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**Exploring Post-1900 Modern English Literature through an  
Ecocritical Lens**

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## Abstract

Ecocriticism is a prominent, innovative, and reformist approach to contemporary English literature that is changing the way people talk about the environment across the globe. With an eye on the good and bad sides of the complex relationship between humans and the natural environment, this perspective examines the whole picture. This research paper will use Ecocriticism as a prism through which to examine English literature published after 1900. By analyzing famous literary works, the study hopes to discover insights that are relevant to the environment. This research aims to chart Ecocriticism's evolution from an emphasis on nature as a mystic to one that stresses the interconnectedness of human and nonhuman forces. Examining the works of influential authors allows us to achieve this goal. On top of that, it stresses the need to promote eco-literacy, raising eco-consciousness, and preserving nature. The study finishes by urging everyone to take an active role and work together to save and improve the environment.

**Keywords:** Index Terms Ecocriticism, Eco-consciousness, Ecological, Modern English Literature, Environmentalism.

## INTRODUCTION

Since it is literature from all around the world, English literature has acquired many distinct styles. The development process paid close attention to environmental issues, one of the most pressing socio-human concerns. At its most basic level, Ecocriticism is an academic discipline that draws from a variety of disciplines to examine literature's connections to the natural world. The phrase pertains to the writings of writers, anthropologists, literary critics, historians, and scientists in order to probe the differences between the natural world and the cultural construction of nature.

It gets into the presentation and evaluation of environmental problems, cultural issues related to the environment, and attitudes toward nature. Ecocriticism seeks, among other things, to understand how different civilizations deal with environmental crises by analyzing human behavior and cultural responses. Because of technological advancements and the growing public concern about environmental destruction, this kind of critique has recently received much attention. As a consequence, it provides a fresh perspective on reading and analyzing literature, which allows literary and theoretical study to expand its scope. Ecocriticism did not start to get substantial momentum until the 1980s. However, it had its origins in the environmental movement and Rachel Carson's 1962 book *Silent Spring*. There have been two main waves of



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Ecocriticism, the first of which happened in the 1980s and the second in the 1990s. The first group of writers primarily focused on nature writing as an academic discipline and a practical hobby; at the same time that it drew attention to the fact that humans and the natural world are distinct from one another, it emphasized the significance of nature and the need to stand out for it. Expanding on the work of the first wave, the second wave of environmentalists expanded the movement's sphere of influence. This new generation of ecocritics rethought the definition of "environment" to include both natural and urban areas, and they panned the traditional categorizations of natural and non-natural phenomena.

In addition, the eco-justice movement had its start during this wave, which looked at how communities' most marginalized members are also the ones most likely to suffer from the negative effects of environmental degradation and climate change. Ecocriticism encompasses the views of ecofeminists, pastoralists, and those who inhabit wilderness areas. "Ecocriticism" is the process of analyzing literature through the lens of environmental principles and practices, as opposed to only through the lens of traditional literary Criticism. According to Oppenmann (2016), Ecocriticism, a new revisionist movement, has been very popular across the world in the last several decades. Many authors who wrote in the early and late modern periods of English literature followed this trend. There was a consensus among early ecocritics that "nature writing" was excellent. In their work, they encouraged authors to highlight the wonders of nature's flora and fauna. Activist forms of ecological literary critique emerged in the 1970s, helping to spread environmental understanding and consciousness. This happened when the environmental movement started making waves in politics. Several literature from the modern era (after 1900) showed the changing trends in this way, according to Westling (2016).

American and British romance novelists have articulated their concern for the environment from three vantage points: the living community, fundamental ecological understanding of environmental conservation, and both. Truth, love, and beauty are presented to those who are seeking a spiritual home naturally. Their light illuminates this way. Also, they define beauty as harmony with nature and stress the need to reconnect with it. As a last point, they clarify what it means to find beauty in nature. They urged people to save lives and utilize natural resources responsibly while also showing their genuine care for the environment and natural resources (Jin, 2022).



