Literary Theory unit

(with Lit Theory PAPER PACKET at END)

Look at the chart and say the COLOUR not the word

YELLOW  BLUE  ORANGE
BLACK  RED  GREEN
PURPLE  YELLOW  RED
ORANGE  GREEN  BLACK
BLUE  RED  PURPLE
GREEN  BLUE  ORANGE

Left - Right Conflict
Your right brain tries to say the colour but your left brain insists on reading the word.

Are the horizontal lines parallel or do they slope?
## An Overview of the Schools of Literary Criticism

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Active Reading and 2 Stories: "The Singing Lesson" and "Shooting an Elephant"

How to Read

by David Chioni Moore, draft IV, 1/21/96

What follows are some informal and partial remarks designed to teach Macalester students how to read. In the most basic sense, of course, most of you learned how to read years ago, in kindergarten if not before. The type of reading I’m referring to here, however, is at another level: call it close reading, analytical reading, combative reading, meta-reading, active reading, graduate-school reading, engaged reading, reading with passion, insight, suspicion, pressure, a whiskey and a knife.

The type of reading I am not talking about is passive reading — “I’ve turned all the pages and passed my eyes over all the words; I’ve got a general idea of what the author said, and so now my work is done” reading. I am also not talking about the type of reading that leaves to your professor, or to classroom discussion, the active work of evaluating, judging, construing, interpreting, contextualizing, supplying meaning. Those passive types of reading are fine for many purposes, such as passing Friday’s quiz, or having some basic background before you go into situation X or Y. A reasonably large chunk of the reading you’ll do in life can be profitably undertaken in that way. But those passive types of reading are unacceptable for situations in which you want to take responsibility for your knowledge and beliefs.

The type of active reading I am talking about is also not exclusively devotional or exclusively for-pleasure reading. Devotional and pleasure reading have their own time-honored protocols, upon which I shall not comment here. I would hope, however, that the type of reading I’m discussing here would not be seen as antithetical to devotional or pleasure reading. They should work well, in varying proportions, all three at once.

So what do I mean by active reading? First off, habit: read with a pen in your hand and write back. Circle words, put !! and ?? at times in the margin, scrawl an objection, put a star next to a key sentence or phrase. At the end of each section (how big this is will depend on whether you’re reading a fourteen-line sonnet or a 405-page book), summarize and/or react to what’s been said. At the end of the whole reading, write ten or twenty lines summarizing the summaries. Articulate in your own words the message of the piece. Toss your highlighter pen in the garbage, or only use it as a supplement: it does not give you enough voice.

Some of you will want to sell your texts back at the end of the semester, and will be hesitant to use a pen. So go out and buy some small-sized yellow post-it notepads. Scrawl on these and stick them in appropriate points in the text.

What should you look for? Well, hell, everything. Who wrote the book and when? Who published it and why? What’s the book’s title? Who wrote the blurbs on the back and what did they say? Who does the author thank in the acknowledgments? What are her first and last words, and epigraph if she includes one? How is it organized? What and/or who are the first and last footnotes? What nation and era produced this book, and could it have been produced in another nation and/or at a different time? Always historicize, by which I mean always ask yourself what it was about the specific historical moment of the book’s writing which gave rise to its existence, message, and form. If the book was written in, say, 1921 and published in, say, 1992, this gives you a dual task: why was it written then, and why it exists in your hands now.

Always biographize, as well. What is it about the author’s life trajectory that led to the writing of this book? The author’s race, ethnicity, language, education, class, health, religion, gender,
political affiliation, gender preference, profession and more will all have played a role in the production of the text, though the text cannot be, finally, reducible to those components.

Always genericize. That is, what genre is this text? Given what it says, is it a novel, a history, an accountant’s balance-sheet, memoir, sociological study? And if, for example, a novel, of what type? Epistolary, surreal, Gothic, bildungsroman, comic, detective, Harlequin, or something else? Then ask yourself if there isn’t some content in the form itself. What does it mean that it was written in this fashion? Could this science fiction novel have been presented as a philosophical dialogue, work of cultural theory, math book, or anything else, and if so how would it have differed? And what language and language tradition does it take part in?

Read the words closely. Look for little tics or signals. Of course often flags the weakest point of any argument. Merely is often an attempt to denigrate what the author fears most. Pure, genuine, and their semantic cousins (real, authentic, natural, true, etc.) are often attempts to hide or banish their supposed opposites. Objectively speaking might be a patch for the reverse. Look out for the words “we,” “us,” and “our,” and figure out to whom they refer: they give a good sense of who is in- and excluded. For the same reasons, note instances of “they” or “them.”

Are some words or sentences in parentheses? And if so, why (assume that the reason might be other than that the information within them is less important)? Are some sections of the book written simply and other parts more complexly? If so, what does that mean about the content of those sections? What are the key terms used in the book — the words used over and over, the basic categories, the concepts that “do a lot of work” for the author. Do they make sense?

What about voice? Michel Foucault advises that the First Question is: “Who is speaking?” By this he means, who among the totality of people who might speak on this issue has been given the right to speak here? Whose voices, if any, are not present in this text? These questions are useful in analyzing both fiction and non-fiction.

Think about bigger stories these books might resemble. Is this the story of the Fall? Of growth and flourishing? Of struggle between opposites? Is there a Bible story or some other major cultural text underneath the book’s argument? What of imagery, symbolism, and analogy? And at some level you must take on the argument itself: what is the author (or the text, if you prefer) trying to get across, argue for, convince you of? And how is the argument made? With examples, anecdotes, analogies, passions, formal or logical argumentation? And what’s the quality of that argument?

Think about the mood of the book: is it angry, dispassionate, self-effacing, understated, stultifying, academic, speculative, exhaustively data-laden . . . and why or why not? Compare the book to other books on similar topics: how are they similar or do they differ? Do they refer to each other explicitly? All of the questions I asked above may be asked in a comparative fashion.

Finally, this isn’t “a formula to use”: it would be insanity to read something and ask all these questions of every sentence. As with a good family doctor or an expert car mechanic, after lots of practice doing it a whole range of diagnostic questions ends up floating in your head, all available, and some shifting subset of them comes into play, somewhat by habit and somewhat by instinct, in each new situation. You’ll get better the more you do it. So it’s that mix of basic instruction, such as the few ideas provided here, and practice, that gets you rolling. I trust this has been of some use.
Roger Rosenblatt

Life in the Margins

ONCE I BORROWED A BOOK OF ESSAYS called The Immediate Experience, by the cultural critic Robert Warshow who HE, from an old and learned friend. HE'S
LEARNED, SO YOU'RE LEARNED? My friend had so thoroughly marked up the text that his annotations constituted a parallel text of its own, consisting of his annoyances, approvals, elaborations, questions and challenges. SO?

Some passages were underlined in black ink, some in blue magic marker, some in green, some in thick red. There were solid red and green arrows pointing from one paragraph to another. RED AND GREEN = STOP AND GO? There were equal signs followed by pithy interpretations. PITHY YET? Words such as key and why? were written alongside certain sentences. YES. YES. GET TO IT! I had borrowed one book and was reading two. INTERESTING—MAYBE.

The subject as if we HADN'T GUESSED is marginalia—the notes one makes in response to something, usually in books. A forthcoming book called Marginalia WHAT ELSE?, by H.J. Jackson (Yale University Press), deals exclusively with the marginalia in books, but it also suggests the wider subject of how the mind works generally.

Every thought breeds an internal commentary, a counterthought NOT ALWAYS, some elaboration on the initial matter. Every action taken incurs an inner comment. EVERY ACTION? Everything we are is under continual revision. We even live in the margins of one another's lives. PROVE IT! That is, in a sense, Boswell was the marginalia to Dr. Johnson's life, which would not have been celebrated had there been no work in the margins. DIDN'T J. HAVE A LIFE WITHOUT B.?

But the major premise of marginalia is that life is infinitely adjustable. As soon as a work comes under someone else's scrutiny, up rises the impulse to correct, enlarge, destroy.

One might go so far as to say marginalia reveal the human desire not to accept familiarity. BE CAREFUL! The idea of ghosts, or heaven, may be our marginalia on death. GIVE ME A BREAK!

It was interesting to learn from Jackson's book on which THIS ESSAY IS MARGINALIA, I SUPPOSE, that friends would deliberately lend Coleridge their books, knowing he would mark them up endlessly. Thus, the lenders would be getting back a book improved by Coleridge.

Other writers known for their relentless annotations were Horace Walpole, Charles Darwin, Thomas Macaulay and William Blake.

I LOVE BLAKE. But quality that high is rare. We take a book out of the library and read the marginalia, often surly and stupid, of anonymous strangers. THANKS A HEAP! The fun, though, is to respond to them, by which we perpetuate the argument and extend the text. BACK TO HIS THE
SIS, AT LAST?

Or, one can simply respond to the language and doodle: thesis, Croesus, Jesus, JESUS!

And this practice goes way beyond reading. I sit and watch some political commentator on television and write in the margins of the air. DOES ANYONE KNOW WHAT'S GOING ON IN THIS COUNTRY? An acquaintance slithers into some self-aggrandizing prevarication. I write, Liar! A nice, honest moment occurs in the new, good movie Traffic when the U.S. drug czar, Michael Douglas, falters in the middle of a false and insincere speech, and you can see his conscience writing marginalia on his claptrap.

Marginalia create the presence of more than one voice at a time SEE COMPUTER MESS
AGES, and this cacophony simulates the ways our minds work. The difference between thought and speech—the inchoate mess in our minds as opposed to the crispy words that emerge—suggests that we live with a number of voices at once. SPOOKY! If we really wanted to get spooky about it, we might wonder how to tell the texts of our lives from the margins.

What I am writing at this moment may be the marginalia to feelings of loss and pain that do not appear in the sentence. The feelings of loss and pain may constitute the text of my life for which all sentences, written or spoken, create a defense or rebuke.

The point AT LAST is that whatever is put in the margins in some way enhances the center by deflating certainty and that this infinite operation makes up who we are. For example, I may have got everything in this essay all wrong. NO KIDDING! I may have got my life all wrong. DON'T MAKE ME CRY! And so I may have to start all over again and fill up the margins you're running out of space until I run out of space.

Now, practice these skills while reading Mansfield's "The Singing Lesson."
Sometimes the notes are ferocious, skirmishes against the author raging along the borders of every page in tiny black script. If I could just get my hands on you, Kierkegaard, or Conor Cruise O’Brien, they seem to say, I would bolt the door and beat some logic into your head.

Other comments are more offhand, dismissive—"Nonsense."“Please!”“HA!!”—that kind of thing. I remember once looking up from my reading, my thumb as a bookmark, trying to imagine what the person must look like who wrote "Don’t be a ninny" alongside a paragraph in *The Life of Emily Dickinson*.

Students are more modest needing to leave only their splayed footprints along the shore of the page. One scrawls "Metaphor" next to a stanza of Eliot’s. Another notes the presence of "Irony" fifty times outside the paragraphs of *A Modest Proposal*.

Or they are fans who cheer from the empty bleachers, hands cupped around their mouths. "Absolutely," they shout to Duns Scotus and James Baldwin. “Yes.”“Bull s-eye.” “My man!” Check marks, asterisks, and exclamation points rain down along the sidelines.

And if you have managed to graduate from college without ever having written "Man vs. Nature" in a margin, perhaps now is the time to take one step forward.

We have all seized the white perimeter as our own and reached for a pen if only to show we did not just laze in an armchair turning pages; we pressed a thought into the wayside, planted an impression along the verge.

Even Irish monks in their cold scriptoria jotted along the borders of the Gospels brief aside about the pains of copying, a bird singing near their window, or the sunlight that illuminated their page—anonymous men catching a ride into the future on a vessel more lasting than themselves.

And you have not read Joshua Reynolds, they say, until you have read him enwreathed with Blake’s furious scribbling.

Yet the one I think of most often, the one that dangles from me like a locket, was written in the copy of *Catcher in the Rye* I borrowed from the local library one slow, hot summer. I was just beginning high school then, reading books on a davenport in my parents’ living room, and I cannot tell you how vastly my loneliness was deepened, how poignant and amplified the world before me seemed, when I found on one page a few greasy looking smears and next to them, written in soft pencil—by a beautiful girl, I could tell, whom I would never meet— "Pardon the egg salad stains, but I’m in love.”
The Singing Lesson. Katherine Mansfield

With despair—cold, sharp despair—buried deep in her heart like a wicked knife, Miss Meadows, in cap and gown and carrying a little baton, trod the cold corridors that led to the music hall. Girls of all ages, rosy from the air, and bubbling over with the gleeful excitement that comes from running to school on a fine autumn morning, hurried, skipped, fluttered by; from the hollow classrooms came a quick drumming of voices; a bell rang; a voice like a bird cried, "Muriel." And then there came from the staircase a tremendous knock-knock-knocking. Someone had dropped her dumbbells.

The Science Mistress stopped Miss Meadows.

"Good mor-ning," she cried, in her sweet, affected drawl, "Isn't it cold? It might be winter."

Miss Meadows, hugging the knife, stared in hatred at the Science Mistress. Everything about her was sweet, pale, like honey. You would not have been surprised to see a bee caught in the tangles of that yellow hair.

"It is rather sharp," said Miss Meadows, grimly.

The other smiled her sugary smile.

"You look frozen," said she. Her blue eyes opened wide; there came a mocking light in them. (Had she noticed anything?)

"Oh, not quite as bad as that," said Miss Meadows, and she gave the Science Mistress, in exchange for her smile, a quick grimace and passed on.

Forms Four, Five, and Six were assembled in the music hall. The noise was deafening. On the platform, by the piano, stood Mary Beazley, Miss Meadows' favorite, who played accompaniments. She was turning the music stool. When she saw Miss Meadows she gave a loud warning "Sh-sh! girls!" and Miss Meadows, her hands thrust in her sleeves, the baton under her arm, strode down the center aisle, mounted the steps, turned sharply, seized the brass music stand, planted it in front of her, and gave two sharp taps with her baton for silence.

"Silence, please! Immediately!" and, looking at nobody; her glance swept over that sea of colored flannel blouses, with bobbing pink faces and hands, quivering butterfly hair bows, and music books outspread. She know perfectly well what they were thinking. "Mealy is in a wax." Well, let them think it! Her eyelids quivered; she tossed her head, defying them. What could the thoughts of those creatures matter to someone who stood there bleeding to death, pierced to the heart, to the heart, by such a letter—

"I feel more and more strongly that our marriage would be a
mistake. Not that I do not love you. I love you as much as it is possible for me to love any woman, but, truth to tell, I have come to the conclusion that I am not a marrying man, and the idea of settling down fills me with nothing but—and the word "disgust" was scratched out lightly and "regret" written over the top.

Basil! Miss Meadows stalked over to the piano. And Mary Beazley, who was waiting for the moment, bent forward; her curls fell over her cheeks while she breathed, "Good morning, Miss Meadows," and she motioned toward rather than handed to her mistress a beautiful yellow chrysanthemum. This little ritual of the flower had been gone through for ages and ages, quite a term and a half. It was as much a part of the lesson as opening the piano. But this morning, instead of taking it up, instead of tucking it into her belt while she leaned over Mary and said, "Thank you, Mary. How very nice! Turn to page thirty-two," what was Mary's horror when Miss Meadows totally ignored the chrysanthemum, made no reply to her greeting, but said in a voice of ice, "Page fourteen, please, and mark the accents well."

Staggering moment! Mary flushed until the tears stood in her eyes, but Miss Meadows was gone back to the music stand; her voice rang through the music hall.

"Page fourteen. We will begin with page fourteen. 'A Lament.' Now, girls, you ought to know it by this time. We shall take it all together; not in parts, all together. And without expression. Sing it, though, quite simply, beating time with the left hand."

She raised the baton; she tapped the music stand twice. Down came Mary on the opening chord; down came all those left hands, beating the air, and in chimed those young, mournful voices—

Fast! Ah, too Fast! Fade the Ro-oses of Pleasure;
Soon Autumn yields unto Wi-nter Drear
Fleety! Ah, Fleety Music's gay Measure
Pauses away from the Listening Ear.

Good Heavens, what could be more tragic than that lament! Every note was a sigh, a sob, a groan of awful mournfulness. Miss Meadows lifted her arms in the wide gown and began conducting with both hands. "... I feel more and more strongly that our marriage would be a mistake. "... she beat. And the voices cried. "Fleety! Ah, Fleety! What could have possessed him to write such a letter! What could have led up to it! It came out of nothing. His last letter had been all about a fumed-oak bookcase he had bought for "our" books, and a "natty little hall stand" he had seen, "a very neat affair with a carved owl on a bracket, holding three hat brushes in its claws." How she had smiled at that! So like a man to think one needed three hat brushes! From the Listening Ear, sang the voices.

