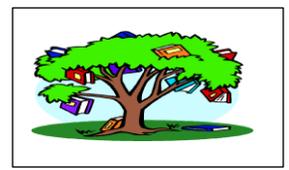


# Toward Better Literacy: Reference Outlines



## Biographical, Historical & Postmodern Criticism

**Biographical Criticism** relates author's life and thoughts to his or her work.

### Assumptions

- ❖ Literary studies include knowledge of context in which work was created vs. literature manifesting "universal" transcendence of the conditions of its genesis (Plato)
- ❖ Don't equate work with the author's life. They are not the same.
- ❖ Avoid less than credible sources (speculative or controversial).

### Questions to ask:

- ✚ How does the text reflect the author's life?
- ✚ Is the text an extension of the author's position on issues in the author's life?
- ✚ What about the author's life can aid in interpreting and understanding his or her work?

**Historical Criticism** or New Historicism is concerned with the period in which a text is produced

### Assumptions

- ❖ Thematic elements are related to the culture, context, discourse, ideology and concept of self
- ❖ The reader places the text in the context of the historical period when it is written (historiography) or the period that is the setting of the work.

### Questions to Ask

- ✚ How do events and zeitgeist (cultural feel) that surround the writing of a text lend meaning?
- ✚ If there is correlation in the work to historical figures, movements, documents or events, is there any bias in the work that would affect representational faithfulness?
- ✚ Is the use of historical elements serving to make a good story, or is it an attempt at revision?

**Postmodern Criticism** pertains to the relationship of language and meaning

### Assumptions

- ❖ It rejects the certainty of meaning
- ❖ Analyzes the text and exposes its ambiguities
- ❖ Its goal is to upset the connection between text and perceived reality

### Questions to ask:

- ✚ What assumptions or presuppositions predispose a text's meaning?
- ✚ How does the language, micro and macro, contradict itself?
- ✚ Can there be a fresh interpretation of a text?