

A GUIDE TO

MATRIX THINKING

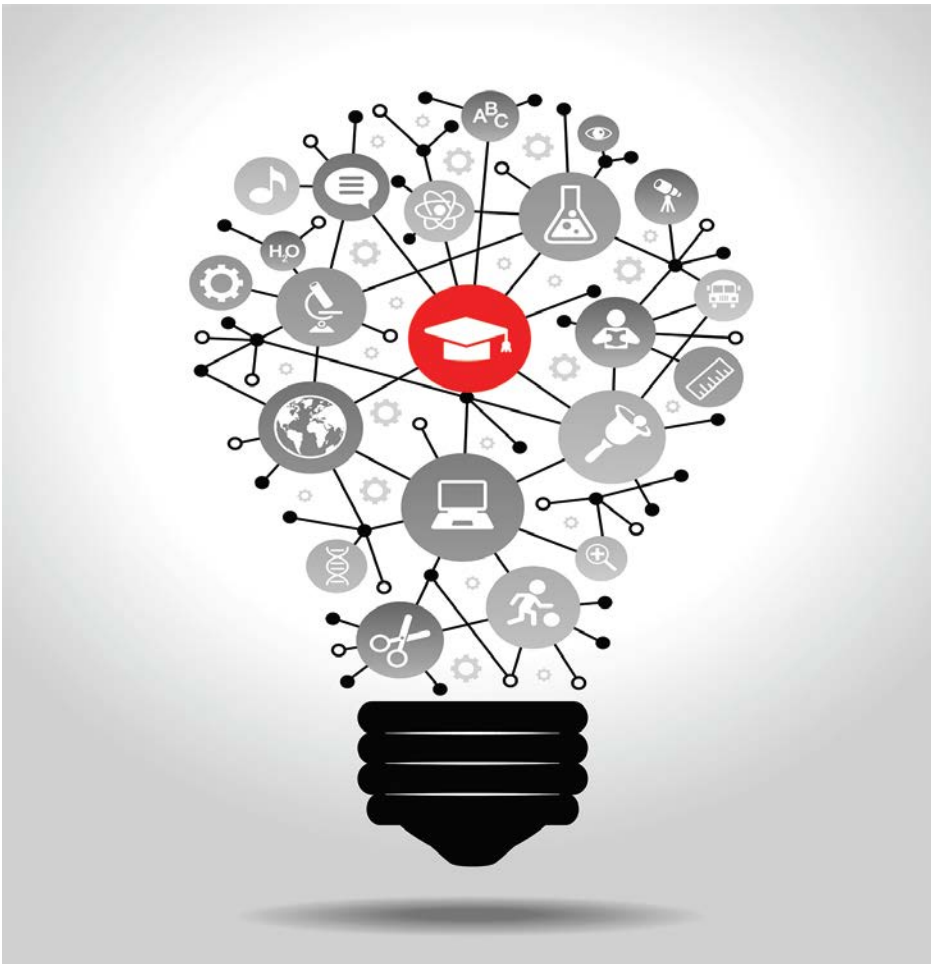


Ideas for Portfolio Design and Development

THE CRITICAL ANALYSIS



Copyright © 2017 by Missed Education 101, LLC
All Rights Reserved
CRN 2017-88-03-04



GUIDE 4: THE CRITICAL ANALYSIS

What is the purpose of this guide?

This guide will help you transition from personal writing to more academic forms of writing and critical analysis using the character biography you selected. Learning how to analyze and interpret using basic or advanced theory will provide you with an opportunity to better understand the network of social relationships you encounter when using your Matrix Map. Also, it will improve your ability to think and write critically using theoretical approaches and concepts that stretch across multiple disciplines.

Targeted Proficiency

Writing Skills

Intellectual Skills

Applied Learning

Broad, Integrative Knowledge

VALUE RUBRICS

Critical Thinking

or

Written Communication

THE CRITICAL ANALYSIS

A *critical analysis* is a close examination of texts using theoretical approaches and concepts from a variety of disciplines. These texts can be literary or non-literary in nature. A critical analysis can be done using almost any kind of text because of the flexibility and interdisciplinary nature of the various schools of criticism discussed below.

What is critical theory? A theory is a perspective, principle or way of thinking. Criticism is the way in which a theory is practiced or applied for analysis or interpretation. There are various schools of criticism. One of the main themes that seems to connect the major critical approaches is a preoccupation with various forms of rhetoric and the social relationships you see outlined on your Matrix Maps Diagram. The biographies serve as introductions to the Matrix Maps. The Matrix Maps Diagram helps you to situate and connect relationships between the individual, the family, the nation state and the cases in your Matrix Map. Theory helps you understand what these interdisciplinary relationships mean as you rotate maps and biographies.

To write a critical analysis for your portfolio, you have to study the diagram in your Matrix Map and read your selected biography carefully in order to identify what you want to analyze. The biography is just one kind of text. A text can be defined in a number of ways. It can be an oral, written or artistic piece. You might want to focus on a text's structure, theme, symbols, characterizations, techniques, metaphors, assumptions, implications, methodology, etc. Critical theories help you identify what you want to focus on. They magnify or highlight aspects of a text that may have been hidden or misunderstood. You should think of theories as tools that provide you with a perspective or lens you can use to better see and analyze relationships.

