HOW TO STUDY LITERATURE

General Editors: John Peck and Martin Coyle

HOW TO BEGIN STUDYING ENGLISH LITERATURE

Second Edition

IN THE SAME SERIES

- How to Begin Studying English Literature* *Nicholas Marsh*
How to Study a Jane Austen Novel *Vivien Jones*
How to Study Chaucer *Robert Pope*
How to Study a Joseph Conrad Novel *Brian Spittles*
How to Study a Charles Dickens Novel *Keith Selby*
How to Study an E. M. Forster Novel *Nigel Messenger*
How to Study a Thomas Hardy Novel *John Peck*
How to Study a D. H. Lawrence Novel *Nigel Messenger*
How to Study Milton *David Kearns*
How to Study a Novel* *John Peck*
How to Study a Shakespeare Play* *John Peck and Martin Coyle*
How to Study Modern Drama *Kenneth Pickering*
How to Study Modern Poetry *Tony Curtis*
How to Study a Poet *John Peck*
How to Study a Renaissance Play *Chris Coles*
How to Study Romantic Poetry *Paul O'Flinn*
Literary Terms and Criticism* *John Peck and Martin Coyle*
Practical Criticism *John Peck and Martin Coyle*

**Now in a second edition*

Series Standing Order

If you would like to receive future titles in this series as they are published, you can make use of our standing order facility. To place a standing order please contact your bookseller or, in case of difficulty, write to us at the address below with your name and address and the name of the series. Please state with which title you wish to begin your standing order. (If you live outside the UK we may not have the rights for your area, in which case we will forward your order to the publisher concerned.)

Standing Order Service, Macmillan Distribution Ltd,
Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire, RG21 2XS, England

HOW TO BEGIN STUDYING ENGLISH LITERATURE

Second Edition

Nicholas Marsh

© Nicholas Marsh, 1987, 1995

All rights reserved. No reproduction, copy or transmission of this publication may be made without written permission.

No paragraph of this publication may be reproduced, copied or transmitted save with written permission or in accordance with the provisions of the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988, or under the terms of any licence permitting limited copying issued by the Copyright Licensing Agency, 90 Tottenham Court Road, London W1P 9HE.

Any person who does any unauthorised act in relation to this publication may be liable to criminal prosecution and civil claims for damages.

First edition 1987
Reprinted five times
Second edition 1995

Published by
MACMILLAN PRESS LTD
Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire RG21 2XS
and London
Companies and representatives
throughout the world

ISBN 978-0-333-64090-6 ISBN 978-1-349-13799-2 (eBook)
DOI 10.1007/978-1-349-13799-2

A catalogue record for this book is available
from the British Library.

10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1
04	03	02	01	00	99	98	97	96	95

Typeset by Acorn Bookwork, Salisbury, Wiltshire

For Simon

Contents

<i>General editors' preface</i>	ix
1 Finding a theme	1
Making a start	1
What is a theme?	2
Choosing a passage to study	2
How to study	4
<i>Wuthering Heights</i>	5
'Do Not Go Gentle into That Good Night'	14
'The Tyger'	20
2 Looking at characters	26
Characters and themes	26
Elizabeth Bennet from <i>Pride and Prejudice</i>	27
Studying characters from plays	39
3 Structure	42
What is structure?	42
Basic structure in novels and plays	43
<i>Othello</i>	44
Structure in more complicated texts	50
Structure in poems	52
'The Faithful Swallow'	53
'Sonnet 52'	56
4 Style and imagery	62
What is style?	62
How to analyse style	63
'The Wreck of the Deutschland'	63
How imagery works	66

	<i>Romeo and Juliet</i>	67
	Imagery in shorter poems	73
	‘Harry Ploughman’	74
5	Irony	82
	What is irony?	82
	What irony is not	82
	What to do when you find irony	83
	How to describe irony	90
6	Writing an essay I	93
	The literature examination	93
	The essay question	94
7	Writing an essay II	102
	Making a case	102
	How to write a simple paragraph	103
	How to write more complicated paragraphs	107
8	Exam revision and practice	111
	Revision	111
	Practice for the examination	116
9	Taking study further	119
	Natural developments from your study	119
	Experts and expertise	124
	<i>Further reading</i>	132

General editors' preface

EVERYBODY who studies literature, either for an examination or simply for pleasure, experiences the same problem: how to understand and respond to the text. As every student of literature knows, it is perfectly possible to read a book over and over again and yet still feel baffled and at a loss as to what to say about it. One answer to this problem, of course, is to accept someone else's view of the text, but how much more rewarding it would be if you could work out your own critical response to any book you choose or are required to study.

The aim of this series is to help you develop your critical skills by offering practical advice about how to read, understand and analyse literature. Each volume provides you with a clear method of study so that you can see how to set about tackling texts on your own. While the authors of each volume approach the problem in a different way, every book in the series attempts to provide you with some broad ideas about the kind of texts you are likely to be studying and some broad ideas about how to think about literature; each volume then shows you how to apply these ideas in a way which should help you construct your own analysis and interpretation. Unlike most critical books, therefore, the books in this series do not simply convey someone else's thinking about a text, but encourage you and show you how to think about a text for yourself.

Each book is written with an awareness that you are likely to be preparing for an examination, and therefore practical advice is given not only on how to understand and analyse literature, but also on how to organise a written response. Our hope is that although these books are intended to serve a practical purpose, they may also enrich your enjoyment of literature by making you a more confident reader, alert to the interest and pleasure to be derived from literary texts.

John Peck
Martin Coyle