

**THE PRINCIPLES OF  
CRITICISM. AN  
INTRODUCTION TO THE  
STUDY OF LITERATURE**

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The principles of criticism. An introduction to the study of literature by W. Basil Worsfold

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**W. BASIL WORSFOLD**

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THE  
PRINCIPLES OF CRITICISM



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# THE PRINCIPLES OF CRITICISM

AN INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY  
OF LITERATURE

BY

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III

## TO THE READER

*THE purpose of this book is to present an account of the main principles of literary criticism, and to illustrate these principles by passages from great writers.*

*The book will, therefore, be found to contain (in addition to the text) a collection of noteworthy critical utterances.*

*The translations from the Greek, German, and French have been done by the Author.*

*References are made (with two exceptions) to the text of Aristotle by the pages of Immanuel Bekker's large (Berlin) edition; and to that of Plato, by the pages of the edition of Henry Stephens. Addison is cited by numbers of the Spectator, and Lessing by chapters of the Laocoon. In the case of other authors, the footnotes will sufficiently indicate the sources of reference.*

*Both an index of authors and an index of subjects have been provided.*

W. B. W.

RIDGE, NEAR CAPEL, SURREY,  
November 1, 1902.



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# THE PRINCIPLES OF CRITICISM

## INTRODUCTORY

### I. ASPECTS OF LITERATURE

I SUPPOSE that it will not be denied that comparison lies at the root of all our judgments in art and literature, and that our judgments are valid in proportion as the range of experience on which they are based is of greater or less extent. It is the principle in which Burke finds a foundation for the belief in the existence of a general standard of taste. A man who has never seen a piece of sculpture admires the representations of the human head afforded by a barber's shop; but his admiration for the waxen effigies of the barber is killed by a visit to a studio. The ordinary processes which minister to mental growth and to the training of eye and ear—education, experience, travel, and opportunities of social converse—together provide material which, unconsciously applied, is sufficient to enable us to form approximately correct judgments on every-day questions. In this way we become sensible to the charm of painting and music, learn to distinguish between a harmonious and an inharmonious arrangement of form and colour, and are quickly affected by any sense of incongruity in our social or material surroundings.

For all the purposes of every-day life taste will serve.