

The Art of Critical Power

According to an author in this passage, whenever we eat or consume whatever we like or not can impart us directly. The same goes with reading. The influence of reading can be studied by examining our individual literary history. For instance, when we are adults, we are usually immune to literary seductions because of art of sensibility. But, in youth, that same person was carried away one after another poet when one author invades our heart and mind. We start comparing that author with already present author in our mind. This process can help in harnessing critical power. The good critic always judges on his own, rather than relying on fellows who give reviews. This can only be done by wide reading, during which we grow sensibility and becomes prone to the dominance of any other poet.

Total Words: 420

Words Written: 260

Yes

No

Yes

No

Passage.

16. Average

The author of a work of imagination is trying to affect us wholly, as human beings, whether he knows it or not; and we are affected by it, as human beings, whether we intend to be or not. I suppose that everything we eat has some effect upon us than merely the pleasure of taste and mastication; it affects us during the process of assimilation and digestion; and I believe that exactly the same is true of anything we read.

The fact that what we read does not concern merely something called our literary taste, but that it affects directly, though only amongst many other influences, the whole of what we are, is best elicited, I think, by a conscientious examination of the history of our individual literary education. Consider the adolescent reading of any person with some literary sensibility. Everyone, I believe, who is at all sensible to the seductions of poetry, can remember some moment in youth when he or she was completely carried away by the work of one poet. Very likely he was carried away by several poets, one after the other. The reason for this passing infatuation is not merely that our sensibility is keener in adolescence than in maturity. What happens is a kind of inundation, or invasion of the undeveloped personality, the empty (swept and garnished) room, by the stronger personality of the poet. The same thing may happen at a later age to persons who have not done much reading.

One author takes complete possession of us for a time; then another, and finally they begin to affect each other in our mind. We weigh one against another; we see that each has qualities absent from others, and qualities incompatible with the qualities of others: we begin to be, in fact, critical: and it is our growing critical power which protects us from excessive possession by any one literary personality. The good critic and we should all try to critics, and not leave criticism to the fellows who write reviews in the papers- is the man who, to a keen and abiding sensibility, joins wide and increasingly discriminating. Wide reading is not valuable as a kind of hoarding, and the accumulation of knowledge or what sometimes is meant by the term 'a well-stocked mind.' It is valuable because in the process of being affected by one powerful personality after another, we cease to be dominated by anyone, or by any small number. The very different views of life, cohabiting in our minds, affect each other, and our own personality asserts itself and gives each a place in some arrangement peculiar to our self.