

The birth of satire essay sample



“ Aristophanes, a Greek playwright, is one of the best known early Satirists; he’s particularly famous for his political satire in which he criticized the powerful Cleon (as in the Knights) and for the persecution he underwent. ”(pp. 55-59)

We learn that Aristophanes was one of the earliest Satirists that we study in the history of Satires.

“ The first to discuss Satire critically was Quintilian, who invented the term to describe the writings of Lucilius. In the 16th century, most believed that the term satire came from the Greek satyr. Satyrs were the companions of Dionysos and central characters of the satyr plays of the Theatre of Ancient Greece. Its derivatives satirical and satirise are indeed, but the style of the Roman satire is rather linked to the satira, or satura lanx, a “ dish of fruits” resembling the colorful mockings or figuratively a “ medley”. (Oxford, 1998)

Quintilian was marked as having come up with the term “ Satire” in the 16th century which was a term adopted from the Greeks, most people assume. It is evident that this word was closely connected to objects, well known and often used by the Greeks, such as medley and dish of fruit.

“ Pliny reports that the 6th century BC poet Hipponax wrote Satirae that were so cruel that the offended hanged themselves. The confusion with the satyr supported the understanding of the satire as biting, like Juvenal, and not mild, like Horace, method of criticism in Early Modern Europe until the 17th century.”

We assume that some of the poets of the 6th century were capable of creating an extreme and harmful impact on individuals by their writing, in Early Modern Europe. Pliny tells us that Hipponax used Satirae that could be so hurtful that the objects of his writing would feel so horrible that they would end their own lives.

We see that in our early history of writing that satires were used by early poets who used them, at times to cause others to feel shame.

“ Criticism of Roman emperors (notably Augustus) needed to be presented in veiled ironic terms-but when applied to Latin works actually tilted as “ satires” is much wider than in the modern sense of the word, including fantastic and highly colored humorous writing with little or no real mocking intent.

Prominent satirists from Roman antiquity include Horace and Juvenal, who were active during the early days of the Roman Empire and are the two most influential Latin satirists. Other important satirists are Lucilius and Persius.”

There were many satirists from Rome but we clearly see that the early days of satirists revolve around the most noted in history, which two of these well-remembered satirists were Horace and Juvenal who were well-known in the time where the Roman Empire existed.

“ The Elizabeth (16th century English) writers did not know about the real origin of the word satire, and stressed only the Greek-influenced derivative, so that they believed it to relate to the half-animal satyr, that lived in the wild and was full of grim. They related it to only the notoriously rude, harse

and sharp satyr play. That way, authors attempting satire developed an even more biting pamphlet than the (well-known) Roman original satire was. The discussion ended when French Huguenot Isaac Casaubon discovered in 1605 that satire was a Roman term, ending the misunderstanding. Since then it referred again to the “ amendment of vices” (Dryden)

The 16th century writers sought out to find out where the word satire derived from wanted to know who were the first people to use satires. It was discovered by Huguenot Isaac Casaubon that the word satire did originate from the Greeks.

We do understand that the word satire is a useful technique that is used in writing, such as fiction, journalism, drama and sometimes we see satires in poetry and in graphic arts and in other forms of media where the author can benefit from criticizing through the means of a literary device.

Usually satires are used for humoring the audience of readers targeted in the direction of a group or a person, but used in a clever or witty manner in their writing about their target of speech.

We have found early satire in plays, literature and in artistic forms of expressing one’s ideas to bring across a point in their topic of discussion.

Sarcasm or mockery earlier marked the term of satire from the beginning of the word being used in literary history. From the early beginnings of using satire in writing, authors often used satires to create irony in their method of writing.

“ There are example of satire from the Early Middle Ages, especially songs by goliards or vagrants now best known as an anthology called Carmina Burana and made famous as texts of a comosition by the 20th century composer Carl Orff. Satirical poetry is believed to have been popular, although little has survived.

