richards, TS Eliot, Cleanth Brooks, John Crowe Ransom, Allen Tate, and Robert Penn Warren and William Empson.
 - **Structuralism:** Ferdinand de Saussure, a Swiss linguist and semiotician's Course in General Linguistics (1916) changed the outlook of not only linguistics but nearly every branch of the humanities and the social sciences. It propounded the theory that the meaning of a text lies in the structures it employs. Major advocates of this theory are Ferdinand de Saussure, Roland Barthes, Jacques Derrida, Levi Strauss etc.
 - **Reader-Response Theory:** Once the text is written, it no more belongs to the author. It is in the realm of the reader and the meaning of the text lies in the reaction of the reader. It is a reader that creates meaning. The promoters of this theory are by Norman Holland, Stanley Fish, Wolfgang Iser, Hans-Robert Jauss, and Roland Barthes.
 - **Feminist Theory:** The publication of Mary Wollstonecraft's *Vindication of the Rights of Women* (1792) is credited with the beginning of feminist view in literary studies. Both, male and female writers have contributed to this cause. Some famous works are John Stuart Mill's *The Subjection of Women* (1869), *The Origin of the Family* (1884) by Friedrich Engels, Virginia Woolf's *A Room of One's Own* (1929), *The Second Sex* (1949) by Simon de Beauvoir.
 - **Marxist Theory:** Followers of this theory look at a literary work from the lenses of class conflict. An effort is made to understand the social and political meaning of literature. The working class is sympathized and capitalists are criticized. Marxist ideology is discussed in the works like *The Communist Manifesto* (1848), *Preface to the Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy* (1859), *Das Kapital or Capital* (1867) by Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels

