UNIT 13: INTRODUCTION TO NEW CRITICISM

UNIT STRUCTURE:

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13.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to

- familiarise yourself with the historical background and philosophical heritage of New Criticism
- discuss how the movement is continuous with or departs from critical tendencies and theorisation prevalent in earlier times
- find out the important critics and literary scholars associated with New Criticism
- explain the ideas and concepts central to New Criticism.

13.2 INTRODUCTION

New criticism was an influential critical movement in the course of modern literary criticism. If it is in some ways aligned with Structuralism and Russian Formalism, more recent trends such as Marxism, Post-structuralism, Feminist or Neo-historicism developed as reaction against the New-Critical ethos. The term 'New Criticism' appears in John Crowe Ransom's book entitled *The New Criticism,* published in 1941. As a critical trend, it implies a form of critical practice that was gradually

becoming dominant in Anglo-American literary criticism in-between 1940s and 1960s. You should note that *Principles of Literary Criticism* (1924), *Practical Criticism* (1929), and *Understanding Poetry* (1938) are the three important works that served as the foundational text of the new critical movement. Many of the critical essays of the poet T.S. Eliot also paved the way for the development of New Criticism. New Criticism is a reaction against some of the important critical insights and tendencies of the Romantics. In this unit, we shall discuss the history of New Criticism with reference to the major exponents as well as the important concepts in New Criticism.

13.3 HISTORY OF NEW CRITICISM

Perhaps you remember that the dominant tendency of the Romantics like Wordsworth and Coleridge was to see the value and significance of literary work as the result of authorial intention or the 'expression' of the intention of the authors. Thus, it was believed that the root of literary truth could be traced in the sincerity of emotions and feelings experienced by the author. New Criticism dispensed with the idea of an author while assessing a work of art. Secondly, it is a reaction against the historical and philological approaches to literature. For example, John Crowe Ransom, the Carnegie Professor of Poetry at Kenyon College, regularly organised academic discussions pleading for a 'pure' criticism that could overthrow historical, philological, and biographical scholarship then in vogue in the universities. Subsequently, he opted for exclusive focus on literary techniques rather than on biography, morality, psychology, and sought to replace 'extrinsic' criticism with the 'intrinsic'. Thirdly, with the advent of the New Critical trends, criticism became a self-contained academic discipline. From the 1920s, there started a sudden vogue in academic institutions of critical interpretation, which included analysis, and introduction of evaluative judgment of literary works.

The key thinkers and critics associated with this school had their own individual agendas and propositions. Despite having differences and

disagreements among themselves, they all seemed to agree on the question of the text as the main object of literary criticism. The basic assumption was that reading a text in terms of authorial intention, effect on the reader, or its historical context could not do justice to the text, which is a texture of variously patterned linguistic elements. The text is an autonomous, self-contained entity, and is itself the proper object of criticism. A text must be studied in its own terms and extra-textual yardsticks should not be brought to bear upon it. Hence, the New Critics called for 'Close Reading' of texts.

Is New Criticism just a method of reading or does it also embody a distinctive ideology are some other related issues to be discussed. In subsequent critical trends, with the advent of a variety of 'political reading' of literary works, the New Critics are accused of a certain snobbery because of their exclusive focus on a clearly demarcated text, alienated from its various contexts. You should however understand that such a separation of the text from history as well as the circumstances of its production could also imply a 'closure' of reading rather than opening up of the text to diverse possibilities of meaning. Critics like Terry Eagleton, Frank Lentriccia critiqued New Criticism for this kind of conservatism. In America, the 'little magazine' *The Fugitive* formed a group of critics that included Allan Tate, John Crowe Ransom and Austin Warren. Although the group disappeared by 1937, Ransom, Tate, Warren and Brooks turned to literary criticism and the conservative political background inspired them to uphold a formalist poetics.



LET US KNOW

Although the New Critics reacted against some of the important critical insights and tendencies of the Romantics like the 'authorial intention' or the 'spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings' of the author, there also seems to be some affinities between Romantic criticism and New Criticism. For example, in chapter XIV of *Biographia Literaria,* Coleridge offers a theory of poetry and its relation to the poet.

