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Literary Theory

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From Russian Formalism to Ecocriticism

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CONTENTS

Topic-wise arrangement of all questions

Part / Topic	Page
01 Russian Formalism	5
Viktor Shklovsky & Defamiliarisation	5
Formalist Concepts	5
Roman Jakobson	8
Prague School	8
02 Structuralism I: Saussure & Linguistics	9
Ferdinand de Saussure	9
Langue, Parole & the Sign	11
Linguistics & Language Theory	12
03 Structuralism II: Semiotics, Lévi-Strauss & Barthes	15
Claude Lévi-Strauss	15
Roland Barthes (Structuralist)	15
Semiotics (Peirce, Eco, Greimas)	16
Structuralism: General	17
04 Narratology: Propp, Todorov & Genette	19
Vladimir Propp	19
Gérard Genette	19
Booth, Lubbock & Point of View	20
Narratology: General	20
05 Mikhail Bakhtin & Dialogism	21
Mikhail Bakhtin	21
06 New Criticism & Practical Criticism	24
I.A. Richards	24
William Empson	25
Ransom, Tate, Brooks & Warren	26
Wimsatt & Beardsley	27
T.S. Eliot	28
F.R. Leavis & Liberal Humanism	29
New Criticism: General	31
07 Post-Structuralism: Barthes, Kristeva & Intertextuality	33
Roland Barthes (Post-Structuralist)	33
Julia Kristeva & Intertextuality	35
Post-Structuralism: General	35
Deleuze & Guattari	36
08 Deconstruction: Derrida, de Man & the Yale School	37
Jacques Derrida	37
Deconstruction: Key Terms	40
Paul de Man & the Yale School	43
09 Michel Foucault: Discourse & Power	45

	Michel Foucault	45
10	Psychoanalysis I: Freud & Jung	50
	Sigmund Freud	50
	Carl Jung	55
	Psychoanalysis: General	56
11	Psychoanalysis II: Lacan, Bloom & Beyond	56
	Jacques Lacan	56
	Harold Bloom	58
12	Marxism I: Marx, Lukács, Gramsci & Althusser	60
	Marx & Engels	60
	Georg Lukács	62
	Antonio Gramsci	62
	Louis Althusser	63
	Macherey, Goldmann & Others	64
	Marxism: General	65
13	Marxism II: Frankfurt School, Williams, Eagleton & Jameson	67
	Walter Benjamin	67
	Adorno, Horkheimer & the Frankfurt School	67
	Raymond Williams	68
	Terry Eagleton	70
	Fredric Jameson	72
14	Feminism I: Woolf, Beauvoir, Showalter, Gilbert & Gubar	74
	Wollstonecraft & Virginia Woolf	74
	Simone de Beauvoir	76
	Millett, Friedan & Greer	77
	Elaine Showalter	77
	Gilbert & Gubar	79
	Feminism: General	79
15	Feminism II: French Feminism & Black Feminism	85
	Hélène Cixous	85
	Julia Kristeva (Feminist)	85
	Black & Third-World Feminism	86
16	Gender & Queer Theory	87
	Judith Butler	87
	Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick	88
	Queer & Gender Theory: General	88
17	Postcolonial Theory: Said, Spivak, Bhabha & Fanon	90
	Edward Said	90
	Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak	92
	Homi K. Bhabha	92
	Frantz Fanon	93
	Ngũgĩ, Achebe & Writers Back	94
	Postcolonialism: General	95
	Passage-Based Questions	99

