

LIT310

INTRODUCTION TO LITERARY CRITICISM/THEORIES



Course video is available on our app

Course Code: LIT 310

Course Title: Introduction to Literary Criticism/Theories

Course Credit Load: 2 Units

Series 1: Surveying Literary Theories and Concepts

Series 2: Exploring Critical Forms and Applications

Series 3: Theory versus Criticism in Literary Studies

Series 4: Movements and Development of Critical Schools

Series 5: Theories, Ideologies, and Aesthetics in Literature

Proposed Outline for Series 1

Part 1.1: Introduction to literary theories

- Sub-Part 1.1.1: Definition and scope of literary theory
- Sub-Part 1.1.2: Functions and relevance of theory in literature

Part 1.2: Classical and traditional theories

- Sub-Part 1.2.1: Greek and Roman foundations
- Sub-Part 1.2.2: Medieval and Renaissance perspectives

Part 1.3: Modern and contemporary theories

- Sub-Part 1.3.1: Structuralism and post-structuralism
- Sub-Part 1.3.2: Marxist, feminist, and postcolonial approaches

Part 1.4: Concepts and critical forms

- Sub-Part 1.4.1: Key concepts in literary analysis
- Sub-Part 1.4.2: Critical forms and their applications

Introduction

Literary theory provides the tools we need to interpret, analyse, and evaluate texts. Without theory, our reading of literature may remain impressionistic or superficial. By surveying the major theories and concepts, we gain a structured way of approaching works by authors such as Shakespeare, Soyinka, Ngugi, and Achebe. This Series lays the foundation for the rest of the course by introducing you to the frameworks that shape literary criticism.

The aim of this Series is to equip you with knowledge of key literary theories and concepts, enabling you to apply them confidently in textual analysis.

We shall commence this Series by introducing the definition, scope, and functions of literary theory. Next, we will explore classical and traditional theories, beginning with Greek and Roman



foundations and continuing through medieval and Renaissance perspectives. Following that, we will examine modern and contemporary theories, including structuralism, post-structuralism, Marxist, feminist, and postcolonial approaches. Finally, we will conclude with an overview of key concepts and critical forms, showing how they are applied in literary analysis.

Series Learning Outcomes

Upon completing this Series, you should be able to:

- **SLO 1.1** define literary theory and explain its scope,
- **SLO 1.2** analyse the functions and relevance of theory in literature,
- **SLO 1.3** describe classical and traditional theories, including Greek, Roman, medieval, and Renaissance perspectives,
- **SLO 1.4** explain modern and contemporary theories such as structuralism, post-structuralism, Marxist, feminist, and postcolonial approaches, and
- **SLO 1.5** identify and apply key concepts and critical forms in literary analysis.

1.1 Introduction to Literary Theories

1.1.1 Definition and scope of literary theory

Literary theory refers to the systematic study of the principles, methods, and frameworks used to interpret and analyse literary texts. It provides readers with tools to move beyond personal impressions and to engage critically with literature. The scope of literary theory is broad, encompassing classical traditions, modern schools of thought, and contemporary approaches. By defining literary theory clearly, learners can appreciate its role as both a lens for interpretation and a foundation for criticism.

Fill in the blank: _____ theory refers to the systematic study of the principles, methods, and frameworks used to interpret and analyse literary texts.

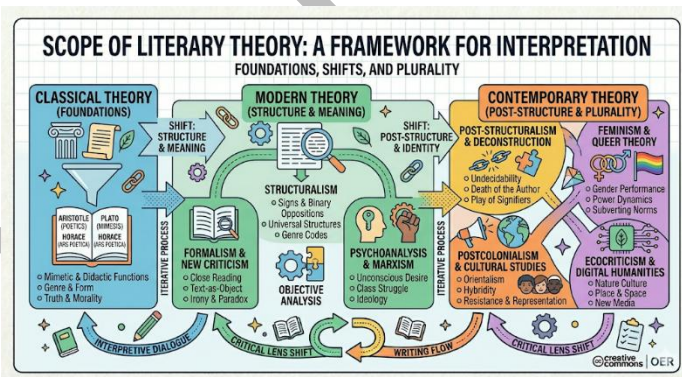


Figure 1.1: Scope of literary theory

1.1.2 Functions and relevance of theory in literature



The **functions of literary theory** include guiding interpretation, providing frameworks for analysis, and connecting literature to wider cultural, social, and philosophical contexts. Theory helps readers to ask deeper questions about texts, such as how meaning is constructed, how power relations are represented, or how identity is portrayed. The **relevance of theory** lies in its ability to make literary study systematic and rigorous, ensuring that analysis is not merely subjective but grounded in established principles.

Fill in the blank: The _____ of literary theory include guiding interpretation, providing frameworks for analysis, and connecting literature to wider contexts.



Plate 1.1: Applying literary theory to texts

Function	Benefit to the Scholar
Decoding Themes	Reveals the "hidden" arguments a text makes about human nature or society.
Structural Clarity	Helps identify how the plot architecture supports the story's emotional goals.
Ideological Critique	Uncovers the unconscious assumptions of the time (e.g., colonial or patriarchal biases).
Comparative Analysis	Provides a common language to compare a 17th-century poem with a 21st-century novelette.

Box 1.1: Key functions of literary theory

Pilot questions 1.1

1. _____ theory refers to the systematic study of the principles, methods, and frameworks used to interpret and analyse literary texts.



2. State one aspect of the scope of literary theory.
3. The _____ of literary theory include guiding interpretation, providing frameworks for analysis, and connecting literature to wider contexts.
4. Give one reason why literary theory is relevant to the study of literature.
5. Why is it important for literary analysis to be systematic and rigorous?

1.2 Classical and Traditional Theories

1.2.1 Greek and Roman foundations

The origins of **literary theory** can be traced back to ancient Greece and Rome. Thinkers such as **Plato** and **Aristotle** laid the groundwork for systematic approaches to literature. Plato viewed literature with suspicion, arguing that poetry could mislead by imitating reality rather than presenting truth. Aristotle, however, offered a more balanced perspective in his *Poetics*, where he defined tragedy, introduced the concept of **catharsis** (emotional purification), and emphasised the importance of plot and character. Roman critics such as **Horace** and **Longinus** further contributed by stressing the moral purpose of literature and the power of sublimity in style.

Fill in the blank: Aristotle introduced the concept of _____, which refers to emotional purification experienced by audiences of tragedy.

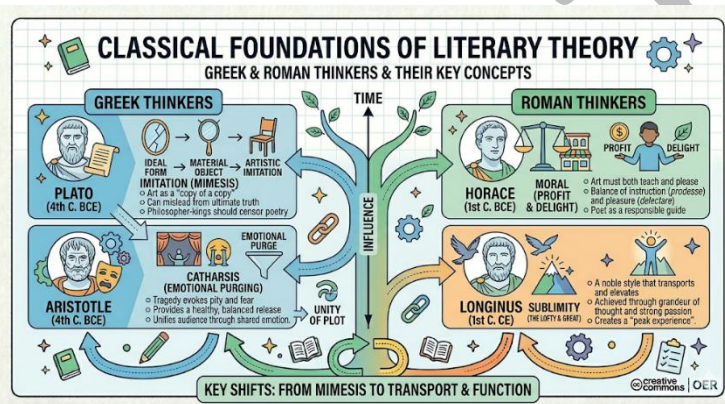


Figure 1.2: Contributions of Greek and Roman thinkers to literary theory

1.2.2 Medieval and Renaissance perspectives

During the **medieval period**, literary theory was closely tied to religious and philosophical traditions. Texts were often interpreted allegorically, with emphasis on moral and spiritual lessons. The Renaissance brought a revival of classical ideas, but with new attention to humanism and artistic creativity. Writers such as **Sir Philip Sidney** defended poetry as a noble art that could instruct and delight, while critics emphasised harmony, proportion, and the imitation of nature. These perspectives reinforced the idea that literature serves both aesthetic and ethical purposes, bridging classical foundations with emerging modern sensibilities.

Fill in the blank: During the _____ period, texts were often interpreted allegorically, with emphasis on moral and spiritual lessons.



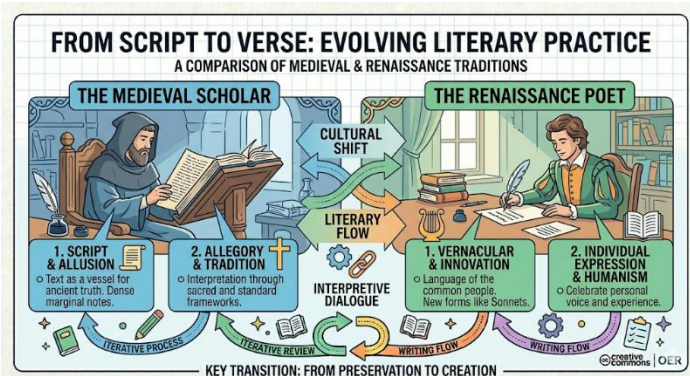


Plate 1.2: Medieval and Renaissance perspectives on literary theory

Feature	Medieval Theory	Renaissance Theory
View of the Author	A humble scribe or compiler of tradition.	A creative "maker" or genius with a unique voice.
Core Value	Faith: Does this lead the soul to God?	Reason & Beauty: Is this well-proportioned?
Method	Exegesis: Decoding hidden layers of meaning.	Mimesis: Imitating the best of nature and the classics.
Language	Latin as the sacred, "true" language.	Elevation of the Vernacular to literary status.

Box 1.2: Key features of medieval and Renaissance literary theory

Pilot questions 1.2

1. Aristotle introduced the concept of _____, which refers to emotional purification experienced by audiences of tragedy.
2. State one contribution of Roman critics such as Horace or Longinus.
3. During the _____ period, texts were often interpreted allegorically, with emphasis on moral and spiritual lessons.
4. Give one feature of Renaissance literary theory.
5. Why is the Renaissance considered a bridge between classical and modern perspectives in literary theory?



1.3 Modern and Contemporary Theories

1.3.1 Structuralism and post-structuralism

Structuralism is a theoretical approach that views literature as part of a wider system of language and culture. It emphasises structures such as narrative patterns, myths, and linguistic codes that shape meaning. Thinkers like Ferdinand de Saussure and Roland Barthes argued that texts are not isolated but function within systems of signs. **Post-structuralism** emerged as a reaction, questioning the stability of meaning and highlighting the role of interpretation. Jacques Derrida's idea of **deconstruction** showed how texts contain contradictions that undermine fixed meanings.

Fill in the blank: _____ is a post-structuralist method that reveals contradictions within texts and challenges fixed meanings.

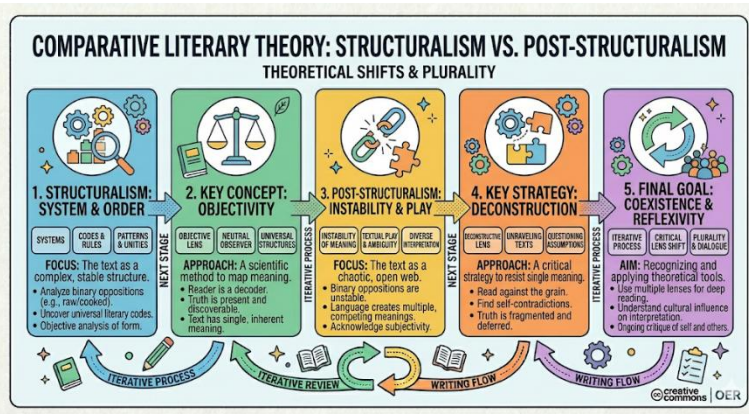


Figure 1.3: Structuralism and post-structuralism in literary theory

1.3.2 Marxist, feminist, and postcolonial approaches

Marxist theory analyses literature in terms of class struggle, ideology, and economic power. It asks how texts reflect or challenge social structures. **Feminist theory** focuses on gender, examining how literature represents women and men, and how it reinforces or resists patriarchal norms. **Postcolonial theory** explores the impact of colonialism and imperialism on literature, highlighting issues of identity, resistance, and cultural hybridity. These approaches connect literature to broader social and political contexts, making analysis more dynamic and relevant.

Fill in the blank: _____ theory explores the impact of colonialism and imperialism on literature, highlighting identity and resistance.



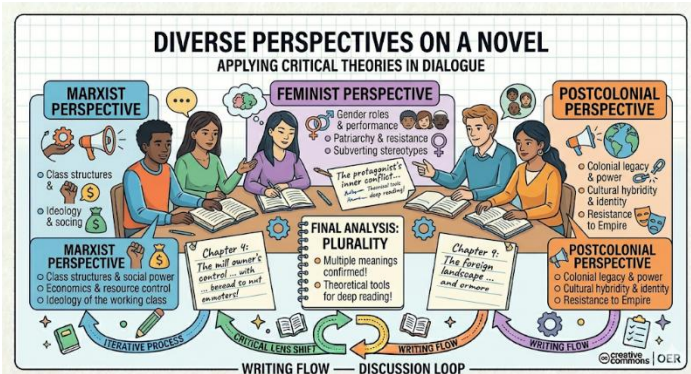


Plate 1.3: Applying Marxist, feminist, and postcolonial theories

Theory	Primary Concern	Key Term
Structuralism	Universal patterns and rules.	Signifier/Signified
Post-structuralism	The breakdown of certainty.	Différance
Marxist	Economic and social power.	Base/Superstructure
Feminist	Gendered power dynamics.	The Gaze
Postcolonial	The legacy of empire.	Subaltern

Box 1.3: Key features of modern and contemporary theories

Pilot questions 1.3

- _____ is a post-structuralist method that reveals contradictions within texts and challenges fixed meanings.
- State one focus of structuralism in literary theory.
- _____ theory analyses literature in terms of class struggle, ideology, and economic power.
- Give one concern of feminist literary theory.
- Why is postcolonial theory important for understanding literature in formerly colonised societies?

1.4 Concepts and Critical Forms

1.4.1 Key concepts in literary analysis



Concepts in literary theory are the fundamental ideas that guide interpretation and analysis. Examples include **mimesis** (imitation of reality), **catharsis** (emotional purification), **ideology** (systems of belief reflected in texts), and **intertextuality** (the relationship between texts). These concepts provide a vocabulary for discussing literature in a structured way. By mastering them, learners can move beyond personal impressions and engage critically with texts.

Fill in the blank: _____ refers to the relationship between texts, where meaning is shaped by connections to other works.

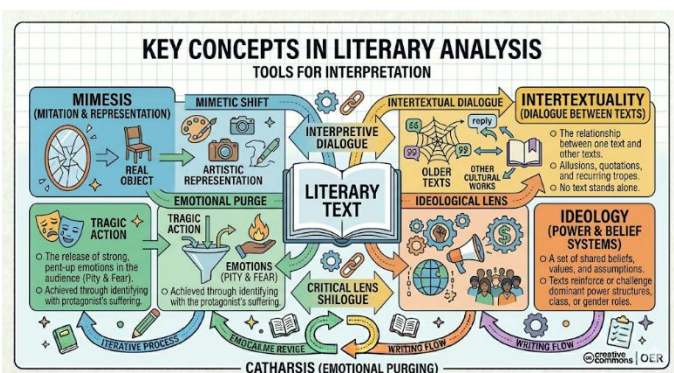


Figure 1.4: Key concepts in literary analysis

1.4.2 Critical forms and their applications

Critical forms are the methods or approaches used to apply theory in practice. Examples include **formalism** (focus on structure and language), **historicismism** (emphasis on historical context), and **reader-response criticism** (attention to the reader's role in creating meaning). Each form provides a different lens for analysis, and together they enrich our understanding of literature. Applying critical forms allows learners to evaluate texts systematically, whether by examining their structure, situating them in history, or considering how audiences interpret them.

