PROFESORES DE ENSEÑANZA SECUNDARIA · INGLÉS · JUNTA DE EXTREMADURA

TEMA

37

Literary Language, Genres and Criticism

El lenguaje literario. Los géneros literarios. La crítica literaria.

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Material de elaboración propia a partir de las fuentes oficiales que se citan al final del tema. No es un temario oficial ni sustituye a la normativa publicada.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Matthew Arnold believed that culture was "a pursuit of our total perfection by means of getting to know, on all the matters which most concern us, the best which has been thought and said in the world." That sentence, written in the preface to Culture and Anarchy in 1869, is a good starting point for Topic 37: Literary Language, Genres and Criticism, because it reminds us that literature is, above all, the place where the best that has been thought and said is kept, shaped and handed on. A teacher of English who wants students to read literature has to answer three questions. What is it in the language of a poem or a play that makes it different from a shopping list? Into which families do literary works fall, and why does it matter? And how have readers, over more than two thousand years, argued about what such works are for and how they should be judged?

To answer them, I will divide this topic into four main sections. Firstly, I will examine literary language: how scholars have tried to define its specificity, from Russian Formalism and Roman Jakobson to the notion of foregrounding, and which devices of sound, sense and structure it uses. Secondly, I will analyse the literary genres, from the classical triad of Plato and Aristotle to the modern division into poetry, prose and drama, with their main subgenres. Thirdly, I will trace the history of literary criticism from Plato to deconstruction and reader-response theory. Finally, I will reflect on the pedagogical and didactic implications of this content in the current educational framework, before drawing my conclusions.

Before moving on, I would like to mention the sources consulted for the preparation of this topic. These include: Abrams' A Glossary of Literary Terms, Eagleton's Literary Theory: An Introduction, Culler's Literary Theory: A Very Short Introduction, Frye's Anatomy of Criticism and Wellek and Warren's Theory of Literature, as well as the online sources Encyclopaedia Britannica, Project Gutenberg and the Folger Shakespeare Library. For the educational framework, I have also drawn on Organic Law 3/2020 (LOMLOE), Royal Decrees 217/2022 and 243/2022, and Decrees 110/2022 and 109/2022 of the Autonomous Community of Extremadura.