

## Literary Criticism Revision Questions

### Level IV

Dr. Sadek R. Mohammed

- 1. Etymologically, from which Greek word is the word "criticism" derived? What does it mean?**

Etymologically the word "criticism" is derived from the Greek word krinein which means to judge or discern.

- 2. Simply put, what does the word criticism mean?**

Simply put, criticism is the exercise of judgment.

- 3. Simply put, what does the term 'literary criticism' mean?**

Simply put, literary criticism is the exercise of judgment on literary works.

- 4. Who said the following: "is the work good or bad? That is the critic's domain"?**

Victor Hugo

- 5. Who said the following: "to set up a critic is to set up a judge of value"?**

I. A. Richards

- 6. What are the chief functions of literary criticism?**

Evaluation, Interpretation, and Explanation or Elucidation are the chief functions of literary criticism.

- 7. What type of criticism that sees literature as an imitation of nature?**

Mimetic Criticism

- 8. What type of criticism that is concerned with the relationship of the work of art to its audience?**

Pragmatic Criticism

- 9. What type of criticism that is concerned with literature and its relationship to its author?**

Expressive Criticism

**10. What type of criticism that studies literature in its relationship to itself solely?**

Objective Criticism

**11. What type of criticism that sees literature as primarily a form?**

Formalist Criticism

**12. What type of criticism that teaches writers how to write and lays down rules of literary composition?**

Legislative Criticism

**13. What type of criticism that sees literature against the background of the age in which it was written?**

Historical Criticism

**14. What type of criticism that evaluates literature against the background of the life of its author?**

Biographical Criticism

**15. What type of criticism that evaluates a literary work by comparing it to other literary works in other languages?**

Comparative Criticism

**16. What type of literary criticism that studies the literary work with reference to the facts of the interior life of its author?**

Psychological Criticism

**17. What type of criticism that records the critic's appreciation of the literary work?**

Impressionistic Criticism

**18. What type of criticism that examines literature with the hope of discovering underlying mythological patterns?**

Archetypal Criticism

**19. In which city was the literary criticism of the Greek period produced?**

Athens

**20. In which city was the literary criticism of the Roman period produced?**

Rome

**21. Who were the main critics of the Greek period in the history of literary criticism?**

Plato & Aristotle

**22. Who were the main critics of the Roman period in the history of literary criticism?**

Horace, Quintilian, & Longinus

**23. Who were the main English critics of the Neo-Classical period in the history of literary criticism?**

Dryden, Pope, and Johnson

**24. Who were the main English critics of the Romantic period?**

Wordsworth, Coleridge, and Shelley

**25. Who was the major English critic of the Victorian period?**

Mathew Arnold

**26. What is the name of the English critic who wrote the Impersonal Theory of Poetry?**

T. S. Eliot

**27. What is the name of the critic who defined literary criticism as "the endeavor to discriminate between experiences and evaluate them"?**

I. A. Richards

**28. Who said that literary criticism is "the disinterested endeavor to know and propagate the best that has been known and thought in the world"?**

I. A. Richards

**29. Is the following statement true or false: "the function of criticism is not fault-finding"?**

True

**30. Is the following statement true or false: "the function of criticism is not to eulogize or laud"?**

True

**31. Is the following statement true or false: "criticism is an activity of many-sided kind; it may consist of theorizing or judging, legislating or appreciating"?**

True

**32. What do we mean when we say that a critic must have "imaginative sympathy"?**

A critic must put himself in place of the writer and see through his point of view, share his vision of life.

**33. Etymologically, from which Latin word is the word "literature" derived? What does it mean?**

Etymologically, the word literature is derived from the Latin word *littera* which means the written word.

**34. What are the chief characteristics of Literary Language?**

Fictional, subjective, connotative, and all techniques are developed to draw attention to words.