Fill in the blank: _____ criticism emphasises the reader's role in creating meaning from a text.

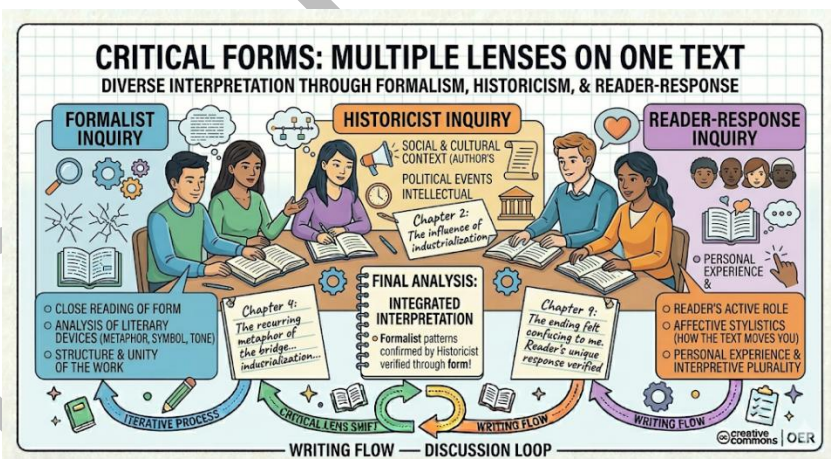


Plate 1.4: Applying critical forms in literary analysis



Critical Form	Key Question Asked of the Text
Formalism	How do these specific literary devices create a unified theme?
Historicism	How does this text reflect the power struggles of its time?
Reader-Response	How did your personal background influence your reaction to the ending?
Psychoanalytic	What unconscious childhood trauma is driving the protagonist's behavior?
Postcolonial	How does the language of the text resist or reinforce colonial "othering"?

Box 1.4: Examples of critical forms

Pilot questions 1.4

1. _____ refers to the relationship between texts, where meaning is shaped by connections to other works.
2. State one example of a key concept in literary analysis.
3. _____ criticism emphasises the reader's role in creating meaning from a text.
4. Give one example of a critical form used in literary analysis.
5. Why is it important to apply different critical forms when studying literature?

Series Summary

This Series has provided a broad survey of literary theories and concepts, establishing their importance in guiding interpretation and analysis. We began by defining literary theory and exploring its scope and functions, then moved on to classical and traditional perspectives from Greek, Roman, medieval, and Renaissance thinkers. Following that, we examined modern and contemporary theories such as structuralism, post-structuralism, Marxist, feminist, and postcolonial approaches. Finally, we considered key concepts like mimesis, catharsis, ideology, and intertextuality, alongside critical forms such as formalism, historicism, and reader-response criticism.

By completing this Series, you should now be able to define literary theory, analyse its functions, describe classical and traditional perspectives, explain modern and contemporary approaches, and apply key concepts and critical forms in literary analysis. These skills directly align with the Series Learning Outcomes (SLOs 1.1–1.5), giving you a strong foundation for deeper engagement with literature throughout the course.



Glossary of Terms

- **Catharsis:** Emotional purification experienced by audiences, especially in tragedy.
- **Concepts:** Fundamental ideas that guide interpretation, such as mimesis, ideology, and intertextuality.
- **Critical forms:** Methods of applying theory in practice, including formalism, historicism, and reader-response criticism.
- **Deconstruction:** A post-structuralist method that reveals contradictions within texts and challenges fixed meanings.
- **Feminist theory:** An approach that examines gender representation and challenges patriarchal norms in literature.
- **Ideology:** Systems of belief reflected in texts, often linked to power and social structures.
- **Intertextuality:** The relationship between texts, where meaning is shaped by connections to other works.
- **Literary theory:** The systematic study of principles, methods, and frameworks used to interpret and analyse texts.
- **Marxist theory:** A critical approach that analyses literature in terms of class struggle, ideology, and economic power.
- **Mimesis:** The imitation of reality in literature.
- **Point of view:** The perspective from which a story is told.
- **Postcolonial theory:** An approach that explores the impact of colonialism and imperialism on literature.
- **Post-structuralism:** A theoretical movement that questions the stability of meaning and emphasises interpretation.
- **Structuralism:** A theoretical approach that views literature as part of wider systems of language and culture.

Concept Check Questions 1

Objective Questions

1. _____ theory refers to the systematic study of principles, methods, and frameworks used to interpret and analyse texts. (Linked to SLO 1.1)
2. Aristotle introduced the concept of _____, which refers to emotional purification in tragedy. (Linked to SLO 1.3)
3. _____ is a post-structuralist method that reveals contradictions within texts. (Linked to SLO 1.4)
4. _____ theory analyses literature in terms of class struggle and ideology. (Linked to SLO 1.4)



5. _____ refers to the relationship between texts, where meaning is shaped by connections to other works. (Linked to SLO 1.5)

Short-Answer Questions

6. State one function of literary theory. (Linked to SLO 1.2)
7. Give one contribution of Roman critics such as Horace or Longinus. (Linked to SLO 1.3)
8. State one concern of feminist literary theory. (Linked to SLO 1.4)
9. Give one example of a critical form used in literary analysis. (Linked to SLO 1.5)
10. Why is it important to apply different critical forms when studying literature? (Linked to SLO 1.5)

Long-Answer Questions

11. Analyse the importance of classical and traditional theories in shaping literary criticism. (Linked to SLO 1.3)

- **Basic response:** Classical and traditional theories introduced foundational ideas such as imitation, catharsis, and moral purpose, which shaped early literary criticism.
- **Value-added response:** Outstanding learners may explain how these theories influenced later movements, bridged philosophy and literature, and continue to inform modern approaches.

12. Evaluate the role of modern and contemporary theories in broadening literary analysis. (Linked to SLO 1.4)

- **Basic response:** Modern and contemporary theories such as structuralism, Marxism, and feminism broaden analysis by connecting literature to systems, ideology, and social issues.
- **Value-added response:** Outstanding learners may discuss how these theories challenge traditional views, highlight marginalised voices, and provide diverse frameworks for interpretation.

Answers to Pilot Questions [Series 1]

Part 1.1

1. Literary
2. Classical, modern, or contemporary
3. Functions
4. It makes analysis systematic and rigorous
5. To avoid subjective or impressionistic readings

Part 1.2

1. Catharsis
2. Moral purpose or sublimity



3. Medieval
4. Humanism or defence of poetry
5. It revived classical ideas while introducing modern sensibilities

Part 1.3

1. Deconstruction
2. Narrative patterns or linguistic codes
3. Marxist
4. Gender representation or patriarchy
5. It highlights identity, resistance, and cultural hybridity

Part 1.4

1. Intertextuality
2. Mimesis, catharsis, or ideology
3. Reader-response
4. Formalism, historicism, psychoanalytic criticism
5. To enrich understanding by using multiple perspectives

References and Attributions [Series 1]

- **Figures**

- *Figure 1.1: Scope of literary theory* – AI-generated suggestion using the prompt: “Create a diagram showing the scope of literary theory including classical, modern, and contemporary approaches.” Suggested search string: “scope of literary theory diagram OER.”
- *Figure 1.2: Contributions of Greek and Roman thinkers to literary theory* – AI-generated suggestion using the prompt: “Create a diagram showing contributions of Greek and Roman thinkers to literary theory including Plato, Aristotle, Horace, and Longinus.” Suggested search string: “Greek Roman literary theory diagram OER.”
- *Figure 1.3: Structuralism and post-structuralism in literary theory* – AI-generated suggestion using the prompt: “Create a diagram comparing structuralism and post-structuralism in literary theory.” Suggested search string: “structuralism poststructuralism literary theory diagram OER.”
- *Figure 1.4: Key concepts in literary analysis* – AI-generated suggestion using the prompt: “Create a diagram showing key concepts in literary analysis including mimesis, catharsis, ideology, and intertextuality.” Suggested search string: “key concepts literary analysis diagram OER.”



- **Plates**

- *Plate 1.1: Applying literary theory to texts* – AI-generated suggestion using the prompt: “Generate an image showing a student reading a novel with notes referencing different literary theories.” Suggested search string: “student applying literary theory OER image.”
- *Plate 1.2: Medieval and Renaissance perspectives on literary theory* – AI-generated suggestion using the prompt: “Generate an image showing a medieval scholar reading a manuscript alongside a Renaissance writer drafting poetry.” Suggested search string: “medieval renaissance literary theory OER image.”
- *Plate 1.3: Applying Marxist, feminist, and postcolonial theories* – AI-generated suggestion using the prompt: “Generate an image showing diverse students discussing literature with notes on Marxist, feminist, and postcolonial perspectives.” Suggested search string: “Marxist feminist postcolonial literary theory OER image.”
- *Plate 1.4: Applying critical forms in literary analysis* – AI-generated suggestion using the prompt: “Generate an image showing students applying different critical forms to the same text.” Suggested search string: “critical forms literary analysis OER image.”

- **Boxes**

- *Box 1.1: Key functions of literary theory* – AI-generated suggestion using the prompt: “Create a text box summarising key functions of literary theory.” Suggested search string: “functions of literary theory OER.”
- *Box 1.2: Key features of medieval and Renaissance literary theory* – AI-generated suggestion using the prompt: “Create a text box summarising key features of medieval and Renaissance literary theory.” Suggested search string: “medieval renaissance literary theory OER summary.”
- *Box 1.3: Key features of modern and contemporary theories* – AI-generated suggestion using the prompt: “Create a text box summarising key features of modern and contemporary literary theories.” Suggested search string: “modern contemporary literary theories summary OER.”
- *Box 1.4: Examples of critical forms* – AI-generated suggestion using the prompt: “Create a text box summarising examples of critical forms in literary analysis.” Suggested search string: “critical forms literary analysis summary OER.”



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Course Title: Introduction to Literary Criticism/Theories

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Series 1: Surveying Literary Theories and Concepts

Series 2: Exploring Critical Forms and Applications

Series 3: Theory versus Criticism in Literary Studies

Series 4: Movements and Development of Critical Schools

Series 5: Theories, Ideologies, and Aesthetics in Literature

Proposed Outline for Series 2

Part 2.1: Understanding critical forms

- Sub-Part 2.1.1: Definition and scope of critical forms
- Sub-Part 2.1.2: Functions of critical forms in literary study

Part 2.2: Major critical forms

- Sub-Part 2.2.1: Formalism and structural approaches
- Sub-Part 2.2.2: Historicism and contextual approaches
- Sub-Part 2.2.3: Reader-response and interpretive approaches

Part 2.3: Applying critical forms to texts

- Sub-Part 2.3.1: Case study of poetry analysis
- Sub-Part 2.3.2: Case study of prose analysis
- Sub-Part 2.3.3: Case study of drama analysis

Part 2.4: Evaluating critical forms

- Sub-Part 2.4.1: Strengths and limitations of each form
- Sub-Part 2.4.2: Integrating multiple forms for deeper analysis

Introduction

In the last Series, we surveyed literary theories and concepts, laying the foundation for understanding how literature can be studied critically. Building on that knowledge, this Series focuses on the practical side of literary criticism by examining critical forms and their applications. Critical forms provide the methods through which theories are put into practice, enabling us to analyse texts systematically and meaningfully.



The aim of this Series is to introduce you to major critical forms and to equip you with the skills needed to apply them effectively in the analysis of poetry, prose, and drama.

We shall commence this Series by defining critical forms and exploring their scope and functions. Next, we will examine major critical forms such as formalism, historicism, and reader-response approaches. Following that, we will apply these forms to case studies in poetry, prose, and drama, showing how each method works in practice. Finally, we will evaluate the strengths and limitations of different forms and consider how they can be integrated for deeper and more balanced literary analysis.

Series Learning Outcomes

Upon completing this Series, you should be able to:

- **SLO 2.1** define critical forms and explain their scope,
- **SLO 2.2** analyse the functions of critical forms in literary study,
- **SLO 2.3** describe major critical forms including formalism, historicism, and reader-response approaches,
- **SLO 2.4** apply critical forms to the analysis of poetry, prose, and drama, and
- **SLO 2.5** evaluate the strengths and limitations of critical forms and integrate multiple approaches for deeper analysis.

2.1 Understanding Critical Forms

2.1.1 Definition and scope of critical forms

Critical forms are the structured methods or approaches used to apply literary theory in practice. They provide readers and scholars with systematic ways of interpreting texts, ensuring that analysis is not merely subjective but grounded in established frameworks. The scope of critical forms is wide, ranging from approaches that focus on the text itself, such as **formalism**, to those that emphasise historical context, such as **historicism**, and those that highlight the reader's role, such as **reader-response criticism**.

Fill in the blank: _____ forms are the structured methods or approaches used to apply literary theory in practice.



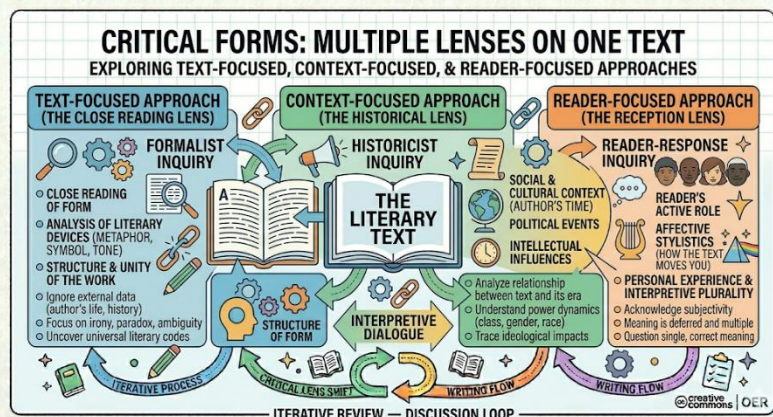


Figure 2.1: Scope of critical forms in literary analysis

2.1.2 Functions of critical forms in literary study

The **functions of critical forms** include guiding interpretation, providing consistency in analysis, and connecting literature to broader contexts. For example, formalism helps us examine structure and language, historicism situates texts within their cultural and historical background, and reader-response criticism highlights how meaning is shaped by readers. These functions make critical forms essential tools for literary study, as they allow us to approach texts from multiple perspectives and to generate richer insights.

Fill in the blank: The _____ of critical forms include guiding interpretation, providing consistency in analysis, and connecting literature to broader contexts.

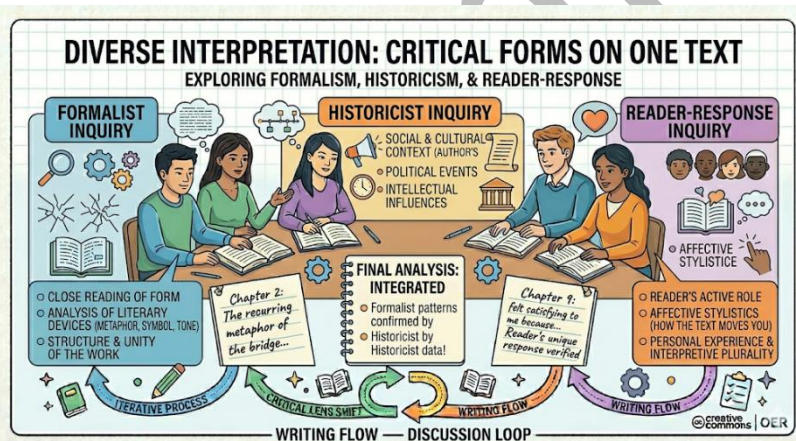


Plate 2.1: Applying critical forms in literary study

Core Function	Method of Application	Pedagogical Objective
Systematic Frameworks	Applying a specific "lens" (e.g., Formalism or Structuralism) to look for	To move students from subjective impressions to evidence-based analysis.



