

MA ENGLISH
SEMESTER IV
PAPER I
NORTHROP FRYE'S "THE FUNCTION OF CRITICISM
AT THE PRESENT TIME."

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR:

Northrop Frye won the Governor General's literary award for English language. He was a literary critic and literary theorist. He gained international fame with his first book *Fearful Symmetry*.

In the essay the function of criticism at the present time attempts to make clear what the function of criticism is in the first place he argues that criticism mediates between The artist and his public. As for him "criticism exist because it can talk and all our hearts are dumb". Frye uses the term 'structure' in several related senses. Indeed it was he who had anticipated structuralism in literary criticism. He was a structuralist without being aware of it. As for the current trends of criticism, Frye states that literature is and will be a pile of creative excellence as long as there is a lack of organisation established by criticism. It still needs to develop a theory of literature which will see this pile up efforts with a non verbal universe. The concept of culture as stated by Matthew Arnold was precisely an integration and consolidation of literature and verbal univers by using criticism as a means of connection in the process of this consolidation, according to Frye, the main function of criticism at the present time, One of the main problems the criticism faces at the present time is that it is not well enough organised so as to clearly understand what factors to make him into account when it comes to critical judgement .Such judgement may come whether from the critical reader or from the spokesman of critical attitude.

MCOs

1. Does Northrop Frye emphasize on a scientific method for analysing a critique?

Ans - yes

2. Which two kinds of critics does Northrop Frye talk about ?

Ans. a. One who faces the public(the one we would call the critical reader)

b.The one who is involved in the literary work; that is, the author himself.

3. What is a criticism for Northrop Frye?

Ans - According to Frye, criticism exists because 'it can talk, and all arts are dumb'.

4. In which essay he expresses his dissatisfaction with New Criticism?

Ans-" The Archetypes of Literature."

5. Which country does Northrop Frye belong to?

Ans- Canada

6. Who said "criticism in order to point beyond itself needs to be actively iconoclastic about itself?"

Ans- Northrop Frye

7. When was Northrop Frye born?

Ans- 14th July 1912

8. When did he die?

Ans- 23rd January 1991

9. Who considered Frye his critical ancestor ?

Ans- Aristotle

SHORT ANSWER QUESTIONS

1. What is Northrop Frye theory?

Ans. Frye's theory of modes divides all of literature into five categories based on our relationship to the hero or protagonist of a story. At the one end of the spectrum we have the Mythic mode, where our protagonists are deities and demigods who are superior to the readers and to their world.

2. What are the literary modes of Northrop Frye?

Ans. The first of Frye's four essays divides literature into five modes—mythic, romantic, high mimetic, low mimetic, and ironic—each associated with, but not rigidly aligned to, a specific historical period; revising ideas first worked out in Frye 1950, the second essay shows how literary symbols operate in accordance to five phases, ranging from simple descriptive function to the most profoundly revelatory, which he calls anagogic.

3. What are the important works of Northrop Frye?

Ans. The *Stubborn Structure: Essays on Criticism and Society* appeared in 1970, and *The Great Code: The Bible and Literature*, a study of the mythology and structure of the Bible, was published in 1982. Frye's other critical works—*The Well-Tempered Critic* (1963), *The Secular Scripture: A Study of the Structure of Romance* (1976), *Northrop Frye on*

Shakespeare (1986), and *Words with Power: Being a Second Study of "The Bible and Literature"* (1990)—similarly emphasize symbols and group myths in literature and the systematic classification of literary symbols, genres, and criticism.

4. What are Northrop Frye's five modes of narrative?

Ans. Frye divides his study of tragic, comic, and thematic literature into five "modes", each identified with a specific literary epoch: mythic, romantic, high mimetic, low mimetic, and ironic.

5. What are the five spheres of Frye?

The context of a genre determines how a symbol or image is to be interpreted. Frye outlines five different spheres in his schema: human, animal, vegetation, mineral, and water. The comedic human world is representative of wish-fulfillment and being community centred. In contrast, the tragic human world is of isolation, tyranny, and the fallen hero. Animals in the comedic genres are docile and pastoral, e.g. sheep, while animals are predatory and hunters in the tragic.

6. Is Northrop Frye a structuralist?

Ans, Northrop Frye wasn't a "mainstream or popular structuralist, but his work helped change the way literature was perceived and he created his own in depth diagrams that helped him categorize literature. Some of these categorizes included comedy, thematic, and tragic.

What is the primordial task of a critic according to Northrop Frye?

Ans-The primordial task of a critic is to evaluate the state of literature as it is presented and exemplify new literature to be absorbed into a particular society. It is stated that both(the critic proper and critic reader) are supposed to fulfill different functions by approaching different aspects of the same text simultaneously. In order to do so the critics first step to take is reading literature in order to shape the principles he or she is going to use according to the knowledge of the field of expertise of the critic. The ideal step to take good be to, some, systematize the process of criticism to make it scientific by integrating, not only religion and philosophy but other sciences as well.

Which steps of criticism does Frye speak about?

Ans- After emphasising on the scientific method for analysing and focusing towards different subjects such as, history, philosophy and language he puts next aspects. Frye next describes the steps of criticism. In the first place, the critic should try to identify the category of literature in which the books are located before proceeding to examine aspects such as the author's life, the historical context, language and thought. Then it is important to make a distinction between

John such as prose or poetry in order to know what theory is more likely to be used comprehensively to analyse the text. Therefore the critic will be able to know that the text deals with elements that are part of his/her area of expertise or if on the contrary deals with the concepts that should be researched in detail by the critic before analysing properly. The final step is to identify different levels of meaning, if there are in the literary text so as to define them and classify them.

What is the main problem that criticism faces at the present time according to Northrop Frye ?

Ans- One of the problems that criticism faces at the present time according to Frye is that it is not well organised so as to clearly understand what factors to take into account when it comes to critical judgement. Such judgement may come whether from the critical reader or from the spokesman of a critical attitude. Another problem involves determining the category of literature which should start by making a distinction between two groups ...

.a. complex verbal facts ,(a verbal form which is itself)and b. A complex verbal symbol (a verbal form which is related to something else)

The author shows his insides on the state of literature in relation to criticism. As for the current trends of criticism Frye states that literature is and will be "a pile of creative efforts" as long as there is a lack of organisation established by criticism. It still needs to develop a theory of literature which will see this "pile of efforts" with a verbal univers. According to Frye the process of the consideration is the main function of criticism at the present time, as Matthew Arnold earlier stated

that the concept of culture was precisely an integration and consolidation of literature and the verbal universe by using criticism as a main means of connection.