

Who Wins The Battle Between Two Genres? A Comparison of Prose and Poetry

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Abstract

This article encompasses views of different people from different fields about different genres of writings. It majorly includes a comparison of prose and poetry in terms of their appealing ability. The article includes a survey by asking different people about their opinion. Two questions were catered to the participants that gave us the required material for research. Writings have always been one of influential way of shaping people ideology. It had been from very early eras a source of changing one's thoughts about a particular thing. All of the religions have their holy books that they consider as their guiding authority. The stories of ancient times also had a great influence of people. It is a best medium to portray one's imagination. It not only changed people thoughts but also served as a motivation to discover and invent new things around us. There are major two purposes of writings. One is writing that enhances our knowledge. It gives us knowledge about history and other things and the other is for the sake of pleasure. Mostly the informative writing is linked with prose and the pleasure provision writing is associated with poetry. This is what this article tries to resolve that which genre has a great influence on people.

Keywords: Prose and poetry, appealing ability, pleasure's sake, knowledge sake.

Introduction

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The ability of writing have been a major weapon in hands of people form very early ages. This weapon however did not aim at destruction always. It fulfilled various positive and beneficent purposes. It had been very resourceful medium to share one's thoughts and imagination. However, there had been paucity of such cases when these writings acted as conflict raiser but mostly they have a good intention if understood properly. This article majorly deals with the two genres of writings: Prose and poetry. Poetry has been one of the greatest and beautiful medium for presentation of thought. However, it had been criticized by many critics. That is not something surprising because change is always threatening and when a medium like that became fore grounded, it emphasized critics to write about its pitfalls. Going back to Greek Ages, we find that Plato, who a great was known philosopher of that time, banished poets from his rule. He was not buoyed up by poets for several reasons. He said that poetry is a mere imitation and the poet himself is unaware of what is he imitating. He was of the view that poets are deceivers as they deceive the readers by taking them away from reality. He also said that poetry morally corrupts people. Later Puritans came who also sabotaged the poetry. Poetry dealt with pleasure and imagination and Puritans only focused on life as a mere punishment to the individuals. They had a belief that individuals here are not for enjoying the life so they also raised voice against poetry or any form of entertainment. It was in Elizabethan Age that a warrior came out who took the responsibility to defend poetry for all the charges that had been put upon it by Plato. He was Sir Philip Sydney who wrote a book An Apology for poetry or it is also known as Defense of Poesy. In his book, he wrote that poetry is an imitation but imitation does not mean to copy or reproduce but rather it transforms. He stated the function of poetry to be that of providing pleasure. Its purpose is to delight and teach.

According to Philip Sydney, there are three types of poetry.

1. Religious poetry
2. Philosophical poetry
3. Poetry as an imaginative treatment of life and nature

So by a past analysis, we find that poets have really worked hard to establish their place in society and in literary world. Later, there came the Age of Dryden and the rise of metaphysical

poetry. Ben Johnson said of Dryden: He did to literature what Augustus did to Europe. He found it a brick and left it marble. Johnson also regard Dryden as father of English criticism. Other than serving the purpose of pleasure, it also worked at some places as an alarm for the people to realize their true place in society. With Dryden, there is also the famous name of John Donne for metaphysical poetry. His famous poems are “Love and Divine Poems”. In these poems, he used metaphors and conceits to draw the attention of readers. In his poem, A Valediction: of weeping, he has compared his tears on his face carry an image of his beloved with a coin containing a sovereign’s photo. In this way, he made his work interesting. In one of his poems, he compared the distance between him and his beloved as the separation between two feet of campus. This use of extra-ordinary examples made his poetry a heart taking. There are many examples that we find related to that when poetry in the form of satire worked as a self-awakening device as in World wars. The great epic by Alexander Pope “The Rape of the Lock” is a true representative of eighteenth century society. It enlightens its follies in such a way that it developed people thoughts and raised awareness.

“A well-bred Lord t’assault a gentle Belle?
Oh say what stranger Cause, yet unexplor’d,
Cou’d make a gentle Belle reject a Lord?
Is Tasks so bold, can little Men engage;
And in soft Bosoms dwells such mighty rage?”

The use of words and presentation in this very long narrative poem is quite different from what we read today because it belongs to ancient times but even its complex appearance has a sort of attraction in it that makes reader curious to develop understanding of it. Even today, when use of diction and writing styles have changed a lot, this epic is read and admired by the people of modern times.

Poetry is not a cup of tea of everyone because understanding poetry is also an art. Earlier poetry was written in blank verse that was very much complicated and it was not easy for everyone to understand that and it was considered literature for intellectuals. Only intellectual

people were able to understand it. William Wordsworth then broke the tradition and said that language of poetry must be pure and simple. It must be language of common man so that the people must be able to understand it because if not understood properly, it cannot serve its purpose. After that the trend shifted from blank verse to free verse. It was due to this use of free verse that made it simple and use of diction was also made according to the taste of people. Only this was the way that people could feel familiar with the words and they could easily grasp the meaning and could implement it over them.

