

Literary criticism assignment

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What comes to your mind when you hear the word “criticism”? Nowadays, most people look at criticism as something negative and personally, it has a negative connotation to me. Multimedia (for example, television, radio, etc.) has often depicted criticism as an antagonist. On reality TV shows, say, a singing competition, there is usually a panel of Judges who criticize the contestants’ performances particularly focusing on its fine points and flaws (more on the latter) and the audience usually “boos” the Judges when they get antagonized by their criticisms. Also, people get reverse whenever they are given criticisms.

For example, a student on a consultation day will most likely fidget when the instructor would give comments on an important term paper they were to submit for finals. Even if this kind of criticism is not necessarily destructive, it just gives this queasy, uncomfortable feeling whenever we hear it. In fact, the Merriam-Webster Dictionary defines criticism as “an act of criticizing usually unfavorable.” This just shows that in the language of people (particularly those who speak English) “criticism” has evolved into something which has a negative annotation, when in fact it stemmed from something harmless.

The English word “criticism” was derived from the French word “critique”, and in turn “critique” has roots from the Latin word “critics” which meant a Judge, decider, or critic. The early English meaning of “criticism” was primarily literary criticism which would be the focus throughout this essay. Literary criticism is the study, evaluation, and interpretation of literature. Literary theory is mainly where literary criticism is drawn from. It uses the concepts from literary theory to form a literary criticism of a work. Literary

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theory is the systematic study of the nature of literature and of methods for analyzing literature.

It would seem that they mean the same thing. In fact, there are debates which argue that these fields of study be merged. Literary criticism may have probably existed for as long as literature had. Among the first is Aristotle Poetics which set the standard for “poetry” and dictated which was “bad” or “good” in structure. Around the same time, a certain Barbara Mini wrote literary criticism on ancient Indian literature and Sanskrit drama on his work Natty Shasta. Literary criticism has also dealt with religious texts particularly the Brachium elisions: Jewish literature, Christian literature, and Islamic literature.

The interpretation of these religious texts came to be known as hermeneutics and which its meaning has evolved simply into text interpretation. Literature, in its own sense, is a preserver of culture and history. It reflects the society and the goings-on in the world in a creative way ranging from simple to complex points-of-view. It provides different the faces of life in different times in different places and cultural background. Because of this, literary criticism and theory became a vital field of study.

The close reading of literature and its analysis provides us a general or even a close view of life and gives us messages, ideas, moral and life lessons. That said, literature and literary theory and criticism contributes to other fields of study aside from itself such as history, anthropology, archaeology, international relations, law, political science and government, philosophy, psychology, sociology, religion, and even science.

This disproves some arguments by scholars and artists that literature, literary theory and criticism is not valuable to life.

Stephen Joyce, a grandson of James Joyce (author of the Edible including the famous coming-of-age story *The Arab*), said that ordinary people can enjoy J. Joyce's works without knowing the technicalities, theories, and intricate explanations. Though this is true, that it is possible to enjoy a work without really knowing what it really means, it is important to derive what the author means to partake to its readers for what is a work if it means nothing and is only there for the purpose of amusement and enjoyment? Why do we still keep and preserve certain works of literature from long ago to now?

As I've mentioned before, literature was preserved as an art and field of study because it is vital to other fields of study (which may seem to be more important to other people nowadays) as well.