

ANNAI VAILANKANNI ARTS AND SCIENCE COLLEGE, THANJAVUR-7

P.G AND RESEARCH DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH

CLASS & SEMESTER:

II MA- III SEM

TITLE:

LITERARY THEORY

SUB CODE:

P 16EN33

UNIT:

I-V

TYPE OF QUESTION:

PART-A SHORT ANSWER

SL. NO	QUESTIONS	KEY
1	Who is Father of New Criticism?	I.A. Richards
2	What are the four types of codes used in semiotic theory?	Metonymic Analogical Displaced Condensed.
3	What is dialectical materialism?	Dialectical materialism, a philosophical approach to reality derived from the writings of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels. ... For Marx and Engels, materialism meant that the material world, perceptible to the senses, has objective reality independent of mind or spirit.
4	In what way does Julia Kristeva	Ulia Kristeva for the most part follows the general

	build on Jacques Lacan's theory of psychosexual development?	parameters of Lacan's model of psychosexual development (see the first Lacan module); however, she adds a number of elements that recast the valences of Lacan's terms. ... Kristeva refers to this stage as the chora.
5	From whom did New Historicists draw the idea of 'self-regulating systems'?	Claude Lévi-Strauss
6	Which of the following text is considered the first example of postcolonial criticism?	Edward Said's Orientalism
7	How do Marxist theorists react to ideology?	Marx believes that because the superstructure is determined by the base, it inevitably supports the ideologies of the base. Ideologies are the changing ideas, values, and feelings through which individuals experience their societies.
8	What is the main function of postcolonial criticism?	Postcolonial critics reinterpret and examine the values of literary texts, by focussing on the contexts in which they were produced, and reveal the colonial ideologies that are concealed within.
9	What is hermeneutics?	Hermeneutics refers to the theory and practice of interpretation, where interpretation involves an understanding that can be justified.
10	What is phenomenology?	Phenomenology is a philosophy of experience. ... Phenomenological theories of literature regard works of art as mediators between the consciousnesses of the author and the reader or as attempts to disclose aspects of the being of humans and their worlds.
11	Define historicism.	Historicism is the idea of attributing significance to elements of space and time, such as historical period, geographical place, and local culture, in order to contextualize theories, narratives and other interpretative instruments. ... The writings of Karl Marx, influenced by Hegel, also include historicism.
12	Name any two important structuralists.	Saussure. Lévi-Strauss. Lacan and Piaget.
13	What does Reader-Response criticism advocate?	Reader-response criticism argues that literature should be viewed as a performing art in which each reader creates their own, possibly unique, text-related

		performance. It stands in total opposition to the theories of formalism and the New Criticism.
14	Define Narratology.	Narratology, in literary theory, the study of narrative structure. Narratology looks at what narratives have in common and what makes one different from another.
15	Who coined the term 'deconstruction'?	Jacques Derrida

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**PART-B & C PARAGRAPH AND
ESSAY QUESTIONS**

PARAGRAPH QUESTIONS

1	What is Russian Formalism and what was its effect on literature? Russian Formalism, which emerged around 1915 and flourished in the 1920s, was
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associated with the OPOJAZ (Society for the Study of Poetic Language) and with the Moscow Linguistic Society (one of the leading figures of which was Roman Jakobson) and Prague Linguistic Circle (established in 1926, with major figures as Boris Eichenbaum and Viktor Shklovsky) The school derives its name from “form”, as these critics studied the form of literary work rather than its content, emphasizing on the “formal devices” such as rhythm, metre, rhyme, metaphor, syntax or narrative technique.

Formalism views literature as a special mode of language and proposes a fundamental opposition between poetic/literary language and the practical/ordinary language. While ordinary language serves the purpose of communication, literary language is self-reflexive, in that it offers readers a special experience by drawing attention to its “formal devices”, which Roman Jakobson calls “literariness” — that which makes a given work a literary work. Jan Mukarovsky described literariness as consisting in the “maximum of foregrounding of the utterance”, and the primary aim of such foregrounding, as Shklovsky described in his Art as Technique, is to “estrangle or “defamiliarize”. Thus literary language is ordinary language deformed and made strange. Literature, by forcing us into a dramatic awareness of language, refreshes our habitual perceptions and renders objects more perceptible.

Though Formalism focused primarily on poetry, later Shklovsky, Todorov and Propp analysed the language of fiction, and the way in which it produced the effect of defamiliarization. They looked at the structure of a narrative and explored how elements like plot and characterization contributed to the narrative’s effect. Propp studied folk narratives () and Shklovsky treated Sterne’s Tristram Shandy, as a novel that parodied earlier conventions of writing.

2 What is Semiotics and Semiology?

A highly influential branch of study, Semiotics or the study of signs, can be considered the foundation for literary theory. Many of the revolutionary theories of the twentieth century, such as Structuralism and Poststructuralism, Structural Anthropology (Levi-Strauss), Psychoanalysis (Lacan), Cultural Studies (Barthes) and the theories of Foucault have drawn their ideas from Semiotics.

Introduced by Charles Sanders Peirce as Semiotics, in the end of the 19th century, and as Semiology by Saussure in his Course in General Linguistics (1916), this science deals with the study of signs that are not just confined to the literary realm, but also to the non-literary, which spans across an entire gamut of human activities, such as rituals, customs, dress code and so on, and which convey common meanings to the members of a particular culture. Thus Semiotics can be considered one of the larger structures of structuralism itself, as Saussure himself referred to it as a “larger imaginative province for the study of language”. Though Semiotics and Semiology have been used interchangeably to refer to the same study, there are certain basic differences in the

way both CS Peirce and Saussure perceived, defined and classified the “sign”.

