

"Compelling ... powerful  
and impressive." *Philip Pullman*

# A MONSTER CALLS

## Top 20 resources for Teaching Literary Criticism

Assembled by Jill Mountain

1. **40 Texts for Teaching Literary Criticism** <https://moore-english.com/choosing-texts-for-literary-criticism/>

Moore English is an excellent resource for secondary English teachers. This page of the website lists different types of literary criticism and specific texts to use in teaching each type. Hyperlinks throughout the page lead to additional resources on most of the suggested texts as well as explanations of the different types of criticism.

2. **Literary Theory and Schools of Criticism** [https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/subject\\_specific\\_writing/writing\\_in\\_literature/literary\\_theory\\_and\\_schools\\_of\\_criticism/index.html](https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/subject_specific_writing/writing_in_literature/literary_theory_and_schools_of_criticism/index.html)

The Purdue OWL website is a highly regarded resource that covers everything from MLA and APA to literary theory, and more. This is a general overview of literary criticism with links to more in-depth discussions of well-known schools of criticism. There are no lessons included, but this is a good resource to provide to students or to use in developing lessons.

3. **ReadWriteThink: Introducing Literary Criticism through Reception Moments** <http://www.readwritethink.org/classroom-resources/lesson-plans/review-redux-introducing-literary-801.html?tab=1#tabs>

ReadWriteThink, a free resource provided by the NCTE (National Council of Teachers of English) is an excellent source of lesson plans and lesson ideas. This resource is a five-lesson unit plan using “A Raisin in the Sun” to explore different schools of literary criticism and to work collaboratively to respond to the story from the different perspectives provided by these schools of criticism. Portions of this could be used to develop single lessons, or one could follow the entire five-lesson unit.



4. **A Simple Way to Introduce Students to Critical Reading Lenses** <https://www.readingandwritinghaven.com/analyzing-disney-films-through-critical-reading-lenses/>

This author offers a list of recommended texts for teaching feminist, multicultural, and socioeconomic theory through literature. She also includes for each school suggested Disney movies that can be used to apply the criticism. The site includes the basic outline of a lesson on Feminist Theory and how the author uses texts and Disney films to illustrate different characteristics. This resource is valuable for the author’s ideas as well as for the lists of suggested texts and films.

5. **Lesson: Introduction to Literary Theory**

<https://betterlesson.com/community/lesson/39329/introduction-to-literary-theory-a-weeks-worth-of-lesson-plans>

A lesson plan for grades 11-12 that can be adapted for lower grades. The lesson engages students by introducing perspective as a way to think about criticism; that is, the idea that different people look at the same objects or experience in different ways. The introductory section is accessible and it transitions easily into the discussion and definition of criticism. This is an excellent foundational lesson.

6. **5 Reasons You Should be Teaching Literary Criticism**

<https://moore-english.com/introducing-literary-criticism/>

This is another excellent resource from Moore-English.com. While there is some discussion of *why* literary criticism should be taught, there is much more information on *how* to do so. The author suggests strong foundational texts (*To Kill a Mockingbird*) to begin close reading, and offers lists of texts for historical, biographical, feminist, and Marxist lenses. There are general tips on how approach teaching criticism, and discussion of how to assess texts to see what school should be applied. There are no step-by-step lessons, but enough information for a teacher to create a lesson using these tools.

