

## Literary Criticism

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## Definitions

*Literature* is the body of written works, especially those with a high and lasting artistic value, and includes, in its widest sense, prose, poetry and dramatic works. The *canon* of literature is the collection of works which are deemed worthy of study in academic organisations such as schools, colleges and universities.

*Literary criticism* is the activity of studying, evaluating, and interpreting works of literature.

*Literary theory* analyses literature in the context of a broader philosophical, social, moral, political, gender or other framework. Literary theory is not concerned with the meaning of a work of literature but with the theories that reveal what literature can mean.

*Literary movements* are groupings of authors and literary works that share similar aesthetics, styles, philosophies, and/or topics, as opposed to groupings by genre or era.

### **What is literary criticism?**

Literary criticism concerns itself with the activities of studying, evaluating, and interpreting works of literature. Literary criticism does not criticize or applaud a work or its author. It is not concerned whether the author or their work is in some subjective way either good or bad. Rather, it seeks to be an investigative review asking how the text functions, and how it is constructed.

Literary criticism uses the tools provided by literary theory. Different literary theories use different approaches when developing and substantiating an argument. Some theories concentrate on the reader's emotional or intellectual response to the text, some on aggregating the works of other critics, some focus solely on a close reading of the text and some analyse a work from a social, historical, gender or political perspective. Literary criticism then uses one or more of these literary theories to propose a persuasive argument about some aspects of the text. Literary criticism thus expresses the various ways that readers try to understand and respond to an author's work. In producing a piece of literary criticism, the critic's purpose is to broaden or challenge the reader's understanding of the text, and to present the critic's opinion on how the text informs the reader about the world that the reader lives in.

### **Why is literary criticism worth reading or writing?**

Literary criticism sharpens the mind and enables a better understanding of how a writer's work affects a reader emotionally and intellectually. By analysing a wide range of literature texts, we can gain a better insight into the moral, social, religious, political, economic, historical and other aspects of our own behaviour and the way our society works can be obtained. Literary criticism provides the tools to study, evaluate, and interpret literary works like novels, short stories, and poems. The canon of existing literary criticism provides a rich source of material that can help frame our own point of view about a particular text or set of works. Different literary styles encourage us to consider different viewpoints other than our own.

### **Forms of Literary Criticism**

There are numerous different approaches to literary criticism, according to the various different literary theories that have been proposed. The following is by no means a comprehensive list (Purdue University, 2022):

- Moral Criticism, Dramatic Construction (~360 BC-present)
- Formalism, New Criticism, Neo-Aristotelian Criticism (1930s-present)
- Psychoanalytic Criticism, Jungian Criticism(1930s-present)
- Marxist Criticism (1930s-present)
- Reader-Response Criticism (1960s-present)
- Structuralism/Semiotics (1920s-present)
- Post-Structuralism/Deconstruction (1966-present)
- New Historicism/Cultural Studies (1980s-present)
- Post-Colonial Criticism (1990s-present)
- Feminist Criticism (1960s-present)
- Gender/Queer Studies (1970s-present)
- Critical Race Theory (1970s-present)
- Critical Disability Studies (1990s-present)

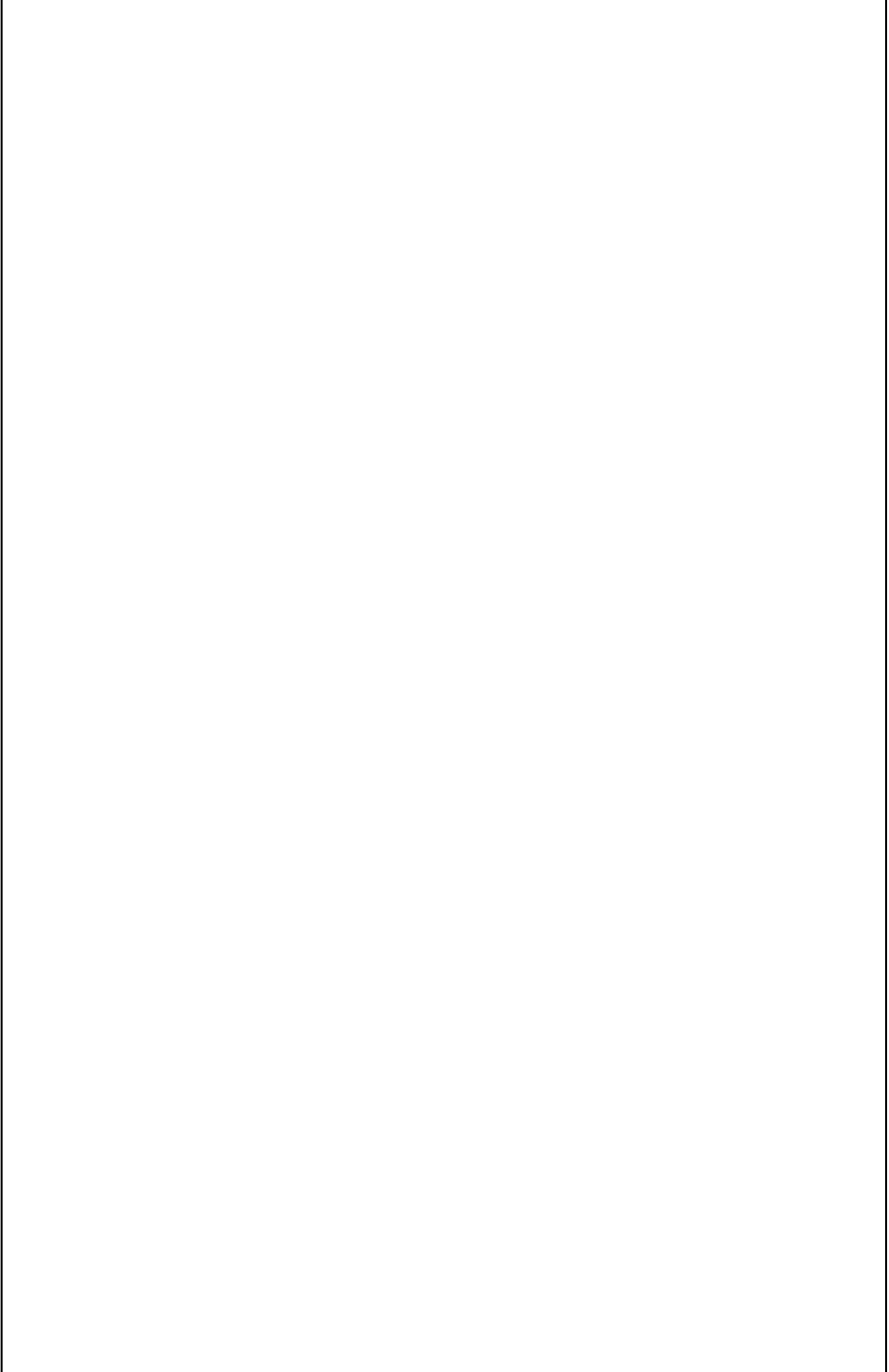
#### Historical-biographical criticism

Historical-biographical criticism focuses on the author's historical context. This approach assumes that the significance of a particular piece of literature is inextricably linked to its historical context. This is not necessarily the historical context of the era that the writer is living in. For example, Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar*, is placed in the first century BC of the Roman Empire. Superficially, then Shakespeare is telling a story of Ancient Rome and the characters in the work respond to one another as Romans not Elizabethan's (or at least the Elizabethan view of what Roman's would have done in the first century BC). But Shakespeare is not writing in a vacuum and his audience is essentially an Elizabethan one, so, when considered in depth, critics evaluate *Julius Caesar* within the context of English literature, history, and culture of the late sixteenth century.

Questions that might be considered in this form of criticism include:

- When was text written and when was it published?
- What was the critical and public reception? What does this reception say about the standards of taste and the social and moral values at the time it was published or reviewed?
- To what extent does the work reflect differences from the ideas and values of its time?
- What influences in the writer's life does the work reflect? These might include people, ideas, movements or events.
- How much of the writer's actual life appears in the work? Have modifications of the actual events been made by the author in incorporating them in the text and for what possible purposes?
- What effects do these differences have on the effect of the text on its readership?
- Has the author revealed something about their personal thoughts, perceptions, or emotions in the work?