**35. Who said that literature is "fundamentally an expression of life through the medium of language"?**

William H. Hudson

**36. Who said that literature is "the exploitation of words"?**

Anthony Burgess

**37. Who said that "literature is organized violence committed on language"?**

Roman Jakobson

**38. Who defines literature as "what the reader and writer agree to consider as literature"?**

The Reader-Response Theory

**39. Who defines literature as a "criticism of life"?**

Mathew Arnold

**40. Which school defines literature as a "deviation from normal speech"?**

The Formalist School

**41. What does the "Enjoyment Function" of literature mean?**

Literary works are consumed for the sake of one's enjoyment.

**42. What does the "Socio-political Function" of literature mean?**

Literary works unveil the surrounding social and political constructs. They portray the state of the people and the world around them.

**43. What does the "Ideological Function" of literature mean?**

Literary works shape our ideas and ways of thinking based on the ideas of other people. They also display a person's ideology placed in the text consciously or unconsciously.

**44. What does the "Moral Function" of literature mean?**

Literary works impart moral lessons to their readers.

**45. What does the "Linguistic Function" of literature mean?**

Literary works preserve national languages. They also evidence that a certain civilization has existed by recording the language and preserving it through wide periods.

**46. What does the "Cultural Function" of literature mean?**

Literary works preserve entire cultures and create an imprint of the people's way of living for others to read, hear, and learn.

**47. What does the "Educational Function" of literature mean?**

Literary works teach us many things about the human experience. They are used to show aspects of life that we see, and those that we would never dream of seeing.

**48. Traditionally, what are the two basic functions of literature?**

To teach and delight

**49. What is meant by the "Four R's Rule" which sums up the functions of literature?**

That the functions of literature are basically: Recreation, Recognition, Revelation, and Redemption.

**50. In which language words are not important, but their meanings?**

Scientific Language

**51. In which language all techniques are developed to draw attention to words?**

Literary Language

**52. What are the basic differences between Scientific Language and Literary Language?**

Scientific Language is factual, objective, and denotative, while Literary Language is fictional, subjective, and connotative. In scientific language, words are not important, but their meanings, whereas in Literary Language all techniques are developed to draw attention to words.

**53. What is literature essentially?**

Language

**54. Who is officially considered the first critics in the history of literary criticism?**

Plato

**55. Where can one find Plato's literary criticism?**

In his two major books: *The Republic X* & *Ion*.

**56. Unlike the Sophists who laid the entire cosmos in one level, Plato established a level of transcendence. What did he call it?**

The World of Ideas or Ideals

**57. According to Plato, the world of ideas or ideals is constitutive of which world?**

The Objective World

**58. According to Plato, which world is the domain of truth?**

The World of Ideas or Ideals

**59. According to Plato, which world is nothing but a copy of the world of ideas?**

The Objective World

**60. According to Plato, how can man bridge the gap between the objective world and the world of ideas?**

Through the possession of the faculty of reason

**61. According to Plato, why is literature a copy of a copy or an imitation of an imitation?**

Literature imitates life (the objective world), which is nothing but a copy of the world of ideas. This means that literature is A COPY OF A COPY or an IMITATION OF an IMITATION.

**62. According to Plato, how many times is literature removed from the truth?**

TWICE removed from the truth

**63. According to Plato, can we trust poetry as a source of the truth?**

According to Plato, poetry cannot be trusted as a source of the truth. IT IS USELESS & IT CAN NOT BE TRUSTWORTHY.

**64. Who said the following statement: "not by art does the poet sing, but by power divine"?**

Plato

**65. According to Plato, why can't we trust poets as bringers of the truth?**

Plato sees that poetry is the result of inspiration. Poets write when they get help from an outside force. The poet writes when there is no mind in him. BUT MIND IS THE MEANS TO BRIDGE THE GAP BETWEEN THE OBJECTIVE WORLD & THE WORLD OF IDEAS. So poets cannot be trusted as bringers of truth.