"Once again," said Miss Meadows. "But this time in parts. Still without expression." Fast! Ah too Fast. With the gloom of the contratals added, one could scarcely help shuddering. Fade the Roses of Pleasure. Last time he had come to see her, Basil had worn a rose in his buttonhole. How handsome he had looked in that bright blue suit, with that dark red rose! And he knew it, too. He couldn't help knowing it. First he stroked his hair, then his moustache; his teeth gleamed when he smiled.

"The he-man's wife keeps on asking me to dinner. It's a perfect nuisance. I never get an evening to myself in that place."

"But can't you refuse?"

"Oh, well, it doesn't do for a man in my position to be unpopular."

Music's Gay Measure, wailed the voices. The willow trees, outside the high, narrow window, waved in the wind. They had lost half their leaves. The tiny ones that clung wriggled like fishes caught on a line. "... I am not a marrying man..." The voices were silent; the piano waited.

"Quite good," said Miss Meadows, but still in such a strange, stony tone that the younger girls began to feel positively frightened. "But now that we know it, we shall take it with expression. As much expression as you can put into it. Think of the words, girls. Use your imaginations. Fast! Ah, too Fast," cried Miss Meadows. "That ought to break out—a loud, strong forte—a lament. And then in the second line, Winter Drear, make that Drear sound as if a cold wind were blowing through it. Drear!" said she so awfully that Mary Beazley, on the music stool, wriggled her spine. The third line should be on crescendo. "Fleety! Ah, Fleety Music's Gay Measure. Breaking on the first word of the last line, Passes. And then on the word, Away, you must begin to die... to fade... until The Listening Ear is nothing more than a faint whisper... You can slow down as much as you like almost on the last line. Now, please."

Again the two light taps; she lifted her arms again. Fast! Ah, too Fast. ... and the idea of settling down fills me with nothing but disgust—Dissapoint what he had written. That was as good as to say their engagement was definitely broken off. Broken off! Their engagement! People had been surprised enough that she had got engaged. The Science Mistress would not believe it at first. But nobody had been as surprised as she. She was thirty. Basil was twenty-five. It had been a miracle, simply a miracle, to hear him say, as they walked home from church that very dark night, "You know, somehow or other, I've got fond of you." And he had taken hold of the end of her ostrich feather boa. Passes away from the Listening Ear.

"Repeats! Repeats!" said Miss Meadows. "More expression, girls! Once more!"

Fast! Ah, too Fast. The older girls were crimson; some of the younger ones began to cry. Big spots of rain blew against the windows, and one could hear the willows whispering. ... not that I do not love you..."
"But, my darling, if you love me," thought Miss Meadows, "I don't mind how much it is. Love me as little as you like." But she knew he didn't love her. Not to have cared enough to scratch out that word "disgust," so that she couldn't read it! Soon Autumn yields unto Winter Dear. She would have to leave the school, too. She could never face the Science Mistress or the girls after it got known. She would have to disappear somewhere. Passes away. The voices began to die, to fade, to whisper... to vanish...

Suddenly the door opened. A little girl in blue walked furtively up the aisle, hanging her head, biting her lips, and twisting the silver bangle on her little wrist. She came up the steps and stood before Miss Meadows.

"Well, Monica, what is it?"

"Oh, if you please, Miss Meadows," said the little girl, gasping, "Miss Wyatt wants to see you in the mistress's room."

"Very well," said Miss Meadows. And she called to the girls. "I shall put you on your honor to talk quietly while I am away." But they were too subdued to do anything else. Most of them were blowing their noses.

The corridors were silent and cold; they echoed to Miss Meadows's steps. The head mistress sat at her desk. For a moment she did not look up. She was as usual disentangling her eyeglasses, which had got caught in her lace tie. "Sit down, Miss Meadows," she said very kindly. And then she picked up a pink envelope from the blotting pad. "I sent for you just now because this telegram has come for you."

"A telegram for me, Miss Wyatt?"

Basil! He had committed suicide, decided Miss Meadows. Her hand flew out, but Miss Wyatt held the telegram back a moment. "I hope it's not bad news," she said, so more than kindly. And Miss Meadows tore it open.

"Pay no attention to letter, must have been mad, bought hat stand today—Basil," she read. She couldn't take her eyes off the telegram.

"I do hope it's nothing very serious," said Miss Wyatt, leaning forward.

"Oh, no, thank you, Miss Wyatt," flushed Miss Meadows. "It's nothing bad at all. It's—and she gave an apologetic little laugh—"it's from my fiancé saying that... saying that—" There was a pause. "I see," said Miss Wyatt. And another pause. Then—"You've fifteen minutes more of your class, Miss Meadows, haven't you?"

"Yes, Miss Wyatt," she got up. She half ran toward the door.

"Oh, just one minute, Miss Meadows," said Miss Wyatt. "I must say I don't approve of my teachers having telegrams sent to them in school hours, unless in case of very bad news, such as death," explained Miss Wyatt, "or a very serious accident, or something to that effect. Good news, Miss Meadows, will always keep, you know."

On the wings of hope, of love, of joy, Miss Meadows sped back to the music hall, up the aisle, up the steps, over to the piano.

"Page thirty-two, Mary," she said, "page thirty-two," and, picking up the yellow chrysanthemum, she held it in her lips to hide her smile. Then she turned to the girls, rapped with her baton. "Page thirty-two, girls. Page thirty-two."

We come here To-day with Flowers o'erladen,
With Baskets of Fruit and Ribbons to boot,
To-day congratulate..."

"Stop! Stop!" cried Miss Meadows. "This is awful. This is dreadful. And she beamed at her girls. "What's the matter with you all? Think, girls, think of what you're singing. Use your imaginations. With Flowers o'erladen. Baskets of Fruit and Ribbons to boot. And Congratulate." Miss Meadows broke off. "Don't look so doleful, girls. It ought to sound warm, joyful, eager. Congratulate. One more. Quickly. All together. Now then!"

And this time Miss Meadows's voice sounded over all the other voices—full, deep, glowing with expression.

Now, before thinking too much, give a quick reaction to the story.

1. On a scale of 1-10 (10 = awesome), what rating would you give this story and why? MY RATING =

2. What relevance does this story have to your life, to those who are or ever have been close to you, or to society at large?

3. What messages do you think Mansfield is trying to relate about the way some people live (or should live) their lives?

4. For what purpose did Mansfield put some of the text in italics?

5. If you were to write a sequel to this story, what do you think would happen next? Would Miss Meadows be happy?
You do not have to actively read this story. When you are done reading, think about the differences between active reading and passive reading.

Shooting an Elephant

George Orwell

Moulmein, in Lower Burma, I was hated by large numbers of people—the only time in my life that I have been important enough for this to happen to me. I was a subdivisional police officer of the town, and in an amiable, petty kind of way anti-European feeling was very bitter. No one had the guts to raise a riot, but if a European woman went through the bazaar alone somebody would probably spit betel juice over her dress. As a police officer I was an obvious target and was barked whenever it seemed safe to do so. When a humble Burman tripped me up on the football field and the referee (another Burman) looked the other way, the crowd yelled with hideous laughter. This happened more than once. In the end the sneering yellow faces of young men that met me everywhere, the insults heaped after me when I was a safe distance, got on my nerves. The young Buddhist priests were the worst of all. There were several thousands of them and none of them seemed to have anything to do except stand on street corners and jeer at Europeans.

At that time I had already made up my mind that imperialism was an evil thing and the sooner I chucked up my job and got out of it the better. Theoretically—yes, and scientifically, of course—I was all for the Burmese and all against their oppressor, the British. As for the job I was doing, I hated it more bitterly than I can perhaps make clear. In a job like that you see the dirty work of Empire at close quarters. The wretched prisoners huddling in the stinking cages of the lock-ups, the grey, sallow faces of the long-term convicts, the scarred buttocks of the men who had been bagged with bamboo—all these oppressed me with an intolerable sense of guilt. But I could get nothing into perspective. I was young and ill-educated and I had to think out my problems in the utter silence that is imposed on every Englishman in the East. I did not even know that the British Empire is dying, still less did I know that it is a great deal better than the younger empires that are going to supplant it. All I knew was that I was stuck between my hatred of the empire I served and my rage against the evil-spirited little beasts who tried to make my job impossible. With one part of my mind I thought of the Burmese as unbreakable tyrants, as something clamped down, in servile submission, upon the will of prostrate peoples; with another part I thought that the greatest joy in the world would be to drive a bayonet into a Buddhist priest’s guts. Feelings like these are the normal by-products of imperialism, ask any Anglo-Indian official, if you can catch him off duty.

One day something happened which in a roundabout way was enlightening. It was a tiny incident in itself, but it gave me a better glimpse than I had had before of the real nature of imperialism—the real motives for which despotic governments act. Early one morning the sub-inspector at a police station the other end of the town rang me up on the phone and said that an elephant was ravaging the bazaar. Would I please come and see something about it? I did not know what I could do, but I wanted to see what was happening and I got on to a pony and started out. I took my rifle, as old

1. Burmese Raj, the British Empire in Burma, until what is now India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, and Burma. To a Hindu, the elephant is the god of the good. To a Moslem, the elephant is the god of the evil. To an Englishman, the elephant is a beast of burden. The Burmese population had no weapons and were quite helpless against it. It had already destroyed somebody’s banyan tree, killed a cow and raised some fruit-stalls and devoured the stock; also it had met the municipal rubbish van, and, when the driver jumped out and took to his heels, turned the van over and inflicted violence upon it.


3. “Taun—what? mahout. Ma was a friendly sort of creature, occasionally in male elephants, a mahout (the boy) is an elephant-keeper.”

At Winchester and much too small to kill an elephant, but I thought the noise might be useful as a warning. Various Burmese stopped me on the way and told me about the elephant’s doings. It was not, of course, a wild elephant, but a tame one which had gone "musth." It had been chained up as all elephants are always when their attack of "musth" is due, but on the previous night it had broken its chain and escaped. Its mahout, the only person who could manage it when it was in that state, had set out in pursuit, but he had taken the wrong direction and was now twelve hours' journey away, and in the morning the elephant had suddenly appeared in the town. The Burmese population had no weapons and were quite helpless against it. It had already destroyed somebody’s banyan tree, killed a cow and raised some fruit-stalls and devoured the stock; also it had met the municipal rubbish van, and, when the driver jumped out and took to his heels, turned the van over and inflicted violence upon it.

The Burmese sub-inspector and some Indian constables were waiting for me in the quarter where the elephant had been seen. It was a very quiet quarter, a labyrinth of squatted bamboo huts, dappled with palm-leaves, winding all over a steep hillside. I remember that I was a very stumpy monkey as I stood at the beginning of the street. We began questioning the people as to where the elephant had gone, and, as usual, failed to get any definite information. That is invariably the case in the East; a story always sounds clear enough at a distance, but the nearer you get to the scene of events the more confused it becomes. Some of the people said that the elephant had gone in one direction, some said that he had gone in another, some professed not to have heard of any elephant. I had almost made up my mind that the whole story was a pack of lies, when we heard yells a little distance away.

There was a loud, scolded cry of "Go away, you idiot! Go away this instant!" and an old woman with a switch in her hand came round a corner of a hut, violently shaking away a crowd of naked children. Some more women followed, clicking their purses and exclamations; evidently there was something there that the children ought not to have seen. I rounded the hut and saw a man’s dead body sprawled in the mud. He was an Indian, a black Dervish, almost naked, and he could not have been dead many minutes. The people said that the elephant had come suddenly upon him round the corner of the hut, caught him with its trunk, put its foot on his back and ground him into the earth. This was the rainy season and the ground was soft, and his face had scored a trench a foot deep and a couple of yards long. He was lying on his belly with arms crucified and head sharply twisted to one side. His face was covered with mud, the eyes wide open, the teeth bared and grinning with an expression of unspeakable agony. (Never tell me, by the way, that the dead look peaceful. Most of the corpses I have seen looked devilish.)

The friction of the great beast’s foot had stripped the skin from his back as neatly as a skin a rabbit. As soon as I saw the dead man I sent an orderly to a friend’s house nearby to borrow an elephant ride. I had already sent back the pony, not wanting it to go mad with fright and throw me if it smelt the elephant. The orderly came back in a few minutes with a rifle and five cartridges, and meanwhile some Burmese had arrived and told us that the elephant was in the paddies below, only a few hundred yards away. As I started forward practically the whole population of the quarter flocked out of their houses and followed me. They had seen the rifle and were all shooting recklessly that I was going to shoot the elephant. They had not shown much interest in the elephant when he was merely ravaging their huts, but it was different now that he was going to be shot. It was a bit of fun to them, as it would be to an English crowd; besides, they wanted the meat. It made me vaguely uneasy. I had no intention of shooting the elephant—I had merely sent for the rifle to defend myself if necessary—and it is always unnerving to have a crowd following you. I marched down the hill, looking and feeling a fool, with the rifle over my shoulder.

"Musth" —what? mahout. Ma was a friendly sort of creature, occasionally in male elephants, a mahout (the boy) is an elephant-keeper.

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and an ever-growing army of people insulating at my heels. At the bottom, when you got away from the bustle, there was a well-tended road and beyond that a jumble of muddy fields a thousand yards across, not yet ploughed but soggy from the first rains and dotted with cow-dung grass. The elephant was standing eighty yards from the road, his left side towards us. He took not the slightest notice of the crowd's approach. He was tearing up bunches of grass, beating them against his knees to clean them and stuffing them into his mouth.

I had halted on the road. As soon as I saw the elephant I knew with perfect certainty that I ought not to shoot him. It is a serious matter to shoot a working elephant—it is comparable to destroying a huge and costly piece of machinery—and obviously one ought not to do it if it can possibly be avoided. And at that distance, peacefully eating, the elephant looked no more dangerous than a cow. I thought then and now that his attack of "must" was already passing off, in which case he would merely wander harmlessly about until the mahout came back and caught him. Moreover, did not in the least want to shoot him. I decided that I would watch him for a little while to make sure that he did not turn savage again, and then go back.

But at that moment I glanced round at the crowd that had followed me. It was an immense crowd, two thousand at the least and growing every minute. It blocked the road for a long distance on either side. I looked at the sea of yellow faces above the pariah clothes—faces all happy and excited over this bit of fun, all certain that the elephant was going to be shot. They were watching me as they would watch a conjurer about to perform a trick. They did not like me, but with the magical rifle in my hands I was momentarily worth watching. And suddenly I realized that I should have to shoot the elephant after all. The people expected it of me and I had got to do it; I could feel their two thousand with me pressing forward, irresistibly. And it was at this moment, as I stood there with the rifle in my hands, that I first grasped the hollowness, the futility of the white man's dominion in the East. Here was the white man with his gun, standing in front of the unarmed native crowd—seemingly the leading actor of the piece; but in reality I was only an absurd puppet pushed to and fro by the will of those yellow faces behind. I perceived in this moment that when the white man turns tyrant it is his own freedom that he destroys. He becomes a sort of hollow, empty dummy, the conventionalized figure of a sahib. For it is the condition of his rule that he shall spend his life in trying to impress the "natives" and so in every crisis he has got to do what the "natives" expect of him. He wears a mask, and his face grows to fit it. I had got to shoot the elephant. I had committed myself to doing it when I went for the rifle. A sahib has got to act like a sahib; he has got to appear resolver, to know his own mind and do defensible things. To come all that way, rifle in hand, with two thousand people marching at my heels, and then to indecorably away, having done nothing—no, that was impossible. The crowd would laugh at me. And my whole life, every white man's life in the East, was one long struggle not to be laughed at.

But I did not want to shoot the elephant. I watched him bearing that bunch of grass against his knees, with that preoccupied grandiloquent air that elephants have. It seemed to me that it would be murder to shoot him. At that age I was not squeamish about killing animals, but I had never shot an elephant and never wanted to. (Somehow it always seems worse to kill a large animal.) Besides, there was the beast's own curiosity to be considered. Alive, the elephant was worth at least a hundred pounds; dead, he would only be worth the value of his tusks—five pounds, possibly. But I had to act quickly. I turned to one of the experienced looking Burmans who had been there when we arrived, and asked them how the elephant had been behaving. They all said the same thing, so I took no notice of you if you left him alone, but he might charge if you went too close to him. It was perfectly clear to me what I ought to do. I ought to walk up to within twenty-five yards of the elephant and test his behavior. If he charged I could shoot, if he took no notice of me it would be safe to leave him until the mahout came back. But also I knew that I was going to do no thing. I was a poor shot with a rifle and the ground was soft mud into which one would sink at every step. If the elephant charged and I missed him, I had about as much chance as a road under steam-troller. But even then I was not thinking particularly of my own skin, only the watchful yellow faces behind. For at that moment, with the crowd watching me, I was not afraid in the ordinary sense, as I would have been if I had been alone. A white man must be frightened of "natives"; and so, in general, he isn' frightened. The sole thought in my mind was that if anything went wrong those two thousand Burmans would see me punting, caught, trampled on and reduced to a grinning corpse like that Indian up the hill. And if that happened it was quite probable that some of them would laugh. That would never do. There was only one alternative. I showed the caricatures into the magazine and lay down on the road to get a better aim.

