

The background is a light gray gradient. It features several realistic water droplets of various sizes, some with highlights and shadows, scattered across the frame. In the upper center, there is a faint, circular, textured pattern that resembles a lens or a ripple in water.

LITERARY THEORIES

LITERATURE THROUGH A CRITICAL LENS

LITERARY

- KEY POINTS:
AUTHORIAL INTENT IS NOT IMPORTANT.
- THE VALUE OF TEXTS IS THE IMPACT THEY HAVE ON THE READER.
- WE USE LANGUAGE TO TRY TO COMMUNICATE OUR EXPERIENCE OF OUR WORLD TO OTHERS.
- ALL TEXTS ARE PRODUCTS OF THEIR CONTEXT AND REFLECT PARTICULAR IDEOLOGIES AND VALUE SYSTEMS.

TRADITIONAL LITERARY CRITICISM

- TRACKING INFLUENCE, ESTABLISHING THE CANON OF MAJOR WRITERS IN THE LITERARY PERIODS, AND CLARIFYING HIS
- KEY FEATURE OF TRADITIONAL LITERARY CRITICISM WAS THE CONSENSUS WITHIN THE ACADEMY AS TO THE BOTH THE LITERARY CANON (THAT IS, THE BOOKS ALL EDUCATED PERSONS SHOULD READ) AND THE AIMS AND PURPOSES OF LITERATURE, HISTORICAL CONTEXT AND ALLUSIONS WITHIN THE TEXT.

MARXIST THEORY

- MARXIST LITERARY THEORIES TEND TO FOCUS ON THE REPRESENTATION OF CLASS CONFLICT AS WELL AS THE REINFORCEMENT OF CLASS DISTINCTIONS THROUGH THE MEDIUM OF LITERATURE.
- MARXIST THEORISTS USE TRADITIONAL TECHNIQUES OF LITERARY ANALYSIS BUT SUBORDINATE AESTHETIC CONCERNS TO THE FINAL SOCIAL AND POLITICAL MEANINGS OF LITERATURE.
- MARXIST THEORIST OFTEN CHAMPION AUTHORS SYMPATHETIC TO THE WORKING CLASSES AND AUTHORS WHOSE WORK CHALLENGES ECONOMIC EQUALITIES FOUND IN CAPITALIST SOCIETIES.
- BASED ON THE THEORIES OF KARL MARX IT EXAMINES CLASS DIFFERENCES, ECONOMIC AND OTHERWISE, AS WELL AS THE IMPLICATIONS AND COMPLICATIONS OF THE CAPITALIST SYSTEM:
"MARXISM ATTEMPTS TO REVEAL THE WAYS IN WHICH OUR SOCIOECONOMIC SYSTEM IS THE ULTIMATE SOURCE OF OUR EXPERIENCE" (TYSON 277).
- THEORISTS WORKING IN THE MARXIST TRADITION ARE INTERESTED IN ANSWERING THE OVERARCHING QUESTION, WHOM DOES IT [THE WORK, THE EFFORT, THE POLICY, THE ROAD, ETC.] BENEFIT? THE ELITE? THE MIDDLE CLASS?
- MARXIST CRITICS ARE ALSO INTERESTED IN HOW THE LOWER OR WORKING CLASSES ARE OPPRESSED - IN EVERYDAY LIFE AND IN LITERATURE.

QUESTIONS

- **TYPICAL QUESTIONS:**
- WHOM DOES IT BENEFIT IF THE WORK OR EFFORT IS ACCEPTED/SUCCESSFUL/BELIEVED, ETC.?
- WHAT IS THE SOCIAL CLASS OF THE AUTHOR?
- WHICH CLASS DOES THE WORK CLAIM TO REPRESENT?
- WHAT VALUES DOES IT REINFORCE?
- WHAT VALUES DOES IT SUBVERT?
- WHAT CONFLICT CAN BE SEEN BETWEEN THE VALUES THE WORK CHAMPIONS AND THOSE IT PORTRAYS?
- WHAT SOCIAL CLASSES DO THE CHARACTERS REPRESENT?
- HOW DO CHARACTERS FROM DIFFERENT CLASSES INTERACT OR CONFLICT?

GENDER

- TAKING A GENDERED READING OF A TEXT IS TO FOREGROUND THE DEPICTION OF THE SEXES AND GENDERS. IT IS IMPORTANT TO SEPARATE THE TERMS:

SEX: THE PHYSICAL MANIFESTATION OF BEING MALE OR FEMALE

GENDER: THE PSYCHOLOGICAL, EMOTIONAL AND BEHAVIOURAL MANIFESTATION OF MASCULINITY OR FEMININITY.

A PERSON DOES NOT NEED TO BE PHYSICALLY FEMALE TO IDENTIFY AS BEING FEMININE; A PERSON, IN RARE CASES, MAY HAVE THE PHYSICAL ATTRIBUTES OF BOTH MAN AND WOMAN (INTERSEX) BUT IDENTIFY AS ONE OR THE OTHER.