Core Function	Method of Application	Pedagogical Objective
	recurring patterns, symbols, and syntax.	
Contextual Connection	Linking the narrative to the social, political, or economic conditions of the era in which it was written.	To illustrate how literature acts as a mirror or a critique of its historical moment.
Reader-Response Role	Analyzing how different readers' backgrounds and experiences change the "decoded" meaning of the text.	To encourage a diverse and inclusive classroom dialogue where multiple interpretations are valid.
Rigorous Interpretation	Using literary theory to challenge "obvious" meanings and uncover subtext, irony, or underlying contradictions.	To develop high-level critical thinking and the ability to handle narrative complexity.

Box 2.1: Key functions of critical forms

Pilot questions 2.1

1. _____ forms are the structured methods or approaches used to apply literary theory in practice.
2. State one example of the scope of critical forms.
3. The _____ of critical forms include guiding interpretation, providing consistency in analysis, and connecting literature to broader contexts.
4. Give one function of formalism in literary study.
5. Why are critical forms considered essential tools for literary analysis?

2.2 Major Critical Forms

2.2.1 Formalism and structural approaches

Formalism is a critical form that focuses on the structure, language, and form of a text rather than its historical or social context. It examines elements such as imagery, symbolism, rhythm, and narrative technique to understand how meaning is created within the text itself. **Structural approaches**, influenced by linguistics, extend this by analysing patterns and systems, such as recurring myths or narrative structures. Together, these approaches encourage close reading and highlight the artistry of the text.



Fill in the blank: _____ is a critical form that focuses on the structure, language, and form of a text rather than its historical or social context.

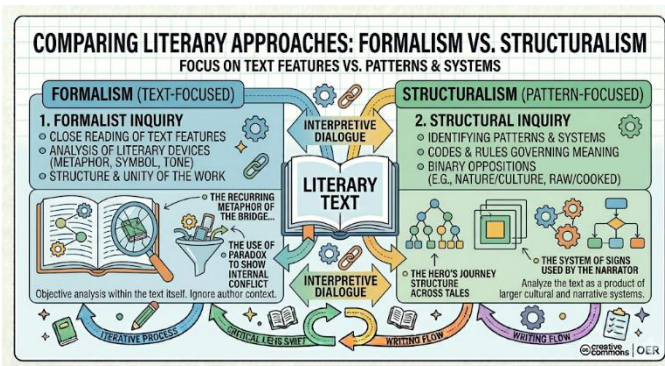


Figure 2.2: Formalism and structural approaches in literary analysis

2.2.2 Historicism and contextual approaches

Historicism emphasises the importance of historical and cultural context in interpreting literature. It considers the time, place, and circumstances in which a text was produced, as well as the author's background and influences. Contextual approaches extend this by including social, political, and cultural factors that shape meaning. These methods remind us that literature is not created in isolation but reflects and responds to the world around it.

Fill in the blank: _____ emphasises the importance of historical and cultural context in interpreting literature.



Plate 2.2: Historicism and contextual approaches in literary analysis

2.2.3 Reader-response and interpretive approaches

Reader-response criticism shifts the focus from the text itself to the reader's role in creating meaning. It argues that interpretation is not fixed but varies depending on the reader's experiences, emotions, and cultural background. Interpretive approaches highlight the dynamic relationship between text and reader, showing how meaning evolves through engagement. This perspective values diversity of interpretation and acknowledges that literature can resonate differently across audiences.



Fill in the blank: _____ criticism shifts the focus from the text itself to the reader's role in creating meaning.

Approach	Primary Focal Point	Key Analytical Goal
Formalism	The Text itself	To find organic unity and aesthetic patterns.
Structuralism	The System	To identify universal rules governing all texts.
Historicism	The Era	To reconstruct the "spirit" of the author's time.
Contextual	Power Dynamics	To expose social, economic, or gender biases.
Reader-Response	The Audience	To explore the diverse experiences of the "receiver."

Box 2.2: Key features of major critical forms

Pilot questions 2.2

1. _____ is a critical form that focuses on the structure, language, and form of a text rather than its historical or social context.
2. State one feature of structural approaches in literary analysis.
3. _____ emphasises the importance of historical and cultural context in interpreting literature.
4. Give one example of a contextual factor considered in literary analysis.
5. _____ criticism shifts the focus from the text itself to the reader's role in creating meaning

2.3 Applying Critical Forms to Texts

2.3.1 Case study of poetry analysis

When applying **critical forms** to poetry, formalism is often a useful starting point. By focusing on the structure, rhythm, imagery, and symbolism, we can uncover how meaning is created within the poem itself. For example, analysing a sonnet through its rhyme scheme and metaphorical language reveals how the poet conveys emotion and thought. Historicism can then be applied to situate the poem within its cultural or historical context, while reader-response criticism highlights how different audiences may interpret the same imagery in diverse ways.

Fill in the blank: Analysing a sonnet through its rhyme scheme and metaphorical language is an example of applying _____ to poetry.



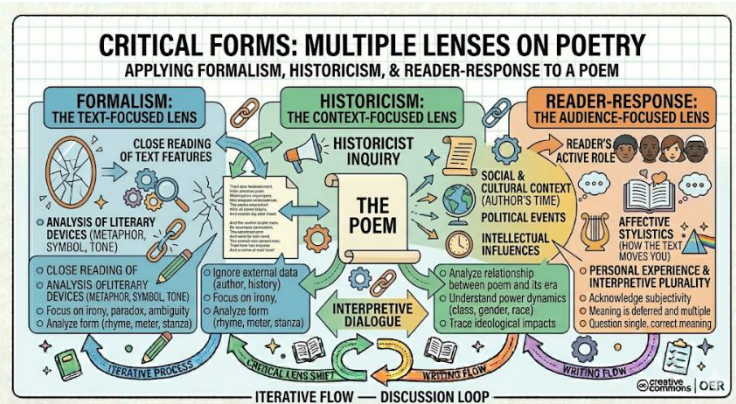


Figure 2.3: Applying critical forms to poetry

2.3.2 Case study of prose analysis

In prose, critical forms can be applied to examine narrative techniques, characterisation, and themes. Formalism allows us to study how language and structure shape meaning, while historicism situates the text within its social and political background. Reader-response criticism adds another layer by considering how readers' perspectives influence interpretation. For instance, a novel may be read differently by audiences in different cultural contexts, showing the dynamic nature of meaning.

Fill in the blank: _____ criticism considers how readers' perspectives influence interpretation of prose texts.



Plate 2.3: Applying critical forms to prose

2.3.3 Case study of drama analysis

Drama provides a rich field for applying critical forms because it combines text with performance. Formalism can be used to analyse dialogue, stage directions, and dramatic structure. Historicism situates plays within their cultural and political contexts, while reader-response criticism considers how audiences interpret performances differently. For example, Shakespeare's plays may be analysed for their poetic language, understood in relation to Elizabethan society, and interpreted differently by modern audiences.

Fill in the blank: Analysing dialogue, stage directions, and dramatic structure in a play is an example of applying _____ to drama.



Genre	Primary Analytical Lens	Key Elements to Interrogate
Poetry	Aesthetic/Sensory	Rhyme, meter, metaphor, and stanzas.
Prose	Narrative/Thematic	Plot arc, narrator reliability, and setting.
Drama	Performative/Dialogic	Subtext in dialogue, blocking, and audience reaction.

Box 2.3: Applying critical forms to different genres

Pilot questions 2.3

1. Analysing a sonnet through its rhyme scheme and metaphorical language is an example of applying _____ to poetry.
2. State one way historicism can be applied to poetry.
3. _____ criticism considers how readers' perspectives influence interpretation of prose texts.
4. Give one example of how critical forms can be applied to prose.
5. Analysing dialogue, stage directions, and dramatic structure in a play is an example of applying _____ to drama.

2.4 Evaluating Critical Forms

2.4.1 Strengths and limitations of each form

Every **critical form** offers unique strengths but also has limitations. **Formalism** is strong in its close reading of language and structure, allowing us to appreciate the artistry of texts. However, it can be limited because it often ignores historical or social context. **Historicism** provides valuable insights into how texts reflect their time, yet it may reduce literature to a mere historical document if overemphasised. **Reader-response criticism** highlights the diversity of interpretation and the active role of audiences, but it can risk becoming too subjective if not balanced with textual evidence. Recognising these strengths and limitations helps us to use each form wisely.

Fill in the blank: _____ provides valuable insights into how texts reflect their time, but may reduce literature to a mere historical document if overemphasised.



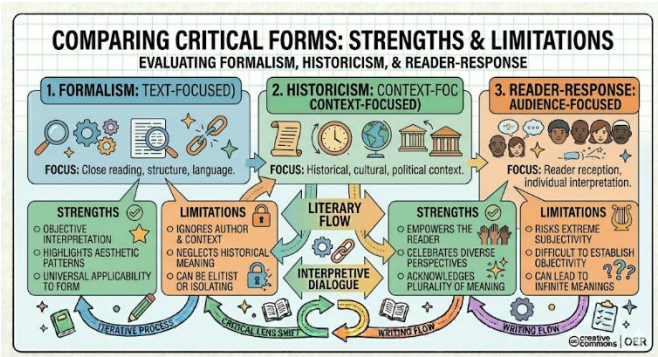


Figure 2.4: Strengths and limitations of critical forms

2.4.2 Integrating multiple forms for deeper analysis

The most effective literary analysis often comes from **integrating multiple critical forms**. For example, a poem can be studied formally for its imagery and rhythm, historically for its cultural context, and through reader-response for its impact on audiences. Combining approaches allows us to balance objectivity with interpretation, and to generate richer insights. Integration also prevents over-reliance on a single perspective, ensuring that analysis remains comprehensive and nuanced.

Fill in the blank: The most effective literary analysis often comes from _____ multiple critical forms.

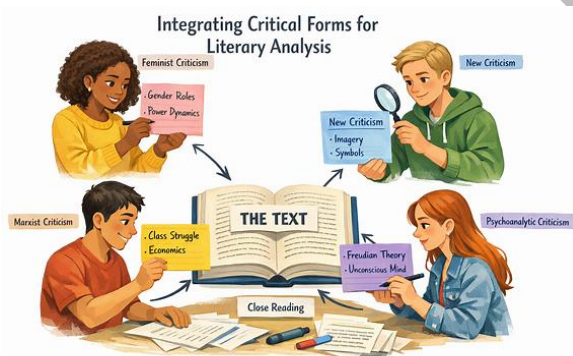


Plate 2.4: Integrating multiple critical forms in analysis

Reason for Relevance	Practical Application in Drama	Educational & Artistic Value
Accessible to Audiences	Its short duration (usually 20–40 minutes) fits into non-traditional spaces like marketplaces or community halls.	Communal Pulse: Maintains the audience's high-intensity engagement, mirroring the "Total Theatre" energy of oral storytelling.



Reason for Relevance	Practical Application in Drama	Educational & Artistic Value
Ease of Staging	Requires minimal sets, lighting, and a small cast (often 2–4 adult characters).	Resource Sovereignty: Ideal for itinerant troupes or school programs operating with limited budgets in rural or urban settings.
Experimental Freedom	Allows playwrights to test radical symbols or non-linear structures without the risk of a full-length production.	The Aesthetic Loop: A safe space to blend traditional "Call and Response" with modern avant-garde techniques.
Training Ground	Provides a manageable "Structural Map" for emerging writers to master the arc of a story.	Literary Literacy: Teaches the economy of language and how to establish a "Witnessing Realism" through concise action.
Focus on Dialogue	Forces a deep concentration on the rhythm of speech and the core conflict.	Allegorical Weight: Every word must carry the weight of the social critique, making the dialogue a "Literature of Witness."

Box 2.4: Benefits of integrating critical forms

Pilot questions 2.4

1. _____ provides valuable insights into how texts reflect their time, but may reduce literature to a mere historical document if overemphasised.
2. State one strength of formalism in literary analysis.
3. Give one limitation of reader-response criticism.
4. The most effective literary analysis often comes from _____ multiple critical forms.
5. Why is integrating multiple critical forms beneficial for literary study?

Series Summary

This Series has focused on exploring critical forms and their practical applications in literary analysis. We began by defining critical forms and examining their scope and functions, then moved on to major approaches such as formalism, structuralism, historicism, contextual analysis, and reader-response criticism. Following that, we applied these forms to case studies in poetry, prose, and drama, showing how each method works in practice. Finally, we evaluated the



strengths and limitations of different forms and considered how integrating them can lead to deeper and more balanced analysis.

By completing this Series, you should now be able to define and explain critical forms, analyse their functions, describe major approaches, apply them to different genres, and evaluate their strengths and limitations. These abilities align directly with the Series Learning Outcomes (SLOs 2.1–2.5), equipping you with practical skills for applying theory to texts in a systematic and insightful way.

Glossary of Terms

- **Contextual approaches:** Methods that interpret literature by considering social, political, and cultural factors.
- **Critical forms:** Structured methods or approaches used to apply literary theory in practice.
- **Formalism:** A critical form that focuses on the structure, language, and form of a text.
- **Historicism:** An approach that emphasises the importance of historical and cultural context in interpreting literature.
- **Reader-response criticism:** A critical form that highlights the reader's role in creating meaning from a text.
- **Structural approaches:** Methods that analyse patterns and systems, such as myths or narrative structures, within literature.

Concept Check Questions 2

Objective Questions

1. _____ forms are the structured methods or approaches used to apply literary theory in practice. (Linked to SLO 2.1)
2. _____ is a critical form that focuses on the structure, language, and form of a text. (Linked to SLO 2.3)
3. _____ emphasises the importance of historical and cultural context in interpreting literature. (Linked to SLO 2.3)
4. _____ criticism highlights the reader's role in creating meaning. (Linked to SLO 2.3)
5. The most effective literary analysis often comes from _____ multiple critical forms. (Linked to SLO 2.5)

Short-Answer Questions

6. State one function of critical forms in literary study. (Linked to SLO 2.2)
7. Give one feature of structural approaches in literary analysis. (Linked to SLO 2.3)



8. State one way critical forms can be applied to poetry. (Linked to SLO 2.4)
9. Give one example of how historicism can be applied to prose. (Linked to SLO 2.4)
10. Why is integrating multiple critical forms beneficial for literary study? (Linked to SLO 2.5)

Long-Answer Questions

11. Analyse the strengths and limitations of formalism in literary analysis. (Linked to SLO 2.5)
 - **Basic response:** Formalism is strong in its close reading of language and structure but limited because it often ignores historical or social context.
 - **Value-added response:** Outstanding learners may explain how formalism enhances appreciation of artistry, yet must be complemented by contextual approaches to avoid narrow interpretation.
12. Evaluate the importance of applying critical forms to different genres such as poetry, prose, and drama. (Linked to SLO 2.4)
 - **Basic response:** Applying critical forms helps uncover meaning in each genre by focusing on features such as imagery in poetry, narrative in prose, and dialogue in drama.
 - **Value-added response:** Outstanding learners may discuss how combining approaches across genres enriches analysis, highlights diversity of interpretation, and ensures comprehensive engagement with literature.

