

## THE BELLES - LETTERS STYLE AND ITS CLASSIFICATION

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**Abstract:** *The belles-lettres style is a form of literary expression that emphasizes beauty, creativity, and artistic value in language. It is distinct from other styles of writing, such as technical or scientific writing, because it focuses on the emotional and intellectual impact of the text rather than simply conveying information. The primary aim of the belles-lettres style is to evoke emotions, provoke reflection, and engage the reader through elegant, expressive, and often figurative language. This style is typically found in poetry, prose fiction, drama, and essays, where the writer uses language to create an aesthetic experience. The belles-lettres style includes various forms of writing that prioritize artistic expression and the emotional resonance of words. In poetry, the language is structured with rhythm, rhyme, and other stylistic devices, allowing it to create a deep emotional response.*

**Key words:** *Enlightenment, figurative language, rhetorical devices, and symbolic imagery, belles-lettres, rhetoric.*

The term "belles-lettres" originates from the French language, where it literally means "beautiful letters" or "fine writing." Historically, the term was used to describe literary works that were appreciated not for their informational or didactic value but for their artistic elegance, expressive richness, and stylistic beauty. The concept of belles-lettres dates back to the 17th and 18th centuries, a period when literature was undergoing significant transformation, particularly in Europe. During the Enlightenment, literary scholars began to classify writing into different functional styles, distinguishing between works meant for practical communication (such as scientific and business texts) and those created for aesthetic enjoyment and artistic expression. The latter became known as belles-lettres and encompassed fiction, poetry, drama, and literary essays—genres that prioritized linguistic creativity, emotional depth, and stylistic refinement over purely factual content.

The role of the belles-lettres style in literature is profound, as it serves as the foundation of artistic and imaginative writing. Unlike other functional styles of language that are primarily concerned with clarity, precision, and objectivity, the belles-lettres style is designed to evoke emotions, stimulate the imagination, and engage readers on an intellectual and sensory level. Through the use of figurative language, rhetorical devices, and symbolic imagery, this style allows authors to create vivid, immersive narratives that transcend mere storytelling and instead become deeply moving, thought-provoking works of art. Belles-lettres are not limited to entertainment; they also serve as powerful tools for philosophical inquiry, cultural critique, and the exploration of human nature. One of the key characteristics of the belles-lettres style is its aesthetic function. This means that, unlike scientific or business communication, where the primary goal is to transmit information efficiently, the belles-lettres style is primarily focused on the beauty of language itself. This aesthetic function manifests in various ways, including poetic rhythm, metaphorical

richness, and harmonious sentence structures. Writers who employ the belles-lettres style often experiment with linguistic elements, such as alliteration, assonance, and wordplay, to create texts that are not only meaningful but also musically and visually appealing. The artistry of language in belles-lettres transforms ordinary words into a powerful sensory and emotional experience for the reader. Another essential feature of the belles-lettres style is its expressiveness. This style is characterized by subjective, emotionally charged language that reflects the author's individual voice, worldview, and artistic vision. Unlike official documents or journalistic reports, which strive for neutrality and objectivity, the belles-lettres style embraces personal interpretation, mood, and tone. Authors use a variety of stylistic techniques, including hyperbole, irony, paradox, and allegory, to create a unique and dynamic linguistic experience. This expressiveness enables literary works to resonate deeply with readers, allowing them to connect emotionally with the characters, themes, and messages of the text.

The phrase is sometimes used in a derogatory manner when speaking about the study of literature: those who study rhetoric often deride many language departments (particularly English departments in the English-speaking world) for focusing on the aesthetic qualities of language rather than its practical application. A quote from Brian Sutton's article in *Language and Learning Across the Disciplines*, "Writing in the Disciplines, First-Year Composition, and the Research Paper", serves to illustrate the rhetoricians' opinion on this subject and their use of the term: Writing-in-the-disciplines adherents, well aware of the wide range of academic genres a first-year composition student may have to deal with in the future, are unlikely to force those students to venture so deeply into any one genre as to require slavish imitation. The only first-year composition teachers likely to demand "conformity and submission" to a particular kind of academic discourse are those English-department fixtures, the evangelical disciples of literature, professors whose goal in first-year composition is to teach students to explicate belles lettres. Writing-in-the-disciplines adherents, unlike teachers of literature-as-composition, generally recognize the folly of forcing students to conform to the conventions of a discourse community they have no desire to join. In his *Elements of Criticism*, prominent Scottish belles-lettres rhetorician Lord Kames (1696–1782) says the aim of the belles-lettres movement is to "discover a foundation for reasoning upon the taste of an individual" and "design a science of rational criticism." Samuel Taylor Coleridge criticizes the term as being of less than reputable origin. The focus of the *Belletristic Rhetoric Theory* is on defining the characteristics of rhetorical style such as beauty, sublimity, propriety and wit all of which play a part in affecting the emotion and reasoning capabilities of the audience.

