

Questions Marxist Criticism Asks

concerns itself with class differences, economic and otherwise, as well as the implications and complications of the capitalist system

Relate context of work to social class of the author and or time period
 Whom does it benefit if the work or effort is accepted/successful/believed, etc.?

What happens as a result in differences in power/money
 What is the social class of the author?

What roles does power, money and class play in this work?
 Which class does the work claim to represent?

Consider who has the money/power and who doesn't
 What values does it reinforce?

What values does it subvert?

Does the work propose some form of utopian vision as a solution to the problems encountered in the work?
 What conflict can be seen between the values the work champions and those it portrays?

What does the work say about oppression; or are social conflicts ignored or blamed elsewhere?
 What social classes do the characters represent?

In what ways does the work serve as propaganda for the status quo; or does it try to undermine it?
 How do characters from different classes interact or conflict?

How do characters overcome oppression?
 What role does class play in the work; what is the author's analysis of class relations?

Gender Criticism:

the manner in which gender and sexuality is discussed

What elements of the text can be perceived as being masculine (active, powerful) and feminine (passive, marginalized) and how do the characters support these traditional roles?
 What sort of support (if any) is given to elements or characters who question the masculine/feminine binary? What happens to those elements/characters?

Gender Criticism: (cont)

What elements in the text exist in the middle, between the perceived masculine/feminine binary? In other words, what elements exhibit traits of both (bisexual)?
 How does the author present the text? Is it a traditional narrative? Is it secure and forceful? Or is it more hesitant or even collaborative?

What are the politics (ideological agendas) of specific gay, lesbian, or queer works, and how are those politics revealed in...the work's thematic content or portrayals of its characters?
 What are the poetics (literary devices and strategies) of a specific lesbian, gay, or queer works?

What does the work contribute to our knowledge of queer, gay, or lesbian experience and history, including literary history?
 How is queer, gay, or lesbian experience coded in texts that are by writers who are apparently homosexual?

What does the work reveal about the operations (socially, politically, psychologically) homophobic?
 How does the literary text illustrate the problematics of sexuality and sexual "identity," that is the ways in which human sexuality does not fall neatly into the separate categories defined by the words homosexual and heterosexual?

Critical Race Theory

a theoretical and interpretive mode that examines the appearance of race and racism across dominant cultural modes of expression.

What is the significance of race in contemporary American society
 How does racism continue to function as a persistent force in American society

How can we accurately reflect the experiences of victims of racism
 How can scholars convey that racism is a concern that affects all members of society?

What types of texts and other cultural artifacts reflect dominant culture's perceptions of race?
 Where and to what ends does race appear in American culture and shape the ways we interact?

How can we combat racism to ensure equal opportunity

Feminist/Gender Criticism Questions

concerned with lit that reinforces or undermines the economic, political, social, and psychological oppression of women and the implicit misogyny in male writing about women

Consider the gender/orientation of the author and characters

How is the relationship between men and women portrayed?

What roles does the gender of sexuality play in the work (examine power relations)

What are the power relationships between men and women (or characters assuming male/female roles)?

look for sexual stereotypes either reinforced or contradicted

How are male and female roles defined?

imagine yourself as the opposite gender reading the text

What constitutes masculinity and femininity?

How do characters embody these traits?

What does the work reveal about the operations (economically, politically, socially, or psychologically) of patriarchy?

Do characters take on traits from opposite genders? How so? How does this change others' reactions to them?

What does the work imply about the possibilities of sisterhood as a mode of resisting patriarchy?

What does the work say about women's creativity?

What does the history of the work's reception by the public and by the critics tell us about the operation of patriarchy?

What role the work play in terms of women's literary history and literary tradition? (Tyson)

Historical Criticism Questions

seeks to reconnect a work with the time period in which it was produced and identify it with the cultural and political movements of the time and assumes that every work is a product of the historic moment that created it.

What language/characters/events present in the work reflect the current events of the author's day?

Are there words in the text that have changed their meaning from the time of the writing?

Historical Criticism Questions (cont)

How are such events interpreted and presented?

How are events' interpretation and presentation a product of the culture of the author?

Does the work's presentation support or condemn the event?

Can it be seen to do both?

How does this portrayal criticize the leading political figures or movements of the day?

How does the literary text function as part of a continuum with other historical/cultural texts from the same period...?

How does the work consider traditionally marginalized populations?

Psychoanalytical Criticism

people's unconscious affects their behavior. the unconscious feelings affected behavior are desire, fear of loss, and repression. Dreams are a lens into the unconscious. The behavior of characters in a story give insight into the author's unconscious feelings

How do the operations of repression structure or inform the work?

Are there any oedipal dynamics at work here?

What does the work suggest about the psychological being of its author?

What might a given interpretation of a literary work suggest about the psychological motives of the reader?

Are there prominent words in the piece that could have different or hidden meanings?

How can characters' behavior, narrative events, and/or images be explained in terms of psychoanalytic concepts of any kind

