**Literature**

Literature is the art of written works. Literally translated, the word means "acquaintance with letters" (from Latin littera letter). In Western culture the most basic written literary types include fiction and non-fiction

The word "literature" has different meanings depending on who is using it. It could be applied broadly to mean any symbolic record, encompassing everything from images and sculptures to letters. In a more narrow sense the term could mean only text composed of letters, or other examples of symbolic written language (Egyptian hieroglyphs, for example). An even more narrow interpretation is that text have a physical form, such as on paper or some other portable form, to the exclusion of inscriptions or digital media. The Muslim scholar and philosopher Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq (702-765 AD) defined Literature as follows: "Literature is the garment which one puts on what he says or writes so that it may appear more attractive."[1] added that literature is a slice of life that has been given direction and meaning, an artistic interpretation of the world according to the percipient's point of views. Frequently, the texts that make up literature crossed over these boundaries. Russian Formalist Roman Jakobson defines literature as "organized violence committed on ordinary speech", highlighting literature's deviation from the day-to-day and conversational structure of words. Illustrated stories, hypertexts, cave paintings and inscribed monuments have all at one time or another pushed the boundaries of "literature."

People may perceive a difference between "literature" and some popular forms of written work. The terms "literary fiction" and "literary merit" often serve to distinguish between individual works. For example, almost all literate people perceive the works of Charles Dickens as "literature," whereas some critics[citation needed] look down on the works of Jeffrey Archer as unworthy of inclusion under the general heading of "English literature." Critics may exclude works from the classification "literature," for example, on the grounds of a poor standard of grammar and syntax, of an unbelievable or disjointed story-line, or of inconsistent or unconvincing characters. Genre fiction (for example: romance, crime, or science fiction) may also become excluded from consideration as "literature."

History

One of the earliest known literary works is the Sumerian Epic of Gilgamesh, an epic poem dated around 2700 B.C., which deals with themes of heroism, friendship, loss, and the quest for eternal life. Different historical periods have emphasized various characteristics of literature. Early works often had an overt or covert religious or didactic purpose. Moralizing or prescriptive literature stems from such sources. The exotic nature of romance flourished from the Middle Ages onwards, whereas the Age of Reason manufactured nationalistic epics and philosophical tracts. Romanticism emphasized the popular folk literature and emotive involvement, but gave way in the 19th-century West to a phase of realism and naturalism, investigations into what is real. The 20th century brought demands for symbolism or psychological insight in the delineation and development of character.

Poetry

A poem is defined as a composition written in verse (although verse has been equally used for epic and dramatic fiction). Poems rely heavily on imagery, precise word choice, and metaphor; they may take the form of measures consisting of patterns of stresses (metric feet) or of patterns of different-length syllables (as in classical prosody); and they may or may not utilize rhyme. One cannot readily characterize poetry precisely. Typically though, poetry as a form of literature makes some significant use of the formal properties of the words it uses — the properties attached to the written or spoken form of the words, rather than to their meaning. Metre depends on syllables and on rhythms of speech; rhyme and alliteration depend on words

Poetry perhaps pre-dates other forms of literature: early known examples include the Sumerian Epic of Gilgamesh (dated from around 2700 B.C.), parts of the Bible, the surviving works of Homer (the Iliad and the Odyssey), and the Indian epics Ramayana and Mahabharata. In cultures based primarily on oral traditions the formal characteristics of poetry often have a mnemonic function, and important texts: legal, genealogical or moral, for example, may appear first in verse form.

Some poetry uses specific forms: the haiku, the limerick, or the sonnet, for example. A traditional haiku written in Japanese must have something to do with nature, contain seventeen onji (syllables), distributed over three lines in groups of five, seven, and five, and should also have a kigo, a specific word indicating a season. A limerick has five lines, with a rhyme scheme of AABBA, and line lengths of 3,3,2,2,3 stressed syllables. It traditionally has a less reverent attitude towards nature. Poetry not adhering to a formal poetic structure is called "free verse"

Language and tradition dictate some poetic norms: Persian poetry always rhymes, Greek poetry rarely rhymes, Italian or French poetry often does, English and German can go either way (although modern non-rhyming poetry often, perhaps unfairly, has a more "serious" aura). Perhaps the most paradigmatic style of English poetry, blank verse, as exemplified in works by Shakespeare and by Milton, consists of unrhymed iambic pentameters. Some languages prefer longer lines; some shorter ones. Some of these conventions result from the ease of fitting a specific language's vocabulary and grammar into certain structures, rather than into others; for example, some languages contain more rhyming words than others, or typically have longer words. Other structural conventions come about as the result of historical accidents, where many speakers of a language associate good poetry with a verse form preferred by a particular skilled or popular poet.

Works for theatre (see below) traditionally took verse form. This has now become rare outside opera and musicals, although many would argue that the language of drama remains intrinsically poetic.

In recent years, digital poetry has arisen that takes advantage of the artistic, publishing, and synthetic qualities of digital media.

