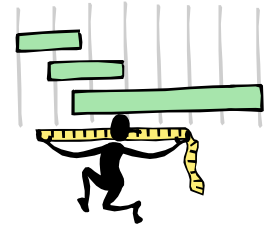


Nine Yardsticks of Value



CLARITY - *The yardstick of clarity is a very simple standard of measuring according to which everything that resists reasonably careful reading is considered poor writing.*

ESCAPE - *If you measure by the yardstick of escape, the literary work that causes you to forget yourself and the circumstances of your own life is by that fact good.*

REFLECTION OF REAL LIFE - *The work that reports actuality in a flawless manner is good; the one that distorts the facts as we know them is bad. . The yardstick of realism will not admit any change as good unless at least three elements have been attended to: (1) a temperament that makes the change possible, (2) circumstances that motivate the change, and (3) sufficient time for such a change to take place.*

ARTISTRY IN DETAILS - *By the standard of pleasure in artistic details, a work is good if it provides enough pleasurable moments through effectively handled details to compensate for the time spent on it.*

INTERNAL CONSISTENCY - *The problem here is to discover what the relation of the parts is to the whole and to one another. The competent work, presumably, is one in which the parts are so consistent and harmonious that the work as a totality is an organism in which no part can be changed without detriment to the whole work.*

TONE - *(The emotional quality of literature achieved by language, appropriate form, imagery, words, and rhythm.) The basic premise of those who use the yardstick of tone is that a fundamentally significant aspect of a literary work is the personal quality given the material as it passes through the mind and emotions of the author.*

EMOTIONAL IMPACT - *The basic premise of this yardstick is that the most important aspect of a literary work is its effect upon the reader. Its concerns, therefore, are chiefly psychological, and they deal with the type of effect, its intensity, its components, its duration, and its universality.*

PERSONAL BELIEFS - *By the yardstick of personal beliefs a literary work is considered good if it states or implies ideas that are already congenial to the reader. In considering such a yardstick, we could range through the whole gamut of human qualities, for to one degree or another everything we have opinions about affects our judgment. Here we can discuss only those concerns that most radically affect these judgments: morality, religion, politics and economics, philosophy, and literary criticism.*

SIGNIFICANT INSIGHTS - *The basic premise of those who use the yardstick of significant insights in making literary judgments is that literature should be the repository of the best that has been thought and said. In the highest sense, it should be a "criticism of life," for in making us conscious of the best it provides us with a standard against which we can measure our own thoughts and actions. A work, then, is great to the extent to which it provides us with insight into what is best – what is true, good, and beautiful. To apply this yardstick, the reader should consider every aspect of the work to determine what is the totality of its insight into life. The core of the answer is likely to fall in one of four fields – the psychological, the sociological, the ethical, or the metaphysical.*

Adapted by Anna J. Roseboro

from work of Walter Blair and John Gerber in their 1959 textbook *LITERATURE* published by Scott Foresman

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