

# Essay on understanding world literature

[History](#), [Middle East](#)



It is astounding how influential literary works have been able to affect people's life. Words are chosen exceedingly carefully by literary writers, to communicate with other people, all over the world. The words are chosen not only based on their meaning, but also their association. The writers create their world using words; words that allow the reader to live in this world with the writer. Reading a piece of masterly literature is like traveling through time, traveling to a different place and time and the writer is the tour guide. I never realized the pleasure of reading until I gained the skills to read exemplary literature. The skills everyone should have to navigate through the writer world.

To understand any work of literature, it is indispensable to be aware of any aspect that may be reflected on the writer thinking. An expose for the religious and political background and the culture, even when and where the writer was born will help to understand the writer's point of view and why he/she wrote that piece of literature. Literature gave freedom to the writers over the world to express and to share their feelings with others. The writers' different backgrounds and civilizations are reflected through themes and styles used in their genres. Different reasons and events forced the writers to express their feelings and concerns. Many literary and philosophical movements were started by the literary writers. Each movement has its own agenda based on why and where it started.

Understanding relevant literary or philosophical movement, such as Nationalism, Imperialism, Exoticism, just to mention but a few, help readers to see more clearly the meaning behind literary works. Writers from all over the world have always used different themes and styles to address similar

concerns. Leopold Sedar Senghor from Senegal and Aime Cesaire from Martinique are leaders of Negritude. Negritude is a literary movement started by African and Caribbean writers, lived in Paris and spoke French, protesting against the French colonization. Different writers shared the same concern and goal in their writings. To get back the African freedom and cultural pride that was taken away by the French. The poem Prayer to Masks by Senghor and the poem Out of Alien Days by Cesaire are an example of their similar concerns. Both of them evoked nationalism, the love of the country and their ethnic identity, through their poems. Similarly, Ouologuem Yambo's mocking sense of humor and moral outrage singularly clear in his poem; When Black Men's Teeth Speak Out " Cannibal or not a cannibal... Yes or no...Ha ha you think you are pretty clever...Playing high and mighty" (Lim and Spencer 98). Through poem scansion, more details are gained about the poem structure.

While I'm your Horse in the night by Luisa Valenzuela from Argentina is a sample of Magical Realism, the Latin American literary genre that mixes fantasy and reality. Valenzuela concerned about male/female relations and politics in Latin America. For example, " Beto, I say, looking at him. I know that is not his name, but it is the only name I can call him out loud. He replies: we'll make it someday, Chiquita, but let's not talk now" (Lim and Spencer 776). The previous text shows that the males are dominant over females in that culture when the male stopped the conversation. Moreover, she showed political concerns in the next text " So what did I care if they broke every breakable object and tore apart my dresser?" (Lim and Spencer 777).

To understand foreign literature, it is extremely helpful to be familiar with the culture and historical events of the origin of that piece of literature. When reading *Another Evening at the Club* by Alifa Rifaat and *The Happy Man* by Naguib Mahfous, who both were from Egypt, their literary works have some similarity in the relation between different classes. In *The Happy Man*, a story is told of a person who ate his breakfast with magnificent appetite in a jovial mood with constant smiles that even perplexed his servant considering that he had always known him to give instructions and ask questions at the expense of smiling. (Lim and Spencer 48). Similar to the text from *Another Evening at the Club* " Five minutes later Gazia, the young servant girl they had recently employed, entered behind her mistress. Samia took herself to a far corner of the room while Gazia stood in front of Abboud Bey, her hands folded across her chest, her eyes lowered." (Lim and Spencer 56). Both texts from different works by different authors address the same relationship between the master and the servant in Egypt. Also, the text from *Another Evening at the Club* shows that in the Egyptian culture males are dominant over females and lowering the eyes is a sign of respect in that culture. Many of the things analyzed from the previous texts would be difficult to analyze by someone not familiar with the Egyptian culture and traditions.

Also, it would be difficult to understand the idea behind the writer choice to describe the way Abboud Bey dressed in *Another Evening at the Club* " In particular she noticed the well-cut coat of English tweed and the silk shirt with gold links" (Lim and Spencer 54) if the reader was not aware of the British colonization of Egypt and that particular piece of literature was

written to explore male/female relation in a modern postcolonial setting that refers to when and where the story happened.

Every single word is chosen exceedingly carefully by the writers to give a particular meaning and sound. Different writers from different cultures use different words that represent the true meaning and deliver the exact feeling to the reader. Especially in poetry each letter and word has a remarkable effect on the reader or listener. Each word has a rhythm and sound. By using metaphor, oxymoron or simile, in their writing in general and their poems in particular, writers targeted a peculiar effect on the readers' feeling.

Senghor uses personification to describe New York City in his poem New York, as if New York a beautiful woman (Lim and Spencer 146). There are different kinds of poems, and each poem has a rhythm. Lyrics are the most kinds of poems used in songs, because of the beautiful rhythm they have. Throughout the different kinds of literatures such as poems, short story, novels, and plays, the authors have been able to move the readers' feelings and emotions the way they want, by using the magic of the words. Words explain the writers' motivations to the reader in a sophisticated structure. Words also transmit the feelings and the sensation of the time and place. . Each piece of literature needs different reading technique; some require a slow reading like reading a poem, which is different from reading a short story. New words add to the reader vocabulary carry with it new information.

It is an absolute pleasure to communicate with others through literature, to understand other cultures, religions and human relationships in other countries. Different countries with different languages and different traditions

shared similar feelings and concerns. Feelings and concerns shared through literature. The pleasure I did enjoy through a close reading of each literary piece after going through the background information about the author. The pleasure I was not enjoying without having the right skills to go beyond the denotative meanings of the words.

Reading through skilful literature not only gave me pleasure but also improved my speaking and writing skills. How to choose the words that express may true feelings. I understood other people's feelings from other cultures. I was able to think through and to analyze different pieces of literature. I gained new information about countries all over the world. I learned about the Afghanis culture and values by reading closely through *The Kite Runner* by Khaled Hosseini. I do feel rich with knowledge after reading different pieces of literature from different parts of the world.