

# Literary Criticism PYQ 2020

**Q1. "What is a poet? To whom does he address himself? And what language is to be expected from him? He is a man speaking to men". Discuss Wordsworth's definition of a poet in the light of this statement.**

**Ans.** William Wordsworth's definition of a poet, as expressed in his Preface to "Lyrical Ballads" (published in 1800), emphasizes the idea that a poet is a person who communicates with ordinary people through language that is accessible and relatable. **Let's break down Wordsworth's definition in the context of this statement:**

- 1. A Poet as a Communicator:** Wordsworth sees a poet primarily as a communicator—a person who conveys thoughts, feelings, and experiences to others. This communication is not limited to a select or elite audience but extends to "men," which implies a broader readership or listenership.
- 2. Addressing Ordinary People:** Wordsworth's definition implies that a poet should address and connect with ordinary people, not just a privileged or educated elite. He emphasizes the universality of human experiences and emotions, suggesting that poetry should resonate with the common human condition.
- 3. Accessible Language:** Wordsworth emphasizes that a poet's language should be comprehensible and straightforward. The poet should avoid overly complex or esoteric language that would alienate readers or listeners. Instead, the poet should use language that can be understood by the average person.
- 4. Relatability:** Wordsworth's idea of a poet "speaking to men" suggests that the poet should tackle themes and subjects that are relevant and relatable to people's everyday lives. The poet should explore common human experiences, emotions, and observations.
- 5. Democratic Poetry:** Wordsworth's view aligns with a democratic notion of poetry, where the poet seeks to connect with and elevate the experiences of everyday people. This approach stands in contrast to more elitist or classical forms of poetry that might have been prevalent in his time.
- 6. Nature and the Sublime:** Wordsworth's poetry often draws inspiration from nature and the sublime. In doing so, he finds a way to make the natural world and its beauty accessible and relatable to his readers, connecting them to a sense of wonder and awe.

**In essence,** Wordsworth's definition of a poet is rooted in a belief in the democratic potential of poetry. He views the poet as a bridge between the ordinary experiences of humanity and the power of language to capture and convey those experiences. Wordsworth's poetry, particularly in the "Lyrical Ballads," exemplifies this approach by focusing on the everyday, the familiar, and the emotional, all conveyed in accessible language that speaks to a broad audience. His influence on the Romantic movement and the development of modern poetry can be seen in his commitment to this vision of the poet as a communicator with a deep connection to the common human experience.

**Q2. In response to Wordsworth's description of poetic composition, T. S. Eliot writes, "emotion recollected in tranquillity" is an inexact formula. For it is neither emotion, nor recollection, nor,**

**without distortion of meaning, tranquillity". Explain T. S. Eliot's critique of Romantic theory in the context of the idea of depersonalization in "Tradition and the Individual Talent."**

**Ans.** T.S. Eliot's critique of Romantic theory, particularly as expressed in his essay "Tradition and the Individual Talent," centers on the idea of depersonalization in poetry and challenges the Romantic emphasis on intense personal emotion and the concept of "emotion recollected in tranquillity." **Let's break down Eliot's critique and its context:**

- 1. Emotion Recollected in Tranquillity:** Wordsworth's famous phrase, "emotion recollected in tranquillity," suggests that poetry should capture intense personal emotions experienced in the past, but with a reflective and tranquil perspective. Eliot challenges this idea by arguing that it is an "inexact formula" and that it fails to capture the essence of poetic creation.
- 2. Depersonalization:** Eliot advocates for depersonalization in poetry, meaning that the poet should strive to distance themselves from their own personal emotions and experiences when writing. He believes that poetry should not be a direct expression of the poet's feelings but a medium for exploring universal human experiences and emotions.
- 3. Objective Correlative:** Eliot introduces the concept of the "objective correlative," which is a set of external objects, events, or situations that can evoke a particular emotion in the reader. He argues that poetry should use these objective correlatives to convey emotions indirectly, rather than relying on the poet's subjective emotions.
- 4. Tradition:** Eliot emphasizes the importance of tradition in poetry. He believes that poets should be in dialogue with the literary tradition that precedes them, drawing on the collective wisdom and experiences of the past. This tradition provides a framework for depersonalization and the exploration of universal themes.
- 5. The Individual Talent:** Eliot contends that the individual poet's role is not to express their own emotions but to channel the emotions and experiences of the entire human race. The poet should be a conduit for the collective human experience rather than a mere vessel for personal expression.
- 6. Critique of Romanticism:** Eliot's critique of Romanticism, including Wordsworth's idea of "emotion recollected in tranquillity," is rooted in his belief that poetry should transcend the limitations of individual subjectivity and connect with a broader, timeless human experience. He sees Romanticism as overly focused on the individual poet's emotions and experiences, which he considers limiting and self-indulgent.