Prose

Prose consists of writing that does not adhere to any particular formal structures (other than simple grammar); "non-poetic" writing, perhaps. The term sometimes appears pejoratively, but prosaic writing simply says something without necessarily trying to say it in a beautiful way, or using beautiful words. Prose writing can of course take beautiful form; but less by virtue of the formal features of words (rhymes, alliteration, metre) but rather by style, placement, or inclusion of graphics. But one need not mark the distinction precisely, and perhaps cannot do so. One area of overlap is "prose poetry", which attempts to convey using only prose, the aesthetic richness typical of poetry.

Essays

An essay consists of a discussion of a topic from an author's personal point of view, exemplified by works by Francis Bacon or by Charles Lamb.

'Essay' in English derives from the French 'essai', meaning 'attempt'. Thus one can find open-ended, provocative and/or inconclusive essays. The term "essays" first applied to the self-reflective musings of Michel de Montaigne, and even today he has a reputation as the father of this literary form.

Genres related to the essay may include:

the memoir, telling the story of an author's life from the author's personal point of view

the epistle: usually a formal, didactic, or elegant letter.

Fiction

Narrative fiction (narrative prose) generally favours prose for the writing of novels, short stories, graphic novels, and the like. Singular examples of these exist throughout history, but they did not develop into systematic and discrete literary forms until relatively recent centuries. Length often serves to categorize works of prose fiction. Although limits remain somewhat arbitrary, modern publishing conventions dictate the following:

A Mini Saga is a short story of exactly 50 words

A Flash fiction is generally defined as a piece of prose under a thousand words.

A short story comprises prose writing of between 1000 and 20,000 words (but typically more than 500 words), which may or may not have a narrative arc.

A story containing between 20,000 and 50,000 words falls into the novella category.

A work of fiction containing more than 50,000 words falls squarely into the realm of the novel.

A novel consists simply of a long story written in prose, yet the form developed comparatively recently. Icelandic prose sagas dating from about the 11th century bridge the gap between traditional national verse epics and the modern psychological novel. In mainland Europe, the Spaniard Cervantes wrote perhaps the first influential novel: Don Quixote, the first part of which was published in 1605 and the second in 1615. Earlier collections of tales, such as Boccaccio's Decameron and Chaucer's The Canterbury Tales, have comparable forms and would classify as novels if written today. Earlier works written in Asia resemble even more strongly the novel as we now think of it — for example, works such as the Chinese Romance of the Three Kingdoms and the Japanese Tale of Genji by Lady Murasaki. Compare to The Book of One Thousand and One Nights.

Early novels in Europe did not, at the time, count as significant literature, perhaps because "mere" prose writing seemed easy and unimportant. It has become clear, however, that prose writing can provide aesthetic pleasure without adhering to poetic forms. Additionally, the freedom authors gain in not having to concern themselves with verse structure translates often into a more complex plot or into one richer in precise detail than one typically finds even in narrative poetry. This freedom also allows an author to experiment with many different literary and presentation styles — including poetry— in the scope of a single novel.

See Ian Watt's The Rise of the Novel. [This definition needs expansion]

Other prose literature

Philosophy, history, journalism, and legal and scientific writings traditionally ranked as literature. They offer some of the oldest prose writings in existence; novels and prose stories earned the names "fiction" to distinguish them from factual writing or nonfiction, which writers historically have crafted in prose.

The "literary" nature of science writing has become less pronounced over the last two centuries, as advances and specialization have made new scientific research inaccessible to most audiences; science now appears mostly in journals. Scientific works of Euclid, Aristotle, Copernicus, and Newton still possess great value; but since the science in them has largely become outdated, they no longer serve for scientific instruction, yet they remain too technical to sit well in most programmes of literary study. Outside of "history of science" programmes students rarely read such works. Many books "popularizing" science might still deserve the title "literature"; history will tell.

Philosophy, too, has become an increasingly academic discipline. More of its practitioners lament this situation than occurs with the sciences; nonetheless most new philosophical work appears in academic journals. Major philosophers through history—Plato, Aristotle, Augustine, Descartes, Nietzsche—have become as canonical as any writers. Some recent philosophy works are argued to merit the title "literature", such as some of the works by Simon Blackburn; but much of it does not, and some areas, such as logic, have become extremely technical to a degree similar to that of mathematics.

A great deal of historical writing can still rank as literature, particularly the genre known as creative nonfiction. So can a great deal of journalism, such as literary journalism. However these areas have become extremely large, and often have a primarily utilitarian purpose: to record data or convey immediate information. As a result the writing in these fields often lacks a literary quality, although it often and in its better moments has that quality. Major "literary" historians include Herodotus, Thucydides and Procopius, all of whom count as canonical literary figures.

Law offers a less clear case. Some writings of Plato and Aristotle, or even the early parts of the Bible, might count as legal literature. The law tables of Hammurabi of Babylon might count. Roman civil law as codified in the Corpus Juris Civilis during the reign of Justinian I of the Byzantine Empire has a reputation as significant literature. The founding documents of many countries, including the United States Constitution, can count as literature; however legal writing now rarely exhibits literary merit.

Game Design Scripts - In essence never seen by the player of a game and only by the developers and/or publishers, the audience for these pieces is usually very small. Still, many game scripts contain immersive stories and detailed worlds making them hidden literary gems.

Most of these fields, then, through specialization or proliferation, no longer generally constitute "literature" in the sense under discussion. They may sometimes count as "literary literature"; more often they produce what one might call "technical literature" or "professional literature".