

Literary theory



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

Compare/contrast the expressive theories of Horace and Longinus. Try to identify areas of agreement and disagreement in their discussions of how poets create, or should create, works of literature. Which theory do you find most useful for your own work as a critic and writer, and why?

Both Horace and Longinus believe in the rhetorical approach to create a poem but Longinus is more practical. Both believe in the formal elements and the issue of expression. Horace advises that the poet should take into consideration how the audience would respond to it. Some people read poems for enlightenment while others just for pleasure. To cater to a wider audience, Horace suggests including both these elements in a poem.

Besides, the setting, time and location should have unity and coherence.

Longinus feels that a poem should immediately elevate the reader to a sublime state as if he has experienced it himself, which element has not been taken into account by Horace. Horace merely suggests that poems should begin in the middle of a situation so that the reader immediately plunges into the poem. Longinus finds that conflicting feelings can be united while Horace feels decorum and coherent effect are essential for unity.

Horace believes that learning can come only when there is an innate quality to be a poet. Learning without innate talent would serve no purpose. Longinus on the other hand feels following too much of formal elements can create or ruin the poetic effect, which is the very purpose of creating poetry.

Both agree that poets are innate and not made.

As a critic or a writer, being able to express conflicting feelings would be more appealing. Most people do experience such conflicts in their life and it would be easy to transport people to such heights so as to merge the reader and the writer and the written passage or poem.

Compare/contrast the rhetorical theories of Plato and Longinus. Try to identify areas of agreement and disagreement in their discussions of how poetry affects its audiences. Do you think one theory is superior, or do they both have value for your work as a critic and writer? Which theory do you think is more helpful in understanding the effect of literary texts in the 20th century?

Plato believes that poems do not reflect reality while Longinus contends that poets are innate and hence their creation has to be truth. Plato believes being a poet is a skill that can be created. Longinus asserts that a poem should elevate the reader to such a state that he feels he is the composer which is contradicted by Plato who contends that poems create a wrong impression on the youth. He feels poems are made of imitations of the phenomenal world presented in words that are appealing to the mind. It can mislead the audience and adversely affect the lower faculties of the mind while Longinus thinks poems have a subliming effect on the audience. Plato feels they are displays of emotion rather than reason and such pieces have a larger audience.

Longinus' theory is superior because the actual impact of a poem is when the reader is able to merge with the poem and does not identify himself separate from the poem. He becomes the experiencer, the creator and the experience itself. This sort of rhetoric can come only from the inner self and cannot be acquired as a skill.

To understand the effect of the literary texts in the 20th century, Plato's rhetorical theories are more helpful because philosophy cannot be learned or expressed with art and color. It is each one's thoughts which have to come from reason; it cannot be colored with emotions and drama. Hence while

Longinus's theory is more practical for poems, to understand literature,
Plato's theories carry substance.