

LITERARY CRITICISM

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ABSTRACT

Literature as the mirror of all sciences contains a set of written texts like novels, poems, short stories and plays which are related to fiction and transfer a specific message. Literature, generally, includes many linguistic varieties and styles as it is a reproduction of real life through the eyes of an artist as well as it is rich in culture and ideological aspects by which reflects the similarities and differences of these aspects. Moreover, books are the key to learn a language and we can consider children's literature as a substantial tool to build a chance for communication as well as language skills development such as listening, speaking, reading and writing in a given language. Literature evaluates the interest of the learner, whether he is young or adult to understand the life's values and activates usefulness of literature. Moreover, the most challenging and demanding portion of teaching a language through literature is the issue of developing the critical thinking and creative capacity of the learners.

KEYWORDS: Literature, Criticism & Critical Thinking

1. INTRODUCTION

A literary text contains in its meanings and terms the touch of the aesthetic, as well as the issue of real life such as social, political, and cultural. For Atikins (1952) declares that **“Criticism is the play of mind on the aesthetic qualities of literature, having for its object an interpretation of literary value.”**¹ Thereon, theories is seen as rules, principles, and techniques that are put in an application to a subject or a matter and this is a literary criticism. Criticism is a word that derives from the Greek term “Kritikos” which signifies 'to judge'. It refers to the act of explaining and examining literature. The critic was a follower of the book in the early stages of criticism, such as impressionism criticism and journalism, but later on, the concept of monetary movement was developed in the field of academic and cultural criticism by which criticism became a real and effective partner, influential and compelling to see the creative literary writings. Literary criticism is an autonomous domain of research which shows and proves the right or reasonableness of the literary work consistently; besides it examines the privilege and deficiency of a literary work and finally evaluates the worth of it.

2. THE CONCEPT OF LITERARY CRITICISM

Many scholars view that literature appeared before criticism, where the critic looks at literary writings or poetic with deep observation and then begins to reveal the places of ugliness, and beauty to attract the souls honestly about what he says. Thereon, theories is seen as rules, principles and techniques that are put in an application to a subject or a matter and this is what means by a literary criticism **“Literary criticism is the study, analysis, and evaluation of imaginative**

literature. Everyone who expresses an opinion about a book, a song, a play, or a movie is a critic, but not everyone's opinion is based upon thought, reflection, analysis, or consistently articulated principles.”ⁱⁱ The literary criticism of the style defines the method as the way of thinking, the doctrines of expression or the picture of words that reflect the writer's thinking and interpretation, knowing that the style of writing differs between the writer and the world, and between the writer and others as well as it differs between time and another depending on the subject that is talked about, in this stream, Eliot in his essay *The Frontiers of Criticism* (1956), illustrates the purpose of literary criticism as, **“the promotion of understanding and enjoyment of literature”ⁱⁱⁱ**.

Moreover, there are several elements of style, namely; *ideas*, i.e., are the monetary measures to judge the work of the writer and novelist. Secondly, *emotion*, i.e., the direct impulse to say, an element determines the attitude of the writer towards what he presents, in addition to *imagination* which is the language of passion and the means of photography in terms of the writer, and sent it to the reader along with *the language* which is known as the verbal picture of facts and feelings.

Furthermore, the notion of literary criticism has defined as the study, evaluation, discussion, and interpretation of literature and modern literary criticism that is based on literary theory; it is defined as a philosophical discussion of literary criticism and its aims. It is also known as an art based on the interpretation of literary works in order to reveal the ugly and beautiful in a literary work. Lawrence views literary criticism as an art or a correct science and in this sense, he states that **“criticism and science can never be same, mainly based on the idea that criticism is 'much too personal' and 'values that science ignores”^{iv}**.

Criticism is the process of studying and issuing judgments on literary texts. It depends on the profound discussion of literary criticism and its aims. It is one of the literary arts in which the critic's taste and intellect are linked in an attempt to reveal the aesthetic of the literary text or the flaws that exist in it.

3. THE RELATIONSHIP OF CRITICISM WITH LITERATURE

It is obvious that literature appeared before criticism because the rules derived from the study of literature, where the critic looks at literature and then begins to reveal the places of ugliness, and beauty, to raise the souls honestly what he says, that criticism has changed from one era to another.

On the other hand, the literary criticism of the style defines the method as the way of thinking, or the doctrines of expression, or the picture of words that reflect the writer's thinking and interpretation, knowing that the style of putting words and even thinking of it differs between the writer and the world, and between the writer and others, and the style of the writer between time and other depending on the subject that is talked about. In this process, *Ideas* are the monetary measures to judge the work of the writer and the writer himself. *Emotion* is known as the direct impulse to say, an element determines the attitude of the writer towards what he presents. *Imagination* is the language of passion and the means of photography in terms of the writer and sent in the same reader and *Language* which is known as the verbal picture of facts and feelings.