WRITING THE CRITICAL ANALYSIS

While the means and methods for writing a critical analysis will vary, the essay remains the primary genre used to document and transfer academic knowledge and information. The *essay* means to try or to attempt. It is a collection of information on a topic. The structure for presenting knowledge in an essay can vary, but its features tend to mirror those found in report and proposal writing. A critical analysis using theory can be done using a variety of style guidelines, depending on the nature of the text and the disciplinary conventions. The two most common styles for citing and documenting textual evidence and research information are the Modern Language Association (MLA) and the American Psychological Association (APA). There are many similarities and differences between the two and they will be discussed in later guides. The purpose of the critical analysis here is to prepare you for argumentative research papers by introducing you to various critical approaches and the role of MLA and APA in the structure of the academic essay. Be sure to review the sample essays below.

Cover Page with Title

A paper with a cover page should include your title, your name, your professor's name, course name and number and the date the paper is due. The title should answer what hook or catchy phrase will create interest in the paper and what is the subject and purpose of the essay. A convenient way you can define the purpose of an essay is to use participles or modes, such as analyzing, examining or discussing. Then identify the theoretical approach you are using and the name of the work of literature or other text on which the theory is being used. It might be better to create the title page after completing the entire paper.

Introduction with a Theoretical Focus and Thesis

A critical analysis should begin with an introduction that provides a summary of the text you wish to analyze and interpret. After the summary, present the theoretical approach you hope to use and the specific problem or aspect of the text you will analyze and interpret and why. This establishes the frame or lens through which you will view the work. Then write the thesis. The thesis establishes the expectations and goals for your argument. It tells readers what you intend to analyze, explain, describe, investigate, discover, reveal, resolve or recommend concerning the problem. Sometimes, words such as "intend to" or "will" can be used to signify the thesis and forecast the content covered in long or complex essays. Using this strategy makes readers more aware of the essay's purpose and what will be discussed in the body of the essay. The subtitles for the body will be best determined by taking key phrases from the thesis statements.

Subtitles and Body Paragraphs

Subtitles are headings that help focus and organize essays so that information is more accessible to readers. Also, they provide the topic sentences for the paragraphs that explain your interpretation of the text with supporting evidence from the text itself and other sources. There are many techniques you can use to explain points. You can quote or paraphrase citations from the text or other sources. To quote, you use the author's exact words in a sentence, enclosed by quotation marks. To paraphrase, use your own words to restate the author's ideas from his or her original text. These are standard practices for MLA and APA citations.

You can use descriptions and comparisons. You can identify causes and effects. The goal is to relate the information that helps readers understand your thesis and interpretation of the text. The number of subtitles you use is best determined by your thesis and the length of your paper. The number of paragraphs for each subtitle varies, but you usually need at least two paragraphs for a subtitle.

Conclusion

The conclusion is the closing of the essay. Restate briefly the purpose of the analysis, then explain how your analysis contributes to our understanding of the text. You might consider any lasting impressions your interpretation creates or how it will open the door for a new discussion of the text in the future.

A Bibliography in MLA or APA

You must properly document all of the sources you used to write your critical analysis. This includes the text you interpreted, the writings from the theorist or critical sources used and any other supporting evidence found in your essay. A bibliography is a list of all of the books, articles, magazines, websites, newspapers, etc. used for a paper or project. The rules and formats for the list will depend on the guidelines you use for the essay. In MLA, a bibliography for an essay is called a *Works Cited* page and the rules and formats vary for each source. In APA, a bibliography for an essay is called a *Reference* page and the rules and formats vary for each source. To learn more about MLA and APA documentation, you can use the Purdue Owl website at owl.english.purdue.edu/owl and review the MLA and APA guides at missed101.com.

THE CHALKBOARD

Essays using Critical Theory are typically written using MLA style guidelines.

Document Design Tips: Leave one-inch margins for all sides of the pages. Use standardized paper (8.5 x 11) and size 12 font in New Times Roman, Arial or Garamond. Double-space the entire text and indent five spaces the first lines of paragraphs. Include your last name and page numbers as running headers for MLA papers, typically flush right, excluding the title page and page one.

See a demonstration at
www.youtube.com/watch?v=22CPQoLE4U0

Reader-Response Criticism

If you use this approach to analyze a text, you are concerned with the impact or impression the text has on you after reading it carefully. You read the story and come to an interpretation of it based on your views, opinions, background and life experiences. This critical approach tends to be popular because it is more personal. Stanley Fish's interpretative community captures the general spirit of this critical approach and its focus on the reader's experience as the primary framework for understanding a text. For Fish, there are experiences, interpretative strategies and language conventions that people share with one another. As a result, people read text through their personal perspectives. The reader, in many ways, (re)creates the text as he or she reads. Every act of reading is an act of rewriting. Some critics disagree. Those who practice New Criticism take the opposite view of the reader-response school. The author's transaction and authority over a text are not as important. What is important is the text, its linguistic form and devices, and not outside experiences or contextual influences. New Criticism takes a more objective, almost scientific, view of texts. Immanuel Kant anticipates many of the ideas that define reader-response criticism. In his work on the relationship between reality, subjects and objects, Kant claims the mind plays an important role in creating our views of the world.

Some of the questions you might pose and explore with this approach are...

- What is my unique opinion of this work?
- What does the text mean to me?
- Who shares my views or interpretative community?
- Is the text affecting me or am I affecting the text?
- How might someone with a different view react to the text?