Example: tbd



## Aesthetic criticism

Aestheticism is a 19th-century movement that takes the view that art is an end in itself, often stated as 'Art for Art's sake'. The beauty experienced when reading literature, viewing art and or hearing music is seen as the reason for creating that art. The idea that art should be didactic or have a moral purpose is not part of the aesthetic viewpoint. The judgement of a piece of art should therefore not be based on the characteristics of that piece of art and not any associated moral, religious, economic, social, political or commercial context. Precocity, archaisms and obscurity often characterise aestheticism since aesthetes take the view that any subject matter can be made beautiful. Aesthetic craftsmanship was both careful and self-conscious. Consequently, some aesthetic artists concentrated on the morbid, the perverse, the unusual and the abnormal in their work. aestheticism can be seen as a reaction against the conventionalities and ugliness of middle-class Victorian life with its associated admiration for the effects of industrialization and mass production. Aesthetes retreated into the world of art in an attempt to transcend what they regarded as the ugliness of middle-class Victorian life. Instead, aesthetes felt that life should imitate art and that nature was crude and lacking in design when compared to art. Aestheticism focuses on suggestion and sensuality, suggestion rather than statement, reinforces the correspondence between words, colours and music and the use of symbols. Aestheticism sought to express an admiration of beauty and provided a vehicle of escapism through the visual and literary arts. Aestheticism found a home not only in art and literature but also extended beyond literature into the decorative arts, architecture, furniture design and fashion.

The roots of aestheticism go back to Alexander Gottlieb Baumgarten's *Aesthetica* (1750), Immanuel Kant's *Critique of Judgement* (1790) and Friedrich Schiller's *Aesthetic Letters* (1794). In the first half of the nineteenth century, Thomas Carlyle supported and popularised the aesthetic viewpoint in England in works such as *The Life of Friedrich Schiller* (1825), *Critical and Miscellaneous Essays* and *Sartor Resartus* (1833-34). The essays of Walter Pater in 1867-68 in which he promoted the need to need life at a high intensity in the search for beauty influenced British decadent writers such as Oscar Wilde in the second half of the nineteenth century. This led to the adoption of the idea of 'Art for Art's sake' (*L'art pour l'art*), popularised by Théophile Gautier in France, who used the phrase to suggest that art and morality were separate.

Aestheticism first reached prominence in the mid-19th century in the poetry and painting of the British Pre-Raphaelites from the 1850s onward and in the writing of Edgar Allan Poe. Aestheticism reached a peak in the 1870s and 1880s with the works of artists such as James McNeill Whistler and Dante Gabriel Rossetti and writers such as Walter Pater, Oscar Wilde and Algernon Charles Swinburne.

Though aestheticism is most often discussed in relation to painting, poetry, and the decorative arts, its influence is also notable in the short fiction of the late Victorian period. On the one hand, aestheticism characterized a genre of short story with a sumptuous, almost poetic style. Often the plot is slight, the emphasis being on mood and character, the embodiment of intellectual insights in an imaginative form, and the

representation of the artist figure or sensitive individual struggling to realize an ideal in an inhospitable environment. Notable examples of such stories appear in Walter Pater's *Imaginary Portraits* (1887), Oscar Wilde's *The Happy Prince and Other Tales* (1888) and *A House of Pomegranates* (1891), Arthur Symonds's *Spiritual Adventures* (1905), and Ernest Dowson's *Dilemmas* (1895). On the other hand, aestheticism and the aesthete figured as important subject matter in much late 19th-century short fiction, often treated negatively. Some of HENRY JAMES's short stories of the 1880s and 1890s, for example, including "The Author of Beltraffio" (1884), "The Lesson of the Master" (1888), and "The Middle Years" (1893), explore the personal costs of the aesthete's extreme devotion to art. (Mambrol, 2022).

Questions that might be considered in this form of criticism include:

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Example: tbd

Moral-philosophical criticism

Here the ethical merits of the author's work are the primary focus and the moral statements and judgments made by the characters and author in the text are the main concerns of the moral-philosophical critics.

Questions that might be considered in this form of criticism include:

- Does the theme of the work reveal an enduring truth?
- What rewards does the protagonist receive because of their actions? Are these rewards merited?
- What rewards does the antagonist receive because of their actions? Are these rewards merited?

Example: tbd

Sociological criticism

Sociological criticism evaluates literature based on its relationship to society. A knowledge of sociological theories is thus required when taking this approach. The effect that the author's work has on its audience within the society is the critic's primary concern together with the critic's view of the author's status in their society. An example of this approach would be Marxist criticism, which analyses whether a work supports or rejects oppression within a class system.

Questions that might be considered in this form of criticism include:

- How does the economic status of the characters affect the outcome of the story?
- Do the characters strive against the economic and political status quo, or do they manipulate it to their own ends?

- What social conditions does the writer depict in the text and what importance does this depiction play in the work? (These conditions might include poor education, poor health care, poor nutrition or inadequate opportunity)
- Does the work properly and fairly deal with the economic, social and political implications of its material?
- In what other ways is the work affected by economic and social issues? How should a consideration of today's modern economic and social setting influence the reader's interpretation of the story?

Example: [A Marxist/Feminist Analysis of Shirley Jackson's 'The Lottery'](#).

#### Psychoanalytic criticism

This approach is based on the idea that an author's unconscious thoughts are expressed through their work. The psychological desires and neuroses of the characters within the text are thus seen as an expression of the author's unconscious thoughts and the purpose of criticism is to analyse and evaluate these thoughts. Knowledge of the psychoanalytic theories of Jung, Freud and others is therefore relevant to this approach.

Questions that might be considered in this form of criticism include:

- Are there connections between the behaviour and motivations of characters in the text and our knowledge of an author's life?
- In what way do the characters, their actions, their relationships, and their motivations illuminate the mental world and imaginative life, or the actions and motivations of the author?
- How are the psychological motivations of its characters revealed by the use of its images, metaphors, and other linguistic elements in the text?
- How is the psychological mindset of its author revealed by the use of its images, metaphors, and other linguistic elements in the text?
- Are the motivations of literary characters explainable in terms of the concepts of Freudian psychoanalysis?

Example: [A Freudian Analysis of 'Erin McGraws 'A Thief'](#).

#### Formal criticism

Formalism compels readers to judge the artistic merit of literature by examining its formal elements, like language and technical skill. Formalism favours a literary canon of works that exemplify the highest standards of literature, as determined by formalist critics.

Questions that might be considered in this form of criticism include:

- How is the work organized? What is its structure? What is the nature of the beginning, how does it progress and how does it end? How is its plot related to its structure?
- How are the parts of the work related to the work seen as a whole? How are the individual parts related to one another?

- Who is the narrator? Are there multiple narrators? What are their points of view? How do they relate to each other and how are they revealed to the readers? What is the effect of the choice of narrator on the reader and the work? Is there a reason why the author selected the particular type of narration used?
- Who are the major and minor characters and how do they relate to one another? Has the author used the characters to represent particular themes or ideas?
- Where is the work set (in terms of time and place). How does the author make use of the setting and how does the author relate the setting to what we know of the characters and their actions? Is the setting symbolic? Is the setting also a character in the story?
- What tone is used by the author? How does the author describe, narrate, explain, or otherwise create the world of the literary work? What does this achieve from the reader's point of view? What images, similes, metaphors, symbols appear in the work? Why are they used, what is their function and what meanings do they convey?

Example: [On Literary Criticism: Looking into Noers Moths from the planes of light of New Critics, Russian Formalists and the Structuralists](#)

Herujiyanto Herujiyanto (2016) 'On Literary Criticism: Looking into Noers Moths from the planes of light of New Critics, Russian Formalists and the Structuralists', LLT journal (Online). Universitas Sanata Dharma, 17(1), pp. 42–50. doi: 10.24071/lt.v17i1.277.

#### New criticism

Led by Clench Brooks, John Crowe Ransom (critics) and T.S. Eliot (poet) this form of criticism emphasised the examination of the formal and structural elements of the text, rather than its moral or emotional components.

New criticism concentrates on an 'objective' evaluation of the text to identify its underlying form. Things like a text's use of imagery, metaphor, or symbolism within the text are of interest but matters outside the text such as biographical information about the author or contextual information about the environment the text is written in are not considered.

Questions that might be considered in this form of criticism are:

- Character: What is unique or interesting about the characters? Do the characters represent stereotypical tropes of the genre (such as the action hero, the anti-hero, the patriarchal father figure, and the Madonna)? How do the characters interact? How do they evolve?
- Setting: What role does the setting play? Does setting enhance tension within the work? Do any elements of the setting foreshadow the conclusion of the piece?
- Plot: Where is the source of conflict? How is the structural design of the scene used to build, enhance or resolve tension within the plot?
- Point of View. What types of point of view are used. Are narrators omniscient or closed? Are they reliable or unreliable?

Example: [A Formalist Reading of Sandra Cisneros's "Woman Hollering Creek" , Sound in William Shakespeare's The Tempest by Skylar Hamilton Burris.](#)



[On Literary Criticism: Looking into Noers Moths from the planes of light of New Critics, Russian Formalists and the Structuralists](#)

Herujiyanto Herujiyanto (2016) 'On Literary Criticism: Looking into Noers Moths from the planes of light of New Critics, Russian Formalists and the Structuralists', LLT journal (Online). Universitas Sanata Dharma, 17(1), pp. 42–50. doi: 10.24071/llt.v17i1.277.