**66. On how many grounds does Plato object to poetry?**

Four

**67. What are the four grounds on which Plato objects to poetry?**

Intellectual, utilitarian, emotional, and moral grounds

**68. Does Plato expel all poets from his ideal state?**

Not all poets. HE EXCLUDES A SMALL CLASS OF POETS WHO SING SONGS OF PRAISE FOR THE HEROES & WARRIORS OF THE REPUBLIC.

**69. What is the essence of Plato's intellectual objection to poetry?**

Plato thinks that poetry is illusory and false. It is far removed from the truth. It imitates the objective world. Therefore, it is an imitation of an imitation. So we cannot rely on it as a source of the truth.

**70. What is the gist of Plato's utilitarian objection to poetry?**

Plato thinks that poetry is useless. It does not serve any purpose in life. It is not as useful as a bed. We can use a bed for sleeping, but poetry serves no practical purpose.

**71. What is the core of Plato's emotional objection to poetry?**

Plato thinks that poetry is trivial. For him, poetry speaks to man's feelings and feelings are seen by him as inferior faculty. He sees the mind (reason) as the superior faculty. Poetry is seen as an obstacle in the face of man's journey to the truth.

**72. What is the cause of Plato's moral objection to poetry?**

Plato thinks that poetry is morally dangerous. He sees that it is not conducive to social morality as poets pander to human weaknesses and glorify vices. Poets tell lies about the gods. They portray them as capable of committing all the vices people commit.

**73. Who said the following: "I love Plato, but my love for the truth is greater still."?**

Aristotle

**74. Is the following statement true or false: "Aristotle does not agree with Plato that imitation is the common basis of all Arts"?**

False

**75. How does Aristotle differ with Plato on the concept of nature?**

For Aristotle, nature is not the outward world of created things, but "the creative force, the reproductive principle of the universe." Nature is a dynamic organic process of becoming based on the interaction and unity between MATTER & FORM. Each thing has the potentiality to become what its form has made it into. MATTER is what something is made of. FORM is what something is made into.

**76. What does the artist imitate according to Aristotle?**

The artist imitates the creative process of nature.

**77. How does Aristotle understand imitation?**

Imitation is not a mere photographic representation of the surface of things, but a creative process. The poet selects and orders his material and in this way recreates reality. He brings order out of chaos.

**78. Why does Aristotle believe that poetry is superior to history?**

History deals with the particular and the ephemeral, poetry deals with the permanent and universal. History deals with what is, poetry deals with what ought to happen. History tells us what happened; poetry tells what may happen.

**79. Why does Aristotle believe that poetry is superior to philosophy?**

Poetry is not servile mimicry of reality. Poetic truth is of a much higher order. The poet deals with reality shorn of the particular and the non-essential. The poet deals with the permanent and universal facts of nature, he idealizes reality, but in doing so he remains true to the principles of nature. He reveals the laws of nature, the laws which govern the course of events. Poetry is more philosophical than philosophy itself, for it is more conducive to

understanding, as it presents permanent truths in easy, pleasant, and concrete forms.

**80. Who is the more original genius, Plato or Aristotle?**

Plato

**81. How does tragedy present men according to Aristotle?**

Better than they are.

**82. How does comedy present men according to Aristotle?**

Comedy presents men worse than they are.

**83. What by definition, according to Aristotle, is serious, complete, and of a certain magnitude?**

Tragedy

**84. What is the most important element of tragedy according to Aristotle?**

Plot

**85. What is the least important element of a tragedy according to Aristotle?**

Spectacle

**86. What term does Aristotle use for the purgation of pity and fear in the audience?**

Catharsis

**87. Where can one find Aristotle's literary criticism?**

In his book Poetics

**88. What are the elements of tragedy according to Aristotle?**

The elements of tragedy, according to Aristotle, are Plot, Character, Thought, Diction, Song, and Spectacle.

**89. What should be the time limit given by Aristotle for the action of the play?**

24 hours

**90. What does Aristotle mean by hamartia?**

Tragic flaw

**91. In which form was Horace's *Ars Poetica* written? When was it written?**

Horace's *Ars Poetica* was a verse epistle written in (19 B.C.)