Sources for Further Reading

- Fish, Stanley. *Is There a Text in This Class? The Authority of Interpretative Communities*. Harvard UP, 1980.
- Iser, Wolfgang. *The Implied Reader: Patterns of Communication in Prose Fiction from Bunyan to Beckett*. Johns Hopkins UP, 1974.
- Klinke, Willibald. *Kant for Everyman: An Introduction for the General Reader*. Translator Michael Bullock, Collier, 1962.
- Lentricchia, Frank. *After the New Criticism*. U of Chicago P, 1980.
- Rice, Philip, and Patricia Waugh. *Modern Literary Theory*. 2nd ed., Bloomsbury, 1992.
- Rosenblatt, Louise M. *Literature as Exploration*. 5th ed., MLA, 1995.
- Suleiman, Susan R., and Inge Crosman, editors. *The Reader in the Text*. Princeton UP, 1980.

Feminist Criticism

If you use this approach to analyze a text, you are concerned with the social, cultural and economic roles of women. This area of inquiry examines the ways women have been stigmatized as a result of male dominance and body architecture that places them in marginalized positions in relation to males and the structures and institutions they often control. Feminist criticism raises questions and concerns about the nature of sexual differences in relation to the socio-cultural constructions and all of the hierarchies that they sustain and reproduce as a result. Simone de Beauvoir makes a landmark contribution to feminism in her critique of patriarchy. She traces the ways anatomy becomes destiny and positions women second in relation to men. The constructed and marginalized status of women via men makes them an *other*. The ideology and myths produced by this dynamic impact not only male interpretations and expectations of women, but women's views of themselves. This relationship between the two becomes the basis of further exploration in terms of the ways they view and create texts. Many feminist theorists discuss how this impacts artistic expression. Others discuss the impact of race, economics, reproductive rights, equal employment opportunities, sexual freedom, and gender ambiguity and subordination.

Some of the questions you might pose and explore with this approach are...

Are there differences in the ways men and women are treated in the text?
How do men and women come to accept their sex roles in society?
How is language in the text reflecting masculine biases and orientations?
How is language in the text reflecting feminine biases and orientations?
How does race or class impact women in the text?

Sources for Further Reading

Beauvoir, Simone de. *The Second Sex*. Vintage, 1989.
Collins, Patricia Hill. *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment*. Routledge, 2000.
Crenshaw, Kimberlé. *On Intersectionality: The Essential Writings of Kimberlé Crenshaw*. New Press, 2015.
Ehrenreich, Barbara. *The Hearts of Men: American Dreams and the Flight from Commitment*. Anchor, 1983.
Farrell, Warren. *The Liberated Man*. Random House, 1974.
Laqueur, Thomas, *Making Sex*. Harvard UP, 1990.
Millett, Kate. *Sexual Politics*. Columbia UP, 2016.
Showalter, Elaine, editor. *The New Feminist Criticism: Essays on Women, Literature and Theory*. Pantheon, 1985.

Psychoanalytic/Psychological Criticism

If you use this approach to analyze a text, you are concerned with human behavior, motivation and the structure of the mind and consciousness. This area of inquiry seeks to explore the limits and potential of the conscious and unconscious mind. Sigmund Freud is a permeating influence on this school of criticism. Many theorists react to his framing of the interactivity of the unconscious mind in terms of id, ego and superego. His ideas about sexual desire, fears and dreams have also been influential. He often turns to literature in order to explicate many of his psychological theories. Noted theorists such as Jacques Lacan and Julia Kristeva rethink Freud's ideas in terms of linguistics or semiotics. They see the psyche as structured like a language. Lacan relies on the work of Ferdinand de Saussure to remap the development of desire in humans. Using language and psychoanalysis as a starting point, Kristeva presents a feminist interpretation of some of Lacan's work. She examines the way language comes to represent the symbolic (male orientation) and the semiotic (female orientation) and how the semiotic seeks to challenge the symbolic, calling into question the larger divisions between male and female and masculinity and femininity. Frantz Fanon uses psychology to examine racism and colonialism, while Ed Bernays, Freud's nephew, uses it for social control, advertising and public relations.

Some of the questions you might pose and explore with this approach are...

What influences the behaviors and actions you see in the text?

What motivates characters or people to say what they say?

How might an experience or memory from the past affect one's personality?

How might mental problems be at the root of other problems in the text?

How is language or propaganda used to influence beliefs and behaviors in the text?

Sources for Further Reading

Bernays, Edward. *Propaganda*. IG Publishing, 1955.

Fanon, Frantz. *Black Skin, White Masks*. Translated by Richard Philcox, Grove, 2008.

Freud, Sigmund. *The Complete Psychological Works*. Ed. James Strachey. Hogarth, 1953.

Fromm, Eric H. *Escape from Freedom*. Owl, 1994.

Gilman, Sander L., editor. *Introducing Psychoanalytic Theory*. Brunner/Mazel, 1982.

Hoffman, F.J. *Freudianism and the Literary Mind*. Grove, 1959.

Kristeva, Julia. *Desire in Language: A Semiotic Approach to Literature and Art*. Edited by Leon S. Roudiez, translated by Thomas Gera, et al. Columbia UP, 1980.

Lacan, Jacques. *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psycho-Analysis*. Edited by Jacques-Alain Miller, translated by Alan Sheridan. Hogarth, 1977.