#### New Historicism

Here an understanding of the texts is obtained by viewing it in the context of other texts. The influence of economic, social, and political factors are the considered and the term “text,” is interpreted flexibly. The Catholic Church could, for instance, be defined as a “text.” The perspectives of other interpretive methods –particularly reader-response criticism, feminist criticism, and Marxist approaches may also be incorporated when interpreting a text.

Questions that might be considered in this form of criticism are:

- What social classes are depicted in the text? What are the roles of these classes in the story?
- How are the aspirations and conditions of these classes depicted?
- How is the conflict between the powerful, privileged classes and the subordinate, lower classes depicted - does this drive the tension in the story and the jeopardy of the characters forward?
- How does the historical context of the story and the social positions of the characters inform the reader about those characters' motivations?
- How do they social positions benefit or obstruct the characters' actions?

Example: <https://cla.purdue.edu/academic/english/theory/newhistoricism/index.html>.

#### Structuralism/Semiotics

This critical approach regards literature as a system of signs where meaning is constructed in a context. In this system words acquire meaning by being compared to other words and structures. A major theory associated with Structuralism was binary opposition. The theory of binary opposition plays an important role in Structuralism. This theory proposed that there are certain theoretical and conceptual opposites, which structure a given text, often arranged in a hierarchy. Such binary pairs might include light/dark, old/young, male/female, rational/emotional, black/white etc.

Questions that might be considered in this form of criticism include:

- What patterns are evident in the text? Are these patterns similar to those in other texts?
- What binary oppositions are presented in the text? (e.g., masculine/feminine, old/young, light/dark, good/evil, natural/artificial, etc.)
- Are the binary oppositions used in a hierarchal way (e.g., is an old age more valuable than a young age, is light better than dark, etc.)? How is each part of the binary valued?

Example: [On Literary Criticism: Looking into Noers Moths from the planes of light of New Critics, Russian Formalists and the Structuralists](#)

Herujiyanto Herujiyanto (2016) 'On Literary Criticism: Looking into Noers Moths from the planes of light of New Critics, Russian Formalists and the Structuralists', LLT journal (Online). Universitas Sanata Dharma, 17(1), pp. 42–50. doi: 10.24071/llt.v17i1.277.

Post-structural criticism

A reaction to New Criticism, Post-structuralist literary criticism de-emphasised the ideas of structural and formal analysis and questioned the assumption that universal truths as reliant on the social structure that they occur within. Like structuralism, literature is viewed as a system of signs, but post-structural criticism rejects the Structuralist view there is an inherent meaning in a text. Instead, Post-structural criticism, takes the view that literature is inherently ambiguous and thus has no centre, nor a single interpretation.

Post-structuralism rejects the assumption in Structuralism that an essential quality of a work is the dominant relation of a hierarchy of binary opposites. Instead, Post-Structuralism aims to expose these relations and the dependency of the dominant term on its apparently subservient counterpart. Post-Structuralism aims to understand these meanings by deconstructing the assumptions and knowledge systems which produce the illusion that the text has a singular meaning. Meaning, therefore, is equally in the hands of the reader and the author.

Questions that might be considered in this form of criticism include:

- How does the reader respond in their understanding of how the work relates to their own personal concept of self?

Example: tbd

Deconstructional criticism:

Jacques Derrida originated this critical method which deconstructs (as the name suggests) the ideas and arguments present in a text and looks for contradictions that indicate that there can be no single interpretation of the text. This seems rather similar (or maybe even was the originating idea behind Post-structuralism).

Questions that might be considered in this form of criticism include:

- Can different and conflicting interpretations of a text be used to show the instability of the language and its true meaning?
- How is the theme of the work presented in relation to the binaries in the work and how does the favoured binary dismantle the hierarchy of privilege of binaries within the work. Does the hierarchy contradict the binary that is showcased?
- What is the meaning of the text? What belief structure or ideology is it supporting?

Example: tbd

## Feminist criticism

The increasing prominence of gender studies in the last hundred years or so lead to the emergence of feminist criticism. Feminist criticism is interested in exploring the ways gender dominance and submission are depicted in the text, how gender roles are reflected or contradicted by the text, and how gender roles evolve in the text.

Questions that might be considered in this form of criticism are:

- What gender roles are depicted in the text? What roles do men and women assume and perform and with what consequences? How are the relationships between men and women or those between members of the same sex presented in the text?
- Do these roles witness or contradict traditional gender roles? For example, are the male characters in powerful positions while the women are dominated? Are the male characters in leadership positions and active, decisive and dominant? Are the women subordinate, passive or controlled?
- Is the source of tension and jeopardy based on the gender roles within the text?
- Do the character's gender roles evolve over the course of the story?
- How is the place and time that the text was written in reflected by the way that men and women are represented in the text?
- Does the author take a male or female perspective in the text? Is the work presented in a way that reflects a predominantly male or female sensibility? Why might this have been done, what effect was intended by the author and does the work achieve this effect?
- Did the nature of the author's life and personal circumstances relate to the depiction of men and women in the work and their relative status?

Example: An early example is Virginia Woolf essay *A Room of One's Own*. More recent feminist critics include Elaine Showalter and H el ene Cixous.

## Reader Response criticism

The important thing here is the reader's personal reactions to a text. Reader Response criticism assumes meaning is created by a reader's or interpretive community's personal interaction with a text. Since there can be many readers this implies there can be no single, correct, universal interpretation of the text. The meaning of the text exists in the minds of its readers.

Questions that might be considered in this form of criticism are:

- What are you the reader's feelings in response to reading the text?
- If you the reader personally took on the role of a character in the text, would you behave differently and why?
- What memories or experiences are invoked in you the reader?
- What values, morals or ethics do you, as the reader, believe are supported or discussed in the story?
- As a reader, are you surprised, inspired, disappointed, dis-illusioned, depressed and so on by the story. What is the spectrum of your emotional response and why?

An example: tbd

#### Media criticism

Here the methods used to deliver the work such as multimedia, visual, oral and other sensory presentations, digital and analogue channels is the important fact.

Questions that might be considered in this form of criticism are:

- How does the author use media to interact with the text?
- What, if any, deviations from the traditions of print and page design have been used within the text?
- In what ways has the author deviated from the traditional linear, deductively organised text?

Example: <http://www2.iath.virginia.edu/elab/elab.html>

#### Archetypal criticism

Archetypal Criticism is concerned with identifying the underlying myths or biblical allusions in stories and archetypes. These reflect and represent the “collective unconsciousness”, a term coined by the psychologist Carl Jung.

Questions that might be considered in this form of criticism include:

- What archetypal patterns or mythic elements are employed in this literary work? These might be apparent in the author’s selection of any of the following: themes, settings, symbols, plots, genres, characters or imagery. What archetypal events occur in the story? (e.g., quest, initiation, descent into the underworld, ascents into heaven). What archetypal images occur? (e.g., rising or setting sun, water, earth, natural elements e.g., forest, symbolic colours). What archetypal images occur? ((e.g., water, rising sun, setting sun, symbolic colours). What archetypal characters appear in the story? (e.g., mother earth, femme fatal, hermit, wise old man, wanderer). What archetypal settings appear? (e.g., desert, garden, heath, cave, castle, mountains). How do these elements contribute to the work as a whole?
- Does the protagonist undergo any kind of transformation, such as movement from innocence to experience or the pursuit of a Hero’s Quest that seems archetypal?
- Does the work reflect the hopes, fears, and expectations of a society or culture?
- Does the work deal with the depiction of universal experiences? What common human concerns are revealed in the story?
- Does the writer allude to biblical or mythological literature? For what purpose?

Example: [A symbolic approach to Kate Chopin’s ‘The Awakening’](#).

## Post-colonial criticism

Starting from the viewpoint that Western cultures misrepresent the true nature of third-world countries. Post-colonial criticism analyses how a text's stories, myths, and stereotypical images encourage repression and domination.

Questions that might be considered in this form of criticism include:

- How is colonial oppression represented, either explicitly or allegorically within the text?
- What does the text reveal about resistance to colonialism?
- Does the text view colonial oppression as a social, political, economic or religious issue, or as a combination of some or all of these?
- How does the text deal with the issues of personal and cultural identity?
- Which characters or groups are identified as isolated or outsiders? What does the text say about the treatment of these characters or groups?
- What does the text reveal about the operations of cultural difference
- How are the ways in which race, gender, religion, class, sexual orientation, cultural beliefs, and customs combined to form individual identity depicted in the text? What does the text say about our perceptions of ourselves, others, and the world in which we live?
- Where does the text place itself in relationship to the existing canon of colonialist work?
- Does the representation of colonialization and/or its inappropriate silence about colonized peoples reinforce or undermine colonialist ideology?
- Example: [Other Voices](#)

Some key contributions to Post-colonial criticism:

- Edward Said - *Orientalism*, 1978; *Culture and Imperialism*, 1994
- Kamau Brathwaite - *The History of the Voice*, 1979
- Gayatri Spivak - *In Other Worlds: Essays in Cultural Politics*, 1987
- Dominick LaCapra - *The Bounds of Race: Perspectives on Hegemony and Resistance*, 1991
- Homi Bhabha - *The Location of Culture*, 1999

## Twelve books on literary criticism

See: (Interesting Literature, 2022).