CS Peirce classified sign into icon, index and symbol, based on the relation between the signifying item and that which it signifies. Accordingly, an icon is a sign by virtue of its similarities with what it signifies. For instance, the similarity of a portrait to the person it depicts. An index is a sign which has cause/effect relationship with what it signifies (smoke signifies fire).

A symbol becomes a sign, as the relationship between the signifier and the signified is socially constructed by convention and the meaning is arbitrarily attributed, for instance, the red traffic light signifying “Stop!”.

The Saussurean sign consists of two inseparable parts, the signifier (word image) and the signified (the concept) and it is due to the interaction between various signifiers and signifieds that meaning is generated in a language. With the example of the 8.25 Geneva to Paris express, Saussure illustrates the relationality of meaning. Like CS Peirce’s “symbol”, Saussure propounds that meaning is arbitrary and constructed through convention, except in the case of onomatopoeic words. The identity of all elements in a language is determined by their difference from and opposition to other elements in a particular linguistic system. Consequently, in structural linguistics, any individual utterance of sign/ language (the parole) should be understood as only a manifestation of the overall system of language {the langue). Thus a semiotic study focuses on establishing the general signifying system that each particular instance manifests.

Roland Barthes in Mythologies (1957) developed the notion of a highly ideological sign system called myth, which itself contains two semiotic systems, the first order signification or the denotation, and the sign of the denotation becoming the second order signification or the connotation Barthes studied the bourgeoisie myths of French daily life such as soap, steak, and chips, which are usually displayed by the media “neutrally and innocently”, when they are in fact ideologically and historically determined.

3 Distinguish between structuralism and post structuralism

Post Structuralism vs. Structuralism

Post structuralism and deconstruction deals with the differences between the two terms. In the essay there are 4 different key points that can show the reader the difference between post structuralism and structuralism.

The certain key differences that I decided to write about were tone and style, attitude to language and, project. The essay points out the differences between the two terms in order to get a better understanding what the differences are and to compare the two theories to one another.

Structuralism writing is one that is seen as abstract and general. There is a form that

structuralism takes on that has an order that takes on aspects of scientific writing although it does not want to be labeled as a term that is only scientific.

Post-structuralism writing is euphoric and urgent. This means that the writing is supposed to give off a certain feeling or expression to the reader that is associated with happiness.

Structuralist believes that the world is constructed through language. Reality is only seen through a linguistic medium. I find this interesting because I think that the structuralism is trying to state that language is very important in the sense that it creates the world we live in. Structuralism also is thought of as having a structure and order that the world revolves around.

Post structuralist's believe that reality is seen as textual. "post structuralism develops what threatens to become terminal anxieties about the possibility of achieving knowledge through language." I think that this quote helps us understand how post structuralism causes certain tensions that are brought up by the idea of language. This idea is further explained to express the idea of words in language that mean one thing may not successfully be understood the way one refers to them. There is a lost in translation at times and meaning can vary according to the words that are used in language.

Post structuralists also believe that words are known and understood through the help of other words that are opposite of the original word that is trying to be identified. The goal that structuralism wants to fulfill is the breakaway from the modes of perception/categorization and get words to be seen in a more reliable point of view. Post structuralisms goals are for one to see an individual as a product of social and linguistic forms and to take away the idea of skepticism in language.

4 Explain the deconstruction theory attributed to Derrida.

Deconstruction is a philosophical system of thought. It is applied to many fields and disciplines particularly to literature but also to fields as different from literature as anthropology and archaeology. Derrida is a philosopher who studied then taught at prestigious academic institutions in France (he later lectured then taught at prestigious American universities like John Hopkins and UC Irvine). Derrida became disillusioned with Western philosophical systems and with philosophical Structuralism.

Concurrently, he became interested in the linguistic system of Saussure in which words--expressions of speech and writing--are signifiers and the thing referred to is the signified and both comprise sign. Saussure posited that the signified has no innate nor inherent meaning of its own--there is no universal object irrevocably, inherently labeled "dog" "horse" "piano" "love" etc--and that the way signifieds are defined is through their relationship to other signifiers in systems of grouped signifiers or chains of signifiers: signifiers are defined not by what they innately are but by contrast to what they are not;

they are not defined by their presence but by the absence of presence.

Derrida began to develop a Saussurean philosophic linguistics. He saw that while Saussure was correct, Saussurean linguistics stopped short of the true picture of linguistics. He saw that the logical extension of Saussurean insight was that there is no linguistic meaning at all. If there is no linguistic meaning because signifiers are given meaning through absence, then agents of linguistic expression (speakers, writers) can have no absolute intention and expressions can have no absolute meaning. This system of linguistic meaning formed the bedrock of theoretical deconstruction.

Derrida holds that language expressions and reality described by these expressions are constructed culturally; such expressions are not, as ancient and modern Western philosophers have held, describing absolutes of truth and substance: other realities are possible from within the systems (or chains) of definitions developed through relationship with that which is the other; if "dog" is the absence of "cat," then "dog" is equally the absence of "run." Defining dog through relationship with another signifier(s), such as "run," shapes a subtly different reality. Thus reality is malleable and mutable, not static and immutable: it is unstable, not stable.

Deconstruction theory seeks to deconstruct the constructed reality and to expose the instability of the language presented by linguistic expression. Deconstruction theory does this by: destabilizing the logocentric idea that states that knowledge is knowable and that reality has origination (origin) in opposing ideas, called binary hierarchies, such as the examples power/weakness, evil/good, truth/beauty, me/them, us/other etc. exposing jeu or "play" (mobility, interchangeability, fluidity) between signifiers whereby suppressed realities can emerge thus subverting linguistic stability and immutable reality.

challenging the assertion of the primacy of speech over writing, which, in Western views, is a mere disconnected shadow of speech, speech having come and continuing to come first and directly from the conscious mind, while positing the opposing assertion that before speech was, writing was, with writing defined as anything from cave paintings to music to (in the extreme analysis) wars.

