DC English IV
World/British Literature

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Literary Criticism

Academic literary criticism exists as a method for further interpreting or developing a better understanding of:

- a culture
- a moment in history, ***or***
- an individual author/group of authors.

Likewise, **literary criticism** should be seen as a **social activity**.

- One reader/student/critic develops a view on a specific work of literature.
- As a result, others then others respond to the interpretation.
- An exchange of ideas then occurs, a stronger development
  of critical analysis (which is the overall college experience)

This is why in a literary critical paper the date of the references is not important. Any essay from any era can be used as a resource.

Literary Criticism

The critic's specific purpose, when using a **specified lens**:

- **value judgements** on a work

- furthers an **interpretation** of the work, *or*

- provide readers with relevant historical or biographical information

- which in the end provides readers with an added level of **understanding**

- or stronger **comprehension** of the literary work

Similar to Plato's demonstration of the Socratic method:

- these papers engage in dialogue or debate with other critics

- views of other critics enrich and support the discussion with evidence

Early Genres

The forerunners of modern literature include:

- *parable*
- *myth*
- fable
- folk-tales

Although rather diverse by appearance and format, all of these forms have a common origin: *all four are based on an oral tradition of story telling.*

Of course, lumped into this historical time you also have **other genres** such as:

- legends / epics
- jokes / riddles
- tall-tales

Early Genres

Overall, these collected stories define a people's culture—and usually these stories relate a system of morality or ethics.

In other words, they all teach a lesson in diverse ways.

By definition, the top four sub-genres are similar and they do use universal themes, *however* they each have different functions.

Early Genres

Definition of Parable: (quick review)

a brief story, <u>based in realistic terms</u>, contains <u>explicit teachings</u> of religion or philosophy; they explain the notions of a Spiritual World and apply them to the Natural World.

- these stories are intensified in the areas of
  - > morality
  - > spirituality
  - > cultural
- deal with human characters (*not* talking animals)
- do *not* contain magic nor fantasy aspects
- strictly contain teachings of:
  - > social
  - > political
  - > religious
  - > moral behavior

Early Genres

Definition of Myth:

a religious teaching—developed by a culture which views them as a truth,

as a religious mystery; these stories try to explain aspects of the Natural World:

- how the Universe was created

- how gods or goddesses became chief deities

- how humans were created

- how cities, countries, and societies were created

- how human intellect and art developed

- how gods and goddesses interact with humans

- how some heros became worshipped as gods

Overall these stories show the manner how a culture tries to explain
the Divine aspects of the Universe. To explain the unexplainable.