

ARA104

INTRODUCTION TO ARABIC LITERATURE



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Course code: ARA 104

Course title: Introduction to Arabic Literature

Course credit load: 2 Units

Series 1 Foundations of Literature and Its Components

- **Part 1.1 Approaches to Reading Arabic Texts**
 - Sub-Part 1.1.1: Importance of Reading Skills in Arabic Study
 - Sub-Part 1.1.2: Techniques for Effective Reading (Skimming, Scanning, Detailed Reading)
 - Sub-Part 1.1.3: Identifying Main Ideas and Supporting Details
- **Part 1.2 Meaning and Nature of Literature**
 - Sub-Part 1.2.1: Definitions and Scope of Literature
 - Sub-Part 1.2.2: Types of Literature
- **Part 1.3 Components of Literature**
 - Sub-Part 1.3.1: Imagery in Literature
 - Sub-Part 1.3.2: Musical Qualities in Literature
- **Part 1.4 Characteristics and Functions of Literature**
 - Sub-Part 1.4.1: General Characteristics of Literary Works
 - Sub-Part 1.4.2: Literature as Reflection of Society and Source of Pleasure

Introduction

Literature has always been a mirror of human thought and creativity, offering insights into the values, beliefs, and emotions of societies across time. For learners of Arabic, engaging with



literature is not only about enjoying stories and poems, but also about developing the skills to read texts critically and to appreciate the artistry embedded within them. This Series sets the foundation by guiding you through the essential components of literature and the strategies needed to approach Arabic texts effectively.

The aim of this Series is to equip you with the ability to read Arabic texts with confidence, to recognise the meaning and nature of literature, and to identify its components and functions. By the end of this Series, you will be able to analyse literary features and appreciate their relevance to Arabic literary traditions.

We shall commence this Series by exploring approaches to reading Arabic texts, focusing on the importance of reading skills, techniques such as skimming and scanning, and the identification of main ideas and supporting details. Next, we will examine the meaning and nature of literature, considering its definitions and types. Following that, we will move on to the components of literature, with particular attention to imagery and musical qualities. Finally, we will wrap up by discussing the characteristics and functions of literature, highlighting how it reflects society and provides aesthetic pleasure. This progression will ensure that you build a strong foundation for appreciating Arabic literature in later Series.

Series Learning Outcomes

Upon completing this Series, you should be able to:

- **SLO 1.1** demonstrate effective approaches to reading Arabic texts by applying techniques such as skimming, scanning, and detailed reading,
- **SLO 1.2** analyse the importance of reading skills in the study of Arabic literature and identify main ideas and supporting details within texts,
- **SLO 1.3** define the meaning and scope of literature and distinguish between its major types,



- **SLO 1.4** explain the key components of literature, with emphasis on imagery and musical qualities,
- **SLO 1.5** evaluate the general characteristics of literary works and the distinctive features of Arabic literature, and
- **SLO 1.6** assess the functions and value of literature as a reflection of society and as a source of knowledge and aesthetic pleasure.

1.1 Approaches to Reading Arabic Texts

1.1.1 Importance of reading skills in Arabic study

Reading is the gateway to engaging with Arabic literature. Strong **reading skills**, defined as the ability to decode written symbols, interpret meaning, and connect ideas within a text, are essential for learners. Arabic texts often employ rich vocabulary, layered meanings, and cultural references that require careful attention. Without these skills, learners may overlook the subtleties that make Arabic literature unique.

Fill in the blank: Strong _____ skills are essential for uncovering meanings and appreciating the artistry of Arabic texts.

<i>Arabic phrase</i>	<i>English translation</i>
الكتاب مرآة الحياة	<i>The book is a mirror of life</i>

Box 1.1: Sample Arabic Phrase and Translation

1.1.2 Techniques for effective reading (skimming, scanning, detailed reading)

Different texts call for different approaches. **Skimming** is the technique of quickly running your eyes over a text to grasp its general idea. **Scanning** is the process of searching for specific information, such as names, dates, or keywords. **Detailed reading** involves carefully examining the text to understand its full meaning, structure, and style. Each technique serves a distinct



purpose. For example, skimming may be useful when previewing a long passage, scanning when looking for a particular reference, and detailed reading when analysing a poem or prose.

Fill in the blank: _____ is used to quickly grasp the general idea of a text, while _____ is used to locate specific information.

Technique	Definition	Example in Arabic literature
Skimming	Quickly grasping the general idea	Reading the opening lines of a story to sense its theme
Scanning	Searching for specific information	Looking for the word "الحب" (love) in a poem
Detailed reading	Analysing meaning and style	Studying the imagery in "قصيدة الغزل" (ghazal poem)

Table 1.1: Techniques for effective reading

1.1.3 Identifying main ideas and supporting details

Every text contains a central message supported by smaller points. The **main idea** is the most important thought the author wants to convey, while **supporting details** are the examples, explanations, or descriptions that reinforce it. In Arabic literature, identifying main ideas helps learners to focus on the essence of the text, while recognising supporting details enhances appreciation of the author's craft. For instance, in a poem, the main idea may be love or longing, while supporting details may include imagery of nature or metaphors of distance.

Fill in the blank: The _____ idea conveys the central message of a text, while _____ details reinforce it with examples and explanations.



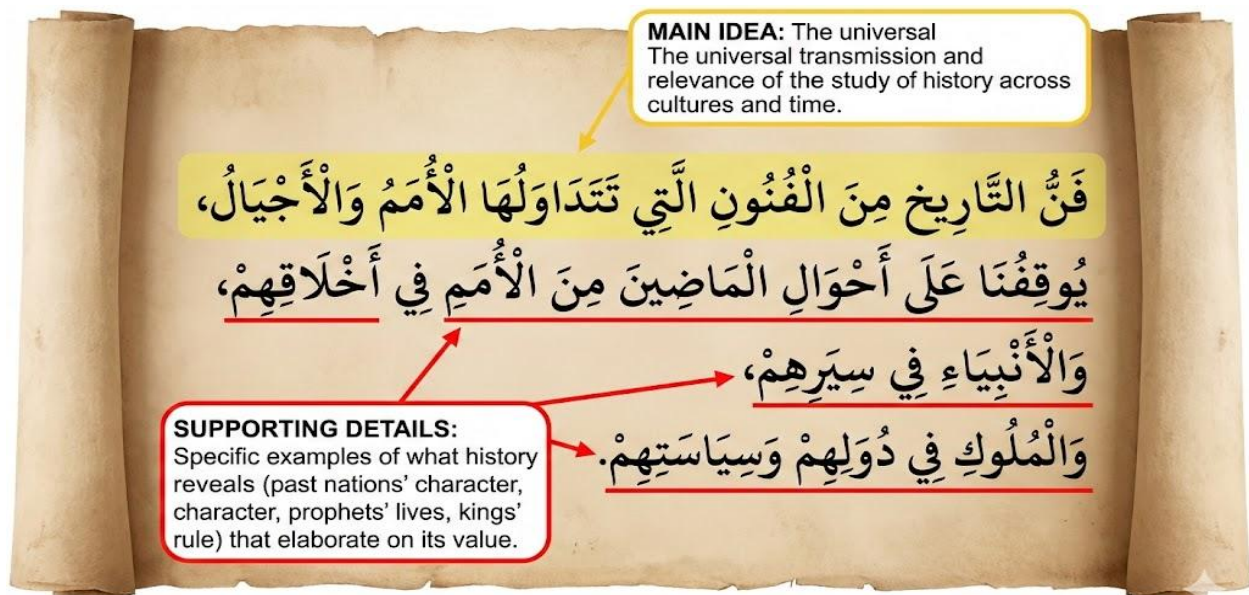


Plate 1.1: Identifying main ideas and supporting details in Arabic texts

Pilot questions 1.1

1. Which reading skill involves quickly grasping the general idea of a text?
2. What is the difference between scanning and detailed reading?
3. Why are strong reading skills essential in the study of Arabic literature?
4. What term refers to the central message of a text?
5. Provide one Arabic phrase that could serve as a supporting detail in a literary work.

1.2 Meaning and Nature of Literature

1.2.1 Definitions and scope of literature

Literature is defined as written or spoken works that express ideas, emotions, and experiences through artistic language. In Arabic, the term **الأدب** (*al-adab*) refers not only to literary texts but also to refined manners and cultural expression. This dual meaning highlights the breadth of



literature in Arabic tradition, where texts are valued both for their aesthetic qualities and their moral or social lessons. The scope of literature includes poetry, prose, drama, and oral traditions, each serving as a reflection of human thought and creativity.

Fill in the blank: In Arabic, the word _____ refers both to literary texts and to refined manners.

تَعْرِيفُ الْأَدَبِ

الأدب هو فن الكلام الذي يعبر عن الأفكار والمشاعر والقيم الإنسانية بأسلوب جميل مؤثر، ويشمل المتر والنثر والشعر والنثر وفنون الكتابة المختلفة.

Definition of Literature

Literature is the art of language that expresses human ideas, feelings, and values in a beautiful and affecting style, including poetry, prose, and various forms of writing.

Box 1.2: Sample Arabic definition of literature

1.2.2 Types of literature

Literature can be divided into several types, each with its own style and purpose. In Arabic tradition, الشعر (*al-shi'r*, poetry) is highly esteemed, often used to convey emotions, wisdom, and social commentary. النثر (*al-nathr*, prose) includes stories, essays, and historical accounts, valued for their clarity and narrative power. Another important type is الأمثال (*al-amthāl*, proverbs), which are short sayings that encapsulate cultural wisdom. These types of literature together form the foundation of Arabic literary heritage.

Fill in the blank: _____ is the Arabic term for poetry, while _____ refers to prose.

Type of literature	Arabic term	Example
Poetry	الشعر	"قفنا نبك من ذكرى حبيب ومنزل" (<i>Stop, let us weep for the memory of a beloved and a dwelling</i>) – from Imru' al-Qays



Prose	النثر	Historical accounts of Ibn Khaldun
Proverbs	الأمثال	"الصبر مفتاح الفرج" (<i>Patience is the key to relief</i>)

Table 1.2: Types of Arabic literature

Pilot questions 1.2

1. What is the Arabic term that refers both to literature and refined manners?
2. Define literature in your own words using the Arabic phrase provided.
3. Which type of Arabic literature is most associated with emotions and social commentary?
4. Give one example of a proverb in Arabic literature.
5. What is the difference between النثر and الشعر?

1.3 Components of Literature

1.3.1 Imagery in literature

Imagery refers to the use of descriptive language that appeals to the senses, creating vivid pictures in the reader's mind. In Arabic literature, imagery is often expressed through metaphors, similes, and symbolic references. For example, poets frequently use images of nature to convey emotions such as love, longing, or sorrow. Consider the line:

"كَأَنَّ قَلْبِي زَهْرَةٌ ذَابِلَةٌ" (*Ka'anna qalbī zahra dhābila*) – *As if my heart were a withered flower.*

Here, the image of a flower conveys the fragility of the poet's emotional state.

Fill in the blank: _____ is the literary device that appeals to the senses and creates vivid pictures in the reader's mind.





Box 1.3: Examples of imagery in Arabic poetry

1.3.2 Musical qualities in literature

Musical qualities in literature refer to the rhythm, sound, and flow of words that enhance the aesthetic experience of reading. In Arabic poetry, this is achieved through rhyme schemes, repetition, and the natural cadence of the language. The **بحر الطويل** (*Baḥr al-Ṭawīl*) is one of the classical Arabic poetic metres, known for its balanced rhythm and musicality. For instance:

"إذا غامرت في شرف مروم *** فلا تقنع بما دون النجوم"

(If you aspire to noble honour, do not be content with anything less than the stars.)

Fill in the blank: The _____ qualities of literature refer to rhythm, sound, and flow that enhance the aesthetic experience.

Feature	Arabic term	Example
Rhyme	القافية	Ending sounds in classical odes
Rhythm	الوزن	<i>Baḥr al-Ṭawīl</i> metre
Repetition	التكرار	Repeated words for emphasis

Table 1.3: Musical qualities in Arabic literature



Pilot questions 1.3

1. What is imagery, and how is it used in Arabic literature?
2. Provide one Arabic example of imagery and explain its meaning.
3. What are musical qualities in literature?
4. Name one classical Arabic poetic metre that demonstrates rhythm.
5. Which feature of musical qualities refers to repeated words for emphasis?

1.4 Characteristics and Functions of Literature

1.4.1 General characteristics of literary works

Characteristics of literature are the features that distinguish literary texts from ordinary writing. These include creativity, emotional depth, aesthetic quality, and universality. In Arabic literature, these characteristics are often expressed through eloquence, rhythm, and imagery. For example, classical Arabic poetry is admired for its **بلاغة** (*balāgha*, eloquence), which refers to the ability to express profound meaning with clarity and beauty. Literary works also tend to reflect timeless human experiences, making them relevant across generations.

Fill in the blank: The Arabic term _____ refers to eloquence, a key characteristic of literary works.

<i>Arabic term</i>	<i>Transliteration</i>	<i>English meaning</i>
بلاغة	<i>balāgha</i>	<i>Eloquence and clarity of expression</i>
جمال	<i>jamāl</i>	<i>Aesthetic beauty in language</i>
عمومية	<i>‘umūmiyya</i>	<i>Universality of themes</i>
إبداع	<i>ibdā‘</i>	<i>Creativity and originality</i>



Box 1.4: Key characteristics of Arabic literature

1.4.2 Literature as reflection of society and source of pleasure

Literature serves important functions in society. One function is as a **reflection of society**, capturing the values, struggles, and aspirations of people. For instance, Arabic literature often portrays themes of honour, hospitality, and love, which are central to Arab culture. Another function is providing **aesthetic pleasure**, allowing readers to enjoy the beauty of language and the artistry of expression. Consider the proverb:

"الشعر ديوان العرب" (*al-shi'r dīwān al-'Arab*) – *Poetry is the record of the Arabs.*

This highlights how literature preserves cultural identity while offering enjoyment.

Fill in the blank: The Arabic proverb "الشعر ديوان العرب" means that _____ is the record of the Arabs.

Function	Arabic term	Example
Reflection of society	مرآة المجتمع	Poetry describing tribal values
Source of pleasure	متعة جمالية	Enjoying the rhythm of a ghazal
Preservation of culture	حفظ الثقافة	Proverbs and oral traditions

Table 1.4: Functions of literature in Arabic tradition

Pilot questions 1.4

1. What is one general characteristic of Arabic literature?
2. Define eloquence using the Arabic term provided.
3. How does literature reflect society?
4. What Arabic proverb describes poetry as the record of the Arabs?
5. Name one function of literature that provides enjoyment to readers.

Series Summary



This Series has introduced you to the foundations of literature and its components, with particular attention to Arabic texts. We began by exploring approaches to reading Arabic texts, where you learnt the importance of reading skills and techniques such as skimming, scanning, and detailed reading, as well as how to identify main ideas and supporting details. We then examined the meaning and nature of literature, considering its definitions, scope, and types, followed by a study of its components, including imagery and musical qualities. Finally, we discussed the general characteristics of literary works and the functions of literature as a reflection of society and a source of pleasure.

By working through these Parts, you have achieved the Series Learning Outcomes. You can now demonstrate effective reading strategies for Arabic texts (SLO 1.1), analyse the importance of reading skills and identify main ideas and supporting details (SLO 1.2), define the meaning and scope of literature and distinguish its types (SLO 1.3), explain the components of literature such as imagery and musical qualities (SLO 1.4), evaluate the characteristics of literary works and distinctive features of Arabic literature (SLO 1.5), and assess the functions and value of literature in society (SLO 1.6). This foundation prepares you for deeper engagement with Arabic literary traditions in the subsequent Series.

Glossary of Terms

- **الأدب (al-adab):** An Arabic term that refers to literature, but also encompasses refined manners and cultural expression.
- **الأمثال (al-amthāl):** Proverbs in Arabic literature, short sayings that encapsulate cultural wisdom and moral lessons.
- **بلاغة (balāgha):** Eloquence, the ability to express profound meaning with clarity and beauty, a key characteristic of Arabic literary works.
- **النثر (al-nathr):** Prose, a type of Arabic literature that includes stories, essays, and historical accounts, valued for clarity and narrative power.



- **الشعر (al-shi'r):** Poetry, a highly esteemed form of Arabic literature used to convey emotions, wisdom, and social commentary.
- **Imagery:** The use of descriptive language that appeals to the senses, creating vivid pictures in the reader's mind.
- **Main idea:** The central message or most important thought that an author wants to convey in a text.
- **Musical qualities:** Features of literature such as rhythm, rhyme, and repetition that enhance the aesthetic experience of reading.
- **Reading skills:** Abilities that allow a learner to decode written symbols, interpret meaning, and connect ideas within a text.
- **Scanning:** A reading technique used to search for specific information such as names, dates, or keywords.
- **Skimming:** A reading technique used to quickly grasp the general idea of a text.
- **Supporting details:** Examples, explanations, or descriptions that reinforce the main idea of a text.
- **بحر الطويل (Baḥr al-Ṭawīl):** One of the classical Arabic poetic metres, known for its balanced rhythm and musicality.

Concept Check Questions [Series 1]

Objective questions

1. Which Arabic term refers both to literature and refined manners? (Linked to SLO 1.3)
2. What reading technique is used to quickly grasp the general idea of a text? (Linked to SLO 1.1)



3. Which feature of musical qualities refers to repeated words for emphasis? (Linked to SLO 1.4)
4. What Arabic proverb describes poetry as the record of the Arabs? (Linked to SLO 1.6)
5. Which classical Arabic poetic metre is known for its balanced rhythm and musicality? (Linked to SLO 1.4)

Short-answer questions

6. Define imagery and provide one Arabic example from poetry. (Linked to SLO 1.4)
7. Explain the difference between skimming and scanning in reading Arabic texts. (Linked to SLO 1.1)
8. Identify one general characteristic of Arabic literature and explain its significance. (Linked to SLO 1.5)
9. What is the main idea in a text, and how do supporting details reinforce it? (Linked to SLO 1.2)
10. Give one example of prose in Arabic literature and describe its purpose. (Linked to SLO 1.3)

Long-answer questions

11. Analyse the importance of reading skills in the study of Arabic literature, using examples of skimming, scanning, and detailed reading. (Linked to SLO 1.1, SLO 1.2)
12. Evaluate the functions of literature in Arabic tradition, explaining how it reflects society and provides aesthetic pleasure. (Linked to SLO 1.6)
13. Discuss the components of literature, focusing on imagery and musical qualities, and illustrate with Arabic examples. (Linked to SLO 1.4)

Answers to Concept Check Questions [Series 1]

Objective questions



1. الأدب (*al-adab*)
2. Skimming
3. Repetition (التكرار)
4. "الشعر ديوان العرب" (*Poetry is the record of the Arabs*)
5. بحر الطويل (*Baḥr al-Ṭawīl*)

Short-answer questions

6. Imagery is descriptive language that appeals to the senses. Example: "الليل بحرٌ من الأحلام" (*The night is a sea of dreams*).
7. Skimming is reading quickly to grasp the general idea, while scanning is searching for specific information.
8. Eloquence (بلاغة) is a key characteristic, showing clarity and beauty in expression.
9. The main idea is the central message, while supporting details provide examples and explanations that reinforce it.
10. Prose (النثر) includes historical accounts, such as those by Ibn Khaldun, and serves to narrate and explain events.