**In summary,** T.S. Eliot's critique of Romantic theory, as articulated in "Tradition and the Individual Talent," challenges the Romantic emphasis on personal emotion and the notion of "emotion recollected in tranquillity." He advocates for depersonalization in poetry, where the poet's role is to connect with universal human experiences and emotions while drawing from the tradition of literature that precedes them. Eliot's ideas have had a significant influence on modernist and postmodernist poetry, which often emphasizes the detachment of the poet from their work and a focus on broader, collective human experiences.

**Q3. "A few conjectures, a supply of admonitions, many acute isolated observations, some brilliant guesses, much oratory and applied poetry, inexhaustible confusion, a sufficiency of dogma, no small stock of prejudices, whimsies and crotchets, a profusion of mysticism, a little genuine speculation, sundry stray inspirations, pregnant hints and random aperçus; of such as these, it may**

**be said without exaggeration, is extant critical theory composed.” – Comment on I. A. Richards’ assessment of the history of literary criticism based on the above statement.**

**Ans.** I.A. Richards' assessment of the history of literary criticism, as described in the provided statement, reflects a somewhat complex and multifaceted view of the field. **Let's break down the components of his assessment and comment on them:**

1. **"A few conjectures"**: This suggests that literary criticism has often been built on speculative ideas or hypotheses. While conjecture can be a starting point for critical inquiry, it should ideally be supported by evidence and rigorous analysis to be valuable.
2. **"A supply of admonitions"**: Literary criticism has often included warnings, guidance, or moral lessons. This indicates a didactic aspect of criticism where critics may advise readers on how to interpret or approach literary works.
3. **"Many acute isolated observations"**: Richards acknowledges that there have been moments of keen insight and astute observations in the history of literary criticism. These can provide valuable insights into the understanding of literature.
4. **"Some brilliant guesses"**: While guesses may not be a reliable foundation for literary criticism, occasionally, critics may make educated guesses that turn out to be remarkably insightful. However, solid evidence and analysis are generally preferred over guesswork.
5. **"Much oratory and applied poetry"**: This suggests that some critics may rely on persuasive language and rhetorical flourish rather than rigorous analysis. While eloquence can enhance the presentation of ideas, it should ideally be grounded in substance.
6. **"Inexhaustible confusion"**: Richards acknowledges that literary criticism has not always been clear or straightforward. Different critics may have conflicting viewpoints, leading to confusion in the field.
7. **"A sufficiency of dogma"**: Literary criticism has often been associated with certain established beliefs or doctrines. This can limit open-minded exploration but can also provide a framework for interpretation.
8. **"No small stock of prejudices, whimsies, and crotchets"**: Critics may bring personal biases, idiosyncrasies, and eccentricities to their work, which can influence their interpretations. It's essential to recognize and critically assess these biases.
9. **"A profusion of mysticism"**: Some literary criticism may involve mystical or esoteric interpretations, which can be challenging to evaluate objectively. This reflects the diversity of approaches within the field.
10. **"A little genuine speculation"**: While much of criticism may involve conjecture and guesswork, there is also room for genuine and thoughtful speculation that contributes to the evolution of literary theory.
11. **"Sundry stray inspirations, pregnant hints, and random aperçus"**: This suggests that critical insights can emerge unexpectedly and unpredictably. These moments can be valuable but may require further development and substantiation.

**In summary**, Richards' assessment paints a picture of literary criticism as a field with a wide range of approaches, from insightful observations to dogma and mysticism. It highlights both the strengths and weaknesses of literary criticism, emphasizing the need for critical thinking, evidence-based analysis, and an awareness of personal biases and prejudices in the field. Critics should strive for a balance between creative interpretation and scholarly rigor to advance our understanding of literature.