**92. Why *Ars Poetica* is sometimes referred to as the "Epistle to the Pisos"?**

Because it is originally an Epistle (or Letter) to Lucius Calpurnius Piso (the Roman senator and consul) and his two sons.

**93. What are the three divisions that make the subject matter of *Ars Poetica*?**

Poesis, Poema, Poeta.

**94. What does Horace do in the first part of *Ars Poetica*? What is it normally called?**

The first part of *Ars Poetica* is normally called Poesis in which Horace discusses the subject matter of poetry.

**95. Is the following statement true or false: "although *Ars Poetica* seems formless and unsystematic, a closer examination shows a definite and well-marked scheme of treatment"?**

True

**96. Horace's *Ars Poetica* is made of three parts. Which one of them is thoroughly organized?**

Poema

**97. The second part of *the Ars Poetica* is called Poema. What does Horace discuss in it?**

Horace discusses drama as a form of poetry.

**98. Where should a plot begin according to Horace?**

Horace insists that a plot should plunge straight into the middle.

**99. According to Horace, how should the beginning of a plot in a drama be?**

Simple and straightforward

**100. According to Horace, how should a writer deal with characters drawn from tradition?**

They must preserve their traditional traits.

**101. According to Horace, how should a writer show children's characters?**

They should be shown as quick to anger and quick to cool.

**102. According to Horace, how should a writer show the characters of men of riper years?**

They should be shown as businesslike, ambitious, and worldly-wise.

**103. According to Horace, how should a dramatic style vary?**

A dramatic style should vary by character, mood, and circumstance.

**104. According to Horace, where should ugly and horrible incidents in drama take place?**

Offstage

**105. How many acts should a play have according to Horace?**

A play should not have more or less than five acts.

**106. How many characters should be in every scene according to Horace?**

Three characters only

**107. Should the gods intervene in the action of the play according to Horace?**

The gods should not intervene in the action unless it is essential.

**108. Is the Chorus an integral part of a play according to Horace?**

Yes, the chorus is an integral part of a play.

**109. What functions does the Chorus have in a play according to Horace?**

- a. Its songs forward the action of the play.
- b. It backs the good and gives sage counsel.
- c. It checks and controls passion.

**110. To which period does "On the Sublime" belong?**

The Greco-Roman period

**111. It is calculated that as much as one-third of the original text of "On the Sublime" is missing. Is what we have sufficient to make plain the intention of the author?**

Yes.

**112. What questions does "On the Sublime" tackle?**

What is good writing? And how it may be achieved?

**113. What is the Sublime according to Longinus?**

The sublime is a certain loftiness and distinction in the style of writing.

**114. Where does the effect of the Sublime take place?**

The effect of the sublime takes place on the reader and moves him/her from one psychological state to another.

**115. What does Longinus mean by *Tumidity*?**

Bombastic use of language.

**116. What does Longinus mean by *Puerility*?**

Childish use of language.

**117. What does Longinus mean by *Parentyrsus*?**

Cheap display of passion.

**118. What are the aspects of false Sublime according to Longinus?**

Bombastic use of language. (Tumidity)  
Childish use of language. (Puerility)  
Cheap display of passion. (Parenthyrsus)

**119. What does true Sublime do according to Longinus?**

True sublime pleases all and pleases always.

**120. What are the sources of the true Sublime according to Longinus?**

The sources of the true sublime are:

- a. The greatness of thought.
- b. Passion.
- c. Figurative language.
- d. Diction.
- e. Dignified composition.

**121. Why was Sir Philip Sidney provoked to write his Apology?**

In 1579, Stephen Gosson wrote an attack on poetry entitled *School of Abuse* which he dedicated to Sidney. The dedication reads like this: "To the right noble Gentleman, Master Philip Sidney, Esquire." Indeed, Sidney was largely provoked by Gosson's dedication. Thus, he wrote his *Apology*.