Poetry, to Coleridge, is not just an outward expression of a poet's inner feelings because imagination plays a creative and transformative role. Imagination, Coleridge states: "dissolves, diffuses, dissipates in order to recreate". Besides, imagination fuses the opposites…". This accounts for the organic unity of poetry, the interrelationships of poetic elements and their inseparability from the whole seems to be an important antecedent to the New Critical concept of literary work as a self-contained whole. Of course, the pervasive insistence of the Romantics on the link between the poet and the poem, the cause and the effect, the literary phenomenon and its subjective origin did not find any importance among the New Critics. The New Critical ethos goes against the dominant Romantic concept of the origin of any literary phenomenon. Again, Keats's idea of the relation between a poet and his/her poem greatly departs from the expresser's notion of art, and is more attuned towards the New Critical ethos. Wimsatt and Beardsley in *The Intentional Fallacy* declares that the biographical account of the poet is irrelevant to the reading of the poem. Keats too was dismissive of Romantic subjectivism. In a letter to Sir Richard Woodhouse, he stated: "The poetical character… is not itself, it has no self, it is everything and nothing, it has no character…a poet is the most un-poetical of anything in existence; because he has no identity- he is continually in for and filling some other body**".** The implication is important, as knowledge about the poet does not help in the reading of the poem. Therefore, an understanding of this type of a background should surely help you to comprehend the ideas of New Criticism in detail.

The next point to be discussed is the connection between New Criticism and Empiricism. Because, discussing a literary text as the object of literary study is not the only purpose of New criticism. It also dwells extensively on the 'nature' of 'textual experience'. 'Experience' thus becomes a key word because critics see literature and more specifically poetry as an embodied experience, which cannot be reduced to a set of

principles or propositional truth. Philosophically the term 'experience' refers to empiricism, and you should note that the philosophical origin of New Criticism is Empiricism. According to the New Critics, any reference to context, either historical or biographical, or understanding of how a text affects a reader does not help us in this regard. The only way to acquire the experience of the text itself is through 'close-reading' of the text. Reading itself is an experience, which is the authentic source of truth and knowledge. Empiricism is based on the assumption that all knowledge is derived from experience. The mind, according to the Empiricists, is capable of organising experience and that there is no 'innate' idea, as ideas are impressed upon the human mind by experience itself. There are two ways in which knowledge-formation is possible- (i) perception and (ii) reflection of the mind. You should not, however confuse poetic experience with scientific and practical knowledge. New Critics were assertive of the distinctive character of literary knowledge, which greatly differed from scientific knowledge.

New Criticism had many things in common with Formalism. Both unanimously fixed the text to be object of investigation, both employed a mode of 'intrinsic' criticism, brushing aside the 'extrinsic' elements from the scene, and both shared a pervasive concern for 'form'. Therefore, a discussion of the convergence between the two becomes yet another necessity. New Criticism and Russian Formalism is that both regard literature as a self-contained verbal entity. They both insist on the autonomy of the literary text. One important offshoot of such an assumption is that they promote a mode of intrinsic criticism, and, they reject extra-literary criteria to judge literary texts. Both schools dwell on the specific nature of literary language. Whereas New Critics hold literary language in opposition to the language of science and of practical discourse, Formalists like Roman Jacobson defines 'literariness' by insisting on the poetic function of language. However, as M H Abrams points out, Formalists rely more on overarching organisational principles such as fabula, syuzhet, metaphor, metonymy or on specific modes of literary representation, which they tend to call defamiliarisation. On the

other hand, "the principles of the New Criticism are basically verbal. That is, literature is conceived to be a special kind of language…and the explicative procedure is to analyse the meanings and interactions of words, figures of speech, and symbols. However, whether or not one dwells on the 'origin' of meaning or exploration of meaning through interrelationship of verbal entities that constitute the text, one must invariably seal off experiences of the external world, and read the text itself carefully. Hence, both groups adopt a habit of 'close reading'".