Samuels, Andrew. *The Political Psyche*. Routledge, 1993.

Marxist Criticism

If you use this approach to analyze a text, you are concerned with the ways the economy, business and finance influence and determine social and cultural relationships. Influenced by the studies on capitalism by Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, some theorists see economic materialism as the major influence on human lives, and many of the conflicts workers experience are tied to the relationship between capitalists and the people who have to work for them, the bourgeoisie. For Marx, capitalists have an enormous amount of control over society and culture because they use much of their profits to maintain their wealth, political power and influence over major organizations and institutions in society. Economic relations in a society influence its ideas and culture. Marx claims these dominant ideas skew reality in ways that distort truth. This is the basis of Marx's famous definition of *ideology*, the view that the dominant beliefs in any society are reflections of the dominant class. Ideas form a kind of superstructure that rests on economic relations. Antonio Gramsci's and Louis Althusser's works grow out of Marx's theories. Marx anticipates a new world where capitalism will give way to socialism then communism. That this transformation has yet to occur has been a major criticism against Marxism. Many theorists such as Max Weber, Theodor W. Adorno, Herbert Marcuse, Erich Fromm and Jürgen Habermas use Marxist ideas, but they offer alternative, interdisciplinary assessments to explain social relationships.

Some of the questions you might pose and explore with this approach are...

- What role does economics play in the text and how does it influence one's life chances?
- How are class and issues associated with social status addressed in the text?
- What role does work and money play in turning people into commodities?
- How are privileges and cultural hegemony reproduced in the text?
- What ideologies or belief systems are used to support economic inequality or alienation?
- How does money create a certain type of human being?
- How do ideology and myths in a society behave like psychology, interpellating or manipulating people into subjection?

Sources for Further Reading

- Althusser, Louis. *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays*. Translated by Ben Brewster, Monthly Review Press, 1971.
- Beard, Charles. *An Economic Interpretation of the Constitution*. Dover, 2004.
- Bronner, Stephen Eric. *Critical Theory: A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford UP, 2011.
- Cox, Oliver C. *Caste, Class & Race*. Modern Reader, 1970.
- Eagleton, Terry. *Marxism and Literary Criticism*. Methuen, 1976.
- Robinson, Lillian S. *Sex, Class, and Culture*. Indiana UP, 1978.
- Simmel, Georg. *The Philosophy of Money*. Edited by David Frisby, Routledge, 1990.
- Tucker, Robert C. *The Marx-Engels Reader*. W.W. Norton, 1972.

Structuralism

If you use this approach to analyze a text, you are concerned with linguistics or the ways language behaves as a system of signs. The study of signs is called Semiotics. Its two founding fathers are C.S. Peirce in America and Ferdinand de Saussure in Europe. Peirce believes the sign is constructed as iconic, indexical and symbolic. Ferdinand de Saussure's construction of the sign as signified, signifier and referent tends to be the more famous of the two. For de Saussure, language comprises a system of signs and the sign is the basic unit of meaning, but it is arbitrary and gathers meaning from its being different from another sign. He made two distinctions for language: language as *langue* or a system of language and all of its forms, rules, myths or codes, and language as *parole* or the actual speech acts that make *langue* possible. He thought it was more important to study language as a system rather than historically or contextually. He was not as concerned with what people said but with the structure of language itself. This system of language helps us to understand various cultures and ideological practices, images, beliefs and patterns in a social system. The system operates in a particular way, upholding and maintaining certain structures or hierarchies and opposites. It is concerned with the laws, rules, myths or codes that give structures and systems meaning. There are many critics of Structuralism, including Jacques Derrida and Mikhail Bakhtin. Bakhtin thought de Saussure was too objectivist, and Bakhtin was concerned with what people said and the social contexts in which they said it. He emphasized the dialogic nature of language and its power to produce reality rather than reflect it. For Bakhtin, language is interactive, social and historical.

Some of the questions you might pose and explore with this approach are...

How are oppositions, metaphors or images operating in the text?
What kind of oppositions are working in the text to uphold certain myths or stereotypes?
What narratives, set of relations or beliefs are used to support myths in the text?
What are some of the different ways the text can be interpreted and how do these interpretations interact and challenge one's perception of the text?
What dialogic relations can you find in the text and what social conditions make these relationships possible?

Sources for Further Reading

Bakhtin, Mikhail. *The Dialogic Imagination*. Edited by Michael Holquist, translated by Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist, U of Texas P, 1981.
Barthes, Roland. *Mythologies*. Translated by Annette Lavers, Jonathan Cape, 1972.
Gates, Henry Louis, Jr. *The Signifying Monkey: A Theory of African-American Literary Criticism*. Oxford UP, 1988.
Saussure, Ferdinand de. *Course in General Linguistics*. Translated by Roy Harris, Duckworth, 1916/1983.