The crowd grew very still, and a deep, low, happy sigh, as of people who see the theatre curtain go up at last, breathed from innumerable throats. They were going to have their bit of fun after all. The rifle was a beautiful German thing with cross-hair sights. I did not then know that in shooting an elephant one should shoot to cut an imaginary bar running from ear-hole to ear-hole. I ought therefore, as the elephant was sideways on, to aim straight at his ear-hole; actually I ained several inches in front of this, thinking the brain would be further forward. When I pulled the trigger I did not hear the bang or feel the kick—one never does when a shot goes home—but I heard the devilish roar of gle that went up from the crowd. In that instant, in too short a time, one would have thought, even for the bullet to get there, a mysterious, terrible change had come over the elephant. He neither stirred nor fell, but every line of his body had altered. He looked suddenly stricken, shrunken, immensely old, and though the frightful impact of the bullet had paralyzed him without knocking him down. At last, after what seemed a long time—it might have been five seconds, I dare say—he sagged flabbily to his knees. His mouth slobbered. An enormous sensibility seemed to have settled upon him. One could have imagined him thousands of years old. I fired again into the same spot. At the second shot he did not crumple but crumbled with desperate lowness to his feet and stood weakly upright, with legs sagging and head drooping. I fired a third time. That was the shot that did him. You could see the agony of it in his whole body and knock the last remnant of strength from his legs. But in falling he seemed for a moment to rise, for his hand legs collapsed beneath him he seemed to tower upwards like a huge pillar, his trunk reaching skyward like a tree. He trumpeted, for the first and only time. And then down he came, his belly splayed in a death that seemed to shake the ground even where I lay.

I got up. The Burmans were already racing past me across the mud. It was obvious that the elephant would never rise again, but he was not dead. He was breathing very rhythmically with long rattling gasps, his great mound of a side painfully rising and falling. His mouth was wide open—I could see far down into caverns of pale pink throat. I waited a long time for him to die, but his breathing did not weaken. Finally I fired my two remaining shots into the space where I thought his heart must be. The thick blood welled out of him like red velvet, but still he did not die. His body did not even jerk when the shots hit him, the bullet breathing continued without a pause. He was dying, very slowly and in great agony, but in some world remote from me where not even a bullet could damage him further. I felt I had got to put an end to that dreadful noise. It seemed dreadful to see the great beast lying there, powerless to move and powerless to die, and not even to be able to finish him. I went back for my small rifle and pored shot after shot into his heart and down his throat. They seemed to make nothing. The tortured gasps continued as steadily as the ticking of a clock.

In the end I could not stand it any longer and went away. I heard later that it took him half an hour to die. Burmans were arriving with daws and baskets even before I left, and I was told they had stripped his body almost to the bones by the afternoon.

Afterwards, of course, there were endless discussions about the shooting of the elephant. The owner was furious, but he was only an Indian and could do nothing. Besides, legally I had done the right thing, for a mad elephant has to be killed, like a mad dog, if its owner fails to control it. Among the Europeans opinion was divided. Some of the older men said I was right, the younger men said it was a damn shame to shoot an elephant for killing a coolie, because an elephant was worth more than any damn Coringhee coolie. And afterwards I was glad that the coolie had been killed; it put me legally in the right and end the text for shooting the elephant. And I wonder whether any of the others who had dared it was solely to avoid looking a fool.

4. sahib (saib), in British India, a European.

5. daw (da), a heavy Burmese knife.
EAVESDROPPING ON A LITERATURE CLASSROOM

Having assigned his literature class Flannery O'Connor's short story "A Good Man Is Hard to Find" and knowing O'Connor's canon and her long list of curious protagonists, Professor George Blackwell could not anticipate whether his students would greet him with silence, bewilderment, or frustration when asked to discuss this work. His curiosity would soon be satisfied, for as he stood before the class, he asked a seemingly simple, direct question: "What do you believe O'Connor is trying to tell us in this story? In other words, how do you, as readers, interpret this text?"

Although some students suddenly found the covers of their anthologies fascinating, others shot up their hands. Given a nod from Professor Blackwell, Alice was the first to respond. "I believe O'Connor is trying to tell us the state of the family in rural Georgia during the 1950s. Just look, for example, at how the children, June Star and John Wesley, behave. They don't respect their grandmother. In fact, they mock her."

"But she deserves to be mocked," interrupted Peter. "Her life is one big act. She wants to act like a lady—to wear white cotton gloves and carry a purse—but she really cares only for herself. She is selfish, self-centered, and arrogant."

"That may be," responded Karen, "but I think the real message of O'Connor's story is not about family or one particular character, but about a philosophy of life. O'Connor uses the Misfit to articulate her personal view of life. When the Misfit says Jesus has thrown 'everything off balance,' O'Connor is really asking each of her readers to choose their own way of life or to follow the teachings of Jesus. In effect, O'Connor is saying we all have a choice: to live for ourselves or to live for and through others."

"I don't think we should bring Christianity or any other philosophy or religion into the story," said George. "Through analyzing O'Connor's individual words—words like tall, dark, and deep—and noting how often she repeats them and in what context, we can deduce that O'Connor's text, not
O'Connor herself or her view of life, is melancholy, a bit dark itself. But to equate O'Connor's personal philosophy about life with the meaning of this particular story is somewhat silly.

"But we can't forget that O'Connor is a woman," said Betty. "And an educated one at that! Her story has little to do about an academic or pie-in-the-sky, meaningless philosophical discussion, but a lot to do about being a woman. Being raised in the South, O'Connor would know and would have experienced prejudice because she is a woman. And as we all know, Southern males' opinion of women is that they are to be barefoot, pregnant, and in the kitchen. Seemingly, they are to be as nondescript as Bailey's wife is in this story. Unlike all the other characters, we don't even know this woman's name. How much more nondescript could O'Connor be? O'Connor's message, then, is simple. Women are oppressed and suppressed. If they open their mouths, if they have an opinion, and if they voice that opinion, they will end up like the grandmother, with a bullet in their head."

"I don't think that's her point at all," said Barb. "I do agree that she is writing from personal experience about the South, but her main point is about prejudice itself—prejudice against African Americans. Through the voice of the grandmother we see the Southern lady's opinion of African Americans: They are inferior to whites, uneducated, poor, and basically ignorant. O'Connor's main point is that we are all equal."

"Yes, I agree," said Mike. "But if we look at this story in the context of all the other stories we have read this semester, I see a theme we have discussed countless times before: appearance versus reality. This is O'Connor's main point. The grandmother acts like a lady—someone who cares greatly about others—but inwardly she cares only for herself. She's a hypocrite."

"I disagree. In fact, I disagree with everybody," announced Daniel. "I like the grandmother. She reminds me of my grandmother. O'Connor's grandmother is a bit self-centered, but whose old grandmother isn't? Like my grandma, O'Connor's grandmother likes to be around her grandchildren, to read and to play with them. She's funny, and she has spunk. And she even likes cats."

"But, Dr. Blackwell, can we ever know what Flannery O'Connor really thinks about this story?" asked Jessica. "After all, she's dead, and she didn't write an essay titled 'What 'A Good Man Is Hard to Find' Really Means.' And since she never tells us its meaning, can't the story have more than one meaning?"

Professor Blackwell instantly realized that Jessica's query—Can a story have multiple meanings?—is a pivotal question not only for English professors and their students but also for anyone who reads any text.

CAN A TEXT HAVE MORE THAN ONE INTERPRETATION?

A quick glance at the discussion of O'Connor’s "A Good Man Is Hard to Find" in Professor Blackwell’s classroom reveals that not all readers interpret texts in the same way. In fact, all of the eight students who voiced their understandings of the story gave fundamentally different interpretations. Was only one of these eight interpretations correct and the remaining seven simply wrong? If so, how does one arrive at the correct interpretation? Put another way, if there is only one correct interpretation of a text, what are the hermeneutical principles readers must use to discover this interpretation?

On the other hand, if a work can have multiple interpretations, are all such interpretations valid? Can and should each interpretation be considered a satisfactory and legitimate analysis of the text under discussion? In other words, can a text mean anything a reader declares it to mean, or are there guiding principles for interpreting a text that must be followed if a reader is to arrive at a valid and legitimate interpretation?

Or need a reader be thinking of any of these particulars when reading a text? Can't one simply enjoy a novel, for example, without considering its interpretation? Need one be able to state the work's theme, discuss its structure, or analyze its tone in order to enjoy the act of reading the novel itself?

These and similar questions are the domain of literary criticism: the act of studying, analyzing, interpreting, evaluating, and enjoying a work of art. At first glance the study of literary criticism appears daunting and formidable. Jargon such as hermeneutics, Aristotelian poetics, deconstruction, and a host of other intimidating terms confront the would-be literary critic. But the actual process or act of literary criticism is not as ominous as it may first appear.

HOW TO BECOME A LITERARY CRITIC

When the students in Professor Blackwell's class were discussing O'Connor’s short story "A Good Man Is Hard to Find," each of them was directly responding to the instructor's initial question: What do you believe O'Connor is trying to tell us in and through this story? Although not all responses were radically different, each student viewed the story from a unique perspective. For example, some students expressed their liking of the grandmother, but others thought she was a selfish, arrogant woman. Still others believed O'Connor was voicing a variety of philosophical, social, and cultural concerns, such as the place of women and African Americans in
southern society, or adherence to the teachings of Jesus Christ as the basis for one’s view of life, or the structure of the family in rural Georgia in the 1950s. All had an opinion about and therefore an interpretation of O’Connor’s story.

When Dr. Blackwell’s students stated their personal interpretations of O’Connor’s story, they had already become practicing literary critics. All of them had already interacted with the story, thinking about their likes and dislikes of the various characters; their impressions of the setting, plot, and structure; and their overall assessment of the story itself, whether that assessment was a full-fledged interpretation that seeks to explain every facet of the text or simply bewilderment as to the story’s overall meaning.

None of the students, however, had had formal training in literary criticism. None knew the somewhat complicated language of literary theory. And none were acquainted with any of the formal schools of literary criticism.

What each student had done was to read the story. The reading process itself produced within the students an array of responses, taking the form of questions, statements, opinions, and feelings evoked by the text. These responses coupled with the text itself are the concerns of formal literary criticism.

Although these students may need to master the terminology, the many philosophical approaches, and the diverse methodologies of formal literary criticism to become trained literary critics, they automatically became literary critics as they read and thought about O’Connor’s text. They needed no formal training in literary theory. By mastering the concepts of formal literary criticism, these students, like all readers, can become critical readers who are better able to understand and articulate their own reactions and those of others to any text.

WHAT IS LITERARY CRITICISM?

Matthew Arnold, a nineteenth-century literary critic, describes literary criticism as “A disinterested endeavor to learn and propagate the best that is known and thought in the world.” Implicit in this definition is that literary criticism is a disciplined activity that attempts to describe, study, analyze, justify, interpret, and evaluate a work of art. By necessity, Arnold would argue, this discipline attempts to formulate aesthetic and methodological principles on which the critic can evaluate a text.

When we consider its function and its relationship to texts, literary criticism is not usually considered a discipline in and of itself, for it must be related to something else—that is, a work of art. Without the work of art, the activity of criticism cannot exist. And it is through this discerning activity that we can knowingly explore the questions that help define our humanity, evaluate our actions, or simply increase our appreciation and enjoyment of both a literary work and our fellow human beings.

When analyzing a text, literary critics ask basic questions concerning the philosophical, psychological, functional, and descriptive nature of the text itself. Since the time of the Greek philosophers Plato and Aristotle, the answers to these questions have been debated. By asking questions of O’Connor’s or any other text and by contemplating answers, we too can participate in this debate. Whether we question whether the motives of O’Connor’s character the grandmother in wanting to take her cat on the family’s vacation or whether the Misfit is the primary reason the grandmother experiences her epiphany, we are participating in an ongoing discussion of the value and enjoyment of O’Connor’s short story while simultaneously engaging in literary criticism and functioning as practical literary critics.

Traditionally, literary critics involve themselves in either theoretical or practical criticism. Theoretical criticism formulates the theories, principles, and tenets of the nature and value of art. By citing general aesthetic and moral principles of art, theoretical criticism provides the necessary framework for practical criticism. Practical criticism (also known as applied criticism) applies the theories and tenets of theoretical criticism to a particular work. Using the theories and principles of theoretical criticism, the practical critic defines the standards of taste and explains, evaluates, or justifies a particular piece of literature. A further distinction is made between the practical critic who posits that there is only one theory or set of principles a critic may use when evaluating a literary work—the absolutist critic—and the relativistic critic, one who uses various and even contradictory theories in critiquing a piece of literature. The basis for either kind of critic, or any form of criticism, is literary theory. Without theory, practical criticism could not exist.

WHAT IS LITERARY THEORY?

When reading O’Connor’s “A Good Man Is Hard to Find,” we necessarily interact with the text, asking many specific, text-related questions and often times rather personal ones as well. For example, such questions as these may concern us, the readers:

- What kind of person is the grandmother? Is she like my grandmother or any grandmother I know?
- What is the function or role of June Star? John Wesley? Bailey? The mother?
- Why was the grandmother taking Pitty Sing, the cat, on the family vacation?
- What is the significance of the restaurant scene at The Tower?
- Right before she is shot, what does the grandmother recognize about the Misfit?
- What is the significance of this recognition?

Such questions immediately involve us in practical criticism. What we tend to forget during the reading of O’Connor’s short story or any other text,
however, is that we have read other literary works. Our response to any text, then—or the principles of practical criticism we apply to it—is largely a conditioned or socially constructed one; that is, how we arrive at meaning in fiction is in part determined by our past experiences. Consciously or unconsciously, we have developed a mindset or framework concerning our expectations when reading a novel, short story, poem, or any other type of literature. In addition, what we choose to value or uphold as good or bad, moral or immoral, or beautiful or ugly within a given text actually depends on this ever-evolving framework. When we can clearly articulate our mental framework when reading a text and explain how this mindset directly influences our values and aesthetic judgments about the text, we are well on our way to developing a coherent, unified literary theory—the assumptions (conscious or unconscious) that undergird one's understanding and interpretation of language, the construction of meaning, art, culture, aesthetics, and ideological positions.

Because anyone who responds to a text is already a practicing literary critic and because practical criticism is rooted in the reader's preconditioned mindset concerning his or her expectations when actually reading a text, every reader espouses some kind of literary theory. Each reader's theory may be conscious or unconscious, whole or partial, informed or ill informed, eclectic or unified. An incomplete, unconscious, and therefore unclear literary theory leads to illogical, unsound, and haphazard interpretations. On the other hand, a well-defined, logical, and clearly articulated theory enables readers to develop a method by which to establish principles that enable them to justify, order, and clarify their own appraisals of a text in a consistent manner.

A well-articulated literary theory assumes that an innocent reading of a text or a sheerly emotional or spontaneous reaction to a work cannot exist, for theory questions the assumptions, beliefs, and feelings of readers, asking why they respond to a text in a certain way. According to a consistent literary theory, a simple emotional or intuitive response to a text does not explain the underlying factors that caused such a reaction. What elicits that response, or how the reader constructs meaning through or with the text, is what matters.

**MAKING MEANING FROM TEXT**

How we as readers construct meaning through or with a text depends on the mental framework each of us has developed concerning the nature of reality. This framework or worldview consists of the assumptions or presuppositions that we all hold (either consciously or unconsciously) concerning the basic makeup of our world. For example, we all struggle to find answers to such questions as these:

- What is the basis of morality or ethics?
- What is the meaning of human history?
- Is there an overarching purpose for humanity's existence?
- What is beauty, truth, or goodness?
- Is there an ultimate reality?

Interestingly, our answers to these and other questions do not remain static, for as we interact with other people, our environment, and our own inner selves, we are continually shaping and developing our personal philosophies, rejecting former ideas and opinions and replacing them with newly discovered ones. But it is our dynamic answers—including our doubts and fears about these answers—that largely determine our response to a literary text.

Upon such a conceptual framework rests literary theory. Whether that framework is well reasoned or simply a matter of habit and past teachings, readers respond to works of art via their worldview. From this philosophical core of beliefs spring their evaluations of the goodness, worthiness, and value of art itself. Using their worldviews either consciously or unconsciously as a yardstick by which to measure and value their experiences, readers respond to individual works of literature, ordering and valuing each separate or collective experience in each text based on the system of beliefs housed in their worldviews.

