Cheat Sheet Literature

1. Biographical Theory

- **Definition**: Analyzes a work by considering the **author's life, experiences, and personal history**.
- **Key Idea**: The author's **background and emotions** influence their writing.

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2. New Historicism

- **Definition**: Focuses on the **historical, cultural, and social context** in which a work was created.
- **Key Idea**: Literature reflects the **values, beliefs, and issues** of the time period in which it was written.

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3. Feminist Theory

- **Definition**: Examines **gender roles, power dynamics**, and the representation of **women** in a text.
- **Key Idea**: Explores how literature **reinforces or challenges patriarchal norms**.

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4. Marxist Theory

- **Definition**: Analyzes **class struggle**, **economic systems**, and the **distribution of power**.
- **Key Idea**: Focuses on how **capitalism** influences characters, relationships, and societal structures.

1. Biographical Theory

- **Definition**: Analyzes a film based on the director/writer's life, experiences, and influences.
- **Key Idea**: The creator's background shapes the story, themes, and characters.

Example: *Pulp Fiction* (1994, Quentin Tarantino)

- Tarantino's **love for pop culture, crime movies, and nonlinear storytelling** is reflected in the film's **episodic narrative** and constant references to old Hollywood.
- His experience working at a **video rental store** influenced his ability to blend genres and dialogue styles.
- The film's **stylized violence and dialogue-driven scenes** show Tarantino's **personal storytelling preferences**.

Example: *Alien* (1979, Ridley Scott)

- Scott's fascination with **realism and world-building** is evident in the gritty, industrial design of the spaceship Nostromo.
- His **interest in mythology** influenced the film's **"monster as a force of nature"** approach.
- The **Xenomorph design** was inspired by artist **H.R. Giger**, reflecting a fusion of horror and surrealist aesthetics.

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2. New Historicism Theory

- **Definition**: Examines a film within the **historical, social, and cultural context** in which it was created.
- **Key Idea**: The film reflects the political and cultural attitudes of its time.

Example: *Pulp Fiction*

- The 1990s saw a shift in Hollywood storytelling—**nonlinear narratives and antiheroes** became more popular, influencing Tarantino's writing.
- The film's **postmodern approach**, mixing humor with violence, mirrors the decade's **growing cynicism toward traditional Hollywood storytelling**.
- The characters, especially **Jules (a hitman questioning his morality)**, reflect a time when **philosophy and existentialism** were being explored more deeply in cinema.

Example: *Alien*

- The **late 1970s sci-fi boom** (post-*Star Wars*) influenced the film's **realistic approach to space travel**.
- Themes of **corporate exploitation** (Weyland-Yutani's disregard for human life) reflect real-world anxieties about **capitalist greed and worker expendability** in the industrial era.
- The **Cold War paranoia** is evident in the fear of an unknown, uncontrollable alien force disrupting human civilization.

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3. Feminist Theory

- **Definition**: Examines gender roles, power dynamics, and the representation of women in films.
- **Key Idea**: How does the film **challenge or reinforce patriarchal norms**?

Example: *Pulp Fiction*

- Women have **limited agency**—Mia Wallace is a femme fatale trope, and Fabienne is depicted as weak and dependent.
- **Butch's girlfriend (Fabienne)** plays a passive role, reinforcing gender norms.
- However, **Honey Bunny (Amanda Plummer) is a subversion**—a woman initiating crime, though still dependent on a male partner (Pumpkin).

Example: *Alien*

- **Ellen Ripley (Sigourney Weaver) is a revolutionary feminist icon**—a woman in a traditionally male-dominated genre who becomes the hero.
- The film **challenges gender stereotypes**—Ripley survives because of intelligence and resourcefulness, not brute strength.
- The **Xenomorph's design (a blend of male and female reproductive horror)** plays into fears of **violation and bodily autonomy**, making the film a **metaphor for gender-based fears**.

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4. Marxist Theory

- **Definition**: Analyzes class struggle, capitalism, and social hierarchy within films.
- **Key Idea**: Who holds power, and how does the economic system affect characters?

Example: *Pulp Fiction*

- The film's criminals represent **the working class**, while figures like Marsellus Wallace **exploit and control them**.

- Jules and Vincent, despite their skills, are **just workers following orders**, reinforcing capitalist hierarchies.
- The film's casual approach to violence suggests a **world where power is dictated by wealth and influence**.

