

A Short Introduction to Literary Criticism

INTRODUCTION

For centuries literary criticism was considered as an art of writing poetry; it was an advice to the poet rather than the reader. Literary criticism has been applied since the seventeenth century to the description, justification, analysis, or judgments of works of arts. Criticism in modern times is classified in different ways. M.H. Abrams in **The Mirror and the Lamp** talks about four different critical theories: When the critic views art in terms of the universe or what is imitated, he is using the **mimetic theory**. When the emphasis is shifted to the reader, and the critic views art in terms of its effect on the audience, he is using a **pragmatic theory** that was dominant up to the end of the eighteenth century. But in the nineteenth century the emphasis shifted to the poet, and poetry became „a spontaneous overflow of powerful feeling“ of the poet. In this case a work of art is essentially the internal made external. Therefore, when a critic views art in terms of the artist, he is using the **expressive theory**. In the 20th century, the emphasis shifted to the work of art, especially under the influence of the **New Criticism**. When the critic views art basically in its own terms, seeing the work as a self-contained entity, he is using the **objective theory**.

Some critics have talked about theoretical and practical or applied criticism. **Theoretical criticism** attempts to arrive at the general principles of art. **Practical criticism** applies these principles to the works of art. Literary critics have also talked about other types of criticism:

Historical criticism examines a work of art against its historical background and the author's life and time. **Impressionistic criticism** emphasizes the way that a work of art affects the critic. **Textual criticism** applies scholarly means to a work of art to reconstruct its original version. **Analytical criticism** tries to get at the nature of a work of art as an object through the detailed analysis of its parts and their organization. **Judicial criticism** judges a work of art by a definable set of standards. **Moral criticism** evaluates a work of art in relation to human life. **Mythic criticism** explores the nature and significance of the archetypes and archetypal patterns in a work of art.

WHAT IS LITERARY CRITICISM

Sometimes the word **criticism** puts people off, because in everyday use it has negative connotations. We usually think of a "critic" as the kind of grumpy person who seems to exist solely to find problems and stress faults.

The word means more than that, however. It comes from the Greek verb **kritikos**, which means to judge or to decide. In its original sense, a critic is simply a person who expresses an informed judgment or opinion about the meaning, value, truth, beauty, or artistry of something.

Let's go more specific. **Literary criticism** is the discipline of **interpreting, analyzing and evaluating** works of literature. **Literature** is most commonly defined as works of writing that have lasted over the years because they deal with ideas of timeless and universal interest with exceptional artistry and power. This can include poems, stories, novels, plays, essays, memoirs, and so on.

An Introduction To Short Fiction And Criticism

Yijin Wang



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