With a focus on poetry and novels produced in modern (post-1900) English literature, this research study aims to examine and assess the Ecocritical tactics used in a selection of these works. This article covers the history of Ecocriticism and its growth over time, as well as a literary examination of developing ecocritical themes in chosen English literary works.

## **SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY**

This study serves as a fresh application of the Ecocritical method of critique by examining the characteristics of English literary works produced by humans in the modern age, namely those published after 1900. Also covered are the ideas of "nature as a mystic substance," "nature's interconnectedness to humans," "the importance of maintaining nature," "eco-consciousness," and "eco-literacy" as they pertain to environmental issues, as well as their evolution into Ecocriticism.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

The modern world's ecology is in a perilous position due to the many environmental disasters that have happened recently. Science and technology cannot solve the world's environmental problems in isolation. The way people in the contemporary world see the natural environment needs to change. Literature does not exist in a vacuum, but it does fulfill a purpose. Given that literary critics neglected nature for a long time, eco-conscious literature advocates for a broader perspective on the natural world. During the last 30 years, Ecocriticism has grown into what is now known as a "global emerging movement." The term "ecocriticism" was first used in a 1978 critical article by William Rueckert. What follows is an excerpt from the paper titled "Literature and Ecology: An Experiment in Ecocriticism." Originating from the Greek words "oikos" (meaning "home" or "earth") and "logy" (meaning "a logical argument"), the word "eco" is produced. 'Eco' is formed by combining these two terms. In Mishra's (2016) view, they are closely related to literary representations of home-environment critique. This subject delves into several fields and has a vast and limitless reach, all while focusing on sustainability in the long run. In his book "Ecocriticism and Early Modern English Literature," Borlik shows that writers of the Elizabethan and Jacobean eras were very aware of and worried about the effects of human activities on the natural world (Todd, 2012).

In Ecocriticism, we look at literature from a certain period through the lens of how people interacted with the natural environment. The field known as Ecocriticism examines how literary works reflect and respond to their natural surroundings. An ecocritical perspective values nature above everything else in literature.



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According to Singh (2019), Ecocriticism is a literary movement that aims to highlight the need to reassess the existing connection between humans and their environment.

Buell claims that Ecocriticism has been popular in English literature in two distinct waves and that it is about to gain much more traction. An earlier school of thought laid the groundwork for subsequent schools of thought, including historicism, logocentrism, realism, pastoral poetry, and wilderness romance. It entailed returning to an uninhabited, natural, and untamed environment. As time went on, second-wave Ecocriticism shifted its emphasis from the original field of first-wave Ecocriticism. Like first-wave Ecocriticism, it had an activist bent and focused on environmental issues rather than extreme nature. Aspects of the environment that were taken into account included agricultural, suburban, and natural areas that were properly maintained. This is similar to a modification that Burberry has agreed to (Mabie, 2016). Many people have taken an interest in postcolonial Ecocriticism recently. The rise of postcolonial Ecocriticism is largely responsible for the increased focus on postcolonial literature in the last few years. Among the postcolonial Ecocriticism's most pressing concerns are the plights of the world's hungry, thirsty, displaced, sick, and incarcerated (Mabie, 2016).

According to Munthir M. Habib's "NATURE, ENVIRONMENT AND LANDSCAPE IN MODERN BRITISH POETRY," an ecocritical examination of modern British poetry has shown a heightened awareness of environmental issues. Disruptive changes are happening in the interplay between people and the environment, and both T. S. Eliot and Edward Thomas are quite worried about it. Habib (2020) cites Edward Thomas as an example of an author who has pleaded for people to really appreciate nature.

