

A Critique of the History of Literature Section in “Science and Literary Arts” Textbooks and a Proposed Redesign Based on Genre and Movement-Based Approaches

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ABSTRACT

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The book on literary sciences and arts is a unique source for teaching Persian literature in the second middle school cycle for disciplines such as literature, humanities, and Islamic sciences and knowledge. As the introductory part of this book, the literary history section is one of the most critical lessons that students sometimes show reluctance to learn due to its high volume, the similarity of some topics, and the memorization nature of the content. Despite simplifying and reducing the volume compared to the old literary history system, the authors of the present book have not addressed some critical issues. This has led to criticism of the book's structure, content, scientific and semantic aspects. A reevaluation and rewriting of the book based on the genre or literary type and literary movements approach is a method that can provide not only ease in learning literary history for students and teachers but also offer valuable content. The current method, which has predominated over the literary history section of textbooks, often focuses more on the biographies and listing of works of poets and writers. It occasionally presents less significant information. The aim of this research, conducted using a descriptive-analytical method and utilizing library sources, is to analyze and critique the literary history section of each book in the three-part series of literary sciences and arts separately. It also proposes a new design for Persian literary history based on the genre (pre-Islamic to the twelfth century) and literary movements (contemporary era) approach. This approach is considered one of the best methods for restructuring the book to address its current challenges. In this article, we first examine, analyze, and critique the content of the literary history sections in the literary sciences and arts textbooks. Subsequently, we present a proposal for restructuring it with a genre and literary movement perspective.

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Introduction

The “History of Literature” section is a cornerstone of the “Science and Literary Arts” textbook series, designed for high school students in Iran specializing in humanities and Islamic sciences. Despite its importance, this section is often perceived by students as a dry, rote-memorization task, leading to a widespread lack of interest and academic avoidance. The current textbooks, while attempting to simplify the complex history found in older pedagogical systems, suffer from structural, content-based, and scientific imbalances. This research addresses the pedagogical shortcomings of the existing curriculum and proposes a modern alternative to transform history of literature from a list of names and dates into a meaningful study of literary evolution.

Method

This study employs a descriptive-analytical approach utilizing library-based research. The authors conducted a comprehensive content analysis of the three volumes of the “Science and Literary Arts” textbook series. The critique focused on structural balance, thematic coverage, historical accuracy, and pedagogical efficacy. Following the critique, the researchers developed a new structural framework for the textbooks based on two distinct theoretical approaches: the **Genre-based approach** (applied to the period from pre-Islamic times to the 12th century AH) and the **Movement-based approach** (applied to contemporary literature).

Results

The analysis revealed several critical flaws in the current textbook series:

- **Structural Imbalance:** There is a significant lack of equilibrium between the volume of content and its importance. For instance, Volume 1 neglects major figures of the Samanid and Ghaznavid eras (such as Rudaki and Ferdowsi), while Volume 3 contains an excessively dense and fragmented section on contemporary literature.

- **Content Gaps:** Significant literary periods and seminal figures (e.g., Sanai, Khaqani, and various contemporary poets like Forugh Farrokhzad or Sohrab Sepehri) are either omitted or mentioned only superficially, failing to provide a holistic view of Persian literary history.
- **Pedagogical “Dryness”:** The current method relies heavily on biographical sketches and lists of works, which discourages deep engagement. Furthermore, certain historical inaccuracies were identified in previous editions.
- **Methodological Inconsistency:** The textbooks inconsistently mix history and stylistics, often placing genre-based discussions in the wrong sections (e.g., placing prose classification in stylistics rather than in the history of literature section).

Conclusion

The study concludes that the current “History of Literature” curriculum is inadequate for fostering genuine interest or deep understanding among students. To remedy this, the authors propose a dual-framework redesign:

۱. **Pre-Modern Period (Pre-Islamic to 12th Century AH):** Should be organized by **Genre** (e.g., Epic, Lyric, Prose types) to help students understand the structural evolution of literary forms.
۲. **Contemporary Period:** Should be organized by **Literary Movements** (e.g., Romanticism, Symbolism, Modern Poetry) to highlight the socio-political and aesthetic shifts in modern eras.

By shifting the focus from “who wrote what” to “how and why literature evolved through forms and movements,” the proposed model aims to reduce the burden of rote memorization and provide a more cohesive, engaging, and scientifically rigorous educational experience for both students and instructors.