- Bradley, A. C. (1905) *Shakespearean tragedy: lectures on Hamlet, Othello, King Lear, Macbeth*. 2nd ed. London: Macmillan.
- Richards, I. A. (1929) *Practical criticism: a study of literary judgment*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.
- Empson, W., (1966) *Seven Types of Ambiguity*, New Directions; 3rd ed. edition

- Spurgeon, C.F.E, (2014) *Shakespeare's Imagery and What It Tells Us*, Martino Fine Books
- Leavis, F.R. (1974) *The Great Tradition*, Penguin
- Abrahms, M.H., (1971) *The Mirror and the Lamp: Romantic Theory and the Critical Tradition*, Oxford University Press, U.S.A.
- Spivak, G.C. (1987) *In Other Worlds: Essays in Cultural Politics*, Routledge (1 Aug. 1987)
- Gilbert, S. M. and Gubar, S. (2000) *The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-century Literacy Imagination* Paperback, Yale University Press; 2nd edition
- Ricks, C., (1984) *The Force of Poetry*, Clarendon Press; First Edition (1 Oct. 1984)
- Royle, Nicholas. *Telepathy and Literature: Essays on the Reading Mind*. Oxford: Blackwell, 1991.
- Cook E., (1998) *Against Coercion: Games Poets Play*, Stanford University Press

Three more:

- *The Critical Tradition: Classical Texts and Contemporary Trends*, 1998, edited by David H. Richter
- *Critical Theory Today: A User-Friendly Guide*, 1999, by Lois Tyson
- *Beginning Theory*, 2002, by Peter Barry

## Scholarly Writing

A piece of academic literary criticism is expected to have a recognised structure and to contain several specific elements. (In the case of the OU, it is more than an expectation, it is a requirement). Literary criticism should be written in the form of an essay, written in a scholarly style and should put forward an opinion, line of argument, proposition, thesis or opinion about a literary text. This opinion must be supported by evidence from the text (in the form of close reading and detailed analysis of quotes from the text) and weighed against similar or contrary opinions in the existing body of criticism that exists for that text. At the end of the essay, a concluding statement should be made indicating if the evidence presented in the essay does indeed support the initial opinion and indicate what further implications may be drawn from the arguments presented.

Literary critiques are based on a thesis - a statement or theory that is put forward as a premise to be maintained or proved. Note: the thesis must make an argument, not an observation. Traditionally the critique has a simple structure. A thesis claim is made in the introduction. Each subsequent paragraph examines some aspect of this claim. Evidence is provided within the paragraph in the form of quotes and paraphrased statements from the text to serve as evidence of the claim.

## Close Reading

This involves closely examining the text, at a detailed level, often word by word and sentence by sentence. The objective is to arrive at a reading or interpretation of the meaning of the work that is something more than just a completely literal understanding of the words on the page. Close reading includes identifying literary elements contained in the text, such as genre, plot, setting, characterisation, point of view, use of rhetoric, humour, irony, syntax, tone, diction, style, imagery, figurative language, theme(s), cultural/historical/religious references, rhyme, rhythm, patterns, or absence of patterns.

While close reading will look for the author's use of literary devices at the word or sentence level (such as alliteration, sensory description, assonance, metaphor, simile, leitmotiv etc) it must also look for aspects of the work that exist at a higher structural level (e.g., flashback, foreshadowing, choice of narrator and the reliability of the nature and so on as well as the author's apparent underlying moral, religious, political, social or economic message.

The objective of close reading is to gain an understanding or appreciation of how the author has assembled the text, what the apparent intent of the author is, and whether this intent is achieved. Does this detailed study of the text then facilitate a higher-level understanding of the work? The features of the work thus identified are then used as evidence to support the thesis of the essay. Close reading is not concerned with simply summarising the work, it requires a detailed analysis of what the words achieve.

## Essay writing

An essay written in a scholarly style must include the following elements:

1. A thesis or premise or proposition - the development of a perspective of a topic, rather than just a summary of facts. An interpretation of those facts to support a particular view of that topic which comes to a clearly stated conclusion
2. An academic voice - the essay must be written using a clear, consistent formal style using formal word choice and tone, objective phrasing, and concise but not repetitive sentence structure. While the writing should not be dry, it should focus on clarity and economy of expression.
3. Formal organisation and presentation of ideas. The essay must use a strong paragraph structure:
  - a. An introductory paragraph containing a thesis statement that introduces the topic of the essay
  - b. Paragraphs that support the argument being proposed. Each paragraph should make an individual point in the overall argument and this point must be supported with evidence and analysis. One way of thinking about body paragraphs in scholarly writing is the MEAL plan:
    - i. Main Idea: Your topic sentence stating the concrete claim the paragraph is advancing.

- ii. Evidence: Paraphrase or direct quotations from the source material you are using to support your topic sentence's claim
- iii. Analysis: Your explanation and evaluation of the evidence; explaining the evidence you provided and its relevance in your own words
- iv. Lead Out: Concluding; preparing your reader to transition to the next paragraph (and the next claim)

The MEAL plan matches the general format of academic writing on many levels: that of assertion, evidence, and explanation. Many students make the mistake of writing toward a topic sentence or claim, rather than from one; keeping the MEAL plan in mind as you write will help you begin your paragraphs strongly and develop your analysis thoroughly. (Extracted from: Duke University Thompson Writing Program. (n.d.)).

4. A concluding paragraph which briefly recapitulates the essay main points and states if the thesis has been demonstrated or not.
5. Cited evidence and critical and logical analysis. The arguments in the essay must be supported by scholarly sources, which are generally peer-reviewed articles, books, and journals. As an academic writer, you should express your own personal views, but these must be supported either by specific evidence from relevant recognised scholarly resources or by evidence based on close reading of the text under analysis. Supporting evidence must always contain a citation (and a corresponding reference list entry) indicating the source of that evidence. The citations and references should be expressed in the specified house style (OU Harvard for the Open University). If you refer to well-known historical events or other contexts or facts generally in the public domain (e.g. that India is in Asia or John F Kennedy was assassinated in Dallas) then you don't need to cite sources for this information – it is simply regarded as common knowledge. You must however cite sources for more specific ideas and information, all quotations, and any paraphrase of particular content from a source such as a subject expert (e.g. Simon Schama in History or Einstein in Science) or books, journal articles, academic websites, personal website, blogs, social media and so on. This can often be a matter of phrasing or framing. The claim that 'Shakespeare wanted us to understand that the rose is a metaphor for a woman' needs to offer some evidence, in addition to evidence from a close reading of the poem, since we are making a statement about what Shakespeare was thinking. This is because we are making a claim about the other rather than the interpretation of the poem. A letter in which he describes his thought process would be a suitable reference. On the other hand, the claim that 'The rose in this poem can be interpreted as a metaphor for a woman' can simply be supported by a close reading of the poem to show how the relevant words in the poem point the reader towards that understanding.

A good scholarly essay will

- easily identify your thoughts and ideas on a subject and distinguish these from the thoughts and ideas of others.
- express and analysis the relationship between ideas rather than simply making a sequence of factual statements that the reader has to interpret themselves
- take a balanced view of the topic



- be objective
- be formal in tone and impersonal in style
- may use the passive form of verbs
- tend to employ a cautious way of explaining findings, using expressions such as 'may', 'it is possible that...', 'could'
- may use specialised vocabulary
- write in your own words, using the vocabulary and expressions relevant to your subject
- link your ideas in a logical way
- use sentences in grammatical English with accurate spelling so that your meaning is clear.
- contain a citation for each source of critical evidence or other supporting information and an accompanying reference list expressed in the appropriate house style (OU Harvard for the Open University).

