Literary Theory Cheat Sheet

Literary theory gives readers different ways to view and analyze a text. So, literary theory is like a lens. When looking through different lenses, we see the subject in different ways – reading a text is the same way. When we look at the text from these different lenses, we find that we can correctly analyze the text in numerous ways.

**Part 1 Directions:** Using Owl Purdue resources, you will research and fill out the following chart to help you better understand ways that we have analyzed *The Great Gatsby* through our class discussions, so that you can select a specific literary theory and replicate the analytical process through your research paper.

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| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Literary Theory | Basic Definition | Focus for Analysis | Questions to Guide Analysis |
| Formalism or New Criticism  (1930s-present) |  |  |  |
| Marxist Criticism  (1930s-present) |  |  |  |

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| Literary Theory | Basic Definition | Focus for Analysis | Questions to Guide Analysis |
| New Historicism/ Cultural Studies  (1980s-present) |  |  |  |
| Post-Colonial Criticism  (1990s-present) |  |  |  |

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| Literary Theory | Basic Definition | Focus for Analysis | Questions to Guide Analysis |
| Feminist Criticism  (1960s-present) |  |  |  |
| Gender Studies and Queer Theory  (1970s-present) |  |  |  |
| Critical Race Theory  (1970s-present) |  |  |  |

Matching Analytical Points with Its Literary Criticism

**Part 2 Directions:** Below are examples of general topics from *The Great Gatsby* that we started to analyze in class. These basic analytical ideas are starting points for possible paper topics that we could examine in more depth. To help us analyze these topics, we need to match these basic concepts with the appropriate literary criticism to direct us through our analysis, to help us focus our scope by using a specific lens to look through while questioning and analyzing the text. Read each example of a possible topic and then match it with an appropriate literary criticism.

1. *The Great Gatsby* is the portrait of a broken society, where the upper class exploits those beneath them, living covered in dust and ashes

1. Fitzgerald criticizes women’s ambition through the carelessness of characters from all of the different social classes

1. Fitzgerald’s anti-Semitic depiction of Wolfshiem reflects the ethnic bias of 1920s America

1. Fitzgerald degrades the lower class by normalizing abusive relationships only when the men hold financial and social power over the women

1. Fitzgerald represents the destruction of the American dream through the car motif