**THE READING PROCESS AND LITERARY THEORY**

The relationship between literary theory and a reader's personal worldview is best illustrated in the act of reading itself. When reading, we are constantly interacting with the text. According to Louise M. Rosenblatt's text *The Reader, the Text, the Poem* (1978), during the act or event of reading,

A reader brings to the text his or her past experience and present personality. Under the magnetism of the ordered symbols of the text, the reader marshals his or her resources and crystallizes out from the stuff of memory, thought, and feeling a new order, a new experience, which he/she sees as the poem. This becomes part of the ongoing stream of the reader's life experience, to be reflected on from any angle important to him or her as a human being.

Accordingly, Rosenblatt declares that the relationship between the reader and the text is not linear, but transactional; that is, it is a process or event that takes place at a particular time and place in which the text and the reader condition each other. The reader and the text transact, creating meaning, for meaning does not exist solely within the reader's mind or within the text.
Rosenblatt maintains, but in the transaction between them. To arrive at an interpretation of a text, readers bring their own “temperament and fund of past transactions to the text and live through a process of handling new situations, new attitudes, new personalities, and new conflicts in value. They can reject, revise, or assimilate into the resource with which they engage their world.” Through this transactional experience, readers consciously and unconsciously amend their worldview.

Because no literary theory can account for all the various factors included in everyone’s conceptual framework, and because we, as readers, all have different literary experiences, there exists no metatheory—one overarching literary theory that encompasses all possible interpretations of a text suggested by its readers. And there cannot be no one correct literary theory, for in and of itself, each literary theory asks valid questions about the text, and no one theory is capable of exhausting all legitimate questions to be asked about any text.

The valid questions asked by the various literary theories often differ widely. Espousing separate critical orientations, each theory focuses primarily on one element of the interpretative process, although in practice different theories may address several areas of concern in interpreting a text. For example, one theory stresses the work itself, believing that the text alone contains all the necessary information to arrive at an interpretation. This theory isolates the text from its historical or sociological setting and concentrates on the literary forms found in the text, such as figures of speech, word choice, and style. Another theory attempts to place a text in its historical, political, sociological, religious, and economic setting. By placing the text in historical perspective, this theory asserts that its adherents can arrive at an interpretation that both the text’s author and its original audience would support. Still another theory directs its chief concern toward the text’s audience. It asks how the readers’ emotions and personal backgrounds affect a text’s interpretation. Whether the primary focus of concern is psychological, linguistic, mythical, historical, or from any other critical orientation, each literary theory establishes its own theoretical basis and then proceeds to develop its own methodology whereby readers can apply this theory to an actual text.

Although each reader’s theory and methodology for arriving at a text’s interpretation differ, sooner or later groups of readers and critics declare allegiance to a similar core of beliefs and band together, thereby founding different schools of criticism. For example, critics who believe that social and historical concerns must be highlighted in a text are known as Marxist critics, whereas reader-response critics concentrate on the readers’ personal reactions to the text. Because new points of view concerning literary works are continually evolving, new schools of criticism and therefore new literary theories will continue to develop. One of the most recent schools to emerge in the 1980s and 1990s, New Historicism or Cultural Poetics, declares that a text must be analyzed through historical research that assumes that history and fiction are inseparable. The members of this school, known as New Historians, hope to shift the boundaries between history and literature and thereby produce criticism that accurately reflects what they believe to be the proper relationship between the text and its historical context. Still other newly evolving schools of criticism such as postcolonialism, gender studies, and African-American studies continue to emerge and challenge previous ways of thinking and critiquing texts.

Because the various schools of criticism (and the theories on which they are based) ask different questions about the same work of literature, these theoretical schools provide an array of seemingly endless options from which readers can choose to broaden their understanding not only of the text but also of their society, their culture, and their own humanity. By embracing literary theory, we can thus learn not only about literature but also about tolerance for other people’s beliefs. By rejecting or ignoring theory, we are in danger of canonizing ourselves as literary saints who possess divine knowledge and can therefore supply the one and only correct interpretation for a work of literature. To oppose, disregard, or ignore literary theory is also to be against questioning our own concepts of self, society, and culture and how texts help us define and continually redefine these concepts. By embracing literary theory and literary criticism (its practical application), we can participate in that seemingly endless historical conversation and debate concerning the nature of humanity and its concerns as expressed in literature itself.

WHAT IS LITERATURE?

Because literary criticism presupposes that there exists a work of literature to be interpreted, we could assume that formulating a definition of literature would be simple. But it is not. For centuries, writers, literary historians, and others have debated about but failed to agree on a definition for this term. Some assume that literature is simply anything that is written, thereby declaring a city telephone book, a cook book, and a road atlas to be literary works along with David Copperfield and the Adventures of Huckleberry Finn. Derived from the Latin littera, meaning “letter,” the root meaning of literature refers primarily to the written word and seems to support this broad definition. However, such a definition eliminates the important oral traditions on which much of our literature is based, including Homer’s Iliad and Odyssey, the English epic Beowulf, and many Native American legends.

To solve this problem, others choose to define literature as an art, thereby leaving open the question of its being written or oral. This further narrows its meaning, equating literature to works of the imagination or creative
writing. To emphasize the imaginative qualities of literature, some critics choose to use the German word for literature, *Wortkunst*, instead of its English equivalent, for *Wortkunst* automatically implies that the imaginative and creative aspects of literature are essential components of the word *literature* itself. By this definition, written works such as a telephone or cook book can no longer be considered literature, being replaced or superseded by poetry, drama, fiction, and other imaginative writing.

Although such a narrowing and an equating of the definition of literature to art seemingly simplifies what can and cannot be deemed a literary work, such is not the case. That the J. Crew and Victoria’s Secrets clothes catalogues are imaginative (and colorful) writing is unquestioned, but should they be considered works of literature? Or should Madonna’s book *Sex* or the lyrics of the rap song “Cop Killer” be called literary works? Is Madonna’s text or the rap song an imaginative or creative work? If so, can or should either be considered a work of literature? Defining and narrowing the definition of literature as being a work of art does not immediately provide consensus or a consistent rule concerning whether a work should be called a work of literature.

Whether one accepts the broad or narrow definition, many argue that a text must have certain peculiar qualities before it can be dubbed literature. For example, the artist’s creation or secondary world often mirrors the author’s primary world, the world in which the creator lives and moves and breathes. Because reality or the primary world is highly structured, so must be the secondary world. To achieve this structure, the artist must create plot, character, tone, symbols, conflict, and a host of other elements or parts of the artistic story, with all of these elements working in a dynamic relationship to produce a literary work. Some would argue that it is the creation of these elements—how they are used and in what context—that determines whether a piece of writing is literature.

Still other critics add the test-of-time criterion to their essential components of literature. If a work such as Dante’s *Divine Comedy* withstands the passage of time and is still being read centuries after its creation, it is deemed valuable and worthy to be called literature. This criterion also denotes literature’s functional or cultural value: If people value a written work, for whatever reason, they often declare it to be literature whether or not it contains the prescribed elements of a text.

What this work may contain is a peculiar aesthetic quality—that is, some element of beauty—that distinguishes it as literature from other forms of writing. *Aesthetics*, the branch of philosophy that deals with the concept of the beautiful, strives to determine the criteria for beauty in a work of art. Theorists such as Plato and Aristotle declare that the source of beauty is inherent within the art object itself; other critics, such as David Hume, say that beauty is in the eye of the beholder. And some twentieth-century theorists argue that one’s perception of beauty in a text rests in the dynamic rela-

**tionship between the object and the perceiver at a given moment in time.** Wherever the criteria for judging beauty of a work of art finally resides, most critics agree that a work of literature does have an appealing aesthetic quality.

While distinguishing literature from other forms of writings, this appealing aesthetic quality directly contributes to literature’s chief purpose: the telling of a story. Although it may simultaneously communicate facts, literature’s primary aim is to tell a story. The subject of this story is particularly human, describing and detailing a variety of human experiences, not stating facts or bits and pieces of information. For example, literature does not define the word *courage*, but shows us a courageous character acting courageously. By so doing, literature concretizes an array of human values, emotions, actions, and ideas in story form. And it is this concretization that allows us to experience vicariously the stories of a host of characters. Through these characters we observe people in action, making decisions, struggling to maintain their humanity in often inhumane circumstances, and embodying for us a variety of values and human characteristics that we may embrace, discard, enjoy, or detest.

**LITERARY THEORY AND THE DEFINITION OF LITERATURE**

Is literature simply a story that contains certain aesthetic and literary qualities that all somehow pleasiously culminate in a work of art? If so, can texts be considered *artifacts* that can be analyzed, dissected, and studied to discover their essential nature or meaning? Or does a literary work have ontological status; that is, does it exist in and of itself, perhaps in a special neo-Platonic realm, or must it have an audience, a reader, before it becomes literature? And can we define the word *text*? Is it simply print on a page? If pictures are included, do they automatically become part of the text? And who determines when print becomes a work of art? The reader? The author? Both?

The answers to these and similar questions have been long debated, and the various responses make up the corpus of literary theory. Providing the academic arena in which those interested in literary theory (literary theorists) can posit philosophical assumptions concerning the nature of the reading process, the *epistemological* nature of learning, the nature of reality itself, and a host of related concerns, literary theory offers a variety of methodologies that enable readers to interpret a text from different and often conflicting points of view. Such theorizing empowers readers to examine their personal worldviews, to articulate their individual assumptions concerning the nature of reality, and to understand how these assumptions directly affect their interpretation not only of a work of art but also of the definition of literature itself.
Although any definition of literature is debatable, most would agree that an examination of a text’s total artistic situation would help us decide what constitutes literature. This total picture of the work involves such elements as the work itself (an examination of the fictionality or secondary world created within the story), the artist, the universe or world the work supposedly represents, and the audience or readers. Although readers and critics will emphasize one, two, or even three of these three elements while de-emphasizing the others, such a consideration of a text’s artistic situation immediately broadens the definition of literature from the concept that it is simply a written work that contains certain qualities to a definition that must include the dynamic relationship of the actual text and the readers. Perhaps, then, the literary competence of the readers themselves helps determine whether a work should be considered literature. If this is so, then a literary work may be more functional than ontological, its existence and therefore its value being determined by its readers and not the work itself.

Overall, the definition of literature depends on the particular kind of literary theory or school of criticism that the reader or critic espouses. For formalists, for example, the text and text alone contains certain qualities that make a particular piece of writing literature. But for reader-response critics, the interaction and psychological relationships between the text and the reader help determine whether a document should be deemed literary.

THE FUNCTION OF LITERATURE AND LITERARY THEORY

Critics continually debate literature’s chief function. Tracing their arguments to Plato, many contend that literature’s primary function is moral, its chief value being its usefulness for hidden or undisclosed purposes. But others, like Aristotle, hold that a work of art can be analyzed and broken down into its various parts, with each part contributing to the overall enjoyment of the work itself. For these critics, the value of a text is found within it or inseparably linked to the work itself. In its most simple terms, the debate centers around two concerns: Is literature’s chief function to teach (extrinsic) or to entertain (intrinsic)? In other words, can or do we read a text for the sheer fun of it, or must we always be studying and learning from what we read?

Such questions and their various answers lead us directly to literary theory, for literary theory concerns itself not only with ontological questions (whether a text really exists), but also with epistemological issues (how we know or ways of knowing). When we ask, then, if literature’s chief function is to entertain or to teach, we are really asking epistemological questions.

Whether we read a text to learn from it or to be entertained, we can say that we know that text once having read it.

We can know a text in two distinct ways. The first method involves the typical literature classroom analysis. When we have studied, analyzed, and critiqued a text and arrived at an interpretation, we can then confidently assert that we know the text. On the other hand, when we stay up all night turning the pages of a mystery novel to discover who the murderer is, we can also say that we know the text, for we have spent time devouring its pages, lost in its secondary world, consumed by its characters, and by novel’s end eagerly seeking the resolution of its tensions. Both methods—one whose chief goal is to learn and the other’s being entertainment—involve similar yet distinct epistemological ways of knowing.

The French verbs savoir and connaître can both be translated as “to know” and highlight the difference between these two epistemological ways of knowing a text. SAVOIR means to analyze (from the Greek ἀναλύειν, to undo) and to study. It is used to refer to knowing something that is the object of study and assumes that the object, such as a text, can be examined, analyzed, and critiqued. Knowledge or learning is its ultimate goal.

CONNAÎTRE, on the other hand, implies that we intimately know or have experienced the text. Interestingly, connaître is used for knowing people and refers to our knowing an author’s canon. Knowing people and knowing a literary canon imply intimacy, learning the ins and outs of each one of them. And it is such intimacy that one often experiences while reading a mystery novel all night long.

To know how to analyze a text, to discuss its literary elements, and to apply the various methodologies of literary criticism means that we know that text (savoir). To have experienced the text, to have cried with or about its characters, to have lost time and sleep immersed in the secondary world of the text, and to have felt our emotions stirred also means that we know that text (connaître). From one way of knowing we learn facts or information, and from the other we encounter and participate in an intimate experience.

At times, however, we have actually known the text from both these perspectives, savoir and connaître. While analyzing and critiquing a text (savoir), we have at times (and perhaps more often than not) simultaneously experienced it, becoming emotionally involved with its characters’ choices and destinies (connaître) and imagining ourselves to be these characters, or at least recognizing some of our own characteristics dramatized by the characters.

Thus, to say that we know a text is no simple statement. Underlying our private and public reactions and our scholarly critiques and analyses is our literary theory, the fountainhead of our most intimate and our most public declarations. The formal study of literary theory therefore enables us to explain our responses to any text and allows us to articulate the function of literature in an academic and a personal way.
BEGINNING THE FORMAL STUDY OF LITERARY THEORY

This chapter has stressed the importance of literary theory and criticism and its relationship to literature and the interpretative processes. And it has also articulated the underlying premises as to why a study of literary theory is essential:

- Literary theory assumes that there is no such thing as an innocent reading of a text. Whether our responses are emotional and spontaneous or well reasoned and highly structured, all such interactions with and to a text are based on some underlying factors that cause us to respond to the text in a particular fashion. What elicits these responses or how a reader makes sense out of a text is at the heart of literary theory.

- Because our reactions to any text have theoretical bases, all readers must have a literary theory. The methods we use to frame our personal interpretations of any text directly involve us in the process of literary criticism and theory, automatically making us practicing literary critics.

- Because many readers' literary theory is more often than not unconscious, incomplete, ill-informed, and eclectic, their interpretations can easily be illogical, unsound, and haphazard. A well-defined, logical, and clearly articulated literary theory enables readers to consciously develop their own personal methods of interpretation, permitting them to order, clarify, and justify their appraisals of a text in a consistent and logical manner.

It is the goal of this text to enable readers to make such conscious, informed, and intelligent choices concerning their own methods of literary interpretation and to understand their personal and public reactions to a text. To accomplish this goal, this text will introduce readers to literary theory and criticism, its historical development, and the various theoretical positions or schools of criticism that enable readers to become knowledgeable critics of their own and others' interpretations. By becoming acquainted with diverse and often contradictory approaches to a text, readers will broaden their perspectives not only about themselves but also about others and the world in which they live.

FURTHER READING


Critical Encounters in High School English: Teaching Literary Theory to Adolescents

by Deborah Appleman

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The Case for Critical Theory in the Classroom

Critical lenses are about looking into elements of the world in different ways, thinking about things from different perspectives. This will never be a bad thing, no matter what the lenses are used to view. Seeing many different sides of stories only benefits everyone, everything.

—Mark, Grade 11

To read the world is to notice, to understand, and to interpret. The world around us needs all the lenses, and to use them is to respond to the world itself.

—Jenny, Grade 12

Literary theory can handle Bob Dylan just as well as John Milton.

—Terry Eagleton, Literary Theory

We live in dangerous and complicated times and no one is more aware of it than our teenagers. How do we even begin to make our way through such a difficult and complicated world? As we begin our apprehensive march into the twenty-first century, we educators find ourselves reconsidering how our schools might help young people lead productive and satisfying lives. How do we help them negotiate these treacherous times? What can we do to make things better for them, to make schools safer and more productive places to grow and to learn?

Research on literacy practices, child and adolescent development, and school reform initiatives has tried to address these questions by focusing on urgent issues such as class size, qualifications of teachers, the sociocultural contexts of schooling, the out-of-school lives and challenges of children, and the requirements to make classrooms safe spaces. In the face of today's turbulence and the seemingly urgent need for pragmatic education, it seems almost ludicrous to suggest that the study of literary theory could have any relevance to the education of young people.