Long-answer questions

11. **Basic response:** Reading skills are essential in Arabic literature because they help learners decode meaning. Skimming provides a quick overview, scanning locates specific details, and detailed reading allows for deeper analysis.

Value-added response: Beyond these techniques, strong reading skills enable learners to appreciate cultural references, rhetorical devices, and the artistry of Arabic texts, making them active participants in literary interpretation.

12. **Basic response:** Literature reflects society by portraying values and traditions, and it provides pleasure through rhythm and beauty.

Value-added response: Arabic literature not only mirrors social realities but also



preserves cultural identity and inspires moral reflection. Its aesthetic qualities foster emotional engagement, making it both a cultural record and a source of enjoyment.

13. **Basic response:** Imagery creates vivid pictures in the reader's mind, while musical qualities add rhythm and sound. Examples include metaphors in poetry and rhyme schemes in classical metres.

Value-added response: Imagery and musical qualities are central to Arabic literary artistry. Imagery conveys emotions through symbolic language, while musical qualities such as repetition and metre enhance memorability and oral performance, reflecting the oral heritage of Arabic literature.



Answers to Pilot Questions [Series 1]

Part 1.1 Approaches to Reading Arabic Texts

1. Skimming is the reading skill that involves quickly grasping the general idea of a text.
2. Scanning is used to locate specific information, while detailed reading is used to analyse meaning and style.
3. Strong reading skills are essential in the study of Arabic literature because they help learners uncover meanings and appreciate the artistry of texts.
4. The central message of a text is referred to as the main idea.
5. An example of a supporting detail in a literary work is the Arabic phrase "الكتاب مرآة الحياة" (*The book is a mirror of life*).

Part 1.2 Meaning and Nature of Literature

1. The Arabic term الأدب (*al-adab*) refers both to literature and refined manners.
2. Literature is the artistic expression of human experience, as expressed in the Arabic phrase "الأدب هو التعبير الفني عن التجربة الإنسانية".
3. Poetry (الشعر) is the type of Arabic literature most associated with emotions and social commentary.
4. An example of a proverb in Arabic literature is "الصبر مفتاح الفرج" (*Patience is the key to relief*).
5. الشعر (*poetry*) refers to verse, while النثر (*prose*) refers to narrative or non-poetic writing.

Part 1.3 Components of Literature

1. Imagery is the use of descriptive language that appeals to the senses and creates vivid pictures in the reader's mind.
2. An example of imagery in Arabic poetry is "الليل بحرٌ من الأحلام" (*The night is a sea of dreams*).
3. Musical qualities in literature include rhythm, rhyme, and repetition.



4. بحر الطويل (*Baḥr al-Ṭawīl*) is a classical Arabic poetic metre that demonstrates rhythm.
5. Repetition (التكرار) is the feature of musical qualities that refers to repeated words for emphasis.

Part 1.4 Characteristics and Functions of Literature

1. One general characteristic of Arabic literature is eloquence (بلاغة).
2. Eloquence (بلاغة) is the ability to express profound meaning with clarity and beauty.
3. Literature reflects society by portraying the values, struggles, and aspirations of people.
4. The Arabic proverb "الشعر ديوان العرب" means that poetry is the record of the Arabs.
5. One function of literature that provides enjoyment to readers is aesthetic pleasure (متعة جمالية).

References and Attributions [Series 1]

General References

- Allen, R. (2000). *An Introduction to Arabic Literature*. Cambridge University Press.
- Jayyusi, S. K. (1987). *Classical Arabic Poetry: An Anthology*. Columbia University Press.
- Kilpatrick, H. (1991). *Arabic Literature: A Companion*. Edinburgh University Press.
- Stetkevych, S. P. (2010). *The Poetics of Islamic Legitimacy: Myth, Gender, and Ceremony in the Classical Arabic Ode*. Indiana University Press.
- Qur'anic examples cited are from the *Mushaf al Madina* (King Fahd Complex for the Printing of the Holy Qur'an).

Illustrations

- *Figure 1.1 Relationship between reading skills and literary appreciation*



- AI generated prompt: “Create a simple diagram showing reading skills leading to comprehension, which leads to appreciation of Arabic literature.”
- Tool/platform: Microsoft Copilot image generation.
- Suggested OER search string: “reading comprehension diagram open educational resource.”
- *Box 1.1 Sample Arabic text for practice*
 - AI generated prompt: “Generate a simple table box with an Arabic phrase and its English translation, styled for learners.”
 - Tool/platform: Microsoft Copilot image generation.
 - Suggested OER search string: “Arabic literature quotes OER.”
- *Table 1.1 Techniques for effective reading*
 - AI generated prompt: “Generate a simple table comparing skimming, scanning, and detailed reading with Arabic examples.”
 - Tool/platform: Microsoft Copilot image generation.
 - Suggested OER search string: “skimming scanning detailed reading OER.”
- *Plate 1.1 Identifying main ideas and supporting details in Arabic texts*
 - AI generated prompt: “Create an annotated image of an Arabic text passage with the main idea highlighted and supporting details underlined.”
 - Tool/platform: Microsoft Copilot image generation.
 - Suggested OER search string: “Arabic text annotation main idea supporting details OER.”
- *Box 1.2 Sample Arabic definition of literature*
 - AI generated prompt: “Generate a single-column box with an Arabic definition of literature and its English translation.”
 - Tool/platform: Microsoft Copilot image generation.



- Suggested OER search string: “Arabic definition of literature OER.”
- *Table 1.2 Types of Arabic literature*
 - AI generated prompt: “Generate a table showing types of Arabic literature with Arabic terms and examples.”
 - Tool/platform: Microsoft Copilot image generation.
 - Suggested OER search string: “types of Arabic literature poetry prose proverbs OER.”
- *Box 1.3 Examples of imagery in Arabic poetry*
 - AI generated prompt: “Generate a box with Arabic poetic lines that illustrate imagery, alongside English translations.”
 - Tool/platform: Microsoft Copilot image generation.
 - Suggested OER search string: “Arabic poetry imagery examples OER.”
- *Table 1.3 Musical qualities in Arabic literature*
 - AI generated prompt: “Generate a table showing rhyme, rhythm, and repetition in Arabic literature with examples.”
 - Tool/platform: Microsoft Copilot image generation.
 - Suggested OER search string: “Arabic poetry rhyme rhythm repetition OER.”
- *Box 1.4 Key characteristics of Arabic literature*
 - AI generated prompt: “Generate a box listing the main characteristics of Arabic literature with Arabic terms and English translations.”
 - Tool/platform: Microsoft Copilot image generation.
 - Suggested OER search string: “characteristics of Arabic literature eloquence beauty creativity OER.”
- *Table 1.4 Functions of literature in Arabic tradition*



- AI generated prompt: “Generate a table showing functions of Arabic literature with Arabic terms and examples.”
- Tool/platform: Microsoft Copilot image generation.
- Suggested OER search string: “functions of Arabic literature reflection pleasure preservation OER.”



Course code: ARA 104

Course title: Introduction to Arabic Literature

Course credit load: 2 Units

Series 2: Literary Creation and Appreciation in Arabic Tradition

Part 2.1: Foundations of Literary Creation

- 2.1.1 The concept of creativity in Arabic literature
- 2.1.2 Sources of inspiration: religion, culture, and history
- 2.1.3 The role of imagination and originality

Part 2.2: Forms of Literary Expression

- 2.2.1 Poetry: classical and modern forms
- 2.2.2 Prose: narrative, essays, and historical writing
- 2.2.3 Proverbs and oral traditions

Part 2.3: Techniques of Appreciation

- 2.3.1 Analysing imagery and symbolism
- 2.3.2 Understanding rhythm, rhyme, and metre
- 2.3.3 Evaluating themes and cultural values

Part 2.4: Literature and Society

- 2.4.1 Literature as a mirror of social realities
- 2.4.2 Literature as a source of pleasure and moral guidance
- 2.4.3 Preservation of identity through literary works



Introduction

In the last Series, we explored the foundations of literature and its components, focusing on how reading skills, definitions, and literary features shape our understanding of Arabic texts. Building on that foundation, this Series turns to the creative process itself and the ways in which Arabic literature is appreciated both within its cultural context and beyond. By examining how writers and poets craft their works, you will gain insight into the artistry and cultural significance of literary creation.

The aim of this Series is to introduce you to the processes and forms of literary creation in Arabic tradition and to equip you with the skills needed to appreciate and evaluate literary works critically.

We shall commence this Series by studying the foundations of literary creation, including the concept of creativity, sources of inspiration, and the role of imagination. Next, we will move on to forms of literary expression, examining poetry, prose, and oral traditions. Following that, we will consider techniques of appreciation, focusing on imagery, symbolism, rhythm, and cultural values. Finally, we will conclude with literature and society, exploring how literary works reflect social realities, provide pleasure and guidance, and preserve cultural identity.

Series Learning Outcomes

Series 2: Literary Creation and Appreciation in Arabic Tradition

Upon completing this Series, you should be able to:

- **SLO 2.1** define the concept of creativity in Arabic literature and identify its main sources of inspiration.
- **SLO 2.2** explain how imagination and originality contribute to the process of literary creation.



- **SLO 2.3** describe the major forms of literary expression in Arabic tradition, including poetry, prose, and oral traditions.
- **SLO 2.4** analyse imagery, symbolism, rhythm, and rhyme in selected Arabic literary texts.
- **SLO 2.5** evaluate how Arabic literature reflects social realities, provides moral guidance, and preserves cultural identity.

Part 2.1 Foundations of Literary Creation

2.1.1 The concept of creativity in Arabic literature

Creativity in Arabic literature refers to the ability of writers and poets to produce **original works** that combine imagination, artistry, and cultural depth. It is not merely about inventing something new, but about expressing ideas in ways that resonate with readers and listeners. In Arabic tradition, creativity is closely tied to eloquence and the capacity to convey profound meaning through concise and beautiful expressions.



Fill in the blank: Creativity in Arabic literature is the ability to produce _____ works that combine imagination, artistry, and cultural depth.

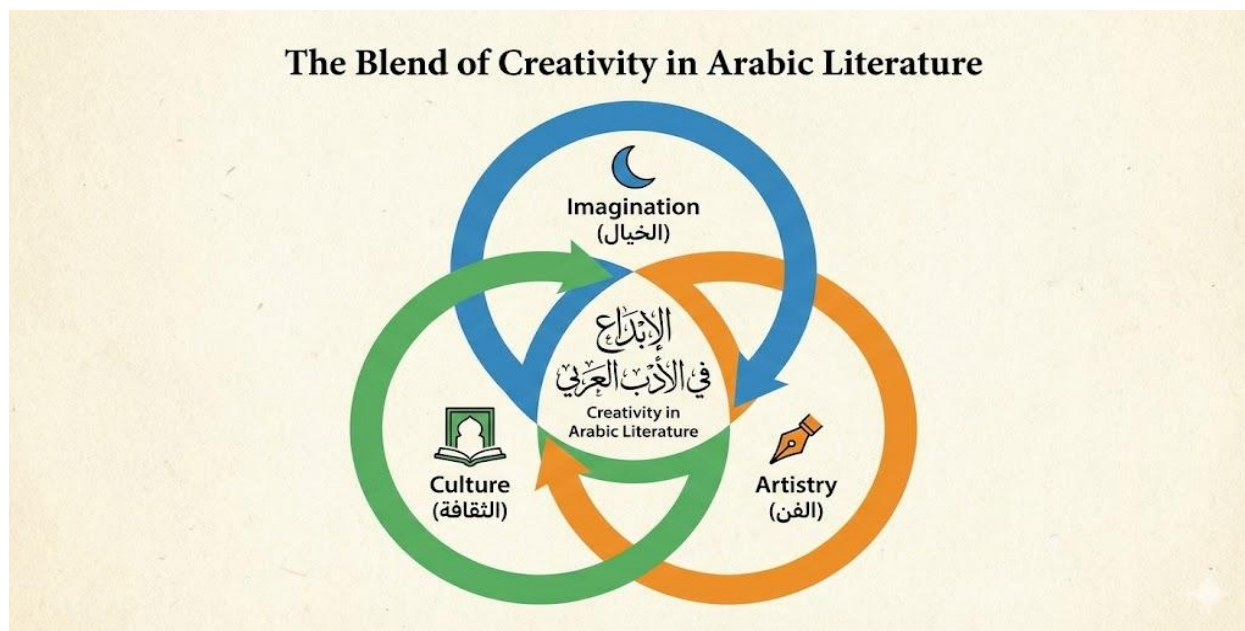


Figure 2.1 Creativity in Arabic literature

2.1.2 Sources of inspiration: religion, culture, and history

Arabic literary creation draws heavily from **religion**, especially the Qur'an, which has influenced style, themes, and linguistic beauty. **Culture** provides everyday experiences, values, and traditions that shape literary works, while **history** offers narratives of past events, heroes, and struggles that inspire writers. Together, these sources enrich Arabic literature and ensure that it remains deeply connected to the identity of its people.

Fill in the blank: The three main sources of inspiration in Arabic literature are religion, _____, and history.

Source

Description

Religion The Qur'an and Islamic teachings shaping themes, style, and linguistic beauty

Culture Everyday experiences, traditions, and values reflected in literary works



Source

Description

History Narratives of past events, heroes, and struggles inspiring creativity

Box 2.1 Sources of inspiration in Arabic literature

2.1.3 The role of imagination and originality

Imagination is the power to create vivid mental pictures and scenarios that go beyond ordinary reality, while **originality** is the ability to present ideas in a fresh and distinctive way. In Arabic literature, imagination allows poets to craft metaphors and imagery that elevate language, while originality ensures that each work stands out as a unique contribution. These two elements are essential for literary creation, as they transform simple words into enduring works of art.

Fill in the blank: In Arabic literature, imagination allows poets to craft _____ and imagery that elevate language.

Element	Definition	Example
Imagination	The power to create vivid mental pictures and scenarios	“The night is a sea of dreams” (<i>الليل بحرٌ من الأحلام</i>)
Originality	Presenting ideas in a fresh and distinctive way	A poet’s unique metaphor that sets their work apart

Table 2.1 Imagination and originality in Arabic literature

Pilot Questions [Series 2: Literary Creation and Appreciation in Arabic Tradition]

Part 2.1: Foundations of Literary Creation

1. Define creativity in Arabic literature.
2. List the three main sources of inspiration for Arabic literary creation.
3. Explain how imagination contributes to the creation of literary works.



4. Describe the role of originality in distinguishing Arabic literary works.
5. State how creativity in Arabic literature is connected to eloquence.

Part 2.2 Forms of Literary Expression

2.2.1 Poetry: classical and modern forms

Poetry in Arabic literature is one of the oldest and most celebrated forms of expression. Classical poetry, such as the **qasīda** (ode), follows strict rules of metre and rhyme, often beginning with themes of love or longing before moving to praise or reflection. Modern Arabic poetry, however, has experimented with free verse and contemporary themes, reflecting social change and personal identity. Poetry remains a powerful medium for conveying emotions and cultural values.

Fill in the blank: Classical Arabic poetry often follows strict rules of _____ and rhyme.

Form	Features	Example theme
Classical poetry	Strict metre and rhyme, formal structure	Love, praise, reflection
Modern poetry	Free verse, flexible structure, contemporary language	Identity, social change, exile

Table 2.2 Classical and modern Arabic poetry

2.2.2 Prose: narrative, essays, and historical writing

Prose refers to written or spoken language in its ordinary form, without the structured rhythm of poetry. In Arabic literature, prose includes **narratives** such as stories and novels, **essays** that explore ideas or arguments, and **historical writing** that records events and preserves cultural



memory. Prose allows for flexibility and depth, making it suitable for detailed exploration of themes and ideas.

Fill in the blank: Prose refers to written or spoken language in its _____ form, without structured rhythm.

Form	Description
Narrative	Stories and novels that explore characters and events
Essays	Analytical or reflective writings on ideas and arguments
Historical writing	Accounts of past events, preserving cultural and historical memory

Box 2.2 Forms of prose in Arabic literature

2.2.3 Proverbs and oral traditions

Proverbs are short, memorable sayings that express wisdom or cultural values, while **oral traditions** include storytelling, folk tales, and songs passed down through generations. These forms of expression are vital in Arabic literature because they preserve collective knowledge and reflect everyday experiences. They also serve as bridges between formal literary works and the lived realities of communities.

Fill in the blank: Proverbs are short, memorable sayings that express _____ or cultural values.

Form	Features	Example proverb or tradition
Proverbs	Concise sayings expressing wisdom or values	“الصبر مفتاح الفرج” (<i>Patience is the key to relief</i>)
Oral traditions	Storytelling, folk tales, songs, passed orally	Folk tales of heroes, traditional songs

Table 2.3 Proverbs and oral traditions in Arabic literature



Part 2.2: Forms of Literary Expression

1. Identify one key difference between classical and modern Arabic poetry.
2. Define prose and name two of its forms in Arabic literature.
3. Explain the function of proverbs in Arabic literary tradition.
4. Describe oral traditions and give one example.
5. State why poetry remains a powerful medium in Arabic literature.

Part 2.3 Techniques of Appreciation

2.3.1 Analysing imagery and symbolism

Imagery refers to the use of descriptive language that appeals to the senses, creating vivid mental pictures for the reader. **Symbolism** involves using objects, characters, or events to represent deeper meanings or abstract ideas. In Arabic literature, imagery and symbolism are often intertwined, with poets and writers using them to elevate everyday experiences into universal themes.

Fill in the blank: Imagery appeals to the _____ by creating vivid mental pictures for the reader.

Technique	Definition	Example
Imagery	Descriptive language appealing to the senses	“Tears are pearls upon the cheeks” (الدمع لؤلؤ على الخدود)
Symbolism	Using objects or events to represent deeper meanings	The desert symbolising endurance and resilience

Table 2.4 Imagery and symbolism in Arabic literature



2.3.2 Understanding rhythm, rhyme, and metre

Rhythm is the pattern of stressed and unstressed syllables in a line of poetry. **Rhyme** refers to the repetition of similar sounds at the end of lines, while **metre** is the structured arrangement of syllables into patterns that give poetry its musical quality. Classical Arabic poetry is particularly known for its strict adherence to metre, which creates harmony and enhances memorability.