Poetry is not a medium to be ignored or not taken into consideration as it takes several people's heart when written with use of beautiful metaphors and musical pattern. So is prose. It is also important the way we find poetry as for some people understanding poetry might not be that easy. Some people might prefer an over-simplified piece of writing instead of a convoluted one. Here we come to the dish that this article has to cater.

Research Question

Which genre of writing is more influential? Is it Prose or Poetry?

Research Objectives

1. The main objective of research is to find out the intensity of impact of any piece of writing in different genres.
2. The other objective of this research is to find out the reason for particular genre being more influential. For example: If its prose then what is the reason and if poetry then what is the reason?

Methodology

The research has been conducted by a survey. People belonging to different fields have been asked their favorite genre of writing and the reason for that as well. Total number of twenty participants was included.

Analysis

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Out of all 20 participants, 18 said that they find poetry more influential and the reasons were as follows:

- Some said that poetry is more influential because it follows a rhyming scheme or even if it does not follow, its rhythmic way of presentation makes it interesting.
- Some said it has a long lasting effect.
- Some said that its hidden meanings are a kind of surprise and one can interpret it his/her own way.
- Some said its presentation style touches the heart.
- Some said that use of metaphors and similes and rhyme makes it more appealing.

The two people who said that prose is more interesting gave the reasons as:

- Prose is more comprehensive.
- It gives strategies to be implemented in life.

Without any conflict it is obvious that people find poetry more influential than prose. The major reason for it is stylistic presentation. People always like different things. Prose gives a feel of normal everyday conversation. No doubt it too has its own value but when compared to genre of poetry, it seems a step back. There came an avalanche of positive response for poetry. Most common reason that we see is the aesthetic sense associated with it and may be this was the reason that most of the writers used it in their plays as chorus. The lines in the chorus gave an appealing effect and functioned as portrayal of characters thoughts. To illustrate, as we find in T.S Eliot “Murder to cathedral” in modern writings or in classical as we find work of Shakespeare or even if we go before that, we find in Oedipus Rex by Sophocles. So we find poetry somehow also in dramaturgy that makes it genre within genre. The lines of chorus from Murder to Cathedral are best illustration of this:

“Seven years and the summer is over,
Seven years since the Archbishop left us,
He who was always so kind to his people,
But it would not be well if should return”

Now if analyze this piece, we find that there is no restriction of rhyming words but even then use of words in musical pattern give it a unique touch that makes it prominent within the play.

Poetry has conquered hearts of many people due to its empowering rhythms and its metrical presentation and its aesthetic ability. It not only serves as a source of pleasure but also has made its mark in mobilizing the thoughts of people. As we find greater Pakistani poets who inspired people to raise voice for their freedom. So it serves the purpose of moral guidance as well. One of the famous poets of Pakistan was Doctor Allama Muhammad Iqbal, who had a remarkable ability of penning down his thoughts. He motivated people of sub-continent to fight for their freedom. Poetry as already said by many other writers serves a didactic purpose; however, this has always been a controversial topic for critics of earlier times but if seen in present context, it no doubt works for both. We find numerous other poets that raised the bar of poetry and took this genre of literature to the greater heights. In Religious poetry, we have great name of Baba Bullay Shah, who with is great expression of feelings effected the minds and hearts of many people. People still admire him and take guidance from his poetry. His one of the famous poems is:

“Parh Parh Alam Fazal Hoya,
Kadi apney ap nu parhya hi nai
Ja ja varda e mandar masiti
Kadi man apny ich varya hi nhi
Avein roz shaitan nal larda aye
Kadi nafs apny nal larya hi nhi
Bullay shah asmano ud’diyan phardha aye
Jera ghar betha, o noon phaya hi nhi”

Give a paraphrase meaning in English to help the readers who do not know the language.

This is one such poem that changes the thoughts. Other than this, there are numerous poets as such as one great name of modern poet is T.S Eliot. “The Wasteland” by T.S Eliot is a great poem in which he has presented a picture of modern world. As the lines state:

“APRIL is the cruelest month, breeding
Lilacs out of dead land breeding
Memory and desire, stirring”

These are the lines taken from “The wasteland” by T.S Eliot and we see that how beautifully, with use of rhyming schemes poet has tried to put an influence. Poetry is not only limited to any one language. We find its instances in every language. Prose also gave its contribution to every language but if we analyze same lines written in prose form, it does not have that impact as it has when is written in genre of poetry. For instance: if we write the wasteland as:

Among all the months, April is the cruelest and we see lilacs coming out of barren land in it and it brings back several memories and enhances our desires.

It clearly states the effect. The musical rhythms have much power than simple conversation language. This does not mean that prose is not an effective genre or is not a good medium. It has its own place. There are several books which have played an important role. For example: J.S Mill book “On Liberty”, Bertrand Russell book “Unpopular Essays”, The Road to Makah” by Muhammad Asad and many others. These books have proved very much influential but when it comes to a comparison between these two genres, then poetry takes the medal.

Conclusion

Out of this little effort, we exempt that poetry has made its way more smoothly to people minds than prose. The reasons that we extract out are that people do not only need moral guidance in their lives, they also need to satisfy their part of brain that commands human body to go for pleasure providing activities. This is why, people prefer poetry because they find fun its

musical rhythms and its way of presentation. On Contrary, they find prose boring and sleep triggering.

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