Answers to Pilot Questions [Series 2]

Part 2.1

1. Critical
2. Text-focused, context-focused, or reader-focused
3. Functions
4. It examines structure and language
5. They provide systematic and balanced analysis

Part 2.2

1. Formalism
2. Analysis of patterns and systems
3. Historicism
4. Social or political factors
5. Reader-response

Part 2.3

1. Formalism



2. Situating a poem in its cultural or historical context
3. Reader-response
4. Examining narrative technique or themes
5. Formalism

Part 2.4

1. Historicism
2. Close reading of language and structure
3. It can risk becoming too subjective
4. Integrating
5. It provides balanced and nuanced analysis

References and Attributions [Series 2]

• Figures

- *Figure 2.1: Scope of critical forms in literary analysis* – AI-generated suggestion using the prompt: “Create a diagram showing the scope of critical forms in literary analysis including text-focused, context-focused, and reader-focused approaches.” Suggested search string: “scope of critical forms literary analysis diagram OER.”
- *Figure 2.2: Formalism and structural approaches in literary analysis* – AI-generated suggestion using the prompt: “Create a diagram comparing formalism and structural approaches in literary analysis.” Suggested search string: “formalism structuralism literary analysis diagram OER.”
- *Figure 2.3: Applying critical forms to poetry* – AI-generated suggestion using the prompt: “Create a diagram showing how formalism, historicism, and reader-response criticism can be applied to poetry.” Suggested search string: “critical forms poetry analysis diagram OER.”
- *Figure 2.4: Strengths and limitations of critical forms* – AI-generated suggestion using the prompt: “Create a diagram showing strengths and limitations of formalism, historicism, and reader-response criticism.” Suggested search string: “strengths limitations critical forms literary analysis diagram OER.”

• Plates

- *Plate 2.1: Applying critical forms in literary study* – AI-generated suggestion using the prompt: “Generate an image showing students analysing a text with notes referencing different critical forms.” Suggested search string: “students applying critical forms literary analysis OER image.”



- *Plate 2.2: Historicism and contextual approaches in literary analysis* – AI-generated suggestion using the prompt: “Generate an image showing a scholar analysing a text alongside historical documents and cultural artefacts.” Suggested search string: “historicism contextual literary analysis OER image.”
- *Plate 2.3: Applying critical forms to prose* – AI-generated suggestion using the prompt: “Generate an image showing students discussing a novel with notes on narrative technique, historical background, and reader perspectives.” Suggested search string: “critical forms prose analysis OER image.”
- *Plate 2.4: Integrating multiple critical forms in analysis* – AI-generated suggestion using the prompt: “Generate an image showing a group of students combining notes from different critical forms to analyse a single text.” Suggested search string: “integrating critical forms literary analysis OER image.”
- **Boxes**
 - *Box 2.1: Key functions of critical forms* – AI-generated suggestion using the prompt: “Create a text box summarising key functions of critical forms in literary study.” Suggested search string: “functions of critical forms literary analysis OER.”
 - *Box 2.2: Key features of major critical forms* – AI-generated suggestion using the prompt: “Create a text box summarising key features of major critical forms including formalism, structural approaches, historicism, contextual approaches, and reader-response.” Suggested search string: “major critical forms literary analysis summary OER.”
 - *Box 2.3: Applying critical forms to different genres* – AI-generated suggestion using the prompt: “Create a text box summarising how critical forms are applied to poetry, prose, and drama.” Suggested search string: “critical forms application poetry prose drama OER summary.”
 - *Box 2.4: Benefits of integrating critical forms* – AI-generated suggestion using the prompt: “Create a text box summarising the benefits of integrating critical forms in literary analysis.” Suggested search string: “integrating critical forms literary analysis OER summary.”



Course Code: LIT 310

Course Title: Introduction to Literary Criticism/Theories

Course Credit Load: 2 Units

Series 1: Surveying Literary Theories and Concepts

Series 2: Exploring Critical Forms and Applications

Series 3: Theory versus Criticism in Literary Studies

Series 4: Movements and Development of Critical Schools

Series 5: Theories, Ideologies, and Aesthetics in Literature

Proposed Outline for Series 3

Part 3.1: Defining theory and criticism

- Sub-Part 3.1.1: Meaning and scope of theory
- Sub-Part 3.1.2: Meaning and scope of criticism

Part 3.2: Distinctions between theory and criticism

- Sub-Part 3.2.1: Conceptual differences
- Sub-Part 3.2.2: Practical differences in application

Part 3.3: Interrelationship of theory and criticism

- Sub-Part 3.3.1: How theory informs criticism
- Sub-Part 3.3.2: How criticism refines theory

Part 3.4: Case studies in theory and criticism

- Sub-Part 3.4.1: Application to poetry
- Sub-Part 3.4.2: Application to prose
- Sub-Part 3.4.3: Application to drama

Introduction

In the last Series, we explored critical forms and their applications, learning how different approaches can be used to analyse texts. Building on that foundation, this Series turns to the important distinction between theory and criticism. While these terms are often used interchangeably, they serve different purposes in literary studies, and understanding their differences is essential for effective analysis.



The aim of this Series is to clarify the meanings of theory and criticism, highlight their distinctions, and demonstrate how they interact in practice.

We shall commence this Series by defining theory and criticism, examining their scope and meanings. Next, we will explore the distinctions between them, both conceptually and practically. Following that, we will consider their interrelationship, showing how theory informs criticism and how criticism refines theory. Finally, we will apply these ideas to case studies in poetry, prose, and drama, bringing the discussion to life through practical examples.

Series Learning Outcomes

Upon completing this Series, you should be able to:

- **SLO 3.1** define theory and explain its scope in literary studies,
- **SLO 3.2** define criticism and explain its scope in literary studies,
- **SLO 3.3** analyse the conceptual distinctions between theory and criticism,
- **SLO 3.4** evaluate the practical differences between theory and criticism in application,
- **SLO 3.5** explain how theory informs criticism and how criticism refines theory, and
- **SLO 3.6** apply the distinction between theory and criticism to case studies in poetry, prose, and drama.

3.1 Defining Theory and Criticism

3.1.1 Meaning and scope of theory

Theory in literary studies refers to the systematic frameworks and principles used to interpret and analyse texts. It provides abstract models that guide how we understand literature, often drawing from philosophy, linguistics, psychology, or cultural studies. The scope of theory is broad, encompassing classical traditions, modern schools such as structuralism, and contemporary approaches like feminism or postcolonialism. Theory is not tied to a single text but offers general perspectives that can be applied across genres and contexts.

Fill in the blank: _____ in literary studies refers to the systematic frameworks and principles used to interpret and analyse texts.



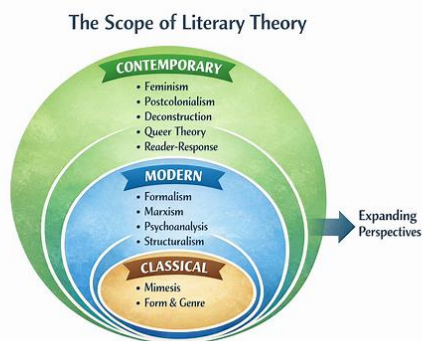


Figure 3.1: Scope of literary theory

3.1.2 Meaning and scope of criticism

Criticism refers to the practical activity of interpreting, evaluating, and analysing specific literary texts. Unlike theory, which provides abstract frameworks, criticism applies those frameworks to actual works. The scope of criticism includes textual analysis, evaluation of artistic quality, and consideration of cultural or historical significance. Criticism is therefore more concrete, focusing on how individual texts can be understood, appreciated, or challenged.

Fill in the blank: _____ refers to the practical activity of interpreting, evaluating, and analysing specific literary texts.



Plate 3.1: Practising literary criticism

Feature	Literary Theory (The "Map")	Literary Criticism (The "Journey")
Nature of Inquiry	Abstract Frameworks: Focuses on the underlying principles, "rules," and philosophical structures of literature.	Practical Application: Focuses on the direct examination, analysis, and evaluation of specific texts.



Feature	Literary Theory (The "Map")	Literary Criticism (The "Journey")
Scope of Study	Broad & Universal: Looks across genres, time periods, and cultures to define what "literature" or "meaning" actually is.	Focused & Specific: Concentrates on a single work, an author's body of work, or a specific literary movement.
Primary Goal	Guides Interpretation: Establishes the <i>tools</i> and <i>methods</i> (e.g., Post-colonialism, Feminism, Formalism) used to read.	Performs Interpretation: Uses those tools to uncover themes, symbols, and social critiques within a text.
Functional Output	Structural Map: Asks "How does a text mean?" and "Who has the power to define meaning?"	Evaluative Essay: Asks "What does <i>this</i> text mean?" and "How well does it achieve its aesthetic goals?"

Box 3.1: Key distinctions between theory and criticism

Pilot questions 3.1

1. _____ in literary studies refers to the systematic frameworks and principles used to interpret and analyse texts.
2. State one source from which literary theory may draw its principles.
3. _____ refers to the practical activity of interpreting, evaluating, and analysing specific literary texts.
4. Give one scope of literary criticism.
5. Why is it important to distinguish between theory and criticism in literary studies?

3.2 Distinctions Between Theory and Criticism

3.2.1 Conceptual differences

Theory provides abstract frameworks that explain how literature can be studied, while **criticism** applies those frameworks to specific texts. Theory is concerned with principles, models, and general perspectives, whereas criticism is concerned with interpretation, evaluation, and practical analysis. For example, feminist theory offers a lens for examining gender in literature, while feminist criticism applies that lens to a particular novel or poem.

Fill in the blank: _____ provides abstract frameworks, while _____ applies those frameworks to specific texts.



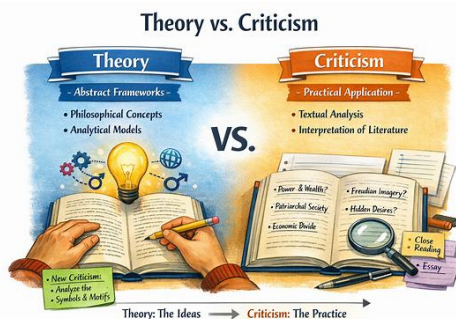


Figure 3.2: Conceptual differences between theory and criticism

3.2.2 Practical differences in application

In practice, theory and criticism operate differently. Theory guides the questions we ask of texts, shaping our approach to analysis. Criticism, on the other hand, involves the actual process of reading, interpreting, and evaluating a text. For instance, Marxist theory explains how literature reflects class struggle, while Marxist criticism analyses a specific novel to show how class conflict is represented. The practical difference lies in theory's role as a guiding framework and criticism's role as the act of applying that framework.

Fill in the blank: _____ guides the questions we ask of texts, while _____ involves the actual process of reading, interpreting, and evaluating.



Plate 3.2: Practical differences in application of theory and criticism

Feature	Literary Theory	Literary Criticism
Primary Goal	Defines the framework and questions used to approach a text.	Performs the actual interpretation and evaluation of the text.
Scope	Abstract and general ; it applies to many different works.	Concrete and text-specific ; it focuses on a unique work.



Feature	Literary Theory	Literary Criticism
Function	Informs the analysis by providing a specific viewpoint (e.g., Feminist, Marxist).	Delivers the analysis by applying that viewpoint to specific passages.
Output	Philosophies, methodologies, and systemic "rules."	Essays, reviews, and deep-dives into character and plot.

Box 3.2: Practical distinctions between theory and criticism

Pilot questions 3.2

1. _____ provides abstract frameworks, while _____ applies those frameworks to specific texts.
2. State one conceptual difference between theory and criticism.
3. _____ guides the questions we ask of texts, while _____ involves the actual process of reading, interpreting, and evaluating.
4. Give one example of how Marxist theory differs from Marxist criticism.
5. Why is it important to recognise both conceptual and practical distinctions between theory and criticism?

3.3 Interrelationship Of Theory And Criticism

3.3.1 How theory informs criticism

Theory provides the guiding frameworks that shape the questions we ask of texts. It sets the foundation for criticism by offering perspectives such as feminism, Marxism, or psychoanalysis. For instance, feminist theory highlights issues of gender and power, which then informs feminist criticism when applied to a specific novel or play. Without theory, criticism risks becoming impressionistic or inconsistent, as theory ensures that analysis is systematic and grounded.

Fill in the blank: _____ provides the guiding frameworks that shape the questions we ask of texts.



FIGURE 3.3: HOW THEORY INFORMS CRITICISM

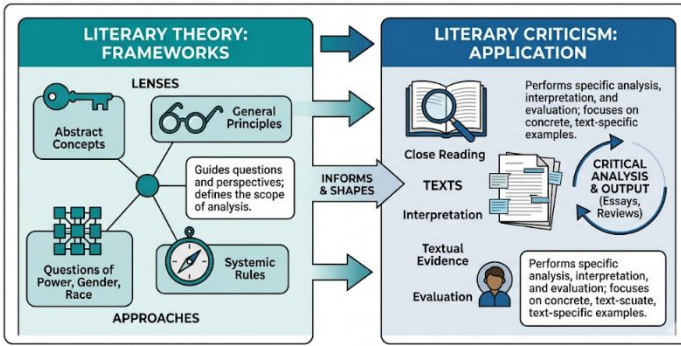


Figure 3.3: How theory informs criticism

3.3.2 How criticism refines theory

Criticism plays a vital role in refining theory. When critics apply theoretical frameworks to texts, they may uncover limitations, contradictions, or new insights. For example, applying postcolonial theory to diverse texts can reveal nuances that lead to adjustments or expansions of the theory itself. In this way, criticism is not only guided by theory but also feeds back into it, ensuring that theories remain dynamic and responsive to literature.

Fill in the blank: _____ plays a vital role in refining theory by uncovering limitations, contradictions, or new insights.



Plate 3.3: How criticism refines theory

Direction	Process	Impact
Theory → Criticism	Orientation	Theory provides the "lenses" (e.g., Post-colonialism, Psychoanalysis) that guide the critic on what questions to ask and which patterns to look for.



Direction	Process	Impact
Criticism → Theory	Application	Criticism acts as the laboratory where theoretical frameworks are tested against the "messiness" of actual texts to see if they hold up.
Criticism → Theory	Refinement	When a theory fails to explain a certain part of a text, the critic's findings reveal limitations, forcing the theory to evolve or expand.
The Result	Synthesis	This creates a dynamic, cyclical relationship where new insights from specific texts generate new general theories.

Box 3.3: Interrelationship of theory and criticism

Pilot questions 3.3

1. _____ provides the guiding frameworks that shape the questions we ask of texts.
2. State one way feminist theory informs feminist criticism.
3. _____ plays a vital role in refining theory by uncovering limitations, contradictions, or new insights.
4. Give one example of how criticism can expand or adjust a theory.
5. Why is the relationship between theory and criticism described as cyclical and dynamic?

3.4 Case Studies In Theory And Criticism

3.4.1 Application to poetry

Poetry provides a rich ground for demonstrating the interaction between **theory** and **criticism**. For example, feminist theory may highlight themes of gender and voice, while feminist criticism applies this lens to a specific poem, analysing imagery and tone. Similarly, Marxist theory explains literature in terms of class struggle, and Marxist criticism might examine a poem's portrayal of labour or inequality. These case studies show how theory guides the perspective, while criticism performs the detailed analysis.

Fill in the blank: _____ criticism applies theoretical perspectives such as feminism or Marxism to specific poems.



INTERRELATIONSHIP OF LITERARY THEORY & CRITICISM: APPLICATION TO POETRY

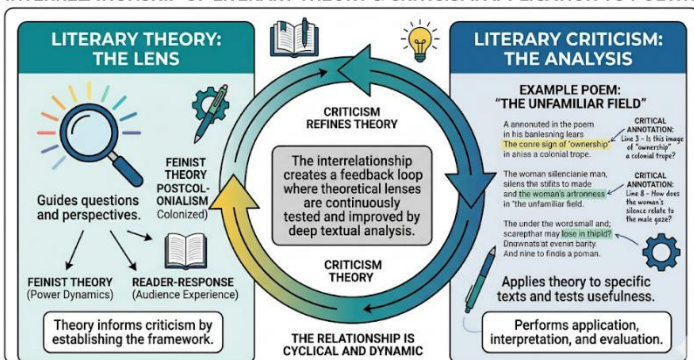


Figure 3.4: Application of theory and criticism to poetry

3.4.2 Application to prose

In prose, theory and criticism interact by shaping how novels and short stories are interpreted. For instance, psychoanalytic theory provides concepts such as the unconscious or repression, while psychoanalytic criticism applies these ideas to characters and plot. Postcolonial theory highlights issues of identity and power, while postcolonial criticism analyses how a novel portrays colonial relationships. These applications demonstrate how theory frames the questions and criticism delivers the answers through close reading.

