



By John Ruskin

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Understanding the Text

1. What, according to Ruskin, are the limitations of the good book of the hour?

Answer: According to Ruskin, the limitations of the good book of the hour are that these are not true books but merely letters or newspapers in good print. The good books of the hour are simply some useful or pleasant talk of some person whom one cannot otherwise converse with. These good books are written merely for the purpose of communication to a wider audience. According to the essayist, these good books are rather books of talk which are printed only because their authors cannot speak to thousands of people at once. These are mere conveyance of voice through printed words.

2. What are the criteria that Ruskin feels that readers should fulfil to make themselves fit for the company of the Dead?

Answer: The criteria that Ruskin feels that readers should fulfil to make themselves fit for the company of the Dead are that one must be laborious and meritorious. Ruskin feels that no wealth will bribe, no name will overawe, no artifice will deceive the Dead. Ruskin says that in order to be with their company one has to rise to the level of their thoughts.

3. Why does Ruskin feel that reading the work of a good author is a painstaking task?

Answer: Ruskin feels that reading the work of a good author is a painstaking task as it is not very easy to get into the meaning of the words that the author has written. He says that one has to be prepared to work like an Australian Miner to understand a good book which is born of wisdom. Just as mining is a very painstaking task, so is reading a good book, according to the author. In other words, the essayist means that one has to go through between the lines to understand the pithy words in the good books. Like an Australian miner, one needs patience and hard work to understand the works of the good authors.

4. What is the emphasis placed by Ruskin on accuracy?

Answer: Ruskin emphasised on accuracy by pointing out that the entire difference between education and non education consists in accuracy. Ruskin says a well educated gentleman may not know many languages – may not be able to speak any but his own – may have read very few books. But whatever language he knows, he knows precisely, whatever word he pronounces, he pronounces rightly etc, Ruskin points out that one may chose to read all the books in the British museum and may remain an utterly illiterate, uneducated person but that if one read ten pages of a good book, letter by letter, i.e., with real accuracy that truly is rewarding.

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