7. **Prestwick House: Introducing Literary Theory**

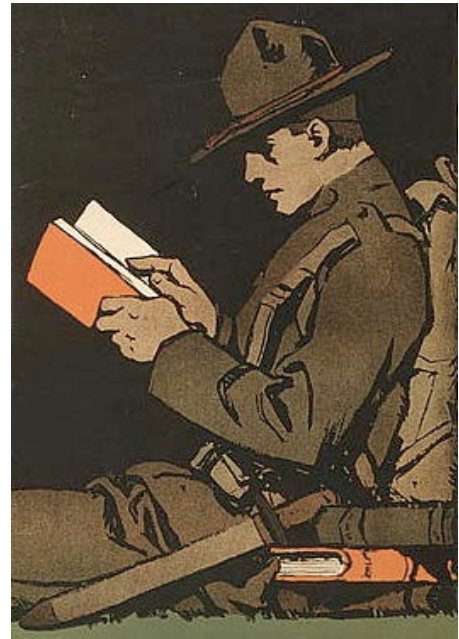
<https://www.prestwickhouse.com/File%20Library/Free%20Lessons/Free-Lesson-June-2015---Introducing-Literary-Theory.pdf>

This is a complete lesson plan in .pdf form, and a free resource from the educational publisher Prestwick House. The lesson plan suggests familiar texts such as *The Great Gatsby* or *Lord of the Flies* but also provides directions for teachers to apply the lesson to other texts students have read recently in class. There are introductory prompts and guiding questions to complete feminist, Marxist, Freudian, and Archetypal readings as well as suggested homework assignments, links to CCSS, and a short bibliography of resources.

8. **Introduction to Feminist Theory by Martha Soto**

<https://betterlesson.com/lesson/544356/introduction-to-feminist-theory>

The author is a high school teacher who is sharing how she applies this school of literary criticism to the novel *Their Eyes were Watching God*. This is a complete lesson including the author's resources and notes, as well as a short video on how she created resources. A key



to this lesson is the use of a children's book, what the author calls a "non-threatening text," to introduce the theory.

9. **Literary Theory: Critical Lenses (YouTube)**

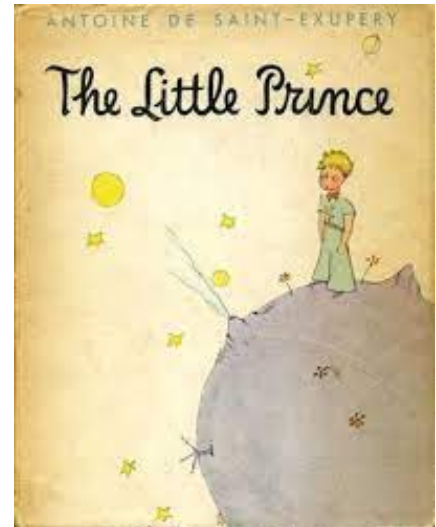
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F85BG3fkn98&feature=share>

This is a 2-1/2 minute video that provides an overview of the seven main types of critical theory. The video is a series of text slides, so that it can be used as a refresher or to provide notes for students to flip through. There is also a brief section explaining some similarities or "interrelations" between different schools of criticism.

10. **Telescopes and Spyglasses: Using Literary Theories in High School Classrooms (E-book)**

<https://scholarworks.bgsu.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1200&context=honorsprojects>

Written directly to and for teachers of English literature in secondary grades, the handbook explains each of the main schools of literary criticism, provides example texts for each, and then offers three to four specific strategies for teaching each type of criticism, along with guiding questions and key vocabulary for each section. It is a strong resource to use in developing a literary criticism lesson on almost any text.



11. **Levels of Thinking: An Introduction to Archetypes**

<https://betterlesson.com/lesson/516211/levels-of-thinking-an-introduction-to>

Teachers preparing to introduce archetypal criticism should consider an introductory lesson on archetypes. This lesson builds on students' prior knowledge of archetypes and symbols from books, films, children's stories, etc. It is aligned to CCSS, and can be used "as-is" or as inspiration for a new lesson. The source, Betterlesson.com is reliable.

12. **Marxist Literary Theory**

<https://natureofwriting.com/courses/writing-about-literature/lessons/marxist-literary-theory/>

This resource serves as an excellent model for introducing and applying Marxist literary theory. The author includes both a text and video that explain Marxist theory with some detail. Key vocabulary relevant to the theory (determinism, base, infrastructure, superstructure) are introduced and explained. The author goes on to apply the theory to a Wordsworth poem, both in the text and in a short video,

and adds commentary on the application. This resource can be used to build a lesson Marxist theory or provided to students as a resource.

