

The Rise of English Summary

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Literary Background of 18th-Century England: In the 18th century, literature meant many things. It included essays, letters, and moral writings. Fiction and poetry were not central yet. The novel was not respected as literature. Only writings of the upper class were valued. Popular songs or street plays were ignored. Literature supported the ideas of the ruling class. It helped teach manners, order, and taste. It was used to shape public thinking. This made literature a tool of ideology.

Eagleton's Views on Romanticism: Eagleton says Romanticism changed the idea of literature. Before this, literature meant all serious writing. In the Romantic period, it meant creative or imaginative writing. Imagination became more important than facts. Poets were seen as deep thinkers. Literature became a way to fight against industrial capitalism. Romantics valued emotions and nature. They showed protest through poems. They used symbols to express truth. Art stood against the harsh world of machines. But some poets stayed away from real problems. Some became isolated. So, Romanticism was both a protest and an escape. Eagleton connects this with social and political history.

Eagleton's Assessment of Arnold's View: Arnold viewed literature as a new religion. Besides, religion was losing power in Victorian society. People stopped believing as before. Arnold wanted something to guide people. He thought literature could help. Literature gives values and moral lessons. It teaches beauty and truth. Like religion, it touches emotions. It speaks to the soul. Arnold used literature to control society. He wanted to improve the middle class. He hoped literature would unite people. Eagleton says this was not neutral. It was a way to keep social order. Literature became a tool. It replaced religion as a guide for life and behavior. Eagleton shows that Arnold assigned a sacred role to literature. But that role was to serve the needs of the ruling class. Literature became a quiet force of control, just like religion had been before.

English Literature and Imperialism: English studies also grew with imperialism. The British Empire needed cultural strength overseas. Literature was used to teach English pride. Officers studied Shakespeare and Milton before ruling colonies. This made them feel morally and racially superior. Literature showed the colonizers as noble people. It helped control minds, not just land. Even colonized students were taught English texts. So, English was part of imperial

power. Its rise was not just for beauty or truth.

Evolution of English Studies: English began in workers' schools and women's colleges. It was a subject for the poor. It later entered big universities like Oxford and Cambridge. At first, it was seen as weak. People thought it was soft and emotional. However, during World War I, English became a valuable asset. It gave comfort, hope, and national pride. After the war, it became a mainstream part of education. Critics like F. R. Leavis made it a serious matter. English now stood for culture, values, and nationhood.

Eagleton Links the Rise of English to Modern Crisis: In the 19th century, religion began to decline. Science and change broke old beliefs. People no longer trusted the church. The rich feared losing control. So, English took the place of religion. It became the new moral guide. Literature taught values and emotions. It helped unite different classes. English gave hope in hard times. It answered spiritual questions. It made people calm and loyal. Eagleton says this was not neutral. The rulers used English to control others. Literature became a soft power tool. It shaped thoughts and feelings. So, English rose during the crisis. It helped keep order in modern life.

Literature in the Syllabus: At that time, women were not allowed to study science or technical subjects. Literature was seen as soft, emotional, and suitable for women. So, women were encouraged to study literature only. It was a gender-based discrimination. Literature entered the syllabus as a subject 'safe' for women. This reveals how literature was treated with less seriousness. Besides, Britain had colonies in many countries. Officers were sent from Britain to rule them. These officers were required to learn English literature. This helped them spread British values, culture, and identity. It also gave them a sense of national pride. Literature in the syllabus supported colonial power. It helped spread English ideology across the world.

Scrutiny Movement and Its Contradictions: Leavis and his journal, *Scrutiny*, led the way. They believed literature could save civilization. They trained readers to focus on deep meaning. They rejected mass media and popular culture. They praised moral seriousness and high standards. For them, great books built strong characters. They believed the best writing showed "Life". But they never tried to change society. They wanted to preserve old values, not reform them. They ignored class struggles and real politics.

Scrutiny wanted to go back to the old unity. It loved the idea of an "organic" society. This meant a past where everyone lived in harmony. But that society never really existed. They were also elitist, not democratic thinkers. They believed only a few could understand real literature. Ordinary people were seen as morally weak. This made the movement both radical

and narrow. It focused more on education than social change. That made their project limited and unrealistic.

Eagleton's Critique of New Criticism: New Criticism came from the U.S. and the UK. It focused only on the text itself. It avoided history, society, or the author. Critics read poetry like puzzles to solve. They searched for unity and irony in form. Eagleton says this made literature lifeless. It became holy but useless in real life. New Critics thought emotions mattered more than ideas. However, Eagleton shows that ideas matter too. Ignoring politics made literature a safe and empty object.

Terry Eagleton's Prose Style: Eagleton writes in a clear style. His tone is formal and serious. He uses short but strong arguments. His ideas are deep and logical. He mixes history with theory. Irony and satire are often used. His words carry strong meanings. He writes with passion and purpose. His writing is rich and thoughtful.