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What is a Literary Movement ?

Literature / Second Year

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1. What is a Literary Movement?

A literary movement is a group of literary works (novels, short stories, poems and plays) sharing similar aesthetic features, philosophical themes, ideologies, and historical or cultural contexts. These movements often emerge in response to significant social, political, or intellectual shifts, reflecting the zeitgeist of their time.

2. Characteristics of Literary Movements

- **Shared Aesthetic Features:** Literary movements often exhibit common stylistic elements, such as specific literary devices, forms, or narrative techniques.
- **Philosophical Themes:** Movements often explore recurring themes, such as individualism, societal critique, or the nature of reality.
- **Historical or Cultural Context:** Movements are shaped by the prevailing social, political, and intellectual currents of their time.

Examples of Literary Movements:

- **Romanticism (18th-19th centuries):** Emphasis on emotion, imagination, and the individual's relationship with nature.
- **Gothic fiction (first mid-19th century):** Emphasis on the supernatural and exploration of themes like fear, death, and the human condition.
- **Realism (second mid-19th century):** Focus on depicting everyday life with objectivity and accuracy.

3. Significance of Literary Movements

- **Understanding Literary Context:** Movements provide a framework for interpreting and analysing literary works within their historical and cultural context.

- **Identifying Shared Themes and Patterns:** Movements allow us to recognize common threads and recurring themes across different literary works.
- **Appreciating Literary Evolution:** Movements trace the trajectory of literary development and showcase the changing forms and ideas of literature over time.
- **Dividing Literature into Periods:** literary movement allows us to explore the mosaic of human expressions, one piece at a time, making it more manageable and enlightening endeavour.

Conclusion

Literary movements are dynamic and complex, shaping the landscape of literature and reflecting the ever-changing world around us. By understanding the characteristics and significance of literary movements, we can gain a deeper appreciation for the rich tapestry of human expression.

References

- Abrams, M. H. *The mirror and the lamp: Romantic theory and the critical tradition*. Oxford University Press, 1953.
- Abrams, M. H., and Geoffrey Harpham. *A Glossary of Literary Terms*. Cengage learning, 2014.