Post-Structuralism and Deconstruction

If you use this approach to analyze a text, you are concerned with the ways language fails to capture truth and reality. Post-structuralism and deconstructionists analyze the ways structures try to represent truth and meaning by hiding or suppressing alternatives that are evident once these structures unravel. Deconstruction brings forth a kind of freedom because it creates possibilities and new meanings where previous structures or versions of truth and reality suggested there were none. The theorist most associated with this process is Jacques Derrida. Derrida believes that the Western tradition is built on *logocentrism* or the need to establish ultimate truths. Logocentric thinkers tend to rationalize the world in terms of binary opposites and hierarchies. A few basic examples are good/evil, men/women, gay/straight, black/white and rich/poor. Oppositions structure reality in ways that are handy, but they can end up being reductive, oversimplified and sometimes destructive. Michel Foucault explores the ways politics and power are used to maintain these patterns. Derrida calls for their dismantling because meaning and privileges gather around one term at the expense of others, creating hierarchies, stereotypes, marginalization and exclusions in society. Propaganda and proliferation of these divisions create a sense of permanence and people come to believe that “this is just the way things are.” However, Derrida would say this is only the way things appear to be due to the conditions influencing the structure of the relationships and those who benefit most from them. Derrida’s philosophy grows out of his views of the interconnected relationship between speech and writing and the logocentric attitudes that divide them. According to Derrida, language is not able to transmit truth because the relationship between the signifier and the signified involves degrees of difference, deference and ultimately more words. As in a dictionary, words gain their meanings because one is different from another, but the way they are interpreted will always vary. As a result, language and meaning are constantly in flux, thus reinforcing the idea that reality is relative. For Derrida, writing is a metaphor for philosophy.

Some of the questions you might pose and explore with this approach are...

- Who or what is marginalized or deemed different or foreign in the text and why?
- How does a word, image or metaphor used in a text actually undermine its meaning?
- What binary oppositions work in the text to privilege a certain kind of thinking?
- What happens when these oppositions are deconstructed to create new possibilities?

Sources for Further Reading

- Derrida, Jacques. *Of Grammatology*. Translated by Gayatri Spivak. Johns Hopkins UP, 1976.
- Foucault, Michel. “The Order of Discourse.” *Untying the Text: A Post-Structuralist Reader*. Edited by Robert Young, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1981. pp. 48-78.
- Norris, Christopher. *Deconstruction: Theory and Practice*. Methuen, 1982.
- Payne, Michael. *Reading Theory: An Introduction to Lacan, Derrida, and Kristeva*. Blackwell, 1993.

Socio-Historical Criticism

If you use this approach to analyze a text, you are concerned with the ways society, culture and history (or *historicism*) influence texts. All texts grow out of a particular context, and context is vital to a text's meaning. This critical approach seeks to connect a text to the social, economic, historical, political or cultural context in which it was created in order to better understand its significance. The exercise of power in these various contexts is of particular interest to those who use this approach. The work of Michel Foucault is a key source. Foucault discusses a range of topics to articulate his views of power as repression. He says, "Power is employed and exercised through a net-like organization. And not only do individuals circulate between its threads; they are always in the position of simultaneously undergoing and exercising this power" (98). In short, power is the ability to produce intended outcomes, and Foucault believes that power is exercised with knowledge. The two are interwoven. Foucault describes the ways in which power is exercised through language. Certain ideas, modes of speech and behaviors are defined by society as legitimate, valid, qualified and true. Others are seen as the exact opposite. The result is that some people or groups are excluded, ignored, violated or marginalized in social systems and their ability to express and share alternative viewpoints is repressed, suppressed or completely ignored. Those who have power may work to ensure it is hard for others to think outside of certain parameters or dominant frameworks. This allows for the easy reproduction and proliferation of certain kinds of myths, ideologies, illusions or propaganda. For the dominant power to maintain a grip on what is and is not acceptable truth, Foucault says language and society have to be policed in order to prevent the (re)production and distribution of threatening ideas, which always have the potential to challenge, deconstruct or upset the status quo. For Foucault, history rests on injustices and, like language, it is only a representation of the past. It has its own discursive practices and methods of exclusion just like any other text. He focuses on the origins and layers associated with these relationships and how they operate.

Some of the questions you might pose and explore with this approach are...

- How is the setting in which a text is written key to understanding its significance?
- How might culture influence the circumstances in the text?
- What historical facts are in the text that need to be highlighted or illuminated?
- How is power used to influence or control truth, law, violence, discourse and people?
- How is the use of language in a text a reflection of colonialism or dominant cultures?

Sources for Further Reading

- Foucault, Michel. *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings, 1972-1977*. Edited by Colin Gordon, translated by Colin Gordon, Leo Marshall, John Mepham, and Kate Soper, Pantheon, 1980.
- Said, Edward. *Culture and Imperialism*. Vintage, 1993.
- White, Hayden. *Metahistory: The Historical Imagination in Nineteenth-Century Europe*. Johns Hopkins UP, 1974.

Teaching Sample #1

One Man's Compromise:
A Reader's Response to Paul Winter's "The Death of Carrie Walker"

by

Ryan Hill

Composition II
ENG 102-414
Professor Graves
January 17, 2015

In Paul Winter's short story "The Death of Carrie Walker," an elderly man has to accept the fact that his wife is dying because of old age and poor health. Adam and Carrie Walker have been married for 45 years. Although they have no children, the couple lives a comfortable life in South Carolina. Carrie becomes ill and requires the assistance of a nurse, Miss Tallon, who visits on Thursday afternoons. One day, Miss Tallon tells Adam that she does not think Carrie will ever get better. Adam's mood changes to a fit of rage. He slams a chair against the wall and orders Miss Tallon to leave and never return to his house (455-457). Adam declares that God will help his wife get better. He sits with her late into the night and recounts memories of their years together. Adam notices his wife's health does not improve, and he realizes that Miss Tallon was right. Suddenly, Carrie asks Adam if he would help her take her life. Initially, Adam refuses. He later abides by his wife's wishes and feeds her an overdose of sleeping pills. In this discussion, I intend to explain how this summary of Winter's story illustrates how one man has to compromise his own beliefs in order to relieve his wife's suffering. Before offering my concluding thoughts on death, I examine how Winter's story shows how vulnerable humans become when they feel threatened by death.

