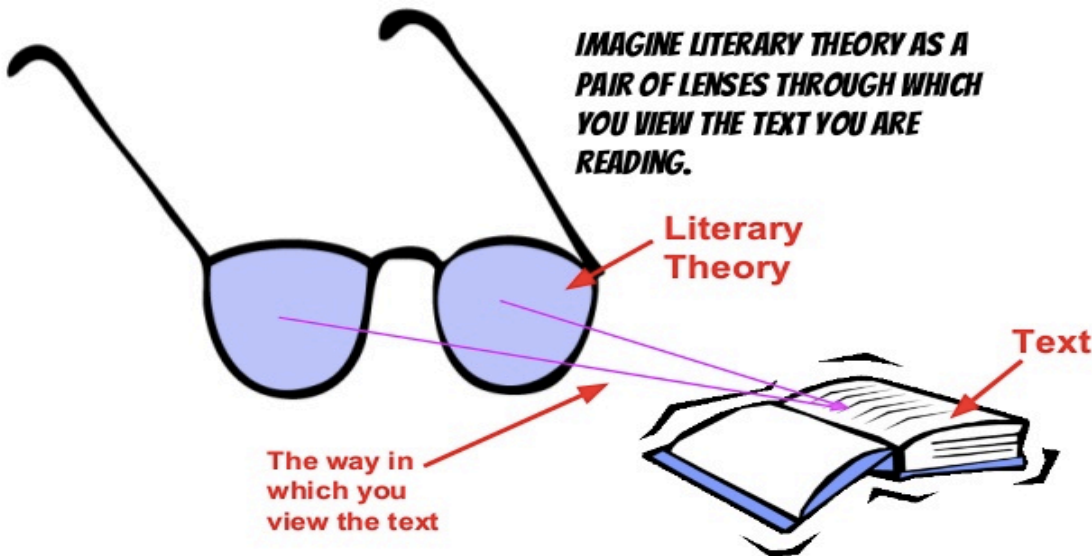


# An Introduction to Literary

Imagine you and your friends gather outside a movie theater after watching a re-release of *Twilight*. Some of your friends say they do not like the movie because it shows Bella as a weak female who becomes obsessed with Edward Cullen whom she cannot marry without leaving her loving father and losing her precious mortality. However, other people like those aspects of the film, and argue that the film makes them disagree with its representation of some women as meek characters. In each case, everyone states his or her interpretation of the film to contribute to a conversation about it; everyone offers literary criticism.



Literary criticism **advances a particular argument** about a specific text, so literary criticism should be *persuasive*. The first step to formulating a critical argument is to **assume a stance** that engages a specific lens of literary criticism. The critical approach you choose will determine how you will approach the interpretation of the text. Although literary theory and criticism have existed from classical through contemporary times, a feature of modern and postmodern literary criticism is the division of criticism into various lenses.

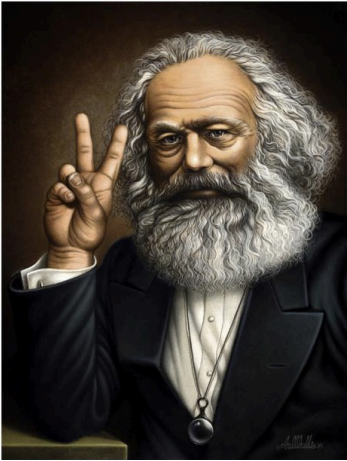


The most common lenses of literary criticism are:

- Archetypal Criticism
- *Feminist Criticism*
- Structural Criticism
- New Criticism
- Psychoanalytic Criticism
- Reader-Response Criticism
- *Marxist Criticism*
- Deconstructional Criticism
- Historical Criticism

While we read (and prepare) to read *Frankenstein* we will focus on Feminist and Marxist Criticism.

# An Introduction to Marxist Criticism



According to Marxists, and to other scholars, literature reflects the social institutions out of which it emerges and is itself a social institution with a particular ideological function. Literature reflects class struggle and materialism: think how often the quest for wealth traditionally defines characters. So, Marxists generally view literature "not as works created in accordance with timeless artistic criteria, but as 'products' of the economic and ideological determinants specific to that era" (Abrams 149). Literature reflects an author's own class or analysis of class relations, however piercing or shallow that analysis may be.

*What is a social institution?*  
A social institution consists of a group of people who have come together for a common purpose. These institutions are a part of the social order of society and they govern behavior and expectations of individuals. Ex: Colleges, Boy Scouts, Hospitals, or Traffic Court.

Marxist criticism is concerned with viewing Literature as a social institution, which promotes certain values. Specifically the Marxist perspective is interested to see how certain classes are portrayed.

Key Terms	Definitions
<b>Class</b>	a classification or grouping typically based on income and education
<b>Alienation</b>	a condition Karl Heinrich Marx ascribed to individuals in a capitalist economy who lack a sense of identification with their labor and products
<b>Proletariat</b>	workers or working-class people, regarded collectively
<b>Bourgeoisie</b>	the capitalist class who own most of society's wealth and means of production.

