

AN OVERVIEW OF THE REASONS TO STUDY ENGLISH LITERATURE IN MODERN SOCIETY

Mohan Kumar G R

Assistant Professor

Department of English

Government First Grade College

Alur, Hassan district, Karnataka state, India-573213

mokugara79@gmail.com

Abstract: Literature serves as a mirror to the era in which it was created, reflecting the socio-political and historical contexts of that time. Additionally, the imaginative manipulation of language and information captivate readers as they seek to understand the author's insights. This process fosters significant development in creative and critical thinking skills. Ultimately, literature is an art form that showcases the talent for creation. This article explores the notion that an English Major is akin to a Swiss Army Knife among university disciplines. An English degree equips graduates for a wide array of specialized professions, including law, medicine, business, marketing, media, and technology. Furthermore, it imparts versatile skills that enable individuals to navigate their careers with adaptability, addressing the complexities and demands of the contemporary job market.

Keywords: Literature, English literature, Language skills, Learning English, English culture, Study of English.

1.0 Introduction

Studying English literature provides a gateway to inspiration and creativity while cultivating essential skills for the contemporary global landscape. Engaging with English literature allows individuals to explore how narratives, poetry, novels, and plays interpret the world around us. Additionally, it enhances one's ability to write, read, analyze, and persuade effectively. In today's educational climate, there is a noticeable trend towards secondary school subjects that closely align with higher education pathways. Consequently, some parents and students perceive the mandatory study of English literature, particularly within the international curricula prevalent in many of Hong Kong's international schools, as misguided and potentially detrimental, especially for those learning English as a second language. Nevertheless, there are compelling arguments in favor of studying English literature. Students focusing solely on English language skills, which prioritize reading and writing, may struggle to appreciate the value of literature, particularly if they do not intend to pursue English or Translation in higher education. However, English literature offers insights into various facets of both the English language and its culture. Many elements of English culture are captured within its literary works, a fact that is particularly evident in the writings of Shakespeare and other authors, poets, and playwrights from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. This relevance extends to a broader range of English literature, where students can uncover allusions and references that enrich their understanding of English culture. Students can also gain insights into the context and significance of well-known quotes and phrases. The study of Literature extends beyond the confines of English traditions, offering opportunities to explore influences that shape English Literature, such as Ancient Greek drama, as well as literature from other cultural backgrounds, including American literature. This discipline serves as a counterbalance to the dominance of "television culture," which often prioritizes immediacy and superficiality. A genuine enjoyment and appreciation of Literature can foster a lasting interest in books and reading as students transition into adulthood. They will feel empowered to engage with diverse literary forms and styles, having been exposed to a wide array of literature throughout their educational journey. In addition to enhancing their vocabulary, students will learn that language serves both specific and artistic purposes. Understanding concepts like beat, meter, and rhythm can enrich their own writing, as they learn to recognize and implement these elements. Ultimately, the study of Literature offers students a unique and imaginative perspective on their academic pursuits and life experiences. Therefore, when encountering discussions about the creativity and initiative in the local workforce, consider how the study of English Literature can contribute positively to an individual's life.

2.0 Why Do We Study Literature?

Studying literature transcends the mere pursuit of practical skills required for securing a job post-graduation; it serves as a profound intellectual pursuit with far-reaching benefits. Delving into literary works penned by

authors representing diverse cultures, perspectives, and historical epochs enriches our appreciation of humanity's tapestry and broadens our global outlook. Beyond broadening our horizons, the study of literature nurtures critical thought processes essential not only within academic realms but also in all facets of life and professional endeavors. Engaging with literary texts within a classroom setting enhances one's ability to analyze and interpret information critically, fostering skills applicable across various domains like analyzing films, consuming news content critically, and engaging with social media discerningly. This immersive experience engenders an environment conducive to independent critical thinking, sparking dialogues and prompting profound inquiries that further enrich personal growth and intellectual engagement.

3.0 Why Study English Literature?

As you contemplate your upcoming educational endeavors, pondering the path your studies will take, the allure of delving deeper into the world of English Literature certainly captivates your heart. Yet, a lingering doubt shrouds your eagerness, fearing the substantial commitment of time, effort, and financial resources to pursue a degree that seems shrouded in uncertainty. Reflecting on the value of pursuing English Literature at the university level, one must consider various compelling reasons that advocate for its exploration. An encouraging statistic reveals that approximately 87% of graduates from English Literature programs found employment or pursued further studies within a mere 15 months post-graduation, shedding light on the tangible opportunities awaiting those who undertake this academic journey. Moreover, the acquisition of invaluable transferable skills through the analysis, critical thinking, and communication nurtured within the realms of English Literature only solidifies the wisdom in embarking on such a study path. However, the ultimate decision to immerse oneself in the intricate world of English Literature invariably hinges on the alignment of this pursuit with one's personal aspirations and professional ambitions. Thus, as you navigate the crossroads of academic choices, remember that the pursuit of knowledge and passion in English Literature embraces a myriad of outcomes that extend beyond the confines of uncertainty, offering a gateway to personal growth, intellectual enrichment, and potentially a fruitful career trajectory.

4.0 English Literature students visit the Bronte Parsonage Museum

Engaging with English Literature immerses you in a realm of creative thought. It not only cultivates essential skills for navigating today's interconnected world but also fosters innovation and transformation. Through the exploration of stories, novels, poems, and plays, English Literature provides insights into the social, political, economic, and cultural dimensions of our society. Pursuing a degree in English Literature equips you with a comprehensive understanding of literary history, theory, and criticism, while also broadening your appreciation of diverse cultures and intellectual legacies. Additionally, it enhances your ability to acquire transferable skills that are highly valued by various employers. The English Literature program at LJMU is crafted and delivered by dedicated scholars who focus on enriching your subject knowledge alongside enhancing your overall skills and career opportunities.