Fill in the blank: _____ theory highlights issues of identity and power, while _____ criticism analyses how a novel portrays colonial relationships.



Plate 3.4: Application of theory and criticism to prose

3.4.3 Application to drama

Drama combines text with performance, making the interaction between theory and criticism particularly dynamic. For example, structuralist theory may explain dramatic conventions, while structuralist criticism analyses how a play uses those conventions. Reader-response theory emphasises audience interpretation, while reader-response criticism studies how different



audiences react to performances. These case studies show how theory provides the framework and criticism applies it to both text and performance.

Fill in the blank: _____ criticism studies how different audiences react to performances in drama.

Genre	Role of Theory (The Framework)	Role of Criticism (The Application)
Poetry	Provides a lens to view abstract patterns (e.g., how Formalism looks at structure).	Analyzes imagery, meter, and tone to see how they create specific emotional effects.
Prose	Frames broad concepts like social class, gender roles, or historical context.	Interprets character development, plot arcs , and narrative voice within those frames.
Drama	Explains theatrical conventions and the mechanics of the stage.	Examines performance, stage directions , and the immediate audience response .

Box 3.4: Case studies in theory and criticism

Pilot questions 3.4

1. _____ criticism applies theoretical perspectives such as feminism or Marxism to specific poems.
2. State one way Marxist criticism can be applied to poetry.
3. _____ theory highlights issues of identity and power, while _____ criticism analyses how a novel portrays colonial relationships.
4. Give one example of how psychoanalytic criticism can be applied to prose.
5. _____ criticism studies how different audiences react to performances in drama

Series Summary

This Series has explored the distinction and relationship between theory and criticism in literary studies. We began by defining both concepts, clarifying their scope and purpose. We then examined their conceptual and practical differences, before moving on to their interrelationship, showing how theory informs criticism and how criticism refines theory. Finally, we applied these ideas to case studies in poetry, prose, and drama, demonstrating how abstract frameworks and practical analysis work together in practice.

By completing this Series, you should now be able to define theory and criticism, analyse their differences, explain their interrelationship, and apply these concepts to different genres. These abilities align directly with the Series Learning Outcomes (SLOs 3.1–3.6), equipping you with a



balanced and practical understanding of how literary studies combine theoretical perspectives with critical practice.

Glossary of Terms

- **Criticism:** The practical activity of interpreting, evaluating, and analysing specific literary texts.
- **Frameworks:** Structured models or principles used to guide interpretation in theory.
- **Literary theory:** Systematic frameworks and principles used to interpret and analyse texts.
- **Scope:** The range or extent of application of theory or criticism.
- **Textual analysis:** The close study of a specific literary text to uncover meaning and evaluate artistic quality.

Concept Check Questions [Series 3]

Objective Questions

1. _____ in literary studies refers to the systematic frameworks and principles used to interpret and analyse texts. (Linked to SLO 3.1)
2. _____ refers to the practical activity of interpreting, evaluating, and analysing specific literary texts. (Linked to SLO 3.2)
3. Theory provides _____ frameworks, while criticism applies them to texts. (Linked to SLO 3.3)
4. Criticism focuses on _____ works, while theory has a broader scope. (Linked to SLO 3.4)
5. Theory informs _____, and criticism refines theory. (Linked to SLO 3.5)

Short-Answer Questions

6. State one source from which literary theory may draw its principles. (Linked to SLO 3.1)
7. Give one scope of literary criticism. (Linked to SLO 3.2)
8. State one conceptual difference between theory and criticism. (Linked to SLO 3.3)
9. Give one practical difference between theory and criticism. (Linked to SLO 3.4)
10. Why is it important to distinguish between theory and criticism in literary studies? (Linked to SLO 3.6)

Long-Answer Questions

11. Analyse how theory informs criticism in literary studies. (Linked to SLO 3.5)
 - **Basic response:** Theory provides frameworks that guide criticism in interpreting texts.



- **Value-added response:** Outstanding learners may explain how specific theories, such as feminism or Marxism, shape critical practice and influence the questions critics ask of texts.
12. Evaluate the importance of applying the distinction between theory and criticism to case studies in poetry, prose, and drama. (Linked to SLO 3.6)
- **Basic response:** Applying the distinction helps clarify whether we are using abstract frameworks or performing practical analysis.
 - **Value-added response:** Outstanding learners may discuss how this distinction enriches analysis, prevents confusion, and ensures balanced engagement with literature across genres.

Answers to Pilot Questions [Series 3]

Part 3.1

1. Theory
2. Philosophy, linguistics, psychology, or cultural studies
3. Criticism
4. Textual analysis, evaluation of artistic quality, or cultural significance
5. To ensure clarity between abstract frameworks and practical application

Part 3.2

1. Theory; criticism
2. Theory is abstract, criticism is practical
3. Theory; criticism
4. Marxist theory explains class struggle, Marxist criticism analyses a novel's portrayal of class conflict
5. To avoid confusion and ensure balanced analysis

Part 3.3

1. Theory
2. It highlights gender and power issues that criticism applies to specific texts
3. Criticism
4. Applying postcolonial criticism may expand postcolonial theory to include new cultural contexts
5. Because theory and criticism continually inform and refine each other

Part 3.4

1. Literary criticism
2. By examining a poem's portrayal of labour or inequality



3. Postcolonial; postcolonial criticism
4. By analysing unconscious motives in characters or plot
5. Reader-response criticism

References and Attributions [Series 3]

- **Figures**

- *Figure 3.1: Scope of literary theory* – AI-generated suggestion using the prompt: “Create a diagram showing the scope of literary theory including classical, modern, and contemporary approaches.” Suggested search string: “scope of literary theory diagram OER.”
- *Figure 3.2: Conceptual differences between theory and criticism* – AI-generated suggestion using the prompt: “Create a diagram showing conceptual differences between theory and criticism.” Suggested search string: “conceptual differences theory criticism literary studies diagram OER.”
- *Figure 3.3: How theory informs criticism* – AI-generated suggestion using the prompt: “Create a diagram showing how theory informs criticism.” Suggested search string: “how theory informs criticism literary studies diagram OER.”
- *Figure 3.4: Application of theory and criticism to poetry* – AI-generated suggestion using the prompt: “Create a diagram showing how theory provides a lens and criticism applies it to poetry.” Suggested search string: “application theory criticism poetry diagram OER.”

- **Plates**

- *Plate 3.1: Practising literary criticism* – AI-generated suggestion using the prompt: “Generate an image showing a student writing notes on a novel with references to different critical perspectives.” Suggested search string: “student practising literary criticism OER image.”
- *Plate 3.2: Practical differences in application of theory and criticism* – AI-generated suggestion using the prompt: “Generate an image showing a scholar reading a novel with theoretical notes on one side and critical annotations on the other.” Suggested search string: “practical differences theory criticism literary analysis OER image.”
- *Plate 3.3: How criticism refines theory* – AI-generated suggestion using the prompt: “Generate an image showing a critic analysing a text and feeding insights back into theoretical notes.” Suggested search string: “criticism refines theory literary studies OER image.”
- *Plate 3.4: Application of theory and criticism to prose* – AI-generated suggestion using the prompt: “Generate an image showing students discussing a novel with



theoretical notes and critical annotations.” Suggested search string: “application theory criticism prose literary analysis OER image.”

- **Boxes**

- *Box 3.1: Key distinctions between theory and criticism* – AI-generated suggestion using the prompt: “Create a text box summarising key distinctions between theory and criticism in literary studies.” Suggested search string: “theory versus criticism literary studies OER summary.”
- *Box 3.2: Practical distinctions between theory and criticism* – AI-generated suggestion using the prompt: “Create a text box summarising practical distinctions between theory and criticism in literary studies.” Suggested search string: “practical distinctions theory criticism literary studies OER summary.”
- *Box 3.3: Interrelationship of theory and criticism* – AI-generated suggestion using the prompt: “Create a text box summarising the interrelationship of theory and criticism in literary studies.” Suggested search string: “interrelationship theory criticism literary studies OER summary.”
- *Box 3.4: Case studies in theory and criticism* – AI-generated suggestion using the prompt: “Create a text box summarising case studies in theory and criticism for poetry, prose, and drama.” Suggested search string: “case studies theory criticism poetry prose drama OER summary.”

Course Code: LIT 310

Course Title: Introduction to Literary Criticism/Theories

Course Credit Load: 2 Units

Series 1: Surveying Literary Theories and Concepts

Series 2: Exploring Critical Forms and Applications

Series 3: Theory versus Criticism in Literary Studies

Series 4: Movements and Development of Critical Schools

Series 5: Theories, Ideologies, and Aesthetics in Literature

Proposed Outline for Series 4

Part 4.1: Emergence of critical schools

- Sub-Part 4.1.1: Early foundations in classical and medieval thought
- Sub-Part 4.1.2: Renaissance and Enlightenment contributions

Part 4.2: Modern critical movements

- Sub-Part 4.2.1: Formalism and New Criticism
- Sub-Part 4.2.2: Structuralism and post-structuralism



- Sub-Part 4.2.3: Marxist and psychoanalytic criticism

Part 4.3: Contemporary critical schools

- Sub-Part 4.3.1: Feminist and gender criticism
- Sub-Part 4.3.2: Postcolonial and cultural studies
- Sub-Part 4.3.3: Reader-response and eclectic approaches

Part 4.4: Trends and future directions

- Sub-Part 4.4.1: Interdisciplinary approaches
- Sub-Part 4.4.2: Digital humanities and global perspective

Introduction

In the last Series, we examined the distinction between theory and criticism, learning how abstract frameworks and practical analysis interact. Building on that foundation, this Series turns to the historical movements and development of critical schools, showing how literary criticism has evolved over time. Understanding these movements helps us appreciate the diversity of perspectives and the intellectual traditions that continue to shape literary studies today.

The aim of this Series is to trace the emergence, growth, and transformation of critical schools, and to equip you with knowledge of both their historical significance and contemporary relevance.

We shall commence this Series by exploring the early foundations of critical schools in classical, medieval, Renaissance, and Enlightenment thought. Next, we will examine modern critical movements such as formalism, structuralism, Marxism, and psychoanalysis. Following that, we will consider contemporary schools including feminist, postcolonial, and reader-response approaches. Finally, we will wrap up by discussing current trends and future directions, including interdisciplinary methods and digital humanities.

Series Learning Outcomes

Upon completing this Series, you should be able to:

- **SLO 4.1** describe the early foundations of critical schools in classical, medieval, Renaissance, and Enlightenment thought,
- **SLO 4.2** explain the key features of modern critical movements such as formalism, structuralism, Marxism, and psychoanalysis,
- **SLO 4.3** analyse contemporary critical schools including feminist, postcolonial, and reader-response approaches, and
- **SLO 4.4** evaluate current trends and future directions in literary criticism, including interdisciplinary and digital approaches.



4.1 Emergence Of Critical Schools

4.1.1 Early foundations in classical and medieval thought

The roots of **critical schools** can be traced back to classical antiquity, where philosophers such as Plato and Aristotle laid the foundations of literary thought. **Plato** viewed literature with suspicion, arguing that poetry could mislead by imitating reality rather than presenting truth. **Aristotle**, however, offered a more systematic framework in his *Poetics*, defining tragedy, plot, character, and catharsis. These early ideas shaped centuries of literary reflection. In the medieval period, criticism was often tied to religious and moral interpretations, with texts studied for their alignment with theological principles.

Fill in the blank: _____ offered a systematic framework in his *Poetics*, defining tragedy, plot, character, and catharsis.

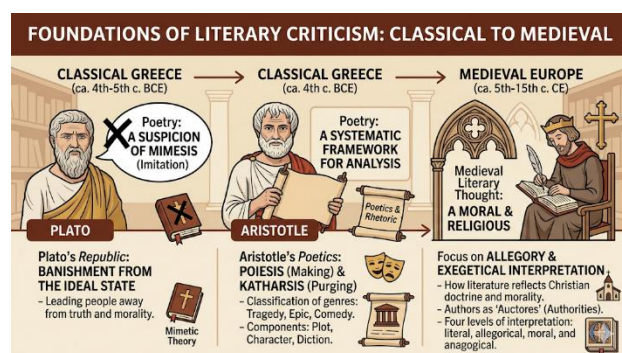


Figure 4.1: Early foundations of critical schools

4.1.2 Renaissance and Enlightenment contributions

The **Renaissance** marked a revival of classical learning and humanism, encouraging critics to value literature for its artistic qualities and human insights. Writers such as Sir Philip Sidney defended poetry as a source of moral instruction and delight. The **Enlightenment** further advanced critical thought by emphasising reason, clarity, and universal principles. Critics like Alexander Pope and Samuel Johnson highlighted rules of taste, decorum, and balance, while also recognising the importance of individual genius. These movements contributed to the gradual emergence of literary criticism as a distinct discipline.

Fill in the blank: The _____ emphasised reason, clarity, and universal principles in literary criticism.





Plate 4.1: Renaissance and Enlightenment contributions to criticism

Era / Figure	Central Philosophy	Key Contribution to Criticism
Plato (Classical)	Suspicion of Mimesis	Viewed poetry as a "copy of a copy" that leads people away from the truth; argued for its censorship in an ideal state.
Aristotle (Classical)	Systematic Framework	Wrote <i>Poetics</i> , defining genres like Tragedy and Epic. Introduced concepts like catharsis (emotional purging) and plot structure .
Medieval	Moral & Religious Focus	Literature was treated as allegory . Criticism focused on how texts reflected Christian doctrine and provided moral lessons.
Renaissance	Humanism & Defense	Scholars like Philip Sidney defended poetry as a tool for teaching virtue. There was a rebirth of interest in "human-centered" classical texts.
Enlightenment	Reason & Universalism	Focused on clarity, logic, and decorum . Critics sought "universal principles" and "rules" for good taste based on rational thought.

Box 4.1: Key contributions of early critical schools

Pilot questions 4.1

1. _____ offered a systematic framework in his *Poetics*, defining tragedy, plot, character, and catharsis.
2. State one way medieval criticism approached literature.



3. The _____ emphasised reason, clarity, and universal principles in literary criticism.
4. Give one contribution of Renaissance humanism to literary criticism.
5. Why are classical and Enlightenment contributions considered foundational to the development of critical schools?

4.2 Modern Critical Movements

4.2.1 Formalism and New Criticism

Formalism is a school of literary criticism that emphasises the study of a text's structure, language, and literary devices, independent of external context. It values close reading and focuses on how meaning is created through form. **New Criticism**, which developed in the early twentieth century, shares this emphasis on textual analysis, arguing that a literary work should be treated as a self-contained object. Both approaches resist biographical or historical distractions, insisting that meaning lies within the text itself.

Fill in the blank: _____ is a school of literary criticism that emphasises the study of a text's structure, language, and literary devices, independent of external context.