**122. Who claimed that poetry is "mere rhyming and versifying"?**

Stephen Gosson

**123. Who said that poetry is the "mother of all lies."?**

Stephen Gosson

**124. In his attack on poetry, Stephen Gosson claimed that poetry makes men effeminate. What was Sidney's defense?**

The fault lies not with poetry, but with the abuse of poetry. Poetry was always used to move men to heroic action.

**125. How does Sir Philip Sidney justify his claim that poetry is superior to both philosophy and history?**

Philosophy teaches by precept alone. It is general, abstract, and without clarity or beauty of style. History teaches by example alone. It shows the experience of past ages. It is tied to what happened and the particular. Poetry teaches by precept and example (dual function) binding the general with the particular.

**126. How does Sir Philip Sidney define poetry?**

Sir Philip Sidney defines poetry as an art of imitation...that is to say, a representing, counterfeiting, or figuring forth: to speak metaphorically, a speaking picture, with this end- to teach and delight.

**127. According to Sidney, what is the function of rhyme?**

It is a polish to speech, it regulates verbal harmony, it adds the quality of music, and it is an aid to memory.

**128. During which era did Alexander Pope write his Essay on Criticism?**

The Enlightenment

**129. What other critical works did Alexander Pope write in addition to his Essay on Criticism?**

- a. *Imitations of the Epistles of Horace to Augustus*
- b. *His Letters*
- c. *His Preface to his edition of Shakespeare's Plays*

**130. When was *An Essay on Criticism* first published?**

1711

**131. How old was Alexander Pope when *An Essay on Criticism* was first published?**

22 years old

**132. When did Alexander Pope live?**

From 1688 to 1744

**133. In which form was *An Essay on Criticism* written?**

Heroic couplets.

**134. How is nature treated in *An Essay on Criticism*?**

As the ultimate guide to understanding poetry.

**135. Who inspired Alexander Pope to write *An Essay on Criticism*?**

Horace

**136. Who said the following: "A little learning is a dang'rous thing"?**

Alexander Pope

**137. How many parts are there in *An Essay on Criticism*?**

Three

**138. What does the first part of *An Essay on Criticism* deal with?**

The general principles of good criticism and poetry

**139. According to Alexander Pope, what does the word criticism mean?**

Criticism for Pope means determining the *merit* of a work rather than its *meaning*, understanding the principles of good criticism means understanding the rules for good poetry and vice versa.

**140. What is the main problem in the field of literary criticism according to Alexander Pope?**

Judgments are partial, and the true taste is as rare as a true genius. Some critics go astray through false learning, others through envy of wit.

**141. What does Pope mean by 'nature' in the following line: "First follow nature"?**

*Nature* here means something like "the universe as God created it" or "that which is permanently true."

**142. What did Alexander Pope mean when he said that a critic should learn the "rules of old"?**

He meant the precepts of poetry and criticism set down by the classical Greek and Roman authors or deducible from their literature.

**143. What does the second part of *An Essay on Criticism* deal with?**

The second part identifies the main flaws a critic is exposed to, and therefore the greatest obstacles to good criticism.

**144. What is the first and biggest flaw in criticism as in just about everything else according to Alexander Pope?**

Pride

**145. One of the biggest drawbacks in the making of a critic according to Alexander Pope is "little learning", what does he mean by that?**

Little learning makes critics susceptible to pride, by making them think they know more than they do.

**146. According to Alexander Pope, one of the biggest flaws in the making of a critic is "a love of parts", what does he mean by that? What should a critic do instead?**

By "a love of parts", Pope means emphasizing one aspect of a poem at the expense of all others. A critic SHOULD, instead, "read each work of wit/ With the same spirit that its author writ"; "Survey the whole" and "regard the writer's end."

**147. One of the failings in the making of a critic, according to Alexander Pope, is liking only "one small sect", what does he mean by that?**

He means liking foreign writers, British author, ancients, or moderns, as opposed to approving merit wherever it is found.

