

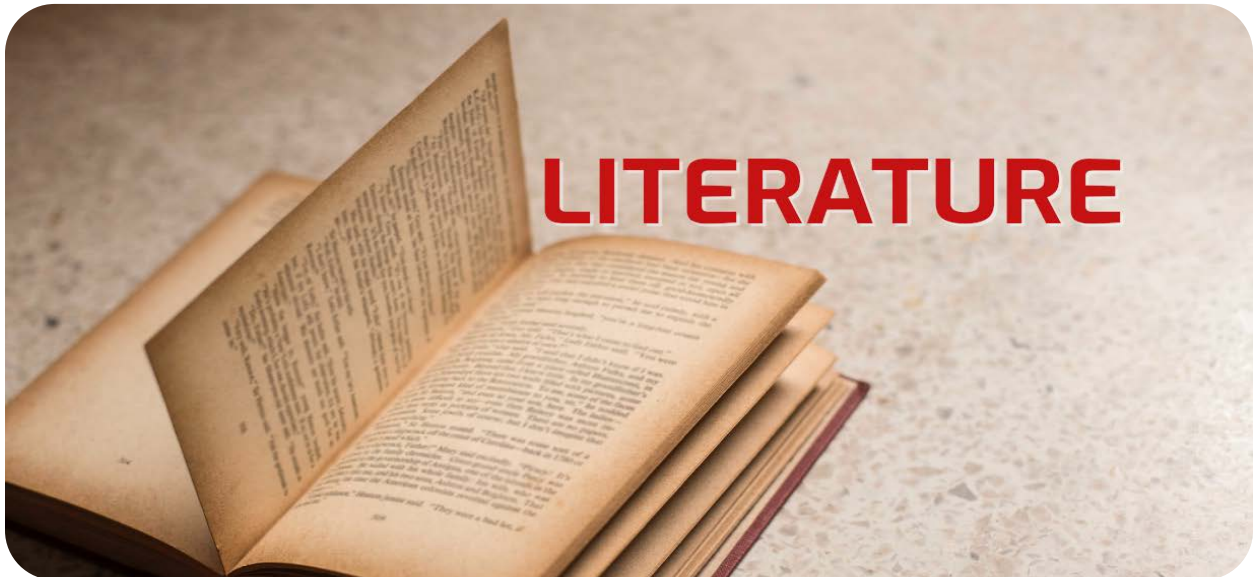


CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION TO LITERATURE



Objectives:

- Define literature.
- Categorize five main literature genres.
- Recognize different elements of poetry.
- Determine different types of prose.



Lesson 1: What is Literature?

Literature, in its broadest sense, is any written work. Etymologically, the term derives from Latin *litaritura/litteratura* “writing formed with letters,” although some definitions include spoken or sung texts. More restrictively, it is writing that possesses literary merit. Literature can be classified according to whether it is fiction or non-fiction and whether it is poetry or prose. It can be further distinguished according to major forms such as the novel, short story or drama, and works are often categorized according to historical periods or their adherence to certain aesthetic features or expectations (genre).

Lesson 2: Classification of Literary Type (Literary Genre)

Numerous literary genres exist to broaden knowledge and entertain back in ancient Greece, literature was divided into two main categories: tragedy and comedy. Nowadays the list of possible types and literature genres can seem endless. But it is still possible to narrow down the vast amount of literature available into a few basic groups. The five genres of literature students should be familiar with are Poetry, Drama, Prose, Nonfiction, and Media—each of which is explained in more detail below. You'll see some overlap between genres; for example, prose is a broader term that includes both drama and non-fiction. At the end of this article, we'll also touch on a couple of narrower but still important literary categories.

Poetry

This is often considered the oldest form of literature. Before writing was invented, oral stories were commonly put into some sort of poetic form to make them easier to remember and recite.

Poetry is a form of literary art that uses aesthetic and rhythmic qualities of language to evoke meanings in addition to, or in place of, prosaic ostensible meaning (ordinary intended meaning). Poetry has traditionally been distinguished from prose by its being set in verse; prose is cast in sentences, poetry in lines; the syntax of prose is dictated by meaning, whereas that of poetry is held across metre or the visual aspects of the poem.

Poetry today is usually written down but is still sometimes performed. A lot of people think of rhymes and counting syllables and lines when they think of poetry, and some poems certainly follow strict forms. But other types of poetry are so free-form that they lack any rhymes or common patterns. There are even kinds of poetry that cross genre lines, such as prose poetry. In general, though, a text is a poem when it has some sort of meter or rhythm, and when it focuses on the way the syllables, words, and phrases sound when put together.

Poems are heavy in imagery and metaphor and are often made up of fragments and phrases rather than complete, grammatically correct sentences. And poetry is nearly always written in stanzas and lines, creating a unique look on the page. Poetry, as experienced in the classroom, is usually one of three types. There are the shorter, more modern poems, spanning anything from a few lines to a few pages. Often these are collected in books of poems by a single author or by a variety of writers. Edgar Allen Poe's "The Raven," is one of the most commonly taught poems of this type. Then there are the classical, formulaic poems of Shakespeare's time, such as the blank verse and the



sonnet. And finally, there are the ancient, epic poems transcribed from oral stories. These long, complex poems resemble novels, such as Homer's *The Iliad* and *The Odyssey*.

