

Class
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English Literature

THE MAGIC OF THE MUSE

The Magic of the Muse

THE MAGIC OF THE MUSE
A TEXTBOOK OF ENGLISH LITERATURE
for
CLASS XI



BOARD OF SECONDARY EDUCATION
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Book – THE MAGIC OF THE MUSE CLASS XI

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Preface

What is literature? What are the functions of literature? What are the uses of studying literature? Shouldn't students of literature pose these questions to themselves or to their teachers and have the answers? But, surprisingly enough, in most cases, these questions remain unasked and therefore unanswered. As a result, students remain ignorant of the worth of what they are studying or doing. As a result, their interest in the subject (of their choice!) remains rather casual or superficial which in turn affects their performance.

To each of the above questions, however, several answers are possible and, in fact, available. But here the generally accepted ones may be conveniently considered. Literature as the expression of life in forms of truth and beauty is art. And all art, including literature, as Joseph T. Shipley succinctly puts it, "aims at entertainment, enlightenment, and exaltation."

Entertainment, no doubt, is the fundamental function of literature. Literature pleases or delights by employing highly connotative language, by presenting strange combinations of words and grammatical structures capable of arresting our attention, by re-presenting life in a very concentrated manner so as to evoke our attention to it, by appealing to our senses and emotions, and by posing challenge to our intellect.

The enlightening function of literature can be seen in its leading us to insight and an understanding of the diversity and complexity of human life and experience, in its making us aware of the rich traditions of thought and expression, and in its enabling us to understand diverse cultures of diverse classes or groups of diverse times.

Exaltation is the final fruit of all art including literature. It implies improvement of our mind and a qualitative change in our personality and understanding of the world and ourselves. By reading literature we experience, vicariously though, the joys and sorrows, the expectations and disappointments of others. Even such vicariously gained experience is capable of inculcating in us

virtues like tolerance, endurance, and common-sense. We learn to empathise the lives and experiences of others and thus to be concerned about them.

Literature carries out these functions through its various forms: the Poetry, Drama, Novel, Short Story, Essay, Biography, Letter, Speech etc. The present book is divided into four sections, each anthologizing compositions of a particular form or genre of literature. The selection of literary compositions in each of these sections has been made, keeping in view the functions of literature, the diversity and complexity of expression, the variety, depth and intensity of thoughts and feelings they communicate, the different ages or periods of literary history they belong to, and the amount of delight and wisdom they bring us.

The questions for practice, preceded by useful information on the author and the text and a glossary of difficult words or expressions, are intended to test (and thereby to sharpen) the ability of the student to comprehend, analyse, and interpret the text as crucial part of the study of literature. As a study aid, a glossary of most frequently used literary terms and figures of speech has been added at the end of the book. The textbook has not included any language work/activity for the aim is to teach literature, not language through literature.

In the case of literature, as with any art form, reading and study are closely linked. According to John Lyre, “The more one learns how literature works, the more open one is to the effects that it can have—one gains competency as a reader and literature becomes richer and more engaging for one.”

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