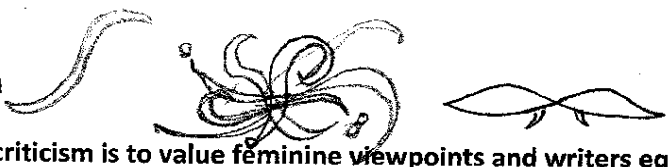


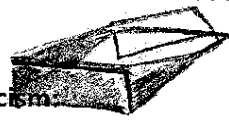
Feminist Literary Criticism



The purpose of feminist literary criticism is to value feminine viewpoints and writers equally with men, which has not been historically the case. There are three main goals of feminist critics (male or female): Rediscover works of female writers that were ignored (examples are Kate Chopin and Zora Neale Hurston); Look at books from the canon again to understand how they reflect and shape attitudes toward women; to influence the canon to include more works that are either by females or that value females beyond simple stereotypes or objects.

Feminist critics are interested in a variety of things. Primarily they are interested in how women are depicted in literary works. They are also very interested in language as a source of power and as the realm of discourse. They look at who is allowed to speak and what kind of discourse is valued. An example of this is a journal or memoir versus an essay or "hero" novel. They are also very interested in depictions of the female body, specifically as an object to be owned or tamed or as a subject which experiences and defines reality. The female body may be literal or figurative and very often relates to sexuality. Feminist critics are also interested in analyzing the forces of patriarchy which has, in the past, infantilized or condemned females. Finally, they are interested in popular art and culture and how it depicts and influences the position of women in the world.

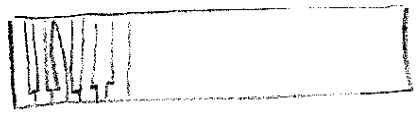
Feminists are not interested in "bashing" males, only the patriarchal and sexist attitudes that limit women's freedoms.



Questions to ask when engaging in a text-based feminist criticism:

1. Characterization—

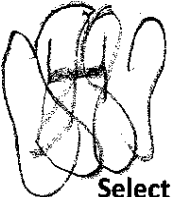
- a. Are the females only stereotypes? (temptress, nurturer, infant, hag)
- b. Are they dynamic/alive?
- c. Are they round or whole? *flur*
- d. What role do they play?
- e. How does this depiction compare with that of the males in the work?



2. Power/Language—

- a. Who is empowered in the work?
- b. How is physical power shown?
- c. Are the females objects (only acted upon) or subjects (actually act)?
- d. Who is allowed to speak?
- e. What voices/viewpoints are valued?
- f. Is patriarchy supported?
- g. How are the females treated and does the work as a whole support or condemn that treatment?

3. For a whole course of study: What works are studied overall and are female writers fairly represented? Do the female characters, whether created by a male or female, support stereotypes or empower freedoms for women?



Select one work from level two and analyze the characterization of the central female character, focusing on questions from #1:

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