(See back of this packet for Appleman's credentials!)
Critical lenses provide students with a way of reading their world; the lenses provide a way of "seeing" differently and analytically that can help them read the culture of school as well as popular culture. Learning to inhabit multiple ways of knowing also can help them learn to adapt to the intellectual perspectives and learning styles required by other disciplines. When taught explicitly, literary theory can provide a repertoire of critical lenses through which to view literary texts as well as the multiple contexts at play when students read texts—contexts of culture, curriculum, classroom, personal experience, prior knowledge, and politics. Students can see what factors have shaped their own world view and what assumptions they make as they evaluate the perspectives of others, whether a character from a text, an author or literary movement, an MTV video, a shampoo commercial, peer pressure, or the school system in which they find themselves. As Bonycastle (1996) points out, studying theory means you can take your own part in the struggles for power between different ideologies. It helps you to discover elements of your own ideology, and understand why you hold certain values unconsciously. It means no authority can impose a truth on you in a dogmatic way—and if some authority does try, you can challenge that truth in a powerful way, by asking what ideology it is based on. . . . Theory is subversive because it puts authority in question. (p. 34)

Perhaps even more important, these multiple ways of seeing have become vital skills in our increasingly diverse classrooms as we explore the differences between and among us, what separates us and what binds us together. As Maxine Greene (1993) has eloquently argued, "Learning to look through multiple perspectives, young people may be helped to build bridges among themselves; attending to a range of human stories, they may be provoked to heal and to transform" (p. 16). Attending to multiplicity, to the diversity that has come to characterize our interpretive communities, has caused some scholars to reconsider the role that literary theory may play as we acknowledge our need to learn to read across and between cultures (Rogers & Soter, 1997). As Laura Desai (1997) points out, "Literary theory reminds us that we do not live in isolation nor do we read and interpret in isolation. We understand what we read through some combination of ourselves as readers and the text with which we interact, but this is never free of the multiple contexts that frame us" (p. 169). Desai further argues that literary theory can provide for young people the tools necessary for interpreting culture as well. "Literary theory allows us to recognize our own reactions by providing the contexts we need to understand them. In this complex world, cultural forces are clearly at play in the lives of young people." But young people will remain powerless over these forces unless they can recognize
them: “How can we judge culture’s impact if we cannot define what it is that is influencing our reactions?” (p. 170). Literary theory provides the interpretive tools young people need to recognize and “read” those cultural forces.

BACKGROUND, OR A BRIEF THEORETICAL HISTORY

Literary theory clearly has informed and in many ways shaped pedagogical practice, but in a monolithic, almost corrective way. That is, a single theoretical vision tends to dominate the teaching of literature until it is replaced by another. For example, literary study in high schools initially was dominated by Matthew Arnold’s view of literary study as “cultural transmissiveness,” a view in which texts are presented to young readers as cultural treasures to be honored unquestioningly. The influence of the New Critical perspective, most notably the work of I. A. Richards and the anthologies of Brooks and Warren, took hold of the secondary English classroom in the 1930s and is still felt today. In this model, the teacher becomes the primary explicator of the meaning of the text, correcting wrong or ill-conceived responses. This model gave rise to the primacy of the text in the literature classroom and to the authority of teachers as the definitive determiners of literary meaning.

Over the past 2 decades, reader-response theory has found its way into secondary classrooms. A reader-response approach to the teaching of literature allows students to employ a variety of interpretive strategies and encourages students to bring their personal experience to the text. Although the emphasis of this critical approach focuses on the reader rather than the teacher or text as the source of literary meaning, the problem of a single dominant theoretical perspective remains. In many high school classrooms, reader response has become the current orthodoxy of English education (Marshall, 1991). Students may be able to derive a plurality of interpretations using the reader-response approach, but they are still not presented with multiple critical approaches, which would enable them to choose and construct their own readings from a variety of theoretical perspectives rather than simply the perspective of personal response.

Broadly stated, teachers often feel torn between either presenting literary texts as cultural artifacts—literary masterpieces whose authoritative meaning is to be mastered by neophyte students—or relying heavily on students’ personal experience through a reader-response approach. This tension between two theoretical traditions is noted by Applebee (1993) when he writes, “Though teachers make a practical compromise with these two traditions by drawing on both, the resulting eclecticism produces tensions and inconsistencies within the classroom rather than a coherent and integrated approach to the teaching and learning of literature” (p. 202). While the resulting compromise in instruction may be due to competing theoretical approaches, teaching literature remains largely atheoretical, both for secondary teachers and for their students. Rarely do high school teachers make their theoretical approaches explicit by naming them to their students. And even more rarely have multiple critical approaches been explicitly taught.

THE CHANGING TIMES

As we begin a second century of teaching literature, it is time we examine these enduring characteristics of literature instruction, asking which are appropriate and essential and which have continued because they have remained unexamined.

—Arthur N. Applebee, Literature in the Secondary School

In the past few decades, the relatively stable (some might even say staid) and predictable practice of teaching literature has undergone changes from a myriad of directions. At the prompting of scholars, practitioners, and, perhaps most important, the changing nature of our students, we have considered and reconsidered the texts, contexts, and pedagogical approaches that constitute the teaching of literature. Our canons are loose, our pedagogy is shifting, and our profession seems to be challenging every assumption we have made about the teaching of literature since 1920. For example, we have reconsidered the relationship of texts to readers, of readers and teachers to authors, of texts to theories, and, of course, of teachers to their students. Multicultural literature has largely been embraced by many teachers, but the complexity of teaching diverse works to diverse and nondiverse classes is just beginning to be confronted.

Our profession is challenging its assumptions about our literary heritage, our students, and even who is included in the pronoun our. This reflection demands that as we challenge the hegemony of the sort of “cultural literacy” proposed by Alan Bloom or E. D. Hirsch, we also challenge the notion of a single theory, perspective, or “truth” about what literature we read together and how we teach it. As Slevin and Young (1995) put it:

If texts no longer organize the curriculum, then what does? If the professor is no longer the privileged agent of education then who is...? These pressing questions... contemplate the end of coverage as a model, the end of the canon as an agreed-upon certainty, the end of the professor as the agent of learning, and the end of the classroom as a place where education is delivered. These “ends” have been much contemplated, indeed. But what arises in their place? (pp. ix–x)
THE CALL FOR THEORY

In the past decade or so, critical theory has played an increasingly important role in professional conversations among college literature professors and has become more visible in college literature classrooms as part of what it means to study literature. Slevin and Young (1995) regard theory as the site of some of our most profound professional re-examinations as we reconceptualize what it means to teach literature: "The new directions in literary theory and criticism that mark the last two decades can be seen as responses to these very concerns, reexamining the assumptions that underlie literary study" (pp. ix–x).

Similarly, Bonnycastle (1996) writes:

Literary theory raises those issues which are often left submerged beneath the mass of information contained in the course, and it also asks questions about how the institution of great literature works. . . . What makes a "great work" great? Who makes the decisions about what will be taught? Why are authors grouped into certain historical periods? The answers to fundamental questions like these are often unarticulated assumptions on the part of both the professor and the students. . . . Literary theory is at its best when it helps us realize what we are really doing when we study literature. (p. 20)

In 1983, Terry Eagleton wrote, "Not much of this theoretical revolution has yet spread beyond a circle of specialists and enthusiasts: it still has to make its full impact on the student of literature and the general reader" (p. vii). More than a decade later, the presence of literary theory was more clearly (some might argue, oppressively) present in the college literature classroom, yet these developments in theory and the reconsiderations of curriculum that they generated had not, for the most part, been introduced into the high school literature classroom. As Applebee (1993) points out:

The certainty of New Critical analysis has given way to formulations that force a more complex examination of the assumptions and expectations about authors, readers and texts as they are situated within specific personal and cultural contexts. The challenges to New Criticism, however, have taken place largely within the realm of literary theory. Only a few scholars have begun to give serious attention to the implications of these new approaches for classroom pedagogy . . . and most of that attention has been focused at the college level. It would be fair to say that, despite the recent ferment in literary theory, the majority of college undergraduates still receive an introduction to literature that has been little influenced by recent theory. (pp. 116–117)

In fact, Applebee (1993) found that 72% of the high school literature teachers he surveyed in schools that had a reputation for excellence "reported little or no familiarity with contemporary literary theory" (p. 122). As one high school teacher put it, "These are far removed from those of us who work on the front lines!" In one of the few texts about theory written explicitly for secondary teachers, Sharon Crowley (1989) agrees: "The practice of teaching people to read difficult and culturally influential texts is carried on, for the most part, as though it were innocent of theory, as though it were a knack that anybody could pick up by practicing it" (p. 26).

While it is not widely reflected in the practice of secondary teachers, the notion that literary theory can be useful for classroom teachers has gained greater voice in the field of English education. In Literary Theory and English Teaching, Griffith (1987) describes the tension between presenting literature as cultural artifacts or vehicles for transmitting ideology, and the aim of many educators, especially those who favor a more progressive approach to education, to use literature as a vehicle for self-exploration and expression. Griffith points out that the teaching of literary theory to secondary students is a useful way to bridge this gap:

Certain applications of literary theory can lay bare what the text does not say and cannot say as well as what it does and, as part of the same process, to make certain aspects of the context in which the reading takes place visible as well. . . . To be able to offer pupils this sense of power over their environment seems a desirable goal, especially if the sense of power is more than a delusion and can lead in some way to an effect on the pupil's environment. (p. 86)

Dennie Palmer Wolf in Reading Reconsidered (1988) urges us to re-examine our notions of what literacy is, of what students should read, and of what it means to read well. She encourages us to teach students ways of thinking about texts. She writes, "Not to teach students these habits of mind would be to cheat them just as surely as if we kept them away from books written before 1900 and burned all poetry" (p. 4). Wolf reminds us that reading is "a profoundly social and cultural process" and urges us to provide all students with deeper and richer ways of thinking about literature, using terminology such as "holding a conversation with work," "becoming mindful," and "reading resonantly" (p. 9).

In Textual Power: Literary Theory and the Teaching of English, Robert Scholes (1985) argues that there are three basic textual skills: reading, interpretation, and criticism. Although there are many secondary English teachers skilled in all three, all too often they relegate only the reading to their students. It is they, rather than their students, who determine the appropriate critical approach for each literary text. After their critical stance has been
articulated, the teachers either allow students to create interpretations within the context of that critical approach or they provide a single privileged interpretation for the students. While the teacher may be well-schooled in theory, the students are not and therefore are limited in the interpretive choices they can make.

The call to theory has just begun to be heard by secondary school practitioners. As he contemplates the “shape high school literature should take in the coming years,” Bruce Pirie (1997) also invokes Scholes (1985) as he calls for a repositioning of the study of literature that “clarifies its relationship with the rest of the world.” Critics such as Scholes have pointed out that contemporary literary theory opens the barriers between the literary text and “the social text in which we live” (Scholes as quoted by Pirie, 1997, p. 31). It is at the opening, this intersection, of text and social context that the explicit study of contemporary literary theory can help adolescent readers make meaning of literary texts.

Kathleen McCormick, a scholar notable for her unique ability to gracefully straddle the theoretical world of the university and the seemingly more pragmatic world of reading instruction in elementary and secondary schools, argues for the relevance of contemporary literary theories, especially those she calls “culturally informed theories,” to the development of pedagogies in schools. She writes:

While so often the schools and universities seem quite separate, it is primarily the research carried on in the colleges and universities that drives the reading lessons students are given in the schools. If feminists, theorists of race and gender and cultural studies, teachers, and researchers in the universities were to begin to engage in more active dialogue with the developers of reading programs and the teachers who have to teach students—young and older—“how” to read, it might be possible to begin to change the dominant significations of reading in the schools—so that more students could begin to learn to read the world simultaneously with learning to read the word—so that readers can begin to see themselves as interdiscursive subjects, to see texts as always “in use,” and to recognize that different ways of reading texts have consequence. (1995, p. 308)

McCormick’s suggestion that theoried ways of reading have significant consequences for our students of literature echoes an eloquent plea Janet Emig made a decade ago for the teaching of literary theory. In a conference paper as president-elect of the National Council of Teachers of English, Emig (1990) wrote, “Theory then becomes a vivid matter of setting out the beliefs that we hold against the beliefs of others, an occasion for making more coherent to others, and quite as important to ourselves, just what it is we believe, and why” (p. 93).
materials provide ways of integrating critical lenses into the study of literature. A variety of texts—"classics" such as *Hamlet*, *The Awakening*, *Of Mice and Men*, *Heart of Darkness*, *Frankenstein*, and *The Great Gatsby*, as well as titles that have been included in our secondary literature curriculum more recently, such as *Beloved*, "The Yellow Wallpaper*, *The Things They Carried*, and *Native Son*—are used to illustrate a variety of literary lenses.

Chapter 1 sets forth the reasons for teaching critical theory, and Chapter 2 argues for the importance of multiple theoretical perspectives in reading and interpreting literary texts. In Chapter 2, four very different classroom vignettes illustrate the power of multiple perspectives. The vignettes suggest specific strategies for introducing the notion of multiple perspectives to students (and to teachers) using several short stories and poems. These introductory activities, designed for students in grades 9–12, can be used at the beginning of a semester, trimester, or year-long course, or at the beginning of a specific unit on critical analysis. The focus of the activities is on the power of viewing literary texts from a variety of perspectives, not on specific literary theories—yet. The emphasis on multiple perspectives and multiple ways of viewing texts helps set the stage for the introduction of theories that constitute the rest of the book.

Is reader response an appropriate interpretive strategy for all students? Is it useful or appropriate for all texts? Chapter 3 explores what happens when students are taught how to apply the basic tenets of reader response to their own reading. By describing what happens when students are given interpretive tools that are explicitly named, this chapter demonstrates that making teaching strategies explicit to students strengthens their interpretive possibilities. This chapter also challenges some of the common assumptions and practices of response-centered teaching, especially as they relate to diverse classrooms.

Chapter 4 explores the political prism of Marxist literary theory. This chapter makes the case for the importance of political theory and argues that Marxist literary theory may be best-suited to help students learn to understand, read, and perhaps even resist prevailing ideology. Texts such as *Of Mice and Men*, *Black Boy*, *Native Son*, *Hamlet*, *The Great Gatsby*, and *Beloved* also explore how these theoretical lenses help readers understand the political, social, and economic dimensions of the world in which we live.

Feminist literary theory is the focus of Chapter 5. The chapter explores, through a series of classroom vignettes, a variety of pedagogical approaches using feminist literary theory. Classroom situations are presented in which students learn to interpret texts such as *A Doll's House*, *The Great Gatsby*, *A Room of One's Own*, *The Awakening*, "The Yellow Wallpaper," *Frankenstein*, and a variety of poetry using a feminist lens. Chapter 5 also looks at the resistance both male and female students have to reading literary texts through a feminist lens and illustrates how students can not only read literary texts through the prism of feminist theory but also learn to read the world through that refractive light.

Chapter 6 tackles a more difficult and even more rarely used contemporary theory, deconstruction. Students contrast the purposes of critical theories that are structural and linguistic with more political, extrinsic critical lenses. In using these theories, students are encouraged to focus on the specific language of literary texts (mostly poetry) and apply recent postmodern theories to those texts. Again, several specific lessons are provided to teachers, along with a discussion of the potential value of these approaches to high school students.

Chapter 7 describes how the teaching of literary theory dramatically affected a particular teacher's method of instruction. When she relinquished her position as literary authority in one class, she discovered that all of her classes became less teacher-centered and more exploratory. Excerpts from the teacher's journal chart her own personal and pedagogical transformation. In addition, the story of this unique teacher/researcher collaboration presents a potential model for alternative approaches to curriculum development, inservice training, and teacher education.

In addition to presenting concluding remarks, Chapter 8 summarizes the central thesis of the book: that literary theory can and should be taught to secondary students. Using literary theory as they read texts enables students to become theorized and skilled readers with a variety of interpretive strategies and theoretical approaches. As they become constructors of meaning, with multiple literary visions of their own, they become adept at reading the world around them.

Beyond providing portraits of particular teachers and students who embarked on this theoretical odyssey, this book offers teachers many specific teaching strategies for incorporating critical lenses into their literature curriculum. Included in the appendix are all of the activities that are described throughout the text. Teachers should feel free to adapt and use these activities in their own classrooms.
Deborah Appleman is the Class of 1944 Professor of Educational Studies and the Liberal Arts and director of the Summer Writing Program at Carleton College in Northfield, Minnesota. Professor Appleman earned her doctorate in 1986 from the University of Minnesota. A former president of the Minnesota Council of Teachers of English, she currently serves on the executive committee of the National Council of Teachers of English's Conference on English Education. She has been a member of NCTE's Standing Committee on Research and served as co-chair of NCTE's Assembly for Research as well as the special interest group in literature for the American Educational Research Association.