4. TYPES OF LITERARY CRITICISM

- **Formalist Criticism:** 1920 and 1926 represent the stage of formalism maturity and formalist criticism, reviews literature as a single, unique form of people's realizations that views neatly at the work itself, analyzing the different aspects of the work as a way of explicating or interpreting a text moreover, Formalism is a tendency to give preference to form and aesthetic values more than the content of literary work and what it contains an idea, imagination or feeling
- **Gender Criticism:** gender studies have been originated during the feminist movement where critics started exploring, testing and assume the role of each gender in a piece of literature. Thus, this type of criticism tests images of men or women in literature as well as explores the influence of the sexual identity on the formation of literary works.
- **Mythological Criticism:** This type of criticism is a combination of anthropology, psychology, history, and comparative religion in order to explore how the text uses myths and symbols to various cultures and eras, in this sense, the principle notion of mythological criticism is an archetype that analyses characters, symbols, situations, or images to find a deeper concept; according to Northrop Frye, archetypes is **“a symbol, usually an image, which recurs often enough in literature to be recognizable as an element of one’s literary experience as a whole.”**^v And we may take the example of Harry Potter which is a common mythological part of literature, working on the notions of myths, history, signs, and epochs. Another example that mentioned by the critic Joseph Campbell, in his literary works such as The Hero with a Thousand Faces, this book explains how the journey of the hero with the same epic personalities and circumstances appearsineffectively in each culture.
- **Reader-Response Criticism:** This type of criticism tries to draw out what occurs in the mind of the reader while understanding a text and it overlaps with gender criticism in discussing how men and women look and read the same literary text but with different assumptions. This kind of critics might also seek to examine a particular text on his or her own ideas or values. For example, one might think about how a special character gives the impression or sensation of being admirable or unlikable and why. On the other hand, one might reflect on how one’s religious, cultural, or social values affect readings.
- **Sociological Criticism:** Like historical criticism, this may analyze the social contents of a literary work and evaluates a given text, whether implicitly or explicitly in a cultural, economic, or political way. Sociological criticism studies literature that has been written or received in terms of culture, economics, and politics.

5. FACILITATING CRITICAL THINKING THROUGH LITERATURE

The standard of our lives relies on the standard of our thoughts. Critical thinking as an intellectual skill and psychological habit includes the art of analyzing arguments, using inductive or deductive reasoning and evaluating thinking with a view to improving it.

Critical thinking is not an easy skill that can be enriched at any time or context, but it is the action or process of thinking that may enable the child of Three years old to engage in and contrary even a trained expert can fail in it. According to the American Philosopher Ennis (1985) defined critical thinking as **“a reflective and reasonable thinking that is focused on deciding what to believe or do”**^{vi}

Generally speaking, critical thinking is thinking about thinking in order to improve thinking and critical thinkers attempt to be objective with evidence and argumentation. However, literature plays a big role in both facilitating and developing the skills of thinking critically through reading a short story, a novel, a poem or even watching a play; but the question here is How? According to many thinkers and psychologist literature helps the reader to be not only critical thinking, but also to develop his reading, listening and even speaking skills. He will be open minded person who understands the world better and he will use cognitive strategies such as asking for examples when something is unclear and be willing to read more works of literature like novels and poems so as to prove his capacities through critical thinking.

As stated by Richard Paul and Linda Elder, a well- critical thinker^{vii} is the one who,

- Collects essential issues and problems, and articulates them clearly and accurately;
- Collects and evaluates relevant information, using abstract ideas to explain it in such a manner as to achieve the desired result;
- Comes to well-studied conclusions and solutions, tested with relevant standards.
- Communicate effectively with others to find solutions to problems.

So, accordingly, we may summarize the critical thinking methods in the following steps

- Ability to identify problems and central issues, and this contributes to the identification of the main parts of the proof or evidence.
- Identify similarities and differences, and this contributes to the ability to identify characteristics, and to place information in classifications for different purposes.
- Deviate or verify relevant information, and distinguish basic information from less relevant peripheral information.
- Formulate questions that contribute to a deeper understanding of the problem.
- Ability to provide a standard to judge the quality of observations and conclusions.
- Ability to determine whether existing phrases or symbols are linked together and with the general context.
- Ability to identify obvious issues and ideas that did not appear explicitly in proof and evidence.
- Highlight duplicates formulas.
- Ability to determine the reliability of sources.
- Differentiating trends and different perceptions of a particular situation.
- Determine the data capacity, adequacy and quality of the subject.
- Predict possible or potential outcomes, from an event or set of events.

In the light of this, a British writer and thinker Riessman (1993) says that **“Thinking aimed at forming a judgment and literature aimed at facilitating the job of thinking such a way”**^{viii} Here the one may see that literature facilitates critical thinking by giving a new ways of seeing and knowing things, it smoothes the progress of understanding

how communication takes place in a given country, thanks to literature the one will think deeply before making decisions.

For a long time, readers discussed and evaluated literature from a set of standpoints. Some of them examined a literary work from a moral perspective bearing in mind how values appear in a text. Others may assess a story or a poem in terms of its form; whereas some critics looked at literature to sight what it has been said about society, politics, gender roles, or eroticism and from this sense literary criticism is divided in terms of the basis on which it evaluates literary works and making judgments of satisfaction, approval or discontentment.

6. CONCLUSIONS

Literature as an art and a creative writing helps the reader to use the process of thinking deeply about each word said by the writer and even go further to the inner thinking and the role of literature here is to facilitate and develop the job of thinking critically so as to evaluate whether that book or a story is worth to have a place among the other aesthetics also literary criticism asks what literature is, what it does, and what it is merit as well as it helps the one to understand the relationship between authors, readers, and texts.

Furthermore, a lot of scholars see that critical thinking is thinking about thinking in order to improve thinking, in the light of this, the study of literature is the study of life through the eyes of an artist.

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