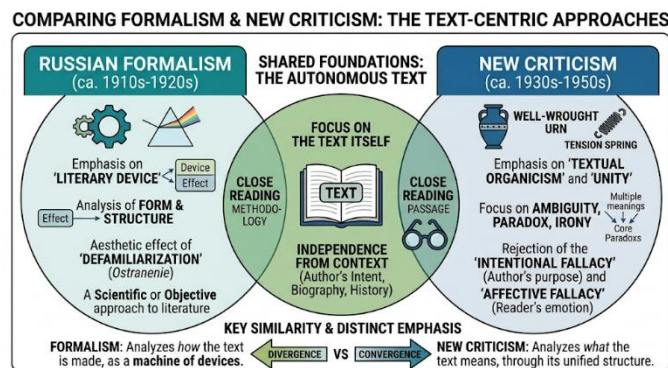


Figure 4.2: Formalism and New Criticism

4.2.2 Structuralism and post-structuralism

Structuralism applies linguistic and anthropological models to literature, analysing texts as systems of signs and structures. It seeks to uncover universal patterns, such as myths or narrative functions, that shape meaning. **Post-structuralism**, however, challenges the stability of these structures, emphasising ambiguity, multiplicity, and the instability of meaning. Thinkers such as Roland Barthes and Jacques Derrida argued that texts are open to endless interpretation, undermining fixed systems.

Fill in the blank: _____ challenges the stability of structures, emphasising ambiguity, multiplicity, and the instability of meaning.





Plate 4.2: Structuralism and post-structuralism in practice

4.2.3 Marxist and psychoanalytic criticism

Marxist criticism interprets literature in terms of class struggle, ideology, and economic power. It examines how texts reflect or challenge social hierarchies and material conditions.

Psychoanalytic criticism, influenced by Freud, explores unconscious desires, repression, and symbolic meaning in literature. It often analyses characters, plots, and imagery to reveal hidden psychological dimensions. Both schools highlight forces beyond the text itself, whether social or psychological, and show how literature interacts with broader human realities.

Fill in the blank: _____ criticism interprets literature in terms of class struggle, ideology, and economic power.

Movement	Core Focus	Primary Analytical Tool
Formalism	The "literariness" of a text; its technical structure and form.	Defamiliarization: How the text makes the ordinary feel strange through artifice.
New Criticism	The text as a self-contained, "organic" object.	Close Reading: Analyzing irony, paradox, and ambiguity without looking at the author's life.
Structuralism	Universal systems and the "grammar" of narrative.	Signs & Binary Oppositions: Mapping how meaning is created through relationship patterns (e.g., Light vs. Dark).
Post-structuralism	The instability and "slipperiness" of language.	Deconstruction: Showing how a text contradicts itself and lacks a single, fixed "truth."



Movement	Core Focus	Primary Analytical Tool
Marxist Criticism	Power dynamics, class struggle, and economic reality.	Ideology: Uncovering how a text supports or challenges the status quo and social hierarchies.
Psychoanalytic	The hidden psychological "internal" life of the text.	The Unconscious: Treating the text like a dream to find repressed desires and symbolic complexes (e.g., Oedipal themes).

Box 4.2: Key features of modern critical movements

Pilot questions 4.2

1. _____ is a school of literary criticism that emphasises the study of a text's structure, language, and literary devices, independent of external context.
2. State one feature of New Criticism.
3. _____ challenges the stability of structures, emphasising ambiguity, multiplicity, and the instability of meaning.
4. Give one example of how structuralism analyses literature.
5. _____ criticism interprets literature in terms of class struggle, ideology, and economic power.

4.3 Contemporary Critical Schools

4.3.1 Feminist and gender criticism

Feminist criticism examines how literature represents gender roles, power relations, and women's experiences. It challenges patriarchal assumptions and highlights voices that have been marginalised. **Gender criticism** extends this by exploring how texts construct and question identities of masculinity, femininity, and sexuality. These approaches emphasise inclusivity and encourage readers to consider how literature both reflects and shapes cultural attitudes towards gender.

Fill in the blank: _____ criticism examines how literature represents gender roles, power relations, and women's experiences.



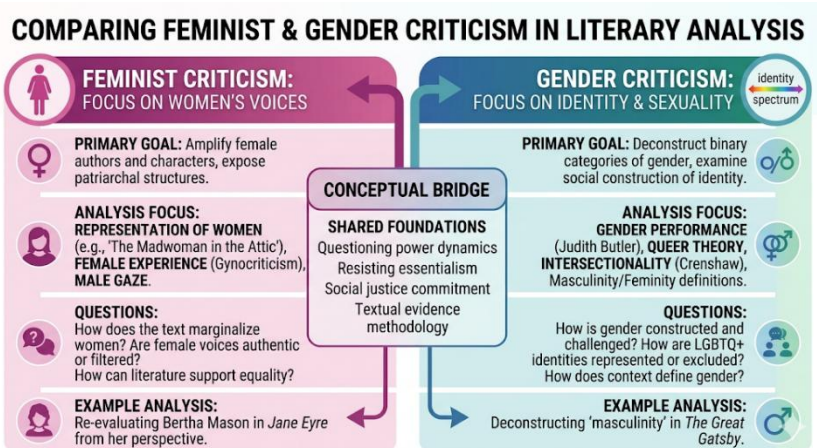


Figure 4.3: Feminist and gender criticism

4.3.2 Postcolonial and cultural studies

Postcolonial criticism analyses literature produced in or about formerly colonised societies. It explores themes of identity, power, resistance, and hybridity, showing how texts respond to colonial histories. **Cultural studies** broadens this scope by examining literature alongside other cultural forms such as film, media, and popular culture. Both approaches highlight how literature interacts with social and political contexts, encouraging readers to see texts as part of wider cultural struggles.

Fill in the blank: _____ criticism analyses literature produced in or about formerly colonised societies.



Plate 4.3: Postcolonial and cultural studies in literary criticism

4.3.3 Reader-response and eclectic approaches

Reader-response criticism shifts the focus from the text itself to the reader's role in creating meaning. It argues that interpretation varies depending on the reader's background, emotions, and cultural context. **Eclectic approaches** combine insights from multiple schools, recognising that no single perspective can fully explain literature. These approaches encourage flexibility and creativity, allowing critics to adapt their methods to the text and context at hand.

Fill in the blank: _____ criticism shifts the focus from the text itself to the reader's role in creating meaning.



Movement	Core Focus	Primary Analytical Tool
Feminist Criticism	Gender roles, patriarchal structures, and the recovery of women's voices.	The Female Gaze: Analyzing how women are represented and how female authors challenge traditional narratives.
Gender Criticism	The social construction of identity, masculinity/femininity, and sexuality.	Performative Identity: Viewing gender as an act shaped by society rather than a fixed biological trait.
Postcolonialism	The legacy of colonial rule, displacement, and cultural resistance.	Othering: Examining how Western texts portray non-Western cultures as exotic or inferior.
Cultural Studies	The relationship between "high" literature and popular culture (film, ads, fashion).	Interdisciplinary Analysis: Treating all cultural artifacts as "texts" that reveal societal values.
Reader-Response	The active role of the reader in creating the meaning of a story.	The Interpretive Community: Exploring how different readers bring their own "baggage" to a text.
Eclectic Approaches	Combining multiple theories to gain a holistic understanding.	Synthesis: Using, for example, a Marxist lens alongside a Feminist lens to analyze a single work.

Box 4.3: Key features of contemporary critical schools

Pilot questions 4.3

1. _____ criticism examines how literature represents gender roles, power relations, and women's experiences.
2. State one focus of gender criticism.
3. _____ criticism analyses literature produced in or about formerly colonised societies.
4. Give one way cultural studies broadens literary analysis.
5. _____ criticism shifts the focus from the text itself to the reader's role in creating meaning.



4.4 Trends And Future Directions

4.4.1 Interdisciplinary approaches

In recent decades, literary criticism has increasingly embraced **interdisciplinary approaches**, drawing insights from history, sociology, psychology, philosophy, and even the sciences. This broadening of scope allows critics to situate literature within wider intellectual and cultural frameworks. For example, eco-criticism combines literary analysis with environmental studies, while medical humanities link literature with health and wellbeing. These approaches highlight the adaptability of criticism and its ability to respond to contemporary issues.

Fill in the blank: _____ approaches in literary criticism draw insights from history, sociology, psychology, philosophy, and the sciences.

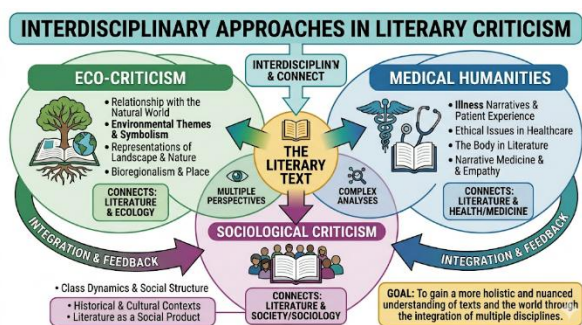


Figure 4.4: Interdisciplinary approaches in literary criticism

4.4.2 Digital humanities and global perspectives

The rise of **digital humanities** has transformed literary studies by introducing computational tools for text analysis, visualisation, and archiving. Scholars can now study large corpora of texts, trace patterns across centuries, and make literature more accessible through digital platforms. At the same time, **global perspectives** have become increasingly important, recognising the diversity of literary traditions worldwide. This includes valuing African, Asian, Latin American, and Indigenous literatures, and exploring how globalisation shapes literary production and reception. Together, these trends point towards a more inclusive and technologically enriched future for criticism.

Fill in the blank: The rise of _____ has transformed literary studies by introducing computational tools for text analysis, visualisation, and archiving.



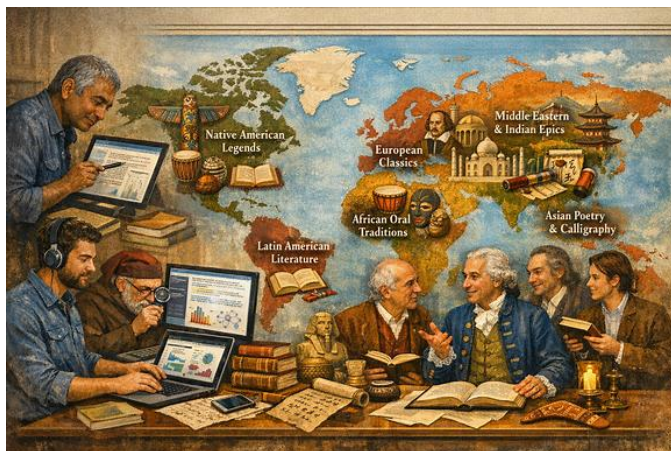


Plate 4.4: Digital humanities and global perspectives

Trend	Core Focus	Key Methodology
Interdisciplinary Approaches	Connecting literature to sciences and social sciences.	Eco-criticism: Analyzing environmental themes; Medical Humanities: Exploring illness narratives.
Digital Humanities	Using technology to study literature at a massive scale.	Computational Analysis: Using "Distant Reading" to find patterns across thousands of books at once.
Global Perspectives	Moving beyond the Western "canon" to value all traditions.	Decolonization: Highlighting indigenous and non-Western storytelling methods and histories.
Sociological Criticism	The relationship between the text and its social impact.	Institutional Analysis: Examining how schools, prizes, and publishers shape what we consider "good" art.

Box 4.4: Emerging trends in literary criticism

Pilot questions 4.4

1. _____ approaches in literary criticism draw insights from history, sociology, psychology, philosophy, and the sciences.
2. State one example of an interdisciplinary approach in literary criticism.
3. The rise of _____ has transformed literary studies by introducing computational tools for text analysis, visualisation, and archiving.
4. Give one way global perspectives enrich literary criticism.



5. Why are interdisciplinary and digital approaches considered important for the future of literary studies?

Series Summary

This Series has traced the movements and development of critical schools in literary studies, showing how ideas have evolved from classical foundations to contemporary approaches. We began by examining the early contributions of Plato, Aristotle, medieval scholars, and Renaissance humanists, before moving on to Enlightenment thinkers who emphasised reason and clarity. We then explored modern critical movements such as formalism, structuralism, Marxism, and psychoanalysis, followed by contemporary schools including feminist, postcolonial, cultural, and reader-response criticism. Finally, we considered emerging trends such as interdisciplinary approaches, digital humanities, and global perspectives.

By completing this Series, you should now be able to describe the early foundations of critical schools, explain the features of modern movements, analyse contemporary schools, and evaluate current trends and future directions. These abilities align directly with the Series Learning Outcomes (SLOs 4.1–4.4), equipping you with both historical knowledge and practical insight into the diverse traditions that shape literary criticism today.

Glossary of Terms

- **Cultural studies:** An approach that examines literature alongside other cultural forms such as film, media, and popular culture.
- **Digital humanities:** The use of computational tools and digital platforms to analyse, visualise, and archive literary texts.
- **Eclectic approaches:** Methods that combine insights from multiple critical schools to provide flexible and creative analysis.
- **Enlightenment criticism:** Literary thought that emphasised reason, clarity, and universal principles.
- **Feminist criticism:** A school of criticism that examines gender roles, power relations, and women's experiences in literature.
- **Formalism:** A critical movement focusing on the structure, language, and form of texts, independent of external context.
- **Interdisciplinary approaches:** Methods that draw on insights from other fields such as history, sociology, psychology, and science.
- **Marxist criticism:** A school of criticism that interprets literature in terms of class struggle, ideology, and economic power.
- **New Criticism:** A twentieth-century movement emphasising close reading and treating texts as self-contained objects.



- **Psychoanalytic criticism:** A school of criticism influenced by Freud, analysing unconscious desires and symbolic meaning in literature.
- **Reader-response criticism:** A school of criticism that focuses on the reader's role in creating meaning.
- **Structuralism:** A movement that analyses literature as systems of signs and structures, seeking universal patterns.

Concept Check Questions [Series 4]

Objective Questions

1. _____ offered a systematic framework in his *Poetics*, defining tragedy, plot, character, and catharsis. (Linked to SLO 4.1)
2. _____ is a school of literary criticism that emphasises the study of a text's structure, language, and literary devices, independent of external context. (Linked to SLO 4.2)
3. _____ challenges the stability of structures, emphasising ambiguity, multiplicity, and the instability of meaning. (Linked to SLO 4.2)
4. _____ criticism analyses literature produced in or about formerly colonised societies. (Linked to SLO 4.3)
5. The rise of _____ has transformed literary studies by introducing computational tools for text analysis, visualisation, and archiving. (Linked to SLO 4.4)

Short-Answer Questions

6. State one way medieval criticism approached literature. (Linked to SLO 4.1)
7. Give one feature of New Criticism. (Linked to SLO 4.2)
8. State one focus of gender criticism. (Linked to SLO 4.3)
9. Give one example of an interdisciplinary approach in literary criticism. (Linked to SLO 4.4)
10. Why are global perspectives important in contemporary literary criticism? (Linked to SLO 4.4)

Long-Answer Questions

11. Analyse the contributions of Renaissance and Enlightenment thought to the development of critical schools. (Linked to SLO 4.1)
 - **Basic response:** Renaissance humanism valued literature for its artistic qualities, while Enlightenment thinkers emphasised reason, clarity, and universal principles.
 - **Value-added response:** Outstanding learners may explain how these contributions laid the groundwork for modern criticism by balancing artistic appreciation with rational analysis.



12. Evaluate the importance of contemporary critical schools such as feminist, postcolonial, and reader-response criticism. (Linked to SLO 4.3)

- **Basic response:** These schools highlight issues of gender, identity, colonial history, and reader interpretation, enriching literary analysis.
- **Value-added response:** Outstanding learners may discuss how these approaches challenge traditional canons, promote inclusivity, and encourage diverse perspectives in literary studies.