Professor Appleman was a high school English teacher for 9 years, working in both urban and suburban schools. She continues to work weekly in high schools with students and teachers. Professor Appleman's primary research interests include adolescent response to literature, multicultural literature, adolescent response to poetry, and the teaching of literary theory in high school. She is the author of many articles and book chapters, and, with an editorial board of classroom teachers, helped create the multicultural anthology Braided Lives.
SOME THEORIES OF LITERARY CRITICISM

FORMALISM  Also referred to as the New Criticism, formalism reached its height during the 1940s and 1950s but is still practiced today. Formalists read a work of literary art as if it were a self-contained, self-referential object. Rather than basing their interpretations of a text on the reader's response, the author’s stated intentions, or parallels between the text and historical contexts (such as the author's life), formalists concentrate on the relationships within the text that give it its own distinctive character or form. Special attention is paid to repetition, particularly of images or symbols, but also of sound effects and rhythms in poetry.

Because of the importance placed on close analysis and the stress on the text as a carefully crafted, orderly object containing observable formal patterns, formalism has often been seen as an attack on Romanticism and impressionism, particularly impressionistic criticism. It has sometimes been even called an "objective" approach to literature. Formalists are more likely than others to believe and say that the meaning of a text can be known objectively. For instance, reader-response critics see meaning as a function either of each reader's experience or of the norms that govern a particular "interpretive community," and deconstructors argue that texts mean opposite things at the same time.

Formalism was originally based on essays written during the 1920s and 1930s by T. S. Eliot, I. A. Richards, and William Empson. It was significantly developed later by a group of American poets and critics, including R. P. Blackmur, CLEANTH BERNERS, John Crowe Ransom, Allen Tate, Robert Penn Warren, and William K. Wimsatt. Although we associate formalism with certain principles and terms (such as the "Affective Fallacy" and the "Intentional Fallacy" as defined by Wimsatt and Monroe C. Beardsley), formalists were trying to make a cultural statement rather than establish a critical dogma. Generally, Southern, religious, and culturally conservative, they advocated the inherent value of literary works (particularly of literary works regarded as beautiful art objects) because they were sick of the growing ugliness of modern life and contemporary events. Some recent theorists even suggest that the rising popularity of formalism after World War II was a feature of American isolationism, the formalist tendency to isolate literature from biography and history being a manifestation of the American fatigue with wider involvements.

READER-RESPONSE CRITICISM  An approach to literature that, as its name implies, considers the way readers respond to texts, as they read. Stanley Fish describes the method by saying that it substitutes for one question, "What does this sentence mean?" a more operational question, "What does this sentence do?" Reader-response criticism shares with deconstruction a strong textual orientation and a reluctance to define a single meaning for a work. Along with psychoanalytic criticism, it shares an interest in the dynamics of mental response to textual cues.

PSYCHOANALYTIC CRITICISM  Grounded in the psychoanalytic theories of Sigmund Freud, it is one of the oldest critical methodologies still in use. Freud's view that works of literature, like dreams, express secret, unconscious desires led to criticism that interpreted literary works as manifestations of the authors' neuroses. More recently, psychoanalytic critics have come to see literary works as skillfully crafted artifacts that may appeal to our neuroses by tapping into our repressed wishes and fantasies. Other forms of psychological criticism that diverge from Freud, although they ultimately derive from his insights, include those based on the theories of Carl Jung and Jacques Lacan.

FEMINIST CRITICISM  An aspect of the feminist movement whose primary goals include critiquing masculine-dominated language and literature by showing how they reflect a masculine ideology; writing the history of unknown or undervalued women writers; thereby earning them their rightful place in the literary canon; and helping create a climate in which women's creativity may be fully realized and appreciated.

MARXIST CRITICISM  An approach that treats literary texts as material products, describing them in broadly historical terms. In Marxist criticism, the text is viewed in terms of its production and consumption, as a product of work that does identifiable cultural work of its own. Following Karl Marx, the founder of communism, Marxist critics have used the terms "base" to refer to economic reality and "superstructure" to refer to the corresponding or "homologous" infrastructure consisting of politics, law, philosophy, religion, and the arts. Also following Marx, they have used the word "ideology" to refer to that set of cultural beliefs that literary works at once reproduce, resist, and revise.
DECONSTRUCTION  A poststructuralist approach to literature that is strongly influenced by the writings of the French philosopher Jacques Derrida. Derrida, who coined the term “deconstruction,” suggested that the Western mind tends to think in terms of binary oppositions (light/dark, masculine/feminine, cause/effect, presence/absence). When we read, consequently, we look for ways in which a text means one thing and not another.

Derrida attempts to show, in readings of Rousseau’s Confessions and Plato’s Phaedrus, that texts can defy logic’s “law” of noncontradiction. They can mean both “A” and “not-A”; they can mean opposite things at the same time.

“What Derrida does in his reading of Plato,” Barbara Johnson explains, “is to unfold dimensions of Plato’s text that work against the grain of (Plato’s own) Platonic.” J. Hillis Miller, the leading American practitioner of deconstruction, points out that “deconstruction is not a dismantling of the structure of a text but a demonstration that it has already dismantled itself.”

Deconstruction is, in part, a response to structuralism and to formalism. Formalists relied on close readings of individual works to determine meaning, giving patterns of imagery, sound, rhythm, allusion, and other rhetorical devices. Although they were interested in ambiguities, they tended to resolve ambiguity in interpretation. Structuralists relied on the linguistic theory of Ferdinand de Saussure and also on semiotics or semiology (the study of signs) in their attempt to identify the organizing principles, not only of individual works but also of whole classes of stories or myths.

Deconstructors, like structuralists, are highly interested in linguistic theory and its implications for literary criticism. Like formalists they practice close reading, often devoting several intricate paragraphs to a single, ambiguous passage. But there most of the similarities end. Deconstructors tend to leave a work ambiguous or “undecidable”; indeed, they would subvert the search for the structure of a passage, or work, or set of works. They would suspend the quest for the form or pattern of artistic effects that makes a text mean black and not white, life and not death, one thing and not another. They would have us see that, as Jonathan Culler puts it, when “one reads the structure of a literary work, one does so from a certain vantage point: one starts with notions of the meaning or effects of a poem and tries to identify the structures responsible for those effects. Possible configurations or patterns that make no contributions are rejected as irrelevant.”

Deconstruction has fostered a body of highly imaginative, even playful, works of criticism: essays and books that some (including some deconstructors) would call metafictions, that is, fictions about fictions. Deconstruction has also proved useful to critics who are interested in political problems and relationships — both within literary works and in the world they represent. For feminist critics, for example, the same “logic” that Derrida would call into question can cause us to see women as women and men as men, and not to see instructive connections, say, between white women and minority men. To a new historicist critic, the same deconstructive moves that can reveal the “other side” of a text may also help reveal what else the past may have to tell us.

See also: Feminist Criticism, Formalism, New Historicism, Oppositions, Semiotics, Structuralism.
Unlearning the Myths That Bind Us

Critiquing Fairy Tales and Films

By Linda Christensen

I was nourished on the milk of American culture: I cleaned the dwarves’ house and waited for Prince Charming to bring me life; I played Minnie Mouse to Mickey’s flower-bearing adoration; and, later, I swooned in Rhett Butler’s arms — my waist as narrow and my bosom every bit as heaving as Scarlett’s. But my daddy didn’t own a plantation; he owned a rough and tumble bar frequented by loggers and fishermen. My waist didn’t dip into an hourglass; in fact, according to the novels I read, my thick ankles doomed me to be cast as the peasant woman weeping bay while the heroine swept by with her handsome man in hot pursuit.

Our students suckle the same pop. They learn that women are passive, men are strong, and people of color are either absent or evil. Our society’s culture industry colonizes their minds and teaches them how to act, live, and think. The “secret education” of Chil- en writer Arlet Dorfman’s book, delivered by children’s books and movies, is the most direct method to socialize the young as it is portrayed in these social blueprints. And all of this website depicts the notion of one sex, one race, one class, or one country over a weaker counterpart. My student Omar said, “When we read children’s books, we aren’t just reading one little story, we are discovering the tools with which a young society is manipulated.”

More than social primers, these tales, filled with dukes and damsels and elephants in green suits, inhibit the abilities of older students to question and argue with the texts they read. Children’s literature is perhaps the most influential genre read. As my colleague Bill Bigelow noted, young people, unpro}

Friele says, instead of wrestling with the words and ideas presented.

My goal is to give students the tools to criticize every story that pulverizes or legitimizes social inequality — every story that teaches them they are incapable of imagining and building a fundamentally equal and just society.

Children shouldn’t be taught that domination is normal or nice or funny. That’s why we watch The Little Mermaid and read The Ugly Duckling in my high school English classes.

Exposing the Myths: How to Read Cartoons

We begin by reading the preface and first chapter of Arlet Dorfman’s book, The Empire’s Old Clothes, subtitled, “What the Lone Ranger, Barbie, and other innocent heroes do to our minds.” I ask students to read Dorfman and keep track of their responses in a dialogue journal which consists of a paper folded in half from the top to the bottom. They quote or paraphrase Dorfman on the left side of the paper and argue, agree, or question him on the right. Dorfman writes in his book:

“Industrially produced fiction has become one of the primary shapers of our emotions and our intellects in the twentieth century. Although these stories are supposed to merely entertain us, they constantly give us a secret edu-
cation. We are not only taught certain stereotypes of violence, the latest fashions, and sex roles by TV, movies, magazines, and comic strips; we are also taught how to succeed, how to love, how to be, how to compete, how to forget the past and suppress the future. We are taught more than anything else, how not to rebel.”

Thus, according to Dorfman’s notion that children receive a “secret education.” Do they remember any incidents from their own childhood that support his allegations? This is difficult for some students. The dialogue journal spurs them to argue, to talk back, to create a conversation with the writer. Dorfman is controversial. He gets under their skin. Many of them don’t want to believe that they have been manipulated by children’s books or advertising. As Dorfman writes:

“There has also been a tendency to avoid scrutinizing these mass media products too closely, to avoid asking the sort of hard questions that can yield disquieting answers. It is not strange that this should be so. The industry itself has declared time and again with great forcefulness that it is innocent, that no hidden motives or implications are lurking behind the cheerful faces it generates.

Dorfman’s desire “to dissect those dreams, the ones that nourished my childhood and adolescence, that continued to infect so many of my adult habits” bothered Justice, a senior in my Contemporary Literature and Society class a few years ago. In her dialogue journal she responded:

“Personally, handling the discussion of dreams has been a major cause of depression for me. Not so much dissecting — but how I react to what is found as a result of the operation. It can be overwhelming and discouraging to find out my whole self image has been formed mostly by others or undereat my worries about what I look like in years (17 of them) of being exposed to TV images of girls and their set roles given to them by TV and the media. It’s painful to deal with. The idea of not being completely responsible for how I feel about things today is scary. So why discuss the dreams? Why not stay ignorant about them and happy? The reason for me is that those dreams are not unrelated to my everyday life. They

Influence how I behave, think, react to things. . . . My dreams keep me from dealing with an unpleasant reality.”

In looking back through this passage and others in Justice’s dialogue with Dorfman, Justice displayed discomfort with purely her ideas, with discovering where she received her ideas, and yet she also gravely admitted how necessary this process was if she wanted to move beyond where she was at the time. Her discomfort might also have arisen from feeling incapable of changing herself or changing the standards by which she is judged in the larger society. In a later section of her journal, she writes, “True death equals a generation living by rules and attitudes they never questioned and producing more children who do the same.”

Justice’s reaction is typical of many students. She was beginning to peel back the veneer covering some of the injustice in our society. She appreciated the importance of constructing a more liberatory set of possibilities for girls and women, but at the same time was overwhelmed by the hollowness of this task — uncertain if she would have anything to hang on to after she began dismantling her old values.

Charting Stereotypes

To help students both dismantle those old values and reconstruct more just ones, I carry twin objectives with me when we begin this study of children’s culture: first, to critique portrayals of hierarchy and inequality, but also to equip students in imagining a better world, characterized by relationships of mutual respect and equality. We start by watching cartoons and children’s movies — Bugs Bunny,
Popeye, Daffy Duck, and Hackle and Jackie videos in one class; in my freshman class we also watched Disney's *The Little Mermaid*. On first viewing, students sometimes missed critical analysis. Kamuel said, "This is just a dumb little cartoon with some ducks running around in clothes." Then they notice the absence of female characters in many of the cartoons. When women do appear, they look like Jessica Rabbit or Phyllis Ferguson. We keep track of the appearance of pigs, color in classic children's movies—Cinderella, Sleeping Beauty, Snow White. We look at the roles women, men, people of color, and poor people take in these films. We also cover men's roles. As they view each episode, they fill in a chart. Here is a partial sample from the ninth grade class evaluation of *The Little Mermaid*.

**Women's Roles:**

- Ariel: Pretty, white, shapely, kind. Goal: Marry the prince.
- Ulula: Fat, white, mean. Goal: Get back at Triton, power.
- Maid: Chubby, confused, nice, white. Goals: Meals on time, clean clothes.

**People of Color:** None, although Sebastian the crab is Jamaican and the court musician.

**Poor People:** Servants. No poor people have major roles.

After filling in a couple of charts, collectively and on their own, students write about the generalizations children might take away from these tales. The ninth graders are quick to point out the stereotypical roles on their own. "Look, Ulula the sea witch is ugly and smart. The young, pretty ones only want to look for their man; the old, pretty ones are mean, because they are losing their looks." Kamuel noticed that people of color and poor people are either absent or servants to the rich, white, pretty people. Tyler points out that the roles of men are limited as well. Men must be virile and wield power, or be old and the object of "good-natured" humor.

Both the freshmen and the seniors write critiques of the cartoons, targeting parents or teachers as an audience. Mike, a senior two years ago, attacked the racist in these Sunday morning rituals. Because of her familiarity with Native American cultures, her analysis was more developed:

"Indians in Looney Tunes are also inferior humans. These characters are stereotypical in the greatest degree, carrying tomahawks, painting their faces, and sending smoke signals as their only means of communication. They live in tepees and their language reminds the viewer of Neanderthals. We begin to imagine Indians as savages with bows and arrows and long black braids. There's no room in our minds for knowledge of the differences between tribes, like the Cherokee alphabets or Caddo syllable fiction."

**A Black Cinderella?**

Kaney, a freshman, sociales parent in her essay, "A Black Cinderella? Give Me A Break." "Have you ever seen a Black person, an Asian, a Hispanic in a cartoon? Did they have a leading role or were they a servant? What do you think this is doing to your child's mind?" She ended her piece, "Women who aren't White begin to feel left out and ugly because they never get to play the princess."

Kaney's piece brought with anger at a society that rarely acknowledges the wit or beauty of women of her race. But she wasn't alone in her feelings. Sabrina wrote, "I'm not taking my kids to see any Walt Disney movies until they have a Black woman playing the leading role." They wanted the race of the character changed, but they didn't challenge the class or underlying gender inequities that also accompany the lives of Cinderellas, Ariel, and Snow White.

Kaney's and Sabrina's anger is justified. There should be more women of color who play the leads in these white-on-white wedding cake tales. But I want them to understand that in the realm of the main character is the only thing changing. Injustice will remain. We read Mary Carter Smith's delightful re-telling of Cinderella, "Cindy Ellis, A Modern Fairytale Tale," which reads like laughter—bubbly, warm, spilling over with infectious good humor and playfulness. In Smith's version, Cindy Ellis, who lives in East Baltimore, was "one pretty young black girl, her skin like black velvet." Her father, "like so many good men, was weak for a pretty face and big legs and big hips." Her stepmother "had a heart as hard as a rock. The mists of human kindness had spilled in her breast. But she did have a pretty face, big legs, and great hips. . . Well, that fool man fell right into that woman's trap." Cindy Ellis and step-sisters were "two big-footed, ugly girls" who made Cindy Ellis wait on them hand and foot. When the "pretty white folks, the good Asian folks, and the good black folks all turned out and voted for a good black brother, running for mayor" there was cause for celebration, and a chance for Cindy Ellis to meet her Prince Charming, the mayor's son. With the help of African American and High John the Conqueror Root, Cindy Ellis looked like an "African Princess." Her legs turned into a dazzling dress of pink. African lace! Her hair was braided into a hundred shining braids, and the end of each braid were beads of pure gold! Gold bracelets covered her arms, up to her elbows. Oh, it's so easy to hang five small diamond earrings. On the tiny feet were delicate golden sandals encrusted with dazzling jewel!

