

The Study of Poetry Literary Terms

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Literary Terms in The Study of Poetry:

Criticism of Life:

Arnold describes poetry as a "criticism of life," meaning it profoundly and truthfully reflects and interprets life. Poetry should offer moral and spiritual guidance by addressing universal truths about human existence. A poem's value lies in its ability to critique life with wisdom and insight.

High Seriousness: Arnold emphasizes that great poetry must possess "high seriousness." This term refers to the depth, sincerity, and moral gravity in a poem's themes and style. High seriousness ensures that poetry is not trivial but deals with profound truths, making it timeless and universally relevant.

Real Estimate: The "real estimate" involves evaluating poetry objectively based on its intrinsic qualities and artistic value. It avoids bias and exaggeration, focusing solely on the inherent greatness of the work. This method ensures a fair and accurate judgment of a poet or poem.

Personal Estimate: The "personal estimate" arises when a reader judges poetry based on their personal preferences, emotions, or attachments to the poet. While it is natural, Arnold cautions against relying on this method, as it can lead to overrating works that lack true literary merit.

Historical Estimate: The "historical estimate" judges poetry based on its significance in literary history rather than its actual artistic value. This approach often results in overrating poets whose work may hold historical importance but lacks the qualities of great poetry, like high seriousness and criticism of life.