Fill in the blank: In Arabic poetry, metre is the structured arrangement of _____ into patterns that give poetry its musical quality.

Quality	Description
Rhythm	Pattern of stressed and unstressed syllables
Rhyme	Repetition of similar sounds at the end of lines
Metre	Structured arrangement of syllables into patterns, e.g., <i>Baḥr al-Ṭawīl</i>

Box 2.3 Musical qualities in Arabic poetry

2.3.3 Evaluating themes and cultural values

Themes are the central ideas explored in a literary work, while **cultural values** are the beliefs and practices reflected in the text. Arabic literature often addresses themes such as love, honour, faith, and resilience, while simultaneously embedding cultural values that guide social behaviour. Evaluating these elements helps readers appreciate not only the artistry of the text but also its relevance to society.

Fill in the blank: Themes are the central _____ explored in a literary work.

Element	Description	Example theme or value
Themes	Central ideas explored in a literary work	Love, honour, resilience



Cultural values	Beliefs and practices reflected in the text	Faith, hospitality, respect for elders
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Table 2.5 Themes and cultural values in Arabic literature

Pilot Questions

Part 2.3: Techniques of Appreciation

1. Differentiate between imagery and symbolism in Arabic literature.
2. Define rhythm in the context of Arabic poetry.
3. Define rhyme and explain its role in poetry.
4. Define metre and explain its importance in Arabic poetry.
5. Distinguish between themes and cultural values in literary works.

Part 2.4 Literature and Society

2.4.1 Literature as a mirror of social realities

Arabic literature often reflects the **social realities** of its time, portraying the struggles, values, and aspirations of communities. Writers and poets use their works to comment on issues such as justice, love, poverty, and resilience. By reading these texts, learners gain insight into the lived experiences of people across different eras.

Fill in the blank: Arabic literature often reflects the _____ of its time, portraying struggles and values.



Aspect	Description	Example theme
Social issues	Literature portrays justice, poverty, resilience	Poems on hardship and endurance
Values	Works reflect honour, hospitality, and faith	Stories emphasising generosity
Aspirations	Texts express hopes for freedom and progress	Modern novels on identity

Table 2.6 Literature as a mirror of society

2.4.2 Literature as a source of pleasure and moral guidance

Beyond reflecting society, Arabic literature serves as a source of **pleasure** through its beauty and artistry, and as a source of **moral guidance** by embedding lessons and values. Poetry, stories, and proverbs often combine entertainment with ethical instruction, making literature both enjoyable and instructive.

Fill in the blank: Arabic literature serves as a source of pleasure through its beauty and artistry, and as a source of _____ by embedding lessons and values.

Function	Description
Pleasure	Provides enjoyment through beauty, eloquence, and artistry
Moral guidance	Embeds lessons and values that shape behaviour and ethics

Box 2.4 *Pleasure and moral guidance in Arabic literature*

2.4.3 Preservation of identity through literary works

Arabic literature plays a vital role in preserving **cultural identity**. Through poetry, prose, and oral traditions, communities safeguard their language, values, and historical memory. Literature becomes a repository of identity, ensuring that future generations remain connected to their heritage.



Fill in the blank: Arabic literature plays a vital role in preserving _____ identity through poetry, prose, and oral traditions.

Element	Contribution to identity preservation	Example
Language	Maintains Arabic as a medium of cultural expression	Classical poetry in Arabic
Values	Embeds cultural beliefs and practices	Proverbs emphasising hospitality
Historical memory	Records events and heroes for future generations	Historical chronicles and epics

Table 2.7 Preservation of identity in Arabic literature

Pilot Questions

Part 2.4: Literature and Society

1. Explain how Arabic literature mirrors social realities.
2. Describe how literature serves as a source of pleasure.
3. Explain how literature provides moral guidance.
4. State one way literature preserves cultural identity.
5. Evaluate how Arabic literature influences society beyond entertainment.

Series Summary

This Series has focused on the processes of literary creation and the ways in which Arabic literature is appreciated within its cultural and social contexts. We began by examining the



foundations of creativity, including its definition, sources of inspiration, and the role of imagination and originality. We then explored the major forms of literary expression, such as poetry, prose, and oral traditions, before moving on to techniques of appreciation, where we analysed imagery, symbolism, rhythm, rhyme, and cultural themes. Finally, we considered literature in relation to society, highlighting how it mirrors social realities, provides pleasure and moral guidance, and preserves cultural identity.

By engaging with these Parts, you should now be able to define creativity in Arabic literature, explain how imagination and originality shape literary works, describe the main forms of literary expression, analyse literary techniques such as imagery and rhythm, and evaluate the social and cultural functions of literature. These outcomes align directly with the Series Learning Outcomes (SLOs), ensuring that you are equipped with both the knowledge and the analytical skills to appreciate Arabic literary creation in a meaningful and critical way.

Glossary of Terms

Creativity – The ability to produce original works that combine imagination, artistry, and cultural depth in Arabic literature.

Cultural values – The beliefs and practices reflected in literary texts that guide social behaviour and identity.

Imagery – Descriptive language that appeals to the senses, creating vivid mental pictures for the reader.

Imagination – The power to create vivid mental pictures and scenarios that go beyond ordinary reality.

Metre – The structured arrangement of syllables into patterns that give poetry its musical quality.



Originality – The ability to present ideas in a fresh and distinctive way, ensuring each work stands out.

Poetry – A form of literary expression in Arabic tradition, often structured with rhythm and rhyme, used to convey emotions and cultural values.

Prose – Written or spoken language in its ordinary form, including narratives, essays, and historical writing.

Proverbs – Short, memorable sayings that express wisdom or cultural values, often passed down through generations.

Rhythm – The pattern of stressed and unstressed syllables in a line of poetry.

Rhyme – The repetition of similar sounds at the end of lines in poetry.

Social realities – The struggles, values, and aspirations of communities reflected in literary works.

Symbolism – The use of objects, characters, or events to represent deeper meanings or abstract ideas.

Themes – The central ideas explored in a literary work, such as love, honour, or resilience.

Concept Check Questions [Series 2]

Objective Questions

1. Define creativity in Arabic literature. (Linked to SLO 2.1)
2. Identify the three main sources of inspiration in Arabic literary creation. (Linked to SLO 2.1)
3. State one key difference between classical and modern Arabic poetry. (Linked to SLO 2.3)



4. Match the following:

- Imagery → _____
- Symbolism → _____

(Linked to SLO 2.4)

5. Literature serves as a source of pleasure and _____ by embedding lessons and values.

(Linked to SLO 2.5)

Short-Answer Questions

6. Explain how imagination contributes to the creation of Arabic literary works. (Linked to SLO 2.2)
7. Describe one form of prose in Arabic literature and its function. (Linked to SLO 2.3)
8. Analyse the role of rhythm and rhyme in enhancing the memorability of Arabic poetry. (Linked to SLO 2.4)
9. Give one example of how Arabic literature preserves cultural identity. (Linked to SLO 2.5)

Long-Answer Questions

10. Discuss the importance of imagery and symbolism in Arabic literature, providing examples from poetry or prose. (Linked to SLO 2.4)
11. Evaluate how Arabic literature reflects social realities and serves as a source of moral guidance. (Linked to SLO 2.5)

Answers to Concept Check Questions [Series 2]

Objective Questions

1. Creativity in Arabic literature is the ability to produce original works combining imagination, artistry, and cultural depth.
2. Religion, culture, and history.



3. Classical poetry follows strict metre and rhyme, while modern poetry uses free verse and contemporary themes.
4. Imagery → Descriptive language appealing to the senses; Symbolism → Use of objects or events to represent deeper meanings.
5. Moral guidance.

Short-Answer Questions

6. Imagination allows poets and writers to craft vivid metaphors and imagery that elevate language beyond ordinary reality.
7. Narrative prose tells stories and explores characters and events, helping readers engage with cultural and social themes.
8. Rhythm and rhyme create harmony and musicality, making poetry easier to memorise and more impactful.
9. Literature preserves cultural identity by maintaining language, values, and historical memory, such as through proverbs or chronicles.

Long-Answer Questions

10.
 - **Basic response:** Imagery appeals to the senses, while symbolism conveys deeper meanings. Together, they enrich Arabic literature by making texts vivid and layered. For example, tears described as pearls create a powerful image, while the desert symbolises endurance.
 - **Value-added response:** Beyond the basics, imagery and symbolism connect literature to universal human experiences. They allow Arabic writers to embed cultural identity and philosophical thought into their works, making them resonate across generations and cultures.

11.



- **Basic response:** Arabic literature reflects social realities by portraying struggles and values, and it provides moral guidance through lessons embedded in stories, poetry, and proverbs.
- **Value-added response:** Outstanding learners may note that literature not only mirrors society but also shapes it. By offering pleasure and ethical instruction, Arabic literature influences social behaviour, preserves identity, and contributes to cultural continuity in both traditional and modern contexts.



Part 2.1: Foundations of Literary Creation

1. Creativity in Arabic literature is the ability to produce **original works** that combine imagination, artistry, and cultural depth.
2. The three main sources of inspiration are **religion, culture, and history**.
3. Imagination allows poets to craft **metaphors and imagery** that elevate language.
4. Originality ensures that each work presents ideas in a **fresh and distinctive way**.
5. Creativity in Arabic literature is closely tied to **eloquence**, the capacity to convey profound meaning beautifully.

Part 2.2: Forms of Literary Expression

1. Classical Arabic poetry follows strict rules of **metre and rhyme**, while modern poetry uses free verse.
2. Prose refers to written or spoken language in its **ordinary form**, including narratives, essays, and historical writing.
3. Proverbs are short, memorable sayings that express **wisdom or cultural values**.
4. Oral traditions include **storytelling, folk tales, and songs** passed down through generations.
5. Poetry remains a powerful medium for conveying **emotions and cultural values**.

Part 2.3: Techniques of Appreciation

1. Imagery appeals to the **senses**, while symbolism uses objects or events to represent deeper meanings.
2. Rhythm is the pattern of **stressed and unstressed syllables** in a line of poetry.
3. Rhyme is the repetition of **similar sounds** at the end of lines.
4. Metre is the structured arrangement of **syllables into patterns** that give poetry its musical quality.
5. Themes are the central **ideas** explored in a literary work, while cultural values are the **beliefs and practices** reflected in the text.



Part 2.4: Literature and Society

1. Arabic literature mirrors **social realities**, portraying struggles, values, and aspirations.
2. Literature serves as a source of **pleasure** through beauty and artistry.
3. Literature also provides **moral guidance** by embedding lessons and values.
4. Literature preserves **cultural identity** through language, values, and historical memory.
5. Arabic literature influences society by shaping **behaviour, ethics, and cultural continuity**.

References and Attributions [Series 2]

General References

Allen, R. (2000). *An Introduction to Arabic Literature*. Cambridge University Press.

Jayyusi, S. K. (1987). *Classical Arabic Poetry: An Anthology*. Columbia University Press.

Kilpatrick, H. (1991). *Arabic Literature: A Companion*. Edinburgh University Press.

Stetkevych, S. P. (2010). *The Poetics of Islamic Legitimacy: Myth, Gender, and Ceremony in the Classical Arabic Ode*. Indiana University Press.

Qur'anic examples cited are from the *Mushaf al Madina* (King Fahd Complex for the Printing of the Holy Qur'an).

Illustrations

Figure 2.1 Creativity in Arabic literature

- AI generated prompt: “Create a diagram showing creativity in Arabic literature as a blend of imagination, culture, and artistry.”
- Tool/platform: Microsoft Copilot image generation.



- Suggested OER search string: “Arabic literature creativity diagram OER.”

Box 2.1 Sources of inspiration in Arabic literature

- AI generated prompt: “Generate a box listing religion, culture, and history as sources of inspiration in Arabic literature with short explanations.”
- Tool/platform: Microsoft Copilot image generation.
- Suggested OER search string: “sources of inspiration Arabic literature OER.”

Table 2.1 Imagination and originality in Arabic literature

- AI generated prompt: “Create a table comparing imagination and originality in Arabic literature with definitions and examples.”
- Tool/platform: Microsoft Copilot image generation.
- Suggested OER search string: “imagination originality Arabic literature table OER.”

Table 2.2 Classical and modern Arabic poetry

- AI generated prompt: “Create a table comparing classical and modern Arabic poetry with features and themes.”
- Tool/platform: Microsoft Copilot image generation.
- Suggested OER search string: “classical modern Arabic poetry comparison OER.”

Box 2.2 Forms of prose in Arabic literature

- AI generated prompt: “Generate a box listing forms of prose in Arabic literature with brief descriptions.”
- Tool/platform: Microsoft Copilot image generation.
- Suggested OER search string: “Arabic prose narrative essays historical writing OER.”

Table 2.3 Proverbs and oral traditions in Arabic literature

- AI generated prompt: “Create a table comparing proverbs and oral traditions in Arabic literature with features and examples.”



- Tool/platform: Microsoft Copilot image generation.
- Suggested OER search string: “Arabic proverbs oral traditions literature OER.”

Table 2.4 Imagery and symbolism in Arabic literature

- AI generated prompt: “Create a table comparing imagery and symbolism in Arabic literature with definitions and examples.”
- Tool/platform: Microsoft Copilot image generation.
- Suggested OER search string: “Arabic literature imagery symbolism examples OER.”

Box 2.3 Musical qualities in Arabic poetry

- AI generated prompt: “Generate a box listing rhythm, rhyme, and metre in Arabic poetry with brief descriptions.”
- Tool/platform: Microsoft Copilot image generation.
- Suggested OER search string: “Arabic poetry rhythm rhyme metre OER.”

Table 2.5 Themes and cultural values in Arabic literature

- AI generated prompt: “Create a table comparing themes and cultural values in Arabic literature with descriptions and examples.”
- Tool/platform: Microsoft Copilot image generation.
- Suggested OER search string: “Arabic literature themes cultural values OER.”

Table 2.6 Literature as a mirror of society

- AI generated prompt: “Create a table showing how Arabic literature mirrors social realities with examples.”
- Tool/platform: Microsoft Copilot image generation.
- Suggested OER search string: “Arabic literature social realities examples OER.”

Box 2.4 Pleasure and moral guidance in Arabic literature



- AI generated prompt: “Generate a box listing pleasure and moral guidance as functions of Arabic literature with brief descriptions.”
- Tool/platform: Microsoft Copilot image generation.
- Suggested OER search string: “Arabic literature pleasure moral guidance OER.”

Table 2.7 Preservation of identity in Arabic literature

- AI generated prompt: “Create a table showing how Arabic literature preserves cultural identity with examples.”
- Tool/platform: Microsoft Copilot image generation.
- Suggested OER search string: “Arabic literature cultural identity preservation OER.”



Divisions of Arabic Literature Across Historical Periods

3.1 Pre-Islamic (Jāhiliyyah) Literature

- **3.1.1 Poetry in Tribal Society:** Focus on oral poetry, themes of honour, bravery, and desert life.
- **3.1.2 Prose Traditions:** Early storytelling, wisdom sayings, and speeches.

3.2 Classical Islamic Literature

- **3.2.1 Qur'anic Influence on Language and Style:** Impact of revelation on literary expression.
- **3.2.2 Abbasid Era Poetry and Prose:** Flourishing of creativity, sophistication in themes.
- **3.2.3 Literary Criticism and Scholarship:** Emergence of systematic study of literature.

3.3 Medieval and Renaissance (Nahda) Literature

- **3.3.1 Literature in the Middle Ages:** Continuity and adaptation under various dynasties.
- **3.3.2 Nahda Movement:** Revival of Arabic literature in the 19th century, influenced by modernisation and contact with Europe.

3.4 Modern and Contemporary Arabic Literature

- **3.4.1 Colonial and Post-Colonial Influences:** Literature as a response to political and social change.
- **3.4.2 Contemporary Genres:** Novels, plays, and media literature reflecting current realities.

Introduction

Arabic literature is one of the richest and most enduring traditions in world culture. It reflects the values, struggles, and aspirations of societies across centuries, offering learners a window into the intellectual and artistic development of the Arab world. By studying its divisions across



historical periods, you will gain insight into how literature evolved in response to social, religious, and political changes, and how it continues to shape identity and thought today.

The aim of this Series is to guide you through the major historical phases of Arabic literature, enabling you to recognise the distinctive features of each period and to appreciate the continuity and transformation of literary expression across time.

We shall commence this Series by examining **Pre-Islamic (Jāhiliyyah) literature**, focusing on poetry and prose that reflected tribal life and desert culture. Next, we will explore **Classical Islamic literature**, considering the influence of the Qur'an, the flourishing of Abbasid poetry and prose, and the rise of literary criticism. Moving on, we will study **Medieval and Renaissance (Nahda) literature**, highlighting the adaptations of the Middle Ages and the revival of the 19th century. Finally, we will conclude with **Modern and Contemporary Arabic literature**, where colonial and post-colonial influences, as well as new genres such as novels and plays, reveal the dynamic character of Arabic literary creativity today.

Series Learning Outcomes

Upon completing this Series, you should be able to:

- **SLO 3.1** define the major features of Pre-Islamic (Jāhiliyyah) literature, including its poetry and prose traditions,
- **SLO 3.2** analyse the influence of the Qur'an on Classical Islamic literature and evaluate the contributions of Abbasid poetry and prose,
- **SLO 3.3** explain the role of literary criticism and scholarship in shaping Classical Arabic literature,
- **SLO 3.4** describe the characteristics of Medieval Arabic literature and assess the impact of the Nahda movement on literary revival, and



- **SLO 3.5** examine the effects of colonial and post-colonial contexts on Modern Arabic literature and identify key contemporary genres such as novels, plays, and media literature.

3.1 Pre-Islamic (Jāhiliyyah) Literature

3.1.1 Poetry in tribal society

The **Jāhiliyyah period** refers to the era before the advent of Islam, roughly the 6th century CE. During this time, **poetry** was the dominant form of literary expression. Poetry served as a record of tribal history, a medium of entertainment, and a tool for preserving values such as bravery, generosity, and loyalty. The most famous poetic form was the **qaṣīda**, a long ode with a tripartite structure: the opening (nasīb) often evoked love or nostalgia, the middle (raḥīl) described journeys or animals, and the conclusion (madīḥ or hijā') praised or satirised tribes and leaders.

An example of Jāhiliyyah poetry is found in the **Mu'allaqāt**, a celebrated anthology of seven long odes hung in the Ka'bah. One famous line by Imru' al-Qays reads:

قِفَا نَبْكَ مِنْ ذِكْرِ حَبِيبٍ وَمَنْزِلٍ

("Stop, let us weep for the memory of a beloved and her dwelling place.")

This line illustrates the nostalgic tone of the nasīb.

Fill in the blank: The most famous anthology of pre-Islamic poetry is called the _____.