Adam's Challenged Beliefs

As a man with strong religious beliefs, Adam's view of death is challenged when Carrie requests that he help her die. He reminds himself that killing his wife would ultimately be seen as a sin in the eyes of God. He says to Carrie, "But I can't do this. It is a sin for me to even think about killing you. I need you" (455). However, Carrie pleads that her life is not worth living if she has to live with the pain that comes with old age. But Adam's response to Carrie's plea suggests that somehow Carrie's lack of faith will only add to her misery. "My daddy always said when your faith in God is not strong, bad things can happen," says Adam (456).

Adam later determines that prayer is the best medicine for Carrie. For Adam, prayer can restore Carrie's health and faith, too. But Winter skillfully weaves some evidence into the story that suggests that Adam has to struggle with his own religious upbringing as he sets out to save the faith of his wife. Before kneeling at Carrie's side to pray, Adam hears echoes of Miss Tallon's voice in his head. He hears Miss Tallon saying, "My mother always said it was never easy trying to strike a deal with death when it knocked at the door. Mr. Walker, nobody can help Mrs. Walker. All we can do now is wait for the sound of knocking" (459). No one can absolutely

determine the effect of Miss Tallon's words on Adam's religious views, but it might be reasonable to claim that Winter tries to allude to the importance of this effect by contrasting Miss Tallon's reference to her mother's view of death with that of Adam's reference to his father's view of faith. The fact that Miss Tallon's words linger in Adam's mind long after he has insisted that she leave and never return might be a sign that Winter wants readers to realize that Adam is slowly acknowledging that there is a hint of truth in Miss Tallon's assessment of his wife's condition.

Fearing the life he will have to lead without Carrie, Adam unsuccessfully tries to cling to his religious views in spite of the echo of Miss Tallon's voice in his head. As Adam prays, he continues to hear Miss Tallon telling him to "...wait on the knock at the door" (457). He prays until he hears a sound at the door. He rushes to open it and realizes it is the wind. Actually, this scene symbolizes Adam's awakening, and this is what allows him to accept his wife's death. Standing in the doorway and remembering the words of Miss Tallon, Adam realizes that Carrie will never be as she was before. Adam realizes that he too has been transformed in the process. He says, "I am not the same man" (460). He no longer clings to his religion as he once did. His total view of his entire world is shaken. Now Adam must learn to live without Carrie and his deep belief in religion.

Concluding Thoughts

Adam's predicament serves as an example of the many complex questions and decisions one encounters in the face of death. In the end, Adam's struggle is really one about love. He has great difficulty determining whether it is God's word or his wife that he loves more. Miss Tallon tries to help him see that there is no need to compromise because death is a part of what makes human beings human. Being old and very much set in his ways, Adam Walker learns this lesson only after experiencing the frustration of having to reassess his faith and lose his wife.

Works Cited

Winter, Paul. "The Death of Carrie Walker." *The Fiction Collection II: Stories of Life*.

Edited by Ray Gold and Joy Roach, Greenwood, 1998, pp. 454-62.

Teaching Sample #2

What components make up the parts of teaching sample #1?

Cover Page

Introduction

Body Subtitles

Conclusion

Works Cited

Teaching Sample #3

The Tragedy in Knowing:
A Structural Analysis of “The Story of Cyrus”

by

Amy Green

ENG 1008-343

Professor Schavitz

April 27, 2015

In “The Story of Cyrus,” a store owner by the name of Cyrus finds himself in the middle of a number of conflicts that occur in Moon County. Cyrus narrates the story and reveals how the lives of key characters intersect. Cyrus opens his narration with a description of Tobias Cutter. Tobias worked for Cyrus, but he is jailed. We find out the reason for his incarceration after meeting two more characters in the story, Ed Lawson and Reverend James. Ed Lawson is a long-time friend of Cyrus. He is a member of a men’s organization called “The Gentlemen’s Society.” Ed has tried to get Cyrus to join, but he refuses because Cyrus sees the organization as too disruptive and prefers the church. Cyrus and Ed often engage in many conversations about the Bible and its interpretations. These conversations are heightened by the fact that their church burns down and no one knows exactly how or why it happens. While Cyrus finds it easy to discuss religion with Ed, his conversations with Reverend James are filled with tension and conflict. This tension fuels the plot of the story. Cyrus’s interpretations of scripture conflict with the reverend’s. The reverend suggests Cyrus misunderstands the word of God.

Also, he criticizes Cyrus for his friendship with Ed Lawson, whom the reverend calls a backslider. The reverend figures that Ed and the men in The Gentlemen’s Society know more about the destruction of the church than they claim. Eventually, Cyrus learns the truth and this leaves him despondent. According to Cyrus, Tobias’s attempt to become a member of The Gentlemen’s Society involved his having an affair with a married woman and he selected Reverend James’s wife. People believe the reverend destroyed the church and left town with the insurance money as a form of revenge. As a result of these revelations, Cyrus finds solace in a dictionary instead of the Bible because meanings are more flexible and they reflect the precarious nature of truth that he comes to experience.

