

STUDYING LITERATURE: THE PRE-CRITICAL RESPONSE

Literary research: the objectives involved

- Understanding of the basic theoretical concepts
- Contemporary approaches to literature
- Major differences among them
- Understanding of the aims of literary criticism
- Knowledge of key forms and terminology of literary criticism
- Read literature with understanding and judicious appreciation

Literary research: the objectives involved

- The basic theoretical concepts
- Basic for understanding and complementing
- Primarily focusing on senses and emotions
- The first step to move from amateur to analytical response
- Focusing on what, how and why?
- No substitute for initial personal, appreciative response to the basic ingredients of literature

Major components of a literary work:

- Setting
- Plot
- Characters
- Structure
- Style
- Atmosphere
- Theme
- Conflict
- Tone

Defining major components of literary work:

- The setting is the time frame or place in which the work takes place.
- The plot is the general background of the story line or literary work that presents the sequence of events in which the characters in possible conflict are involved.
- The characters are the individuals that the writing is typically based upon in a story line.
- Atmosphere is the mood or feeling conveyed by the author's choice of language.
- The theme is the underlying meaning of the writing. It is clearly stated and can be applied to the reader's life.

Commenting on setting and plot

The pre-critical response: setting and plot

- Your understanding of the basic literary components

- The TIME (day or history) and PLACE?
 - General
 - Specific
- Contribute strongly to the mood (atmosphere)
- Through which the action or narrative occurs

The pre-critical response: setting and plot

- Happenings in a literary work
- Referring to an action
- Organized around a conflict
- Builds through:
 - Complication
 - Climax
 - Resolution
- Time-honored plot ingredients (the escape, the chase, the capture, the release)

Commenting on characters and structure

The pre-critical response: characters and structure

- Character (ization) - developing Personality (ities)
 - Round (developed/believable)
 - Flat (stereotypes)
 - Dynamic
 - Static
- Structure: the reader's or viewer's unconscious sense of plot structure
- The relatedness of actions - the gradual buildup in suspense from a situation full of potential to a climax and a resolution

Commenting on style and atmosphere

The pre-critical response: style and atmosphere

- The distinctive handling of language
 - Choice
 - Arrangement
 - Tone
 - Mood
 - Imagery
 - Sound effects and other devices

The pre-critical response: style and atmosphere

- Mood
- The overall atmosphere
- Prevailing emotional era

- A common ingredient
- Created through several factors

Commenting on theme

The pre-critical response: theme

- Major idea and main concept
- Underlying meaning
- Directly or implied
- The often rich and varied underlying idea of the action is the theme
- Complex aspect of literature requiring very intentional thinking
- Slavery, hypocrisy, violence and destruction