With the evident of the High Middle Ages and the birth of modern vernacular literature in the 12th century, it began to be used again, most notably by Chaucer. The disrespectful manner was considered “ Unchristian” and ignored but for the moral satire, which mocked misbehavior in Christian terms. Examples are Livre des Manieres (1170), til Eulenspiegel and Reynord the Fox, and in some of Chaucer’s Canterbury Tales. It’s more (overt) comeback was in Brandt’s Narrenschiff (1494)

Satires began in the early history of writing as an exaggeration, parody, comparison or analogy that was often utilized in satirical writing or in a speech. The misuse of a word which caused laughter from an audience was highly influential since the early times of using satire in writing and speeches.

It is noted that it was often considered an unchristian way of speaking by many and especially those who were the object of the puns.

The early satirists often used a word that was directly opposites of what they were saying, in order to create, sarcasm in their writing, which was popular by the readers, except for those who were the object of the writers humor.

Ebenezer Cooke, (p. 1) author of “ The Sot Weed Factor”, is possibly the first to bring satire to the British colonies, and others followed, using satire to shape an emerging nation’s culture through shaping its sense of the ridiculous.

“ Mark Twain was a great American satirist: his novel, “ Huckleberry Finn” is set in the ante-bellum South, where the moral values Twain wishes to promote are completely turned on their heads.”

We know of many great satirists in history and some of our own great satirists developed their writing styles around the theme of satires, like Mark Twain and Ebenezer Cooke.

“ Jonathon Swift was one of the greatest of Anglo-Irish satirists, and one of the first to practice modern journalistic satire. For instance, his “ A Modest Proposal” suggest that poor parents be encouraged to sell their own children, as food, or dissenters be slaughtered by the High Church.

Swift creates a moral fiction, a world in which parents do not have their most obvious responsibility, which is to protect their children from harm. His purpose is of course to attack indifference to the plight of the desperately poor.”

It is assumed that parents would never allow their children to be in harms way, so the author uses satire in order to create a huge statement in his writing. The author is demonstrating the uncaring nature of people when it comes to the children who are poor and the parents who normally protect them.

Ever since satires came alive with writers using them in their works, they have proven to directly reach out to their intended audiences and grasp their attention in a unique way and this allows the writer to clearly set his message in motion and one that shouldn't be taken, lightly.

When we think about writers who have taken on satires in their writing such as, Horace, we can clearly discern that the poet took on satires from the earlier periods in history, from where the satires were given birth to.

Horace is able to utilize his satires in his clever writing to awaken his audience of readers. Other writers have used satires in their styles of writing who have adopted this skill from their early predecessors from the centuries in the past.

We do learn from other writers who wrote poems, such as Juvenal's 16 satiric poems that show us how Romans lived their lives, so long ago and we are better able to understand their way of life, in that ancient period of time.

Those poems were published in five different books. Satires have a long history that surrounds their usage and we can clearly define satires as words and phrases, used since the centuries past, where a writer can demonstrated his objective in his thinking by offering satires in his writing.

Just like people in ancient periods of time, the Catholic church members complained about rude remarks, given in writing and in speeches. Down through time, we can clearly see that many people, including important officials have been highly offended by the usage of satires, when they were the target of the writer's indiscretion.

The birth of satires has paved a clear road for authors to create unique ways of addressing the message that they set out to deliver to their audience and they expect that these satires will wake up the audience, where they can clearly understand the message that they are trying to deliver, even if some individuals feel ill-treated or embarrassed about what the person is saying.

Satires are more accepted by some than others and satires are a true form of humor. Many people have left themselves open and vulnerable to speakers and writers, and have fallen victims to their sarcastic behavior. Many times, just like in the days of the Romans, where the speaker or writer had to be extremely careful about just how far they went with their humor in their satires, so they didn't offend someone who doesn't take the critical humor, so easily, these speakers and writers had to be on their toes at all times, and critically separate who they could and use satires with.

Just as Aristophanes used satires in the earliest satires, recorded, we can take heart that satires are here to stay.

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