

## LITERARY CRITICISM SAMPLE NOTES

### HORACE (65BC – 8 BC)

Quintus Horatius Flaccus was a Roman poet, literary critic and satirist during the emperor

Augustus reign. Augustan period was glorious in all aspects, especially in literature. The famous Roman writers like Virgil, Tibullus, Propertius, Ovid and Livy belong to this age. Horace first published his Satires in two books. He emphasized themes like unity, brevity, character consistency, and the balance of innovation with tradition. Horace's insights have a lasting impact on literary criticism and the art of writing. **He is more interested in how the poet may delight and instruct an intelligent reader than he is in defining what a poem is or what literature is.** This is connected to his famous catchphrase “**utile et dulce**” which means that literature must be both enjoyable and useful.

**Literary Career:** Horace is best known for his poetry, particularly his Odes, which are a collection of lyric poems written in various meters and styles. His poetry often explored themes of love, friendship, morality, and the pleasures of life. His most famous work, "Carmina" or the "Odes," consists of four books.

**Satires and Epistles:** Horace also wrote Satires and Epistles, which are considered important works of Roman literature. In these works, he offered commentary on various aspects of Roman society, including politics, ethics, and the human condition.

**Literary Criticism:** Horace is recognized for his contributions to literary criticism, primarily through his work "Ars Poetica" (The Art of Poetry). In this treatise, he outlined his views on poetry and provided guidance to aspiring poets. He emphasized the importance of clarity, elegance, and avoiding extremes in literary expression.

### "Ars Poetica" (Art of Poetry)

Ars Poetica is written in verse. It is a poetic letter written to his friend Piso and his two sons as a piece of advice on poetic composition. Horace called it Epistle to the

Pisos but it was Quintilian who named it as Ars Poetica. Ars Poetica can be divided into three parts: (a) poesis (subject matter); (b) poema (form), and (c) poeta (the poet). It's main topics of discussion are poetry, its nature, function, language, poetic style, and drama. **Pope rightly says about Horace, 'His precepts teach but what his works inspire'.** He is deeply influenced by the Greeks. **He recommends: "my friends, study the great originals of Greece; dream of them by night and ponder them by day."**

**(a) Poesis or the subject matter:**

- Poetry is not merely imitation
- it's creative adaptation
- Language of poetry should be different from common language - Language is like a tree and words are like leaves.

**(b) Poema (Form of poetry)**

- "Middle of things" ("In media res") like Homer.
- Comic themes should not be treated like a serious one.
- For Horace imitation means Imitation of other writers

**(c) Poet (poeta)**

- Poetry is the outcome of great effort by poet - Not feel ashamed of art but proud for it.

**Purple patch:**

A "purple patch" is a fancy and excellent part in a piece of writing or talking that is much better than the rest.

In his "Ars Poetica," Horace advocated for skilful and artful writing throughout a literary work, which aligns with the concept of creating standout "purple patches" within a larger composition.

**His works:**

**EPISTLES - THREE BOOKS**

**SATIRES - TWO BOOKS**

**ODES - FOUR BOOKS**

## **INTELLECTUAL INFLUENCES ON HORACE**

**Stoic philosophy** - Which reached Rome in the Hellenistic period.

**Epicureanism** - “Carpe diem” (seize the day).

**Skepticism** - The loss of belief in higher values and the concept that beauty is always fleeting.

### **“IN MEDIAS RES”**

- Horace demands that the epic should begin in the middle of the action.

## **IN TRAGEDY**

-Horace says a play should consist of 5 acts, which was later on followed by the younger generations.