

Stemmed the wild torrent of a barbarous age,  
And drove those holy Vandals off the stage.

But see! each muse, in Leo's golden days,  
Starts from her trance and trims her withered bays,

Rome's ancient genius o'er its ruins spread  
Shakes off the dust, and rears his reverent head  
Then sculpture and her sister arts revive,  
Stones leaped to form, and rocks began to live;  
With sweeter notes each rising temple rung,  
A Raphael painted, and a Vida sung  
Immortal Vida! on whose honored brow  
The poets bays and critic's ivy grow  
Cremona now shall ever boast thy name  
As next in place to Mantua, next in fame!

But soon by impious arms from Latium chased,  
Their ancient bounds the banished muses passed.  
Thence arts o'er all the northern world advance,  
But critic-learning flourished most in France,  
The rules a nation born to serve, obeys;  
And Boileau still in right of Horace sways  
But we, brave Britons, foreign laws despised,  
And kept unconquered and uncivilized,  
Fierce for the liberties of wit and bold,

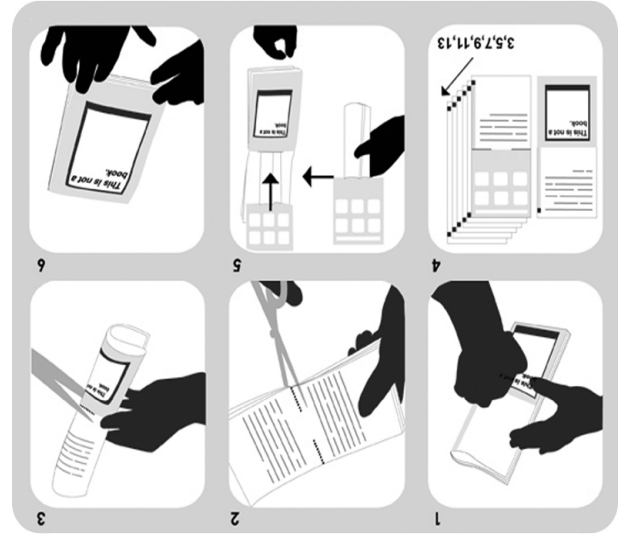
# An Essay on Criticism - Part III

Alexander Pope

Thus useful arms in magazines we place,  
All ranged in order, and disposed with grace,  
But less to please the eye, than arm the hand,  
Still fit for use, and ready at command.  
Thee bold Longinus! all the Nine inspire,  
And bless their critic with a poet's fire.  
An ardent judge, who, zealous in his trust,  
With warmth gives sentence, yet is always just:  
Whose own example strengthens all his laws;  
And is himself that great sublime he draws.  
Thus long succeeding critics justly reigned,  
License repressed, and useful laws ordained.  
Learning and Rome alike in empire grew,  
And arts still followed where her eagles flew,  
From the same foes at last, both felt their doom,  
And the same age saw learning fall, and Rome.  
With tyranny then superstition joined  
As that the body, this enslaved the mind;  
Much was believed but little understood,  
And to be dull was construed to be good;  
A second deluge learning thus o'errun,  
And the monks finished what the Goths begun.  
At length Erasmus, that great injured name  
(The glory of the priesthood and the shame!)

Learn, then, what morals critics ought to show,  
For 'tis but half a judge's task to know.  
'Tis not enough, taste, judgment, learning, join;  
In all you speak, let truth and candor shine:  
That not alone what to your sense is due  
All may allow, but seek your friendship too.  
Be silent always, when you doubt your sense;  
And speak, though sure, with seeming diffidence:  
Some positive persisting fops we know,  
Who, if once wrong will needs be always so;  
But you, with pleasure, own your errors past,  
And make each day a critique on the last.  
'Tis not enough your counsel still be true;  
Blunt truths more mischief than nice falsehoods  
do;  
Men must be taught as if you taught them not,  
And things unknown proposed as things forgot.  
Without good breeding truth is disapproved.  
That only makes superior sense beloved.  
Be niggards of advice on no pretense!

**PART III.**  
*An Essay on Criticism*  
A poem by Alexander Pope



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**An Essay on Criticism - Part III**  
**Alexander Pope**  
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For the worst avarice is that of sense  
 With mean complacence, ne'er betray your trust,  
 Nor be so civil as to prove unjust  
 Fear not the anger of the wise to raise,  
 Those best can bear reproof who merit praise.

'Twere well might critics still this freedom take,  
 But Appius reddens at each word you speak,  
 And stares, tremendous with a threatening eye,  
 Like some fierce tyrant in old tapestry  
 Fear most to tax an honorable fool  
 Whose right it is uncensured to be dull  
 Such, without wit are poets when they please,  
 As without learning they can take degrees  
 Leave dangerous truths to unsuccessful satires,  
 And flattery to fulsome dedicators  
 Whom, when they praise, the world believes no  
 more,  
 Than when they promise to give scribbling o'er.