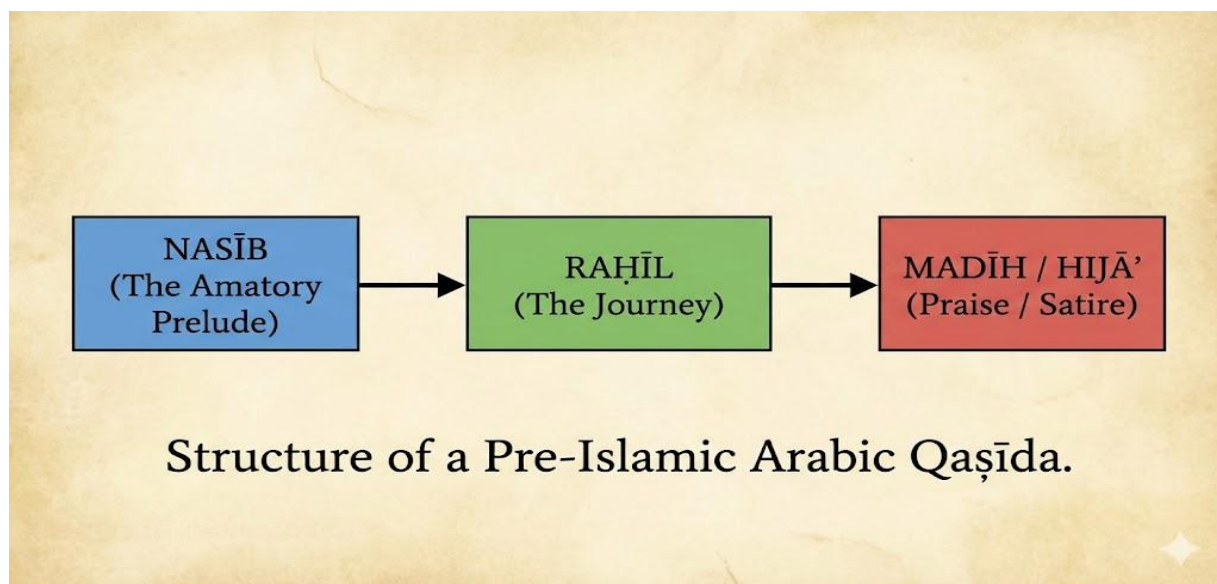


Figure 3.1 Structure of the pre-Islamic qaṣīda.

3.1.2 Prose traditions

Although poetry dominated, **prose** also existed in the form of speeches, proverbs, and storytelling. Tribal leaders and orators used eloquent prose to inspire their people or settle disputes. Proverbs (amthāl) conveyed wisdom in concise form, while stories preserved collective memory.

For example, a well-known proverb states:

الصبر مفتاح الفرج

(“Patience is the key to relief.”)

This reflects the moral and practical guidance embedded in Jāhiliyyah prose.

Fill in the blank: Short, wise sayings in pre-Islamic prose are known as _____.





Plate 3.1 Oral transmission of wisdom in Jāhiliyyah society.

3.1.3 Themes of tribal honour and heroism

The central themes of Jāhiliyyah literature were **tribal honour** and **heroism**. Poetry often celebrated warriors who defended their tribe, or satirised enemies to assert superiority. Honour was tied to courage in battle, generosity in hospitality, and loyalty to kin.

Antara ibn Shaddād, a famous warrior-poet, expressed this in his verse:

ولقد ذكرتُك والرماحُ نواهلُ

(“I remembered you while the spears were drinking my blood.”)

This line shows how love and bravery were intertwined, even in the midst of battle.

Fill in the blank: In Jāhiliyyah poetry, the values most often celebrated were _____ and _____.

Theme	Description



Bravery	Celebrating valor in battle, courage in defending tribe, and heroic endurance.
Generosity	Praising hospitality, gift-giving, and selflessness as tribal virtues.
Loyalty	Emphasizing devotion to tribe, kinship bonds, and alliances.
Satire (Hijā')	Using sharp wit to mock rivals, expose flaws, and defend tribal honor.
Love (Nasīb)	Romantic preludes in qasidas, expressing longing and passion for beloved.
Tribal Pride (Fakhr)	Boasting of lineage, achievements, and superiority over rival tribes.
Desert Imagery	Evoking landscapes, harsh climate, and nomadic life as poetic backdrop.
Elegy (Rithā')	Mourning fallen warriors or loved ones, blending grief with honor.

Box 3.1 Selected themes of Jāhiliyyah literature.

Pilot questions 3.1

1. Which poetic form was most common in Jāhiliyyah literature?
2. What are the three sections of a qaṣīda?
3. Name one famous anthology of pre-Islamic poetry.
4. What is the Arabic term for proverbs in Jāhiliyyah prose?
5. Which values were most celebrated in Jāhiliyyah poetry?

3.2 Classical Islamic Literature

3.2.1 Qur'anic influence on language and style



With the advent of Islam in the 7th century CE, the **Qur'an** became the most influential text in Arabic literature. The Qur'an is regarded not only as a religious scripture but also as a masterpiece of linguistic and rhetorical excellence. Its style introduced new standards of eloquence, rhythm, and imagery, which shaped subsequent literary works. The Qur'an's use of **tajwīd** (recitation rules) and **balāgha** (rhetoric) elevated Arabic prose and poetry, inspiring writers to adopt refined structures and expressive devices.

For example, the verse:

إِنَّ مَعَ الْعُسْرِ يُسْرًا

("Indeed, with hardship comes ease." Qur'an 94:6)

This concise yet profound statement demonstrates the Qur'an's ability to combine brevity with deep meaning.

Fill in the blank: The Qur'an influenced Arabic literature by setting new standards of _____ and _____.

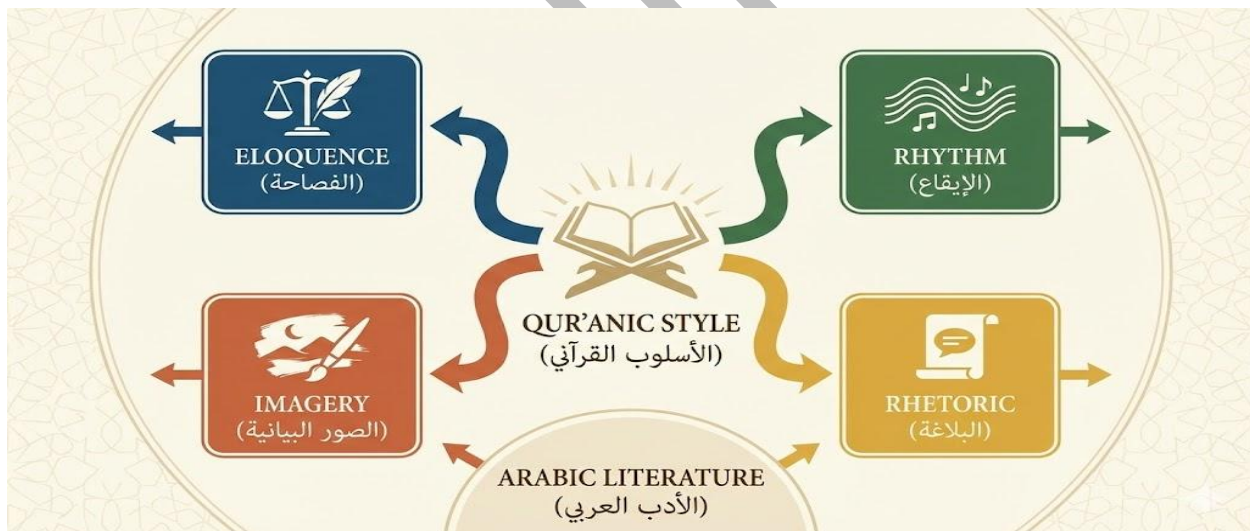


Figure 3.2 Influence of Qur'anic language on Arabic literary forms.

3.2.2 Abbasid era poetry and prose

The **Abbasid era** (750–1258 CE) marked a golden age of Arabic literature. Poetry became more sophisticated, exploring themes beyond tribal honour, such as philosophy, love, and satire. Prose



flourished in the form of scientific treatises, historical chronicles, and literary works. Writers like **Al-Jāhiz** produced influential texts blending humour, observation, and scholarship.

A famous Abbasid poet, Abū Nuwās, wrote:

دع عنك لومي فإن اللوم إغراء

(“Leave aside your blame, for blame is a temptation.”)

This line reflects the playful and innovative spirit of Abbasid poetry.

Fill in the blank: The Abbasid era is often described as the _____ age of Arabic literature.



Plate 3.2 Literary flourishing in the Abbasid era.

3.2.3 Literary criticism and scholarship

During the Classical Islamic period, **literary criticism** emerged as a discipline. Scholars analysed poetry and prose, developing theories of style, rhetoric, and aesthetics. Works such as **Kitāb al-Bayān wa al-Tabyīn** by Al-Jāhiz and **Al-Mu‘jam al-Kabīr** by Ibn Qutaybah provided frameworks for evaluating literature. This scholarly tradition ensured that Arabic literature was not only produced but also studied systematically.

Fill in the blank: The discipline that developed to evaluate and analyse Arabic literature during the Classical period is called _____.



Scholar	Contribution
Al-Jāhiz (776–868 CE)	- Author of <i>Kitāb al-Bayān wa al-Tabyīn</i>, a foundational work on rhetoric and eloquence. - Wrote <i>Kitāb al-Ḥayawān</i> (Book of Animals), blending literary criticism, anecdotes, and natural science. - Advocated clarity, balance, and accessibility in prose. - Emphasized the social role of literature and the importance of style.
Ibn Qutaybah (828–889 CE)	- Author of <i>Kitāb al-Shi'r wa al-Shu'arā'</i> (Book of Poetry and Poets), one of the earliest systematic works of Arabic literary criticism. - Defended poetry as a cultural archive of Arab values and history. - Advocated for fairness in evaluating poets, rejecting excessive bias toward tribal or regional affiliations. - His works helped establish criteria for judging literary quality.

Box 3.2 Selected contributions of Classical literary scholars.

Pilot questions 3.2

1. What aspects of language and style did the Qur'an introduce to Arabic literature?
2. Which era is considered the golden age of Arabic literature?
3. Name one Abbasid poet and one Abbasid prose writer.
4. What is the Arabic term for rhetoric that became central in literary analysis?
5. Which scholar wrote *Kitāb al-Bayān wa al-Tabyīn*?

3.3 Medieval and Renaissance (Nahda) Literature

3.3.1 Literature in the Middle Ages

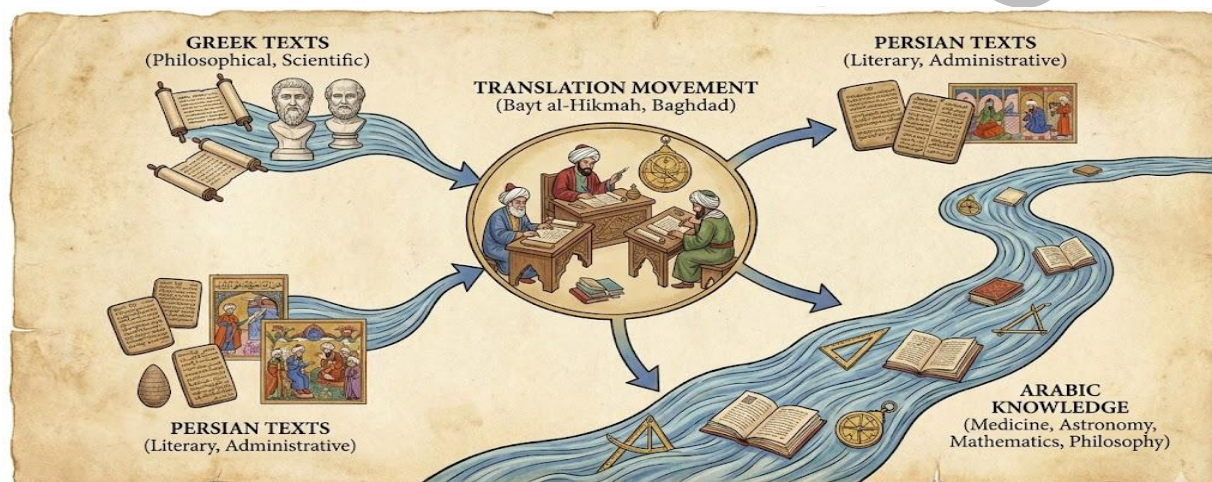
During the **Middle Ages**, Arabic literature continued to thrive under various dynasties such as the Umayyads in Spain and the Fatimids in Egypt. Poetry and prose adapted to new cultural



contexts, blending local traditions with classical forms. Writers produced historical chronicles, religious commentaries, and philosophical works. The period also saw the translation of Greek and Persian texts into Arabic, which enriched literary and intellectual life.

One notable example is the work of **Ibn Hazm of Córdoba**, whose book *Ṭawq al-Ḥamāmah* (The Ring of the Dove) explored themes of love with remarkable psychological insight. His prose combined elegance with deep reflection, showing how Arabic literature could address universal human experiences.

Fill in the blank: The Middle Ages saw Arabic literature enriched by translations of _____ and _____ texts.



The flow of knowledge: Greek and Persian sources translated into Arabic during the Abbasid Caliphate.

Figure 3.3 Transmission of knowledge into Medieval Arabic literature.

3.3.2 Nahda movement

The **Nahda**, or Renaissance, refers to the revival of Arabic literature in the 19th century. This movement was influenced by modernisation, European contact, and the rise of printing. Writers sought to renew Arabic literary forms while addressing contemporary issues such as identity, reform, and nationalism.

Prominent figures include **Rifā‘a al-Ṭahṭāwī**, who promoted education and translation, and **Jibrān Khalīl Jibrān**, whose works blended Arabic tradition with Western literary styles. The Nahda marked a turning point, as literature became a vehicle for social and political change.



An example from Jibrān's poetry reads:

إذا كان قلبك بركاناً، فكيف تتوقع أن تزهر فيه الورود؟

("If your heart is a volcano, how shall you expect flowers to bloom in it?")

This metaphor illustrates the Nahda's creative blending of imagery and moral reflection.

Fill in the blank: The Nahda movement was influenced by _____ and the rise of _____.

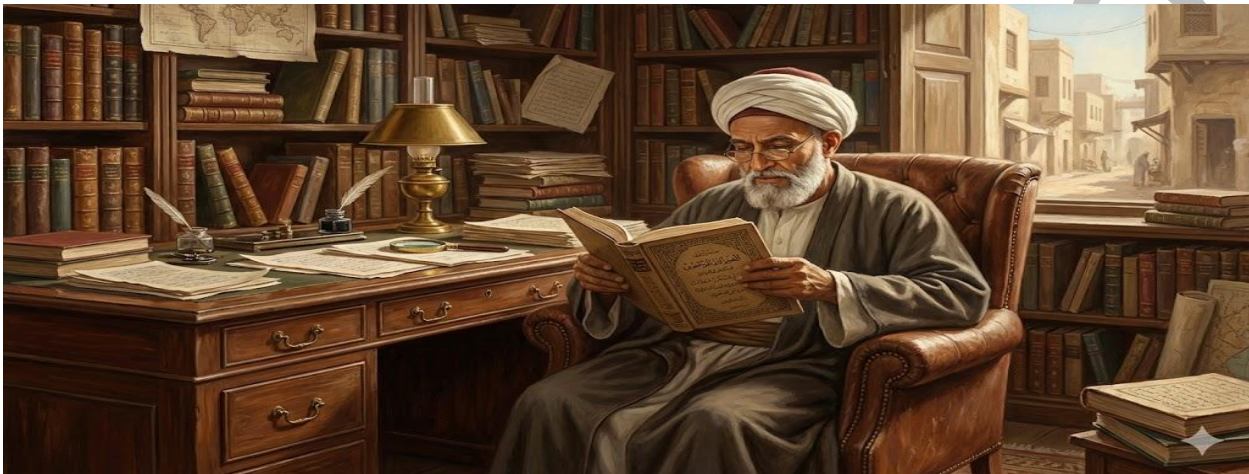


Plate 3.3 The role of printing in the Nahda movement.

Pilot questions 3.3

1. Which dynasties influenced Arabic literature during the Middle Ages?
2. Name one Medieval Arabic writer and a notable work.
3. What two traditions enriched Arabic literature through translation in the Middle Ages?
4. Who were two prominent figures of the Nahda movement?
5. What technological development supported the spread of Nahda literature?

3.4 Modern and Contemporary Arabic Literature

3.4.1 Colonial and post-colonial influences

The modern era of Arabic literature was shaped significantly by **colonial encounters** and the subsequent **post-colonial struggles**. Writers used literature to express resistance, identity, and



reform. During colonial rule, many authors highlighted themes of oppression and cultural conflict. After independence, literature became a platform for exploring nationalism, modernity, and social justice.

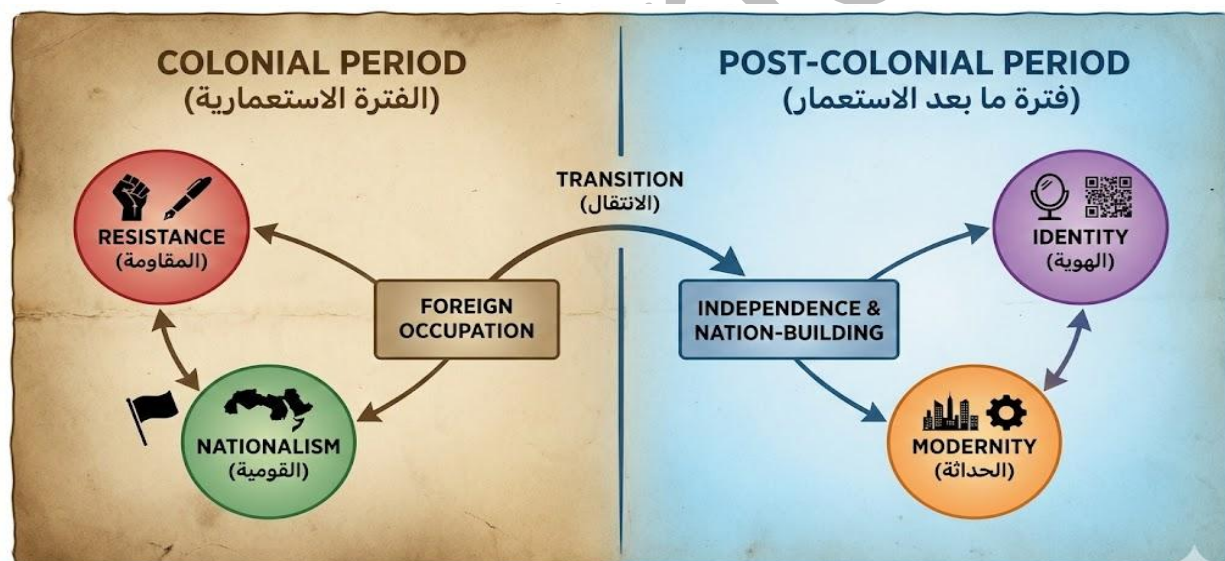
For example, Egyptian novelist **Tawfīq al-Ḥakīm** wrote plays that reflected the tension between tradition and modernity. Similarly, Palestinian poet **Maḥmūd Darwīsh** expressed the pain of displacement and the longing for homeland, as seen in his line:

سجّل أنا عربي

(“Write down, I am an Arab.”)

