

# Aristotle's Theory of Imitation



(322B.C.)

A notable Greek critic of  
philosopher and scientist.

student of the great Ancient  
philosopher, Plato.

# Theory of Imitation

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- Imitation was called *mimesis* in *Ancient Greek* and *imitation* in *Latin*.
- It means a copy or model or replica of someone or something.
- It was Aristotle's guru, Plato who used first the concept of imitation in reference to poetry.
- Plato used imitation for the first time in his world famous critical treatise, *Republic*.

- **Aristotle used the concept, Imitation with a new light in his *Poetics*.**
- **Imitation, according to Plato, is a mere copy of life. It is a copy of copy.**
- **Aristotle says that imitation is not a mere Photostat copy of life or the world, but it is a recreated ideal copy of the world.**

# Plato's Idea of Imitation

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- Plato divides all arts into useful arts like medicine and agriculture and imitative arts like poetry and drama.
- IDEA was the truth or reality and the world is mere representation of reality.
- The objects before us are the imitation of reality.

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- ◉ Poetry is the imitation of appearances which is already the imitation of reality.
  - ◉ Poetry is twice removed from reality or truth. It is the shadow of shadows or the mother of lies.
  - ◉ Imagination is the other name of imitation.
  - ◉ Poetry becomes a dangerous rival to morality.
  - ◉ Milton's epic poem 'The Paradise Lost.'

# Aristotle's Theory of Imitation

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- Aristotle gave a new dimension and significance to the term imitation, which removed the sense of inferiority attached to it by Plato.
- Aristotle does not pay more attention to morality like Plato in poetic imitation.
- Poetry is one of the fine arts.
- Poetry is the reproduction in accordance with the poet's idea.
- Poetry is not a mere copying but an act of creative vision.
- Through imitation, poet can make something out of the real and the actual.

# Medium of Imitation

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- **According to Aristotle, all arts imitate life, but there are three differences in which they can be distinguished from each other. They are:**
  - **1.The Medium of Imitation.**
  - **2.The Object of Imitation.**
  - **3.The Manner of Imitation.**



# The Objects of Poetic Imitation

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- The objects of poetic imitation are men in action. These men may be either better or lower than the average men in real life. Thus, imitation in poetry is clearly distinct from photographic representation. It involves creative imagination and intellectual faculty of the poet. Tragedy and epic deal with men better than in real life. Comedy or satire deal with men worse or lower than men in real life.
- **The manner of imitation also differs from one art to another. The manner of poetic imitation is either narrative or dramatic.**

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- **Thus, poetic imitation is not a pictorial representation.**
  - **It is a faithful but creative recopy of life. It is the possible reality of life. It is an act of imaginative creation. The poet imitates the existing world but he does not create a copy of the world. He creates a new world that is replica of the real world and it is his own created world.**

Thank You