

Lecture One: What is Literature?

***Lesson Plan**

- 1-Introduction
- 2-What is Literature?
- 3-A Brief History of English Literature
- 4-Literary Figurative Language
- 5-Written and Oral Literature
- 6-Significance of Teaching and Studying Literature
- 7-Evaluation

***Lesson Objectives**

Students are expected, by the end of the lesson, to:

- To comprehend what literature revolves around, then to understand the importance of studying literature in the L1 curriculum.
- To make the difference between the literary figurative language and the literal ordinary language.
- To differentiate between oral and written forms of literature.
- To understand the importance of studying literature

***Key words**

Oral Tradition, Written Literature, Figurative Language, Literariness

1-Introduction

The majority of questions about literature center on how literature interacts with the reader rather than how well the author writes. The question is not about the writing but rather about the reception. Value judgments, like literary preferences, naturally evolve, so what we consider to be "literature" is typically largely a subjective judgment of value.

2-What is Literature?

Even though not all written material is considered literature, the word "literature" has a etymological connection to letters, rather than the spoken word. Writing frontal areas language, and utilizations it in imaginative ways. The relationship between literature and language is how Terry Eagleton defines it. He asserts that literature transforms and intensifies ordinary language, deviates systematically from everyday speech in his opinion. Literature is the art form that emerged from man's capacity to create language, just as architecture is the art form that emerged from man's creative conscience to erect buildings. Poetry, drama, and novels and fiction are typically included in the main categories of literature.

Literary distinction and quality are also implied by the term. Literature definitions shift as they describe and clarify a reality. The reality they describe does not originate from them. Additionally, definitions may indicate what we ought to believe literature to be. A literature analysis is more beneficial because there is no one-size-fits-all definition. It is important to examine some of the things that literature does when examining what literature is. Literature is something that reflects society, prompts reflection about oneself and society, and allows us to appreciate language and beauty. It can be instructive and examines the "human condition." It alters as well as reflects ideology. It has an impact on politics and society. The creation of a world that we can only see through reading is what literature is all about. Literature is divided into two main categories.

According to the Oxford definition of literature, Literature is defined as "Writing that is considered to be a work of art." It also includes works like poetry, novels, history, biographies, and essays that are characterized or essential by expression and form in connection with ideas of permanent and universal interest. The following authors hold opposing viewpoints regarding literature:

***Ezra Pound** defines literature as: "Great literature is simply language charged with meaning to the utmost possible degree."

***Oscar Wilde** assumes: "Literature always anticipates life. It does not copy it but molds it to its purpose. The nineteenth century, as we know it, is largely an invention of Balzac."

***Salman Rushdie** believes: "Literature is where I go to explore the highest and lowest places in human society and in the human spirit, where I hope to find not absolute truth but the truth of the tale, of the imagination and of the heart."

3-A Brief History of English Literature

English literature developed over a long period of time and is usually divided into major historical stages.

In the Old English period, literature was mainly oral and religious. The epic poem *Beowulf* is the most famous example. During the Middle English period, literature became more accessible. Geoffrey Chaucer's *The Canterbury Tales* is an important work of this period. The Renaissance period focused on human values, art, and learning. William Shakespeare is the most important writer of this era. The Romantic period emphasized nature, emotion, and imagination. Writers

such as William Wordsworth and Samuel Taylor Coleridge are central figures. In the Victorian period, literature reflected social problems and moral questions. Charles Dickens is one of the most well-known novelists of this time. Modern and contemporary literature explores themes such as war, identity, alienation, and change.

4-Literal Figurative Language

Literal language means exactly what it says, while figurative language uses similes, metaphors, hyperbole, and personification to describe something often through comparison with something different. The literary language gathers both denotative and connotative meanings because the first one signifies the dictionary meaning whereas the second refers to the pictorial or emotional content that goes beyond the dictionary meaning.

5-Written and Oral Literature

-Written Literature

It refers to the literature that is found in books. Books are literature because they are based on a kind of conscious art—the creative art of weaving words and imagination together. Poetry, short stories, novels, plays, or drama are typically included. For writing to be truly composed writing, it should be individual or moral obligation regarding its presence. Second, a person must be identified as the author or creator of a story, poem, play, or technique for a specific genre. However, not all of the parts of literature found in books are written by individuals who are either known or unknown. Some are written down from collected oral literature: songs, legends, and other folklore are instances. They can be written in the most artistic way, but they are still oral literature with certain clear characteristics that no reader can miss.