18	New Historicism & Cultural Materialism	100
	Stephen Greenblatt	100
	New Historicism: General	101
	Dollimore, Sinfield & Cultural Materialism	102
19	Cultural Studies	104
	The Birmingham School	104
	Stuart Hall	105
	Popular Culture & Everyday Life	105
	Cultural Studies: General	109
20	Reader-Response & Reception Theory	111
	Wolfgang Iser	111
	Stanley Fish	111
	Hans Robert Jauss	113
	Phenomenology & Hermeneutics	113
	Reader-Response: General	114
21	Postmodernism: Lyotard & Baudrillard	116
	Jean-François Lyotard	116
	Jean Baudrillard	117
	Postmodernism: General	118
22	Myth & Archetypal Criticism	120
	Northrop Frye	120
	Myth Criticism: General	121
23	Ecocriticism	121
	Ecocriticism	121
	Deep Ecology & Ecofeminism	123
24	Key Terms, Theory Books & Mixed Questions	125
	Key Terms	125
	Theory Basics & Critical Approaches	127
	Theory Books & Their Authors	131
	Matching & Chronology Across Schools	133
	Stylistics	138
25	Background: Classical Thought, Romanticism & Modernism	140
	Greek & Classical Thought	140
	Enlightenment, Romanticism & Arnold	142
	Modernism, Movements & Literary History	145

PART I · RUSSIAN FORMALISM

Viktor Shklovsky & Defamiliarisation

1. 'Art as Technique' is a critical essay published in 1917 by _____.

- (1) Michael Holquist
- (2) Viktor Shklovsky
- (3) Tzvetan Todorov
- (4) Roman Jakobson

Ans: (2) Viktor Shklovsky Viktor Shklovsky's 'Art as Technique' (1917) introduced ostranenie or defamiliarisation, arguing that art makes the familiar strange to restore perception.

2. Which Russian Formalist published the pioneering essay that Eagleton sees as marking the 'beginnings of the transformation which has overtaken literary theory in this century'?

- (1) Alexander Pushkin
- (2) Viktor Shklovsky
- (3) Leo Tolstoy
- (4) Fyodor Dostoevsky

Ans: (2) Viktor Shklovsky Eagleton dates the transformation of literary theory to 1917, when the young Russian Formalist Viktor Shklovsky published his pioneering essay 'Art as Device'.

3. According to Viktor Shklovsky, which novel was 'the most typical novel in world literature' because it impedes its own story-line so that it hardly gets off the ground?

- (1) Animal Farm
- (2) History of the Rebellion
- (3) Tristram Shandy
- (4) Don Quixote

Ans: (3) Tristram Shandy Shklovsky called Sterne's Tristram Shandy 'the most typical novel in world literature' because its digressions so impede the story-line that it hardly gets started.

4. Viktor Shklovsky's name is associated with

- (1) Russian Formalism
- (2) New Historicism
- (3) Reader-Response Theory
- (4) Postmodernism

Ans: (1) Russian Formalism Viktor Shklovsky, author of "Art as Technique" (1917) and founder of OPOYAZ, was a leading Russian Formalist.

5. Viktor Shklovsky was a member of:

- (1) Moscow School
- (2) New Critical School
- (3) Prague School
- (4) Russian Formalism

Ans: (4) Russian Formalism Viktor Shklovsky was a founder of OPOJAZ in St Petersburg and a leading Russian Formalist, known for "Art as Technique" and the concept of defamiliarisation.

6. Who is the author of 'Art as Technique'?

- (1) Viktor Shklovsky
- (2) Mikhail Bakhtin
- (3) Leo Tolstoy
- (4) Theodor Adorno

Ans: (1) Viktor Shklovsky Viktor Shklovsky's "Art as Technique" (1917) argues that art defamiliarises (ostranenie) the habitual to restore fresh perception, making "the stone stony".

Formalist Concepts

7. Formalism as a school of thought was officially suppressed by the Russian government because _____. Complete the sentence with the appropriate clause.

- (1) the Russian Formalists bitterly critiqued the economic system of the government
- (2) the Formalist school of thought idealised oligarchy as a mode of governance
- (3) it focused exclusively on the literariness of language while underplaying social and political contexts
- (4) none of the above

Ans: (3) Soviet authorities condemned Formalism for treating literature as autonomous verbal device while neglecting its social and political content, and it was suppressed by around 1930.

8. Which person is NOT included in the ranks of the Russian Formalists?

- (1) Viktor Shklovsky
- (2) Roman Jakobson
- (3) Heinrich Wölfflin
- (4) Boris Tomashevsky

Ans: (3) Heinrich Wölfflin Heinrich Wölfflin was a Swiss art historian whose formal analysis influenced the movement, whereas Jakobson, Shklovsky and Tomashevsky were Russian Formalists.