In his dissertation, Jeon Deuk Ju brought out the fact that several Romantic writers successfully express women's potential or draw parallels between women and the natural world. Many Romantic authors, he said, highlight women's abilities. In Dorset and Howitt, the mother figures convey to the young reader the beauty of nature. Like Howitt, who conveys the Wordsworthian joy of nature's creatures and emphasizes the importance of humor in a way that's similar to Joseph Meeker's idea of comedy as a survival mechanism, Dorset, like David Ehrenfeld, stresses the importance of emotion in human existence. When it comes to the spiritual realm, Browne argues that humans and nature have a unique bond. In her exploration of women's roles in nineteenth-century England's public and private spheres, the late Romantic poet Landon constructs feminine poetics via the use of natural and environmental figurations (Ju, 2004).



The ecocritical analysis takes a multi-faceted look at the text, analyzing it from both a cultural and environmental vantage point. Under this category of features are (Das, 2020):

- Portrayal of nature in work.
- Geographical surroundings and their role in literature.
- Metaphors to nature and their relevance.
- How life forms are connected or interlined.
- How modern science/human actions/issues impact the environment and create eco-conscious.

The poems and travelogues published by Sepehri between 1920 and 1930 also display ecocritical themes. Poems like "Eight Books," "The Bird," and "Passenger" delve into topics like nature's mystical essence, human emotions, and existential angst. These ideas are promoted throughout his works. "And love, only love." is one example of how he ties human hopes and dreams to the environment. His ability to plunge me into the pits of despair led to my miraculous metamorphosis into a bird. Would you want a glass of sadness?

In 1389, on page 293, Sepehri wrote, "The pure sound imparts an elixir to this drink." He draws a line between the joy of love and the security that comes from being one with nature. Nature was shown in his paintings as a benevolent protector and a restorer of human health. To him, nature was a sentient being, and he dealt with it accordingly. He employed pictures from nature to turn poetry into a presentation. There is an implied connection between humans and the natural world, with the natural world being seen as superior. Sepehri shows how important it is to have compassion for nature even when faced with disaster or hardship. Ecocritical theory, according to Sohrab Sepehri (Dabirnia, 2021), holds that people may discover serenity in nature, which is lacking in metropolitan settings.

Many people recognize William Butler Yeats for his work that incorporates ecocritical viewpoints. One aspect of his work that falls within the ecocritical umbrella is his poetry. He followed the spiritual arrows that nature had pointed out to him, and his work was replete with sacred sites. Poems like "The Towers," "As in the Wild Swans at Coole," and the first lines of "Shadowy Waters" all include nature as a means of spiritual restoration and reconnection with one's original mission. In contrast to his other paintings, which focus on nature, this one is man-made. Yeats isn't exactly a poet recognized for his "deep ecological" views. However, he does include his keen eye for the Irish countryside's flora and fauna in his works. The poems



do more than depict landscapes; they illuminate the interconnectedness of nature, culture, and literature, as well as the ways in which the latter shapes the former. The verbs making, building, and tending to are key to this meaning. If you believe Fleming (2020), the poem is a call to keep in touch with nature and its restorative powers. The poet learns about new life from nature.

Another poet and writer whose works are often studied via an ecocritical lens is Thomas Hardy. Both "Far from the Madding Crowd" and the poetry collection "The Breaking of Nations" are part of his analysis. Both of these pieces exemplify his art. Thomas Hardy's works provide an image of a peaceful and beautiful world where humans and nature cohabit. Thomas Hardy was an individual who cared about people and their relationships with the environment, animals and humans, and human civilization. He was also a Romantic and a believer in Darwin's ideas. All of them show his portrayal of ecological concern. With the exception of the romance story, "Far from the Madding Crowd" mostly deals with the country's culture and surroundings. The contrast between Weatherby's depiction of country life and city life and Hardy's lyrical and lovely focus on the intrinsic beauties of the landscape and Wessex is striking. Gabriel Oak and the other characters live in a setting where nature is an integral aspect of what makes their lives enjoyable. By reading this, people may help advance environmentalist ideas that aim to protect and preserve the natural world (Heidar, 2016; Barry, 2017). Both Hardy and his readers would be making contributions to eco-friendly thought if they viewed his works with an ecological lens.