This declaration illustrates how literature became a voice of identity and resistance.

Fill in the blank: In the modern era, Arabic literature often reflected themes of _____ and _____.



Key themes highlighting the shift from struggle for liberation to navigating self-definition and progress in Arabic literature.

Figure 3.4 Colonial and post-colonial influences on Arabic literature.

3.4.2 Contemporary genres

In the contemporary period, Arabic literature has expanded into diverse **genres** such as novels, plays, and media literature. The novel became a dominant form, allowing writers to explore



complex social realities. Plays addressed political and cultural issues, while media literature, including newspapers and digital platforms, brought literary expression into everyday life.

One notable novelist, **Naguib Mahfouz**, won the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1988 for his Cairo Trilogy, which vividly portrayed Egyptian society across generations. Contemporary literature often blends traditional themes with modern concerns, reflecting the dynamic nature of Arab societies today.

Fill in the blank: The first Arab writer to win the Nobel Prize in Literature was _____.

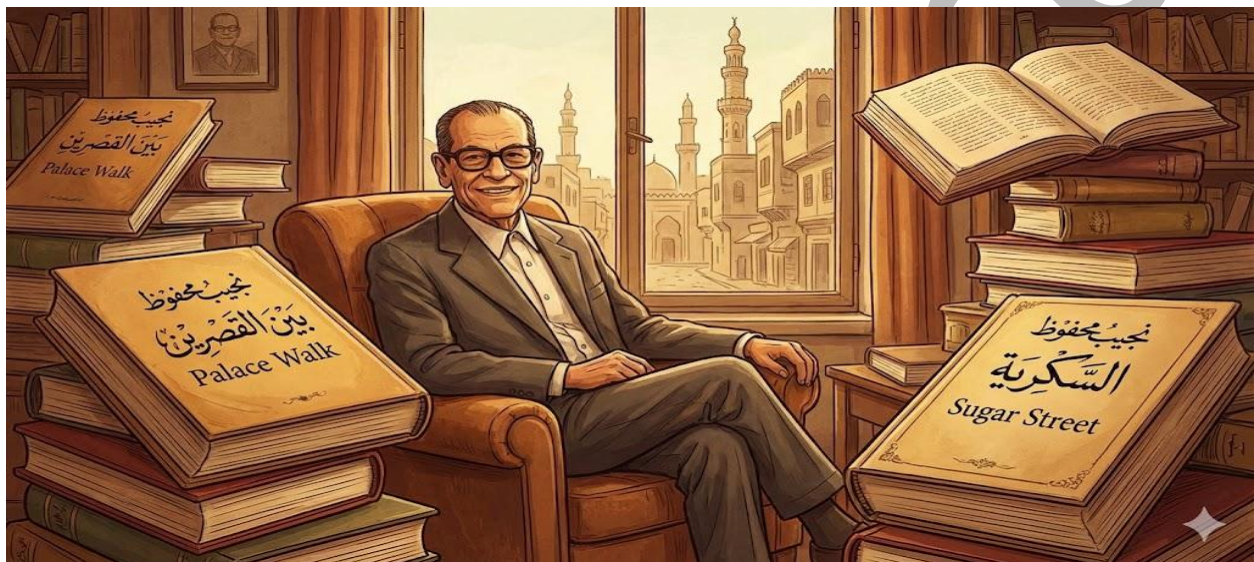


Plate 3.4 Naguib Mahfouz, Nobel Laureate in Arabic literature.

Pilot questions 3.4

1. Which themes dominated Arabic literature during colonial and post-colonial periods?
2. Name one Egyptian writer and one Palestinian poet who reflected modern struggles.
3. What literary form became dominant in contemporary Arabic literature?
4. Who won the Nobel Prize in Literature for Arabic writing in 1988?
5. How has media literature contributed to contemporary Arabic expression?



Series summary

This Series has guided you through the major historical divisions of Arabic literature, showing how each period reflects the social, cultural, and intellectual life of its time. We began with the **Jāhiliyyah era**, where poetry and prose expressed tribal honour and heroism. We then examined **Classical Islamic literature**, shaped by the Qur'an, enriched by Abbasid creativity, and supported by the rise of literary criticism. Moving forward, we explored the **Medieval period**, which absorbed influences from translations and produced works of love, philosophy, and history, before considering the **Nahda movement**, a revival that blended tradition with modernisation. Finally, we studied **Modern and Contemporary literature**, where colonial and post-colonial struggles, alongside new genres such as novels and plays, gave Arabic literature a dynamic and global voice.

By completing this Series, you should now be able to define the features of Pre-Islamic literature, analyse the Qur'anic and Abbasid contributions to Classical literature, explain the role of literary criticism, describe the characteristics of Medieval and Nahda works, and examine the impact of colonial and post-colonial contexts on Modern Arabic literature. These abilities directly align with the Series Learning Outcomes, ensuring that you can confidently trace the evolution of Arabic literature across its historical periods and appreciate its enduring significance.

Glossary of terms

- **Abbasid era:** A period from 750–1258 CE often described as the golden age of Arabic literature, marked by flourishing poetry, prose, and scholarship.
- **Amthāl:** Arabic term for proverbs, short wise sayings used to convey moral lessons or practical advice.
- **Balāgha:** The study of rhetoric in Arabic, focusing on eloquence, style, and effective communication.



- **Jāhiliyyah:** The pre-Islamic era, characterised by tribal poetry and prose that celebrated honour, bravery, and loyalty.
- **Kitāb al-Bayān wa al-Tabyīn:** A classical work by Al-Jāhiz that analysed Arabic prose and rhetoric, contributing to literary criticism.
- **Mu‘allaqāt:** A famous anthology of seven long pre-Islamic odes, traditionally said to have been hung in the Ka‘bah.
- **Nahda:** The Arabic literary renaissance of the 19th century, influenced by modernisation, European contact, and the rise of printing.
- **Nasīb:** The nostalgic or romantic opening section of a qaṣīda, often evoking love or longing.
- **Qaṣīda:** A long Arabic ode with a tripartite structure, central to pre-Islamic poetry.
- **Qur’an:** The holy book of Islam, revered for its linguistic and rhetorical excellence, which profoundly influenced Arabic literature.
- **Raḥīl:** The middle section of a qaṣīda, usually describing journeys, landscapes, or animals.
- **Tajwīd:** The rules of Qur’anic recitation, ensuring correct pronunciation and rhythm.
- **Tribal honour:** A central theme in pre-Islamic literature, emphasising bravery, generosity, and loyalty to kin.

Concept check questions 3

Objective questions

1. Which anthology of pre-Islamic poetry is said to have been hung in the Ka‘bah? (Linked to SLO 3.1)
2. What are the three sections of a qaṣīda? (Linked to SLO 3.1)



3. Which era is described as the golden age of Arabic literature? (Linked to SLO 3.2)
4. Who wrote *Kitāb al-Bayān wa al-Tabyīn*? (Linked to SLO 3.3)
5. Which Arab writer won the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1988? (Linked to SLO 3.5)

Short-answer questions

6. Define the term **amthāl** and give one example. (Linked to SLO 3.1)
7. Explain how the Qur'an influenced Arabic literary style. (Linked to SLO 3.2)
8. Describe the role of translations in enriching Medieval Arabic literature. (Linked to SLO 3.4)
9. Identify two figures of the Nahda movement and state their contributions. (Linked to SLO 3.4)
10. Outline two themes commonly found in colonial and post-colonial Arabic literature. (Linked to SLO 3.5)

Long-answer questions

11. Analyse the themes of tribal honour and heroism in Jāhiliyyah poetry, using examples from the Mu'allaqāt. (Linked to SLO 3.1)
12. Evaluate the contributions of Abbasid poets and prose writers to the development of Arabic literature. (Linked to SLO 3.2)
13. Discuss the significance of the Nahda movement in shaping modern Arabic literature, with reference to specific writers. (Linked to SLO 3.4)
14. Examine how contemporary Arabic literature reflects social and political realities, citing examples from novels, plays, or poetry. (Linked to SLO 3.5)

Answers to concept check questions [Series 3]

Objective questions



1. The Mu‘allaqāt.
2. Nasīb, raḥīl, and madīḥ/hijā’.
3. The Abbasid era.
4. Al-Jāḥiẓ.
5. Naguib Mahfouz.

Short-answer questions

6. *Amthāl* are Arabic proverbs, short wise sayings. Example: “Patience is the key to relief.”
7. The Qur’an introduced new standards of eloquence, rhythm, and imagery, shaping prose and poetry.
8. Translations of Greek and Persian texts enriched Arabic literature with philosophy, science, and cultural ideas.
9. Rifā‘a al-Ṭaḥṭāwī promoted education and translation; Jibrān Khalīl Jibrān blended Arabic tradition with Western styles.
10. Themes included resistance to oppression and the search for identity.

Long-answer questions

11. **Basic response:** Jāhiliyyah poetry celebrated tribal honour and heroism, often praising bravery and loyalty. The Mu‘allaqāt contain examples of warriors defending their tribes.
Value-added response: Beyond tribal values, these poems also reveal personal emotions, nostalgia, and satire, showing a complex interplay between individual and collective identity.
12. **Basic response:** Abbasid poets like Abū Nuwās introduced playful and philosophical themes, while prose writers like Al-Jāḥiẓ contributed scholarly works.
Value-added response: The Abbasid era expanded literary horizons by integrating humour, observation, and scientific inquiry, making literature a reflection of intellectual life.



13. **Basic response:** The Nahda movement revived Arabic literature by blending tradition with modernisation, influenced by printing and European contact.

Value-added response: Writers such as Rifā‘a al-Taḥṭāwī and Jibrān Khalīl Jibrān used literature to promote reform, nationalism, and cultural renewal, laying the foundation for modern Arabic identity.

14. **Basic response:** Contemporary Arabic literature reflects social and political realities through novels, plays, and poetry. Naguib Mahfouz portrayed Egyptian society, while Maḥmūd Darwīsh expressed displacement.

Value-added response: Literature today also engages with globalisation, gender issues, and digital media, showing how Arabic creativity adapts to modern challenges while retaining cultural depth.

Answers to pilot questions [Series 3]

Answers to pilot questions 3.1

1. The most common poetic form in Jāhiliyyah literature was the **qaṣīda**.
2. The three sections of a qaṣīda are **nasīb**, **raḥīl**, and **madīḥ/hijā’**.
3. The most famous anthology of pre-Islamic poetry is the **Mu‘allaqāt**.
4. The Arabic term for proverbs in Jāhiliyyah prose is **amthāl**.
5. The values most celebrated in Jāhiliyyah poetry were **tribal honour** and **heroism**.

Answers to pilot questions 3.2

1. The Qur’an introduced new standards of **eloquence**, **rhythm**, and **imagery** into Arabic literature.
2. The **Abbasid era** is considered the golden age of Arabic literature.
3. One Abbasid poet was **Abū Nuwās**, and one prose writer was **Al-Jāḥiẓ**.



4. The Arabic term for rhetoric that became central in literary analysis is **balāgha**.
5. The scholar who wrote *Kitāb al-Bayān wa al-Tabyīn* was **Al-Jāhiz**.

Answers to pilot questions 3.3

1. Arabic literature in the Middle Ages was influenced by dynasties such as the **Umayyads in Spain** and the **Fatimids in Egypt**.
2. A notable Medieval Arabic writer was **Ibn Hazm**, who wrote *Ṭawq al-Hamāmah* (The Ring of the Dove).
3. The Middle Ages saw Arabic literature enriched by translations of **Greek and Persian** texts.
4. Two prominent figures of the Nahda movement were **Rifā'a al-Taḥṭāwī** and **Jibrān Khalīl Jibrān**.
5. The technological development that supported the spread of Nahda literature was **printing**.

Answers to pilot questions 3.4

1. The dominant themes in Arabic literature during colonial and post-colonial periods were **resistance, identity, nationalism, and modernity**.
2. One Egyptian writer who reflected modern struggles was **Tawfiq al-Ḥakīm**, and one Palestinian poet was **Maḥmūd Darwīsh**.
3. The literary form that became dominant in contemporary Arabic literature was the **novel**.
4. The Arab writer who won the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1988 was **Naguib Mahfouz**.
5. Media literature contributed to contemporary Arabic expression by making literature accessible through **newspapers, magazines, and digital platforms**.

References and Attributions [Series 3]

General references



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- OER Commons. (n.d.). Resources on Arabic literature and cultural history. Retrieved from <https://www.oercommons.org>

Illustrations

- *Figure 3.1 Structure of the pre-Islamic qaṣīda*
 - AI-generated suggestion: “Generate a simple diagram showing the three sections of a pre-Islamic Arabic qaṣīda: naṣīb, raḥīl, and madīḥ/hijā’.”
 - Search string: “diagram structure of qaṣīda pre-Islamic poetry OER”
- *Plate 3.1 Oral transmission of wisdom in Jāhiliyyah society*
 - AI-generated suggestion: “Create an illustration of an Arab tribal elder reciting proverbs to a group of listeners in a desert setting.”
 - Search string: “Arab tribal oral tradition illustration OER”
- *Box 3.1 Selected themes of Jāhiliyyah literature*
 - AI-generated suggestion: “Create a simple text box listing the key themes of Jāhiliyyah literature: bravery, generosity, loyalty, satire.”
 - Search string: “themes of pre-Islamic Arabic poetry OER”
- *Figure 3.2 Influence of Qur’anic language on Arabic literary forms*
 - AI-generated suggestion: “Create a diagram showing how Qur’anic style influenced Arabic literature: eloquence, rhythm, imagery, rhetoric.”
 - Search string: “Qur’an influence on Arabic literature diagram OER”



- *Plate 3.2 Literary flourishing in the Abbasid era*
 - AI-generated suggestion: “Create an illustration of Abbasid scholars and poets reciting in a royal court.”
 - Search string: “Abbasid poetry and prose illustration OER”
- *Box 3.2 Selected contributions of Classical literary scholars*
 - AI-generated suggestion: “Create a text box listing Classical Arabic literary scholars and their contributions: Al-Jāhīz, Ibn Qutaybah.”
 - Search string: “Classical Arabic literary criticism scholars OER”
- *Figure 3.3 Transmission of knowledge into Medieval Arabic literature*
 - AI-generated suggestion: “Create a diagram showing how Greek and Persian texts were translated into Arabic during the Middle Ages.”
 - Search string: “Arabic literature Middle Ages translation diagram OER”
- *Plate 3.3 The role of printing in the Nahda movement*
 - AI-generated suggestion: “Create an illustration of a 19th-century Arab intellectual reading a printed book in a study setting.”
 - Search string: “Nahda Arabic literature printing illustration OER”
- *Figure 3.4 Colonial and post-colonial influences on Arabic literature*
 - AI-generated suggestion: “Create a diagram showing colonial and post-colonial themes in Arabic literature: resistance, identity, nationalism, modernity.”
 - Search string: “colonial post-colonial Arabic literature diagram OER”
- *Plate 3.4 Naguib Mahfouz, Nobel Laureate in Arabic literature*
 - AI-generated suggestion: “Create an illustration of Naguib Mahfouz surrounded by his Cairo Trilogy books.”
 - Search string: “Naguib Mahfouz Nobel Prize Arabic literature OER”



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Series 4: Characteristics of Arabic Literary Figures in Different Eras

4.1 Pre-Islamic Literary Figures

- 4.1.1 Warrior-poets and tribal spokesmen
- 4.1.2 Themes of honour, love, and satire

4.2 Classical and Medieval Literary Figures

- 4.2.1 Qur'anic scholars and Abbasid poets
- 4.2.2 Prose writers and critics of the Middle Ages

4.3 Modern and Contemporary Literary Figures

- 4.3.1 Nahda intellectuals and reformers
- 4.3.2 Novelists, playwrights, and poets of the modern era

Introduction

Arabic literature is not only defined by its periods but also by the remarkable individuals who shaped its course. Each era produced distinctive figures whose works reflected the values, struggles, and aspirations of their time. By examining these literary personalities, you will gain a deeper appreciation of how literature embodies human experience and how writers and poets became voices of their societies.

The aim of this Series is to highlight the defining characteristics of Arabic literary figures across different historical eras, enabling you to recognise their contributions and evaluate their influence on the development of Arabic literature.

We shall commence this Series by exploring **Pre-Islamic literary figures**, focusing on warrior-poets and tribal spokesmen who celebrated honour, love, and satire. Next, we will examine **Classical and Medieval figures**, including Qur'anic scholars, Abbasid poets, and prose writers who advanced literary criticism. Finally, we will conclude with **Modern and Contemporary**



figures, where Nahda intellectuals, reformers, novelists, playwrights, and poets shaped literature into a tool for cultural renewal and social commentary.

Series Learning Outcomes

Upon completing this Series, you should be able to:

- **SLO 4.1** define the distinctive characteristics of Pre-Islamic literary figures, particularly warrior-poets and tribal spokesmen.
- **SLO 4.2** analyse the themes of honour, love, and satire in the works of Pre-Islamic poets.
- **SLO 4.3** explain the contributions of Qur’anic scholars and Abbasid poets to the development of Classical Arabic literature.
- **SLO 4.4** describe the role of Medieval prose writers and critics in shaping Arabic literary scholarship.
- **SLO 4.5** evaluate the influence of Nahda intellectuals and reformers on the revival of Arabic literature in the 19th century.
- **SLO 4.6** examine the defining features of modern Arabic novelists, playwrights, and poets, and assess their impact on contemporary literary expression.

4.1 Pre-Islamic Literary Figures

4.1.1 Warrior-poets and tribal spokesmen

In the **Pre-Islamic era (Jāhiliyyah)**, literary figures were often **warrior-poets**, who combined martial prowess with eloquent verse. These poets acted as spokesmen for their tribes, preserving collective memory and defending honour through words. Their poetry was not merely artistic but also political, serving as a weapon in tribal rivalry. The poet’s role was so central that his verses could elevate the reputation of his tribe or humiliate its enemies.



A famous example is **Antara ibn Shaddād**, whose poetry celebrated both his bravery and his love for ‘Abla. His verses often intertwined personal emotion with tribal duty, making him a symbol of the warrior-poet tradition.

Fill in the blank: In the Jāhiliyyah period, poets were considered the _____ of their tribes.



Plate 4.1 The role of warrior-poets in tribal society.