A good scholarly essay will not

- summarise the text. It is assumed that the readers of the critical essay are familiar with the text being analysed so providing a summary in a critical essay adds no value.
- use personal pronouns such as I, me, you. On the other hand, it is arguable that, given that you are encouraged to think for yourself, interpret texts, and develop an argument in your essay, it makes sense to use the first person. If you do use it though, ensure that views or opinions are backed up by evidence and reference to critics.
- use verbs that are composed of multiple words, such as 'give up', 'put up with'
- express personal bias
- use contractions or shortened forms of verbs, such as won't, doesn't or it's

Conventions vary for the presentation format of a literary essay. A commonly used set of guidelines might be:

- Microsoft Word (doc or docx) or Adobe PDF.
- Normal margins. (2.54 cm top/bottom/right/left) on an A4 page
- Times New Roman, 12-point, black font
- Use double line spacing in general.
- Indent the first line of every paragraph (except the first line of each new section)
- Normal header and footer space
- Personal identifiers if required should be placed in the header or footer
- Number the pages in the header or footer
- If quotations exceed 40 words, then use a block quotation rather than an in-line quotation. The block quote should be a single indented paragraph. It does not require enclosing quotation marks.
- Use single line spacing for block quotes or poetry (or if the poetry has a special layout - then follow this exactly)
- In-line quotations should be placed inside single quotation marks. Line breaks within the quotation should be indicated by a forward slash, e.g., 'There was an Old Man with a beard / Who said, "It is just as I feared! / Two Owls and a Hen, / Four Larks and a Wren, / Have all built their nests in my beard!"'

- Italicise Book, Journal and Play titles, e.g., *Hamlet*, *The Playboy of the Western World*
- Titles of articles in journals or chapters in books are not italicised - they should be placed in single quotation marks, e.g., "Going Native": Geography, Gender, and Identity in Lady Mary Wortley Montagu's Turkish Embassy Letters" in *British Literature in Context in the Long Eighteenth Century*
- If this essay is a response to a course question, then you may be asked to restate the question at the top of the answer. If there are optional sections to the question, make it clear which options you are answering
- Use a consistent referencing style, e.g., the Cite Them Right Harvard referencing style (Pears, R. and Shields, G. 2022)
- Place the list of references, in alphabetic order after the word count
- Indicate the word count for the piece. Do not count titles, restatement of the question etc, but do include in line references and quotes. Do not include the reference list or bibliography at the end of the piece.

### **Evaluative summary writing**

Literary Criticism often consists of an academic essay that evaluates a piece of creative writing such as a novel or poem. An academic essay that evaluates a piece of literary criticism rather than a creative work is called an evaluative summary. Evaluative summaries are not limited to literary criticism but may also be used in more general ways to consider any material that presents an opinion or an argument.

An evaluative summary is made up of two elements:

- An accurate, clear and balanced summary of the text being analysed. This is essentially a factual analysis. (From the tutor's point of view this demonstrates that the student can understand and summarise the facts, arguments and opinions that the author has presented in the text. The summary does not pass any judgement, but merely concisely documents the contents of the text.
- Your own critical analysis of the quality of the arguments being presented in the text. This is the evaluation part. (Here the tutor is looking for evidence that the student can show critical judgement and identify the strengths and weaknesses of the author's views or arguments. While the critical analysis will contain statements of your opinion about the author's text, these opinions should be backed up by reasoned arguments, and by supporting evidence from expert sources wherever possible.

In an evaluative summary you are providing both an analysis and a reasoned judgement. You are not just summarising the facts in the text being analysed, but you are also providing an expert opinion on the validity of these facts.

As an example, consider the American Fox Network TV program, *Conspiracy Theory: Did We Land on the Moon?* This claimed NASA faked the moon first landing in 1969 to win the space race.

The evaluative summary of this article might contain the following sections:

*Summary:* Here the content of the TV programme would be discussed, in a factual way. The summary would cover who created the programme, what the context of the programme was (it was being made some time after the moon landings), and what the audience reaction was. The summary would also concisely list the claims made by the programme and the things that programme presented as facts to support those claims. (These might include the fact that the flag placed by Apollo 11 on the moon seems to be flapping in the wind, hence it cannot be on the moon as there is no atmosphere, the fact that the astronauts would be killed by radiation in the Van Allen belts around the Earth on their journey to the moon, that NASA have 'lost' the high resolution telemetry tapes from the mission suggesting a cover up and so on).

*Evaluation:* While the summary is 'just the facts', the evaluation considers whether these so-called facts are correct. Correct of course can be a subjective judgement. So, the evaluation of the moon conspiracy programme might discuss why Fox made the programme - presumably to show government was being dishonest by supporting a conspiracy - and why Fox was interested in doing that. The evaluation would also consider how plausible the conspirators' arguments were and why the conspirators were presenting these arguments - perhaps with the purpose of undermining the establishment, by proving the government lies to the people. While this evaluation might be a subjective judgement, it can be backed up by considering whether the facts or arguments presented by the conspirators are supported by scientific evidence or expert opinion. There is much in the literature to show that the Flag would remain in whatever position it was set, so no wind is needed, that the radiation in the Van Allen belts, though dangerous, is not experienced for long enough to kill the astronauts and that NASA was simply incompetent and lost the tapes through human error. The evaluation would therefore argue that the conspirators' arguments were weak and false and that the Fox documentary, while entertaining had no actual intellectual merit. These counter arguments provide the meat of the evaluation but most importantly they should be backed up with references to the appropriate scientific journals and historical evidence. The evaluation may certainly express the opinions of the person writing the evaluation, but these opinions should always be supported by credible sources, if possible.

*Questions to ask yourself when writing an evaluative summary of an article*

- Who wrote the article? What is their expertise / authority to write on the topic? Is he of she likely to be prejudiced? What is their motivation? Who was the intended audience? How did the audience react to the article?
- When was the article written. What was the political, social, economic, moral etc environment at the time - did that have a bearing on the article?
- What arguments does the article present? What evidence is presented to support these arguments? Is the author opinionated and do they expect the reader to accept a fact or idea simply because the author says so? Are there implicit assumptions in the author's arguments.
- What tone does the article adopt? Does the author use objective language or does he/she try to use unfair persuasion by using emotive words (eg terrible, horrible, disgusting, appalling). Are there unsupported generalisations, these statements often

beginning with words "all", "every", "most" etc. but lack statistical or logical supporting evidence.

- Is the article clearly expressed? Does the author expect the reader to accept a fact or idea that is important to the argument, but that is not clearly stated.

## Using the Critics

The use of critical resources is a key part of writing an essay of literary criticism.

- Use the critics as testing board for your own thoughts and opinion. It may be better to start a paragraph using your own views, rather than using a quotation from a critic. You can then use the critics within the paragraph to backup or questions the opinion you started the paragraph with.
- Don't necessarily believe the critics. They may be right, or they may be wrong. They certainly can and do contradict each other. The lifeblood of literary criticism is debate and disagreement. Literary criticism is very different from the scientific method. Unless you are writing a purely evaluative essay, the backbone of your essay should be your personal response to the text you are analysing. The critics are there to illuminate your response.
- Do not restrict yourself to a single critical source. It is best to consider the views of multiple critics and see which support your opinion or position and which do not.
- It is probably best not to align yourself completely to a single critical position. There are many nuances in critical thinking, and it is very unlikely that anyone will agree completely with everything a given critic says. So, some element of picking and choosing is required.
- It is important to take each critic seriously and engage with their position rather than dismiss them out of hand. A critic's argument should only be rejected by providing a properly reasoned argument for that rejection.
- The first reference to a particular critic should use both their first name and their surname. Subsequent references use the surname only.
- Avoid redundancy. If you have discussed a critic's views about a particular topic and have credited it to them, there is no need to directly quote the work in which the critic expressed those views. Just include a page number in the reference to the critic.
- Be rigorously consistent in your referencing style. For example: According to John Smith, *Macbeth* is 'a play about motivations, not about actions' (Smith, 2020, p. 123).
- Critical sources are best used to either (a) support or illustrate a part of your own argument (b) disagree with an argument (supporting evidence and reasons should be provided) or (c) extend or develop your arguments.
- A critical source can often profitably be applied outside its original context, e.g., applying to a different text or a different form. For example, something a critic says about Tolstoy's novel *War and Peace* may have relevance to James R Martin's *Game of Thrones*.

## Useful resources for scholarly writing:

Literary Criticism 101, A Useful Fiction, [Online] Available at <https://onehundredpages.wordpress.com/literary-criticism-101/>

Open University, (2022a) 'Developing academic English' in the Open University Help Centre, Core Skills: Study Skills, Available at: <https://help.open.ac.uk/develop-your-writing> (Accessed: 23 Jul 2022).

Open University, (2022b) 'Critical Thinking and writing (Advanced)', The Student Hub, Open University, [Online] Available at: <https://studenthublive.open.ac.uk/content/critical-thinking-and-writing-advanced-12-jul-2022>

Open University, (2022c) 'Types of Assignment', Open University Help Centre, Assignments: Types of assignment, [Online] Available at <https://help.open.ac.uk/essays>

Open University, (2022d) 'Types of Assignment', Open University Help Centre, Assignments: Writing in your own words, [Online] Available at <https://help.open.ac.uk/writing-in-your-own-words>

### Useful resources for close reading

There are some very short examples of good quality close reading at:

Open University, (2022e) 'Don't describe—analyse', Undergraduate arts and humanities: Skills: Skills toolkits: English Literature Toolkit. Available at <https://learn2.open.ac.uk/mod/oucontent/view.php?id=1859527&section=2.2>

and of course, there are a lot of close reading examples in the Open University A334 and A335 module materials and tutorial material.