#### **Q4. Examine the different kinds of meanings discussed by I. A. Richards in his Practical Criticism.**

**Ans.** I.A. Richards, in his work "Practical Criticism," explores various kinds of meanings and aspects of interpretation in literature. Richards' approach to practical criticism focuses on close reading and the reader's response to a text. **Here are some of the different kinds of meanings discussed in his work:**

- 1. Sensuous Meanings:** Richards emphasizes the importance of the immediate sensory experience of reading. This includes the sounds, rhythms, and visual imagery of the text. Sensuous meanings are derived from the sensory qualities of language and how they affect the reader's perception and emotional response.
- 2. Emotive Meanings:** Emotive meanings refer to the emotional impact of a text on the reader. Richards believes that words and phrases can evoke specific emotional responses. Readers interpret these emotional nuances based on their personal experiences and sensitivities.
- 3. Referential Meanings:** Referential meanings relate to the content and subject matter of the text. Readers extract factual information, ideas, and references from the text to understand what it is about and what it communicates in terms of knowledge or information.
- 4. Allusive Meanings:** Allusive meanings involve references to other texts, ideas, or cultural symbols within the text being analyzed. Readers need to recognize these allusions and understand their significance to grasp the deeper layers of meaning in the text.
- 5. Conventional Meanings:** These are meanings that are commonly understood within a specific literary or cultural context. They can include figurative language, metaphors, symbols, and other literary devices that have established meanings and interpretations.
- 6. Personal Meanings:** Personal meanings are unique to each reader. They arise from the reader's individual experiences, beliefs, and emotions. Richards emphasizes that readers bring their personal perspectives to the text, and their interpretations may vary widely.
- 7. Complex Meanings:** Richards suggests that the meanings in a text are often multifaceted and layered. A single word or phrase can carry multiple meanings simultaneously, and readers must navigate these complexities to understand the text fully.
- 8. Dynamic Meanings:** Richards highlights that meanings can change over time and with repeated readings. A text may reveal new layers of meaning as the reader's perspective evolves or as historical and cultural contexts change.
- 9. Implicit Meanings:** Some meanings may not be explicitly stated in the text but can be inferred through careful analysis. These implicit meanings require readers to make inferences and connect the dots to understand the author's intentions fully.
- 10. Ambiguity:** Richards acknowledges that texts can be intentionally ambiguous, allowing for multiple interpretations. Ambiguity can enrich the reading experience by inviting readers to engage actively in interpretation.
- 11. Tensions and Contradictions:** Texts can contain tensions and contradictions that challenge readers to grapple with conflicting ideas or emotions. These tensions can lead to a deeper exploration of the text's themes and messages.

Richards' approach to practical criticism encourages readers to engage with texts on multiple levels and to be aware of the diverse meanings that can be extracted from literature. His work underscores the idea that interpretation is a dynamic and subjective process that involves the interplay of the text and the reader's responses and perceptions.

**Q5. For Cleanth Brooks “paradoxes spring from the nature of poetry”. Discuss Brooks’ theory of paradoxes and its centrality in the appreciation of poetry.**

**Ans.** Cleanth Brooks, a prominent American literary critic, indeed emphasized the centrality of paradoxes in the appreciation of poetry. His theory of paradoxes is rooted in New Criticism, a literary critical approach that emerged in the mid-20th century. **Here's an exploration of Brooks' theory of paradoxes and its importance in the interpretation of poetry:**

### **1. Nature of Poetry and Paradoxes:**

According to Brooks, paradoxes are not incidental or accidental features of poetry; they are inherent to the nature of poetry itself. He argues that poetry thrives on ambiguity, tension, and contradictions, which give it a depth and complexity that distinguishes it from other forms of communication.

### **2. Unity of Paradox:**

Brooks believed that a great poem is characterized by a unity of paradox, where seemingly contradictory elements or ideas are brought together in a harmonious and meaningful way. This unity of paradox is what makes poetry a powerful and unique form of artistic expression.

### **3. Irony and Paradox:**

Irony is closely related to paradox in Brooks' theory. He saw irony as a key component of poetry, where there is often a gap between what is said (the surface meaning) and what is meant (the deeper, often paradoxical meaning). This creates a layer of complexity that engages readers in active interpretation.

### **4. Multiple Interpretations:**

Brooks believed that poems are open to multiple interpretations because of their paradoxical nature. Readers are encouraged to engage in close reading, paying attention to the language, imagery, and symbols in the poem to uncover these paradoxes and the deeper meaning they convey.

### **5. Emotional Impact:**

Paradoxes, in Brooks' view, elicit emotional and intellectual responses from readers. They challenge preconceived notions, provoke thought, and create a sense of intellectual and emotional engagement. This engagement is crucial for a reader's deep appreciation of poetry.

### **6. The Heresy of Paraphrase:**

Brooks famously argued against the "heresy of paraphrase," which refers to the idea that a poem's meaning can be captured and conveyed in simple, straightforward language. He believed that poetry's unique power lies in its ability to express complex ideas and emotions through paradoxical language that resists easy paraphrasing.

### **7. Close Reading and Ambiguity:**

Brooks advocated for close reading as a method for exploring the paradoxes and ambiguities within poems. By closely analyzing the text and paying attention to every word and image, readers can uncover the layers of meaning and paradox that make the poem rich and resonant.