Asserting difference,

(1) The deferment of meaning from the moment of expression to a future moment of interpretation that occurs in conjunction with a system of signifiers or a chain of signifiers that may or may not be the system or chain in the intention and conscious thought of the linguistic expressor (speaker/writer) at the moment of expression and which is

(2) The difference between and amongst signifiers that defines the meaning of the expressed signifier that contains only the absence of meaning until relationship with another signifier(s) is observed.

5	<p>Discuss the major themes and concerns about postmodernism.</p> <p>One of the historical events to come out of the Postmodern era has been globalism. And, with this event, the concept of identity has become more free but also more fragmented. For example, it is now more common to see a person from a conservative religious or cultural background wearing a Che Guevara t-shirt, listening to Outkast and reading Karl Marx. While this has been wonderful for sharing ideas between people and cultures, it reflects one of the concerns of postmodernism which is a fragmentation of identity. In other words, postmodernists criticize neat, clear-cut, identities because they are cliché or because such identities support existing power structures (which tend to oppress certain groups). So, the freeing up of the categories of identity has been just that: freeing. But with it comes the fragmentation and difficulty of finding a way to fit in when these pre-established categories of identity are dismissed in favor of more versatile concepts.</p>
6	<p>Write a short note on New Historicism.</p> <p>New Historicism is a literary theory based on the idea that literature should be studied and interpreted within the context of both the history of the author and the history of the critic. Based on the literary criticism of Stephen Greenblatt and influenced by the philosophy of Michel Foucault, New Historicism acknowledges not only that a work of literature is influenced by its author's times and circumstances, but that the critic's response to that work is also influenced by his environment, beliefs, and prejudices.</p> <p>A New Historicist looks at literature in a wider historical context, examining both how the writer's times affected the work and how the work reflects the writer's times, in turn recognizing that current cultural contexts color that critic's conclusions.</p> <p>For example, when studying Shakespeare's Merchant of Venice, one always comes to the question of whether the play shows Shakespeare to be anti-Semitic. The New Historicist recognizes that this isn't a simple yes-or-no answer that can be teased out by studying the text. This work must be judged in the context in which it was written; in turn, cultural history can be revealed by studying the work — especially, say New Historicists, by studying the use and dispersion of power and the marginalization of social classes within the work. Studying the history reveals more about the text; studying the text reveals more about the history.</p> <p>The New Historicist also acknowledges that his examination of literature is "tainted" by his own culture and environment. The very fact that we ask whether Shakespeare was anti-Semitic — a question that wouldn't have been considered important a century ago — reveals how our study of Shakespeare is affected by our civilization.</p>

	<p>New Historicism, then, underscores the impermanence of literary criticism. Current literary criticism is affected by and reveals the beliefs of our times in the same way that literature reflects and is reflected by its own historical contexts. New Historicism acknowledges and embraces the idea that, as times change, so will our understanding of great literature.</p>
7	<p>Exemplify the Feminist Theory</p> <p>Feminist theory is a major branch within sociology that shifts its assumptions, analytic lens, and topical focus away from the male viewpoint and experience toward that of women. In doing so, feminist theory shines a light on social problems, trends, and issues that are otherwise overlooked or misidentified by the historically dominant male perspective within social theory.</p> <p>Key areas of focus within feminist theory include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> discrimination and exclusion on the basis of sex and gender objectification structural and economic inequality power and oppression gender roles and stereotypes <p>Overview</p> <p>Many people incorrectly believe that feminist theory focuses exclusively on girls and women and that it has an inherent goal of promoting the superiority of women over men.</p> <p>In reality, feminist theory has always been about viewing the social world in a way that illuminates the forces that create and support inequality, oppression, and injustice, and in doing so, promotes the pursuit of equality and justice.</p> <p>That said, since the experiences and perspectives of women and girls were historically excluded for years from social theory and social science, much feminist theory has focused on their interactions and experiences within society to ensure that half the world's population is not left out of how we see and understand social forces, relations, and problems.</p> <p>While most feminist theorists throughout history have been women, people of all genders can be found working in the discipline today. By shifting the focus of social theory away from the perspectives and experiences of men, feminist theorists have created social theories that are more inclusive and creative than those that assume the social actor to always be a man.</p>

Part of what makes feminist theory creative and inclusive is that it often considers how systems of power and oppression interact, which is to say it does not just focus on gendered power and oppression, but on how this might intersect with systemic racism, a hierarchical class system, sexuality, nationality, and (dis)ability, among other things.

Gender Differences

Some feminist theory provides an analytic framework for understanding how women's location in and experience of social situations differ from men's. For example, cultural feminists look at the different values associated with womanhood and femininity as a reason for why men and women experience the social world differently. Other feminist theorists believe that the different roles assigned to women and men within institutions better explain gender differences, including the sexual division of labor in the household.

Gender Inequality

Feminist theories that focus on gender inequality recognize that women's location in and experience of social situations are not only different but also unequal to men's.

Liberal feminists argue that women have the same capacity as men for moral reasoning and agency, but that patriarchy, particularly the sexist division of labor, has historically denied women the opportunity to express and practice this reasoning.

Indeed, these feminist theorists claim, married women have higher levels of stress than unmarried women and married men.⁵ Therefore, the sexual division of labor in both the public and private spheres needs to be altered for women to achieve equality in marriage.

Gender Oppression

Theories of gender oppression go further than theories of gender difference and gender inequality by arguing that not only are women different from or unequal to men, but that they are actively oppressed, subordinated, and even abused by men.⁶

Power is the key variable in the two main theories of gender oppression: psychoanalytic feminism and radical feminism.

