

## Timeline of Literary and Critical Thought

<b>Period</b>	<b>Major School / Era</b>	<b>Key Figures</b>	<b>Key Concepts / Contributions</b>
<b>5th–4th C. BCE</b>	<b>Classical (Greek)</b>	Plato, Aristotle	<i>Mimesis</i> (imitation), <i>Catharsis</i> , Plot, Character
<b>1st C. BCE–CE</b>	<b>Classical (Roman)</b>	Horace, Longinus	<i>Ars Poetica</i> (instruct & delight), The Sublime
<b>5th–15th C.</b>	<b>Medieval</b>	Dante, Al-Jahiz	Allegorical interpretation, Hermeneutics
<b>16th–17th C.</b>	<b>Renaissance</b>	Sidney, Ben Jonson	Defense of poetry, Humanism, Classical imitation
<b>17th–18th C.</b>	<b>Neoclassical</b>	Dryden, Pope, Johnson	Reason, Decorum, Taste, "Nature"
<b>Late 18th–19th C.</b>	<b>Romanticism</b>	Wordsworth, Coleridge	Imagination, "Emotion recollected in tranquility"
<b>Mid–Late 19th C.</b>	<b>Victorian / Humanist</b>	Matthew Arnold, Walter Pater	"Culture," Disinterestedness, Art for art's sake
<b>Early 20th C.</b>	<b>Modernism &amp; Formalism</b>	T.S. Eliot, I.A. Richards	Impersonality, Close reading, Objective Correlative
<b>1930s–1950s</b>	<b>New Criticism</b>	Brooks, Ransom	Irony, Paradox, Intrinsic textual analysis
<b>1920s–1960s</b>	<b>Structuralism</b>	Saussure, Lévi-Strauss	Language as signs, Signifier/Signified, Patterns
<b>1960s–Present</b>	<b>Post-Structuralism</b>	Derrida, Barthes, Foucault	Deconstruction, Unstable meaning, Power
<b>Late 20th C.–21st</b>	<b>Cultural &amp; Postcolonial</b>	Said, Spivak, Bhabha	Orientalism, Subaltern, Hybridity, Identity

## Brief Overview of Major Schools

- **Classical Criticism (Greece & Rome):** Originated as a branch of philosophy. Plato viewed poetry as a dangerous imitation; Aristotle defended it as a natural, cathartic human instinct.
- **Romantic Criticism:** Shifted focus from objective "rules" to the subjective creative process and the power of individual imagination.
- **Formalism & New Criticism:** Emphasized the "autonomy" of the text. They argued that literature should be studied for its internal structure and language, independent of the author's life or historical context.
- **Structuralism & Post-Structuralism:** Structuralism sought universal systems and "codes" in literature. Post-structuralists, led by Jacques Derrida, challenged these fixed systems, arguing that meaning is always fluid and deferred (*différance*).
- **Political & Cultural Theories:** Includes **Marxist Criticism** (class struggle), **Feminist Criticism** (gender roles), and **Postcolonialism** (impact of empire).
- **21st Century Perspectives:** Contemporary criticism increasingly explores **Digital Humanities**, **Ecocriticism** (environmental themes), **Queer Theory**, and **Critical Race Theory**.