

# LITCRIT CONCEPTS VOL 1: HISTORY

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*Lit Crit Concepts* author, Jennifer Bussey has been very involved in Literary Criticism since it was a very new contest. Her nationally published works include entries in: *Contemporary Authors*, *Poetry for Students*, *Encyclopedia of American Poetry - The Twentieth Century*, and *Literature of Developing Nations*. Bussey has been writing for Hexco Academic since 1999. With clients as far away as Barcelona, Spain, her works have also appeared on the web and in national magazines and newsletters, including *Focus on the Family*.

*We are a small company that listens! If you have any questions or if there is an area that you would like fully explored, let us hear from you. We hope you enjoy this product and stay in contact with us throughout your academic journey.*

~ President Hexco Inc., Linda Tarrant

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## **Preface: What This Guide Is and Isn't**

Welcome to LitCrit Concepts, Volume 1: Literary History. I was once in your shoes (many, many, many, many years ago), and now, as a writer for Hexco, I am in the trenches with you every year, studying the reading selections and *The Handbook* to prepare for the year of UIL Literary Criticism. I study so I can create materials to help you in the contest and in your understanding of literature. I mean, you could have signed up for Number Sense or Kazoo Acrobatics, but you chose Literary Criticism, so I have to assume you are interested in literature!

Here's the rub, as Hamlet says. It can be difficult to tackle *The Handbook*. It is a whole lot of information, and while it is great—and it *is* great; I use it all the time in my career as a writer for educational publishers— it is hard to navigate. The alphabetical format is super-simple if you know exactly what you need to study, but what if you don't? What if you don't know what is basic knowledge, and what is advanced? Or how to group information and fit it together so it makes sense, and so you can actually remember it for the test? The last thing I want is to have your youthful spirit crushed by something as fun as literature. So, I put together guides to *The Handbook*, sort of like study notes to give you a better way to structure all that information. If you're an über-nerd, let me put it this way: Let's play *The Divine Comedy*! You be Dante, and I'll be Beatrice, your guide and commentator through Heaven (*The Handbook*). We won't have anyone be Virgil because he is the guide through Purgatory and the Inferno, and *The Handbook* certainly isn't either of those.

This volume covers literary history, as it is presented in *The Handbook* and only in *The Handbook*. That's where your test questions are drawn, so why muddle things by adding other sources? Where I have found discrepancies or areas of confusion in *The Handbook*, I have told you so. That way, you shouldn't run into any surprises on any tests. As it is in *The Handbook*, most of the literary history is European (primarily English) and American. So, don't yell at me because you feel Asian poetry or Sicilian verse novels are under-represented. Keep in mind that this volume is *not* meant to be comprehensive, and it should definitely not replace your study of *The Handbook* itself. There are sections or topics that are merely summarized here, but you know where to go find more. I have used the same terminology and names, so looking something up in *The Handbook* will be easy. In summarizing topics like, say, Realism, I have been intentionally concise. If you can start by learning the very basic information (dates, point of view, major authors and works), you have a solid foundation to go read more about what was going on during that time. Also, in the interest of your time and your school's budget, I had to make some hard choices about what to include and what to omit. Sorry, young padawan.

A word on notation. As you read, if you see something in SMALL CAPS, that means there is an entry on that topic either in this volume or in the Literary Terms volume. If you see something that is Capitalized in the Middle of a Sentence, that means there is an entry on that topic in *The Handbook*. The simple notation is to point you to more information if you need it.

That's it! I really hope you find this helpful and encouraging as you study this year. We would love your feedback, so please feel completely free to email us at Hexco and let us know what you like and don't like. And, hey--Good luck in the contest!

—Jennifer Bussey

**English Literary History and Periods: Overview**

DECADENCE –At the end of a great period, there is usually a time of decadence, a decline accompanied by such things as self-consciousness, rebellion, unsettled feelings, genre confusion, eccentricity, and perversity. The term is also applied to works of art deemed purposeless and lacking in subject matter that is presented with great skill and technique.