**148. What are the eight major flaws in the making of a critic according to Alexander Pope?**

1. Pride.
2. Little Learning.
3. Love of parts.
4. Love of extremes.
5. Liking only one small sect.
6. Judging authors according to the opinions of others rather than the merit of the work.
7. Prizing novelty above everything else.
8. Valuing only those works which agree with one's views, or written by friends or members of one's party, etc.

**149. What does the third part of *An Essay on Criticism* deal with?**

The third part of *An Essay on Criticism* celebrates a good critic and concludes with a short history of literary criticism and a catalog of famous critics.

**150. What are the qualities of a good critic?**

- a. Must possess sound common sense, understanding taste, and clear thinking.
- b. Must be well-read not only in the literature of his language but in the literatures of as many languages as possible.
- c. Must have proper training and technical skills in different branches of literature.
- d. Must be objective (above prejudice: personal, religious, national, political, literary, etc.)
- e. Must have imaginative sympathy (put himself in place of the writer and see through his point of view, share his vision of life. Through such sympathy, meaning can be obtained.
- f. Must possess a sound knowledge of human psychology.

**151. What were the factors that contributed to the rise of Graeco-Roman literary criticism?**

- a. King Augustus (reigned from 27 B.C. until he died in 14 A.D.) and his courtiers were great lovers of art and literature, and they encouraged and assisted writers.
- b. The time was a time of peace in which distinction could no longer be achieved through war. Hence, men turned to poetry and literature to gain such a distinction.
- c. There was an upsurge of nationalism, and the literary men of Rome wanted to equal, if not excel, the achievements of ancient Greece, both in literature and criticism.

- d. Many poetasters were turning to inferior verse, of no literary merit at all, and so were corrupting and degrading public taste.
- e. The arrival in Rome of a group of writers of genius from Naples who had studied the Greek masterpieces there under the guidance of eminent Greek writers and their arrival caused an influx of new ideas, which imposed a fresh life into literary discussions. Virgil was one of them, Horace soon met him and came under his spell, and was encouraged by him.

**152. What are the general characteristics of Renaissance literary criticism?**

- a. Renaissance literary criticism took root in defenses of poetry and dialogues on language and literary imitation in Italy in the 14th and 15th centuries.
- b. It reached maturity and first achieved independence in 16th-century Italy, where the recovery of Aristotle's *Poetics* occasioned a series of commentaries that extended to the elaboration of comprehensive theories of poetry.
- c. Fundamentally, however, it is indebted to Horace, Aristotle, and Plato, roughly in this order.
- d. Critics extended classical poetics to meet the demands of contemporary Christian writers and readers. Their priority was the defense of poetry against the incursions of its ancient and modern opponents and the defense of the vernacular as a poetic medium.
- e. Defending poetry entailed defining it and establishing its formal criteria, both of which hinged on imitation. Following Aristotle, they tended to define poetry as an imitation, the status, source, and purpose of which they debated with recourse to other classical philosophers, critics, and rhetoricians.
- f. Renaissance literary criticism thus reflects the intellectual culture of the age by confronting at every turn the complex dynamics of imitation, both practically and theoretically.

**153. What were the causes that led to the rise of Neo-Classical Criticism?**

- a. The excesses of the Metaphysicals - the followers of John Donne - naturally led to a revolt in favor of order, balance, and sanity in literature. Their extravagant hyperboles, far-fetched and violent similes

and metaphors, and 'conceits' elaborated to a fantastic extent, prepared the ground for neo-classicism with its emphasis on 'correctness', and 'decorum'.

- b. The predominance of French influence. Charles II and his courtiers returned from France imbued with French culture and the French respect for rules and the French theory and practice of Literature. In France, rigid rules and regulations had already been framed by the *French Academy* and they were now imported into England.
  
- c. The rise of the scientific spirit and the new philosophy with their emphasis on rationalism, reason, clarity, and simplicity in thought and expression, and the avoidance of all that was extravagant. Philosophers, like Hobbes, taught that 'fancy' should be guided and controlled by 'judgment'.