Example: *Alien*

- The **Weyland-Yutani Corporation** treats workers as **disposable assets**, reflecting **capitalist exploitation**.
- The crew of the Nostromo is **a working-class team**, doing dangerous labor for a company that ultimately **values profits over their lives**.
- The **Xenomorph itself represents the ultimate consumerist fear**—a creature that **exists only to consume and reproduce**, much like unchecked capitalism.

1. Hypodermic Needle Theory (Magic Bullet)

Definition:

- Media has a **direct, immediate, and powerful influence** on the audience.

- Audience = **Passive recipients**, absorbing messages without questioning.

Key Features:

- Media = **Powerful and manipulative**

- Audience = **Easily influenced**

- Uniform effect on all individuals

Example:

- **Propaganda films** during World War II

- The **"War of the Worlds"** radio broadcast causing mass hysteria

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2. Two-Step Flow Theory

Definition:

- Media messages are filtered through **opinion leaders**, who influence the audience.

- Audience = **Active but influenced** by trusted figures.

Key Features:

- Flow: **Media → Opinion Leaders → Audience**

- Opinion leaders act as **gatekeepers**

- Audience = **Indirectly influenced**

Example:

- **Influencers promoting products** on social media

- **Political commentators** shaping public opinion

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3. Uses and Gratification Theory

Definition:

- Audiences are **active consumers** who seek out media for specific needs.

- Focuses on **why** people consume media rather than its effects.

Key Features:

- Audience = **Active and goal-oriented**

- Media = **Tool for personal gratification**

- Individuals select content based on their needs

Five Types of Gratifications:

1. **Information & Education:** Gaining knowledge

2. **Entertainment:** Enjoyment and relaxation

3. **Personal Identity:** Relating to media characters

4. **Social Interaction:** Connecting with others

5. **Escapism:** Escaping from reality

Example:

- Watching **Netflix** for entertainment

- Using **social media** for social interaction

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4. Reception Theory (Stuart Hall)

Definition:

- Audience **actively interprets media** based on their background and beliefs.

- Meaning depends on the individual's interpretation.

Key Features:

- **Encoding/Decoding Model:**

  1. **Encoding:** Media producers create the message

  2. **Decoding:** Audience interprets the message

- **Three Readings:**

  1. **Preferred Reading:** Accepting the intended meaning

  2. **Negotiated Reading:** Partially accepting or questioning the message

  3. **Oppositional Reading:** Rejecting or opposing the message

Example:

- *Joker (2019)*:

  ○ **Preferred:** Social inequality critique

  ○ **Oppositional:** Glorifying violence

  ○ **Negotiated:** Tragic character study

Key Differences

Theory	Audience Role	Media Influence	Example
Hypodermic Needle	Passive and easily influenced	Direct and powerful	War propaganda

Two-Step Flow	Active but influenced by leaders	Indirect, through opinion leaders	Social media influencers
Uses and Gratification	Active and selective	Individuals choose media based on needs	Watching Netflix for entertainment
Reception Theory	Active interpreters	Interpretation depends on background	Different interpretations of a film

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5. Mythological and Archetypal Theory:

- Focuses on **universal symbols and recurring archetypes**.

- **Hero's journey** as a common narrative structure.

6. Freudian Theory:

- Analyzes **unconscious desires** influencing behavior.

- Includes **Id, Ego, Superego, repression, and projection**.

- Applies **Oedipus complex and dream analysis** to literature.

1. Thematic Analysis of *The Godfather*

- **Power and Corruption:** The film explores how power can lead to corruption. Michael Corleone's transformation from a reluctant outsider to a ruthless mafia leader illustrates how power can erode morality.

- **Family and Loyalty:** Despite the criminal activities, the Corleone family is bound by loyalty and devotion. Family ties are depicted as both a strength and a vulnerability.

- **Tradition vs. Modernity:** The film contrasts the old-world values of Don Vito Corleone with Michael's modern, pragmatic, and ruthless approach to business.

- **Betrayal and Trust:** The movie highlights themes of betrayal (Carlo's betrayal of Sonny, Tessio's betrayal of Michael) and the devastating consequences of broken trust.

- **The American Dream:** It critiques the American Dream by showing how immigrants seek power and wealth through illegal means, revealing the darker side of ambition and capitalism.

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2. Conflicts, Foreshadowing, Setting, and Character Analysis

⭐ **Conflicts**

- **Internal Conflict (Michael):** Michael struggles with his desire for a normal life versus his growing involvement in the family business.