-Oral Literature

Mankind began to develop and pursue more personal pleasures like drawing, drumming, and music-making as a result of the development of human communities and greater relief from anxieties about existence. Man also began establishing social orders, such as rulership and economics regarding marriage, birth, death, and other topics. Folktales, stories, proverbs, and usages vary from place to place, but their application is almost universal in every community. Oral literature is made up of all of these. The stories are only possible because of the irrational.

Written literature can be judged as good or bad based on the canons of specific modes or styles, whereas oral literature has no individual creators. This is the difference between written

and oral literature. Written literature is a conscious creation by a single person according to specific modes or styles. It was written by several people. Its parts come together by themselves. Despite not being deliberately chosen, the forms are still recognizable. They are well-liked and deeply ingrained in human cultures.

6-Significance of Studying and Teaching Literature

Young people can learn to think critically about a variety of subjects from a variety of theoretical perspectives by studying literature. They will acquire knowledge of a variety of historical events and begin to comprehend a variety of cultures through reading. Basically, English Writing will assist understudies with understanding various encounters from different perspectives, assisting them with turning out to be more receptive and sympathetic. It enables them to comprehend the world around them on a deeper level and broadens their perspectives.

One of the principal reasons should showing abstract texts could body composed material which is significant as in it expresses something about crucial human issues , and which is getting through as opposed to vaporous .Its importance changes over time, but it rarely completely disappears. Teaching literary works from other cultures aims to give our students a chance to learn a lot about other cultures, which have different interests and values than our own, so that they can better understand other cultures.

In order for readers to comprehend how various worlds operate, literature creates and immerses them in distinct worlds. Art can assist readers in celebrating, remembering, grieving, analyzing, arguing, and experiencing a variety of roles and lives. Students learn about the structure and function of sentences, the variety of possible structures, and the various ways to connect ideas by reading a substantial and contextualized body of text. This broadens and enhances their writing skills. More importantly, literature study fosters empathy, tolerance for diversity, imagination, and emotional intelligence—the capacity to comprehend one's own and others' feelings. Because it "represents the particular voice of the writer among the many voices of his or her community and thus to appeal to the particular in the reader," a piece of literature acts on the students' emotions, interests, and stays in their memories (Kramersch, 2010:131).

The students' capacity to draw inferences from linguistic clues and to deduce meaning from context, two useful reading skills, is honed through the extensive reading of a novel or long play. As they begin to recognize the richness and variety of the language they are attempting to master and begin to use some of that potential themselves, students of literature may become

more productively creative and adventurous. Apart from these, the most important reason for using literature in the classroom is the personal development. It educates the reader, helps him form a set of values and form attitudes towards them. The researcher *Ruxandra Viorela Stan* believes that literature can function as a change agent since good literature deals with some aspects of the human condition, and can thus contribute to the emotional development of the reader and foster positive interpersonal attitudes. (2015: 456)

Conclusion

Literature is a form of artistic expression that uses language to reflect human life and experience. It includes written and oral forms and develops through history and culture. For EFL students, studying literature is valuable because it improves language ability, cultural understanding, and critical awareness making it an essential part of education.

7- Evaluation

Task One: Choose the correct option

1. According to the Oxford definition, literature is best described as:

- A. Any written document
- B. Writing that reflects personal opinion
- C. Writing considered a work of art
- D. Spoken artistic expression

2. Which writer is most closely associated with the Renaissance period of English literature?

- A. Geoffrey Chaucer
- B. William Shakespeare
- C. Charles Dickens
- D. William Wordsworth

3. Figurative language differs from literal language because it:

- A. Uses only dictionary meanings
- B. Avoids emotional content
- C. Uses comparison and imagery
- D. Is always unclear

4. Connotative meaning refers to:

- A. The grammatical structure of words
- B. The dictionary definition of words
- C. The emotional or pictorial meaning of words
- D. The historical origin of words

5. A key difference between written and oral literature is that written literature:

- A. Is anonymous
- B. Has no recognizable forms
- C. Has identifiable individual authors
- D. Exists only in performance

6. Literature is described as a “change agent” because it:

- A. Changes grammatical rules
- B. Deals with the human condition

- C. Eliminates cultural differences
- D. Teaches only entertainment

Task Two: Answer the following

- In a table, compare between oral and written types of literature.
- Explain Oscar Wilde's definition of literature from your own point of view.
- Identify the figurative features of the literary language.
- What is the significance of using figurative language in literary texts?
- Is teaching/ studying literature so important in the educational system? Why exactly?
- Is Beowulf a medieval age text? Who is the writer?
- How does creativity contribute in the evolution of literature?