Elements of Poetry

- **Stanza** – refers to the grouping of lines or succession of lines arranged together according to substance.
- **Form** – pertains to the style of the poem or how the poem is structured.
- **Classical Poetry** – shows metrical pattern, has specific number of lines and has rhyme scheme.
- **Contemporary Poetry** – it does not have meter, rhyme, nor pattern. It is also called free or blank verse.
- **Rhyme** – repetition of similar sounds.
 - **End Rhyme** – refers to words with similar sounds that appear at the end of the lines.
 - **Internal Rhyme** – kind of rhyme found in the middle of the lines or a rhyme within the lines.
- **Rhythm** – refers to the tempo or beat created through the stress and unstressed syllables presented in the lines.
- **Meter** – the pattern of the sounds or the organized arrangement of sounds. This is shown by the kind of foot and the feet number.
 - **Poetry meter** - defined by the Poetry Foundation as the rhythmical pattern of stressed and unstressed syllables in verse. A foot usually contains one stressed syllable and at least one unstressed syllable.

Type of Foot

- **Trochaic Foot or Trochee** - a succession of accented and unaccented syllables or an unaccented syllable following an accented syllables.
- **Anapestic Foot or Anapest** - consist of two unaccented or unstressed syllables followed by one accented or stress syllables.
- **Dactylic Foot or Dactyl** - consist of stressed or an accented syllable which is followed by two unstressed or unaccented syllables.
- **Iamb or Iambic Foot** - a type of foot consisting of a short syllable which is followed by a long syllables, or an unstressed syllable which is followed by a stressed syllables.

Number of Feet

- **Monometer** - a verse line having a single metrical foot.
- **Dimeter** - consist of a line showing double metrical feet.
- **Trimeter** - a line having three metrical feet.
- **Tetrameter** - a line having three metrocal feet.
- **Pentameter** - shows a line with five metrical feet.
- **Hexameter** - also called Alexanderine, has six metrical feet in a line.
- **Heptameter** - a line consist of seven metrical feet.

- **Rhyme Scheme** - the ordered pattern of rhymes at the ends of the lines of a poem or verse
- **Alternate Rhyme** - it is also known as ABAB rhyme scheme, it rhymes as “ABAB CDCD EFEF GHGH.”
- **Ballade** - it contains three stanzas with the rhyme scheme of “ABABBCBC” followed by “BCBC.”
- **Monorhyme** - it is a poem in which every line uses the same rhyme scheme.
- **Couplet** - it contains two-line stanzas with the “AA” rhyme scheme, which often appears as “AA BB CC and DD...”
- **Triplet** - it often repeats like a couplet, uses rhyme scheme of “AAA.”
- **Enclosed Rhyme** - it uses rhyme scheme of “ABBA”
- **Terza Rima Rhyme Scheme** - it uses tercets, three lines stanzas. Its interlocking pattern on end words follows: ABA BCB CDC DED and so on.
- **Keats Odes Rhyme Scheme** - in his famous odes, Keats has used a specific rhyme scheme, which is “ABABCDECDE.”
- **Limerick** - a poem uses five lines with a rhyme scheme of “AABBA.”
- **Villanelle** - a nineteen-line poem consisting of five tercets and a final quatrain. It uses a rhyme scheme of “A1bA2, abA1, abA2, abA1, abA2, abA1A2.”

Types of Poetry

- **Narrative Poetry** - a form of poetry that tells a story, often making the voices of a narrator and characters as well; the entire story is usually written in metered verse.
 - Subtypes of Narrative Poetry
- **Ballad** – a type of narrative poetry that narrates a story.
- **Epic** – a lengthy kind of narrative poem which centers on a historical or legendary hero's victorious feat.
- **Lyric Poetry** – a kind of poem expresses the strong emotions and thoughts of the persona in the poem.
- **Subtypes of Narrative Poetry**
- **Ode** – a lyric poem of medium or long length, focused on a significant subject.
- **Sonnet** – a type of lyric poem that has fourteen lines, and is often expressed in iambic pentameter in English.
- **Elegy** – a form of lyric poetry which focuses on mourning for the dead.
- **Descriptive Poetry** - a type of poetry which describe the environment that the persona is in.
- **Other Types of Poetry**
- **Haiku** – a type of poem originated in Japan.
- **Limerick** – a kind of well-structured narrative poem, comprised of a cinquain and has rhyme scheme of “AABBA.”

Prose

Once you know what poetry is, it's easy to define prose. Prose is a form of language that possesses ordinary syntax and natural speech rather than rhythmic structure; in which regard, along with its measurement in sentences rather than lines, it differs from poetry.

- **Novel** - a long fictional prose narrative.
- **Novella** - the novella exists between the novel and short story; the publisher Melville House classifies it as "too short to be a novel, too long to be a short story."
- **Short Story** - a dilemma in defining the "short story" as a literary form is how to, or whether one should, distinguish it from any short narrative. Apart from its distinct size, various theorists have suggested that the short story has a characteristic subject matter or structure; these discussions often position the form in some relation to the novel.



