

**TEMPLE  
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**UNIT X- LITERARY CRITICISM**

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## LETTERS

### JOHN KEATS – A Sensuous Poet

John Keats (1795-1821)

- ❖ He was an **English Romantic poet**.
- ❖ He is regarded as **the romantic poet of second generation along with Shelley & Byron**.
- ❖ He was born in Moorgate London.
- ❖ He was a medical student at Guy's Hospital.
- ❖ He wrote his first poem "**An Imitation of Spenser**" in 1814.
- ❖ He was inspired by **Leigh Hunt and Byron**.
- ❖ In **1816, Leigh Hunt** agreed to publish his sonnet "**Solitude**" in his magazine "**The Examiner**".
- ❖ His friend Charles Cowder Clarke described this day of publication of poetry as a '**Red Letter Day**'.
- ❖ All the works of Keats were mostly written and published during the last 5 years of his life.
- ❖ The "**Three Young Poets**" is a collaborative work of **Shelley, Keats, and Reynolds**, published by **Hunt**.
- ❖ "**On First Looking at Chapman's Homer**" is a **sonnet** by **Keats**. All together he wrote 64 sonnets.
- ❖ John Keats is reputed for his **Hellenic spirit**.
- ❖ "**Beauty is truth, truth beauty – that is all ye know on earth and all ye need to know**"  
– These are the ending lines of the "**Ode on Grecian Urn**".
- ❖ He died of **Tuberculosis**.  
His tombstone reads –
- ❖ "**Here lies one, whose name was writ in the water**".
- ❖ Shelley memorized Keats in his poem "**Adonais**".
- ❖ The year **1819** is called "**Annus Mirabilis**" because he wrote most of his important poems in this year.
- ❖ He fell in love with **Fanny Browne** but she did not respond his love.

- ❖ He was one among the **Cockney poets**.  
Mathew Arnold told about Keats –
- ❖ **“Keats is enchantingly and abundantly sensuous. He is more sensuous than others because he satisfies not one or two but all the five senses.”**
- ❖ In a letter entitled **“On Axioms and the Surprise of Poetry: Letter to John Taylor”** Keats wrote –
- ❖ **“I think poetry should surprise by a fine excess and not by singularity. It should strike the reader as a wording of his own highest thought, and appear almost a remembrance.”**

Major Works of Keats

- ❖ Odes of Keats
  - **Ode to Melancholy**
  - **Ode to a Nightingale**
  - **Ode to Psyche**
  - **Ode on a Grecian Urn**
  - **Ode to Autumn**
  - **Ode to Indolence**
- ❖ **O Solitude**
- ❖ **Endymion (1818)**
  - **“A thing of beauty is joy forever”** is the famous line of the poem.  
**Keats suffered from Tuberculosis.**  
**Keats sad love affair on FANNY BRAWNE** was reflected in his letters.  
**He was apprenticed to a surgeon. In 1816, Keats made the acquaintance of Leigh Hunt (Radical journalist and Poet)**

**In 1817 Keats published his first volume of verses.**

**His second volume of verse published in 1818, was brutally assailed by ‘The Quarterly Review’ and by ‘Blackwood’s Magazine’. These TORY JOURNALS struck at him because of his friendship with Leigh Hunt.**

**In 1821, at the age of 25, Keats died in Rome.**

**P.B. Shelley’s Adonais is written on the death of John Keats.**

**In 1818, he published “Endymion”.**

➤ **He published the poetry volume with the poems.**

### **1. Ode on a Grecian urn**

**2. Nightingale****3. Ode on Melancholy****4. Hyperion**

- He was inspired first by Spenser, next by William Shakespeare and Milton.
- He suffered from T.B. He was nursed by his friend Joseph Severn. In 1821, he died in Rome.
- On his tomb the words were inscribed,

“Here lies one whose name was written in water”

**Letters:-**

- Wrote 240 letters.
- Wrote to his brothers George and Thomas Keats. Shelley, and to his friends Benjamin Bailey,  
John Hamilton Reynolds, John Taylor and Richard wood house.
- Where letter from 1816 to 1821.
- The prescribed six letters are taken from the book “the letter of John Keats” edited by Maurice Bustin Forman.

