

Bacon as an Essayist

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Consider Bacon as an essayist.

Or, Consider Bacon as an essayist with special reference to his essays you have studied.

Or, Assess Francis Bacon as an essayist.

The word essay is derived from the French word 'essayer.' It means "to attempt" or "to try. Francis Bacon (1561-1626) is the father of modern English essays. He has written fifty-eight essays. As an essayist, he has always attempted to maintain all the fundamental steps of this genre of literature. At the same time, he has added some new techniques to make this mighty branch of literature flourish.

Maintaining Length: Maintaining the length required to compose an essay is unavoidable. Bacon has mastery in the maintenance of length. To show full command over a subject or topic, the length of an essay should be between 2500 and 3000 words. However, Bacon is quite different. Most of his essays do not exceed 1000 words. This brevity or shortness does mean that Bacon had no complete command over his topics. Rather, it proves the proverb by William Shakespeare in Hamlet,

Brevity is the soul of wit.

This means that clever people can express intelligent ideas using very few words.

Thesis-Based Discussion: As we know, an essay is a short composition on a topic based on a thesis. At the very outset of his essays, Bacon declares that his discussions are based on thesis and observation. The beginning of the essay "Of Studies" gives us the idea of thesis-based discussion.

Studies serve for delight, for ornament, and for ability.

Nobody could disagree with this statement. Nobody can dare to show discontent till the resurrection.

Purposes: The purposes of an essayist are to persuade the audience to accept the thesis on the subject and simply to entertain. Bacon's arguments are so reinforced that readers cannot help but accept them. His essays are packed with entertainment like novels, dramas, movies, or films.

Wives are young men's mistresses, companions for middle age, and old men's nurses.

This clear statement in the essay

“Of Marriage and Single Life”

entertains the audience very highly. There is a somewhat rough surface meaning. However, the deeper meaning of this is supported by religious guidelines and practical life. This is also found in the famous essay “Of Studies.”

Use of Devices: An essayist has the liberal right to use devices such as anecdotes, striking illustrations, or humorous logic and arguments. These devices help the author to create a tone of intimacy with the audience. Bacon's fifty-eight essays abound in devices.

Planting of countries, is like planting of woods.

Aphorism:

Aphorism means a straightforward and simple statement having deep meaning and significance. Bacon, as the father of modern English prose, paved the way for the aphoristic style. This is Bacon's own creation. It is the soul of Bacon's prose style. The following sentence of the essay “Of Love” is a perfect example of his aphorism:

That it is impossible to love, and to be wise.

Use of Latin and Greek Phrases:

Bacon was a man of vast knowledge and experience. He has given guidelines to future essayists like Addison, Steele, Alexander Pope, etc. He states that there is no hindrance to using the words, phrases, or proverbs of other languages in prose writing. There is no single essay by Bacon in which the readers do not face the complexity of Latin or Greek phrases.

Such use of phrases is akin to Geoffrey Chaucer's French and Latin stages of poetic development. This is why Bacon is called the father of modern English prose.

Faults: There is nothing in the world that is over criticism. As an essayist, Bacon is not beyond limitation and criticism. He has some faults, too.

- **Incompleteness**
- **Misquotations**
- **Paradoxical statements**

In conclusion, it can be rightfully asserted that Bacon is a successful essayist. He plays a vital role in the development of English prose and language, although he is not out of limitations.