Answers to Pilot Questions [Series 4]

Part 4.1

1. Aristotle
2. By aligning texts with moral and religious principles
3. Enlightenment
4. Defence of poetry as moral instruction and delight
5. Because they established systematic and rational foundations for criticism

Part 4.2

1. Formalism
2. Close reading and self-contained meaning
3. Post-structuralism
4. By mapping narrative structures or myths
5. Marxist criticism

Part 4.3

1. Feminist criticism
2. Identity and sexuality
3. Postcolonial criticism
4. By examining literature alongside film, media, and popular culture
5. Reader-response criticism

Part 4.4

1. Interdisciplinary
2. Eco-criticism or medical humanities
3. Digital humanities
4. By valuing diverse literary traditions worldwide
5. Because they make criticism more inclusive and responsive to contemporary issues



References and Attributions [Series 4]

- **Figures**

- *Figure 4.1: Early foundations of critical schools* – AI-generated suggestion using the prompt: “Create a diagram showing classical and medieval foundations of literary criticism, including Plato, Aristotle, and medieval moral approaches.” Suggested search string: “classical medieval foundations literary criticism diagram OER.”
- *Figure 4.2: Formalism and New Criticism* – AI-generated suggestion using the prompt: “Create a diagram comparing formalism and New Criticism.” Suggested search string: “formalism new criticism literary analysis diagram OER.”
- *Figure 4.3: Feminist and gender criticism* – AI-generated suggestion using the prompt: “Create a diagram showing feminist criticism focusing on women’s voices and gender criticism focusing on identity and sexuality.” Suggested search string: “feminist gender criticism literary analysis diagram OER.”
- *Figure 4.4: Interdisciplinary approaches in literary criticism* – AI-generated suggestion using the prompt: “Create a diagram showing interdisciplinary approaches in literary criticism.” Suggested search string: “interdisciplinary approaches literary criticism diagram OER.”

- **Plates**

- *Plate 4.1: Renaissance and Enlightenment contributions to criticism* – AI-generated suggestion using the prompt: “Generate an image showing Renaissance scholars studying classical texts and Enlightenment thinkers discussing literature.” Suggested search string: “Renaissance Enlightenment contributions literary criticism OER image.”
- *Plate 4.2: Structuralism and post-structuralism in practice* – AI-generated suggestion using the prompt: “Generate an image showing a scholar mapping narrative structures and another highlighting textual ambiguity.” Suggested search string: “structuralism poststructuralism literary criticism OER image.”
- *Plate 4.3: Postcolonial and cultural studies in literary criticism* – AI-generated suggestion using the prompt: “Generate an image showing scholars discussing postcolonial texts alongside cultural artefacts and media.” Suggested search string: “postcolonial cultural studies literary criticism OER image.”
- *Plate 4.4: Digital humanities and global perspectives* – AI-generated suggestion using the prompt: “Generate an image showing scholars using digital tools to analyse texts alongside a global map highlighting diverse literary traditions.” Suggested search string: “digital humanities global perspectives literary criticism OER image.”

- **Boxes**



- *Box 4.1: Key contributions of early critical schools* – AI-generated suggestion using the prompt: “Create a text box summarising key contributions of early critical schools.” Suggested search string: “early critical schools literary criticism summary OER.”
- *Box 4.2: Key features of modern critical movements* – AI-generated suggestion using the prompt: “Create a text box summarising key features of modern critical movements.” Suggested search string: “modern critical movements literary criticism summary OER.”
- *Box 4.3: Key features of contemporary critical schools* – AI-generated suggestion using the prompt: “Create a text box summarising key features of contemporary critical schools.” Suggested search string: “contemporary critical schools literary criticism summary OER.”
- *Box 4.4: Emerging trends in literary criticism* – AI-generated suggestion using the prompt: “Create a text box summarising emerging trends in literary criticism.” Suggested search string: “emerging trends literary criticism summary OER.”

Course Code: LIT 310

Course Title: Introduction to Literary Criticism/Theories

Course Credit Load: 2 Units

Series 1: Surveying Literary Theories and Concepts

Series 2: Exploring Critical Forms and Applications

Series 3: Theory versus Criticism in Literary Studies

Series 4: Movements and Development of Critical Schools

Series 5: Theories, Ideologies, and Aesthetics in Literature

Proposed Outline for Series 5

Part 5.1: Theories in literature

- Sub-Part 5.1.1: Classical and humanist theories
- Sub-Part 5.1.2: Modern theoretical frameworks
- Sub-Part 5.1.3: Contemporary theoretical perspectives

Part 5.2: Ideologies in literature

- Sub-Part 5.2.1: Literature and political ideologies
- Sub-Part 5.2.2: Literature and cultural ideologies
- Sub-Part 5.2.3: Literature and social ideologies

Part 5.3: Aesthetics in literature



- Sub-Part 5.3.1: Concepts of beauty and form
- Sub-Part 5.3.2: The aesthetic experience of readers
- Sub-Part 5.3.3: The role of aesthetics in literary value

Part 5.4: Intersections and applications

- Sub-Part 5.4.1: How theories, ideologies, and aesthetics interact
- Sub-Part 5.4.2: Case studies across genres
- Sub-Part 5.4.3: Implications for contemporary criticism

Introduction

In the last Series, we explored the movements and development of critical schools, tracing how literary criticism evolved through history. Building on that foundation, this Series turns to the interplay of theories, ideologies, and aesthetics in literature. These three dimensions are central to understanding how literature is created, interpreted, and valued, and they provide powerful tools for critical engagement.

The aim of this Series is to introduce you to major literary theories, examine how ideologies shape texts and their reception, and explore the role of aesthetics in determining literary value.

We shall commence this Series by examining theories in literature, beginning with classical and humanist traditions before moving to modern and contemporary frameworks. Next, we will explore ideologies, considering how political, cultural, and social forces influence literature. Following that, we will focus on aesthetics, discussing concepts of beauty, form, and reader experience. Finally, we will bring these strands together by studying their intersections and applications, using case studies to show how theories, ideologies, and aesthetics interact in practice.

Series Learning Outcomes

Upon completing this Series, you should be able to:

- **SLO 5.1** define and describe classical, modern, and contemporary literary theories,
- **SLO 5.2** explain how political, cultural, and social ideologies shape literature,
- **SLO 5.3** analyse the role of aesthetics in literature, including concepts of beauty, form, and reader experience, and
- **SLO 5.4** evaluate how theories, ideologies, and aesthetics intersect and apply these insights to case studies across genres.

5.1 Theories In Literature

5.1.1 Classical and humanist theories



Classical theories of literature emerged from ancient Greek and Roman thought, with philosophers such as Plato and Aristotle laying the foundations. Plato questioned the moral value of poetry, seeing it as imitation, while Aristotle provided a systematic framework in his *Poetics*, defining tragedy, plot, and catharsis. These ideas influenced literary study for centuries. Later, **humanist theories** during the Renaissance emphasised the dignity of human experience and celebrated literature as a means of moral and intellectual enrichment.

Fill in the blank: _____ provided a systematic framework in his *Poetics*, defining tragedy, plot, and catharsis.

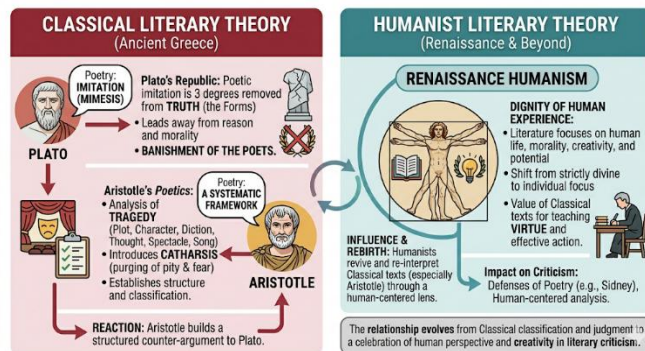


Figure 5.1: Classical and humanist theories in literature

5.1.2 Modern theoretical frameworks

Modern theories of literature developed in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, reflecting new intellectual movements. For example, **Romantic theory** emphasised imagination, emotion, and individuality, while **Marxist theory** analysed literature in terms of class struggle and ideology. **Psychoanalytic theory**, influenced by Freud, examined unconscious desires and symbolism in texts. These frameworks expanded the scope of literary study, linking literature to broader social and psychological contexts.

Fill in the blank: _____ theory emphasised imagination, emotion, and individuality in literature.

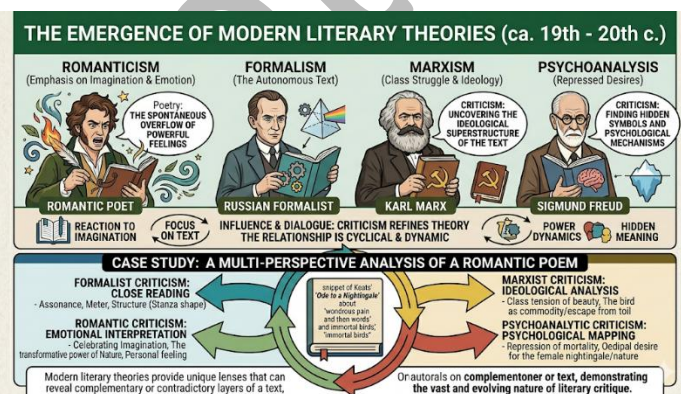


Plate 5.1: Modern theoretical frameworks in literature

5.1.3 Contemporary theoretical perspectives



Contemporary theories reflect the diversity of modern criticism, including feminist, postcolonial, structuralist, and reader-response approaches. **Feminist theory** highlights gender roles and challenges patriarchal assumptions. **Postcolonial theory** examines identity, power, and resistance in formerly colonised societies. **Structuralist theory** analyses texts as systems of signs, while **reader-response theory** shifts focus to the reader's role in creating meaning. These perspectives demonstrate how literary theory continues to evolve, responding to cultural and intellectual changes.

Fill in the blank: _____ theory shifts focus to the reader's role in creating meaning.

Theory	Core Concept	Analytical Focus
Feminist Theory	Patriarchy & Gender	Examines how literature reinforces or challenges the marginalization of women and traditional gender roles.
Postcolonial Theory	Identity & Resistance	Analyzes the effects of colonization on culture and identity, focusing on power dynamics between the colonizer and the colonized.
Structuralism	Systems of Signs	Views literature as a system of signs; focuses on universal patterns and the "grammar" of storytelling rather than individual meaning.
Reader-Response	The Reader's Role	Argues that meaning is not "in" the book, but is created in the mind of the reader during the act of reading.

Box 5.1: Key contemporary theoretical perspectives

Pilot questions 5.1

- _____ provided a systematic framework in his *Poetics*, defining tragedy, plot, and catharsis.
- State one contribution of Renaissance humanism to literary theory.
- _____ theory emphasised imagination, emotion, and individuality in literature.
- Give one way Marxist theory analyses literature.
- _____ theory shifts focus to the reader's role in creating meaning.

5.2 Ideologies In Literature

5.2.1 Literature and political ideologies

Political ideologies are systems of thought that shape how societies are organised and governed. In literature, they influence both the creation and interpretation of texts. For example, works may



reflect democratic ideals, authoritarian control, or revolutionary movements. Writers often use literature to critique political systems or to promote particular visions of society. George Orwell's *Animal Farm* and *1984* are clear examples of literature engaging with political ideology, exposing the dangers of totalitarianism.

Fill in the blank: George Orwell's _____ is a clear example of literature engaging with political ideology, exposing the dangers of totalitarianism.

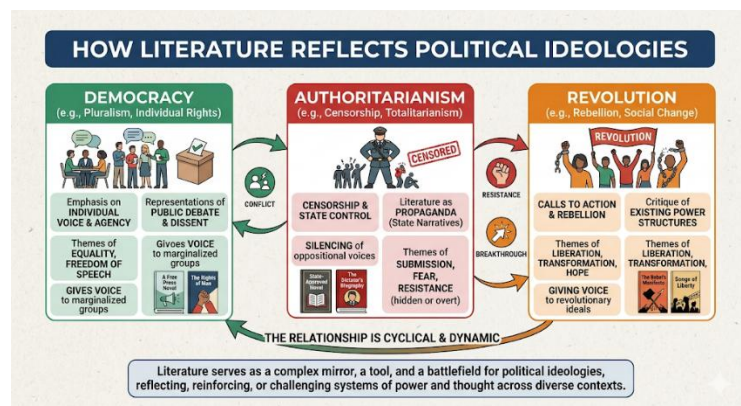


Figure 5.2: Literature and political ideologies

5.2.2 Literature and cultural ideologies

Cultural ideologies refer to shared beliefs, values, and practices within a society. Literature often embodies these ideologies, reinforcing or challenging cultural norms. For instance, Victorian novels frequently reflected ideals of morality and propriety, while postcolonial literature questioned cultural dominance and celebrated hybrid identities. By engaging with cultural ideologies, literature becomes a mirror of society's values and a tool for cultural critique.

Fill in the blank: _____ literature questioned cultural dominance and celebrated hybrid identities.

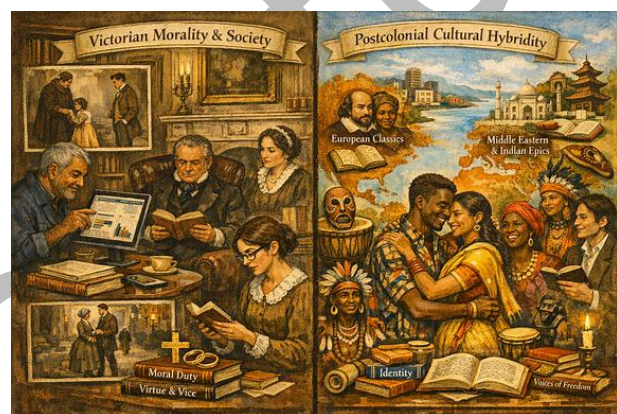


Plate 5.2: Literature and cultural ideologies

5.2.3 Literature and social ideologies



Social ideologies concern the organisation of society, including class, gender, race, and economic relations. Literature often engages with these ideologies by portraying social hierarchies, inequalities, and struggles. For example, Charles Dickens highlighted class disparities in nineteenth-century England, while feminist literature challenged patriarchal structures. Such texts reveal how literature can both reflect and resist social ideologies, offering readers insight into the dynamics of human society.

Fill in the blank: _____ highlighted class disparities in nineteenth-century England, using literature to critique social inequality.

Ideology Type	Core Focus	Literary Manifestation
Political	Power, Governance, & Liberty	Democracy: Emphasis on individual voice and pluralism. Authoritarianism: Explored through censorship or dystopian warnings. Revolution: Calls for radical systemic change.
Cultural	Values, Norms, & Identity	Morality/Propriety: Literature as a tool for "correct" behavior (e.g., Victorian novels). Hybridity: Celebrating the mixing of cultures and identities (e.g., Postcolonial texts).
Social	Hierarchy & Human Relations	Class & Economics: Analysis of wealth gaps and labor (Marxist influence). Gender & Race: Challenging patriarchy and systemic prejudice to reclaim marginalized experiences.

Box 5.2: Key ideological influences in literature

Pilot questions 5.2

1. George Orwell's _____ is a clear example of literature engaging with political ideology, exposing the dangers of totalitarianism.
2. State one way Victorian novels reflected cultural ideologies.
3. _____ literature questioned cultural dominance and celebrated hybrid identities.
4. Give one example of how literature engages with social ideologies.
5. _____ highlighted class disparities in nineteenth-century England, using literature to critique social inequality.

5.3 Aesthetics In Literature

5.3.1 Concepts of beauty and form

Aesthetics refers to the philosophy of beauty, art, and taste, and in literature it concerns how texts achieve artistic value. Classical thinkers such as Aristotle and Horace emphasised harmony, proportion, and unity of form. Later traditions expanded these ideas, considering how style,



imagery, and structure contribute to a work's beauty. Aesthetic judgement often involves both universal principles and subjective responses, making it a dynamic area of literary study.

Fill in the blank: _____ refers to the philosophy of beauty, art, and taste, and in literature it concerns how texts achieve artistic value.