However, the problem is Cyrus’s substitution of a dictionary for a Bible does not resolve the deeper issue the story addresses concerning faith and the human condition. For those of us who have experienced a crisis of faith, Cyrus’s story speaks to the structural opposition that exists between religion/reason and authority/freedom (Fromm 251-255). “The Story of Cyrus” is really the story of a clash of interpretations (Fish 167-73). Cyrus’s view of religion and scripture does not fit into Reverend James’s frame and this becomes a source of contention and conflict. For Reverend James to even consider the legitimacy of Cyrus’s alternative interpretation calls into question the authority of the church and the real foundation on which that authority has

rested for centuries. Cyrus looks for a rational explanation, but Reverend James can only assert his authority. Cyrus is forced to take the Reverend's word over his own because of the reverend's position and status. This default argument excuses the reverend from truly engaging Cyrus's religious questions and concerns in meaningful ways. In fact, he is patronizing, condescending and insincere. Cyrus rightfully pushes back, and Reverend James does more to hinder than clarify Cyrus's understanding by reducing certainty to a choice between good and bad. Why? What is the real threat this creates? What if these questions are unanswerable?

My goal in this discussion is to offer a structural analysis of the oppositions I see operating in "The Story of Cyrus" and what happens when Cyrus challenges those divisions. Also, I reveal why this is a story about the inherent uncertainty and tragedy built into man's search for objective explanations for his existence. I conclude with a poignant assessment about coping with the challenges of existence.

Oppositional Structures

Cyrus identifies the oppositional structure at work in the story when he says, "All the Bible stuff Reverend James talked about started to make sense to me after a while. But whenever I talked to him and I explained back to him what I read in the Bible, he'd say my meanings were all wrong and he'd change them around" (3). It is not good for Cyrus to have his own interpretations based on his understanding of scripture and reality. He must be guided and corrected because the wrong interpretation or too many interpretations threaten orthodoxy. In fact, Reverend James behaves as if there has always been consensus in Christianity over the meaning of scripture. This is simply false. Christianity has a well-documented history of conflicting views of scripture, and this was one of the driving forces for Emperor Constantine's call for a meeting at the Council of Nicea in 325. He wanted church officials to resolve their various views of the Christian faith, its scripture and its interpretations of Christ (Freeman 154-178). These past conflicts anticipate the conflict between Cyrus and Reverend James. In both cases, there is more of an appeal to one's faith and less of an appeal to reason to make church doctrine and scripture acceptable. This is the other important set of opposites I noticed in the story, and the set is symbolized by Cyrus's move from the Bible and a world of regulated meaning or ordered discourse to a dictionary and a world of multiple meanings (Foucault 48-50).

Reverend James's rejection of Cyrus's views draws attention to the politics that are never too far from discussions about religious orthodoxy in the face of relativity. If there is no way we can define God, then those who assume the authority to define God suddenly find their authority called into question, thus reducing all interpretation to the same level, theoretically. This, I argue, is the real reason for these oppositions we see in Cyrus's story and in real life. The very survival of faith and the stability of the society rest on them.

Tragedy and Existence

The great tragedy in this story is that whatever Cyrus is looking for in his Bible or in his dictionary will probably not satisfy him for very long. Cyrus's search is an existential quest for which mankind has sought answers for a very long time. We all want to know what our existence is supposed to mean and if there is something out there greater than us (see Fromm). However, this search raises more questions than it tends to answer. There just might not be any way we can know why human life exists, and this is the great dilemma inherent in the human condition. This tragedy becomes evident when we realize how much horror, death and destruction has been caused by individuals, organizations and institutions trying to impose their beliefs on others. Reverend James asserts his power and version of the truth without shedding blood. In real life, I cannot say this is always the case. The Crusades, Salem witch trials, and the conflict in the Middle East are just a few examples of the many atrocities that have been committed in the name of religion. One does not have to work very hard to find others.

As Cyrus embraces his dictionary, he has essentially chosen a form of relativity. It may be more rational than faith; however, it still falls short of the sense of assurance he seeks. Behind multiple meanings is simply more meaning and more questions that are even harder to define and answer. What is even more tragic is there are some readers who might see Cyrus's dictionary as a real solution to his problem and a suitable alternative to the Bible. However, it is not. It is a substitution that essentially reinforces the power that Reverend James represents in the story and in society. Dictionaries will never have the moral forces of a religious text such as the Bible. Dictionaries can never soothe the deep discomforts associated with life the way the Bible has for centuries. Dictionaries can only serve as supplements that we turn to for the verification of

meaning and not meaning itself. Cyrus essentially reaffirms this point as he straddles a world between his dictionary and a fractured church community that seeks to preserve itself.

Conclusion

Cyrus is like so many people living today. We want answers where there are only questions. We want to feel there is something greater than us out there somewhere, so we embrace relativism and the social construction of truth as a kind of secular humanism substituting for the failure of religion. I predict that the kinds of problems Cyrus's story raises will plague us long into the future. One thing is clear for me after exploring this story: Whatever the meaning of life is, we are all always a part of it, regardless. I do not know if this counts as a religious view or a rational view. To be honest, I am not even sure if it really matters.