- **Family Conflict:** Sonny's temper and Fredo's weakness create internal family tensions.

- **External Conflict:** The Corleone family's rivalry with the Tattaglia, Barzini, and Sollozzo families drives much of the plot.

🔥 **Foreshadowing**

- **Michael's Transformation:** Early on, Michael says, *"That's my family, Kay, not me,"* foreshadowing his eventual immersion into the mafia world.

- **Orange Symbolism:** Oranges symbolize death or danger—Don Vito is ambushed while buying oranges, and later, he dies near an orange grove.

- **Carlo's Guilt:** His nervous behavior and sudden kindness toward Connie hint at his betrayal of Sonny.

🏙️ Setting

- **New York:** The primary setting, representing the center of mafia power struggles.

- **Sicily:** A temporary escape for Michael, symbolizing his connection to his family's heritage. His marriage to Apollonia reflects his attempt at a new beginning, but her death foreshadows his violent future.

- **Lake Tahoe (Part II):** Symbolizes Michael's increasing isolation from family and humanity.

👤 Character Analysis

- **Michael Corleone:**

  - Starts as a reluctant outsider but gradually becomes a ruthless mafia leader.

  - Cold, calculating, and strategic.

  - Prioritizes power over personal relationships, evident in his eventual betrayal of Fredo and distance from Kay.

- **Vito Corleone:**

  - The patriarch of the family, wise, composed, and traditional.

  - Values loyalty and family above all else.

  - His leadership style contrasts with Michael's—more diplomatic and less violent.

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3. Applying Literary Theories to *The Godfather*

✍️ Biographical

- *The Godfather* reflects aspects of Mario Puzo's life and background. Puzo grew up in a New York neighborhood influenced by organized crime, which shaped his portrayal of the mafia world.

- The film also mirrors director Francis Ford Coppola's Italian-American heritage and struggle against Hollywood studios, paralleling the Corleone family's battle for dominance.

📚 Historicism

- The movie reflects post-World War II America, depicting the mafia's role in exploiting capitalism and corruption in politics and law enforcement.

- It captures the era's societal issues, such as the struggle for power among immigrant families and the blurred line between business and crime.

👩 Feminist (Kay and Apollonia)

- **Kay:** Represents the outsider perspective. She symbolizes the traditional American woman, innocent and idealistic. However, she is marginalized by Michael's choices, illustrating the patriarchy's dominance.

- **Apollonia:** Embodies traditional Sicilian femininity—passive, submissive, and domestic. Her death signifies the loss of Michael's brief innocence and cements his commitment to the mafia lifestyle.

- Both women highlight the film's portrayal of women as secondary characters with limited agency.

🎯 Audience Response

- **Hypodermic Needle:** Audiences might be influenced by the glorification of the mafia lifestyle, adopting a romanticized view of organized crime.

- **Two-Step Flow:** Viewers might interpret the film differently based on critics' or cinephiles' opinions, shaping their own take on its morality and themes.

- **Uses and Gratification:** Audiences may watch for entertainment, the crime drama's thrill, or to appreciate the film's artistic and narrative brilliance.

- **Reception Theory:** Different audiences perceive Michael's transformation differently—some see him as a tragic anti-hero, while others view him as a cold-blooded villain.

🔥 Marxist Theory

- **Class Struggle & Power:**

  - Corleone family = capitalist power, running the mafia like a business empire.

  - Wealth and violence manipulate politics and law enforcement.

- **Exploitation of the Working Class:**

- Characters like Enzo (baker) and Bonasera (undertaker) represent powerless workers who rely on the mafia for protection.

- **False Consciousness:**

    - Michael justifies crime as "just business" → masks corruption as necessity.

    - Corleone family's charitable acts create an illusion of morality, hiding their brutal methods.

⚜ Archetypal Theory

- **Hero's Journey (Michael)**:

    - **Call to Adventure:** Michael rejects the mafia life → pulled in after Vito's attack.

    - **Transformation:** From innocent war hero → ruthless mafia boss (anti-hero).

    - **Return:** Fully corrupted, embracing his role as the Godfather.

- **Father Figure (Vito)**:

    - Wise patriarch, symbol of protection and tradition.

    - His death marks the end of old-school mafia values → Michael's ruthless reign.

- **The Femme Fatale & The Ideal Woman:**

    - **Apollonia:** Idealized, innocent woman → her death = Michael's lost innocence.

