Literary Criticism Presentations

English III CP McCook

As a class, we have spent several weeks working with the story *The Metamorphosis* by Franz Kafka. We began this unit by reading Kafka’s short story “The Vulture.” Each of you created your own interpretation of “The Vulture” and supported your interpretation with evidence from the text. As you created your interpretation, you were already using one kind of literary theory called Reader Response Theory[[1]](#footnote-1), which focuses on the reader’s experience with a literary work. Whether you knew it or not, some of you were also using other literary theories like Archetypical/Mythic Theory to compare “The Vulture” to the myth of Prometheus or Historical/Political Theory to compare “The Vulture” to a dictatorship that is attacking its people. All of these were valid interpretations. We will now research some of these other literary theories and use them to perform close readings of *The Metamorphosis.*

**TASK**

Your task is to understand basic literary theory and criticism. As you complete this project, you should become familiar with ***how*** and ***why*** literary criticism is used.

You will work in small groups to explore different types of literary theory. Each group will be responsible for one particular type, or school, of literary criticism. Using the information gathered through research, each group will create a PowerPoint (or Prezi) presentation about their particular school of literary criticism.

This project will help us gain a basic understanding of the following literary criticism theories:

* Biographical Criticism
* Historical Criticism
* Psychological Criticism
* Archetypal (Mythic/Biblical) Criticism
* Moral Criticism
* Philosophical Criticism
* Feminist Criticism
* Political Criticism

**Research:**

* When was your theory “invented” or “born”?
* Who is known as its founder(s)?
* General definition
* Why is it used?
* What does it focus on?
* What are the key questions it asks of a text?
* What kind of texts is it used for?
* What are the benefits and limitations (pros and cons) of using it on literature?

**Apply:**

**How could this theory be used to read *The Metamorphosis*?**

* Give several examples—at least 5 (five)—of what this story would look like through the lens of your theory. For example, when we analyzed the apple as a symbol of Gregor sinning against his God-like father, we were using Archetypal (Mythic/Biblical) Theory. This would count as one of your five examples.
* Explain what happens to Gregor using your critical theory. What do you think turning into a vermin means according to your theory? Why does it happen to Gregor?

**Create:**

Include all of this information in a well-designed PowerPoint (or Prezi) presentation. Choose your own designs, but follow these guidelines:

* Title slide (topic, group member names, teacher name, class, date)
* A suitable picture for each slide
* Limited text on each slide. Use a few bullet points with key words. Do NOT use paragraphs or large chunks of text.
* Works Cited slide

Practice your presentation. Be sure you understand the material. Know it well so that you can speak to the audience rather than read from the slides. Proofread the PowerPoint as you would a paper. Each group member must do an equal amount of preparation and speaking.

Presentations will take place on Friday, December 19th and Monday, December 22nd. All group members must be present and ready to present on the first day.

**Grading:**

Article on your literary theory (1 per person) 10 points

* Basic article on your literary theory (not from me) 8 points
* Detailed/scholarly article on your literary theory 9 points
* Article relating your literary theory to *The Metamorphosis* 10 points

Presentation (see rubric) + 40 points

Total 50 points

1. Reader Response Theory is particularly near and dear to me because my college mentor, David Bleich, is one of its founders. It is no coincidence that he began his freshmen seminar with “The Vulture” each year. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)