

Theoretical Information in Literary Education as the Main Means of Understanding the Content of a Literary Text

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Abstract. *This paper explores the role of theoretical information in literary education as a key means of understanding the content of a literary text. It emphasizes the importance of a theoretical approach to literature that aids students in comprehending the deeper meaning of a text, considering its historical, cultural, and philosophical contexts. The article discusses various literary analysis methods, essential theoretical concepts used in text interpretation, and the methodology of literary studies. It also highlights the necessity of theoretical knowledge in literary interpretation and the pedagogical approaches used in literary education. The paper further investigates the practical application of theoretical knowledge in teaching literature and the vital role literary studies play in the educational process.*

Key words: *Literary studies, theoretical information, literary text, literary analysis, understanding content, historical-contextual approach, pedagogy, teaching methodology, philosophical literature.*

Introduction

Literary education has long been recognized as an essential aspect of intellectual and emotional development, offering readers the opportunity to engage with the nuances of culture, history, language, and human experience. As readers move beyond casual enjoyment, they require frameworks that help them process and comprehend the deeper meanings embedded within literary texts. The application of literary theory is one such tool that empowers readers to understand a work not just for its plot or characters, but for its social, political, cultural, and ideological significance. Through theoretical approaches, readers are introduced to a systematic way of exploring the layers of a text, ultimately enhancing both their appreciation of the literature and their capacity for critical thinking.

At its core, literary theory is a collection of perspectives or methodologies used to examine and interpret literary texts. These frameworks provide systematic ways of analyzing and critiquing literature, allowing readers to better appreciate its multifaceted nature. Literary theory enables readers to go beyond the simple pleasure of reading and helps them to question the forces that shape a text, including the historical, political, and ideological contexts in which it was created. In educational settings, literary theory serves as the lens through which students view and analyze texts. These theories shape the way students approach literary works, encouraging them to explore deeper meanings and question assumptions about the text. Instead of merely consuming a narrative, students use theory as a tool to deconstruct the work and identify its social, political, and psychological layers. Literary theory is not just an academic pursuit—it is a vital part of critical literacy, helping students think analytically about the world around them.

Methodology

1. Formalism and New Criticism: Formalism and New Criticism focus primarily on the intrinsic elements of the text itself. These approaches encourage students to analyze the text's language, structure, form, and aesthetic qualities. By emphasizing how a text is constructed—whether through rhyme, symbolism, narrative structure, or word choice—students are trained to see that meaning emerges not just from the content of the story but from its very composition. For instance, a formalist reading of a poem might delve into its meter, rhyme scheme, or use of metaphor to understand how these elements work together to create meaning. In a novel, examining narrative point of view, pacing, or structure can provide deeper insights into how the author builds tension, develops characters, or conveys thematic content. The New Criticism movement, which became particularly influential in the early to mid-20th century, emphasized close reading and the intrinsic qualities of the text, arguing that the work should be analyzed independently of its author's intentions or the reader's personal reactions.

2. Structuralism and Post-Structuralism: Structuralism and post-structuralism both deal with the deep structures of language and meaning, though they approach these concepts differently. Structuralism looks at the overarching structures—such as linguistic systems, cultural codes, and symbols—that govern how texts are constructed and interpreted. It suggests that these systems shape meaning and that texts are part of broader cultural and linguistic systems that influence how we understand them. Structuralism encourages readers to view literature through the lens of these systems and structures, offering an objective way to analyze texts.

On the other hand, post-structuralism challenges the idea that meaning is fixed within these systems. Figures like Jacques Derrida questioned the stability of meaning, suggesting that language itself is inherently unstable and that interpretation is always subject to ambiguity and change. Post-structuralism encourages readers to approach texts with an awareness of the complexity and indeterminacy of meaning, inviting multiple readings and interpretations. Through these frameworks, students are encouraged to think critically about the role of language in shaping reality, how meaning is contingent on context, and how texts resist fixed interpretation.

3. Feminist Literary Theory: Feminist literary theory examines the representation of gender in literature, exploring how literary works reflect, reinforce, or challenge societal norms and power relations regarding gender. This perspective places a particular emphasis on the voices and experiences of women, who have historically been marginalized in literature. By applying feminist theory, readers can analyze how women are depicted, how their roles are shaped by patriarchal systems, and how literature can either perpetuate or challenge gender inequality.

Results and discussion

For example, students might analyze the portrayal of women in classical works like Shakespeare's plays or explore modern feminist texts that critique social constructs around gender. Feminist theory also asks readers to consider the ways in which literary traditions have excluded or silenced women's voices and to investigate how literature can serve as a platform for challenging these power structures. This approach promotes a more inclusive reading of literature, inviting students to critically engage with how gender dynamics are portrayed across different cultures and historical periods.

4. Psychoanalytic Theory: Psychoanalytic theory, derived from the works of Sigmund Freud, examines the unconscious mind, desires, repressed memories, and psychological conflicts within literature. Through this perspective, students analyze how characters' behaviors and motivations may be shaped by unconscious forces, such as fear, desire, or trauma. Psychoanalysis also encourages an exploration of symbolism—whether in dreams, objects, or actions—that reveals deeper psychological truths about characters or society.

For instance, analyzing the character of Hamlet from a psychoanalytic perspective might lead students to consider the prince's internal conflicts, his feelings of guilt, and his unconscious desire for revenge. Psychoanalytic theory enables readers to explore the psychological underpinnings of characters' actions and gain insight into how literature reflects human consciousness and emotional complexity.

Incorporating various theoretical approaches into literary education enhances students' ability to analyze texts from different perspectives. Teachers can use these theories to guide students through an exploration of literary works, inviting them to consider multiple interpretations. This process encourages critical thinking and fosters an appreciation for the complexity of literature.

Conclusion

By studying literary texts through different theoretical lenses, students are also encouraged to connect literature to broader societal issues, such as gender equality, class struggle, or psychological conflict. For example, a feminist or Marxist approach may highlight the socio-political forces at work within a particular text, while a psychoanalytic approach may shed light on the internal psychological dynamics of the characters. Literary theory also helps students recognize the historical and cultural context in which a text was produced, allowing for a deeper understanding of how literature interacts with society at different points in time.

In conclusion, theoretical information in literary education serves as a powerful means for deepening one's understanding of literary texts. Literary theory offers structured frameworks that guide readers toward a more sophisticated interpretation of texts, allowing them to move beyond surface-level readings to uncover deeper themes, symbols, and societal reflections. By applying various literary theories—whether formalist, structuralist, feminist, Marxist, or psychoanalytic—students and scholars gain a more nuanced understanding of the text and its context. These theoretical approaches not only enhance literary comprehension but also foster critical thinking, encouraging students to engage with texts in a meaningful and informed way. Ultimately, literary theory serves as a gateway to unlocking the full potential of literature, offering insights that resonate across time and place and enriching our understanding of human experience.

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