Prose can be defined as any kind of written text that isn't poetry (which means drama, discussed below, is technically a type of prose). The most typical varieties of prose are novels and short stories, while other types include letters, diaries, journals, and non-fiction (also discussed below). Prose is written in complete sentences and organized in paragraphs. Instead of focusing on sound, which is what poetry does, prose tends to focus on plot and characters. Prose is the type of literature read most often taught in English classrooms. Any novel or short story falls into this category, from *Jane Eyre* to *Twilight* and from "A Sound of Thunder" to "The Crucible." Like poetry, prose is broken down into a large number of other sub-genres. Some of these genres revolve around the structure of the text, such as novellas, biographies, and memoirs, and others are based on the subject matter, like romances, fantasies, and mysteries.

Drama

Any text meant to be performed rather than read can be considered drama (unless it's a poem meant to be performed, of course). In layman's terms, dramas are usually called plays. When written down the bulk of a drama is dialogue, with periodic stage directions such as "he looks away angrily." Of all the genres of literature discussed in this article, drama is the one given the least time in most classrooms. And often when drama is taught, it's only read the same way you might read a novel. Since dramas are meant to be acted out in front of an audience, it's hard to fully appreciate them when looking only at pages of text.

Students respond best to dramas, and grasp their mechanics more fully when exposed to film or theater versions or encouraged to read aloud or act out scenes during class.



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The dramas most commonly taught in classrooms are definitely those written by the bard. Shakespeare's plays are challenging, but rewarding when approached with a little effort and a critical mindset. Popular choices from his repertoire include *Hamlet*, *Taming of the Shrew*, and *Romeo and Juliet*, among others. Older Greek plays are also taught fairly often, especially Sophocles' *Antigone*. And any good drama unit should include more modern plays for comparison, such as Arthur Miller's *Death of a Salesman*. Drama is literature intended for performance.

Non-Fiction

Poetry and drama both belong to the broader category of fiction—texts that feature events and characters that have been made up. Then there is non-fiction, a vast category that is a type of prose and includes many different sub-genres. Non-fiction can be creative, such as the personal essay, or factual, such as the scientific paper. Sometimes

the purpose of non-fiction is to tell a story (hence the autobiography), but most of the time the purpose is to pass on information and educate the reader about certain facts, ideas, and/or issues. Some genres of non-fiction include histories, textbooks, travel books, newspapers, self-help books, and literary criticism. A full list of non-fiction types would be at least as long as

this entire article. But the varieties most often used in the classroom are textbooks, literary criticism, and essays of various sorts. Most of what students practice writing in the classroom is the non-fiction essay, from factual to personal to persuasive. And non-fiction is often used to support and expand students' understanding of fiction texts—after reading *Hamlet* students might read critical articles about the play and historical information about the time period and/or the life of Shakespeare.



Media

The newest type of literature that has been defined as a distinct genre is media. This categorization was created to encompass the many new and important kinds of texts in our society today, such as movies and films, websites, commercials, billboards, and radio programs. Any work that doesn't exist primarily as a written text can probably be considered media, particularly if it relies on recently developed technologies. Media literature can serve a wide variety of purposes—among other things it can educate, entertain, advertise, and/or persuade. More and more educators are coming to recognize the importance of teaching media in the classroom. Students are likely to be exposed to far more of this type of literature than anything else throughout their lives, so it makes sense to teach them how to be critical and active



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consumers of media. Internet literacy is a growing field, for example, since the skills required to understand and use online information differ in important ways from the skills required to analyze printed information.

Teaching media literacy is also a great way for educators to help students become participants in their own culture, through lessons on creating their own websites or home movies or commercials.

Other Types of Literature

These are far from the only important genres of literature. Here are a few more that are sometimes used in classrooms: Oral Literature: The oldest type of literature, and the foundation on which culture was built. Now, most oral texts have been written down, of course, and are usually taught in the form of epic poems or plays or folk tales. Folklore/Folk Tales/Fables: A distinction is often made between regular prose and folklore. Most folk tales were originally oral literature, and are short stories meant to pass on a particular lesson or moral. They often have a timeless quality, dealing with common human concerns that are just as relevant to us today, while still being products of a very specific culture and time period. Graphic Novels and Comic Books: It used to be that most educators saw comic books as the lowest form of literature, not suitable or valuable for children. But times have changed, and many teachers have come to realize that comic books and the more modern graphic novels are both appealing to kids and are a valid form of literature in their own right.

EXPAND YOUR KNOWLEDGE



For further reading please refer to the link provided:

What is Literature?

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3GupG1XWj5Y>

What is literature and its types?

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QEpoaBX0oCw>

Literary Genres and Subgenres (Fiction, Nonfiction, Drama, and Poetry)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oarGRayak5o>



Online Source:

<https://www.brighthubeducation.com/homework-help-literature/100292-the-five-main-genres-of-literature/#poetry>