Psychoanalytic feminists attempt to explain power relations between men and women by reformulating Sigmund Freud's theories of human emotions, childhood development, and the workings of the subconscious and unconscious. They believe that conscious calculation cannot fully explain the production and reproduction of patriarchy.

Radical feminists argue that being a woman is a positive thing in and of itself, but

that this is not acknowledged in patriarchal societies where women are oppressed. They identify physical violence as being at the base of patriarchy, but they think that patriarchy can be defeated if women recognize their own value and strength, establish a sisterhood of trust with other women, confront oppression critically, and form female-based separatist networks in the private and public spheres.

Structural Oppression

Structural oppression theories posit that women's oppression and inequality are a result of capitalism, patriarchy, and racism.

Socialist feminists agree with Karl Marx and Freidrich Engels that the working class is exploited as a consequence of capitalism, but they seek to extend this exploitation not just to class but also to gender.⁹

Inter sectionalist theorists seek to explain oppression and inequality across a variety of variables, including class, gender, race, ethnicity, and age. They offer the important insight that not all women experience oppression in the same way, and that the same forces that work to oppress women and girls also oppress people of color and other marginalized groups.

One way structural oppression of women, specifically the economic kind, manifests in society is in the gender wage gap, which shows that men routinely earn more for the same work than women.

An intersectional view of this situation shows that women of color, and men of color, too, are even further penalized relative to the earnings of white men.

In the late 20th century, this strain of feminist theory was extended to account for the globalization of capitalism and how its methods of production and of accumulating wealth center on the exploitation of women workers around the world.

8

Describe briefly Ecocriticism in Literary Theory.

Generally, the traditional theory considers the linguistics or the cultural background or the social background as an important factor, eco-critics takes nature as a dominant factor as they believe that our evolution as a society is largely dependent on the forces of nature. Because, according to them, the world in which we live is not made only with the language and social elements.

It is only one of the many factors responsible for the existence and development of humans. Life including the human life is heavily affected by the role nature and environment plays and thus nature is the most important consideration of this theory.

	<p>After converting into the field of theory, the green criticism was split into parts and one part developed itself as a branch dedicated to rereading and analyzing the role of nature, representation and the natural elements in the literary works produced by the scholars from the worldwide. Green studies are merely the regional literature as it takes into consideration the differences of nature in different places. But the central source of thoughts, research, and findings in this field will always be the authors and poets well-known and established in the world of literature.</p>
9	<p>What is Phenomenological theory?</p> <p>William James’s famous distinction between the “I” (subject) and the “me” (object) can be used to understand all phenomenological approaches to personality. The “I” refers to experience as it occurs for an individual (e.g., what it feels like to win an award). The “me” refers to how a person thinks about her- or himself as an object of knowledge (e.g., what someone thinks about her- or himself for having won an award). In the phenomenological model, the “I” and the “me” interact to give an individual’s self-consciousness its particular form.</p> <p>Phenomenological theorists focus on two kinds of subjective experience. The first is how people experience themselves in relation to others. An example is how a young girl experiences herself as her parents express disapproval of her behavior. People’s positive and negative experiences with others contribute to how they learn to value themselves, sometimes called self-regard. Carl Rogers was particularly concerned with conditions of worth—or expectations that others have in order for a person to be acceptable to them. If a person receives the message that certain thoughts and feelings are unacceptable to others, he or she may become uncomfortable having those experiences and distort them. When that occurs, experiences of the person’s own spontaneous inclinations are not integrated into his or her self-concept and the “me” becomes less genuine or inauthentic. Such a constrained self is not free.</p>
10	<p>Write a short note on Narratology</p> <p>Narratology, in literary theory, the study of narrative structure. Narratology looks at what narratives have in common and what makes one different from another.</p> <p>Like structuralism and semiotics, from which it derived, narratology is based on the idea of a common literary language, or a universal pattern of codes that operates within the text of a work. Its theoretical starting point is the fact that narratives are found and communicated through a wide variety of media—such as oral and written language, gestures, and music—and that the “same” narrative can be seen in many different forms. The development of this body of theory, and its corresponding terminology, accelerated in the mid-20th century.</p> <p>The foundations of narratology were laid in such books as Vladimir Propp’s <i>Morfologiya skazki</i> (1928; <i>Morphology of the Folk Tale</i>), which created a model for</p>

folktales based on seven “spheres of action” and 31 “functions” of narrative; Claude Lévi-Strauss’s *Anthropologie structurale* (1958; *Structural Anthropology*), which outlined a grammar of mythology; A.J. Greimas’s *Sémantique structurale* (1966; *Structural Semantics*), which proposed a system of six structural units called “actants”; and Tzvetan Todorov’s *Grammaire du Décaméron* (1969; *The Grammar of the Decameron*), which introduced the term *narratologie*. In *Figures III* (1972; partial translation, *Narrative Discourse*) and *Nouveau Discours de récit* (1983; *Narrative Discourse Revisited*), Gérard Genette codified a system of analysis that examined both the actual narration and the act of narrating as they existed apart from the story or the content. Other influential theorists in narratology were Roland Barthes, Claude Bremond, Gerald Prince, Seymour Chatman, and Mieke Bal.

