

## 1. What is Literature?

The word "literature" is very difficult to define. There are as many definitions of literature as there are writers in the world. Etymologically, however, the word literature is derived from the Latin word *littera* which means the written word. Some writers claim that, in fact, literature is derived from the Latin *literatura/litteratura* (writing formed with letters). Hence, one definition of literature is everything in print or everything written.

Or more specifically, it is writing that possesses literary merit.

- Literature → Fiction & Non-fiction
- Literature → Poetry & Prose
- Literature → Drama, shorts stories, novels, etc.
- Literature → Historical Periods



Still,

THIS DEFINITION CAN NOT BE ACCEPTED BECAUSE IT EXCLUDES ORAL LITERATURE.

Another definition of literature sees that it is essentially language. Nevertheless, the language of literature is differentiated from scientific language:

| Scientific Language                 | Literary Language                                   |
|-------------------------------------|---|
| Factual                             | Fictional   |
| Objective                           | Subjective  |
| Denotative                          | Connotative   |
| Words not important, their meanings | All techniques developed to draw attention to words |

*Thus literature may be defined as essentially language, but it is a special sort of language in the sense that while scientific language is factual, objective and*

denotative; literary language is fictional, subjective and connotative. In scientific language words are not important, but their meanings. In literary language all techniques are developed to draw attention to the word.

## 2. Some other definitions of Literature:

- Organizing words to give pleasure. [Encyclopedia Britannica]
- Literature is fundamentally an expression of life through the medium of language. [William H. Hudson]
- Literature is the exploitation of words. [Anthony Burgess]
- Literature is a deviation from normal speech. [Formalist School]
- Literature is a criticism of life. [Mathew Arnold]
- Literature is organized violence committed on language. [Roman Jakobson]
- Literature is what the reader and writer agree to consider as literature. [Reader-Response Theory]

## 3. The Functions of Literature

The two basic functions of literature are to TEACH & DELIGHT.

OR

The four R's:

1. Recreation
2. Recognition
3. Revelation
4. Redemption



Or

1. **Enjoyment Function:** literary works are consumed for the sake of one's personal enjoyment.
2. **Socio-political Function:** literary works unveil the surrounding social and political constructs. They portray the state of the people and the world around them.
3. **Ideological Function:** 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.
4. **Moral Function:** literary works impart moral lessons to their readers.
5. **Linguistic Function:** literary works preserve national languages. They are also evidences that a certain civilization has existed by recording the language and preserving it through wide spans of time.
6. **Cultural Function:** literary works preserve entire cultures and create an imprint of the people's way of living for others to read, hear, and learn.
7. **Educational Function:** literary works teach us many things about human experience. They are used to show aspects of life that we see, and those that we would never dream of seeing

