

Maxism in literature

[Politics](#), [Communism](#)



What is Marxism? Write a note on the influence of Marxism on literature.

Marxism is a sociological approach to literature that viewed works of literature or art as the products of historical forces that can be analyzed by looking at the material conditions in which they were formed. Marxism generally focuses on the clash between the dominant and repressed classes in any given age and also may encourage art to imitate what is often termed an "objective" reality. Contemporary Marxism is much broader in its focus, and views art as simultaneously reflective and autonomous to the age in which it was produced. Marxist literary theories tend to focus on the representation of class conflict as well as the reinforcement of class distinctions through the medium of literature. Marxist theorists use traditional techniques of literary analysis but subordinate aesthetic concerns to the final social and political meanings of literature. Marxist theorist often champion authors sympathetic to the working classes and authors whose work challenges economic equalities found in capitalist societies. Main key features of Marxism are commodification, conspicuous consumption, dialectical materialism, material circumstances, reflectionism, superstructure etc. Major figures include Karl Marx, Terry Eagleton, Fredric Jameson, Raymond Williams, Louis Althusser, Walter Benjamin, Antonio Gramsci, Georg Lukacs, Friedrich Engels, Theodor Adorno, Edward Ahern, Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari. Like Freudian theory, Marxist theory's influence on Modern art and literature can be first broken down by its influence of writers, and the works they produced, and on readers, and the way critics use Marxist theory to interpret the works. Influence On Writers: Under the influence of Marxist theory, an author is interested in examining: a) History

as Historical Materialism: The author hopes to show how all human relations are at root a class struggle between oppressor and oppressed, and/or a struggle for control of the means of production. These include "human relations" writ both large and small: both on a global and political level (like war, the fall of Rome, the spread of Christianity etc) or on a personal level (how two characters or a family relates to one another). Example: Heart Of Darkness, Things Fall Apart. b) Writing As A Means of Controlling Ideology: Marxist theory suggests that if hegemony is maintained through ideology, the oppressed must gain control of their own ideology. This is explicitly the argument presented by Virginia Woolf in A Room Of One's Own; women will break the cycle of oppression by writing their own stories and defining themselves as human, intelligent, equal etc. This theory also inspired writers of color both in the US and throughout the world, to tell their own stories and redefine the cultural image of the Black man, the Latino, the African etc. Influence On Readers: Under the influence of Marxist theory, a reader or critic is probably interested in examining: a) The Work As Ideology: Simply put, Marxism argues that any work of art functions either consciously or unconsciously as ideology; it does not define some eternal representation of "Truth" so much as it represents the ideologies that serve to oppress or an attempt to rebel against that oppression. When combined with a dose of Nietzsche, this way of thinking about art will have a profound effect on so called "Post Modern" critical theories. For example, under this model, a Marxist reading of Wordsworth's Romanticism as an means through which the urban, middle to upper class English elite attempted to maintain hegemony over the rural, agricultural peasant class; that is, "pastoralism"

really masks nothing more than the modern aristocracy keeping control over the peasant class, as it had always done. b) As A Record Of Historical Relations: A Marxist influenced reading of, say a Jane Austen novel would be interested in the role of women as the oppressed and the negotiation of romantic relations and marriage as deeply, if not entirely, influenced by a struggle for domination or freedom. A Feminist Marxist reading of Austen would see the novel's women as the oppressed. Karl Marx was a proponent of the classless society. He attacked the elites (bourgeoisie) and theorised a political and economic system that would eliminate the heirarchical structure in society. It would bring equality, brotherhood and liberty to societies. He wrote the communist manifesto, which was sort of like a handbook for communistic leaders. It influenced modernism because without it, communism would not have been nearly as strong. This view has profound implications in aesthetics, especially in literature. Up until Marx the novel could well be seen as an elitist product, dealing with a certain kind of protagonist and a certain kind of language, voice and perspective. We start to see literature appearing that gives voice to characters and experiences from society at large. Society is attacked, man is attacked! All because suddenly, people are starting to ask the question.... why THIS kind of society? Why THIS kind of man? Marx' ideas inspire a generation of avant-gardists, modernists and bohemians to defy artistic conventions... to write their self, to write experience.... to concieve of writing in wholly new ways. Two of the most telling examples of Marx' influence on modernism in literature are to be found in Virginia Woolf and James Joyce. Their works convey an experience of the self and of society in a way that jepordizes

conventional power structures, they give voice to the marginalised..... a voice of comparable quality and clarity as the elites. In certain modernist texts we see the erasure of monumental history and of class boundaries through the representation of common human experience. This is a telling contribution of Marx' philosophy. In keeping with the totalizing spirit of Marxism, literary theories arising from the Marxist paradigm have not only sought new ways of understanding the relationship between economic production and literature, but all cultural production as well. Marxist analyses of society and history have had a profound effect on literary theory and practical criticism, most notably in the development of " New Historicism" and " Cultural Materialism. " Edited & Re-synchronized By: Mohammad Mehedee Hasan Roll No - 0510022 (2005-06) Department of English, IU, Kushtia <http://facebook.com/mehedee2084> mehedee2084@gmail.com, mehedee2084@yahoo.co