4.1.2 Themes of honour, love, and satire

Pre-Islamic literary figures expressed recurring themes that reflected the values of their society. **Honour** was central, with poets praising courage in battle and generosity in hospitality. **Love** appeared in the *naṣīb* section of the *qaṣīda*, where poets nostalgically recalled beloved figures or lost dwellings. **Satire** (*hijā'*) was another powerful tool, used to mock rival tribes and assert superiority.

For instance, Imru' al-Qays, one of the most celebrated poets, opened his *Mu'allaqa* with:

قفا نَبْكُ مِنْ ذِكْرِى حَبِيبٍ وَمَنْزَلِ

("Stop, let us weep for the memory of a beloved and her dwelling place.")

This line illustrates the emotional depth of the *naṣīb*, contrasting with the later sections that emphasised tribal pride and conflict.

Fill in the blank: The satirical section of a *qaṣīda*, often used to mock rivals, is called _____.



Theme	Description
Honour	Central to tribal identity; poets praised courage, lineage, and defense of tribal reputation.
Love (Nasīb)	Romantic preludes in qasidas, expressing longing for beloveds and nostalgia for past encounters.
Satire (Hijā')	Sharp, witty verses used to mock rivals, expose weaknesses, and defend tribal pride.

Box 4.1 Key themes in Pre-Islamic poetry.

Pilot questions 4.1

1. What role did poets play in tribal society during the Jāhiliyyah period?
2. Name one famous warrior-poet and describe his contribution.
3. Which themes were most commonly expressed in Pre-Islamic poetry?
4. What is the Arabic term for satire in poetry?
5. How did the nasīb section of the qasīda typically begin?

4.2 Classical and Medieval Literary Figures

4.2.1 Qur'anic scholars and Abbasid poets

In the **Classical period**, literary figures were deeply influenced by the **Qur'an**, which set new standards of eloquence and style. Qur'anic scholars studied its language and rhetoric, shaping the way Arabic prose and poetry developed. Alongside them, **Abbasid poets** expanded the scope of poetry beyond tribal themes, exploring philosophy, love, and satire. Their works reflected the intellectual vibrancy of the Abbasid court, where literature was celebrated as both art and scholarship.



One notable poet was **Abū Nuwās**, famous for his playful verses on wine and love, which broke away from traditional tribal themes. His poetry illustrates how Abbasid figures redefined Arabic literature by embracing innovation.

Fill in the blank: The Qur'an influenced Arabic literature by introducing new standards of _____ and _____.



Plate 4.2 Abbasid poets and scholars in the Classical period.

4.2.2 Prose writers and critics of the Middle Ages

In the **Medieval period**, prose writers and critics became central figures in Arabic literature. Scholars such as **Al-Jāḥiẓ** produced works that combined humour, observation, and analysis, while critics like **Ibn Qutaybah** developed frameworks for evaluating poetry and prose. This era marked the rise of **literary criticism**, where literature was studied systematically rather than simply enjoyed.

For example, Al-Jāḥiẓ's *Kitāb al-Bayān wa al-Tabyīn* explored the art of eloquence, offering insights into how language could persuade and inspire. Such works ensured that Arabic literature was not only creative but also intellectually rigorous.

Fill in the blank: The discipline that emerged to evaluate and analyse Arabic literature during the Medieval period is called _____.



Scholar	Major Works	Contribution
Al-Jāhiz (776–868 CE)	<i>Kitāb al-Bayān wa al-Tabyīn</i> (Book of Eloquence and Exposition); <i>Kitāb al-Hayawān</i> (Book of Animals)	Developed theories of rhetoric and eloquence; blended literary criticism with social commentary and natural science; emphasized clarity and accessibility in prose.
Ibn Qutaybah (828–889 CE)	<i>Kitāb al-Shi‘r wa al-Shu‘arā’</i> (Book of Poetry and Poets); <i>‘Uyūn al-Akhbār</i> (Springs of Information)	Systematized Arabic literary criticism; defended poetry as a cultural archive; promoted fairness in evaluating poets; compiled encyclopedic prose works preserving Arab heritage.

Box 4.2 Key contributions of Medieval prose writers and critics.

Pilot questions 4.2

1. How did the Qur’an influence Arabic literature in the Classical period?
2. Name one Abbasid poet and describe his contribution.
3. Which Abbasid prose writer combined humour and scholarship in his works?
4. What is the Arabic term for rhetoric that became central in literary analysis?
5. Who wrote *Kitāb al-Bayān wa al-Tabyīn*?

4.3 Modern and Contemporary Literary Figures

In this part, we will examine two important strands of modern and contemporary literary development: the **Nahda intellectuals and reformers**, and the **novelists, playwrights, and poets of the modern era**. Together, they illustrate how literature became a vehicle for cultural renewal, social critique, and artistic experimentation.

4.3.1 Nahda intellectuals and reformers



The **Nahda** (meaning “renaissance” in Arabic) was a cultural and intellectual awakening in the Arab world during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. It was driven by reformers who sought to modernise society while preserving cultural identity.

- **Rifa’a al-Tahtawi:** An Egyptian scholar who emphasised the importance of education and translation. He believed that exposure to European knowledge could strengthen Arab culture rather than weaken it.
- **Butrus al-Bustani:** A Lebanese intellectual who promoted secular education and the creation of encyclopaedias to spread knowledge widely.
- **Jamal al-Din al-Afghani:** A political thinker who advocated for unity among Muslims and resistance to colonial domination.

These figures used literature, essays, and translations to challenge traditional structures and encourage reform. Their work laid the foundation for modern Arabic literature.

<i>Intellectual</i>	<i>Main Contributions</i>
<i>Rifā’a al-Tahtawi (1801–1873)</i>	<i>Introduced modern sciences and ideas to Egypt after studying in Paris; translated European works into Arabic; emphasized education reform and modernization.</i>
<i>Butrus al-Bustani (1819–1883)</i>	<i>Founded modern Arabic encyclopedias and dictionaries; promoted secular education; established schools and journals; advocated Arab cultural revival and unity.</i>
<i>Jamāl al-Dīn al-Afghānī (1838–1897)</i>	<i>Political activist and thinker; promoted Pan-Islamism and resistance to colonialism; emphasized the role of reason and reform in Islamic</i>

Box 4.3: Key Nahda intellectuals and reformers

Fill in the blank: The cultural and intellectual awakening in the Arab world during the nineteenth century is known as _____.



4.3.2 Novelists, playwrights, and poets of the modern era

Modern Arabic literature expanded beyond reformist essays into creative forms such as the novel, drama, and poetry. Writers experimented with style and addressed themes of identity, colonialism, and social change.

- **Naguib Mahfouz:** An Egyptian novelist and Nobel Prize winner, Mahfouz is celebrated for his Cairo Trilogy, which depicts the transformation of Egyptian society across generations.
- **Tawfiq al-Hakim:** A pioneering playwright who introduced modern drama to Arabic literature, blending classical themes with contemporary issues.
- **Adonis (Ali Ahmad Said Esber):** A Syrian poet known for his innovative use of language and exploration of modernist themes in Arabic poetry.

These authors brought Arabic literature into dialogue with global literary movements while remaining rooted in local realities.



Plate 4.3: Naguib Mahfouz, Nobel Laureate in Literature



Fill in the blank: The Egyptian novelist who won the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1988 is _____.

Pilot Questions 4.3

1. Who were the Nahda intellectuals, and what was their main goal during the cultural renaissance?
2. Name one Nahda reformer and describe his contribution to education or translation.
3. How did the works of Naguib Mahfouz reflect the transformation of Egyptian society?
4. Which playwright is credited with introducing modern drama to Arabic literature?
5. What innovative technique did Adonis bring into modern Arabic poetry?

Series Summary

This Series has explored the defining characteristics of Arabic literary figures across different eras, showing how literature reflected and shaped cultural identity, intellectual life, and social change. We began with the Pre-Islamic warrior-poets, whose verses defended tribal honour and expressed themes of love and satire. We then examined Classical and Medieval figures, including Qur'anic scholars, Abbasid poets, and prose critics, who elevated Arabic literature through eloquence, innovation, and systematic analysis. Finally, we studied the Nahda reformers and modern literary voices, highlighting their role in cultural renewal and creative experimentation.

By engaging with these parts, you have met the Series Learning Outcomes. You should now be able to identify key literary figures across eras, explain their contributions to Arabic culture, and analyse recurring themes such as honour, love, satire, reform, and modernist innovation. This equips you to appreciate Arabic literature not only as a historical record but also as a dynamic tradition that continues to influence contemporary thought and artistic expression.



Glossary of Terms

Abbasid poets: Writers of the Abbasid era who expanded Arabic poetry beyond tribal themes, exploring philosophy, love, and satire.

Adonis (Ali Ahmad Said Esber): A Syrian poet recognised for his innovative language and modernist themes in Arabic poetry.

Al-Jāhiz: A medieval prose writer and scholar whose works blended humour, observation, and literary criticism, emphasising eloquence and clarity.

Antara ibn Shaddād: A famous warrior-poet of the Jāhiliyyah period, celebrated for his bravery and love poetry.

Butrus al-Bustani: A Lebanese Nahda intellectual who promoted secular education and founded modern Arabic encyclopaedias.

Hijā' (satire): A poetic form used in Pre-Islamic and later Arabic literature to mock rivals and defend tribal pride.

Honour: A central theme in Pre-Islamic poetry, expressed through praise of courage, lineage, and hospitality.

Ibn Qutaybah: A medieval literary critic who systematised Arabic literary criticism and compiled encyclopaedic prose works.

Imru' al-Qays: A celebrated Pre-Islamic poet whose Mu'allaqah exemplifies the nasīb section of the qaṣīdah.

Jamāl al-Dīn al-Afghānī: A Nahda reformer and political thinker who promoted Pan-Islamism and resistance to colonialism.

Jāhiliyyah: The Pre-Islamic era in Arab history, marked by tribal society and warrior-poets.

Mu'allaqah: A set of famous Pre-Islamic odes, often hung in the Kaaba, showcasing the finest Arabic poetry of the time.

Nahda: The nineteenth and early twentieth-century Arab cultural renaissance, driven by reformers seeking modernisation.



Nasīb: The romantic prelude of a qaṣīda, expressing longing for beloveds and nostalgia for past encounters.

Naguib Mahfouz: An Egyptian novelist and Nobel Prize winner, renowned for his Cairo Trilogy depicting societal transformation.

Qaṣīda: A classical Arabic ode with a tripartite structure, often beginning with the nasīb.

Qur'anic scholars: Figures in the Classical period who studied the Qur'an's language and rhetoric, shaping Arabic prose and poetry.

Rifā'a al-Tahtawi: An Egyptian Nahda scholar who introduced modern sciences and translated European works into Arabic.

Satire: A recurring theme in Arabic poetry, expressed through witty verses mocking rivals.

Stream of consciousness: A narrative technique capturing the continuous flow of a character's thoughts and feelings, pioneered by modernist writers.

Tawfiq al-Hakim: An Egyptian playwright credited with introducing modern drama to Arabic literature.

Concept Check Questions [Series 4]

Objective Questions

1. In the Jāhiliyyah period, poets were considered the _____ of their tribes. (Linked to SLO 4.1)
2. The satirical section of a qaṣīda, often used to mock rivals, is called _____. (Linked to SLO 4.1)
3. The Qur'an influenced Arabic literature by introducing new standards of _____ and _____. (Linked to SLO 4.2)
4. The cultural and intellectual awakening in the Arab world during the nineteenth century is known as _____. (Linked to SLO 4.3)



5. The Egyptian novelist who won the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1988 is _____.
(Linked to SLO 4.3)

Short-Answer Questions

1. Name one famous warrior-poet and describe his contribution. (Linked to SLO 4.1)
2. Which Abbasid prose writer combined humour and scholarship in his works? (Linked to SLO 4.2)
3. Who wrote *Kitāb al-Bayān wa al-Tabyīn* and what was its focus? (Linked to SLO 4.2)
4. Name one Nahda reformer and explain his contribution to education or translation. (Linked to SLO 4.3)
5. Which playwright is credited with introducing modern drama to Arabic literature? (Linked to SLO 4.3)

Long-Answer Questions

1. Analyse the role of poets in tribal society during the Jāhiliyyah period, focusing on how their verses functioned as both artistic and political tools. (Linked to SLO 4.1)
2. Evaluate the impact of Qur'anic scholars and Abbasid poets on the development of Arabic literature in the Classical period. (Linked to SLO 4.2)
3. Discuss the contributions of Al-Jāhīz and Ibn Qutaybah to medieval Arabic prose and literary criticism. (Linked to SLO 4.2)
4. Explain how the Nahda intellectuals laid the foundation for modern Arabic literature, and connect their efforts to the later achievements of novelists and poets. (Linked to SLO 4.3)
5. Compare the themes and techniques of modern Arabic writers such as Naguib Mahfouz, Tawfiq al-Hakim, and Adonis, highlighting how they engaged with both local realities and global literary movements. (Linked to SLO 4.3)

Answers to Concept Check Questions [Series 4]



Objective Questions

1. Spokesmen
2. Hijā'
3. Eloquence and style
4. Nahda
5. Naguib Mahfouz

Short-Answer Questions

1. Antara ibn Shaddād; his poetry celebrated bravery and love, intertwining personal emotion with tribal duty.
2. Al-Jāhiz.
3. Al-Jāhiz; it focused on eloquence and the art of persuasion.
4. Rifā'a al-Tahtawi; he translated European works and promoted education reform.
5. Tawfiq al-Hakim.

Long-Answer Questions

1. **Basic response:** Poets in the Jāhiliyyah period acted as spokesmen for their tribes, preserving memory and defending honour. Their verses elevated tribal reputation or humiliated rivals.
Value-added response: Beyond tribal politics, warrior-poets like Antara ibn Shaddād blended personal emotion with duty, creating a literary tradition that combined artistry with social function.
2. **Basic response:** Qur'anic scholars set new standards of eloquence and style, while Abbasid poets expanded themes to include philosophy and love.
Value-added response: Their innovations transformed Arabic literature into a sophisticated art form, with figures like Abū Nuwās breaking away from tribal conventions and embedding literature in the intellectual vibrancy of the Abbasid court.



3. **Basic response:** Al-Jāhiz wrote works on eloquence and observation, while Ibn Qutaybah systematised literary criticism.

Value-added response: Together, they established frameworks for evaluating literature, blending humour, science, and fairness, ensuring Arabic literature was both creative and intellectually rigorous.

4. **Basic response:** Nahda intellectuals such as al-Tahtawi, al-Bustani, and al-Afghani promoted education, translation, and reform, laying foundations for modern Arabic literature.

Value-added response: Their efforts connected Arab culture with European knowledge, fostering secular education and political activism, which later enabled novelists and poets to engage with global literary movements while preserving local identity.

5. **Basic response:** Mahfouz depicted Egyptian society, al-Hakim introduced modern drama, and Adonis innovated Arabic poetry.

Value-added response: Collectively, they bridged tradition and modernity, addressing themes of identity, colonialism, and social change, while experimenting with narrative techniques that placed Arabic literature in dialogue with world literature.



Pilot Questions 4.1

1. They acted as spokesmen for their tribes, preserving memory and defending honour.
2. Antara ibn Shaddād; his poetry celebrated bravery and love, intertwining personal emotion with tribal duty.
3. Honour, love (nasīb), and satire (hijā').
4. Hijā'.
5. By nostalgically recalling beloved figures or lost dwellings.

Pilot Questions 4.2

1. By introducing new standards of eloquence and style.
2. Abū Nuwās; he wrote playful verses on wine and love, breaking away from tribal themes.
3. Al-Jāhiz.
4. Balāgha (rhetoric).
5. Al-Jāhiz.

Pilot Questions 4.3

1. They were reformers whose main goal was to modernise society while preserving cultural identity.
2. Rifā'a al-Tahtawi; he translated European works into Arabic and promoted education reform.
3. His Cairo Trilogy depicted the transformation of Egyptian society across generations.
4. Tawfiq al-Hakim.
5. Innovative use of language and modernist techniques in Arabic poetry.



References and Attributions [Series 4]

General References

- Allen, R. (2000). *An Introduction to Arabic Literature*. Cambridge University Press.
- Jayyusi, S. K. (1987). *The Legacy of Arabic Literature*. Routledge.
- Kilpatrick, H. (1991). *Classical Arabic Literature: A Library of Arabic Literature*. Columbia University Press.
- Montgomery, J. E. (2006). *The Vagaries of the Qaṣīda*. Brill.
- OER Commons. (n.d.). Resources on Arabic literature and cultural history. Retrieved from <https://www.oercommons.org>

Part 4.1 Pre-Islamic Literary Figures

- Plate 4.1: The role of warrior-poets in tribal society.
 - Attribution: Suggested OER search string “Pre-Islamic warrior poets tribal society illustration OER”.
 - AI-generated illustration prompt: “Create an image showing a Pre-Islamic Arab warrior-poet reciting verses to his tribe.”
- Box 4.1: Key themes in Pre-Islamic poetry.
 - Attribution: Based on Series instructional content.
 - Suggested OER search string “themes of Pre-Islamic Arabic poetry table OER”.

Part 4.2 Classical and Medieval Literary Figures

- Plate 4.2: Abbasid poets and scholars in the Classical period.
 - Attribution: Suggested OER search string “Abbasid poets scholars Arabic literature illustration OER”.



- AI-generated illustration prompt: “Create an image of Abbasid poets and scholars in a court setting, discussing literature.”
- Box 4.2: Key contributions of Medieval prose writers and critics.
 - Attribution: Based on Series instructional content.
 - Suggested OER search string “Al-Jahiz Ibn Qutaybah contributions Arabic literature table OER”.

Part 4.3 Modern and Contemporary Literary Figures

- Box 4.3: Key Nahda intellectuals and reformers.
 - Attribution: Based on Series instructional content.
 - Suggested OER search string “Nahda intellectuals reformers contributions Arabic literature table OER”.
 - AI-generated illustration prompt: “Create a table-style box listing Nahda intellectuals (al-Tahtawi, al-Bustani, al-Afghani) with their main contributions.”
- Plate 4.3: Naguib Mahfouz, Nobel Laureate in Literature.
 - Attribution: Suggested OER search string “Naguib Mahfouz Nobel Prize photo OER”.
 - AI-generated illustration prompt: “Generate an image of Naguib Mahfouz receiving the Nobel Prize in 1988, with a formal setting.”



