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# **Critical Theory:**

## **A Vehicle for Teaching Social Justice**

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# Goals & Agenda: Participants will be able to...

- Define literary theory and understand its purposes
- Apply critical race, gender, and social class theories to texts

## Agenda:

15 minutes: Introductions to Each Other

15 minutes: Introduction to Critical Literary Theory

15 minutes: Application to *A Raisin in the Sun*

15 minutes: Wrap up - Reflections, Questions, Sharing Resources

# Ideology & You

Ideology (n): a system of social, cultural, and personal values and beliefs that shapes how one sees the world

- What parts of your identity (gender, sexuality, race/ethnicity, religion culture, interests and passions, etc.) are most important to you?
- How do your beliefs and/or background inform your teaching?

# How do we approach text? The Rhetorical Triangle

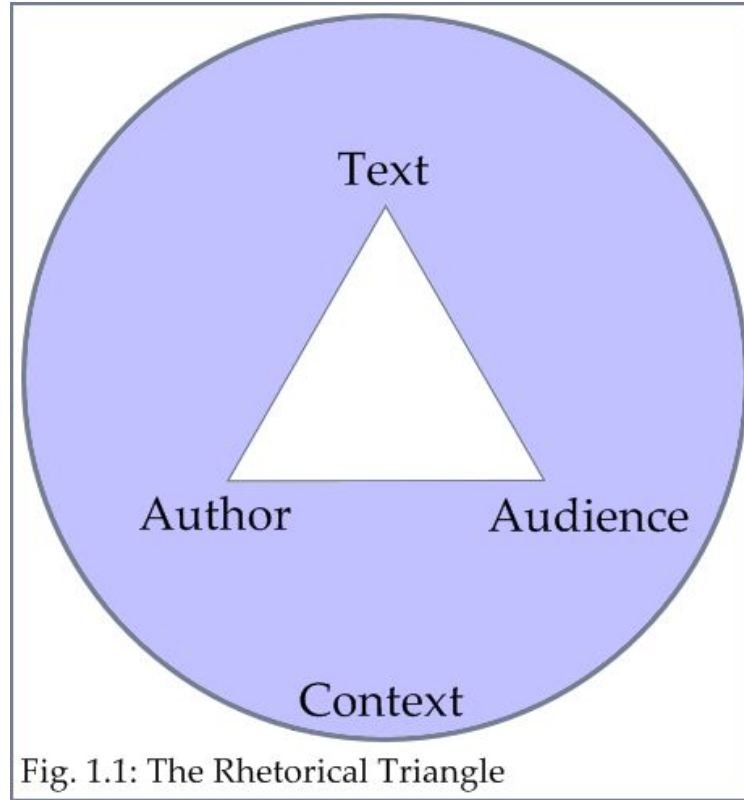


Fig. 1.1: The Rhetorical Triangle

Roberts-Miller, Trish. *Fig. 1.1: The Rhetorical Triangle*. Digital image. *Understanding Misunderstandings: How to Do a Rhetorical Analysis*. The University of Texas at Austin, 2008. Web. 10 June 2016. <<http://www.drw.utexas.edu/roberts-miller/handouts/rhetorical-analysis>>.

# Forms of Theory: Ways to Analyze Text

- **Formalism:** meaning is within the text and only within the text
- **Reader-response:** meaning comes from the reader's experience of reading
- **Structuralism:** meaning comes from examining the science of language used in the text (systems of signs, techniques, vocabulary, linguistics, etc.)
- **Deconstruction:** meaning comes from what is absent from the text, from the inherent contradictions within the text, and from the lack of singular interpretation of a text

# Critical Theory is kinda like Instagram...



Psychoanalytic

Gender

Critical Race

Post-Colonial



Social Class

New Historicism

Queer Studies

Ecocriticism

Instagram filters. Digital image. *Learning Social Media*. N.p., 31 Jan. 2012. Web. 16 Oct. 2013. <<https://aprendiendosm.wordpress.com/2012/01/31/instagram-o-la-nueva-polaroid/>>.

# Understanding Critical Theory

<u>Critical Race</u>	<u>Gender</u>	<u>Social Class</u>
Main Ideas:	Main Ideas:	Main Ideas:

# *A Raisin in the Sun* by Lorraine Hansberry (1959)





# Applying Critical Theory: *A Raisin in the Sun*

<u>Critical Race</u>	<u>Gender</u>	<u>Social Class</u>

# Reflections on this work

- How can having a better understanding of literary theory help engage students in your classroom?
- How could you apply literary theory to your current curriculum/work with students?
- How do you see literary theory advancing the goals of social justice, and in particular anti-racism?
- What questions do YOU have?

# Literary Theory as a Vehicle for Social Justice

- Engages & empowers students and teachers who are typically underrepresented or silenced
- Requires us to diversify and/or challenge content
- Provides students a toolkit to make meaning of the world around them

## Key Considerations:

- Remember intersectionality
- No one person should be expected to speak for an entire group
- Allow students to share the airtime
- Remind students that difficult conversations are necessary for real growth

# Other Texts We Use in our Classrooms

- *The Great Gatsby* by F. Scott Fitzgerald
- *Song of Solomon* by Toni Morrison
- *Their Eyes Were Watching God* by Zora Neale Hurston
- *The Things They Carried* by Tim O'Brien
- *Jane Eyre* by Charlotte Bronte
- *Wide Sargasso Sea* by Jean Rhys
- "The Lost Beautifulnes" by Anzia Yezierska
- Short stories by Edgar Allan Poe, Ernest Hemingway, Kate Chopin, others
- Speeches by Malcolm X, Sojourner Truth, Frederick Douglass, John Winthrop
- Political cartoons and media clips (such as music videos by Beyonce)
- Poetry by Langston Hughes, Adrienne Rich, others

# Contact Us!

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Please check out the suggested resources, and be sure to put your name and email on the sign up sheet if you would like us to send you digital copies of the materials from today's workshop.