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 1: Who, for the first time, had used the term New Criticism? Name some of the foundational New Critical texts?

Q 2: In what ways would you like to state that New criticism is 'new'?

Q 3: What is so common to all the New Critics?

13.4 NEW CRITICISM VS RUSSIAN FORMALISM:

An important point of convergence between New Criticism and Russian Formalism is that both regard literature as a self-contained verbal entity. They insist on the autonomy of the literary text. One important offshoot of such an assumption is that they promote a mode of intrinsic criticism and reject extra-literary criteria to judge literary texts. Let us, in this context, quote from Hans Bertens: "Although Eliot is obviously very much interested in poetic technique and in the form of specific poems, an interest that would be worked out by a group of American poets and critics, the so-called New Critics – he is ultimately more interested in a poem's meaning. Poetry should convey complex meanings in which attitudes that might easily be seen as contradictory are fused and which allow us to see things that we otherwise would not see. Our job, then, is to interpret poems after which we can pass judgment on them; that is, establish how well they succeed in creating

and conveying the complexity of meaning that we expect from them…the idea that we read poems, and literature in general, because they contain meaning, is obvious. This search for the meaning of poems, novels, plays and other works of literature has from the 1920s well into the 1970s absolutely dominated English and American literary studies and still constituted one of their important activities." To the Formalists, however, literary investigation should not be directed at the meaning *per se* but to the discovery of form, that makes meaning possible.

Both schools dwell on the specific nature of literary language. Whereas New Critics hold literary language in opposition to the language of science and of practical discourse, Formalists like Roman Jakobson define 'literariness' by insisting on the poetic function of language. However, Formalists rely more on overarching organizational principles such as fabula, syuzhet, metaphor, and metonymy or on specific modes of literary representation–defamiliarisation. On the other hand, "the principles of the New Criticism are basically verbal. That is, literature is conceived to be a special kind of language…and the explicative procedure is to analyse the meanings and interactions of words, figures of speech, and symbols".*(A Glossary of literary Terms)*

However, whether or not one dwells on the 'origin' of meaning or exploration of meaning through interrelationship of verbal entities that constitute the text, one must invariably seal off experiences of the external world, and read the text itself carefully. Hence, both groups adopt a habit of 'close reading'.

We must also note that the Formalists, unlike the New Critics, confer a greater amount of scientificity to the study of literature. This can be better understood when we read M. H. Abrams. He says: "Unlike the European Formalists…the New Critics did not apply the science of linguistics to poetry' and their emphasis was not on a work as constituted by linguistic devices for achieving specifically literary effects, but on the complex interplay within a work of ironic, paradoxical, and metaphoric meanings around a humanly important theme."

The basic theoretical premises of this school have been variously contested in subsequent periods. New Criticism's implicit assumption about the high cultural values embedded in English literary culture was debunked with 'Culture studies' emerging as a new discipline along with the advent of post-modernism, where moral and ethical barriers are sought to be resolved, hierarchies of aesthetic works are destabilised, in order to pave the way for an open study of multifarious cultural phenomenon. For example, New Historicism, which opts for the historical and social elements as important source of literary speculation, is in sharp reaction to the insular and textual reading upheld by New Criticism. New Historicism insists on a dynamic text, context and dialogue in the production of meaning and value of literature. In fact, the theoretical movements such as Structuralism, Post-structuralism, Deconstruction. Post colonialism, Feminism, Cultural Studies and New Historicism that started from the 1960s onwards began as a reaction against the basic principles and ideas of New Criticism.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 4: Mention the similarities between New Criticism and Russian Formalism.

13.5 KEY FIGURES OF NEW CRITICISM

The key figurers of New Criticism are John Crowe Ransom, I.A. Richards, Cleanth Brooks, Allen Tate, William Empson, W. K. Wimsatt and Monroe C. Beardsley among others. To be more precise, New Criticism denotes a practice of reading evolved by I.A. Richards. In fact, it was 'practical criticism' initiated by Richards that was carried forward by the New Critics, and its impact can be seen in their exclusive textual orientation. Following is a list of the most important New Critics.