For poetry,

Muldoon, P. (2009) *The end of the poem: Oxford lectures on poetry*. London: Faber.

This includes much close reading of a number of modern poets.

### References

Pears, R. and Shields, G. (2022) *Cite them right: the essential referencing guide*. 12th edition. London: Bloomsbury Academic.

Interesting Literature (2022) "12 of the Best Books of Literary Criticism Everyone Should Read", Interesting Literature Web Site [Online] <https://interestingliterature.com/2020/04/books-literary-criticism-theory-all-time/>

Lumen Learning (no date) English Literature I: Literary Criticism, OER Services, Lumen Learning, [Online] Available at: <https://courses.lumenlearning.com/suny-britlit1/chapter/literary-criticism/> (Accessed: 18 May 2022).

Masterclass (2021), *Literary Criticism Explained: 11 Critical Approaches to Literature*, Masterclass, [Online] Available at <https://www.masterclass.com/articles/literary-criticism#3kqMoFiSiznwc856kTEKcN> (Accessed: 18 May 2022).

Purdue University (2022), “Literary Theory and Schools of Criticism”, Purdue Online Writing Lab, [Online] Available at: [https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/subject\\_specific\\_writing/writing\\_in\\_literature/literary\\_theory\\_and\\_schools\\_of\\_criticism/index.html](https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/subject_specific_writing/writing_in_literature/literary_theory_and_schools_of_criticism/index.html) (Accessed: 8 Aug 2022)

Literary Criticism: Questions for a Variety of Approaches [Online] Available at: [http://bcpsherefordhs.ss3.sharpschool.com/UserFiles/Servers/Server\\_3705599/File/Academics/English/Literary\\_Criticism\\_Generic\\_questions.pdf](http://bcpsherefordhs.ss3.sharpschool.com/UserFiles/Servers/Server_3705599/File/Academics/English/Literary_Criticism_Generic_questions.pdf)

Mambrol, N., (2022) *Aestheticism, Literary Theory and Criticism* [Online] Available at: <https://literariness.org/2022/04/29/aestheticism/>

## Literary Movements

(This table has been taken from Wikipedia)

Movement	Description	Notable authors
Renaissance literature	The literature within the general Western movement of the Renaissance was united by the spirit of Renaissance humanism, which arose in 14th-century Italy and continued until the mid-17th century in England.	Petrarch, Giovanni Boccaccio, Baptista Mantuanus, Jacopo Sannazaro, Niccolò Machiavelli, Ludovico Ariosto, François Rabelais, orge de Montemor, Miguel de Cervantes, Thomas Wyatt, Edmund Spenser, William Shakespeare, Georg Rudolf Weckherlin

Mannerism	A 16th-century movement and style that emerged in the later Italian High Renaissance. Mannerism in literature is notable for its elegant, highly florid style and intellectual sophistication.	Michelangelo, Clément Marot, Giovanni della Casa, Giovanni Battista Guarini, Torquato Tasso, Veronica Franco, Miguel de Cervantes
Petrarchism	A 16th-century movement of Petrarch's style followers, partially coincident with Mannerism.	Pietro Bembo, Michelangelo, Mellin de Saint-Gelais, Vittoria Colonna, Garcilaso de la Vega, Giovanni della Casa, Thomas Wyatt, Henry Howard, Edmund Spenser, Philip Sidney
Baroque	A variable 17th-century pan-European art movement that replaced Mannerism and involved several, especially, early 17th-century literary schools. The Baroque characterised by its use of ornamentation, extended metaphor and wordplay.	Giambattista Marino, Lope de Vega, John Donne, Vincent Voiture, Pedro Calderón de la Barca, Georges and Madeleine de Scudéry, Georg Philipp Harsdörffer, John Milton, Andreas Gryphius, Christian Hoffmann von Hoffmannswaldau, Hans Jakob Christoffel von Grimmelshausen
Marinism	This 17th-century followed Mannerism Italian Baroque poetic school and techniques of Giambattista Marino and his followers was based on its use of extravagant and excessive extended metaphor and lavish descriptions.	Giambattista Marino, Cesare Rinaldi, Bartolomeo Tortoletti, Emanuele Tesauro,

		Francesco Pona, Francesco Maria Santinelli
Conceptismo	17th-century Baroque movement in the Spanish literature, a similar to the Marinism.	Francisco de Quevedo, Baltasar Gracián
Culteranismo	Another 17th-century Spanish Baroque movement, in contrast to Conceptismo, characterized by an ornamental, ostentatious vocabulary and highly latinal syntax.	Luis de Góngora, Hortensio Félix Paravicino, Conde de Villamediana, Juana Inés de la Cruz
Précieuses	The main features of this 17th-century French Baroque movement, similar to the Spanish culteranismo and English euphuism, are the refined prose and poetry language of aristocratic salons, periphrases, hyperbole, and puns on the theme of gallant love.	Honoré d'Urfé, Vincent Voiture, Jean-Louis Guez de Balzac, Charles Cotin, Antoine Godeau, Madeleine de Scudéry, Isaac de Benserade, Paul Pellisson, Madame d'Aulnoy, Henriette-Julie de Murat
Metaphysical poets	17th-century English Baroque school using extended conceit, often (though not always) about religion.	John Donne, George Herbert, Andrew Marvell
Cavalier Poets	17th-century English Baroque royalist poets, writing primarily about courtly love, called Sons of Ben (after Ben Jonson)/	Richard Lovelace, William Davenant
Euphuism	A peculiar mannered style of Baroque English prose, richly decorated with rhetorical questions.	Thomas Lodge, John Lyly
Classicism	A 17th–18th centuries Western cultural movement that partially coexisted with the Baroque, coincided with the Age of Enlightenment and drew inspiration from the qualities of proportion of the major works of classical ancient Greek and Latin literature.	Pierre Corneille, Molière, Jean Racine, John Dryden, William Wycherley, William Congreve, Jonathan Swift, Joseph Addison, Alexander Pope,



		Voltaire, Carlo Goldoni
Amatory fiction	Romantic fiction popular around 1660 to 1730; notable for preceding the modern novel form and producing several prominent female authors.	Pierre Corneille, Molière, Jean Racine, John Dryden, William Wycherley, William Congreve, Jonathan Swift, Joseph Addison, Alexander Pope, Voltaire, Carlo Goldoni
The Augustans	18th-century literary movement based chiefly on classical ideals, satire and skepticism.	Alexander Pope, Jonathan Swift
Sentimentalism	Literary sentimentalism arose during the 18th century, partly as a response to sentimentalism in philosophy. In 18th-century England, the sentimental novel was a major literary genre. The movement was one of roots of Romanticism.	Edward Young, James Thomson, Laurence Sterne, Thomas Gray, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Friedrich Gottlieb Klopstock
Gothic fiction	Horror fiction existed from 1760s in which the atmosphere is typically claustrophobic, and common plot elements include vengeful persecution, imprisonment, and murder with interest in the supernatural and in violence/	Horace Walpole, Clara Reeve, Ann Radcliffe, Bram Stoker, Harper Lee, Edgar Allan Poe, Mary Shelley
Sturm und Drang	From 1767 till 1785, a precursor to the Romanticism, it is named for a play by Friedrich Maximilian Klingler. Its literature often features a protagonist which is driven by emotion, impulse and other motives that run counter to the enlightenment rationalism.	Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, Friedrich Schiller, Friedrich Maximilian von Klinger, Jakob Michael Reinhold Lenz, Heinrich Leopold Wagner
Weimar Classicism	In contrast with the contemporaneous German Romanticism, the practitioners of Weimar Classicism (1788–1805) established the synthesis of ideas from pre-Romanticism of Sturm und Drang, Romanticism, and Classicism/	Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, Friedrich Schiller, Caroline von Wolzogen
Romanticism	19th-century (ca. 1800 to 1860) movement emphasizing emotion and imagination, rather	Novalis, Mary Shelley,

	than logic and scientific thought. Response to the Enlightenment.	Victor Hugo, Lord Byron, Camilo Castelo Branco, Adam Mickiewicz, José de Alencar
Dark Romanticism	A style within Romanticism. Finds man inherently sinful and self-destructive and nature a dark, mysterious force.	E. T. A. Hoffmann, Christian Heinrich Spiess, Ludwig Tieck, Edgar Allan Poe, Nathaniel Hawthorne, Herman Melville, Edwin Arlington Robinson
American Romanticism	Distinct from European Romanticism, the American form emerged somewhat later, was based more in fiction than in poetry, and incorporated a (sometimes almost suffocating) awareness of history, particularly the darkest aspects of American history.	Washington Irving, Nathaniel Hawthorne, Ambrose Bierce
Lake Poets	A group of Romantic poets from the English Lake District who wrote about nature and the sublime.	William Wordsworth, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Robert Southey
Pre-Raphaelites	Founded in 1848, primarily English movement based ostensibly on undoing innovations by the painter Raphael. Many were both painters and poets.	Dante Gabriel Rossetti, Christina Rossetti
Transcendentalism	From the mid-19th-century American movement: poetry and philosophy concerned with self-reliance, independence from modern technology.	Ralph Waldo Emerson, Henry David Thoreau
Realism	The mid-19th-century movement based on a simplification of style and image and an interest in poverty and everyday concerns.	Gustave Flaubert, William Dean Howells, Stendhal, Honoré de Balzac, Leo Tolstoy, Fyodor Dostoevsky, Anton Chekhov, Frank Norris, Machado de Assis, Eça de Queiroz