Works Cited

- Fish, Stanley. *Is There a Text in This Class? The Authority of Interpretative Communities*.
Harvard UP, 1980.
- Foucault, Michel. "The Order of Discourse." *Untying the Text: A Post-Structuralist Reader*.
Edited by Robert Young, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1981, pp. 48-78.
- Freeman, Charles. *The Closing of the Western Mind: The Rise of Faith and the Fall of Reason*.
Knopf, 2003.
- Fromm, Erich. *Escape from Freedom*. Henry Holt and Company, 1994.
- "The Story of Cyrus." *Missed101.com*, 2016, www.missed101.com/biographies.

Teaching Sample #4

What components make up the parts of teaching sample #3?

Cover Page



Introduction



Body Subtitles



Conclusion



Works Cited



Teaching Sample #5

EXAMPLE A: Direct Quote (Using the Author's Exact Words)

In *Literary Theory: An Introduction*, Terry Eagleton says, "Rhetoric, which was the received form of critical analysis all the way from ancient society to the eighteenth century, examined the way discourses are constructed in order to achieve certain effects. It was not worried about whether its objects of inquiry were speaking or writing, poetry or philosophy, fiction or historiography: its horizon was nothing less than the field of discursive practices in society as a whole, and its particular interest lay in grasping such practices as forms of power and performance" (179). University of Minnesota Press, 2008.

MLA DOCUMENTATION:

MLA CITATION:

EXAMPLE B: Paraphrase (Restating the Author's Ideas Using One's Own Words)

In *Manufacturing Consent: The Political Economy of the Mass Media*, Edward Herman and Noam Chomsky write that a propaganda model focuses on the "... inequality of wealth and power and its multilevel effects on mass-media interests and choices. It traces the routes by which money and power are able to filter out the news fit to print, marginalize dissent, and allow the government and dominant private interest to get their messages across to the public" (2). They go on to argue the purpose of "the media is to inculcate and defend the economic, social, and political agenda of privileged groups that dominate the domestic society and the state. The media serve this purpose in many ways: through selection of topics, distribution of concerns, framing of issues, filtering of information, emphasis and tone, and by keeping debate within the bounds of acceptable premises" (298). Pantheon, 2002.

MLA DOCUMENTATION:

MLA CITATION:

Teaching Sample #6

EXAMPLE C: Direct Quote (Using the Author's Exact Words)

In *Excellent Sheep: The Miseducation of the American Elite and the Way to a Meaningful Life*, William Deresiewicz says, “society is a conspiracy to keep itself from the truth. We pass our lives submerged in propaganda: advertising messages; political rhetoric; the journalistic affirmation of the status quo; platitudes of popular culture; the axiom’s party, sect, and class; bromides we exchange every day on Facebook; the comforting lies our parents tell us and the sociable ones our friends do; the steady stream of falsehoods, that we each tell ourselves all the time, to stave off the threat of self-knowledge. Plato called this *doxa*, opinion, and it is as powerful a force among progressives as among conservatives.... The first purpose of a real education (a ‘liberal arts’ education) is to liberate us from *doxa* by teaching us to recognize it, to question it, and to think our way around it” (p. 80). New York: Free Press, 2015.

APA DOCUMENTATION:

APA CITATION:

EXAMPLE D: Paraphrase (Restating the Author's Ideas Using One's Own Words)

In *Rethinking Mervin Martin*, Ron Johnson helps readers learn that the rhetorical nature of human interactions seems to permeate all of his work, which can be divided into periods. His early works are concerned with art and aesthetics. The middle years highlight Martin’s focus on the social dimensions of color coding and discourse. In his last years, he returns to concerns he had in his early period, often examining the nature of the Humanities and “the kinds of creative understanding appropriate for social transformation” (pp. 5-6). New York: Basic Press, 2013.

APA DOCUMENTATION:

APA CITATION:

ACTIVITIES FOR DISCUSSION AND WRITING

Activity 1

Select two biographies from missed101.com. Read both stories carefully and review the discussion questions at the end, then write an essay using the MLA style in which you compare and contrast the stories, citing evidence from both texts to support your points. How are the stories similar? How are they different? What is most valuable about intersecting these biographies?

Activity 2

Choose a critical approach from one of these areas: Reader-Response Criticism, Feminist Criticism, Psychological/Psychoanalytic Criticism, Marxist Criticism, Structuralism, Post-Structuralism and Deconstruction or Socio-Historical Criticism. Select one of the biographies at missed101.com. Provide a summary of the story and use the critical approach to establish a claim or argument for a paper in the MLA style. What are some of the things the critical approach highlights that help you to better understand the story? What other interpretations might one have?

Activity 3

Choose a critical approach from one of these areas: Reader-Response Criticism, Feminist Criticism, Psychological/Psychoanalytic Criticism, Marxist Criticism, Structuralism, Post-Structuralism and Deconstruction or Socio-Historical Criticism. Select a case from your Matrix Map. Using the MLA style, use the critical approach to analyze the story the four terms create. Provide a literature review of the case terms, then provide an analysis of the literature review using the critical approach as a lens.

THE CHALKBOARD

[For more on Critical Theory](#)

Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy

plato.stanford.edu/entries/critical-theory

[For more on Literary Theory](#)

Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy

www.iep.utm.edu/literary/#H1

ME:101

MISSED101.COM

Always Learning Outside the Box