

SS1 Literature – Week 1

Topic: Introduction to Literature

Lesson Objectives

By the end of this lesson, students should be able to:

1. Define the term **literature**.
 2. Understand and explain the **functions of literature** in individual and societal life.
 3. Recognize literature as a tool for **education, entertainment, cultural preservation, and social change**.
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◆ 1. Definition of Literature

Literature is defined as a **body of written or spoken works** that reflect the thoughts, feelings, experiences, imaginations, and aspirations of human beings. It is usually expressed in **creative and artistic language** to inform, entertain, educate, and inspire readers or listeners.

Literature is not just about reading and writing—it is about exploring the **human condition**, understanding our world, and imagining other possibilities.

Different Perspectives of Literature

Perspective Definition

General	Literature is the expression of life, truth, and beauty in written or oral form.
Artistic	Literature uses imaginative and creative language to paint a picture of life and experiences.
Cultural	Literature reflects and preserves the traditions, beliefs, values, and norms of a people.
Academic	Literature is one of the fields of study that deals with works of fiction and poetry, often taught in schools and universities.

Forms of Literature

Literature can be **oral** (spoken or sung) or **written** (documented in books or on screens). It exists in the following major forms:


1. **Prose** – ordinary writing like novels, short stories, and essays.
 2. **Poetry** – writing in verse, often rhythmic and expressive.
 3. **Drama** – literature meant to be performed on stage (e.g., plays).
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◆ 2. Functions of Literature

Literature serves several important purposes both for individuals and the society at large. Let's go into each function in detail:


✦ A. Educational Function

- Literature helps to **educate** readers and listeners.
- It introduces readers to **different cultures, historical events, moral values, and life skills**.
- Through literature, students learn new vocabulary, grammar, and how to interpret complex texts.
- It **stimulates intellectual curiosity** and helps students to develop critical thinking.

 *Example:* Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* teaches us about Igbo culture and the impact of colonialism.


✦ B. Entertainment Function

- One of the most immediate functions of literature is **to entertain**.
- Through drama, fiction, poetry, and storytelling, literature provides **fun, humor, suspense, and emotional satisfaction**.
- It allows the reader to **escape reality** and live temporarily in imaginative worlds.

 *Example:* Reading a suspenseful novel or attending a stage drama excites and entertains the audience.


✦ C. Cultural Function

- Literature preserves the **heritage, language, and customs** of people.
- Traditional tales, myths, legends, and proverbs carry values and beliefs from one generation to the next.
- It helps students learn about their roots and **appreciate the richness of their culture**.

 *Example:* Yoruba folktales or proverbs passed down orally preserve indigenous knowledge and wisdom.


✦ D. Moral and Ethical Instruction

- Literature teaches moral lessons by showing the **consequences of good and bad actions**.
- Characters are used as examples to **teach virtues** such as honesty, kindness, courage, and hard work.
- It also condemns social vices such as corruption, greed, injustice, and violence.

 *Example:* A character in a novel who is punished for stealing helps discourage theft in real life.

✦ E. Social and Political Criticism

- Writers often use literature to **critique injustice, bad governance, oppression, and inequality**.
- Literature becomes a **voice for the voiceless** and a tool for **social reform**.

 *Example:* George Orwell's *Animal Farm* criticizes dictatorship and political corruption.

✦ F. Emotional and Psychological Expression

- Literature gives people a way to **express or understand deep emotions** like love, grief, anger, or fear.
- It can **heal emotional wounds** or give comfort to those in distress.

- It helps individuals feel less alone in their experiences.

💖 *Example:* A poem about loss can console a grieving person by letting them know others feel the same way.

🌟 G. Development of Imagination and Creativity

- Literature encourages **creative thinking** and helps readers develop the power of **imagination**.
- It promotes artistic talents, storytelling abilities, and writing skills.

🎨 *Example:* Reading fantasy stories or science fiction helps young people think beyond the ordinary and imagine new possibilities.

📌 Summary

Aspect	Explanation
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Literature	Creative expression of human life, feelings, and culture through writing or speech
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Forms	Prose, poetry, drama, oral literature
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Functions	Education, entertainment, culture, moral lessons, social criticism, emotional healing, creativity
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