

The Touchstone Method by Matthew Arnold

Matthew Arnold's Touchstone Method is a critical approach he introduced in his essay "The Study of Poetry". This method involves using exemplary works of poetry as benchmarks or touchstones to evaluate other poems. Arnold believed that by comparing a poem to these established masterpieces one could assess its quality, depth and emotional resonance.

In practice the touchstone method encourages readers to identify the essential qualities of great poetry such as beauty, truth and emotional impact and apply these criteria when analyzing lesser known works. Arnold emphasized the importance of appreciating poetry not just for its surface level appeal but for its ability to convey profound truths and evoke deep feelings.

He often referred to poets like Homer, Dante and Shakespeare as touchstones against which other poets could be measured. This method reflects Arnold's belief in the universality of certain poetic values and the idea that great poetry transcends time and culture.

In summary Arnold's touchstone method is about using established literary masterpieces as standards for evaluating the quality and significance of other poems, highlighting the timeless qualities that define exceptional poetry.