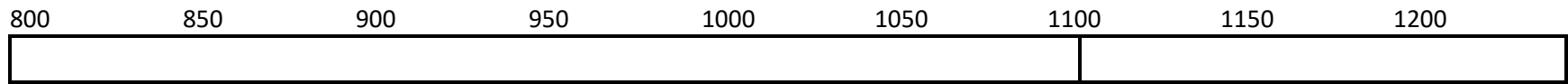
**PERIODS**

Name	When (start and end events)	Characteristics/ Point of View	Major Figures and Major Works	What else?
<b>Old English</b>	428 (invasion of England by Teutonic tribes)-1100 (post-Norman Conquest)		<i>Beowulf</i> ; Caedmon's "Song"; Boethius' <i>Consolation of Philosophy</i>	Christianity won over pagan culture
<b>Anglo-Norman</b> (a.k.a., Early Middle English Period)	1100-1350	Norman-French culture	<i>Poema Morale</i> (poem in fourteeners), <i>King Horn</i> (metrical romance), <i>The Play of St. Catherine</i> (first known miracle play), <i>Cursor Mundi</i> , <i>The Pricke of Conscience</i>	Historical events include the 1215 Magna Carta, establishment of feudalism, origin of Parliament
<b>Middle English</b>	1350 (replacement of French by Middle English in the court) - 1500 (appearance of Modern English writings)	Literature with religious themes; romances	Wycliffe (sermons, translation of Bible); Malory (Arthurian); first major English poet, Chaucer	Age of Chaucer (1340-1400); Black Death/Plague (1348-1350); Peasants' Revolt (1381); Wars of the Roses (15 <sup>th</sup> century); growing nationalism

**English Literary History and Periods: Timeline (cont.)**

In the chart below, write the names of the literary periods in the long boxes at the top. Then write the important events next to, or underneath, the years supplied in the timeline. You may need to refer to *The Handbook*. Last, answer the questions at the bottom; use the back of the page if you need more room. Do not write too many answers; the point is to give you an easy-to-remember visual.

If there are other dates and events you would like to include, add those to the timeline.



1066

1215

Important literary works and/or writers, by period: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Important circumstances, trends, or sentiments, by period: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

## **Criticism, Philosophy, and Theories**

### **RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN A WORK AND THE READER/AUDIENCE**

**AESTHETIC DISTANCE** –When a feeling or experience is presented so objectively that it seems separate from the writer or speaker. The term also describes the reader's awareness that art and reality are different things. Related to objective correlative.

**AFFECTIVE FALLACY** –Assessing a work by its results with special attention to emotions. The other side of the coin is intentional fallacy.

**ALIENATION EFFECT** –Brecht claimed that theater should keep the audience distant enough that those pesky feelings and personal investment don't get in the way of delivering political messages. How do you do it? Strategies like masks, unfamiliar settings, out-of-order time sequences, and removing the fourth wall.

**OBJECTIVE CORRELATIVE** –Eliot's term for the subtle, indirect technique of evoking an emotional response from the reader by using a pattern of images, events, or objects. This is a little hard to identify in a cold reading, but I'll give you an example from Eliot's own "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock"—" When the evening is spread out against the sky/ Like a patient etherized on a table..."

### **CRITICISM: BRIEF HISTORY AND TYPES**

**HISTORICAL HIGH POINTS** –Criticism is analyzing, assessing, evaluating (for meaning and quality), and studying a work or body of literature. It has been around as long as literature itself. Hermeneutics, a term once applied only to the interpretation of allegorical and religious texts, now refers to any theory of interpretation. (By the way, Eliot's hermeneutics stated that art cannot be interpreted because there is nothing to interpret.)

- *Poetics* (Aristotle, 4<sup>th</sup> century BC)—First important treatise, most influential; poetry=idealized representation of human action; tragedy=serious, major, pity & fear, CATHARSIS, unified plot
- *On the Sublime* (Longinus, maybe 3<sup>rd</sup> century AD)
- *Art of Poetry* (Horace [foremost Latin critic])—informal epistle actually written in verse; types of poetry & characters, emphasis on Greek examples, poetry for entertainment & instruction
- Middle Ages—Most criticism focused on Latin versification, grammar, and rhetoric; literature should serve theology and philosophy
- *Defence of Poesie* (Sidney, 1595)
- *Essay on Criticism* (Pope, 1711)
- *Lyrical Ballads* (preface by Wordsworth in second edition, 1800)