13. **New Criticism Introduction**

<https://www.shmoop.com/study-guides/literary-schools-of-theory/new-criticism>

A free resource from Shmoop.com, this page introduces what is sometimes a complicated theory with humor and student-friendly language. The author makes the connection between “close reading” and new criticism, assesses the value of the approach, and provides vocabulary, examples of applications, and suggestions for further reading. There are no lessons in this resource, but it is accessible for students to read independently to prepare for a lesson.

14. **Resources for Close Reading and Literary Analysis Lessons**

<https://www.common sense.org/education/top-picks/resources-for-close-reading-and-literary-analysis-lessons>

An annotated list of resources, some familiar, some may be new. The resources focus primarily on texts appropriate for different forms of analysis. There are also links to free and paid lesson resources, such as ThinkCerca or Actively Learn.

15. **Literary Criticism for the Student’s Soul**

<http://www.aplithelp.com/literary-criticism-students-soul/>

This resources is directed primarily to teachers of AP literature, but there are ideas and strategies that could be applied in any secondary classroom. The author explains how she introduces and teaches literary criticism in her own classes with specific lesson examples and commentary on resources. This is a good read for someone who is just beginning to develop lessons on literary criticism.

16. **TEDEd Literature Resources**

[https://ed.ted.com/lessons.html?\\_id=1591693999805&category=literature](https://ed.ted.com/lessons.html?_id=1591693999805&category=literature)

From the makers of TED Talks, this collection of videos includes children’s stories, analysis of classic literature and other resources that can be used to develop a lesson on critical analysis and/or literary criticism. For example, there is a series “Why Should you Read...” videos that explain the relevance and introduce criticism of significant, classic texts. These videos can be used to introduce a lesson or as homework for students.

17. **Quizlet: Schools of Literary Criticism**

<https://quizlet.com/13083484/schools-of-literary-criticism-flash-cards/>

For teachers who have introduced schools of criticism and want to give students an opportunity to review them independently. These are flashcards with detailed explanations of twelve different schools of criticism. The flashcards are editable and can be linked into an LMS (Google Classroom) to become a resource for students.

18. **“A Pair of Silk Stockings” and Reader Response**

<https://teachers.net/lessons/posts/4256.html>

This is a scripted lesson that introduces Reader Response or New Criticism to grade 10 students using the story “A Pair of Silk Stockings” by Kate Chopin. Students are invited to make personal connections to the text and/or explain how their own lives and experiences have influenced how they read the text. From there, the teacher introduces criticism and reader response and leads students to applying the criticism on their own.

19. **“Little Red Riding Hood” – A Critical Theory Approach**

[https://www.sjsu.edu/people/julie.sparks/courses/100Wfall2016/rrh\\_literary\\_criticism\\_fairy\\_talored%20riding%20hood.pdf](https://www.sjsu.edu/people/julie.sparks/courses/100Wfall2016/rrh_literary_criticism_fairy_talored%20riding%20hood.pdf)

This is an interesting and helpful resource that tells the story of Little Red Riding Hood, *then* performs analysis through the lenses of multiple literary theories. The author begins by briefly defining several schools of criticism, then goes through the main plot points of the fairytale, and interprets them through the theory. This would be an excellent resource to introduce one or several schools of criticism in a way that is accessible and fun.

20. **UnboundEd: Unit 1 Literary Criticism**

<https://www.unbounded.org/ela/grade-12/literary-criticism/unit-1>

This is a standards-aligned unit on literary criticism that focuses on the novel *Song of Solomon* by Tony Morrison. The lesson is intended for grade 12 students, but strategies and texts could be revised and adapted for younger grades. There are 29 unique lessons that make up the unit. Teachers can choose from some or all of these lessons in developing their own curriculum.