    - **Kay:** Moral compass, symbolizes traditional values → disillusioned by Michael's corruption.

- **The Betrayer:**

    - **Carlo & Tessio:** Traitors → their betrayal = disloyalty + deadly consequences.

- **Garden of Innocence (Sicily)**:

    - Sicily = temporary 'Eden' of innocence.

    - Apollonia's death = Michael's fall from grace → descent into darkness.

Fairy Tales: Origin & Purpose

- **Fairy Tale:** A fanciful tale of legendary deeds and creatures, often for children.

- **Original Purpose:**

    - Created by women rebelling against societal norms.

    - Dark, gruesome stories intended for adults.

    - Taught moral lessons and warnings to young girls.

- **Male Authorship:**

    - Men (Perrault, Grimm) published the tales, as women couldn't be authors.

    - Stories were softened for children's audiences.

🖋️ **Famous Fairy Tale Authors**

- **Charles Perrault (France, 1600s)**:

    - Published *Tales of Mother Goose* (1697) with *The Sleeping Beauty*.

- **Grimm Brothers (Germany, 1800s)**:

    - Jacob & Wilhelm Grimm.

    - Collected and published 200 folktales, including *Sleeping Beauty*.

🐉 **Common Elements of Fairy Tales**

- Talking animals/objects.

- Cleverness, tricksters.

- Triumph of the poor.

- Human flaws (curiosity, greed) & strengths (kindness, patience).

- Guardians (fairy godmothers).

- Monsters (dragons, ogres).

- Struggle between good and evil.

- Extended sleep, impossible tasks, sibling rivalry.

👑 Sleeping Beauty: Plot Summary

- Princess is cursed by a witch to sleep for **100 years** after pricking her finger on a spindle.

- Only a true love's kiss can awaken her.

- Good fairies make the entire kingdom sleep alongside her.

- A prince eventually arrives, kisses her, and breaks the spell.

- They marry and live happily ever after.

📚 Sleeping Beauty: Historical Background

- **Earliest Version:** *Perceforest* (1330-1344).

- **Giambattista Basile's Version:** *Sun, Moon, and Talia* (1634).

- **Charles Perrault's Version:** *Histoires ou contes du temps passé* (1697).

- **Grimm Brothers' Version:**

  - Based on Perrault's tale.

  - Categorized as Aarne-Thompson type **410** (enchanted sleep).

- **Modern Adaptations:**

  - Continues to be retold across various media.

📖 Perrault vs. Grimm Brothers

- **Perrault's Version:**

  - Princess & Prince have children: *Aurore (Dawn)* and *Jour (Day)*.

  - Ogre mother-in-law tries to eat the children.

  - Cook tricks her by serving lamb and goat instead.

- **Basile's Version:**

  - Princess (*Talia*) is married to a **king** (not a prince).

  - King's **ogre wife** attempts to kill Talia and her children (*Sun* and *Moon*).

- **Grimm Brothers' Version:**

  - Simplified; omits the ogre and children.

  - Ends with the princess waking and marrying the prince.

  - Curse is cast by a **humiliated old fairy** instead of a witch.

🎥 Disney's *Sleeping Beauty* (1959)

- **Princess Aurora** raised by 3 fairies (Flora, Fauna, Merryweather) in the forest.

- **Maleficent** curses her to die, but Merryweather softens it to sleep.

- **Prince Phillip** fights Maleficent (turns into a dragon) with the *Sword of Truth* and *Shield of Virtue*.

- **Ending:** Phillip kisses Aurora, breaking the spell, and they marry.

💐 Key Differences in Versions

Element	Perrault	Grimm Brothers	Disney (1959)

Villain	Ogre mother-in-law	Old, humiliated fairy	Maleficent (evil witch)
Children	Aurore & Jour	None	None
Prince/King	Prince marries Aurora	Prince marries princess	Prince Phillip
Ending	Ogre defeated by the prince	Ends with wedding	Prince slays Maleficent, marriage
Tone	Darker, cannibalistic mother-in-law	Simpler, more magical	Romantic, family-friendly

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💡 Key Takeaways

- **Evolution of the Tale:**

  - From dark adult folklore to child-friendly tales.

  - Adapted into films, musicals, and modern media.

- **Moral Themes:**

  - Good vs. evil, virtue rewarded.

  - Cautionary warnings for young women.

- **Disney's Influence:**

  - Romanticized and simplified the tale.

  - Created iconic characters (Maleficent).