John Crowe Ransom: (1888-1974)

Ransom was a pioneering figure of New Criticism in America. To Ransom, the function of criticism is the elucidation of literary works. Most

notable among his critical works are *The New Criticism* and *The World as Body* both of which contain important aspects of New Criticism. In an essay titled "Criticism, Inc.", he states certain basic principles of this school, and expresses his aim to make literary criticism "more scientific or precise and systematic". He underlines the importance of a critical shift from historicism to aesthetic appreciation. Historical and biographical information is not irrelevant either, but they must help to define the 'aesthetic' of literature. Ransom mentions some normative principles characteristic of New Criticism. For him, criticism should exclude—Personal impressions, Synopsis and paraphrase, Historical studies, Linguistic studies (involving allusion, word-meaning etc.), Moral content. Ransom further asserts that poetry is ontologically different and hence irreducible to prose meaning.

Ransom had a remarkable influence on contemporary American critics through the literary journal *Kenyon Review* (He was the editor of *Kenyon Review* for 20 years.) His view of the distinctive nature of poetic experience can also be understood through the distinction he made between 'Texture' and 'Structure' of a poem. 'Structure' is the argument of the poem seen as a whole. While 'Texture' is constituted by elements that have local value and affect the overall shape of the poem. The 'Texture' does not easily give rise to the 'Structure', but rather impedes it. It complicates whatever argument the poet is going to establish. As a result, "in the end we have our logic but only after a lively reminder of the aspects of reality with which logic cannot cope." The term 'Texture' is actually derived from the plastic arts, which denotes the surface quality of a work, as opposed to its shape and structure. As applied in modern literary criticism, it thus designates the concrete qualities of a poem as opposed to its idea.

I. A. Richards: (1893-1979)

I.A. Richards was an extraordinary English literary critic and rhetorician. He is known mostly for his experimental 'practical' criticism. Once, he distributed in the classroom some papers containing poems (where the names of the poets were withheld) and asked students to

critically evaluate them. Such an undertaking might seem commonplace to you, but it was indeed a formidable task then because it inspired a direct, 'unmediated' encounter between the literary text and the critical reader. It was principally because of I.A. Richards that scientific objectivity became the hallmark of New Criticism. You will like to know that C. K. Ogden was his main collaborator throughout his intellectual pursuits. Richards, Ogden and James Wood co-authored *Foundations of Aesthetics*, where they mapped the principles of aesthetic reception. Another outstanding work by Richards and Ogden was *The Meaning of Meaning: A Study of the Influence of Language and of the Science of Symbolism.* The earlier phase of his critical works focused on meaning, comprehension and communication.

Principles of Literary Criticism by Richards is a reaction against a time when there was nothing but "an echo of critical theories". The book is an expression of the enthusiasm he felt for science and the scientific mode of enquiry. *Practical Criticism,* another work by Richards, had a pedagogic necessity as it promoted a particular method of teaching literature in many Anglo-American universities, and inspired the practice of 'close-reading' in subsequent critical developments. Richards, who is today considered to be the founder of New Criticism, contributed a good number of terms to the field of literary criticism such as 'stock responses', 'pseudo-statements', 'bogus entities', distinction between 'tenor' and 'vehicle', terms like 'referential', 'referent', 'ambiguity', etc. The term 'ambiguity' was a negative marker, and was used in a pejorative sense in earlier criticism. It was Richards who put it to use in a non-pejorative way, asserting that ambiguity is a basic trait of language itself. William Empson, who was a student of Richards, expounded the term in his *Seven Types of Ambiguity*.

Cleanth Brooks: (1906-1994)

Cleanth Brook was an influential American literary critic and professor. He is best known for his contributions to New Criticism in the mid-20th century and for revolutionising the teaching of poetry in American

higher education. His most important works are *The Well Wrought Urn: Studies in the Structure of Poetry* (1947) and *Modern Poetry and the Tradition* (1939). Such works express the centrality of ambiguity and paradox as a way of understanding poetry. With his writings, Brooks helped to formulate formalist criticism, emphasising "the interior life of a poem" and codifying the principles of close reading. Brooks was also the preeminent critic of Southern literature, writing classic texts on William Faulkner, and co-founder of the influential journal *The Southern Review* with Robert Penn Warren.