I. 5.0 IMPORTANT REASONS TO STUDY ENGLISH LITERATURE

Literature is generally regarded as writing that carries cultural, artistic, and intellectual significance. This form of writing explores complex issues and encourages readers to consider different perspectives. The purposes of literature include:

- a. Literature as a stress reliever Reading literature is widely known to alleviate stress and anxiety. Engaging with a good book can significantly calm a racing mind, slowing down a fast heartbeat and helping readers escape from their worries.
- b. Literature sparks imagination Reading is one of the best ways to enhance imagination, according to the World Literacy Foundation. Unlike watching a movie, which requires minimal mental effort, reading stimulates the imagination as readers visualize the story. This process fosters creativity and innovative thinking.
- c. Literature promotes brain health The cognitive benefits of reading are substantial. It boosts concentration and exercises the imagination. Regular reading keeps the brain active and healthy, potentially delaying the onset of dementia and Alzheimer's disease.

- d. Literature expands vocabulary Literature often features a more advanced vocabulary compared to lighter reading material. Many readers may encounter unfamiliar terms in older texts. Exploring diverse literary works broadens vocabulary, making it especially beneficial for language learners.
- e. Literature improves writing skills Reading extensively contributes to better writing abilities. Successful authors often highlight the importance of reading in their development. Literature not only fuels imagination and enriches vocabulary but also exposes readers to various writing styles, organization of ideas, and character development.
- f. Literature enhances communication skills Reading helps improve writing, which in turn strengthens overall communication abilities. Effective communication is essential in both personal and professional contexts. Early exposure to literature enables individuals to develop these skills, while adults can further refine them through reading.
- g. Literature encourages critical thinking Critical thinking is vital for a fulfilling life, helping individuals discern truths and resolve problems. Literature serves as an excellent tool for teaching critical thinking skills. Readers must engage with the text by paying attention to details, forming connections, and developing their own interpretations. This approach prepares students well for their future careers.
- h. Literature provides historical insights Learning from history is crucial to avoid repeating past mistakes. Literature offers a captivating way to engage with historical contexts, making it more interesting than merely memorizing dates or facts. Regardless of whether a book is fictional or non-fictional, it presents perspectives from the time it was written, illuminating truths from various eras.
- i. Literature fosters empathy Empathy is essential for a healthy society, preventing a hostile environment. Research indicates that reading literature can enhance empathy. This effect is particularly strong with fiction, as it requires readers to connect with and understand complex characters. Studies from Princeton's Social Neuroscience lab support this idea.

6.0 Conclusion

Literature serves as a vital and intricate medium for cultural expression and documentation. Together with music and visual arts, it provides insight into the essence of a culture. Without written works, our understanding of historical and contemporary cultural contexts would be significantly limited. From the timeless plays of Aristophanes to the modern tales of Harry Potter, literature mirrors our identities and societal values. Literature students recently visited St. Michael and All Angels' Church in Haworth, the burial site of the Brontë sisters. Beti Thomas, who opted to pursue English Literature at LJMU, shared her thoughts: "I have always been captivated by language and its usage. This passion was evident during my school years, particularly as I excelled in this area (math was certainly not my strength). With this in mind, I was determined to pursue an undergraduate degree in English. However, my choice of LJMU was influenced by my experience at an Open Day; I immediately felt it was the right fit for me. I appreciated that LJMU is situated in a city environment, allowing someone like me, who values independence, to experience student life while also becoming part of the vibrant Liverpool community. The English Literature program at LJMU stood out to me compared to others I had considered. The English Literature program at LJMU distinguished itself from other options I explored. The innovative and flexible nature of the modules is invigorating, allowing me to leverage my strengths and interests in related fields like history and politics. It embodies the voices of generations communicating with the future. The study of English Literature is essential as it expands one's worldview; it provides valuable insights into various cultures, histories, and human experiences. This discipline enriches one's comprehension of life, nurtures empathy, and contributes to personal development. Through its compelling narratives, literature encourages personal growth, critical analysis, and a greater appreciation for the intricacies of life.

7.0 Reference:

- i. Collie, J. and Slater, S. 1990. *Literature in the Language Classroom: A Resource Book of Ideas and Activities*. Cambridge: CUP. Cruetz, John. June 2011. *The Importance of Learning English Literature* eHow.com http://www.ehow.com/facts_5233864_importancelearningenglish.html#ixzz100X1ORwL . (Taken February, 2016)
- ii. Cuddon, J. A. 1991. *The Penguin Dictionary of Literary Terms and Literary Theory*. London: Penguin Books. Cutajar, M. and Briffa, C. 8-12 March, 2004.

- iii. Harman, S and Edelsky, C. 1989. *The Risks of Whole Language Literacy: Alienation and Connection*. New York: Language Arts.
- iv. Harmon, William, and Holman, C. Hugh. 1996. *A Handbook to Literature* (7th Ed.). New York: Prentice Hall. Hismanoglu, Murat. 2015. Teaching English Through Literature in *Journal of Language and Linguistic Studies* Vol.1, No.1, April 2005
- v. Hudson, William Henry.1949. *An Introduction to the Study of Literature*. London: George. G. Harrap & Co. Ltd. Long, William J. 1989. *English Literature: Its History and Its Significance*. New Delhi: Kalyani Publisher
- vi. Maley, A. 1989. *Down from the Pedestal: Literature as Resource in Literature and the Learner: Methodological Approaches*. Cambridge: Modern English Publications. Sachs, Joe (Trans.). 2006. *Aristotle's Poetics*. London: Pullins Press.
- vii. Smith, Sue. 2015. The reasons why a student should study English Literature. <http://www.itseducation.asia/english-literature.htm> (Taken June 2016).