In the 18th and 19th centuries, the belles-lettres style continued to evolve, adapting to the changing literary landscape and societal transformations. The Romantic movement emphasized individualism, imagination, and emotional intensity, which aligned perfectly with the aesthetic principles of belles-lettres. Writers such as Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, Lord Byron, Percy Bysshe Shelley, and Edgar Allan Poe explored new ways to use language artistically, crafting works that were rich in symbolism, sensory imagery, and introspective depth. The Romantic period reinforced the idea that literature should not merely convey information but should also provoke deep emotional and philosophical responses in readers. The Victorian era (19th century) saw further diversification of the belles-lettres style, as novelists like Charles Dickens, Charlotte and Emily Brontë, and Thomas Hardy blended detailed descriptions, intricate character arcs, and social critique into their literary works. With the expansion of literacy and the publishing industry, belles-lettres

reached a broader audience, influencing public opinion, shaping cultural narratives, and serving as a medium for both artistic expression and societal reflection. The development of the modern novel as a dominant literary form demonstrated the flexibility of the belles-lettres style, proving that it could be adapted to different genres, themes, and narrative techniques. The 20th and 21st centuries have witnessed further experimentation within the belles-lettres style.

The belles-lettres style has undergone significant transformation over the centuries, evolving alongside human civilization, cultural shifts, and literary movements. Its development can be traced back to classical antiquity, when storytelling, poetry, and dramatic performances were essential to cultural and intellectual life. The Greeks and Romans established the foundations of literary artistry, refining language as a medium of beauty, emotional depth, and intellectual exploration. Over time, the belles-lettres style adapted to changing literary trends, social structures, and artistic philosophies, leading to its presence in medieval, Renaissance, Romantic, and modern literature. The evolution of this style reflects humanity's enduring quest for self-expression, meaning, and artistic innovation. The classical period (8th century BCE – 5th century CE) is considered the birthplace of the belles-lettres tradition. Ancient Greek literature, including Homer's epics "The Iliad" and "The Odyssey", exemplifies the earliest forms of narrative beauty and poetic craftsmanship. These works combined mythology, heroism, and philosophical reflection, laying the groundwork for literary aesthetics. Similarly, Sophocles, Euripides, and Aristophanes advanced the art of dramatic storytelling, introducing tragedy and comedy as expressive forms that explored the complexities of human nature. In Rome, Virgil's "Aeneid", Ovid's "Metamorphoses," and Horace's lyrical poetry showcased the Roman appreciation for elegant language, vivid imagery, and rhetorical brilliance. Classical writers emphasized harmony, structure, and poetic beauty, which became defining features of the belles-lettres style for centuries to come. The medieval period (5th – 15th centuries) saw a transformation in literary expression, as religious themes and folklore became dominant. The influence of Christianity and Islamic scholarship reshaped literature, introducing spiritual allegory, divine inspiration, and moral storytelling.

The belles-lettres style, as examined in this coursework, stands as one of the most distinctive and artistically rich functional styles of language, encompassing a broad spectrum of literary expression. Throughout this study, the defining aesthetic, emotional, and expressive qualities of the belles-lettres style have been thoroughly explored, emphasizing its unique role in literature and its classification into poetry, prose, and drama. Each of these literary forms contributes to the overall richness of the belles-lettres style, showcasing the diverse ways in which language can be manipulated for artistic effect.

### **THE LIST OF USED LITERATURE:**

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#### INTERNET RESOURCES

1. <https://scholar.google.com>
2. <https://openlibrary.org>
3. <https://literarydevices.net>.