Allen Tate: (1899-1979)

Allen Tate belongs to the Southern group of American critics. He distinguishes between scientific and literary discourses, which may also explain the distinction between New Criticism and Russian Formalism. If both schools share the view that a literary work is the proper object of study, the Russian Formalists' scientific study of literature goes against the New Critics' insistence on the irreducible and ontologically different experience of literature. In one sense, Tate's criticism is eclectic, and he reconciles Richards, Cleanth Brooks and R.P. Warren. For example, he draws on Richards's ideas of reconciliation, Brooks' concept of irony, and Warren's view that a poetic proposition has nothing to do with intellectual and rational scrutiny.

William Empson: (1906-1984)

Empson, the English literary critic, is perhaps the first analytical critic to consistently apply the principles of I.A. Richards on the nature and function of language. He emphasised a linguistic analysis of literary texts. He maintained that a particular word does not have a single meaning but a cluster of meanings. His *Seven Types of Ambiguity* shows careful analysis of small units of a text (word, line, sentence, etc.). Empson insisted on alternative readings and stated that ambiguity is characteristic of poetic and literary language. He meticulously probes texts like *Othello* and *Paradise Lost,* and explores multiple meanings of



Eliot's "objective correlative" predates "Affective Fallacy". According to it, emotions are externalised into a poem not as emotions but in the form of some events and situation, specific to the emotion, because judging a poem from emotion results in impressionism.

certain key words found in the text. I.A. Richards' principles regarding the nature and function of criticism, was first applied to poetry by Empson. In the *English Critical Tradition,* he is regarded as one of the sharpest and the most sensitive of modern critics.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 5: Mention the names of some of the important New Critics and their specific critical works.

Q 6: Explain the meaning of the terms 'texture' and 'structure'.

13.6 IMPORTANT CONCEPTS IN NEW CRITICISM

Autonomy of the Text

The New Critics were oriented towards "close-reading" or 'practical reading' on the lines laid down by I. A. Richards. They believed that a text, being constituted by a unique system of language, is itself a source of its meaning and value, and is thus distinguished from other texts or other uses of language. A poem is an embodied experience inextricably bound up with language, and hence its meaning cannot be conveyed by prose paraphrases. In the Romantic period, it is the poet who is the locus of meaning and significance, as one can remember from Wordsworth's famous dictum that poetry is the 'spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings'. However, following New Criticism, poetry is said to have its own territory, its own unique mode of existence. New Critics see the poem as a self-contained, self-sustaining entity. The poem, and not its relation to the external world, should be the focus and object of criticism, as the new Critics sought to establish.

Intentional Fallacy and Affective Fallacy

"The Intentional Fallacy" by W K Wimsatt Jr. and Monroe C. Beardsley is a foundational text of New Criticism, which states that 'intention' should not be brought to bear upon the analysis of the literary

text. Wimsatt and Beardsley argue that knowledge of an author's original intention is neither integral to, nor essential in the critical analysis of, a work. One can interpret a text without any reference to 'authorial intention'. Their claim here is two-fold: First, authorial intentions are not available in the text; second, the notion of authorial intention dismantles the integrity of a literary work.

On the other hand, the term "Affective Fallacy" used by Wimsatt and Beardsley (*The Verbal Icon*, 1954), connotes 'a confusion between the poem and its result (what it is and what it does)'. Judgment of a literary text should not rest upon the effect it has on the readers. 'Affective fallacy' is thus a confusion between a poem and its "affect" on readers. A text, however emotive its context might be, must nevertheless be judged as a text, or a self-sufficient entity. It must be seen as a system of language. Therefore, evaluating a work of art in terms of its results in the mind of the readers is supposed to be a critical error. In the subsequent unit, you will read about these concepts in detail.