'Tis best sometimes your censure to restrain,  
 And charitably let the dull be vain  
 Your silence there is better than your spite,  
 For who can rail so long as they can write?  
 Still humming on, their drowsy course they keep,  
 And lashed so long like tops are lashed asleep.

False steps but help them to renew the race,  
 As after stumbling, jades will mend their pace.  
 What crowds of these, impatiently bold,  
 In sounds and jingling syllables grown old,  
 Still run on poets in a raging vein,  
 Even to the dregs and squeezings of their sense,  
 Strain out the last dull droppings of their sense,  
 And rhyme with all the rage of impotence!

Such shameless bards we have, and yet, 'tis true,  
 There are as mad abandoned critics, too  
 The bookful blockhead ignorantly read,  
 With loads of learned lumber in his head,  
 With his own tongue still eddies his ears,  
 And always listening to himself appears  
 All books he reads and all he reads assails  
 From Dryden's Fables down to Durey's Tales  
 With him most authors steal their works or buy;  
 Garth did not write his own Dispensary  
 Name a new play, and he's the poets friend  
 Nay, showed his faults but when would poets  
 mend?  
 No place so sacred from such tops is barred,  
 Nor is Paul's Church more safe than Paul's  
 Churchyard:  
 Nay, fly to altars; there they'll talk you dead,

The learned reflect on what before they knew  
 Careless of censure, nor too fond of fame,  
 Still pleased to praise, yet not afraid to blame,  
 Averse alike to flatter, or offend,  
 Not free from faults, nor yet too vain to mend.

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For fools rush in where angels fear to tread  
 Distrustful sense with modest caution speaks,  
 It still looks home, and short excursions makes;  
 But rattling nonsense in full volleys breaks,  
 And, never shocked, and never turned aside.  
 Bursts out, resistless, with a thundering tide,  
 But where's the man who counsel can bestow,  
 Still pleased to teach, and yet not proud to know?  
 Unbiased, or by favor, or in spite,  
 Not dully prepossessed, nor blindly right;  
 Though learned, well-bred, and though well bred,  
 sincere,  
 Modestly bold, and humanly severe,  
 Who to a friend his faults can freely show,  
 And gladly praise the merit of a foe?  
 Blessed with a taste exact, yet unconfined;  
 A knowledge both of books and human kind;  
 Generous converse, a soul exempt from pride;  
 And love to praise, with reason on his side?

Such once were critics such the happy few,  
 Athens and Rome in better ages knew.  
 The mighty Stagirite first left the shore,  
 Spread all his sails, and durst the deeps explore;  
 He steered securely, and discovered far,

Led by the light of the Maenonian star.  
 Poets, a race long unconfined and free,  
 Still fond and proud of savage liberty,  
 Received his laws, and stood convinced 'twas fit,  
 Who conquered nature, should preside o'er wit.  
 Horace still charms with graceful negligence,  
 And without method talks us into sense;  
 Will like a friend familiarly convey  
 The truest notions in the easiest way.  
 He who supreme in judgment as in wit,  
 Might boldly censure, as he boldly writ,  
 Yet judged with coolness though he sung with  
 fire;  
 His precepts teach but what his works inspire  
 Our critics take a contrary extreme  
 They judge with fury, but they write with phlegm:  
 Nor suffers Horace more in wrong translations  
 By wits than critics in as wrong quotations.  
 See Dionysius Homer's thoughts refine,  
 And call new beauties forth from every line:  
 Fancy and art in gay Petronius please,  
 The scholar's learning with the courtier's ease.  
 In grave Quintilian's copious work we find  
 The justest rules and clearest method joined:

We still defied the Romans as of old.  
 Yet some there were, among the sounder few  
 Of those who less presumed and better knew,  
 Who durst assert the juster ancient cause,  
 And here restored wit's fundamental laws.  
 Such was the muse, whose rule and practice tell  
 "Nature's chief masterpiece is writing well."  
 Such was Roscommon, not more learned than  
 good,  
 With manners generous as his noble blood,  
 To him the wit of Greece and Rome was known,  
 And every author's merit, but his own  
 Such late was Walsh the muse's judge and friend,  
 Who justly knew to blame or to commend,  
 To fallings mild, but zealous for desert,  
 The clearest head, and the sincerest heart,  
 This humble praise, laments shade! receive,  
 This praise at least a grateful muse may give.  
 The muse whose early voice you taught to sing  
 Prescribed her heights and pruned her tender  
 wing,  
 (Her guide now lost) no more attempts to rise,  
 But in low numbers short excursions tries,  
 Content if hence the unlearned their wants may  
 view,