

**EASTERN THEMES IN WESTERN LITERATURE AND CULTURE****Nizomova Maftuna**

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**Abstract:** The influence and impact of Eastern themes on Western writers has been significant in their literary works. These influences date back to Ancient Rome and continue to span to the present time. Eastern philosophy, religion, folklore, and aesthetics have time and again provided the West with resources to create profound literature. In this article, the focus will be on highlights of impact on Eastern themes on works of famous Western authors and how those elements were appropriated in their work.

**Key words:** theme, idea, orientalism, literature, east, symbol, myth

A great deal as it pertains to the occidental approach towards literature from the East is concerned with their well developed styles of philosophy. Buddhism, Hinduism, Sufism, and Taoism have all culminated into a variety of philosophies that the West borrowed from savants in the East. For instance, Emerson and Thoreau used transcendentalism which greatly stemmed from the East's Buddhism and Hinduism focus on self-actualization and enlightenment. Moreover, the renowned 20th century poem, *The Waste Land* by T. S. Eliot, is known for his inclusion of verses from the Upanishads and the Bhagavad Gita,



showing his appreciation to the Eastern world. His work portrays engagement of Eastern thought profoundly deeper.

Additionally, other aesthetics elements from the East have permeated the West. With the likes of Ezra Pound and The Imagist poets, Japanese poetic forms and haiku have inspired artists that aim to capture time in an succinct and powerful manner. For example, Pound and his *\*In a Station of the Metro\**, which featured images he created by fusing Japanese and Chinese poetry together. That kind of Eastern minimalism greatly shifted the focus of modernist poetry, as it aided in accentuating nature, simplicity, and intuition.

In the remainder of the world, Eastern symbols and Mythology is commonly found in the works of various authors. The Arabian Nights, or better known as One Thousand and One Nights, is a perfect example that managed to captivate the western world. It fascinated several writers including Edgar Allan Poe, Jorge Luis Borges, and Salman Rushdie. These authors infused philosophical and fantastical aspects of Eastern stories into theirs, intermixing myth with reality to form complex stories. German romanticism was altered by Sufi mysticism and Persian poetic traditions, something Goethe’s *West-ostlicher Divan* did by showing admiration to Persian literature, specifically Hafiz’s poetry.

As much as Eastern themes have beautified Western Literature, the impact of Orientalism cannot be ignored in defining the West’s understanding of the East. Authors such as Rudyard Kipling and E. M. Forster presented Eastern cultures in a colonial fashion and at times romanticized or distorted them. Edward Said in *\*Orientalism\** (1978) reflects upon the concept that easterners are viewed by western writers as passive, mysterious, or even inferior instead of dealing with its intricacies, which is authentic representation. Even so, modern writers have tried to go beyond such cliches and worked towards a more balanced understanding of Eastern influences.



The Eastern features in Western literature have produced treasured masterpieces that no historian can dispute. From philosophy, aesthetics, and even mythology and religion, Eastern traditions are heavily regarded in Western literary history. The integration of both the Eastern and Western components in literature should be a dialogue that is continuously happening while growing, especially with regards to world literary communication.

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