Irony and Paradox:

In general terms irony refers to a subtly humorous perception of inconsistency in which an apparently straightforward statement or event is undermined by its context so as to give it a very different significance. Irony also indicates a 'verbal situation' where the expressed meaning differs from its implied meaning. Some New Critics used this term to provide a general criterion of affixing literary value to a work of art. I.A. Richards, for example, contends that in any aesthetic experience, the rivalry of conflicting impulses is avoided as they are given autonomy. He also distinguishes between 'exclusion' and 'inclusion' in poetry, defining irony as a 'touchstone' for the poetry of exclusion. As he states: "Irony consists in bringing in of the opposite, the complementary impulses; that is why poetry which is exposed to it is not of the highest order, and why irony itself is so constantly a characteristic of poetry". (*Literary Criticism: A Short History*).

Cleanth Brooks further elaborates Richards' idea in his essay "Irony as a Principle of Structure". He opines that poetic statements can



Denotation and Connotation:

Denotation is the most literal meaning of a word, regardless of what one feels about it or the various ideas and suggestions it connotes. For example, the word apartheid denotes a certain form of political, social, and racial regime. However, it *connotes* much more than that. Connotation refers to the suggestions and implications evoked by a word or a phrase.

aspire for musicality only through particular and concrete details. In poetry, general meaning is qualified by the particular "the concrete particular with which the poet loads himself seems to deny the universal to which he aspires." (*The English Critical Tradition,* 472). Brooks would even like to suggest that the 'language of poetry is the language of paradox'. This idea has been persuasively elaborated in his book *The Well-Wrought Urn* (1947), which is devoted to close reading of poems by John Donne, Shakespeare, Milton, Pope, Wordsworth, Eliot and a few others. Brooks tried to argue that the poems are meant to be "the concrete examples on which generalizations are to be based." Thus, the poetic language may be seen as "The Language of Paradox." Because, it is a language in which connotations play an equally important part along with denotations.

Ambiguity

Ambiguity usually refers to openness to different interpretations, or an instance in which some use of language may be understood in diverse ways. Sometimes known as 'plurisignation' or 'multiple meaning', ambiguity became a central concept in the interpretation of poetry in William Empson's book *Seven Types of Ambiguity* (1930), which is a fundamental text of New Criticism. The basic argument is that because of its unique organization of language, poetry can cover an indecision, which finds an echo in the mind of the reader. Such indecision stems from the reconciliation of contradictory impulses. Although Empson offers a classification of ambiguity into seven types, his actual contributions can be traced not in his classification, but in the way he offers a close and acute analysis of the linguistic elements of language. In view of the multiple meanings, Empson states that a reader must know the forces that work in the mind of the author, or how those forces appear to its first readers. So, knowledge of the history of language, the author's conscious or unconscious intentions as well as the reactions of the first readers—are all keys to an understanding of ambiguity.

Metaphorical Meaning:

I.A. Richards has it that meaning originates from a specific context within a text. However, contrary to this, metaphor exemplifies how the

contexts merge. Metaphorical meaning is therefore not a version of literal meaning or "simply a prettified version of an already stated meaning" (*Literary Criticism: A Short History,* 644), but that which occupies a new, distinctive ground, adding to the richness of poetry. Richards introduced the terms 'tenor' and 'vehicle', 'tenor' indicating the subject and 'vehicle', the metaphorical term linked to the 'tenor'. However, metaphor does not mean either 'tenor' or 'vehicle', but a third entity that stems from their link. Resisting traditional notions of the 'displacement of words', Richards sees metaphor as a transaction of two contexts, and its value is thus, never ornamental.