Cindy Ellis was left behind! The students and I love the story, it is well told and incorporates rich details that do exactly what Sabrina, Kenya, and their classmates wanted—celebrate the beauty, culture, and language of African Americans. It also puts forth the possibility of cross-race alliances for social change.

But, like the original tale, Cindy Ellis's main goal in life is not working to and the plight of the homeless or teaching kids to read. Her goal, like Cinderella the First, is to get her man. Both young women are transformed and made beautiful through new clothes, new jewels, new hairstyles. Both have chauffeurs who deliver them to their man. Cindy Ellis and Cinderella are nicer and kinder and their step-sisters, but the Prince and Tonsant, the mayor's son, don't know that. Both of the C-girks compete for their men against their sisters and the rest of the single women in their city. They seem "win" because of their beauty and their ability to be acceptable. Both of these tales leave African American and white women with two myths: happiness means getting a man, and transformations from wretched conditions can be achieved through new clothes and a new hairstyle.

I am uncomfortable with these myths, I don't want students to believe that change will happen, nor do I want them thinking that the pinnacle of a woman's life is "I do" that supposedly leads them to a "happily ever after." I don't want my women stu-

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**Rethinking 'The Three Little Pigs'**

By Ellen Wolpert

There's scarcely a parent or young child who isn't familiar with "The Three Little Pigs." It has a simple plot line, one that usually involves protection from insects and animals or, in many cases, a transformation to something else. But in "Three Little Pigs," there is no transformation; the pigs are transformed by the very same mechanism that the wolf uses to overcome the piglets. The pigs are transformed into vessels for human consumption, not into something else. In this society, where the wolf is the predator and the pig is the prey, the pigs are transformed into something else.

By Ellen Wolpert is the director of the Washington-Beech Community PreSchool in Baiton.
I don't want my students to believe that change can be bought at the mall.

What's the point? There isn't one. The show is based on fighting the 'bad guy,' Shredder. Demonstrating no concern for the inhuman beings, they battle and fight, but never get hurt. This cartoon teaches a false sense of violence to kids: fight and you don't get hurt or solve problems through fight and words instead of words. Grade: D

POPEYE: This show oozes with horrific messages from Popeye. Olive Oyl to the hero 'man.' Popeye. This cartoon portrays ethnic groups as stupid. It is political also — teaching children that Americans are the land and conquer others. Grade: F

On the back of the pamphlet, they listed some tips for parents to guide them in wise cartoon selection.

Most of the other students wrote articles they hoped to publish in various local and national newspapers or magazines. (See p. 8) Cathlin wrote about the sexual stereotyping and adoration of beauty in children's movies. Her article described how she and other teenage girls carry these messages with them still:

"Women's roles in fairy tales distort reality — from Jessica Rabbit's slapstick in Who Framed Roger Rabbit? to Cinderella's Olympic vanity in Peter Pan. These seemingly innocent stories teach us to look for our faults. At The Little Mermaid, Ariel is a mirror only to find that her happy time is simply too big. This shows us how to turn the mirror into an enemy. And this scenario is repeated in girls' locker rooms all over the world... Because we can never look like Cinderella, we begin to hate ourselves.

The Barbie syndrome starts as we build a life-long search for the perfect body. Crash diets, fat phobias, and an obsession with the materialistic become commonplace. The belief that a product will make us care above all our competition, our friends, turn us into addicts. Our fix is Calvin Klein push-up bras, Gucci jeans, Chanel lipstick, and the latest in suede flats. We don't call it obsession; we call it good taste. And soon it feels awkward going to the mall without makeup.

Cathlin hopes to publish her piece in a magazine for young women so they will begin to question the standards by which they judge themselves.

The writing in these articles is tighter and cleaner because it has the potential for a real audience beyond the classroom walls. The possibility of publishing their pieces changed the level of students' intensity for the project. Anne, who turned in hastily written drafts last year, said, "Five drafts and I'm not finished yet!"

But more importantly, students saw themselves as actors in the world; they were fueled by the opportunity to convey some parents of the long-lasting effects cartoons impose on their children or to enlighten their peers about the roots of some of their insecurities. Instead of leaving students full of bile, standing around with their hands on their hips, shaking their heads about how horrible the media is, we provided them the opportunity to make a difference.

Linda Christiansen teaches English at Reethinking Schools school association.

Work Credits:
What fairy tales teach children about stepmothers and betrayal

(dy Marina Warner)

In many fairy tales, the stepmother is a complex figure, often struggling to maintain control over the household and the children. The stepmother's role is often depicted as one of evil and manipulation, but this is a product of the stories' messages and the cultural context in which they were created.

In the story of Cinderella, the stepmother is portrayed as a selfish and cruel figure who tries to prevent Cinderella from attending the ball. She is motivated by her own desire for power and control over the household. This is a common trope in fairy tales, where the stepmother is often depicted as the villain.

In other stories, such as Snow White, the stepmother is portrayed as a more nuanced figure, with mixed emotions and motivations. She is often depicted as a figure of sympathy and compassion, who tries to protect her own children from the dangers of the outside world.

In both cases, the stepmother's role is a reflection of the cultural and social norms of the time. The stepmother's character is often used to teach children about the dangers of hubris and the importance of kindness and compassion.

In sum, fairy tales teach children about the complexities of familial relationships and the importance of empathy and understanding. They provide a window into the cultural and social norms of the time, and offer a valuable lesson for all ages.

We Can Do It!
II. Explanation of your literary theory

Explain your theory. Make sure that you clearly show that you know the broad outlines as well as the details of the theory. Critical criteria must be stated, clarified, and applied with a variety of significant and precise details, examples, and anecdotes.

You MUST use at least one of the articles the teacher provided in class and provide plenty of references to it through the use of parenthetical documentation.

You must attach the actual articles or photocopies of the portions of the class-provided articles you cite to your paper, highlighting the exact sections you used.

Remember that if you do use direct quoted from sources, make sure you consult the MLA style manual and class handouts including guidelines to follow when using direct quotes. These are tricky!

You may supplement your understanding of the theory by finding other books or articles on literary theory on your own. If you do find your own sources, you must attach photocopies of portions you cite to your paper, highlighting the exact sections you used.

Hint: Authors you may want to look for are Bruno Bettelheim, Madonna Kolbenschlag, Raman Selden or Terry Eagleton.

III. Retelling of your chosen fairy or folk tale's plot/characters/conflict/etc.

Feel free to choose a tale with several different versions available. You may choose to focus on one variation and compare it to others. In fact, it may be fun to use parodies of familiar stories such as those available in James Finn Garner's series, Politically Correct Bedtime Stories, or Sue and Allen Galleghugh's Bedtime Stories for Grown-Ups: Fairy Tale Psychology.

Your retelling of the story must not be too lengthy. Be sure to clearly state much of the story (plot, characters, conflict, etc.) which would be of most interest to the specific literary theory under discussion. It should be clear, for example, when a Marxist theorist retells Hansel and Gretel that he or she really sounds like a Marxist theorist. Eliminate retelling parts of the story which will be of no interest to your Marxist analysis, but do not misrepresent or change the basic plot of the story. IN THIS SECTION, DO NOT GET INTO INTERPRETATION, ANALYSIS, or EVALUATION! That will come later in the paper.

In addition, the retelling must also be very slanted in terms of the narrator's own individual background, personality, experiences, motivations, etc.

You will need to attach a copy of the tale to the paper for the teacher to use to do documentation checks on this section. State from the outset which source you used for your re-telling. As you retell the story cite the source periodically for the convenience of your reader. It often works best to do this episodically.

IV. Analysis and Evaluation of the tale based on your literary theory

This is the section of the paper where you "put it all together." In this most important section, you will apply the literary theory to the tale by interpreting the tale's messages (themes), symbols, repetitions, underlying meaning, characters' motivations, etc. These interpretations must clearly show your understanding of the theory. You will, of course, be using citations to document the points you are making in this section.
V. Conclusion

Finish by reviewing fully the major sections of lecture and by closing the lecture in an interesting, effective way.

STYLE – 10 points

1. The paper must be written in the persona of an original narrator whose voice and life story are different from your own.
2. Precise, subtle word choice clearly conveys the critical approach. Analysis of the ideas, topics or themes must accurately apply advanced critical techniques.
3. The paper must reflect a sophisticated tailoring of message to a clear audience implied through elements such as word choice, details and style.
4. Verb tense can be present (as it’s happening) or past (as if the class period is now history, and you are reflecting on it).

WRITING CONVENTIONS – 20 points

1. Three to five pages (typed, New York or Geneva font, 12 point)
2. Minimum of five paragraphs (sections)
3. The paper must demonstrate control of conventions that is skilled in nuances and enhances the paper’s purpose as well as employ varied prose strategies.
4. The paper must be technically accurate, showing clear evidence of editing. Observe all MLA manuscript form requirements. If you use dialogue consult class hand-outs for the proper MSF.
5. Separate "spot" documentation checks will be included in the grading. You must attach photocopies/print-outs of three separate citations from your paper. One must be one of the required sources given in class. The second must be from your folk tale. The third must be a source cited from your analysis/evaluation section of your paper. You are required to highlight the specific parts of the information you used right on your photocopies/print-outs AND the corresponding places in your paper where these sources are cited. Use a different color highlighter for each documentation check.

These sources will be checked carefully in three ways:

a. that you have understood and used the sources’ information correctly
b. that there is no evidence of plagiarism
c. that you have followed the correct manuscript form requirements in the citing of these sources

EXTRA CREDIT CHALLENGES

You may earn up to three extra credit points on this paper for:

a. using five extra-credit vocabulary words correctly (+1 ec) AND/OR
b. using two professors representing two different literary theories instead of one

The professors will compare and contrast differing interpretations of the tale (+1-2 ec).

Literary Theory Paper

WALLY'S ARTICLES

AUTHOR CREDENTIALS

Ann B. Dobie
Ann Brewster Dobie, who wrote Theory Into Practice: An Introduction to Literary Criticism, attended Columbia and received an Ed.D. in the teaching of writing. She is professor emeritus in the Department of English at the University of Southwestern Louisiana at Lafayette. She taught there for over 30 years. She is currently (2004) the Director of the National Writing Project of Acadia and works with teachers to improve the teaching of writing. She has edited other books such as Something in Common: Contemporary Louisiana Stories (1991) and Uncommonplace (1999).

Dr. Charles E. Bressler
Professor of English
Department of English
Houghton College

Dr. Bressler received his BA degree in English from Wilkes University, Wilkes-Barre, Pa., his MS in education from the University of Scranton, Scranton, PA, and his Ph.D. from the University of Georgia, Athens, GA. He has taught in the public schools of Abbeville County, Maryland for three years and at the college level for 28 years. His various publications include an introductory text on literary theory entitled Literary Criticism: An Introduction to Theory and Practice (3rd ed. Prentice Hall, 2003) and forthcoming text entitled Of Welcome and Wonder (Nouvelle Dame University Press) tracing the influences of O. C. Chesterton and George MacDonald on the lives and writings of Charles Williams, C. S. Lewis, and J. R. R. Tolkien. Dr. Bressler is married to Dr. Darlene Bressler, Ph.D., Chair of the Education Department of Houghton College, Houghton, NY 14744


Deborah Appleman is the Class of 1944 Professor of Educational Studies and the Liberal Arts and director of the Summer Writing Program at Carleton College in Northfield, Minnesota. Professor Appleman earned her doctorate in 1986 from the University of Minnesota. A former president of the Minnesota Council of Teachers of English, she currently serves on the executive committee of the National Council of Teachers of English's Conference on English Education. She has been a member of NCTE's Standing Committee on Research and served as co-chair of NCTE's Assembly for Research as well as the special interest group in literature for the American Educational Research Association.

Professor Appleman was a high school English teacher for 9 years, working in both urban and suburban schools. She continues to work weekly in high schools with students and teachers. Professor Appleman's primary research interests include adolescent response to literature, multicultural literature, adolescent response to poetry, and the teaching of literary theory in high school. She is the author of many articles and book chapters, and, with an editorial board of classroom teachers, helped create the multicultural anthology Braided Lives.

More
Literary Theory Paper
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http://2003.learningconference.com/ProposalSystem/Presentations/P000371
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Frankenstein
Literary Theories Articles

About the Contributors

THE VOLUME EDITOR

Johanna M. Smith is an assistant professor of English at the University of Texas at Arlington, where she teaches eighteenth- and nineteenth-century literature. She has written on novels by Jane Austen, Harriet Beecher Stowe, Joseph Conrad, and Raymond Chandler and has completed a book on sister-brother incest in nineteenth-century texts. She is currently working on a study of representations of nineteenth-century working-class politics.

THE CRITICS

David Collings is an assistant professor of English at Bowdoin College, where he teaches gender theory and romanticism. He has published on Samuel Taylor Coleridge and is completing a book on William Wordsworth.

Lee E. Heller is an assistant professor in the School of Humanities and Arts at Hampshire College, where she teaches courses in American literature. She has published studies on the novels of Henry James and Herman Melville and is preparing a book on the novel as popular literature.

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Hamlet

Literture Theories Articles

About the Contributors

THE VOLUME EDITOR

Susanne L. Wofford is associate professor of English at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. In addition to articles on Spenser and Shakespeare, she has written The Choice of Achilles: The Ideology of Figure in the Epic (1992). She is currently completing a book on Shakespeare entitled Theatrical Power: The Politics of Representation on the Shakespearean Stage.

THE CRITICS

Janet Adelman is professor of English at the University of California at Berkeley. In addition to articles on Shakespeare, she is the author of Suffocating Mothers: Fantasies of Maternal Origin in Shakespeare's Plays, "Hamlet" to The Tempest (1992), and The Common Liar: An Essay on Antony and Cleopatra, (1973).

Michael D. Bristol is professor of English at McGill University in Montreal. In addition to essays on Shakespeare, theater, and cultural history and theory, he is author of Shakespeare's America/America's Shakespeare (1990) and Carnival and Theater: Plebeian Culture and the Structure of Authority in Renaissance England (1985).

Karin S. Coddon is assistant professor of English at Brown University. She has published numerous essays on Shakespeare, Renaissance drama, and postmodern popular culture.

Marjorie Garber is professor of English at Harvard University and director of Harvard's Center for Literary and Cultural Studies. In addition to essays on Shakespeare, Renaissance drama, and cultural studies, she has written four books: Vested Interests: Cross-Dressing and Cultural Anxiety (1991), Shakespeare's Ghost Writers: Literature as Uncanny Causality (1987), Coming of Age in Shakespeare (1981), and Dream in Shakespeare: From Metaphor to Metamorphosis (1974). She was also the editor of Cannibals, Witches, and Divorce: Estranging the Renaissance (1987).


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LITERARY THEORY PAPER WORKS CITED HELP SHEET
rev. term 2 '01-'02

Most of the information you will use will probably be articles or chapters taken from books. This is the basic format for

A WORKS CITED ENTRY FOR PART OF A BOOK


Here is the works cited information for the specific literary theory articles given to you in class. You must use AT LEAST ONE OF THEM. The information provided below is NOT in the correct order called for in the actual works cited page.

It is up to you to consult the separate handouts given to take this information and rearrange it so that it is written up in the correct order and format.

Formalist Criticism articles


Reader-Response Criticism article


Marxist Criticism article


Psychoanalytic Criticism article(s)


or


or


Feminist Criticism articles


or


Deconstruction Criticism article(s)


New Historicism Criticism article(s)


The pink one-page handout entitled "Some Theories of Literary Criticism"
Treat this material as if you had the original pages in front of you.
Here are the pages for the individual entries:

2. "Deconstruction" p. 345

Here is the information needed for the articles from the chapter "Critical Approaches to Literature"

The first part is a quick overview explaining the concept of "literary theory." That part was on pp. 1931-1932.
Here are the specific pages for the article you have attached:

- the section on Formalism -- pp. 1922-1933
- the section on Biographical Criticism -- pp. 1937-1939
- the section on Historical Criticism -- pp. 1942-1943
- the section on Psychological Criticism -- pp. 1947-1950
- the section on Gender Criticism -- pp. 1959-1960
- the section on Reader-Response Criticism -- pp. 1963-1966
- the section on Deconstructionist Criticism -- pp. 1968-1969
- the section on Cultural Criticism -- pp. 1973-1976
**LITERARY THEORIES PAPER GRADING SHEET**

(70 points)

What worked? What didn’t? What challenged you? Of what are you proud? What might you have done differently? What have you learned? Share what you’d like. WRITE YOUR RESPONSE BELOW:

---

### CONTENT

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1. Introduction</th>
<th>5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Overall effectiveness of the intro/opening remarks</td>
<td>-1 to -3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* interesting, engaging, unique, attention-getting, draws reader in*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduce yourself, credentials, experience, background, establish professor’s personality, etc.</td>
<td>-1 to -3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purpose statement/thesis is effective, clear, follows order of paper, etc.</td>
<td>-1 to -3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2. SECTION I: EXPLANATION OF YOUR LITERARY THEORY</th>
<th>10</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Which theory?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Explanation of your literary theory is accurate, clear, complete, and leaves no doubt that you fully understand the theory. Make sure that you clearly show that you know the broad outline as well as the details of the theory.</td>
<td>-1 to -3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Examples/anecdotes provided to help develop the depth of explanation. Critical criteria must be stated, clarified, and applied with a variety of significant and precise details, examples, and anecdotes.</td>
<td>-1 to -3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Explanation is unified. All material present contributes effectively to the explanation.</td>
<td>-1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>This section is organized logically and is balanced.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>This section is coherent, transitions are used effectively both between and within paragraphs to promote coherence.</td>
<td>-1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

### SECTION I: DOCUMENTATION

-1

-1 to -3

1. Use (and attachment) of at least one of the class-provided articles.
   - Remember to pre-highlight the exact sections you used.