ESSAY QUESTIONS

- 1 Write an essay on the intentions of New Criticism.
- New Criticism, born and nurtured during the late twenties and early thirties of the present century, are in sharp reaction to Sociological or Marxian criticism which regarded a litterateur a product of the society in which he lived.
- It put the theory of inspiration off the gear. It assumes a close and causative relationship between society and literature and between society and the writer. It is the stress on textual criticism which has made it new. Otherwise there is nothing new in it. It had its origin in the writings of T. E. Hulme; but it is now mainly an American movement. The term was first used by J. E. Spingam. Its chief exponents in America are Kenneth Burke, John Crowe Ransom, Allen Tate, Richard Blackmur, Cleanth Brooks, etc. In England its leading representatives are I. A. Richards, T. S. Eliot, F. R. Leavis, William Empson, etc.
- The New Critics are opposed to the biographical, historical, sociological and comparative approach of conventional criticism. Similarly, they reject the traditional division of literature into periods and groups for the purpose of criticism. All such considerations are regarded as extrinsic and irrelevant and a work or art is judged solely on its own merits. Their criticism is Intrinsic or Ontological, and not Extrinsic. A poem, a piece of literature, is the thing in itself, with a definite entity of its own separate both from the poet and the socio-cultural milieu in which it is produced.
- The emphasis is laid on the study of the text, and its word by word analysis and interpretation. The music of a poem, its imagery and versification, its total structure must be taken into account to arrive at its meaning. Words must be studied with reference to their sound, and their emotional and symbolic significance. New Criticism is predominantly textual, and the new critics have rendered valuable service to literature by their study and interpretation of literary classics. While Eliot has his affinity with the critics of the new school, he is against too close a scrutiny of a work of art. The poem is

the thing, and it must be studied in itself, but he is against the 'lemon-squeezer' critics who press the words too closely. Although the term 'new criticism' was first used by Joel E. Spingarn in his address at Columbia University, yet it came in general use after John Crow Ransom published his book, *The New Criticism* in 1941. And it was I. A. Richards who provided the theoretical foundations.

The Contribution of the New Critics

Speaking about the contribution of the new critics, Pritchard observes : "their concentration upon linguistic expression has benefited the study of poetry. Readers needed to realize that 'the poem's the thing'. By this redirection of poetic study and by the publicity they have given to poetic problems they have increased the number of readers of poetry. Even their too sweeping assertions, by stirring opponents to combat them, have injected new life into the study of literature. The self-evaluation of the New Critics during the past few years, and the indications that they are increasingly ready to widen their study, are encouraging signs. Whether this expansion indicates their further development or their disappearance as a school, no one can now say. They remain, however, one of the most important and colourful schools of criticism which the century has yet produced."

The Basic Tenets of the New Critics

It is yet too early to make any definitive evaluation of their work and contribution. Therefore, it would be more fruitful to consider their basic tenets, tenets to which they all subscribe despite their individual differences. These basic doctrines and principles may be summarised as follows :

- (a) To the New Critics, a poem, or a work of art, is the thing in itself, and the critic must concentrate all attention on it and illuminate it. The function of the critic is to analyse, interpret and evaluate a work of art. A poem is distinct from the poet and his social milieu; it is a definite entity in itself and must be studied as such. The critic must devote himself to close textual study, unhampered by any extraneous concerns.
- (b) Moral and religious considerations, social, political and environmental conditions, the details of the poet's biography, are all irrelevant and are all obstacles in the way of a real understanding of a work of literature. The literary critic must rid himself of all such extrinsic bias and prejudices. He must approach the work with an open mind, ready to study it, "as is in itself."
- (c) The critic must not allow himself to be hampered and prejudiced by any literary theories also.
- (d) A poem has both form and content and both should be closely studied and analysed before a true understanding of its meaning becomes possible.
- (e) Words, images, rhythm, metre, etc., constitute the form of poetry and are to be closely studied. A poem is an organic whole and these different parts are inter-connected and these inter-connections, the reaction of one upon the other, and upon the total meaning, is to be closely followed, and examined. That is why a prose paraphrase

cannot convey the total, and poetic, meaning of a poem.

(f) The study of words, their arrangement, the way in which they act and react on each other is all important. Words, besides their literal significance, also have emotional, associative, and symbolic significance, and only close application and analysis can bring out their total meaning. The new critics, in their minute scrutiny of words, and the structure of poetry, have propounded different theories. “From I. A. Richards’s concept of the ‘behaviour’ of words, through Empson’s seven categories of “ambiguity” with their subdivisions, to John Crowe Ransom’s principle of ‘texture’ of Robert Penn Warren’s preoccupation with symbols, or Allen Tate’s theory of ‘tensions’, we find the same search for the meaning of words, for the strange transformation they undergo as they react on one another for the way they contribute to build up the structure of the poem—the unified whole of which they are the parts.

(g) Poetry is communication and language is the means of communication, so the New Critics seek to understand the full meaning of a poem through a study of poetic language. As R. C. Crane has aptly remarked : “So everything turns, for I. A. Richards, on the opposition of ‘referential’ and ‘emotive’ speech; for John Crowe Ransom, on the antithesis of logical ‘structure’ and poetic ‘texture’, and for Brooks, on the contrast between the ‘abstract’ language of science, and the ‘paradoxical’ language of poetry. Thus, for the New Critics words are all important, and their study is the only key to the poetic meaning of the poem.

(h) The New Critics are opposed both to the historical and comparative methods of criticism. Historical considerations are extraneous to the work of literature, and comparison of works of art is to be resorted to with great caution and in rare instances alone for the intent and aim of writers differ, and so their method, their techniques, their forms, are bound to be different.

(i) They are also anti-impressionistic. Instead of giving merely his impression, which are bound to be vague and subjective, the critic must make a close, objective and precise study of the poem concerned.