**1. Letter to Benjamin Bailey:- 22<sup>nd</sup> Nov 1817**

- Bailey was the student at Oxford University. Keats and he were friends.
- In this letter, he writes about the power of imagination According to Keats,  
heart affections
- Sensations of a poet
- Poet is an emotional being
- Beauty and Truth
- Aesthetic quality
- Emotions and Thoughts (Emotion prevails)

And Imaginations have holiness. The imagination brings beauty. (Beauty is truth, truth beauty)

**It is truth.**

- He says that he does not know if the concept of Beauty has truth existed before. But he known and has the same idea of passions as of love. They are creative of beauty.
- He used this idea in his first book Endymion and a little song book (1818).  
The imagination is compared to “Oh! Sorrow.  
Adam’s dream. He awoke and found it truth. He quotes from PARADLSE LOST – book VIII – Adams’s dream.
- Keats uses the word ‘sensation’ (feeling) it means ‘inactive perception through the senses’  
Keats says,  
“Oh for a life of sensation rather than of Thoughts! it is a vision in the form of youth”.
- It is shadow of reality (Sensation). Keats enjoys the happiness on earth. Adam’s dream is imagination.
- Its reflection is the same as human life and spiritual repetition. The great things may be compared with small things. The old melody is always joyful by delicious voice. It gives happiness in soul by repetition.

when we listen to the song, the singer's face appears to be more beautiful in imagination. In this state, we travel on wings of imagination. Therefore, he advises Benjamin Bailey to drink the old wine of heaven (imagination) for his eternal happiness. It not only gives happiness, but also increases knowledge and ‘know all things’.

“Heard Melodies Are Sweet, but Those Unheard Are Sweeter” is a line from “Ode on a Grecian Urn” by John Keats. The meaning is that the power of our imagination is often greater than reality.

## **2. Letter to Thomas and George Keats:-**

- **21<sup>st</sup> December 1817**
- **Keats writes about his famous concept NEGATIVE CAPABILITY.**

- Keats refers to the person called Dilke, English critic. He wrote many political and literary essays. Keats was known to Charles Dilke from 1817 onwards. Both Keats and Dilke discussed many topics. One such topic was about ‘*man of Achievement*’.
- Keats says that a writer becomes a man of achievement in literature through Negative capability.
- “A man of achievement est. in literature and which Shakespeare possessed so enormously – I mean negative capability, that is, when man is capable of being in uncertainties, mysteries, doubts, without any irritable reaching after fact and reason.
- Coleridge, for example used it in his poems. When a reader reads the poems of Coleridge, he will not be satisfied with the half knowledge.

### 3. Letter to John Hamilton Reynolds:-

- 3<sup>rd</sup> February/May, 1818.
- Reynolds met Keats in the house of Leigh Hunt.
- This letter is about the greatness of poetry. According to Keats,
- “An extensive knowledge is needful and it helps by widening speculation to ease the burden of mystery”
- people have poetry because it is vague.
  - “Poetry should be great and unobtrusive, a thing which enters into one’s soul and does not stare it or amaze it or amaze its with itself, but with its subject”
- how beautiful are the retired flowers! The highway crying out ‘admire me I am a violet – does upon me I am a primrose’.

- Keats make the reader the subject of experience and object is flowers.