Series 5: Schools of Thought in Arabic Literature

5.1 Classical Schools of Thought

- 5.1.1 Philological and grammatical schools
- 5.1.2 Rhetorical and stylistic schools
- 5.1.3 Theological influences on literary interpretation

5.2 Medieval Schools of Thought

- 5.2.1 Literary criticism and evaluative frameworks
- 5.2.2 Philosophical and mystical schools (e.g., Sufi literature)
- 5.2.3 Encyclopaedic and scholarly traditions

5.3 Modern Schools of Thought

- 5.3.1 Nahda reformist approaches to literature
- 5.3.2 Nationalist and identity-driven schools
- 5.3.3 Realist and social critique traditions

5.4 Contemporary Schools of Thought

- 5.4.1 Modernist and postmodernist approaches
- 5.4.2 Feminist and gender-focused schools
- 5.4.3 Diaspora and global perspectives in Arabic literature

Introduction

Throughout history, Arabic literature has been shaped not only by individual writers but also by broader schools of thought that influenced how texts were created, interpreted, and valued. These schools reflect the intellectual currents of their time, ranging from philological precision and



theological reflection to modernist experimentation and global perspectives. Understanding them provides learners with a framework for appreciating the diversity and evolution of Arabic literary traditions, and it connects directly to the wider course aim of tracing literary development across eras.

The aim of this Series is to introduce you to the major schools of thought in Arabic literature and to equip you with the ability to identify their defining features, evaluate their contributions, and relate them to broader cultural and historical contexts.

We shall commence this Series by examining the classical schools of thought, focusing on philological, grammatical, rhetorical, and theological influences. Next, we will move on to the medieval schools, where literary criticism, philosophical traditions, and encyclopaedic scholarship flourished. Following that, we will explore the modern schools of thought, beginning with the Nahda reformist approaches and continuing with nationalist and realist traditions. Finally, we will conclude with contemporary schools of thought, including modernist and postmodernist approaches, feminist perspectives, and global contributions from diaspora writers. This progression will enable you to see how Arabic literature has continually reinvented itself in response to changing intellectual and cultural contexts.

Series Learning Outcomes

Upon completing this Series, you should be able to:

- **SLO 5.1** define the main features of classical schools of thought in Arabic literature, including philological, grammatical, rhetorical, and theological influences.
- **SLO 5.2** explain how medieval schools of thought contributed to the development of literary criticism and evaluative frameworks.
- **SLO 5.3** describe the role of philosophical and mystical traditions, particularly Sufi literature, in shaping medieval Arabic literary thought.
- **SLO 5.4** analyse the encyclopaedic and scholarly traditions of the medieval period and their impact on Arabic literary heritage.



- **SLO 5.5** identify the approaches of modern schools of thought, focusing on Nahda reformist contributions to literature.
- **SLO 5.6** evaluate the influence of nationalist and identity-driven schools on modern Arabic literary production.
- **SLO 5.7** assess the realist and social critique traditions in modern Arabic literature and their reflection of societal change.
- **SLO 5.8** compare modernist and postmodernist approaches in contemporary Arabic literature, noting stylistic and thematic innovations.
- **SLO 5.9** discuss feminist and gender-focused schools of thought and their contributions to contemporary Arabic literary discourse.
- **SLO 5.10** appraise diaspora and global perspectives in Arabic literature, highlighting how they extend and diversify literary traditions.

5.1 Classical Schools of Thought

In this part, we will explore the classical schools of thought in Arabic literature. These schools emerged during the formative centuries of Arabic culture and scholarship, and they shaped the way language, style, and meaning were understood. By examining philological, grammatical, rhetorical, and theological approaches, you will gain insight into how early scholars established frameworks that influenced literary production for centuries.

5.1.1 Philological and grammatical schools

The **philological school** refers to scholars who studied the origins, meanings, and usage of words in Arabic. They were concerned with preserving the purity of the language and documenting its vocabulary. The **grammatical school** focused on establishing rules for syntax and morphology, ensuring that Arabic was codified and standardised. Together, these schools safeguarded the linguistic foundation upon which literature was built.



For example, scholars in Basra and Kufa debated grammatical rules, producing works that became reference points for later generations. Their efforts ensured that the Qur'an and poetry could be studied with precision.

Fill in the blank: The two main centres of grammatical study in the classical period were _____ and _____.

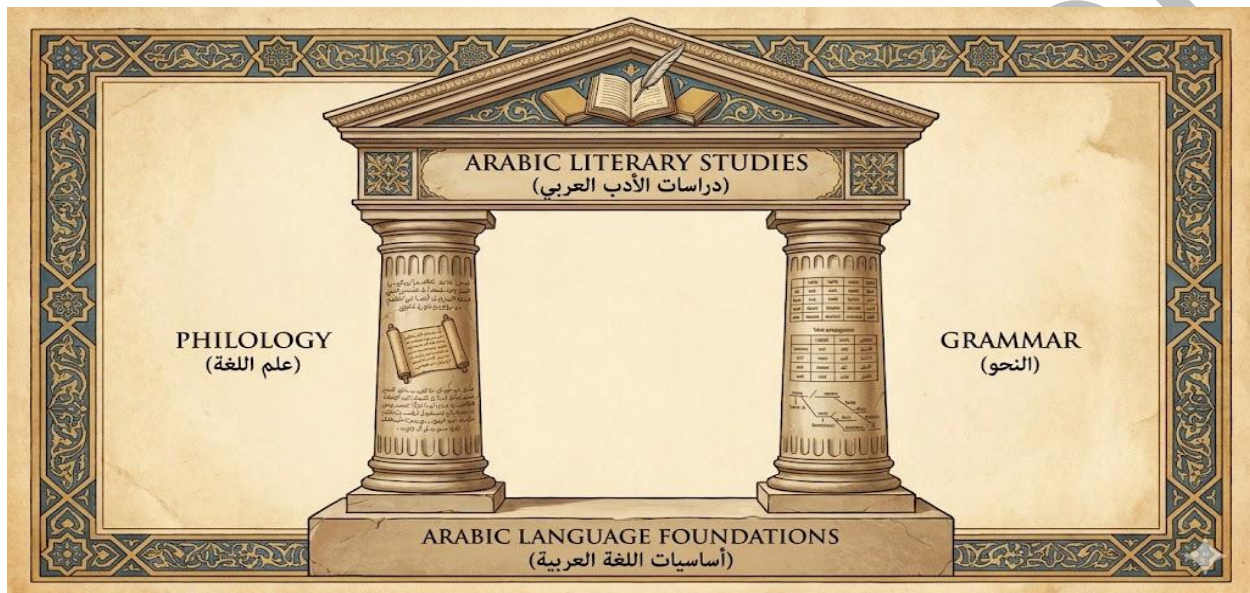


Figure 5.1: Philological and grammatical foundations of Arabic literature

5.1.2 Rhetorical and stylistic schools

The **rhetorical school** focused on **balāgha**, which is the study of eloquence and effective expression. Scholars examined how language could persuade, inspire, and move audiences. The **stylistic school** analysed literary devices such as metaphor, simile, and imagery, aiming to refine the art of writing and speaking.

An example is the work of al-Jurjānī, who explained how meaning in poetry arises not only from words but from their arrangement and stylistic choices. His theories helped readers appreciate the artistry of texts beyond their literal content.



Arabic text example:

”النظم هو توكي معاني النحو وإعمالها في معاني الكلم“ قال عبد القاهر الجرجاني

(“Composition is the deliberate application of syntactic meanings to the meanings of words.”)

Fill in the blank: The Arabic term for the study of eloquence and effective expression is _____.

Device	Definition
Metaphor (isti‘āra)	A figure of speech where one thing is described in terms of another, creating symbolic meaning beyond literal expression.
Simile (tashbīh)	A comparison using explicit markers (like <i>ka-</i> “as/like”), highlighting similarities between two different things.
Imagery (taṣwīr)	Vivid descriptive language that appeals to the senses, painting mental pictures for the audience.
Parallelism (muqābala / jam‘ wa tafriq)	Balanced or mirrored structures in prose or poetry, often used to emphasize contrast or harmony.

Box 5.1: Key rhetorical devices in classical Arabic literature

5.1.3 Theological influences on literary interpretation

The **theological school** examined literature through the lens of religious thought, particularly the Qur’an. Scholars debated issues such as the miraculous nature of the Qur’an’s language (**i‘jāz al-Qur’ān**) and how literary excellence reflected divine inspiration. This school emphasised that literature was not only artistic but also spiritual, linking eloquence to faith.

For instance, al-Bāqillānī argued that the Qur’an’s unmatched style was proof of its divine origin. This perspective influenced how later scholars approached both sacred and secular texts.

Arabic text example:

”إن إعجاز القرآن في نظمه وبلاغته لا يقدر عليه البشر“ قال الباقلائي

(“The miraculous nature of the Qur’an lies in its composition and eloquence, which no human can replicate.”)



Fill in the blank: The concept that the Qur'an's unmatched style is proof of its divine origin is called _____.



Plate 5.1: Qur'anic manuscripts reflecting theological and literary study

Pilot Questions 5.1

1. What were the main concerns of the philological and grammatical schools in classical Arabic scholarship?
2. Name the two centres of grammatical study in the classical period.
3. Who was al-Jurjānī, and what was his contribution to rhetorical and stylistic analysis?
4. What is the Arabic term for the study of eloquence and effective expression?
5. How did theological scholars such as al-Bāqillānī interpret the Qur'an's literary excellence?

5.2 Medieval Schools of Thought

In this part, we will examine the medieval schools of thought in Arabic literature. This period was marked by intellectual vibrancy, where scholars moved beyond preservation of language to



systematic analysis, philosophical exploration, and mystical expression. By studying literary criticism, philosophical and mystical traditions, and encyclopaedic scholarship, you will see how Arabic literature became both a creative and intellectual discipline.

5.2.1 Literary criticism and evaluative frameworks

The **literary criticism school** refers to scholars who developed systematic methods for judging poetry and prose. They created frameworks that assessed style, meaning, and cultural value. Figures such as **Ibn Qutaybah** defended poetry as a cultural archive, ensuring that literature was studied fairly and rigorously.

This school marked a shift from simply enjoying literature to analysing it critically, laying the foundation for modern literary theory.

Fill in the blank: The medieval scholar who defended poetry as a cultural archive was

_____.

Feature	Explanation
Systematic Evaluation	Scholars developed criteria to judge poetry and prose, focusing on eloquence, clarity, and stylistic beauty.
Moral and Cultural Values	Literature was assessed not only for aesthetics but also for its reflection of ethical and social ideals.
Focus on Rhetoric (Balāgha)	Emphasis on rhetorical devices such as metaphor, simile, and parallelism to measure literary excellence.
Preservation of Heritage	Works of criticism often catalogued poets and writers, preserving Arab cultural memory.
Comparative Judgments	Critics compared poets and styles, highlighting strengths and weaknesses to establish hierarchies of talent.



Integration of Prose and Poetry	Both forms were analyzed, with prose writers like Al-Jāḥiẓ and Ibn Qutaybah shaping critical discourse.
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Box 5.2: Key features of medieval literary criticism

5.2.2 Philosophical and mystical schools (Sufi literature)

The **philosophical school** explored literature through reason and logic, often influenced by Greek thought. Scholars examined how literature could express universal truths. The **mystical school**, particularly **Sufi literature**, used poetry and prose to express spiritual longing and union with the divine.

For example, Sufi poets like Rūmī and Ibn al-Fāriḍ employed metaphor and symbolism to convey mystical experiences. Their works blended literary artistry with spiritual depth.

Arabic text example:

”زدني بفرط الحب فيك تحييراً“: قال ابن الفارض

(“Increase me in bewilderment through excessive love for You.”)

Fill in the blank: The mystical tradition in Arabic literature that expressed spiritual longing through poetry is called _____.





Plate 5.2: Sufi poetry manuscript reflecting mystical schools of thought

5.2.3 Encyclopaedic and scholarly traditions

The **encyclopaedic school** refers to scholars who compiled vast works of knowledge, blending literature, science, and history. Figures such as **Al-Jāhiz** produced texts that combined humour, observation, and analysis, while encyclopaedic works preserved Arab heritage.

These traditions ensured that literature was not isolated but connected to broader intellectual pursuits. They also made knowledge accessible to wider audiences.

Fill in the blank: The medieval scholar who wrote *Kitāb al-Bayān wa al-Tabyīn* was _____.

Work	Author	Contribution
Uyūn al-Akhhbār	Ibn Qutaybah (828–889 CE)	A comprehensive anthology of prose and poetry; preserved Arab cultural heritage and offered moral, historical, and literary insights.



Kitāb al-Aghānī (Book of Songs)	Abū al-Faraj al-Iṣfahānī (897–967 CE)	Encyclopaedic collection of poems, songs, and biographies of poets and musicians; a key source for Arab cultural and social history.
al-Fihrist	Ibn al-Nadīm (d. 995 CE)	Bibliographical encyclopedia cataloguing books, sciences, and authors; invaluable record of intellectual life in the medieval Islamic world.
Murūj al-Dhahab (Meadows of Gold)	al-Mas‘ūdī (896–956 CE)	Historical and geographical encyclopedia; combined history, travel accounts, and cultural observations.
al-Bayān wa al-Tabyīn	Al-Jāhīz (776–868 CE)	Encyclopaedic work on rhetoric, eloquence, and cultural anecdotes; foundational text in Arabic literary criticism.

Table 5.1: Major encyclopaedic works of medieval Arabic scholarship

Pilot Questions 5.2

1. What was the main focus of medieval literary criticism?
2. Who was Ibn Qutaybah, and what was his contribution to Arabic literature?
3. Which mystical tradition used poetry to express spiritual longing and union with the divine?
4. Name one Sufi poet and describe his style.
5. Who wrote *Kitāb al-Bayān wa al-Tabyīn*, and what was its significance?

5.3 Modern Schools of Thought

In this part, we will explore the modern schools of thought in Arabic literature. The nineteenth and twentieth centuries witnessed profound changes in Arab societies, shaped by colonial



encounters, reformist movements, and the rise of nationalism. Literature became a powerful tool for cultural renewal, social critique, and identity formation. By examining the Nahda reformist approaches, nationalist and identity-driven schools, and realist traditions, you will see how modern Arabic literature engaged with both local realities and global currents.

5.3.1 Nahda reformist approaches to literature

The **Nahda school** refers to intellectuals and writers of the Arab renaissance who sought to modernise society while preserving cultural identity. Reformers such as **Rifāʿa al-Tahtawi** and **Butrus al-Bustani** promoted education, translation, and encyclopaedic knowledge. Their literary works and essays encouraged openness to European ideas while affirming Arab heritage.

This school laid the foundation for modern Arabic literature by bridging tradition and modernity.

Fill in the blank: The nineteenth-century Arab cultural renaissance is known as _____.

Writer	Contribution
Rifāʿa al-Tahtawi (1801–1873)	Introduced modern sciences and ideas to Egypt; translated European works into Arabic; emphasized education reform and modernization.
Butrus al-Bustani (1819–1883)	Founded modern Arabic encyclopedias and dictionaries; promoted secular education; established schools and journals; advocated Arab cultural revival and unity.
Jamāl al-Dīn al-Afghānī (1838–1897)	Political activist and thinker; promoted Pan-Islamism and resistance to colonialism; emphasized reform, reason, and intellectual awakening in Islamic societies.

Box 5.3: Key contributions of Nahda reformist writers

5.3.2 Nationalist and identity-driven schools

The **nationalist school** emerged in response to colonialism and the struggle for independence. Writers used literature to express collective identity, pride, and resistance. Poetry and prose became vehicles for articulating national aspirations and cultural unity.



Identity-driven schools also addressed issues of language, heritage, and belonging. They emphasised the role of literature in shaping modern Arab consciousness.

Arabic text example:

“وطني لو شغلْتُ بالخلد عنه نازعتني إليه في الخلد نفسي” قال أحمد شوقي

(“My homeland, even if I were distracted by paradise, my soul would still yearn for you there.”)

Fill in the blank: The literary school that used poetry and prose to express collective identity and resistance is called the _____ school.



Plate 5.3: Nationalist poetry as a voice of resistance

5.3.3 Realist and social critique traditions

The **realist school** focused on depicting everyday life and social realities. Writers such as **Naguib Mahfouz** portrayed the struggles of ordinary people, addressing themes of poverty, inequality, and generational change. Realist literature aimed to hold a mirror to society, encouraging reflection and reform.

Social critique traditions overlapped with realism, using novels, plays, and poetry to challenge injustice and highlight the need for progress.



Arabic text example:

From Mahfouz's *Cairo Trilogy*: “البيت هو الوطن الصغير، فإذا ضاع ضاع الوطن الكبير”

(“The home is the small homeland; if it is lost, the greater homeland is lost.”)

Fill in the blank: The Egyptian novelist who won the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1988 is _____.

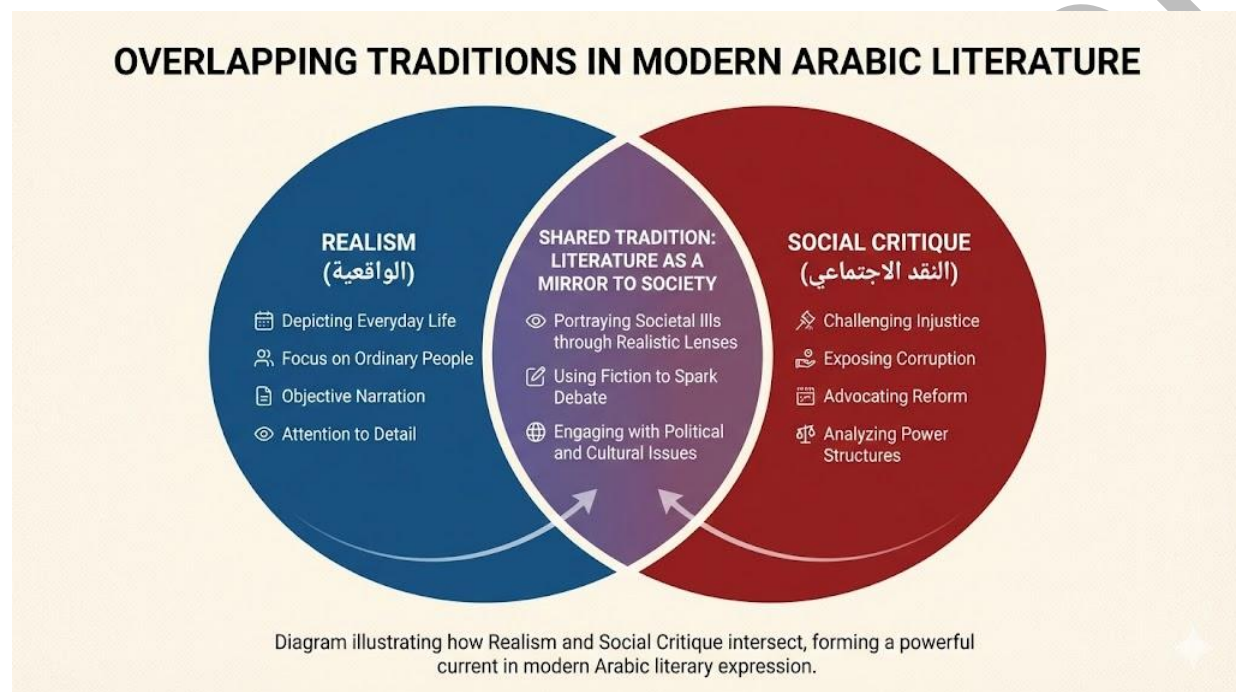


Figure 5.2: Realism and social critique in modern Arabic literature

Pilot Questions 5.3

1. What was the main goal of the Nahda reformist school in Arabic literature?
2. Name one Nahda reformer and describe his contribution.
3. Which literary school used poetry and prose to express collective identity and resistance?
4. Who was Naguib Mahfouz, and what themes did his works address?
5. What is the Arabic term for the nineteenth-century Arab cultural renaissance?