1 to -3

2. **DOCUMENTATION/CITATIONS** are provided for virtually all material in this section that needs to be cited. In other words, credit is given where credit is due.

1 to -3

3. **DOCUMENTATION SPOT CHECK #1** (p. ___ source ID ___ , p. ____ ) author, etc.

---

### PROBLEMS (circled):

- For direct quotations:
  - Direct quotation isn’t quoted *exactly* as it appeared in the original
  - Quoted material stands alone. No effective lead-in statement is present.
  - In-text acknowledgement of author (w/ credentials) of directly quoted material not given
  - Material isn’t found in the original.
  - Interpretation of the original material is inaccurate.
  - Other problem(s): ____________________________ |

- For paraphrased citations:
  - Paraphrasing of original material raises suspicion of plagiarism. Wording too close to original.
  - Interpretation of the original material is inaccurate.
  - In-text acknowledgement of author (w/ credentials) of paraphrased material not given
  - Material isn’t found in the original.
  - Other problem(s): ____________________________ |

### RETELLING OF STORY

10

Which story? ____________________________

Author? ____________________________

Summary of story’s plot, characters, conflict, setting, etc.
-1 to -3

- clearly emphasize parts of the story (plot, characters, conflict, etc.) which would be of most interest to the specific literary theory under discussion.
- unity: eliminates retelling parts of the story which will be of no interest to your theory; all material present contributes effectively to the explanation.
- does not misrepresent or change the basic plot of the story.
- DOES NOT REPLACE RETELLING WITH INTERPRETATION, ANALYSIS, or EVALUATION! (save this for the “analysis section”)

- summary of story is not too lengthy.

Written in the viewpoint of the critic/narrator due to his/her personal interest in the literary theory and his or her personal biases, individual background, personality personal experiences, motivations, etc.

Specific in-text acknowledgement of author/version/source of original story which was used for retelling is present

-1

This section is organized logically and is balanced.

-1

This section is coherent; transitions are used effectively both between and within paragraphs to promote coherence.

-1
SECTION 2: DOCUMENTATION

COPY OF THE TALE IS ATTACHED for documentation checks.

DOCUMENTATION/CITATIONS are provided for virtually all material in this section that needs to be cited. In other words, credit is given where credit is due.

DOCUMENTATION IS PRESENTED EPISODICALLY

As you retell the story, cite the source periodically for the convenience of your reader.

DOCUMENTATION SPOT CHECK #2 (p. ____, source ID _____, p. _____)

PROBLEMS (circled):

For direct quotations:
• Direct quotation isn't quoted exactly as it appeared in the original
• Quoted material stands alone. No effective lead-in statement is present.
• In-text acknowledgement of author (w/ credentials) of directly quoted material not given
• Material isn't found in the original.
• Interpretation of the original material is inaccurate.
• Other problem(s): __________

For paraphrased citations:
• Paraphrasing of original material raises suspicion of plagiarism. Wording too close to original.
• Interpretation of the original material is inaccurate.
• In-text acknowledgement of author (w/ credentials) of paraphrased material not given
• Material isn't found in the original.
• Other problem(s): __________

4. ANALYSIS/APPLICATION OF THEORY TO THE STORY

MEANING/MAIN THEMES AND EVALUATION OF TALE'S EFFECTIVENESS IN REPRESENTING THE THEORY

Sound, accurate, logical analysis and application of theory to the story.

Apply the literary theory to the tale by interpreting the tale's messages (themes), symbols, repetitions, underlying meaning, characters' motivations, etc. These interpretation must clearly show the depth of your understanding of the theory.

The analysis is unified. All material present contributes effectively to the explanation.

Examples/anecdotes provided and full development of their application.

Written in the viewpoint of the narrator due to his/her personal interest in the literary theory and his/her personal biases, individual background, personality, personal experiences, motivations, etc.

Evaluation of the value of the tale as representative of the theory.

Specific points of analysis and evaluation must reflect a mature understanding of the critical approach.

This section is organized logically and is balanced.

This section is coherent; transitions are used effectively both between and within paragraphs to promote coherence.

SECTION 3: DOCUMENTATION

DOCUMENTATION/CITATIONS are provided for virtually all material in this section that needs to be cited. In other words, credit is given where credit is due.

DOCUMENTATION SPOT CHECK #3 (p. ____, source ID _____, p. _____)

PROBLEMS (circled):

For direct quotations:
• Direct quotation isn't quoted exactly as it appeared in the original
• Quoted material stands alone. No effective lead-in statement is present.
• In-text acknowledgement of author (w/ credentials) of directly quoted material not given
• Material isn't found in the original.
• Interpretation of the original material is inaccurate.
• Other problem(s): __________

For paraphrased citations:
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• Interpretation of the original material is inaccurate.
• In-text acknowledgement of author (w/ credentials) of paraphrased material not given
• Material isn't found in the original.
• Other problem(s): __________

Conclusion

Paper transitions smoothly into conclusion
Reviews fully the 3 major sections of the paper
Closing statements logical and conclusive
Sense of closure present (beyond summarizing) with interesting, finalizing "closing statement/discussion"
Conclusion is organized logically. Summary is balanced.

STYLe

CREATIVITY/ORIGINALITY
• the diction, originality, detail, and sentences handle the material effectively and engagingly

VOICE
• the extent to which narrator VOICE is developed throughout the paper with precise, subtle word choice which conveys the complexity of human behavior

SENTENCE STRUCTURE/OVERALL ORGANIZATION
• sentence structure is purposeful, well-crafted and clearly differentiates narrator voice from other characters' voices from author's own person voice and style
• organization is clearly present, naturally complementing and enhancing the content
You can buy back up to ___/20 "writing convention" points by making
a + b + c corrections by __________. (due date)

"Writing Conventions" consists of two areas:
- MANUSCRIPT FORM
  a. ____ (total points off) REGULAR MSF (manuscript form) ERRORS (-1 each)
  b. ____ (total points off) MSF DOCUMENTATION SPOT CHECKS (-1 each)

-1 to -3

DOCUMENTATION SPOT CHECK #1 (p. ____ source ID ____ p. ____)

PROBLEMS (circled):
For direct quotations:
• incorrect msf of the direct quotation (DQ)
• incorrect msf of the parenthetical documentation of the direct quotation.
• incorrect use of ellipsis points in square brackets [. . .] for omissions, square brackets for interpolation, [sic] for errors in the originals
• Other problem(s): __________

For paraphrased citations:
• incorrect msf of the paraphrased citation
• incorrect msf of parenthetical documentation of the paraphrased citation
• Other problem(s): __________

DOCUMENTATION SPOT CHECK #2 (p. ____ source ID ____ p. ____)

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• Other problem(s): __________

TECHNICAL ASPECTS
-1 to -3

TECHNICAL ASPECTS

AWKWARD word choice __________
AGREEMENT faulty subject-verb agreement or pronoun-antecedent agreement __________
CAPITALIZATION __________
EXACT WORD word chosen is not precise or correct to convey clear meaning __________
FRAGMENTS __________
HOMONYM ERRORS __________
OTHER __________

+1 up to +3 EXTRA CREDIT (Circle below the ones you did!)
You may earn up to three extra credit points on this paper for:
a. using five extra-credit vocabulary words correctly (+1 ec) AND/OR
b. using two professors representing two different literary theories instead of one, the professors will compare and contrast differing interpretations of the tale (+1-2 ec).

-_1 off total SECURIT Y COPY NOT ATTACHED

/70 PRELIM. TOTAL = _______ PRELIM GRADE

However, if you receive full credit for buybacks your new score would be ___/70 = ___ grade

Do buybacks carefully! They are due on ___/___ and cannot be redone!

TEACHER COMMENTS
+ positives suggestions

Grading Scale 70
65 - 70 = A
63 - 64 = A-
61 - 62 = B+
58 - 60 = B
56 - 57 = C-
54 - 55 = C
51 - 53 = C-
47 - 48 = D+
44 - 46 = D
42 - 43 = D-
0 - 41 = F
**SOME FOLK TALES SUGGESTED FOR LITERARY THEORY PAPER**

1. Beauty and the Beast  
2. Rapunzel  
3. Aladdin  
4. The Sleeping Beauty  
5. Cinderella  
6. The Princess and the Pea  
7. Snow White  
8. Thumbelina  
9. Pinocchio  
10. The Emperor's New Clothes  
11. The Little Mermaid  
12. Peter Pan  
13. Robin Hood  
14. Little Red Riding Hood  
15. The Velveteen Rabbit  
16. The Ugly Duckling  
17. Jack and the Beanstalk  
18. Goldilocks and the Three Bears  
19. Hansel and Gretel  
20. The Three Little Pigs  
21. The Boy Who Cried Wolf  
22. The Little Red Hen  
23. The Little Dutch Boy  
24. The Lion King  
25. Rumplestiltskin  
26. The Three Billy Goats Gruff  
27. The Pied Piper of Hamelin  
28. Your own choice of tale: 

---

**Tentative Sign-up For Lit. Theory Paper FORM**

(if you are doing this with a partner, you only need to turn in one form!)

1. **Name** ________________________________  
   **Hr.** ________________________

2. **Partner name** ____________________________  
   (If applicable)

3. **THEORY** (please circle):  
   FORMALISM  
   READER RESPONSE  
   PSYCHOANALYSIS  
   FEMINISM  
   MARXISM  
   DECONSTRUCTION  
   NEW HISTORICISM

4. **FOLK OR FAIRY TALE:** _________________________  
   **AUTHOR (IF KNOWN):** _________________________

5. Describe what you have done so far on the paper:

6. Describe a plan for the next few days to do this paper (use back if needed):

7. Jot down any questions you have about the paper right now for the teacher to respond to (use back if needed):  

---

(footnote)  
These are pretty common fairy/folk tales. Why not dazzle the teacher by finding something more obscure? (I've read many, many papers based on Disney stories.)
Punctuating Dialogue and Direct Quotations: A Dozen Rules

1. Use quotation marks to begin and end a direct quotation. Separate the quoted material from the dialogue tag by commas. Do not use quotation marks to set off an indirect quotation.

   I said, "The fable by James Thurber will surprise you."

   I said that the fable by James Thurber would surprise you.

2. If a question mark or an exclamation point occurs where one of the separating commas should be used, omit the comma and use the question mark or exclamation point to separate the quoted material.

   "Don't be late!" Bill warned.

3. The speaker's words are set off from the rest of the sentence with quotation marks, and the first word of the quotation is capitalized. When the end of the quotation is also the end of the sentence, the period falls inside the quotation marks.

   He said, "We'll discuss the fable in one hour."

4. Both parts of a divided quotation are enclosed in quotation marks. The first word of the second part is not capitalized unless it begins a new sentence.

   "This fable," our teacher said, "is a twist of an old tale."

5. When writing only a part of a quoted sentence, do not begin the quotation with a capital letter unless the person you are quoting capitalized it or it is the first word in your sentence.

   A film critic has called the movie "a futile attempt by the director to trade in his reputation as a creator of blockbusters" (Anderson 74).

6. Quotes within quotes: If you need to have one character directly quoting another character, then use double quotes for your main dialogue and single quotes for the quote-within-a-quote.

   "And then he said, 'Mind your own business.' The nerve!" she said.
7. **MSF rules**
   
a. Periods and commas ALWAYS go inside quotation marks.
   "I think you’re wrong," Dan said.
   
b. Colons and semicolons ALWAYS go outside quotation marks.
   Dan said, "I think you’re wrong’; he was asking us to re-examine our information.
   
c. Question marks and exclamation marks go EITHER inside or outside the quotation mark depending on the situation. They go inside when the question or exclamation is part of what is quoted.
   She asked, "Who did it?” or Did she say, "I’m quitting’?”
   
d. When the sentence, as well as the quotation at the end of the sentence, needs a question mark (or an exclamation point), use only ONE question mark (or exclamation point), and place it inside the closing quotation marks.
   Did she ask, "Is this fair?’”
   
   If you are questioning an exclamation, do it like this:
   Is it true he yelled, "No!’”

8. When you write dialogue, begin a new paragraph whenever the speaker changes.

   "Videotape is the wave of the future," declared Clarissa. "There’s no doubt about it! Not only is it a popular medium for today’s artists, but it has practical applications as well.”
   "You’re right,” Angela agreed. "Video has been a boon to us on the swimming team—even when we don’t like what we see! When we see ourselves on tape, however, we see immediately where our shortcomings are: a kick that’s uneven or too much time lost at the turn.”
   "I work with emotionally disturbed children," mused Carmen, "and, now that you mention it, perhaps videotaping the teachers at work would be helpful. It would give us a chance to study our interaction with the children and see where we might improve or change our approach.”
   "Well, I guess we have our work cut out for us,” Clarissa said. "If we all become masters of the video camera, we’ll be on the road to success.”

9. Use a pair of dashes to indicate an abrupt break in thought or speech or an unfinished statement or question.

   "First of all,” he said, “if you can learn a simple trick, Scout, you’ll get along a lot better with all kinds of folks. You never really understand a person until you consider things from his point of view”—
   "Sir?”
   "—until you climb into his skin and walk around in it.”

10. If you have the same speaker saying things that are separated by descriptive passages, you may choose to keep everything in one paragraph or separate parts into their own paragraphs. Make this decision using the same criteria you would use in deciding to start a new paragraph without dialogue. In other words, if you have more than one topic, give each its own paragraph. Just make sure it is clear that the dialogue belongs to the same speaker.

   "If I didn’t go to school tomorrow, you’d force me to.”
   "Let us leave it at this,” said Atticus dryly. "You, Miss Scout Finch, are of the common folk. You must obey the law.” He said that the Ewells were members of an exclusive society made up of Ewells. In certain circumstances the common folk judiciously allowed them certain privileges by the simple method of becoming blind to some of the Ewells’ activities. They didn’t have to go to school for one thing. Another thing, Mr. Bob Ewell, Burris’ father, was permitted to hunt and trap out of season.
   "Atticus, that’s bad.” I said. "In Maycomb County, hunting out of season was a misdemeanor at law, a capital felony in the eyes of the populace.”

11. Sometimes, one speaker’s words run for more than one paragraph. When this happens, use quotation marks at the beginning of the quotation, at the beginning of each subsequent paragraph, and at the end of the whole quotation.

   "I read a spell-binding mystery yesterday,” Agnes said. "It gripped me on the first page, and I couldn’t put the book down until I had finished.”
   "The plot is simple, almost classic. Five people are sitting in a room watching home movies. When the lights come on, one of the people is dead. Who did it? How was it done?”
   "Of course, no one has entered or left the room during the movies; thus, one of the other people in the room has done it. I, of course, thought of poison—but that was wrong.”
   "Well, the detective arrives, and the questioning begins. As the story unfolds, you learn that everyone has a motive. The plot thickens. The mystery isn’t solved until the last page, and it had me fooled. Whew! I’m exhausted from the suspense!”

12. **ELLIPSIS POINTS:** Use three spaced ellipsis points (…) to indicate a pause in written dialogue. Ex. "Well… I don’t know," Sarah answered. When someone’s words “trail off,” you also use 3 ellipsis points. (Be sure to space in between each one.) If the ellipsis points appear at the end of a sentence, you will need a fourth “dot” for the sentence period.

   "Mr. Ewell shouldn’t do that—”
   "Of course, he shouldn’t, but he’ll never change his ways. Are you going to take out your disapproval on his children?”
   "No, sir,” I murmured and made a final stand. "But if I keep on goin’ to school, we can’t ever read any more… .”
   "That’s really bothering you, isn’t it?”
   "Yes, sir.”
   When Atticus looked down at me, I saw the expression on his face that always made me expect something. "Do you know what a compromise is?” he asked.