He speaks of life of sensations. In speaking of Wordsworth’s genius

Keats compares human life to a large mansions of many apartments(The Bible)

1<sup>st</sup> Chamber- Infant thoughtless Chamber(we remain as long we are without thoughts)

**2<sup>nd</sup> Chamber- Room of maiden thoughts (It remained wide open , we go near it pushed by thoughts)**

**We now feel ‘the burden of mystery’ (a phrase borrowed from Wordsworth)  
The time had not come for him to go exploring the areas of human misery.**

#### **4. Letter to John Taylor:-Feb 1818**

**In this letter, Keats again speaks of the beauty of poetry. Taylor was his publisher and friend.**

**He gave financial “assistance for Keats to go to Rome Keats written about the different ideas of poetry.**

**1. “Poetry should surprise by a fine excess and not by singularity – it should straight the reader as**

**The wording of his own highest thoughts, appear almost a remembrance”.**

**It means poetry must contain multiple points, but not single ideas.**

**2. “The touches of beauty should never be half-way making the reader breathless the rise,**

**The progress, the setting of imagery like the sun shine over him and set in magnificence in the luxury of twilight”.**

**It mean says, poems should have beginning, middle, end, like the sun Keats says “Poetry comes not as naturally as the leaves to a tree, it had better not come at all”**

#### **FOUR KINDS OF MEANING**

**It is taken from Practical criticism I.A Richards and C.K Ogden**

- **Critic of practical criticism and classroom criticism.**
- **Two famous books are “practical criticism” and “Principles of literary criticism”**



➤ He begins this essay with quotation from the book 'Leviathan' by Thomas Hobbes.

➤ He analyses the salient points in the art of communication.

➤ Richard says,

“The original difficulty of all reading, the problems of answer to the question,

what is the meaning is our starting point. The answer to the question, what is the meaning? What are we doing? When we make it out? What is it we are making out are the master keys to the problems of criticism”.

➤ It means that the meaning of meaning and also our attitude to meaning are more important to understand the different kinds of meaning.

➤ There are many kinds of meaning. When we speak or write, we become jugglers. Language

Does not have one function, it has many functions. Richards classifies four kinds of meaning.

Sense, Feeling, Tone, and Intention.

**Sense:-**

When we speak sth or when we listen, we expect sth to be said. We use words to attract the

attention of listeners. It is called sense.

**Feeling:-**



When we speak, we have some feelings about these items. We use language to express these feelings. When we listen, we pick it up. The speakers should be conscious of his feelings.

**Tone :-**

The speaker arranges his word differently according to the audience, in automatic or deliberate recognition of his relation to them.

**Intention:-**

Apart from sense what he says? Feeling and tone , there is intention of the speaker conscious or unconscious. The speaker has a purpose. His purpose modifies his speech.

According to him, the speaker's intention comes through in a combination of other functions.

It is decided by the stress in the argument by using phrases for 'contras shakes' or 'let it be supposed'.

These phrases control the plots speech. It is found in dramatic literature sometimes the speaker speaks hiding his hand. The influence of intension is more powerful than the other three meanings.

A man is writing a scientific essay will first put sense. He will subordinate his feelings about his Subject. His tone is used for 'Academic world'. He will write with respect for his readers. His Intention is clear.

He quotes, "PhD thesis, the tone and intension must be serious. When a writer writes, he Must remember three things.

1. He must write with caution, for easy understanding he must write simply to bring sense.
2. To create readers interest, author must show different things.
3. According to audience and the reader, writer can use jokes and comic illustrations.

If conversation also intension is predominant. The speaker will have some sense to bring out his aim. Next come, feeling and tone. In conversation, sometime the social language is often used.

In this sentence,

'Thank you so very much' and 'please to do meet you'.

These are called phatic communion by Malinowski. (Russian) Malinowski's idea phatic

Communion is given as the supplement in 'Meaning of Meaning.

Feeling sometimes operates through sense in poetry. The statements in poetry have effects on feelings. These statements “claim truth”.

Many people who read poetry take the statement seriously. For example, the poetic line,

“My soul is a ship in full sail”

On the other hand some people understand the Aesthetic philosophy ‘Beauty is truth, truth beauty’.

The poet may be distort his statement. He may uses metaphors, sometime non sense to express feeling or adjust tone. Richard quotes, Dr. A.C. Bradley remarks that “poetry is the spirit”

Dr. Mackail’s statement that it is a continuous substance or energy whose progress is immortal.

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