When looking through the lens of Marxism Criticism you might ask these questions:

- What classes, or socioeconomic statuses, are represented in the text?
- Are all the segments of society included, or does the text exclude a particular class?
- How do the socioeconomic statuses of various characters affect their choices and actions?
- Does class restrict or empower the characters in the text?
- How does the text depict a struggle between classes, or how does class contribute to the conflict of the text?
- How does the text depict the relationship between the individual and the state? Does the state view individuals as means for production, or as ends in themselves?

Open this link:

<http://www.azlyrics.com/lyrics/philcollins/anotherdayinparadise.html>

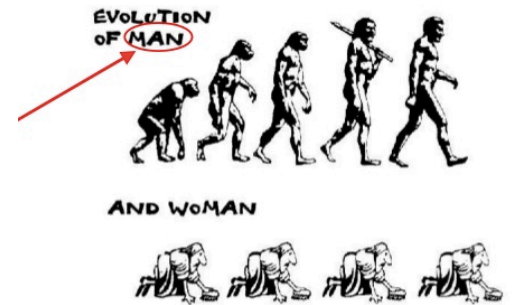
# An Introduction to Feminist Criticism

Feminist criticism focuses on the role of women in a literary text. Feminist criticism is useful for analyzing how gender itself is socially constructed for both men and women. Feminist criticism also considers how literature upholds or challenges those constructions, offering a unique way to approach literature.

The foundation of feminist theory was formed in 1919.

Virginia Woolf, an influential author, theorized that

Shakespeare had a sister called Judith, but that Judith's gender would have prevented her from having a room of her own in which to use her great gift and to write. As a result, Shakespeare's sister would not have gone to school, might have entered a miserable marriage, and would have either committed suicide or died a lonely death. If women write what they think, however, Shakespeare's sister will be born. Consequently, according to feminist criticism, patriarchy, in its masculine-focused structure, socially dictates the norms for both men and women.



Key Terms	Definitions
<b>Gender Roles</b>	a theoretical construct that refers to a cluster of social and behavioral conventions that are typically considered to be socially appropriate customs for individuals of a specific sex within a particular culture
<b>Stereotypical Representations of Gender</b>	representations of gender that rely on stereotypes and, therefore, represent men or women as underdeveloped individuals
<b>Patriarchy</b>	a social system in which men predominantly hold power in familial, social, and political spheres

When looking through the lens of Feminist Criticism you might ask these questions:

- Are men or women noticeably present in the text? If so, how?
- Consider stereotypical representations of women as the beloved, mothers, virgins, whores, and goddesses. Does the text refer to, uphold, or resist any of these stereotypes? How?
- What roles have been assigned to the men and women in the text? Are the roles stereotypical? Do gender roles conflict with personal desires?
- Does the text paint a picture of gender relations? If so, how would you describe gender relations in the text? On what are they based? What sustains them? What causes conflict between men and women?
- Are gender relations in the text celebrated? Denigrated? Mocked? Mystified? If so, how?

View the examples below from “Harry Potter through the Focus of Feminist Literary Theory: Examples of (Un)Founded Criticism” by Krunoslav MIKULAN

- When Malfoy, seeing Hagrid crying, he remarks with a sarcastic voice "Have you ever seen anything quite as pathetic?" (Prisoner of Azkaban: 216), the first person who comes to his defense is none other than Hermione; she slaps Malfoy, pulls out her wand and is ready to fight him on an equal footing. She is capable of subduing childish hysteria and transforms it into determination based on knowledge and skill. According to Dresang, Rowling has succeeded in developing the character of a child who transforms herself into a young woman and who is able to resist the traps connected with her gender: she does not retreat into passivity and silence, she is not scared of the world dominated by men, she does not "lose her voice".
- In the same scene we can sometimes find examples of women represented as both strong and weak. For example, in the fifth novel Harry repeats to Ron and Hermione that Cho Chang started crying when he kissed her. Ron's comment was typically male: "You'd think a bit of kissing would cheer her up" (Order of the Phoenix: 405), while Hermione attempts to explain some things to Harry  
"Well, obviously, she's feeling very sad, because of Cedric dying. Then I expect she's feeling confused because she liked Cedric and now she likes Harry, and she can't work out who she likes best. Then she'll be feeling guilty, thinking it's an insult to Cedric's memory to be kissing Harry at all, and she'll be worrying about what everyone else might say about her if she starts going out with Harry. And she probably can't work out what her feelings towards Harry are, anyway, because he was the one who was with Cedric when Cedric died, so that's all very mixed up and painful. Oh, and she's afraid she's going to be thrown off the Ravenclaw Quidditch team because she's been flying so badly."

The scene continues with Ron's comment: "One person can't feel all that at once, they'd explode", and with Hermione's angry reaction: "Just because you've got the emotional range of a teaspoon doesn't mean we all have."

Although the scene is somewhat comical, it clearly suggests that girls are emotionally more mature than boys. Indeed this is valid for the relationship between men and women in general, at least on a symbolic level. The fact that Cho Chang cries might prompt some critics to claim that Rowling portrays women in a negative light, but on the other hand it appears that this very scene proves that girls (women) are more ready to accept the responsibility for interpersonal relationships, that they care about this problem and that they do not behave irresponsibly and rudely like many

The author is shaping her argument by asking questions of the text that are informed by Feminist Criticism.