

People's Democratic Republic of Algeria  
Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research  
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Faculty of Letters and Languages  
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# Study of Literary Texts

**Domain :** English Language and Literature

**Level:** First Year License (L1)

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# MODULE: STUDY OF LITERARY TEXTS. L1

## Course Objectives

- \*To distinguish literary discourse from other types of discourse –
- \*To distinguish the three major literary genres (poetic, narrative and dramatic) and their subcategories

## Subject Contents

### Semester One

- 1- What is literature?
- 2- 2- Literary Genres : Poetry, Prose narrative (fiction and non-fiction) and Drama
- 3- 3- Poetic types
- 4- 4- Prosody, rhyme and rhythm
- 5- 5- Figures of Speech
- 6- 6- Method of Poem Analysis
- 7- 7- Romantic Poetry : A study of selected poems belonging to the English romantic movement

### Semester Two

- 1- Old English Literature: Beowulf
- 2- 2- Middle English Literature
- 3- 3- Geoffrey Chaucer's The Canterbury Tales
- 4- 4- Elizabethan Literature
- 5- 5- William Shakespeare's Selected Works
- 6- 6- The Rise of the English Novel (Aspects and major figures)
- 7- 7- Daniel Defoe's the Life and Adventures of Robinson Crusoe

## Sources and references

- Beard, Adrian. Texts and Contexts : Introducing literature and language studies, London & New York: Routledge, 2001.
- Cuddon, J. A. The Penguin Dictionary of Literary Terms and Literary Theory, London: Penguin, 1999.
- Hawthorne, Jeremy. Studying the Novel, London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2010.
- McMahan, Elizabeth. Literature and the Writing Practice, New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 2002.
- Greenblatt, Stephen, Katharine E. Maus, and George M. Logan. The Norton Anthology of English Literature: Volume B. 2018. Print

**The importance of literature in education is undeniable. It helps us grow as individuals and better understand the human experience. Many people benefit from this because it stimulates their minds and encourages creativity and expression. We all need to teach our students more literary elements and facets so we can live up to the saying “knowledge is power.**

# What is Literature?

## 1-What is Literature?

Even though not all written material is considered literature, the word "literature" has an etymological connection to letters, rather than the spoken word. Writing frontal areas language, and utilizing 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's 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."

## 2-History of English Literature

Literature is one of living phenomena that cannot be separated from human life. Literature is art used to describe written or spoken material or anything from creative writing to more technical or scientific works. Commonly literature used to refer to works of creative imaginations. With literature, human can depict and explore their imaginations, emotional, experiences, and ideas use fiction or nonfiction works. Such as poetry, poem, lyric of songs, film and or drama.

The earliest form of English is Old English, also known as Anglo-Saxon. The Old English language was spoken from about 600 A.D. to about 1100 A.D., which is a long time. Widsith and Beowulf are two of many pagan poems written during this time period. *Beowulf*, the first English epic, is the greatest English poem. Beowulf's author cannot be identified. In 3182 lines, it tells the story of Beowulf, a brave young man. Beowulf sails to Denmark with a band of warriors in this epic poem to rescue Hrothgar, the Danish king.

The funerals held in honor of the deceased hero complete the poem. Even though modern readers won't find the poem *Beowulf* all that interesting, it was a very important poem in the Old English period because it paints a fascinating picture of life and customs in the past. Reading literature written in Old English can be challenging due to the language's marked difference from modern English. Poems in Old English lacked rhyme. Alliteration was used instead.



**Beowulf, the British Library**



**Cynewulf /Ye Olde Blogge**

Michael Alexander claims that like Greek literature, English literature begins with an epic, a poem of historic scope telling of heroes and of the world, human and non-human. Compared with the epics of Homer, *Beowulf* is short, with 3182 verses, yet it is the longest as well as the richest of Old English poems. (2000: 27)

There are numerous other Old English poems in addition to *Beowulf*. Widsith, Genesis A and B, Exodus, "The Wanderer," "The Seafarer," "Wife's Lament," "Christ and Satan," "Daniel," "Andreas," "Guthlac," "The Dream of the Rood," "The Battle of Maldon," and other works, among others, are just a few examples. Cynewulf and Caedmon are two important figures in Old English poetry. Cynewulf wrote religious poems, and he is always credited with writing *Juliana*, *The Fates of the Apostles*, *Christ*, and *Elene*. Caedmon's Hymn is well-known.

The Middle English period came after the Old English period, as evidenced by the works of the poet Geoffrey Chaucer, who was born in London around 1340. He joined the British court as a public servant for Countess Elizabeth of Ulster in 1357 and remained in that position throughout his life. His most well-known and critically acclaimed work was *The Canterbury Tales*. He was the first person to be buried in Westminster Abbey's Poet's Corner when he passed away in 1400.

### 3-Literal vs. 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.

### 4-Written Vs. Oral Literature

#### a- 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.

### **b- 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.

## **5-Significance of 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 (Kramsch, 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)