

Introduction to Literary Criticism

- -Formalist
- -Psychological
- -Mythological/Archetypal
 - -Feminist
 - -Historical
- -Biographical
- -Reception

Lens

- When you analyze literature using a specific approach, it is called using a LENS to study the work

Formalist (New Criticism)

- Look for PATTERNS within text
- What the works says and how
- Relationship between form and content
- Search for precision
- Study of Thematic Patterns
- No need for outside research

Young Goodman Brown

Formalist Lens

- Repeated Image- pink ribbons- tie the story together
- Light and Dark Imagery- Ambiguity
- Allusions to faith, hope and love
- Faith vs. Doubt (“Desperate,” “Despair,” “No hope”)
- Motif of love vs. hate

Psychological Criticism

- Based on philosophies by Freud
- Actions are motivated by forces beyond our control
- Human behavior is moved by sexuality

Some Freudian Terms

- ID- the source of our aggressions and DESIRES
- EGO- part of the brain that regulates the ID
- SUPEREGO- represses the ID and drives those feelings toward the unconscious

Psychological Approach to Young Goodman Brown

- Brown betrays innocence- motivated by ID
- Journey is both psychological and physical
- Village= consciousness/ social and moral order= SUPEREGO
- Forest=unconscious, wild, untamed passion where he can let go of repression= ID
- Young Goodman Brown= EGO= tries to find a balance between the two worlds

Mythological/Archetypal Approach

- A search for universal symbols within a work
- A search for familiar patterns
- Romantic Heroes/ Quests

Archetypal/ Mythological Approach to YGB

- Serpent in forest= symbol of evil
- Faith= archetype of Good Mother (warmth, nourishment, protection)
- Red/Fire= blood, violence, passion
- Darkness= chaos
- Setting Sun= death

Feminist Approach

- Often called the Gender Theory Approach
- Gender determines roles and action in the work
- Identifies the gender roles in the work
- Question: Does the work reinforce or break down the patriarchy?

Feminist Approach to Young Goodman Brown

- Faith and other women are empowered with knowledge
- Story centers on Brown's rejection of his wife- she doesn't destroy the marriage
- Faith is wiser than Brown, yet he sees her as an obstacle

Historical Criticism

- Study the time period when the work was written
- Study the allusions to contemporary events within the text

A look at YGM using a historical lens

- Hawthorne lived during a time when Puritanism was not as respected
- During the Romantic era, the focus of literature was to create a history of America and an emphasis on the common man

Biographical Lens

- A study of the author's own life as reflected in the work
- A study of the work as a representation of the author's personal beliefs and life

YGB with a Biographical Lens

- Hawthorne had an ancestor who was a judge in the Salem witch trials- he longed to disassociate himself with his family
- Hawthorne believed that Puritanism was wrong- he was a bit of a Transcendentalist!

Reception Theory

- A look at who was reading the work when it was published- this is call readership
- A look at the audience the work was meant for
- A look at any problems that may have arisen at the time of publication
- A look at when/why new editions were released

Reception of YGB

- Hawthorne's first book failed and he burned every copy!
- Although acclaimed by critics, the collection of short stories did not sell well
- A new version was published in 1842, but even it did not garner much interest