

An Introduction to Literary Criticism and Theory Before we begin our examination and study of criticism, it is important that we define what it means. although this criterion is not an essential characteristic of a classical literature. And on what basis?" Well, criticism provides the bases and criteria according to which critics can judge and evaluate a work of art. The main concern of a literary critic should not be restricted to the evaluation of the literary worth of a work of literature. He should be equipped with the weapon to defend a certain interpretation or understanding of the literary text in question. The main task of a literary critic is to provide an explanation and reach a critical understanding of what a literary text means in terms of its aesthetic, as well as political, social, and cultural content. connotations and suggestions. Literary criticism is concerned with more than the evaluation or discussion of the value of a literary work. It rather attempts to provide an understanding that would be considered reasonable and logical by other critics because it is based on acknowledged literary theories. This interpretation or understanding relies on the intended meaning of the writer of the literary text as well as its meaning in the light of the society that produced it taking into consideration the cultural, political and ideological conditions that inspired the work. Traditional literary criticism does not focus on a certain aspect of (or a particular approach to) a literary text in exactly the same way a literary theory does. Literary theory usually offers certain, systematic approaches to literary works that necessarily guide the critic through definite steps to reach an expected interpretation. At the beginning of his critical assessment, a researcher has to limit him/herself to a certain "literary theory" and define the major outline of this theory and also the concepts he/she finds relevant to his/her analysis and interpretation. We use the words "classical literature" to refer to the great literary works which flourished where there were prominent ancient civilizations, e.g. the literary works that emerged in ancient Rome or Greece or other parts of the world. The previous term includes all sorts of writing, e.g. poetry, pastoral, play, etc. To study the nature and characteristics of these works that shaped life at certain eras and whose effect on contemporary life and study of literature can still be detected, we go back to the works of the 18 prominent writers who marked that period. Homer, Ovid and Sophocles are prominent names whose great works are considered the masterpieces of that era. To assess these works we need to first get ourselves acquainted with the literary theory that was used to evaluate their works, so we begin by reading Aristotle, the first critic and then use his criteria and standards to investigate Oedipus Rex the masterpiece of Sophocles, his countryman. It will be a good exercise, though, to apply old theories to present works or any works you know and make a comparison. Even if Aristotle wrote only about drama and poetry, you still could apply his standards to a movie or a TV series and find out the interesting outcomes. Notice that the two words "classic" and "classical", similar as they sound, do not mean the same thing. "Literary criticism" is usually defined as the act of studying, analyzing and interpreting literature. Examples of these theories are Psychoanalysis.