Hugh Blair

[Name of the Writer]

[Name of the Institution]

Hugh Blair

***Introduction***

Hugh Blair is a well-known rhetorician, author, and former Scottish minister of religion. He was born on 7 April 1718. Hugh Blair is considered to be one of the first great theorists of written discourse. The teachings of Blair had a significant impact in both the secular and spiritual realms. Blair was a great scholar, and his work at the University of Edinburgh as the occupant of the Chair of Rhetoric and Belles Letters, and as a minister of the Church of Scotland has made him one of the few great personalities to be remembered[[1]](#footnote-1). Blair’s teachings are best known for Sermons, and he was considered to be a valuable part of the Scottish Enlightenment.

***Chronology Of Works***

* Defundamentis et Obilgatione in the year 1739
* The Works of Shakespeare in the year 1753
* Review of Francis Hutcheson’s in the year 1755
* Observation on a Pamphlet in the year 1755
* Preface to James Macpherson in the year 1760
* A critical dissertation on the Poems of Ossian, the Son of Fingal in the year 1763
* 5 volumes of Sermons from 1777 to 1801.
* 3 volumes of Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres in the year 1783

***Major Works***

There are basically three major works for which Blair is well known for, and these may include the Poems of Ossian, Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres, and Son of Fingal; Sermons. On the other hand, Blair gave very little attention to other works throughout his life. A number of anonymously works had been done by Blair among which the most important is considered to be the eight-volume edition of Shakespeare’s work which was edited by Blair.

*A Critical Dissertation on the Poems of Ossian*

The previous work of Blair was not published and was not well known, but in the year 1763, the first well known openly authored publication of Blair was seen as "A Critical Dissertation on the Poems of Ossian." In the Celtic poetry of the Scottish Highlands, Blair took a long interest and is notable for writing a laudatory account of the poems of Ossian. When it comes to the Christian communication leaders, Blair has maintained his name on top by serving as the voice of authority on the legitimacy of the poems. The Fragments of Ancient Poetry was published upon the urge of Blair to his friend James Macpherson. The dissertation appeared after 1765 in almost all of the Ossian's publication for giving the work credibility.

*Sermons*

In the year 1777, first five-volume series Sermons were published by Blair. As a Presbyterian preacher, he promoted the practical Christian morality which is considered to be a compilation of the sermons. The success of Sermons is parallel with the success of Blair as a preacher regardless of the declining popularity of religious teaching during that time. Although, it cannot be denied that the oral delivery of Blair was quite poor which was often described as a ‘burr.' However, one thing that must be taken into consideration is the fact that Blair was considered to be the most popular preacher in Scotland. The success of Blair is credited to the ease which allows the audience to follow his organized and polite style.

Blair’s position reflects through Sermons. The position which is reflected is of a member of the moderate party. It has been observed that through a number respects, Blair was a socially conservative type of a person. His beliefs were totally against the radical change, and his teachings were safe and were more prepared for the upper classes. In his rejection of Calvinistic doctrines, he also had liberal tendencies demonstrated such as damnation, total corruption, and original sin.

The main focus of Sermons is not on the questions of theology, but on the morality. Moreover, it tends to emphasize the moral virtue, actions in the public sphere, and patriotism by polite secular culture. The main aim of Blair was to encourage people for improving their natural talents by believing in hard work. Moreover, he believed the people bust be content with their appointed stations in the society. Blair had a very deep impact on the society and sued to urge people for playing an active role in the society. He used to ask people to maintain faith in God, do good works, and enjoy the pleasures of society.

The appeal of Blair for both reason and emotion, combined with his elegant, moderate, and non-confrontational style made each Sermon's volume increasingly popular. Within his lifetime, the fourth edition was published. However, the fifth and the last edition was published shortly after his departure from this world. There is no doubt that each volume of Sermons met with the greatest success.

*Lectures on Rhetoric and Belle Lettres*

The lectures of Blair was published for the first time after he retired in the year 1783 from the position as Chair of Rhetoric and Belles Lettres at the University of Edinburgh. In his published, he deemed it as quite important as his work's unauthorized copies threatened the legacy of his teachings[[2]](#footnote-2). A compilation of about 47 lectures of Blair was given to the student of the University of Edinburgh. The aim of his lectures was to serve as a practical guide for youth on language and composition. The outcomes of this result in making Blair as the first great theorist of written discourse.

It is the matter of the fact that the lectures present the radical new theories, but it is simply the only reason behind the importance of Lectures. In a number of occasions, Blair himself admitted his work that it is suffusion of his understanding of modern and classical theories of language. Lectures undoubtedly draw on the classical works of theories such as Cicero and Quintilian along with the combination of the modern work of Lord Kames, Burke, and Addison for becoming one of the first whole language guides. The literature of Blair is a comprehensive, accessible prescriptive composition that tends to combine centuries of theory in the form of cohesive.

The Lecture has the desired aim to provide youth with an organized, simple guide on the value of belles and rhetoric lettres in the quest for social success and upward mobility. The belief of Blair was that the social cultivation along with the use of effective writing and polite literature was the key to social success. Blair believed that the education in literature was socially useful in both of promote morality and virtue or elevate the social status of someone. The Lectures of Blair tends to provide the ideas on the way for composing texts. Blair is notable for supping the sample writings from contemporary literature for illustrating the qualities of writings with a sole purpose for the students to identify, analyze, and imbibe those qualities[[3]](#footnote-3).

The Lectures of Blair on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres are seen to be combining the fundamental principles of belletristic rhetoric and literary theory. In the 18th century, the work of Blair was considered to be the most comprehensive guide on composition. Blair’s work was seen to be enjoying tremendous success for almost a complete century. The reason for that is quite simple as 130 editions were published in different European languages. That work was considered to be the best seller in Europe. In Italy, that work was known as Ugone Blair.

End Notes

Broadie, Alexander. “Scottish Philosophy in the 18th Century.” In *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, edited by Edward N. Zalta, Winter 2017. Metaphysics Research Lab, Stanford University, 2017. https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2017/entries/scottish-18th/.

Christie, William. “Public Lectures on Literature and the Birth of ‘English.’” *New Pilgrimages*, 2015, 147.

1. Alexander Broadie, “Scottish Philosophy in the 18th Century,” in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Edward N. Zalta, Winter 2017 (Metaphysics Research Lab, Stanford University, 2017), https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2017/entries/scottish-18th/. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. William Christie, “Public Lectures on Literature and the Birth of ‘English,’” *New Pilgrimages*, 2015, 147. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Christie. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)