

By has become a fact  
that many people



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By and large people term literature writing which they think is good.

Assess this formulation of literature. Within this statement there arises a problem. This problem lies within the notion of what is good. For people to term a literary work as that of a good piece of writing, people must have something bad, for which they can compare it to.

The concept of good writing has been an on-going argument for many centuries now, as peoples ideas change within certain periods, and many people have differing tastes, and their own personal opinions. It would appear that there is no universal definition of the term good when concerned with literature, however there is a strong connection between them. It has become a fact that many people think literature writing has to be of a good quality, this quality would include the use of its language, and the way it is structured. However what it is saying and whom it is written by, also have to be taken into consideration, when defining it as a good literary work. It appears that over the centuries attitudes towards literature have changed a great deal, and that peoples definition of what they see as good in a piece of writing, changes according to a particular period in question. Hippolyte Taine wrote in 1863: A literary text must be regarded as the expression of the psychology of an individual, which in turn is the expression of the milieu and the period in which the individual lived and of the race to which he belonged.

1 By this statement it becomes clear that the concept of good literature writing has a number of influences, and these must coincide with a particular era in history, in which a text is constructed.

However Taine not only comments upon a particular era, that effects the writing, but also the author plays a vital role in how a text is read. The author is seen as the sole creator of the writing, so therefore they are responsible for its contents. For example if a certain individual were to write something that goes against certain social ideologies of the time, like for instance, a person condemning religion in the seventeenth century, then that persons work may not be welcomed as good, if welcomed at all. However today it may be looked upon as a well formulated piece of writing, and people are able to look at it as good, because of attitudes that have changed. Indeed the term good has a lot to do with the construction of a piece of writing, and its use and positioning of language. As Terry Eagleton quotes from the Russian Formalist view on literature: Literature was an organised violence committed on ordinary speech..

. Literature transforms and intensifies ordinary speech. 2With this notion of literature deviating from colloquial language, it was said, by The Russian Formalist, Roman Jakobson, that language became vividly renewed. If perhaps this new structure of our everyday language is renewed to a great deal of success, then perhaps it could be termed as good literature. The idea of good lies within the richness and complexities of its grammatical structure. This notion is possibly the most common among people today, in regards to their idea upon literature.

A piece of literature is regarded to be good because of the way it chooses its diction and constructs it within its sentences. However what a piece of literature exhibits to its audience, in terms of story or argument is another matter. A piece may be beautifully written, but if the majority do not agree

with what it has to say, it may endanger its recognition within the literary world. Literature in contemporary society seems to be given much more scope, in terms of how it can express itself. (for example freedom of speech), and the audience it addresses is more open minded, in terms of what they can read about.

This is in contrast to the past, where literature writing may have come under much closer scrutiny, especially when connecting it with the notion of good. Literature would have been judged upon a much higher level. Eagleton writes: Value judgements would certainly seem to have a lot to do with what is judged literature and what isn't not necessarily in the same sense that writing has to be fine to be literary, but that it has to be of a kind that is judged fine: it may be an inferior example of a generally valued mode. What Eagleton is expressing here is that literature has to be judged as fine writing by certain individuals of high importance (critics, scholars) before it can be defined as good, to the general public. People have a great power to say what they think of a particular work, what is said about a work can influence people's perception.

However Eagleton goes on to express that: value is a transitive term: it means what is valued by certain people in specific situations. Again Eagleton has spoken of the notion that it all depends upon the status quo, of a particular era. Whether people think literature as good depends upon the individual, and when there are certain groups that say this type of literature is good, there will always be another group saying the opposite. As Eagleton expresses in his introduction, in Literary Theory the problem with defining literature as good is a problem because of the values expressed by each

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society: Any actual language consists of a highly complex range of discourse, differentiated according to class, region, genderstatus and so on, which can by no means be united into a single homogeneous linguistic community.

There is no universal definition for what can be seen as good literature writing as Eagleton sees the problem lies within the complexities of peoples social actions.

If people can define literature writing as good then what constitutes as bad writing. Surly the concept of writing literature is to write some thing good and worthwhile, so that the reader can gain some kind of enjoyment out of it. Sir Philip Sidney, writing in 1580, distinguished the aim of literature was: To give pleasure to the reader, and any moral or didactic element is necessarily either subordinated to that, or at least, unlikely to succeed without it. Here it seems that Sidney is debating the whole idea of literature as a form of entertainment. It would seem that he didnt want people to view literature as a strictly moralistic subject, steeped in the values of religion, or other social ideologies. Literature was there to be enjoyed by all, however peoples attitudes are different and this view change over time, therefore it is impossible for just one piece of literature to be defined as good, by everyone.

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