(f) In short, they concentrate on close textual study, on the study of the form, design and texture of poetry. The psychological state of the poet at the time of creation, as well as the effect of the poem upon the readers are not to be allowed to divert attention from the text. Stressing the point, Wimsatt and Brooks write in their book *The Verbal Icon* “A poem should not mean but be. A poem can be only through its meaning— since its medium is words—yet it is, simply is, in the sense that we have no excuse for inquiring what part is intended or meant. Poetry is a feat of style by which a complex of meaning is handled all at once.” The object of critical analysis should be the poem itself, to approach which either by way of its origins in the mind of its maker or by way of its results in the mind of its maker or by way of its results in the mind of the audience would be critical fallacies. They may be called the intellectual fallacy and the effective fallacy. The former is “the confusion between the poem and its origins. It begins by

trying to derive the standard of criticism from the psychological effects of the poem and ends in impressionism and relativism.” The consequence of both these fallacies is that the poem itself, as an object of specifically critical judgment, tends to be ignored.

Limitations and Shortcomings of New Criticism

The limitations of the New Critics were pin-pointed by a group of critics who have come to be known as the Chicago critics. They are called ‘Chicago critics’ because they all worked at the University of Chicago, and they form a homogenous group with little difference in their views and critical methods. Ronald Crane is the most important member of the group. He in his book *Critics and Criticism* (1952) has criticised the New Critics. Other members of this group are Elder Olson and others. The Chicago Group of Critics has done the criticism of criticism and mentioned the following limitations of the New Critics :—

1. The New Critics are too much pre-occupied with textual analysis. Their excessive pre-occupation with words, images, paradox, irony, etc., makes them forget that the poem is an organic whole. In their pre-occupation with the parts they ignore the beauty of the whole.
2. Their approach is dogmatic and narrow. According to them, it is through Textual study and analyses alone that truth can be arrived at. However, there are a number of other approaches—the historical, the sociological, the psychological, etc., and each has its own value and significance. All possible ways should be tried to arrive at the full truth about a poem.
3. A work of art has two functions, aesthetic and moral. While the older criticism erred in its over-emphasis on the moral concern of literature, the New Critics go to the other extreme in their entire neglect of it. Art cannot be divorced entirely from life.
4. In their insistence on the objective and scientific study of a work of art, they entirely ignore the reactions of the critic. The subjective element cannot be totally done away with, and the impressions of the critic have their own significance.
5. As T. S. Eliot has pointed out, textual analysis can establish only the literary quality of a work, to determine its greatness other methods are also necessary. Literature is certainly an art-form, but it has other values also, besides the literary.
6. The textual approach may work well with some genres, but it is not equally effective with all genres. There are different kinds of poetry, and different critical techniques are needed for their valuation. The same technique cannot be effective both with the lyric and the epic.
7. The New Critics are wrong in ignoring the study of the history of literary criticism. A historical study shows that various critical tools have been used effectively in different ages and countries, and their use may be worthwhile in the present also. Thus, for example, the Aristotelian literary philosophy and poetics may still be of use in evaluation and interpretation. A historical study is the only way of understanding the comparative merits of the rival schools of criticism. The critic must, therefore, master the critical traditions and from among the rival critical techniques choose the one best

	<p>suited to his purposes.</p> <p>8. A poem is certainly an artistic structure, and must be studied as such. The understanding of the poetic meaning of a poem is essential, and textual and structural study is an effective tool for the purpose. But social and biographical factors may also determine its meaning and a knowledge of them may also help the critic to illuminate the work under study. Hence, the new critics are wrong in totally ignoring the social milieu of the poet.</p>
2	<p>Write a critical essay of Deconstruction</p> <p>Deconstruction involves the close reading of texts in order to demonstrate that any given text has irreconcilably contradictory meanings, rather than being a unified, logical whole. As J. Hillis Miller, the preeminent American deconstructionist, has explained in an essay entitled <i>Stevens' Rock and Criticism as Cure</i> (1976), "Deconstruction is not a dismantling of the structure of a text, but a demonstration that it has already dismantled itself. Its apparently solid ground is no rock but thin air."</p> <p>Deconstruction was both created and has been profoundly influenced by the French philosopher Jacques Derrida. Derrida, who coined the term deconstruction, argues that in Western culture, people tend to think and express their thoughts in terms of binary oppositions (white / black, masculine / feminine, cause /effect, conscious /unconscious, presence / absence, speech writing). Derrida suggests these oppositions are hierarchies in miniature, containing one term that Western culture views as positive or superior and another considered negative or inferior, even if only slightly so. Through deconstruction, Derrida aims to erase the boundary between binary oppositions—and to do so in such a way that the hierarchy implied by the oppositions is thrown into question.</p> <p>Although its ultimate aim may be to criticize Western logic, deconstruction arose as a response to structuralism and formalism. Structuralists believed that all elements of human culture, including literature, may be understood as parts of a system of signs. Derrida did not believe that structuralists could explain the laws governing human signification and thus provide the key to understanding the form and meaning of everything from an African village to Greek myth to a literary text. He also rejected the structuralist belief that texts have identifiable "centers" of meaning—a belief structuralists shared with formalists.</p> <p>Formalist critics, such as the New Critics, assume that a work of literature is a freestanding, self-contained object whose meaning can be found in the complex network of relations between its parts (allusions, images, rhythms, sounds, etc.). Deconstructionists, by contrast, see works in terms of their undesirability. They reject the formalist view that a work of literature is demonstrably unified from beginning to</p>

end, in one certain way, or that it is organized around a single centre that ultimately can be identified. As a result, deconstructionists see texts as more radically heterogeneous than do formalists. Formalists ultimately make sense of the ambiguities they find in a given text, arguing that every ambiguity serves a definite, meaningful, and demonstrable literary function. Undecidability, by contrast, is never reduced, let alone mastered in deconstruction. Though a deconstructive reading can reveal the incompatible possibilities generated by the text, it is impossible for the reader to settle on any permanent meanings.