Furthermore, among the most famous American poets of the post-WWII era, Robert Frost stands out for his substantial contributions to the growth of ecocritical concepts in poetry. Many of Frost's poetry works, such as "Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening," "Departmental, Design, Nothing Gold Can Stay," and "The Road Not Taken," adopt an ecocritical perspective.

The overarching goal of all of Frost's designs is to teach viewers how they are interdependent on the natural world and all forms of life within it. Consider, for example, the lines.

“And there’s a barrel that I didn’t fill

Beside it, there may be two or three Apple

I didn’t pick up.

But I am done with apple-picking now” (Frost, p.3-6)



The human experience is subject to death and decay regardless of whether eternal goals are fulfilled or not, and the poem demonstrates that people are solely responsible for their suffering. This once again advances the spiritual dimension of critiques of sustainable development. It achieves this goal by increasing people's sensitivity to environmental issues, which in turn increases their knowledge of and action to address these issues (Shrivastwa, 2020).

## METHODOLOGY

In order to achieve its stated objectives, the present research article opts for an argumentative approach. After that, the study moves on to examine and evaluate, from an ecocritical vantage point, modern English literature published after 1900. A number of famous works written with the goal of obtaining insights from an ecological perspective will be studied by the researcher.

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

### The Trend of Ecocriticism Post-1950

Novelist and dramatist Wole Soyinka of Nigeria bases his works on ecological concepts. "The Swamp Dwellers" (1958) and "A Dance of Forests" (1960) describe the plight of the Yoruba people who live in rural areas. His work highlights how disconnected the present Yoruba youth are from nature. His protagonists in his works are metaphors for man's helplessness in the face of nature and the sensual temptations of urban life. One needs an intimate familiarity with nature to pursue a career in agriculture. From his point of view, natural catastrophes like droughts and floods shouldn't be able to dampen the love of nature. The fact that humans feel the need to separate themselves from nature is a downside, too. This is a perfect illustration of the idea that the main reason the environment is now facing problems is that humans are interacting with the nonhuman world too much, and this is becoming worse at a fast pace. It is said by Ravindran and Maithri (2018) that Soyinka's writings have contributed to a greater awareness of environmental issues and a desire to do one's part to protect them.

Ecocritical thinkers in the postmodern period have pointed to several British novels, like Graham Swift's 1983 masterpiece "Waterland," as examples of literature that may be viewed via an ecocritical lens. Ecologists have cited this book among many others. This work was examined via the lens of Ecocriticism, a hitherto unexplored critical intersection. An example would be Serpil Oppermann's "postmodern Ecocritical theory" put into practice. She enriches the work in three fundamental ways: first, by analyzing how literary





works' narratives include or exclude ideas of nature; second, by challenging hierarchical and dualistic systems; and third, by drawing attention to the language practices that contribute to these ideas. Armbruster argues that there are cases when Waterland's proof of the cultural constructed-ness does not show that a material universe does not exist. An article's depiction of nature pulls Ecocriticism out of its "comfort zone." A thoughtful examination of the exhibited and the ways in which form-relevant literature and knowledge impact depictions of the Fenlands is necessary to grasp the true importance of the natural world in Waterland. Waterland, which exhibits and exposes the geological fragility of the area on a constant basis, sheds insight on the fairy tale impact on Crick's Fenland stories. The nonhuman character of the river Ouse in Waterland is shown as having a lengthy and meandering story. Here, we see how the book Waterland reveals the sluggishness and opacity of major characters. The flooding that occurs throughout the piece reflects modern worries about climate change, says Armbruster. The piece's repeated references to the 2010 English floods are indicative of this (Bracke, 2018).