**In summary**, Cleanth Brooks' theory of paradoxes in poetry emphasizes that the inherent contradictions, tensions, and ambiguities within poems are not flaws but rather essential features that give poetry its depth and resonance. These paradoxes invite readers to engage with the text actively, delving beneath the surface to explore the complexities and multiple layers of meaning. Through this approach, Brooks believed that readers could achieve a deeper appreciation of poetry and its unique power to convey complex emotions and ideas.

**Q6. The paper Literary Criticism in your syllabus demonstrates that different conceptions of the function of art and the process of artistic creation can lead to radically different literary- critical orientations. Write an essay that focuses on your response to the variety of critical positions and theoretical premises that you have encountered in this paper.**

**Ans.** The study of literary criticism is a journey through a diverse landscape of critical positions and theoretical premises. As I delve into the paper "Literary Criticism" outlined in my syllabus, I am struck by the vast array of perspectives and approaches that scholars and critics have adopted over the years. These diverse conceptions of the function of art and the process of artistic creation highlight the richness and complexity of the field of literary criticism. In this essay, I will respond to the variety of critical positions and theoretical premises encountered in the paper, emphasizing the significance of this diversity in enhancing our understanding of literature.

**One of the critical positions that stands out is the formalist approach, which emphasizes the intrinsic qualities of a literary work.** Formalists, such as the Russian Formalists of the early 20th century, focus on the structure, language, and form of a text. They believe that the meaning of a work is to be found within the text itself, rather than in external contexts or authorial intentions. This formalist orientation challenges readers to engage deeply with the text, appreciating the artistry and craftsmanship that go into its creation. However, it can also be criticized for ignoring the social and historical contexts that often inform literary works.

**On the opposite end of the spectrum, we encounter the historical and cultural critics who prioritize the external factors influencing literature.** These critics believe that understanding the social, political, and cultural contexts of a work is crucial to interpreting it accurately. They argue that literature is a reflection of its time and that analyzing these contextual factors can reveal important insights into the work's meaning and significance. While this approach enriches our understanding of literature's relationship with society, it can risk reducing a work to a mere product of its time, neglecting its artistic value.

**Additionally**, the psychoanalytic and psychological perspectives, pioneered by thinkers like Sigmund Freud and Carl Jung, introduce a new dimension to literary criticism. These critics delve into the inner workings of the human psyche and explore how literary characters and narratives can be analyzed as representations of subconscious desires and conflicts. This psychological approach provides a fascinating lens through which to interpret literature, uncovering hidden motivations and psychological complexities in characters and plots. However, it can be seen as reductionist when applied too simplistically, as not all literary works can be neatly explained through psychoanalytic theories.

**The postcolonial and feminist approaches also play a significant role in contemporary literary criticism.** These perspectives challenge traditional power structures and hierarchies in literature,

focusing on issues of gender, race, and identity. They encourage us to question the representation of marginalized groups and the impact of colonialism and patriarchy on literary production. While these approaches have led to important advancements in understanding previously neglected voices in literature, they can sometimes lead to overly politicized readings that prioritize ideology over aesthetic qualities.

**In response to this variety of critical positions**, I find it essential to adopt a pluralistic approach to literary criticism. Each of these perspectives brings valuable insights to the table, and their diversity enriches our understanding of literature as a multifaceted and dynamic art form. Rather than seeking a single "correct" way to interpret a text, we should appreciate the different layers of meaning that can emerge from various critical orientations. By acknowledging the complexity of literature and the multiplicity of interpretations it can yield, we engage in a more holistic and nuanced study of literary works.

**Furthermore**, this diversity in critical positions highlights the dynamic nature of literary criticism itself. The field continually evolves as new theoretical premises and perspectives emerge, reflecting the evolving cultural, social, and intellectual landscape. This dynamism underscores the enduring relevance of literary criticism in our contemporary world, as it allows us to engage with literature in ways that are both timeless and responsive to the changing contexts in which it is produced and consumed.

**In conclusion**, the paper "Literary Criticism" in my syllabus has exposed me to a rich tapestry of critical positions and theoretical premises. While these positions may sometimes appear to be in conflict, they collectively contribute to the depth and vitality of literary criticism. Embracing a pluralistic approach, I believe that the diversity of perspectives enhances our ability to appreciate the multifaceted nature of literature and its enduring relevance in our ever-changing world. As we navigate this literary landscape, we should remain open to the multiplicity of meanings and interpretations that literature offers, recognizing that the richness of literary criticism lies in its capacity to encompass a multitude of voices and perspectives.