Naturalism	Late 19th century. Proponents of this movement believe heredity and environment control people.	Émile Zola, Stephen Crane, Guy de Maupassant, Henrik Ibsen, Aluísio Azevedo
Verismo	Verismo is a derivative of naturalism and realism that began in post-unification Italy. Verismo literature uses detailed character development based on psychology, in Giovanni Verga's words 'the science of the human heart.	Giovanni Verga, Luigi Capuana, Matilde Serao, Grazia Deledda
Social realism	A type of realism, not to be confused with socialist realism, which depicted the socio-political problems and domestic situations of working class. Some its movements include: Proletarian literature Angry young men (Kitchen sink realism).	Bernard Shaw, H. G. Wells, Maxim Gorky, ` Theodore Dreiser, Jaroslav Hašek, Lu Xun, Guo Moruo, Yoshiki Hayama, Kenneth Fearing, John Osborne, Kingsley Amis, Stan Barstow
Socialist realism	Socialist realism is a subset of realist art which focuses on communist values and realist depiction.[41] It developed in the Soviet Union and was imposed as state policy by Joseph Stalin in 1934,[42][43] though authors in other socialist countries and members of the communist party in non-socialist counties also partook in the movement.	Maxim Gorky, Nikolai Ostrovsky, Mikhail Sholokhov, Lu Xun, Takiji Kobayashi, Mike Gold
American Realism	A national variety of Realism often having the character of protecting the American type of development and way of life.	Mark Twain, William Dean Howells, Stephen Crane, Theodore Dreiser, Margaret Deland, Jack London, J. D. Salinger
Magical realism	Literary movement in which magical elements appear in otherwise realistic circumstances. Most often associated with the Latin American literary boom of the 20th century.	Gabriel García Márquez, Octavio Paz, Günter Grass, Julio Cortázar, Sadegh Hedayat, Mo Yan, Olga Tokarczuk

Neo-romanticism	The term has been applied to writers, who rejected, abandoned, or opposed realism, naturalism, or avant-garde modernism at various points in time from circa 1850 and incorporated elements from the era of Romanticism.	Thomas Mayne Reid, Jules Verne, Rudyard Kipling, Robert Louis Stevenson, Rafael Sabatini, Knut Hamsun, Alexander Grin, Kahlil Gibran, Jaishankar Prasad
Decadent movement	In the mid 19th century, decadence came to refer to moral decay, and was attributed as the cause of the fall of great civilizations, like the Roman empire. The decadent movement was a response to the perceived decadence within the earlier Romantic, naturalist and realist movements in France at this time. The decadent movement takes decadence in literature to an extreme, with characters who debase themselves for pleasure, and the use of metaphor, symbolism and language as tools to obfuscate the truth rather than expose it.	Joris-Karl Huysmans, Gustav Flaubert, Charles Baudelaire, Oscar Wilde
Parnassianism	The French-origing group of the anti-Romantic poets, mainly occurring prior to symbolism during the 1860s–1890s that strove for exact and faultless workmanship.	Théophile Gautier, Leconte de Lisle, Théodore de Banville, Felicjan Medard Faleński, Sully Prudhomme, José-Maria de Heredia, Alberto de Oliveira, Olavo Bilac
Symbolism	Principally French movement of the fin de siècle, symbolism is codified by the Symbolist Manifesto in 1886, and focused on the structure of thought rather than poetic form or image; influential for English language poets from Edgar Allan Poe to James Merrill	Charles Baudelaire, Stéphane Mallarmé, Arthur Rimbaud, Paul Valéry, Maurice Maeterlinck, Hugo von Hofmannsthal, Alexandru Macedonski, Cruz e Sousa
Russian symbolism	It arose enough separately from West European symbolism, emphasizing mysticism of Sophiology and defamiliarization.	Alexander Blok, Valery Bryusov, Andrei Bely
Modernism	Variegated movement, including modernist poetry, originated in the late 19th century,	Joseph Conrad, Knut Hamsun,

	encompassing primitivism, formal innovation, or reaction to science and technology.	Gertrude Stein, James Joyce, Ezra Pound, H.D., T. S. Eliot, Fernando Pessoa, Karel Čapek, Peter Weiss, Mário de Andrade, João Guimarães Rosa, Rabindranath Tagore
Mahjar	The "émigré school" was a neo-romantic movement within Arabic-language writers in the Americas that appeared at the turn of the 20th century.	Ameen Rihani, Kahlil Gibran, Nasib Arida, Mikhail Naimy, Elia Abu Madi, Nadra and Abd al- Masih Haddad
Futurism	An avant-garde, largely Italian and Russian, movement codified in 1909 by the Manifesto of Futurism. Futurists managed to create a new language free of syntax punctuation, and metrics that allowed for free expression/	Filippo Tommaso Marinetti, Giovanni Papini, Mina Loy, Aldo Palazzeschi, Velimir Khlebnikov, Almada Negreiros, Vladimir Mayakovsky, Stanisław Młodożeniec, Jaroslav Seifert
Cubo- Futurism	Movement within Russian Futurism with practice of zaum, the experimental visual and sound poetry.	Velimir Khlebnikov, Aleksei Kruchyonykh, Vladimir Mayakovsky
Ego-Futurism	A school within Russian Futurism based on a personality cult.	Igor Severyanin, Vasilisk Gnedov
Acmeism	A Russian modernist poetic school, which emerged ca. 1911 and to symbols preferred direct expression through exact images.	Nikolay Gumilev, Osip Mandelstam, Mikhail Kuzmin, Anna Akhmatova, Georgiy Ivanov
New Culture Movement	A Chinese movement together with the May Fourth Movement as its part during the 1910s and 1920s that opposed Confusian culture and proclaimed a new culture, including the use of	Chen Duxiu, Lu Xun, Zhou Zuoren,

	written vernacular Chinese. It clustered in the New Youth literary magazine and Peking University.	Li Dazhao, Chen Hengzhe, Hu Shih, Yu Pingbo
Stream of consciousness	Early-20th-century fiction consisting of literary representations of quotidian thought, without authorial presence.	Dorothy Richardson, Virginia Woolf, James Joyce
Impressionism	It influenced by the European Impressionist art movement and subsumed into several other categories. The term is used to describe not some movement, but a work of literature characterized by the selection of a few details to convey the sense impressions left by an incident or scene.	Joseph Conrad, Stephen Crane, Vladimir Nabokov, Virginia Woolf
Expressionism	Part of the larger expressionist movement, literary and theatrical expressionism is an avant-garde movement originating in Germany, which rejects realism in order to depict emotions and subjective thoughts.	Franz Kafka, Alfred Döblin, Gottfried Benn, Heinrich Mann, Oskar Kokoschka
First World War Poets	British poets who documented both the idealism and the horrors of the war and the period in which it took place.	Siegfried Sassoon, Rupert Brooke, Wilfred Owen
Imagism	An English-language modernist group founded in 1914 that poetry based on description rather than theme, and on the motto, "the natural object is always the adequate symbol".	Ezra Pound, H.D., Richard Aldington
Dada	Touted by its proponents as anti-art, the Dada avant-garde focused on going against artistic norms and conventions.	Jean Arp, Kurt Schwitters, Tristan Tzara
Imaginism	Avant-garde post-Russian Revolution of 1917 poetic movement that created poetry based on sequences of arresting and uncommon images.	Sergei Yesenin, Anatoly Marienhof, Rurik Ivnev
The Lost Generation	The term 'Lost Generation' is traditionally attributed to Gertrude Stein and was then popularized by Ernest Hemingway in the epigraph to his novel <i>The Sun Also Rises</i> , and his memoir <i>A Moveable Feast</i> . It refers to a group of American literary notables who lived in Paris and other parts of Europe from the time period which saw the end of World War I to the beginning of the Great Depression.	F. Scott Fitzgerald, Ernest Hemingway, Ezra Pound, Waldo Pierce, John Dos Passos
Stridentism	Mexican artistic avant-garde movement. They exalted modern urban life and social revolution	Manuel Maples Arce, Arqueles Vela, Germán List Arzubide