9. When did the Russian Formalists emerge?

- (1) Before WWII
- (2) Before the Bolshevik Revolution
- (3) After WWI
- (4) During the Russian Revolution

Ans: (2) Before the Bolshevik Revolution The Russian Formalists emerged in the years before the 1917 Bolshevik Revolution, through the Moscow Linguistic Circle (1915) and OPOJAZ (1916).

10. Who silenced the Russian Formalists?

- (1) Bolsheviks
- (2) Socialists
- (3) Liberals
- (4) Stalinists

Ans: (4) Stalinists Eagleton notes that the Formalists flourished through the 1920s until they were effectively silenced by Stalinism around 1930.

11. According to Eagleton, the Russian Formalists rejected what kind of doctrines that had influenced literary criticism before them?

- (1) Quasi-mystical Symbolist doctrines
- (2) Quasi-mystical fictional doctrines
- (3) Quasi-mystical religious doctrines
- (4) Quasi-mystical psychoanalytic doctrines

Ans: (1) Quasi-mystical Symbolist doctrines Eagleton writes that the Formalists rejected the quasi-mystical Symbolist doctrines which had influenced criticism before them, turning to the literary text itself.

12. According to Eagleton, the Russian Formalists shifted their attention to the 'material reality' of what?

- (1) The critic
- (2) The text
- (3) The facts
- (4) The fiction

Ans: (2) The text Eagleton says the Formalists, in a practical, scientific spirit, shifted attention to the material reality of the literary text itself.

13. Why did the Russian Formalists NOT see a literary work as a vehicle for ideas, a reflection of reality or an incarnation of transcendental truth?

- (1) Because they saw language as potentially empowering the masses.
- (2) Because they saw language as a mode of speech for the wealthy.
- (3) Because they saw language as obtuse, vague and ephemeral.
- (4) Because they saw language as words and not objects or feelings.

Ans: (4) For the Formalists a literary work was a material organisation of language, made of words rather than objects or feelings, not a vehicle for ideas or truth.

14. Formalism is the application of what to the study of literature?

- (1) Economics
- (2) Sociology
- (3) Linguistics
- (4) Psychology

Ans: (3) Linguistics Eagleton calls Formalism essentially the application of linguistics to the study of literature, concerned with the structures of language rather than content.

15. The Formalists were not out to define literature, but they were out to define what?

- (1) Literariness
- (2) Criticism
- (3) Inventiveness
- (4) Realism

Ans: (1) Literariness The Formalists sought to define not 'literature' but 'literariness', Jakobson's term for the special uses of language that make a text literary.

16. In the formalistic school of criticism art is:

- (1) entertainment
- (2) style
- (3) matter
- (4) preaching

Ans: (2) style Formalists locate art in form, style and device rather than in content, moral message or entertainment; for Shklovsky art is technique.

17. 'Formal criticism' relates to the structure of:

- (1) Content
- (2) Myths
- (3) Literary devices
- (4) Form

Ans: (3) Literary devices Formal criticism studies a work as an arrangement of literary devices, following the Formalist view of literature as the sum of its devices.

18. Which of the following theoretical movements claimed that "the device is the only hero of literature"?

- (1) Deconstruction
- (2) New Criticism
- (3) Phenomenology
- (4) Russian Formalism

Ans: (4) Russian Formalism Roman Jakobson's 1921 claim that if literary scholarship is to be a science it must treat the device as its only hero is a Russian Formalist slogan.

19. Which two terms among the following are associated with formalist criticism?

- A. aura
 - B. actant
 - C. narratee
 - D. defamiliarisation
 - E. foregrounding
- (1) A and C only
 - (2) B and D only
 - (3) B and C only
 - (4) D and E only

Ans: (4) Defamiliarisation (Shklovsky) and foregrounding (Mukařovský) are Formalist and Prague School terms; aura is Benjamin's, actant Greimas's and narratee Prince's.