Deconstruction is a poststructuralist theory, based largely but not exclusively on the writings of Derrida. It is in the first instance a philosophical theory and a theory directed towards the (re)reading of philosophical writings. Its impact on literature, mediated in North America largely through the influences of theorists at Yale University, is based 1) on the fact that deconstruction sees all writing as a complex historical, cultural process rooted in the relations of texts to each other and in the institutions and conventions of writing, and 2) on the sophistication and intensity of its sense that human knowledge is not as controllable or as convincing as Western thought would have it and that language operates in subtle and often contradictory ways, so that certainty will always elude us.

3

Comment on Postmodernism

Postmodernism is largely a reaction against the intellectual assumptions and values of the modern period in the history of Western philosophy (roughly, the 17th through the 19th century). Indeed, many of the doctrines characteristically associated with postmodernism can fairly be described as the straightforward denial of general philosophical viewpoints that were taken for granted during the 18th-century Enlightenment, though they were not unique to that period.

The most important of these viewpoints are the following.

1. There is an objective natural reality, a reality whose existence and properties are logically independent of human beings—of their minds, their societies, their social practices, or their investigative techniques. Postmodernists dismiss this idea as a kind of naive realism. Such reality as there is, according to postmodernists, is a conceptual construct, an artifact of scientific practice and language. This point also applies to the investigation of past events by historians and to the description of social institutions, structures, or practices by social scientists.

2. The descriptive and explanatory statements of scientists and historians can, in principle, be objectively true or false. The postmodern denial of this viewpoint—which

follows from the rejection of an objective natural reality—is sometimes expressed by saying that there is no such thing as Truth.

3. Through the use of reason and logic, and with the more specialized tools provided by science and technology, human beings are likely to change themselves and their societies for the better. It is reasonable to expect that future societies will be more humane, more just, more enlightened, and more prosperous than they are now. Postmodernists deny this Enlightenment faith in science and technology as instruments of human progress. Indeed, many postmodernists hold that the misguided (or unguided) pursuit of scientific and technological knowledge led to the development of technologies for killing on a massive scale in World War II. Some go so far as to say that science and technology—and even reason and logic—are inherently destructive and oppressive, because they have been used by evil people, especially during the 20th century, to destroy and oppress others.

4. Reason and logic are universally valid—i.e., their laws are the same for, or apply equally to, any thinker and any domain of knowledge. For postmodernists, reason and logic too are merely conceptual constructs and are therefore valid only within the established intellectual traditions in which they are used.

5. There is such a thing as human nature; it consists of faculties, aptitudes, or dispositions that are in some sense present in human beings at birth rather than learned or instilled through social forces. Postmodernists insist that all, or nearly all, aspects of human psychology are completely socially determined.

6. Language refers to and represents a reality outside itself. According to postmodernists, language is not such a “mirror of nature,” as the American pragmatist philosopher Richard Rorty characterized the Enlightenment view. Inspired by the work of the Swiss linguist Ferdinand de Saussure, postmodernists claim that language is semantically self-contained, or self-referential: the meaning of a word is not a static thing in the world or even an idea in the mind but rather a range of contrasts and differences with the meanings of other words. Because meanings are in this sense functions of other meanings—which themselves are functions of other meanings, and so on—they are never fully “present” to the speaker or hearer but are endlessly “deferred.” Self-reference characterizes not only natural languages but also the more specialized “discourses” of particular communities or traditions; such discourses are embedded in social practices and reflect the conceptual schemes and moral and intellectual values of the community or tradition in which they are used. The postmodern view of language and discourse is due largely to the French philosopher and literary theorist Jacques Derrida (1930–2004), the originator and leading practitioner of deconstruction.

	<p>7. Human beings can acquire knowledge about natural reality, and this knowledge can be justified ultimately on the basis of evidence or principles that are, or can be, known immediately, intuitively, or otherwise with certainty. Postmodernists reject philosophical foundationalism—the attempt, perhaps best exemplified by the 17th-century French philosopher René Descartes’s dictum cogito, ergo sum (“I think, therefore I am”), to identify a foundation of certainty on which to build the edifice of empirical (including scientific) knowledge.</p> <p>8. It is possible, at least in principle, to construct general theories that explain many aspects of the natural or social world within a given domain of knowledge—e.g., a general theory of human history, such as dialectical materialism. Furthermore, it should be a goal of scientific and historical research to construct such theories, even if they are never perfectly attainable in practice. Postmodernists dismiss this notion as a pipe dream and indeed as symptomatic of an unhealthy tendency within Enlightenment discourses to adopt “totalizing” systems of thought (as the French philosopher Emmanuel Lévinas called them) or grand “metanarratives” of human biological, historical, and social development (as the French philosopher Jean-François Lyotard claimed). These theories are pernicious not merely because they are false but because they effectively impose conformity on other perspectives or discourses, thereby oppressing, marginalizing, or silencing them. Derrida himself equated the theoretical tendency toward totality with totalitarianism.</p>
4	<p>Elucidate the need for Ecocriticism today.</p> <p>Ecocriticism is the study of literature and environment from an interdisciplinary point of view where all sciences come together to analyze the environment and brainstorm possible solutions for the correction of the contemporary environmental situation. Ecocriticism was officially heralded by the publication of two seminal works, both published in the mid-1990s: <i>The Ecocriticism Reader</i>, edited by Cheryll Glotfelty and Harold Fromm, and <i>The Environmental Imagination</i>, by Lawrence Buell.</p> <p>Ecocriticism investigates the relation between humans and the natural world in literature. It deals with how environmental issues, cultural issues concerning the environment and attitudes towards nature are presented and analyzed. One of the main goals in ecocriticism is to study how individuals in society behave and react in relation to nature and ecological aspects. This form of criticism has gained a lot of attention during recent years due to higher social emphasis on environmental destruction and increased technology. It is hence a fresh way of analyzing and interpreting literary texts, which brings new dimensions to the field of literary and theoretical studies. Ecocriticism is an intentionally broad approach that is known by a number of other designations, including “green (cultural) studies”, “ecopoetics”, and “environmental literary</p>

criticism.”