5.4 Contemporary Schools of Thought

In this part, we will explore the contemporary schools of thought in Arabic literature. These schools reflect the dynamic changes of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, where writers engaged with modernist and postmodernist experimentation, feminist perspectives, and global diaspora voices. Literature became a space for questioning tradition, redefining identity, and participating in global conversations.

5.4.1 Modernist and postmodernist approaches

The **modernist school** in Arabic literature refers to writers who experimented with new forms and techniques, such as **stream of consciousness** and fragmented narrative. They sought to break away from classical structures and reflect the complexities of modern life. The **postmodernist school** went further, embracing ambiguity, intertextuality, and playful challenges to meaning.

Poets such as **Adonis** introduced bold imagery and unconventional structures, while novelists like **Abdul Rahman Munif** critiqued political and social realities through layered narratives.

Fill in the blank: The narrative technique that captures the continuous flow of a character's thoughts is called _____.



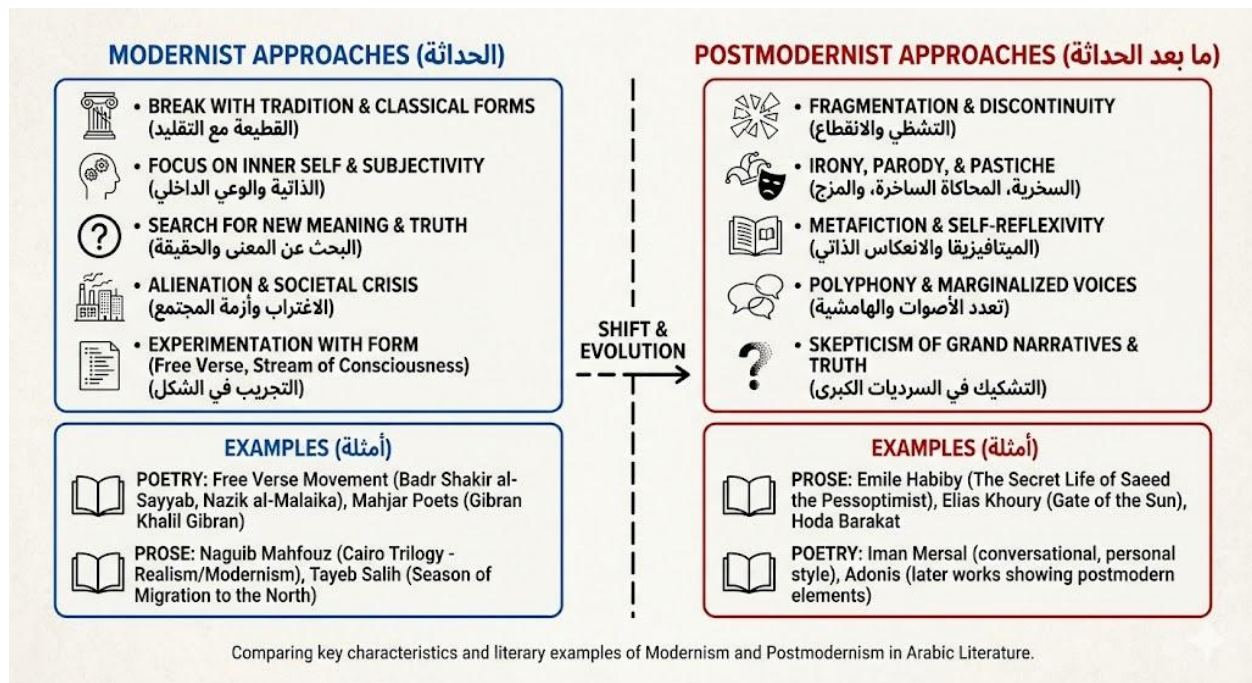


Figure 5.3: Modernist and postmodernist approaches in Arabic literature

5.4.2 Feminist and gender-focused schools

The **feminist school** highlights women's voices and gender issues in Arabic literature. Writers such as **Nawal El Saadawi** and **Hanan al-Shaykh** addressed themes of patriarchy, identity, and liberation. Their works challenged traditional roles and opened space for new perspectives on gender.

This school emphasises literature as a means of empowerment, giving visibility to experiences often marginalised in earlier traditions.

Arabic text example:

”الكتابة فعل مقاومة، وهي وسيلتي لمواجهة الظلم“: قالت نوال السعداوي

(“Writing is an act of resistance, and it is my means of confronting injustice.”)

Fill in the blank: The school of thought that emphasises women's voices and gender issues in Arabic literature is called the _____ school.

Theme	Explanation



Patriarchy	Critiques of male-dominated social structures and the restrictions placed on women's roles in family and society.
Identity	Exploration of women's selfhood, individuality, and cultural belonging in the face of traditional expectations.
Liberation	Calls for freedom from oppressive norms, advocating women's rights and social reform.
Empowerment	Emphasis on women's agency, education, and participation in public life as a means of reshaping society.

Box 5.4: Key themes in feminist Arabic literature

5.4.3 Diaspora and global perspectives in Arabic literature

The **diaspora school** refers to writers living outside the Arab world who use literature to explore themes of exile, migration, and belonging. Their works often blend Arabic traditions with global influences, creating hybrid identities.

Authors such as **Ahdaf Soueif** and **Rashid al-Daif** illustrate how diaspora literature connects Arabic voices to international audiences, enriching global literary dialogue.

Fill in the blank: Literature that explores themes of exile, migration, and belonging is often associated with the _____ school.





Plate 5.4: Diaspora literature connecting Arabic voices to global audiences

Pilot Questions 5.4

1. What are the main differences between modernist and postmodernist approaches in Arabic literature?
2. Name one modernist writer and describe his contribution.
3. Which school of thought emphasises women's voices and gender issues in Arabic literature?
4. Name one feminist writer and explain her central themes.
5. What themes are commonly explored in diaspora Arabic literature?

Series Summary

This Series has examined the major schools of thought in Arabic literature, showing how intellectual traditions shaped the way texts were written, interpreted, and valued across different



eras. We began with the classical schools, where philological and grammatical studies safeguarded the language, rhetorical analysis refined eloquence, and theological perspectives linked literary excellence to faith. We then moved to the medieval schools, highlighting literary criticism, philosophical and mystical traditions such as Sufi poetry, and encyclopaedic scholarship that preserved Arab heritage. Following that, we explored modern schools of thought, including the Nahda reformist approaches, nationalist and identity-driven movements, and realist traditions that reflected social realities. Finally, we concluded with contemporary schools, where modernist and postmodernist experimentation, feminist perspectives, and diaspora voices expanded Arabic literature into global dialogue.

By engaging with these parts, you have achieved the Series Learning Outcomes. You should now be able to define the features of classical schools, explain the contributions of medieval criticism and mystical traditions, analyse modern reformist and nationalist approaches, and evaluate contemporary perspectives such as feminist and diaspora literature. This equips you with the ability to trace the evolution of Arabic literary thought, connect it to cultural and historical contexts, and appreciate its continuing relevance in today's world.

Glossary of Terms

Adonis (Ali Ahmad Said Esber): A Syrian poet known for his modernist innovations in Arabic poetry, using bold imagery and unconventional structures.

Al-Jāhiz: A medieval scholar and prose writer whose works combined humour, observation, and analysis, including *Kitāb al-Bayān wa al-Tabyīn*.

Balāgha: The Arabic term for rhetoric, referring to the study of eloquence and effective expression in literature.

Butrus al-Bustani: A Lebanese Nahda intellectual who promoted secular education and founded modern Arabic encyclopaedias.

Diaspora school: A contemporary school of thought in Arabic literature that explores themes of exile, migration, and belonging.



Feminist school: A contemporary school of thought that emphasises women's voices and gender issues in Arabic literature.

Ibn Qutaybah: A medieval literary critic who systematised Arabic literary criticism and defended poetry as a cultural archive.

I'jāz al-Qur'ān: The concept of the miraculous nature of the Qur'an's language, considered proof of its divine origin.

Modernist school: A twentieth-century literary movement in Arabic literature characterised by experimentation with new forms and techniques.

Nahda: The nineteenth-century Arab cultural renaissance, marked by reformist approaches to literature and education.

Naguib Mahfouz: An Egyptian novelist and Nobel Prize winner whose realist works depicted the transformation of Egyptian society.

Nationalist school: A modern school of thought that used literature to express collective identity, pride, and resistance against colonialism.

Philological school: A classical school of thought concerned with the study of word origins, meanings, and usage in Arabic.

Postmodernist school: A contemporary literary movement that embraces ambiguity, intertextuality, and challenges to fixed meaning.

Rifā'a al-Tahtawi: An Egyptian Nahda scholar who introduced modern sciences and translated European works into Arabic.

Sufi literature: Mystical poetry and prose that expresses spiritual longing and union with the divine, often using metaphor and symbolism.

Stream of consciousness: A narrative technique that captures the continuous flow of a character's thoughts and feelings.

Theological school: A classical school of thought that interpreted literature through religious perspectives, especially the Qur'an.



Concept Check Questions [Series 5]

Objective Questions

1. The two main centres of grammatical study in the classical period were _____ and _____. (Linked to SLO 5.1)
2. The Arabic term for the study of eloquence and effective expression is _____. (Linked to SLO 5.1)
3. The mystical tradition in Arabic literature that expressed spiritual longing through poetry is called _____. (Linked to SLO 5.2)
4. The nineteenth-century Arab cultural renaissance is known as _____. (Linked to SLO 5.5)
5. The Egyptian novelist who won the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1988 is _____. (Linked to SLO 5.7)

Short-Answer Questions

1. Define the concept of *i'jāz al-Qur'ān* and explain its significance in classical literary thought. (Linked to SLO 5.1)
2. Who was Ibn Qutaybah, and what was his contribution to medieval literary criticism? (Linked to SLO 5.2)
3. Name one Nahda reformer and describe his contribution to education or translation. (Linked to SLO 5.5)
4. What themes did nationalist schools of thought emphasise in modern Arabic literature? (Linked to SLO 5.6)
5. Name one feminist writer in contemporary Arabic literature and explain her central themes. (Linked to SLO 5.9)

Long-Answer Questions



1. Analyse the role of philological, grammatical, and rhetorical schools in shaping classical Arabic literature. (Linked to SLO 5.1)
2. Evaluate the contributions of medieval literary criticism and Sufi traditions to Arabic literary heritage. (Linked to SLO 5.2, SLO 5.3)
3. Discuss how the Nahda reformist school laid the foundation for modern Arabic literature, and connect its influence to nationalist and realist traditions. (Linked to SLO 5.5, SLO 5.6, SLO 5.7)
4. Compare modernist and postmodernist approaches in contemporary Arabic literature, highlighting their stylistic innovations. (Linked to SLO 5.8)
5. Assess the impact of feminist and diaspora schools on contemporary Arabic literature and their role in global literary dialogue. (Linked to SLO 5.9, SLO 5.10)

Answers to Concept Check Questions [Series 5]

Objective Questions

1. Basra and Kufa
2. Balāgha
3. Sufi literature
4. Nahda
5. Naguib Mahfouz

Short-Answer Questions

1. *I'jāz al-Qur'ān* refers to the miraculous nature of the Qur'an's language, considered proof of its divine origin. It emphasised the Qur'an's unmatched eloquence.
2. Ibn Qutaybah systematised Arabic literary criticism, defended poetry as a cultural archive, and promoted fairness in evaluating poets.



3. Rifā'a al-Tahtawi translated European works into Arabic and promoted education reform in Egypt.
4. Nationalist schools emphasised collective identity, pride, resistance against colonialism, and cultural unity.
5. Nawal El Saadawi; her central themes included patriarchy, identity, liberation, and writing as resistance.

Long-Answer Questions

1. **Basic response:** Philological and grammatical schools preserved the language, while rhetorical schools refined eloquence. Together, they provided the foundation for literary analysis.
Value-added response: These schools ensured the Qur'an and poetry were studied with precision, linking linguistic rules to artistic expression and establishing a tradition of literary scholarship.
2. **Basic response:** Medieval criticism introduced systematic evaluation, while Sufi traditions expressed spiritual longing through poetry.
Value-added response: Ibn Qutaybah's frameworks and Sufi poets like Ibn al-Fārīd enriched Arabic literature by combining intellectual rigour with mystical depth, influencing later literary movements.
3. **Basic response:** The Nahda reformers promoted education, translation, and cultural revival, laying the groundwork for modern literature.
Value-added response: Their efforts connected Arab culture to European knowledge, inspiring nationalist and realist writers to use literature as a tool for identity and social critique.
4. **Basic response:** Modernist approaches experimented with new forms, while postmodernist approaches embraced ambiguity and intertextuality.
Value-added response: Writers like Adonis and Abdul Rahman Munif introduced stylistic innovations that challenged traditional structures, reflecting the complexities of modern and postmodern life.



5. **Basic response:** Feminist schools gave visibility to women's voices, while diaspora schools explored exile and belonging.

Value-added response: Together, they expanded Arabic literature into global dialogue, addressing issues of gender, migration, and identity, and enriching world literature with diverse perspectives.



Pilot Questions 5.1

1. They focused on preserving the purity of the language and codifying grammar rules.
2. Basra and Kufa.
3. Al-Jurjānī; he explained how meaning in poetry arises from word arrangement and stylistic choices.
4. Balāgha.
5. By interpreting the Qur'an's unmatched eloquence as proof of its divine origin.

Pilot Questions 5.2

1. To develop systematic methods for judging poetry and prose.
2. Ibn Qutaybah; he systematised literary criticism and defended poetry as a cultural archive.
3. Sufi literature.
4. Ibn al-Fāriḍ; his style used metaphor and symbolism to express mystical longing.
5. Al-Jāhīz; it was significant for its insights into eloquence and rhetoric.

Pilot Questions 5.3

1. To modernise society while preserving cultural identity.
2. Rifā'a al-Tahtawi; he translated European works and promoted education reform.
3. The nationalist school.
4. Naguib Mahfouz; his works addressed themes of poverty, inequality, and generational change.
5. Nahda.

Pilot Questions 5.4



1. Modernist approaches experimented with new forms, while postmodernist approaches embraced ambiguity and intertextuality.
2. Adonis; he introduced bold imagery and unconventional structures in poetry.
3. The feminist school.
4. Nawal El Saadawi; her central themes included patriarchy, identity, and liberation.
5. Exile, migration, belonging, and hybrid identity.

References and Attributions [Series 5]

General References

- Allen, R. (2000). *An Introduction to Arabic Literature*. Cambridge University Press.
- Jayyusi, S. K. (1987). *The Legacy of Arabic Literature*. Routledge.
- Kilpatrick, H. (1991). *Classical Arabic Literature: A Library of Arabic Literature*. Columbia University Press.
- Montgomery, J. E. (2006). *The Vagaries of the Qasīda*. Brill.
- OER Commons. (n.d.). Resources on Arabic literature and cultural history. Retrieved from <https://www.oercommons.org>

Part 5.1 Classical Schools of Thought

- Figure 5.1: Philological and grammatical foundations of Arabic literature.
 - Attribution: Suggested OER search string “Arabic philology grammar schools Basra Kufa diagram OER”.
 - AI-generated illustration prompt: “Create a diagram showing philology and grammar as two pillars supporting Arabic literary studies.”
- Box 5.1: Key rhetorical devices in classical Arabic literature.



- Attribution: Based on Series instructional content.
- AI-generated illustration prompt: “Create a table-style box listing rhetorical devices in classical Arabic literature with definitions.”
- Plate 5.1: Qur’anic manuscripts reflecting theological and literary study.
 - Attribution: Suggested OER search string “Qur’an manuscript Arabic calligraphy literary study OER”.
 - AI-generated illustration prompt: “Generate an image of a classical Qur’anic manuscript with commentary notes in Arabic script.”

Part 5.2 Medieval Schools of Thought

- Box 5.2: Key features of medieval literary criticism.
 - Attribution: Based on Series instructional content.
 - AI-generated illustration prompt: “Create a box listing features of medieval Arabic literary criticism with short explanations.”
- Plate 5.2: Sufi poetry manuscript reflecting mystical schools of thought.
 - Attribution: Suggested OER search string “Sufi poetry manuscript Arabic literature OER”.
 - AI-generated illustration prompt: “Generate an image of a medieval Arabic manuscript of Sufi poetry with ornate calligraphy.”
- Table 5.1: Major encyclopaedic works of medieval Arabic scholarship.
 - Attribution: Based on Series instructional content.
 - AI-generated illustration prompt: “Create a table listing major encyclopaedic works of medieval Arabic literature with authors and contributions.”

Part 5.3 Modern Schools of Thought

- Box 5.3: Key contributions of Nahda reformist writers.
 - Attribution: Based on Series instructional content.



- AI-generated illustration prompt: “Create a box summarising contributions of Nahda reformist writers in Arabic literature.”
- Plate 5.3: Nationalist poetry as a voice of resistance.
 - Attribution: Suggested OER search string “Arabic nationalist poetry public recitation OER”.
 - AI-generated illustration prompt: “Generate an image of an Arab poet reciting nationalist poetry to a crowd in the early twentieth century.”
- Figure 5.2: Realism and social critique in modern Arabic literature.
 - Attribution: Suggested OER search string “Arabic literature realism social critique diagram OER”.
 - AI-generated illustration prompt: “Create a diagram showing realism and social critique as overlapping traditions in modern Arabic literature.”

Part 5.4 Contemporary Schools of Thought

- Figure 5.3: Modernist and postmodernist approaches in Arabic literature.
 - Attribution: Suggested OER search string “Arabic literature modernist postmodernist approaches diagram OER”.
 - AI-generated illustration prompt: “Create a diagram comparing modernist and postmodernist approaches in Arabic literature with examples.”
- Box 5.4: Key themes in feminist Arabic literature.
 - Attribution: Based on Series instructional content.
 - AI-generated illustration prompt: “Create a box listing key themes in feminist Arabic literature with short explanations.”
- Plate 5.4: Diaspora literature connecting Arabic voices to global audiences.
 - Attribution: Suggested OER search string “Arabic diaspora literature global perspectives OER”.



- AI-generated illustration prompt: “Generate an image of an Arab diaspora writer presenting at an international book fair.”