13.7 LET US SUM UP

From this unit, we have learnt that New Criticism institutionalised the study of literature and established it as a self-sufficient academic discipline. You have learnt that New Criticism is a movement in American literary criticism from around 1930s to 1960s that concentrated on the verbal complexities and ambiguities of short poems considered as self-sufficient objects without attention to their origins or effects. John Crowe Ransom (*The New Criticism* 1941), I. A. Richards, William Empson are the most important New Critics. Ransom called for a more 'objective' criticism so that one could focus on the intrinsic qualities of a work rather than on its biographical or historical context; and Ransom's students Cleanth Brooks and Robert Penn Warren had already provided a very influential model of such an approach in their college textbook *Understanding Poetry* (1938). This intellectual background made New Criticism the academic orthodoxy for the next twenty years. The names of the other New Critics include Allen Tate, R. P. Blackmur, W. K. Wimsatt Jr, and Kenneth Burke. You have learnt that I. A. Richards' *Practical Criticism* (1929), William Empson's *Seven Types of Ambiguity* (1930), Cleanth Brooks's *The Well-Wrought Urn* (1947), and Wimsatt's *The Verbal Icon* (1954) are the outstanding works of New Criticism. New Criticism also promoted a particular reading practice—the habit of "close reading."



13.8 FURTHER READING

Abrams, M. H. (2003). *A Glossary of Literary Terms*. Singapore: Thomson Asia Pte Ltd.

Brooks, Cleanth & William K. Wimsatt Jr. (1957). *Literary Criticism: A Short History*. New Delhi: Oxford & IBH Publishing Co. Pvt. Ltd.

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Makaryk, Irena R. (ed). (1993). *Encyclopaedia of Contemporary Literary Theory: Approaches, Scholars, Terms.* Canada: University of Toronto Press.

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13.9 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS (HINTS ONLY)

Ans to Q No 1: John Crowe Ransom in his book *The New Criticism* which (1941) used the term for the first time… …*Principles of Literary Criticism* (1924), *Practical Criticism* (1929), and *Understanding Poetry* (1938) are the three other important books that served as the foundational texts of the New Critical movement.

Ans to Q No 2: Because it is a reaction against some of the important critical insights and tendencies of the Romantics (mainly their advocacy of authorial intention or 'expression' of their intention)… …because it is a reaction against the historical and philological

approaches to literature…. …with New criticism, criticism became a self-contained academic discipline.

Ans to Q No 3: They all agreed to accept the text as the object of literary criticism… …they held that the text is an autonomous, self-contained entity and is itself the proper object of criticism… …they all agreed with 'Close Reading'.

Ans to Q No 4: Both fixed the text to be object of investigation… … both employed a mode of 'intrinsic' criticism, brushing aside the 'extrinsic' elements from the scene… …both shared a pervasive concern for 'form'… …both schools dwelled on the specific nature of literary language… …both adopted a habit of 'close reading'.

Ans to Q No 5: John Crowe Ransom (*The New Criticism* and *The World as Body*)… …I.A. Richards (*Principles of Literary Criticism and Practical Criticism… …*Cleanth Brooks (*The Well Wrought Urn: Studies in the Structure of Poetry* and *Modern Poetry and the Tradition*)… William Empson (*English Critical Tradition & Seven Types of Ambiguity)… …* W. K. Wimsatt & Monroe C. Beardsley (*The Verbal Icon*) and so on.

Ans to Q No 6: According to John Crowe Ransom, the distinctive nature of poetic experience can be understood through the distinction he makes between 'texture' and 'structure' of a poem… …the structure is the argument of the poem seen as a whole… …'texture' is constituted by elements that have local value and affect the overall shape of the poem.



13.10 POSSIBLE QUESTIONS

Q 1: Outline the main concerns of the New Critical advocacy of textual "close reading".

Q 2: Highlight the extent of the similarities between New Criticism and the Formalists. In what sense are both schools proponents of the 'poem'? In what way do they differ?

Q 3: How did New Criticism evolve as a dominant critical mode in the beginning of the 20th century? Discuss.

Q 4: What are the important concepts under New Criticism? Discuss their role in the intellectual contexts of New Criticism.

Q 5: "New Criticism institutionalised the study of literature and established it as a self-sufficient academic discipline." Justify your views.

Q 6: Make a list of the important New Critics and describe their contributions with particular reference to their works.

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