

SOME WAYS YOU CAN APPROACH A LITERARY TEXT

- 1. Who wrote it and why? How do the writer's concerns appear in the text?**
 - * Biographical criticism
 - * Psychoanalytical criticism
- 2. How about texts that seem to have no author?**
 - * Folklore studies
 - * Oral studies
- 3. What (or how) does it mean?**
 - * Linguistic criticism (the nature and structure of the text's language)
 - * Hermeneutics (the philosophy--or art--of interpretation)
 - * Phenomenology (pure description of the text and its effects)
 - * Semiotics (the structure of the text's signs and symbols)
 - * Deconstruction (the problematics of language and reading)
- 4. What perennial or cross-cultural themes and symbols does it engage?**
 - * Archetypal criticism
 - * Comparative literature
- 5. What literary techniques does it use?**
 - * Formalist criticism ("New" criticism)
 - * Prosody, stylistics, and genre criticism
- 6. What other texts influenced it, and what other texts did it influence?**
 - * Literary history
 - * Intertextual studies
- 7. How did the author and the original audience understand the work?**
 - * Historicism
- 8. How does it reveal (or conceal) larger social and cultural concerns of the author's day?**
 - * New Historicism
 - * Marxist criticism
- 9. What effect has it had on audiences over the years, in different time periods?**
 - * Reception theory
- 10. How does it affect individual readers like us?**
 - * Reader response theory
- 11. How does it express or represent gender, male or female? What is its relation to the history of women, or to the female reader/writer in particular?**
 - * Feminist criticism
 - * Gender criticism

These and other critical approaches are explained in more detail in M. H. Abram's Glossary of Literary Terms.