WHEN WE READ FOR GENDER, WE MIGHT LOOK AT THE WAY IDEAS OF FEMININITY AND MASCULINITY ARE NORMALISED (OR INTERROGATED) IN A TEXT.

QUESTIONS

- HOW OUR OWN EXPECTATIONS OF HOW MEN AND WOMEN SHOULD ACT LEAD US TO REACT OR RESPOND IN PARTICULAR WAYS.
- WHICH CHARACTERS ARE DEPICTED AS PASSIVE AND WHICH AS ACTIVE.
- HOW FEMININITY IS OFTEN PORTRAYED AS A WEAKNESS, AND MASCULINITY AS AN ASSET.
- THE WAY THAT SOCIAL STRUCTURES REWARD OR PUNISH PARTICULAR SEXES FOR THEIR PHYSICAL FEATURES AND ABILITIES.
- WHETHER A PARTICULAR SEX MIGHT BE OMITTED FROM A TEXT.
- HOW THE PORTRAYAL OF WOMEN OR MEN HAVE BECOME FEATURES OF GENRES

POST-COLONIALISM

- POST-COLONIAL CRITICS ARE CONCERNED WITH LITERATURE PRODUCED BY COLONIAL POWERS AND WORKS PRODUCED BY THOSE WHO WERE/ARE COLONIZED.
- POST-COLONIAL THEORY LOOKS AT ISSUES OF POWER, ECONOMICS, POLITICS, RELIGION, AND CULTURE AND HOW THESE ELEMENTS WORK IN RELATION TO COLONIAL HEGEMONY (WESTERN COLONIZERS CONTROLLING THE COLONIZED).
- POST-COLONIAL CRITICISM ALSO QUESTIONS THE ROLE OF THE WESTERN LITERARY CANON AND WESTERN HISTORY AS DOMINANT FORMS OF KNOWLEDGE MAKING. THE TERMS "FIRST WORLD," "SECOND WORLD," "THIRD WORLD" AND "FOURTH WORLD" NATIONS ARE CRITIQUED BY POST-COLONIAL CRITICS BECAUSE THEY REINFORCE THE DOMINANT POSITIONS OF WESTERN CULTURES POPULATING FIRST WORLD STATUS.
- THIS CRITIQUE INCLUDES THE LITERARY CANON AND HISTORIES WRITTEN FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF FIRST WORLD CULTURES. A POST-COLONIAL CRITIC MIGHT QUESTION THE WORKS INCLUDED IN "THE CANON" BECAUSE THE CANON DOES NOT CONTAIN WORKS BY AUTHORS OUTSIDE WESTERN CULTURE.

TYPICAL QUESTIONS:

- HOW DOES THE LITERARY TEXT, EXPLICITLY OR ALLEGORICALLY, REPRESENT VARIOUS ASPECTS OF COLONIAL OPPRESSION?
- WHAT DOES THE TEXT REVEAL ABOUT THE PROBLEMATICS OF POST-COLONIAL IDENTITY, INCLUDING THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PERSONAL AND CULTURAL IDENTITY AND SUCH ISSUES AS DOUBLE CONSCIOUSNESS AND HYBRIDITY?
- WHAT PERSON(S) OR GROUPS DOES THE WORK IDENTIFY AS "OTHER" OR STRANGER? HOW ARE SUCH PERSONS/GROUPS DESCRIBED AND TREATED?
- WHAT DOES THE TEXT REVEAL ABOUT THE POLITICS AND/OR PSYCHOLOGY OF ANTI-COLONIALIST RESISTANCE?
- WHAT DOES THE TEXT REVEAL ABOUT THE OPERATIONS OF CULTURAL DIFFERENCE - THE WAYS IN WHICH RACE, RELIGION, CLASS, GENDER, SEXUAL ORIENTATION, CULTURAL BELIEFS, AND CUSTOMS COMBINE TO FORM INDIVIDUAL IDENTITY - IN SHAPING OUR PERCEPTIONS OF OURSELVES, OTHERS, AND THE WORLD IN WHICH WE LIVE?
- HOW DOES THE TEXT RESPOND TO OR COMMENT UPON THE CHARACTERS, THEMES, OR ASSUMPTIONS OF A CANONIZED (COLONIALIST) WORK?
- ARE THERE MEANINGFUL SIMILARITIES AMONG THE LITERATURES OF DIFFERENT POST-COLONIAL POPULATIONS?
- HOW DOES A LITERARY TEXT IN THE WESTERN CANON REINFORCE OR UNDERMINE COLONIALIST IDEOLOGY THROUGH ITS REPRESENTATION OF COLONIALIZATION AND/OR ITS INAPPROPRIATE SILENCE ABOUT COLONIZED PEOPLES? (TYSON 378-379)