## **The Trend of Ecocriticism Post-2000**

In the realm of young adult fiction, Jerry Spinelli's 2000 book "Stargirl" created quite a stir. Plus, it's a piece of the younger generation's second wave of Ecocriticism. This reading, which is characterized as being "purely" ecocritical, explores how Stargirl's surroundings affect her character development and argues that she grows into a more complete person as the story progresses. By showing that Stargirl ultimately gives good environmental concepts of eco-literacy for readers to grow within themselves, an eco-pedagogical reading is more hopeful and thorough. Strong personality traits are a result of Stargirl's development via the use of natural images, metaphors, and symbols, her reluctance to resort to violence, and her sexuality. The natural environment is another place where other characters get inspiration. One ecofeminist school of thought maintains that Stargirl represents nature in its purest form. Reading this book will hopefully inspire younger readers to follow Star Girl's example and do what she did to protect the environment. The study conducted by Malo and Hill in 2020 suggests that it acknowledges the presence of various activities and promotes environmental benevolence.

Similarly, books aimed at youngsters often take an ecocritical stance. "I Am a Hornbeam Branch," the only children's book written and published by Hasan Ali Toptaş, came out in 2004. Along with the trees of the Beşparmak Mountains area, it tells the story of a hornbeam branch that grows with them and suffers the pain of aging. The name "hornbeam" is often associated with a child's creative play and any discussions that may



emerge from the environment it depicts, which is fitting given the importance of environmental awareness throughout development. Environmental literacy might be enhanced by the use of eco-writing, which is presented in children's literature. As a parallel universe that imitates action and interacts with individuals engaged, it sees nonhuman living environments through the eyes of animals rather than seeing the world as a sphere of absolute differences. All of these entities become pertinent to the task at hand because of their interaction with nature. Young readers may relate to Hornbeam's story via the trees, which heightens their understanding of environmental issues (Aslan & Bas, 2020). The use of ecological terminology allows for the visual and literary presentation of environmental challenges.

Particularly helpful in this respect is McCarthy's 2006 novel "The Road," which demonstrates how the modalities of character presence and emplacement should be transformed in the context of a global catastrophe. McCarthy conjures up the idea in "The Road" that the environmental catastrophe and its aftereffects are so bad that they make people want to see bizarre, almost dead heads of tormented humanity. This brings to light the subject's immediate environment and the dialectical relationship between the two. That physical ecology and geography mediate the dialogue between human cognition and the lived experience of humans in relation to their natural surroundings is central to this approach, as is the underlying economic norm. One of the primary aims of Ecocriticism is the promotion of mind-body emancipation, which is compatible with the objective of environmental stewardship (Cella, 2013). The significance of environmental stewardship is one of the other consequences of this intimate connection.

## CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Finally, Ecocriticism is a growing topic of literary Criticism that has long been recognized as a significant subfield, especially in the context of American literature. This research paper examines a selection of works published by famous poets and authors in the modern era. Throughout this research article, an ecological or ecocritical viewpoint has been used to analyze the works of these writers. From the modern to the postmodern (after 1900) era of English literature, the overarching themes include a shift in focus from human-nature relationships and societal comparisons to environmental concerns and activism. Today, the most critical issue confronting Ecocriticism is the critical need to use poetry, nature writing, and wilderness storytelling to tackle environmental issues. In Ecocriticism, issues of social justice and equality take center stage. The influence of vision and inspiration on people's ideas, lives, policies, and creative pursuits is explored in this research. As a field of study, Ecocriticism aspires to be both proactive and revolutionary.



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From the investigations conducted here during the last century (1900–2010), it is clear that ecocritical thinking has shifted from seeing nature as God to viewing it as something that requires protection. The following ideas are presented in sequential order: "nature as a mystic substance," "nature's interconnectedness to human beings," "the importance of maintaining nature's consciousness and eco-literacy regarding environmental issues," and finally, a "call to action." More studies on the concept of environment and nature and its interpretation in post-modernist English literature from an ecocritical perspective might be conducted by reviewing more work, especially those published between 2000 and 2010.



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