Harlem Renaissance	African American poets, novelists, and thinkers, often employing elements of blues and folklore, based in the Harlem neighborhood of New York City in the 1920s.	Langston Hughes, Zora Neale Hurston
Jindyworobak movement	The Jindyworobak movement originated in Adelaide, South Australia during the great depression. It sought to preserve uniquely Australian culture from external influence by incorporating Australian aboriginal languages and mythology and unique Australian settings.	Rex Ingamells, Xavier Herbert
Surrealism	Originally a French movement, which developed in the 1920s from Dadaism by André Breton with Philippe Soupault and influenced by surrealist painting, that uses surprising images and transitions to play off of formal expectations and depict the unconscious rather than conscious mind (surrealist automatism)[91]	André Breton, Philippe Soupault, Jean Cocteau, José María Hinojosa Lasarte, Sadegh Hedayat, Mário Cesariny, Haruki Murakami
Los Contemporáneos	A Mexican vanguardist group, active in the late 1920s and early 1930s; published an eponymous literary magazine which served as the group's mouthpiece and artistic vehicle from 1928 to 1931.	Xavier Villaurrutia, Salvador Novo
Villa Seurat Network	A group of left and anarchist writers living in Paris in the 1930s, largely influenced by Surrealism.	Henry Miller, Lawrence Durrell, Anaïs Nin, Alfred Perles
Objectivism	A loose-knit modernist mainly American group from the 1930s. Objectivists treated the poem as an object; they emphasised sincerity, intelligence, and the clarity of the poet's vision.	Louis Zukofsky, Lorine Niedecker, Charles Reznikoff, George Oppen, Carl Rakosi, Basil Bunting
Southern Agrarians	A group of Southern American poets, based originally at Vanderbilt University, who expressly repudiated many modernist developments in favor of metrical verse and narrative. Some Southern Agrarians were also associated with the New Criticism.	John Crowe Ransom, Robert Penn Warren
Postcolonialism	A diverse, loosely connected movement within the contemporary literature, writers from former colonies of European countries, whose work is frequently politically charged.	Jamaica Kincaid, V. S. Naipaul, Derek Walcott, Salman Rushdie, Giannina Braschi, Wole Soyinka, Chinua Achebe

Black Mountain poets	A self-identified avant-garde group of poets, originally, from the 1950, based at Black Mountain College, who eschewed patterned form in favor of the rhythms and inflections of the human voice.	Charles Olson, Denise Levertov, Robert Creeley
Absurdism	The absurdist movement is derived in the 1950s from absurdist philosophy, which argues that life is inherently purposeless and questions truth and value. As such, absurdist literature and theatre of the absurd often includes dark humor, satire, and incongruity.	Jean-Paul Sartre, Samuel Beckett, Albert Camus, Gao Xingjian
The Movement	A 1950s group of English anti-romantic and rational writers.	Kingsley Amis, Philip Larkin, Donald Alfred Davie, D. J. Enright, John Wain, Elizabeth Jennings, Robert Conquest
Nouveau roman	The "new novelists", appeared in French literature in the 1950s, generally rejected the traditional use of chronology, plot and character in novel, as well as the omniscient narrator, and focused on the vision of things.	Alain Robbe-Grillet, Claude Simon, Nathalie Sarraute, Michel Butor, Robert Pinget, Marguerite Duras, Jean Ricardou
Concrete poetry	The Concrete poetry was an avant-garde movement started in Brazil during the 1950s, characterized for extinguishing the general conception of poetry, creating a new language called "verbivocovisual".	Augusto de Campos, Haroldo de Campos, Décio Pignatari
Beats	American movement of the 1950s and 1960s concerned with counterculture and youthful alienation. Its British variety were the 1960s Liverpool poets	Jack Kerouac, Allen Ginsberg, William S. Burroughs, Ken Kesey, Gregory Corso
Confessional poetry	American poetry that emerged in the late 1950s, often brutally, exposes the self as part of an aesthetic of the beauty and power of human frailty.	Robert Lowell, Sylvia Plath, Alicia Ostriker
Oulipo	Founded in 1960 French poetry and prose group based on seemingly arbitrary rules for the sake of added challenge	Raymond Queneau, Walter Abish, Georges Perec, Italo Calvino



Postmodernism	Contemporary movement, emerged strongly in the 1960s US, skeptical of absolutes and embracing diversity, irony, and word play.	Kathy Acker, John Barth, Jorge Luis Borges, Philip K. Dick, William Gaddis, Alasdair Gray, Subimal Mishra, Thomas Pynchon, Samir Roychoudhury, Kurt Vonnegut, Bret Easton Ellis
Hungry generation	A literary movement in postcolonial India (Kolkata) during 1961–65 as a counter-discourse to Colonial Bengali poetry	Shakti Chattopadhyay, Malay Roy Choudhury, Binoy Majumdar, Samir Roychoudhury, Debi Roy, Sandipan Chattopadhyay, Subimal Basak
New York School	Urban, gay or gay-friendly, leftist poets, writers, and painters of the 1960s.	Frank O'Hara, John Ashbery
New Wave	The New Wave is a movement in science fiction produced in the 1960s and 1970s and characterized by a high degree of experimentation, both in form and in content, a "literary" or artistic sensibility, and a focus on "soft" as opposed to hard science. New Wave writers often saw themselves as part of the modernist tradition and sometimes mocked the traditions of pulp science fiction, which some of them regarded as stodgy, adolescent and poorly written.	John Brunner, M. John Harrison, Norman Spinrad, Barrington J. Bayley, Thomas M. Disch
British Poetry Revival	A loose wide-reaching collection of groupings and subgroupings during the late 1960s and early 1970s. It was a modernist reaction to the conservative The Movement.	J. H. Prynne, Eric Mottram, Tom Raworth, Denise Riley, Lee Harwood
Language poets	An avant-garde group or tendency in American poetry that emerged in the late 1960s and early 1970s with the poem as a construction in and of language itself.	Bernadette Mayer, Leslie Scalapino, Stephen Rodefer, Bruce Andrews, Charles Bernstein

Spiralism	A literary movement founded in the late 1960s by René Philoctète, Jean-Claude Fignolé, and Frankétienne. Spiralism defines life at the level of relations (colors, odors, sounds, signs, words) and historical connections	René Philoctète, Jean-Claude Fignolé, Frankétienne
Misty Poets	The Misty Poets were Chinese poets who resisted state artistic restrictions imposed during the Cultural Revolution from 1970s. They made use of metaphors and hermetic imagery and avoided objective facts.	Bei Dao, Duo Duo, Shu Ting, Yang Lian, Gu Cheng, Hai Zi
Spoken Word	A postmodern literary movement started ca. 1970, where writers use their speaking voice to present fiction, poetry, monologues, and storytelling arising from Beat poetry, the Harlem Renaissance, and the civil rights movement in the urban centers of the United States. The textual origins differ and may have been written for print initially then read aloud for audiences	Spalding Gray, Laurie Anderson, Hedwig Gorski, Pedro Pietri, Piri Thomas, Giannina Braschi, Taalam Acey
Performance poetry	This is the lasting viral component of Spoken Word and one of the most popular forms of poetry in the 21st century. It is a new oral poetry originating in the 1980s in Austin, Texas, using the speaking voice and other theatrical elements. Practitioners write for the speaking voice instead of writing poetry for the silent printed page. The major figure is American Hedwig Gorski who began broadcasting live radio poetry with East of Eden Band during the early 1980s. Gorski, considered a post-Beat, created the term "Performance Poetry" to define and distinguish what she and the band did from performance art. Instead of books, poets use audio recordings and digital media along with television spawning Slam Poetry and Def Poets on television and Broadway	Beau Sia, Hedwig Gorski, Bob Holman, Marc Smith, David Antin, Taalam Acey
New Formalism	The late-20th and early 21st century movement in American poetry advocating a return to traditional accentual-syllabic verse.	Dana Gioia, X.J. Kennedy, Brad Leithauser, Molly Peacock, Mary Jo Salter, Timothy Steele
Sastra wangi	A label for the movement of Indonesian literature started circa 2000 and written by young, urban Indonesian women who take on controversial issues such as politics, religion and sexuality.	Ayu Utami, Djenar Maesa Ayu, Dewi "Dee" Lestari, Fira Basuki, Nova Riyanti Yusuf

Empathism	The Empathic Movement is literary, artistic, philosophical movement started in southern Italy in 2020.	Menotti Lerro, Franco Loi, Giampiero Neri, Valerio Magrelli
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