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Essay: Comparative literature (field of study)

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Comparative literature is a field that deals with study of literature from groups of people with different language or culture. The group of people studied can be from different nations, or they can share the same language but be located at different nations. These studies encompass an understanding and comparison of the literature between respective groups across time durations, their various arts such as music, paintings, dances, films, their philosophy and psychology, as well as their cultural backgrounds. However, comparison can be said to be the dominant activity that is carried out in comparative literature studies.

There are numerous explanations as to why comparison is done during comparative studies. To start with, the comparison brings to light most of the things that may have been omitted or obscured in the national literature. The traditional literature studies did not take into place the comparison of different groups

according to their varying cultural backgrounds. Instead, the study was used as a reflection of the state of the nation. Therefore, comparative studies brings another perspective and unmasks various aspects that may not have been covered in the traditional national literature, and through comparison, literary works that are not related in any way may reveal significant similarities and differences.

Secondly, evolution and dissemination of literary varieties and editions can be easily traced across time periods and space. This is revealed through the powerful tool of comparison during the literal comparative studies. The relationship between literature and the group's history, its politics, and various philosophies are brought out through comparison and contrast. This type of contrast helps to explain how the literature has developed over time and the different aspects that may have influenced its spread or hindered its growth across various languages. In addition, through comparison, the cultural factors that may influence the spread of literature in one language or group of people can be brought out clearly. The link between literature and cultural forms that may include visual arts, films, and drama is expounded. Translations of literary works have a unique history and sometimes politics associated with them. Some of the literary works from one language or group of people never get translated to be shared to the rest of the world. This can only be accomplished through comparative literature studies where qualitative comparison is carried out. Other literary works from certain authors are complicated and their complexity can only be well understood when they are compared with other literary works. When these minor works of literature from the various groups are compared during comparative studies, a broader perspective of literature is realized. In his work *Metaphor and Materiality*, Peter Smith was able to show how contradictions about the function of science in literature infuses the literary works. Smith provides amazing insights into the whole idea of making scientific concepts to be themes in literature .

In order to understand the drifts and movements in different national cultures, comparison has to be done between various national cultures represented by groups of people in the countries of study. It is through such contrast that the perspective of the studied national cultures is broadened and people are able understand it beyond the narrow margins of national boundaries. In addition, through the comparison of these national cultures, the relationship between literature and different circles of human activities can be defined in a better way. In *The Anatomy of Laughter*, the authors describe laughter as being cognitive, dialectal, or appealing function .

In conclusion, comparative literature studies involve comparisons between literature and the cultural factors, politics, philosophy, and cultural arts of the groups being studied. Through comparison, trends in literature across time and space and drifts in national cultures can be better understood and explained.

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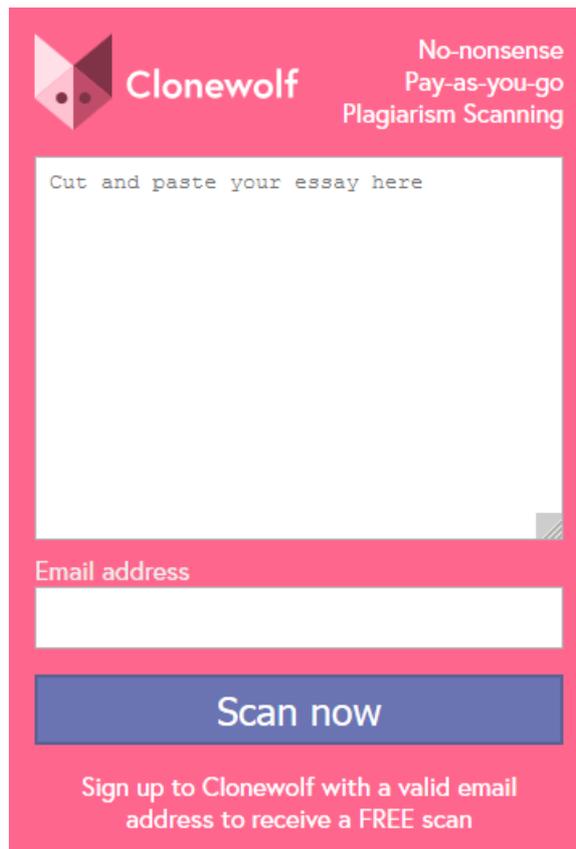
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