20. There are four models of relating literature to history. Which of the following is associated with formalism?

- (1) Literary texts are universal and transcend history: the historical context of their production and reception has no bearing on the literary work, which is aesthetically autonomous, having its own laws, being a world unto itself.
- (2) The historical context of a literary work is integral to a proper understanding of it: the text is produced within a specific historical context but in its literariness it remains separate from that context.
- (3) Literary works can help us to understand the time in which they are set: realist texts in particular provide imaginative representations of specific historical moments, events or periods.
- (4) Literary texts are bound up with other discourses and rhetorical structures: they are part of a history that is still in the process of being written.

Ans: (1) Formalism treats the literary work as autonomous and self-contained, governed by its own laws, so its historical context is irrelevant to its meaning and value.

21. Who among the following is not associated with Russian Formalism?

- (1) Roman Jakobson
- (2) Viktor Shklovsky
- (3) Boris Eichenbaum
- (4) Georges Poulet

Ans: (4) Georges Poulet Georges Poulet was a Belgian critic of the Geneva School of phenomenological criticism; Jakobson, Eichenbaum and Shklovsky were Russian Formalists.

22. The discussions of the OPOJAZ group and the Moscow Linguistic Circle contributed to:

- (1) Modernism
- (2) Formalism
- (3) Marxism
- (4) Postmodernism

Ans: (2) Formalism Russian Formalism grew from two groups: OPOJAZ in St Petersburg (Shklovsky, Eikhenbaum) and the Moscow Linguistic Circle led by Roman Jakobson.

23. Key texts of Russian Formalism were translated into French in *Théorie de la littérature* (1965) by:

- (1) Viktor Shklovsky
- (2) Victor Erlich
- (3) Tzvetan Todorov
- (4) Yury Tynyanov

Ans: (3) Tzvetan Todorov Tzvetan Todorov edited and translated the *Formalists in Théorie de la littérature* (1965), introducing Russian Formalism to French structuralism.

24. Who among the following has been credited by the Russian Formalists with laying the foundation of comparative literature?

- (1) Alexander Veselovsky
- (2) Viktor Shklovsky
- (3) Vladimir Propp
- (4) Roman Jakobson

Ans: (1) Alexander Veselovsky Alexander Veselovsky's historical poetics, a founding work of Russian comparative literature, was the main predecessor the Formalists engaged with.

Roman Jakobson

25. According to the Russian critic Roman Jakobson, literature represents 'organized _____ committed on ordinary _____.'

- (1) protest; speech
- (2) violence; people
- (3) religion; writing
- (4) violence; speech

Ans: (4) violence; speech Roman Jakobson described literature as 'organized violence committed on ordinary speech', since literary language intensifies and estranges everyday language.

26. "According to _____, language functions poetically when we transport the words related along the metaphoric or analogous axis on to the contiguous or metonymic axis." Which option should be selected to fill in the blank?

- (1) Viktor Shklovsky
- (2) Roman Ingarden
- (3) Roman Jakobson
- (4) Ferdinand de Saussure

Ans: (3) Roman Jakobson In "Linguistics and Poetics" (1960) Roman Jakobson defined the poetic function as projecting the principle of equivalence from the axis of selection onto the axis of combination.

27. 'Markedness', a state of standing out as non-typical, was a formalist concept categorised by _____.

- (1) Mikhail Bakhtin
- (2) Roman Jakobson
- (3) Boris Eichenbaum
- (4) Vladimir Propp

Ans: (2) Roman Jakobson Markedness was developed in the Prague Linguistic Circle by Roman Jakobson and Nikolai Trubetzkoy to describe the asymmetry between marked (non-typical) and unmarked (default) terms in an opposition.

Prague School

28. "The just man justices." What kind of foregrounding do you find in the above line?

- (1) Syntactic
- (2) Semantic
- (3) Collocation
- (4) None of the above

Ans: (1) Syntactic In Hopkins's line the noun justice is converted into a verb, a grammatical deviation that foregrounds the word through its unexpected syntactic function.