Western thought has often held a more or less utilitarian attitude to nature — nature is for serving human needs. However, after the eighteenth century, there emerged many voices that demanded a reevaluation of the relationship between man and environment, and man’s view of nature. Arne Naess, a Norwegian philosopher, developed the notion of “Deep Ecology” which emphasizes the basic interconnectedness of all life forms and natural features, and presents a symbiotic and holistic world-view rather than an anthropocentric one.

Earlier theories in literary and cultural studies focussed on issue of class, race, gender, and region are criteria and “subjects” of critical analysis. The late twentieth century has woken up to a new threat: ecological disaster. The most important environmental problems that humankind faces as a whole are: nuclear war, depletion of valuable natural resources, population explosion, proliferation of exploitative technologies, conquest of space preliminary to using it as a garbage dump, pollution, extinction of species (though not a human problem) among others. In such a context, literary and cultural theory has begun to address the issue as a part of academic discourse. Numerous green movements have sprung up all over the world, and some have even gained representations in the governments.

Ecocritics ask questions such as:

- (1) How is nature represented in the novel/poem/play ?
- (2) What role does the physical-geographical setting play in the structure of the novel?
- (3) How do our metaphors of the land influence the way we treat it? That is, what is the link between pedagogic or creative practice and actual political, sociocultural and ethical behaviour towards the land and other non-human life forms?
- (4) How is science —in the form of genetic engineering, technologies of reproduction, sexualities—open to critical scrutiny terms of the effects of science upon the land?

The essential assumptions, ideas and methods of eco critics may be summed up as follows.

- (1) Ecocritics believe that human culture is related to the physical world.
- (2) Ecocriticism assumes that all life forms are interlinked. Ecocriticism expands the notion of “the world” to include the entire ecosphere.
- (3) Moreover, there is a definite link between nature and culture, where the literary treatment, representation and “thematization” of land and nature influence actions on the land.
- (4) Joseph Meeker in an early work, *The Comedy of Survival: Studies in Literary Ecology* (1972) used the term “literary ecology” to refer to “the study of biological themes and relationships which appear in literary works. It is simultaneously an attempt

	<p>to discover what roles have been played by literature in the ecology of the human species.”</p> <p>(5) William Rueckert is believed to have coined the term “ecocriticism” in 1978, which he defines as “the application of ecology and ecological concepts to the study of literature.”</p>
5	<p>Discuss briefly postmodernism in cultural theory.</p> <p>Postmodernism is a theoretical approach that arose in the 1980s to explain an historical period, post-modernity, which is generally accepted to have begun in the late 1960s and early 1970s. This is a period related to the Cold War and social upheaval in many parts of the world. The postmodernism theoretical approach is difficult to define and delineate. It is generally scoffed at in the Natural Sciences, debated in the Social Sciences, and more favorably accepted within the Humanities. In the past, debates on the merits of the postmodern approach have created divisions among faculty and derision between disciplines. The postmodern approach challenges the “dominating and bullying nature of science and reason” and focuses on “...splitting the truth, the standards, and the ideal into what has been deconstructed and into what is about to be deconstructed, and denying in advance the right of any new doctrine, theory, or revelation to take the place of the discarded rules of the past” (Cooke 2006: 2014). It is the academic equivalent of the social clamor against the establishment that arose in the 1960s and 1970s.</p> <p>Postmodernists claim that it is impossible for anyone to have objective and neutral knowledge of another culture. This view comes from the notion that we all interpret the world around us in our own way according to our language, cultural background, and personal experiences. In other words, everybody has their own views based on his or her social and personal contexts. Because of this aspect of human nature, anthropologists can never be unbiased observers of other cultures. When postmodern anthropologists analyze different societies, they are sensitive to this limitation. They do not assume that their way of conceptualizing culture is the only way.</p> <p>The postmodernists believe that anthropological texts are influenced by the political and social contexts within which they are written. Therefore, it is unreasonable when authors try to justify their interpretations and underlying biases by using the concept of objectivity. The postmodernists claim that the acceptance of an interpretation is ultimately an issue of power and wealth. In other words, we tend to legitimize particular statements represented by those with political and economic advantage. In order to heighten sensitivity towards those who are not part of mainstream culture, the postmodernists often promote underrepresented viewpoints, such as those of ethnic minorities, women, and others. Postmodernists also re-introduced a focus on individual behavior, which has become known as agency theory. Agency approaches examine how individual agents shape culture.</p>

Postmodern anthropologists gave other anthropologists an opportunity to reconsider their approaches of cultural analysis by ushering in an era of reflexive anthropology. The anthropologist tries to become sensitive to his or her unconscious assumptions. For example, anthropologists now consider whether they should include in ethnographies different interpretations of culture other than their own. Furthermore, anthropologists need to determine their own standards for choosing what kind of information can be counted as knowledge. This reflection leads anthropologists to enrich their work. At the same time, the challenges by postmodernists often result in backlash from those who feel their understandings are threatened. Some anthropologists claim that the postmodernists rely on a particular moral model rather than empirical data or scientific methods. This moral model is structured by sympathy to those who do not possess the same privilege that the mainstream has in Western societies. Therefore, postmodernism will undermine the legitimacy of anthropology by introducing this political bias.

Another typical criticism on postmodernism comes from the fear of extremely relativistic view. Such critics argue that postmodernism will lead to nihilism because it does not assume a common ground of understanding. Some opponents claim that postmodernism will undermine universal human rights and will even justify dictatorship. Postmodernism is an ongoing debate, especially regarding whether anthropology should rely on scientific or humanistic approaches.