

## What is criticism?

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The term criticism derives from the Greek origin, which means 'judgement'. The view of literary criticism can change from critic to critic and from age to age. But, generally speaking, it is the analysis, interpretation, and evaluation of works of literature. The chief function of literary criticism is to make a study of literary works in light of established standards. Critics can also establish new norms of criticism by offering their judgement on the works of literature. According to Walter Pater:

Criticism is the art of interpretation of art. It serves as an intermediary between the author and the reader by explaining the one to the other.

In everyday life, we use the word 'criticism' to mean an unfavourable judgement or comment. The word literary criticism does not mean only negative judgement. The critic draws our attention to merits and demerits of the literary work. He has to be objective and must rise above personal likes and dislikes and prejudices. He must offer a valid judgement on the literary work. (The critic must be intelligent and sympathetic enough to understand the ideas and feelings of the writer) New English

Dictionary defines criticism as:

... the art of estimating the quality and character of a work of art.

Criticism is a wide subject. It can be theoretical as well as practical. Theoretical criticism is the study of the principles governing different forms of literary writing - fiction, poetry, and drama etc. Practical criticism is concerned with the

~~Interpretation of a literary work and judgement of its value.~~  
interpretation of a literary work and judgement of its value.  
According to Cecil Day Lewis:

{The critic has three eminent tasks - the task of 'easing',  
widening or deepening our response to poetry.

In modern age, the scope of literary criticism has widened a great deal. Modern psychological theories, philosophical thinking and political ideologies have influenced literary criticism. Now we have psychological approaches or a Marxist, Feminist, or Existential interpretations of a literary text.

The raw material of literature is life and the raw material of criticism is literature. An artist can be inspired to write but not a critic. Criticism is an analytical activity and not a creative

The critic's work starts where the writer's ends. An ideal critic must possess imagination and sensitivity of a creative writer. In the words of Alexander Pope:

Both must alike from heaven derive their light,  
These born to judge, as well as those to write.

Criticism is indeed a difficult job. The critic analyzes the literary work and the mind of the man who wrote it. The critic offers his opinions in the light of the established literary and critical theories. He must be widely read in the literature of his own language and of many other languages. The critic must be a man of intellect and sensibility. He has to support his stand with appropriate arguments. The critic must be logical and objective in his judgement. Osbert Sitwell comments that:

The critic is popularly supposed to have a more logical mind, to wield a more consistent pen than the poet's.

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The important functions of criticism are judgement, evaluation, elucidation and interpretation. Judgement is the first and foremost function of the criticism. The judgement should be based on the literary and critical theories. The critic finds the place of a writer or his work in the history of any particular literature. This function is called evaluation. To evaluate a work properly the critic must possess good knowledge of the literary works that have been written in that language.

oo Elucidation means analysis of the form and structure of the work of art in light of the literary theories. Interpretation means getting at the meaning of the literary work. Generally the literary texts are rich in their meanings and can have a variety of interpretations. The critic must make a deep study of all the possible meanings of a literary text. Thus, we may say that literary criticism is the analysis, interpretation, and evaluation of works of literature. According to T. S. Eliot the function of criticism is:

... the elucidation of works of art and the correction of taste. <sup>24/11/18</sup>