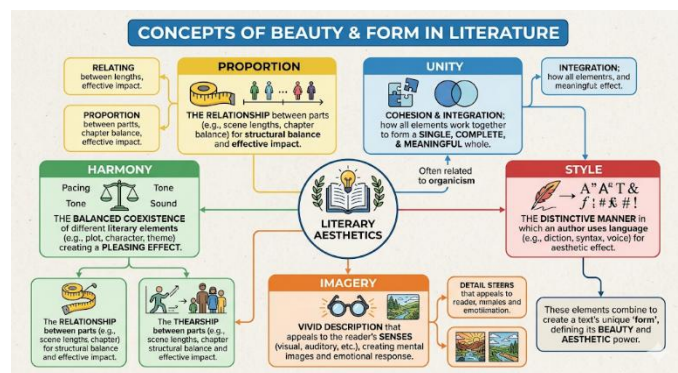


Figure 5.3: Concepts of beauty and form in literature

5.3.2 The aesthetic experience of readers

The **aesthetic experience** refers to the emotional and intellectual response readers have when engaging with literature. This includes feelings of pleasure, wonder, or reflection, as well as appreciation of artistry and craft. Reader-response theorists argue that aesthetic experience is central to meaning, since literature comes alive through the reader's interpretation. The aesthetic dimension therefore bridges the text and its audience, highlighting the interactive nature of literary appreciation.

Fill in the blank: The _____ experience refers to the emotional and intellectual response readers have when engaging with literature.



Plate 5.3: The aesthetic experience of readers

5.3.3 The role of aesthetics in literary value

Literary value is often judged through aesthetic criteria, such as originality, craftsmanship, and emotional impact. Aesthetics helps explain why certain works are considered classics and why others fade into obscurity. However, debates persist about whether aesthetic value should be separated from ideological or social concerns. For instance, a text may be aesthetically rich yet



politically problematic. This tension shows that aesthetics is not isolated but interacts with broader critical perspectives.

Fill in the blank: _____ helps explain why certain works are considered classics and why others fade into obscurity.

Aspect	Core Focus	Elements of Analysis
Beauty and Form	The internal architecture of the text.	Harmony: Balance between plot and theme. Proportion: The scale of scenes. Unity: How parts form a single whole.
Reader Experience	The emotional and cognitive "event" of reading.	Pleasure: The joy of language. Wonder: Being transported to another world. Reflection: Thinking deeply after finishing.
Literary Value	What makes a work "great" or "classic."	Originality: Breaking new ground. Craftsmanship: Mastery of style. Emotional Impact: Resonance with the human condition.
Aesthetic Tension	The conflict between "Art" and "Message."	Art for Art's Sake: Prioritizing beauty. Social Concern: Prioritizing political or moral change.

Box 5.3: Key aspects of aesthetics in literature

Pilot questions 5.3

1. _____ refers to the philosophy of beauty, art, and taste, and in literature it concerns how texts achieve artistic value.
2. State one principle classical thinkers emphasised in aesthetics.
3. The _____ experience refers to the emotional and intellectual response readers have when engaging with literature.
4. Give one example of how reader-response theory connects to aesthetics.
5. _____ helps explain why certain works are considered classics and why others fade into obscurity.

5.4 Intersections And Applications

5.4.1 How theories, ideologies, and aesthetics interact

Literary study becomes most powerful when **theories**, **ideologies**, and **aesthetics** are considered together. Theories provide frameworks for interpretation, ideologies reveal the social and



political forces shaping texts, and aesthetics highlights artistic value and reader experience. For example, a feminist theory may uncover patriarchal ideologies in a novel while also evaluating how its aesthetic form reinforces or challenges those ideologies. This intersection shows that literature is never neutral but is shaped by multiple dimensions working simultaneously.

Fill in the blank: _____ provide frameworks for interpretation, ideologies reveal social and political forces, and aesthetics highlights artistic value and reader experience.

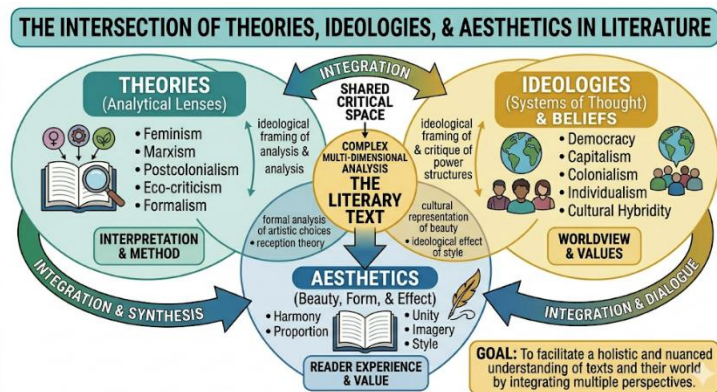


Figure 5.4: Interaction of theories, ideologies, and aesthetics

5.4.2 Case studies across genres

Case studies demonstrate how these dimensions interact in practice. In poetry, Romantic theories emphasise imagination, while cultural ideologies of the period shaped themes of nature and individuality, and aesthetics highlighted beauty of form. In prose, postcolonial theory reveals ideological struggles of identity, while aesthetic choices such as narrative voice enhance the impact. In drama, Marxist theory may expose class conflict, ideology frames social critique, and aesthetic staging influences audience response. These examples show how theory, ideology, and aesthetics enrich analysis across genres.

Fill in the blank: In _____, postcolonial theory reveals ideological struggles of identity, while aesthetic choices such as narrative voice enhance the impact.

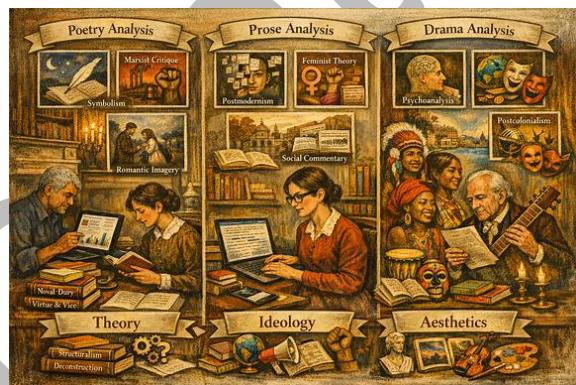


Plate 5.4: Case studies across genres

5.4.3 Implications for contemporary criticism



The intersection of theories, ideologies, and aesthetics has important implications for **contemporary criticism**. It encourages critics to adopt a holistic approach, recognising that texts are shaped by artistic craft, social forces, and interpretive frameworks. This approach prevents one-sided readings and promotes balanced analysis. It also prepares learners to engage critically with diverse texts, appreciating both their beauty and their ideological significance. In today's global and digital age, such integrated criticism is essential for understanding literature's role in society.

Fill in the blank: The intersection of theories, ideologies, and aesthetics encourages critics to adopt a _____ approach, recognising that texts are shaped by artistic craft, social forces, and interpretive frameworks.

Component	Function	Application Example
Theories	The Lens: Systematic frameworks used to "read" a text.	Using Feminism to study the power dynamics between characters.
Ideologies	The Context: The social, political, and economic forces behind the writing.	Analyzing how Capitalism or Revolution influenced a writer's worldview.
Aesthetics	The Art: The pursuit of beauty, form, and the reader's emotional response.	Evaluating how a poem's Rhythm and Imagery create a sense of peace.
Case Studies	The Evidence: Diverse genres (Poetry, Prose, Drama).	Applying these lenses to a Shakespearean play versus a modern graphic novel.

Box 5.4: Intersections and applications in literary criticism

Pilot questions 5.4

1. _____ provide frameworks for interpretation, ideologies reveal social and political forces, and aesthetics highlights artistic value and reader experience.
2. State one way feminist theory can interact with aesthetics in a novel.
3. In _____, postcolonial theory reveals ideological struggles of identity, while aesthetic choices such as narrative voice enhance the impact.
4. Give one example of how Marxist theory interacts with drama.
5. The intersection of theories, ideologies, and aesthetics encourages critics to adopt a _____ approach, recognising that texts are shaped by artistic craft, social forces, and interpretive frameworks.



Series Summary

This Series has explored the interplay of theories, ideologies, and aesthetics in literature, showing how these dimensions shape both the creation and interpretation of texts. We began with classical and humanist theories, moved through modern frameworks such as Romanticism, Marxism, and psychoanalysis, and then examined contemporary perspectives including feminist, postcolonial, structuralist, and reader-response approaches. We continued by considering how political, cultural, and social ideologies influence literature, before turning to aesthetics, where concepts of beauty, reader experience, and literary value were discussed. Finally, we brought these strands together to study their intersections and applications through case studies across genres.

By completing this Series, you should now be able to define and describe major literary theories, explain how ideologies shape texts, analyse the role of aesthetics in literature, and evaluate how these dimensions interact in contemporary criticism. These abilities align directly with the Series Learning Outcomes (SLOs 5.1–5.4), equipping you with a holistic understanding of how literature is both an artistic and ideological practice.

Glossary of Terms

- **Aesthetics:** The philosophy of beauty, art, and taste, focusing on how texts achieve artistic value.
- **Aesthetic experience:** The emotional and intellectual response readers have when engaging with literature.
- **Cultural ideologies:** Shared beliefs and values within a society that influence literature.
- **Humanist theories:** Renaissance approaches that emphasised the dignity of human experience and literature's moral enrichment.
- **Ideologies:** Systems of thought, political or social, that shape how literature is created and interpreted.
- **Literary value:** The worth of a text judged through criteria such as originality, craftsmanship, and emotional impact.
- **Marxist theory:** A framework that interprets literature in terms of class struggle, ideology, and economic power.
- **Psychoanalytic theory:** A framework influenced by Freud, analysing unconscious desires and symbolism in literature.
- **Reader-response theory:** A perspective that focuses on the reader's role in creating meaning.
- **Romantic theory:** A framework emphasising imagination, emotion, and individuality in literature.

Concept Check Questions [Series 5]



Objective Questions

1. _____ provided a systematic framework in his *Poetics*, defining tragedy, plot, and catharsis. (Linked to SLO 5.1)
2. _____ theory emphasised imagination, emotion, and individuality in literature. (Linked to SLO 5.1)
3. _____ literature questioned cultural dominance and celebrated hybrid identities. (Linked to SLO 5.2)
4. _____ refers to the philosophy of beauty, art, and taste, and in literature it concerns how texts achieve artistic value. (Linked to SLO 5.3)
5. The intersection of theories, ideologies, and aesthetics encourages critics to adopt a _____ approach. (Linked to SLO 5.4)

Short-Answer Questions

6. State one contribution of Renaissance humanism to literary theory. (Linked to SLO 5.1)
7. Give one example of how literature engages with political ideologies. (Linked to SLO 5.2)
8. State one principle classical thinkers emphasised in aesthetics. (Linked to SLO 5.3)
9. Give one example of how Marxist theory interacts with drama. (Linked to SLO 5.4)
10. Why is it important to consider theories, ideologies, and aesthetics together in literary criticism? (Linked to SLO 5.4)

Long-Answer Questions

11. Analyse the contributions of modern theoretical frameworks such as Romanticism, Marxism, and psychoanalysis to literary study. (Linked to SLO 5.1)
 - **Basic response:** These frameworks expanded literary study by linking texts to imagination, social class, and unconscious desires.
 - **Value-added response:** Outstanding learners may explain how these frameworks reshaped criticism by connecting literature to broader cultural and psychological contexts.
12. Evaluate the role of aesthetics in determining literary value. (Linked to SLO 5.3)
 - **Basic response:** Aesthetics explains why some works are considered classics, focusing on originality, craftsmanship, and emotional impact.
 - **Value-added response:** Outstanding learners may discuss tensions between aesthetic value and ideological concerns, showing how criticism balances beauty with social significance.

Answers to Pilot Questions [Series 5]

Part 5.1

1. Aristotle



2. Emphasised the dignity of human experience and moral enrichment
3. Romantic
4. By analysing literature in terms of class struggle and ideology
5. Reader-response theory

Part 5.2

1. 1984
2. By reflecting ideals of morality and propriety
3. Postcolonial
4. By portraying class, gender, or racial inequalities
5. Charles Dickens

Part 5.3

1. Aesthetics
2. Harmony, proportion, or unity of form
3. Aesthetic
4. By emphasising the reader's emotional and intellectual response
5. Aesthetics

Part 5.4

1. Theories
2. By showing how aesthetic form reinforces or challenges patriarchal ideologies
3. Prose
4. By exposing class conflict through staging and dialogue
5. Holistic

References and Attributions [Series 5]

- **Figures**
 - *Figure 5.1: Classical and humanist theories in literature* – AI-generated suggestion using the prompt: “Create a diagram showing classical and humanist theories in literature, including Plato, Aristotle, and Renaissance humanism.” Suggested search string: “classical humanist literary theories diagram OER.”
 - *Figure 5.2: Literature and political ideologies* – AI-generated suggestion using the prompt: “Create a diagram showing how literature reflects political ideologies such as democracy, authoritarianism, and revolution.” Suggested search string: “literature political ideologies diagram OER.”



- *Figure 5.3: Concepts of beauty and form in literature* – AI-generated suggestion using the prompt: “Create a diagram showing concepts of beauty and form in literature including harmony, proportion, unity, style, and imagery.” Suggested search string: “aesthetics beauty form literature diagram OER.”
- *Figure 5.4: Interaction of theories, ideologies, and aesthetics* – AI-generated suggestion using the prompt: “Create a diagram showing the intersection of theories, ideologies, and aesthetics in literature as overlapping circles.” Suggested search string: “intersection theories ideologies aesthetics literature diagram OER.”
- **Plates**
 - *Plate 5.1: Modern theoretical frameworks in literature* – AI-generated suggestion using the prompt: “Generate an image showing Romantic poets writing with imagination and emotion, alongside Marxist and psychoanalytic scholars analysing texts.” Suggested search string: “modern literary theories Romantic Marxist psychoanalytic OER image.”
 - *Plate 5.2: Literature and cultural ideologies* – AI-generated suggestion using the prompt: “Generate an image showing Victorian novels reflecting morality and postcolonial texts celebrating cultural hybridity.” Suggested search string: “literature cultural ideologies Victorian postcolonial OER image.”
 - *Plate 5.3: The aesthetic experience of readers* – AI-generated suggestion using the prompt: “Generate an image showing readers immersed in a novel, experiencing pleasure and reflection.” Suggested search string: “aesthetic experience readers literature OER image.”
 - *Plate 5.4: Case studies across genres* – AI-generated suggestion using the prompt: “Generate an image showing poetry, prose, and drama being analysed through theory, ideology, and aesthetics.” Suggested search string: “case studies literature theory ideology aesthetics OER image.”
- **Boxes**
 - *Box 5.1: Key contemporary theoretical perspectives* – AI-generated suggestion using the prompt: “Create a text box summarising key contemporary theoretical perspectives including feminist, postcolonial, structuralist, and reader-response theories.” Suggested search string: “contemporary literary theories feminist postcolonial structuralist reader response OER summary.”
 - *Box 5.2: Key ideological influences in literature* – AI-generated suggestion using the prompt: “Create a text box summarising key ideological influences in literature including political, cultural, and social ideologies.” Suggested search string: “ideologies in literature political cultural social OER summary.”
 - *Box 5.3: Key aspects of aesthetics in literature* – AI-generated suggestion using the prompt: “Create a text box summarising key aspects of aesthetics in literature including beauty, reader experience, literary value, and tensions with ideology.” Suggested search string: “aesthetics in literature beauty reader experience literary value OER summary.”



- *Box 5.4: Intersections and applications in literary criticism* – AI-generated suggestion using the prompt: “Create a text box summarising intersections and applications in literary criticism including theories, ideologies, aesthetics, case studies, and implications.” Suggested search string: “intersections applications literary criticism theories ideologies aesthetics OER summary.”

