

Fall 2004

## "Through the Looking Glass:" Teaching Literary Theory in the High School English Classroom

Alethea Young  
*Central Washington University*

Follow this and additional works at: [https://digitalcommons.cwu.edu/graduate\\_projects](https://digitalcommons.cwu.edu/graduate_projects)



Part of the [Curriculum and Instruction Commons](#), [Language and Literacy Education Commons](#), and the [Secondary Education Commons](#)

---

### Recommended Citation

Young, Alethea, "'Through the Looking Glass:" Teaching Literary Theory in the High School English Classroom" (2004). *All Graduate Projects*. 858.  
[https://digitalcommons.cwu.edu/graduate\\_projects/858](https://digitalcommons.cwu.edu/graduate_projects/858)

This Graduate Project is brought to you for free and open access by the Graduate Student Projects at ScholarWorks@CWU. It has been accepted for inclusion in All Graduate Projects by an authorized administrator of ScholarWorks@CWU. For more information, please contact [scholarworks@cwu.edu](mailto:scholarworks@cwu.edu).

ABSTRACT

“THROUGH THE LOOKING GLASS:” TEACHING LITERARY THEORY IN THE  
HIGH SCHOOL ENGLISH CLASSROOM

by

Alethea Young

November 8, 2004

The project examines the historical context of Contemporary Literary Theories: Deconstruction, Marxist Literary Theory, Althusser’s Theory of Ideology, and Feminist Literary Theory, through a review of literature. The project culminates in a 4-6 week unit on teaching Feminist Literary Theory, Marxist Literary Theory, and Deconstruction in connection with a unit on Rudolfo Anaya’s award-winning novel, *Bless Me, Ultima*. The unit is designed for 10th grade Honors Language Arts classes.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter	Page
I. INTRODUCTION	
Background . . . . .	1
Definition and Rationale . . . . .	3
Purpose of the Project . . . . .	4
Significance of the Project . . . . .	4
II. REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE	
Introduction . . . . .	6
Historical Movements in Literary Theory . . . . .	6
Criticism in the Secondary Classroom . . . . .	17
Contemporary Literary Criticism. . . . .	21
CLT in the Secondary Classroom . . . . .	31
III. METHODOLOGY	
Introduction . . . . .	39
Rationale . . . . .	39
Definition of Terms. . . . .	46
IV. UNIT PLAN	
Lesson Plans. . . . .	50
V. DISCUSSION	
Summary . . . . .	124
Reflections and Analysis . . . . .	125
Recommendations for Further Research . . . . .	128
References . . . . .	130

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

#### Background

As a high school student I had a strong sense of justice, and fierce opinions about what was right and wrong. This led me to ponder such issues as gays in the military, abortion, and the existence of God. Adolescence is a time when we begin to question large moral issues and view them as more abstract than concrete. During my senior year of high school I took an epistemology course and studied the notion of absolute Truth. My teacher suggested that there must be absolute Truths for all situations. For example, one can debate whether the world is round or not, but in reality it either is or is not. One can challenge or champion the Big Bang Theory or Creationism, but ultimately the universe started somehow and there is a Truth, whether we are privy to it or not. My teacher extended this method of reasoning to literary analysis, suggesting that, "Whether or not we can determine the author's point of view from the text, there *is* a definitive message."

I wanted to refute his assumption and method of analysis because I knew it to be flawed; however, as a senior in high school I could not articulate why. It seemed that he was saying there is one right lens through which to view the world, and some people will have it and others will not. Even then, I suspected that some issues have no clear right or wrong answers, that some issues require us to consider multiple perspectives simultaneously. Like Alice and her looking glass I envisioned a world where reality itself might be subject to the lens through which you view it. Contemporary Literary Theory (CLT) and this Masters Project stand in direct contradiction to my high school teacher's

black and white perspective. CLT offers a method for making sense of the issues in our lives that have no clear-cut answers. CLT is a tool that every high school student deserves to have in addition to traditional philosophical and analytical approaches.

It wasn't until I was introduced to CLT in college that many of my high school texts began to make sense to me. The scene in Richard Wright's *Native Son* where protagonist, Bigger Thomas, kills his employer's wealthy white daughter was shocking to me when I read it during my sophomore year of high school. My high school self had difficulty understanding Bigger's character as anything but a cold-hearted killer. Looking back at Bigger from a Marxist theoretical approach enlightened me to the fact that Bigger may have been a victim of a greater economic disparity in society. Maybe the author and his characters were driven by social influences as well as aesthetic ones.

A scene from Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man* in which a father rapes his daughter was also difficult for my high school self to reconcile, until I learned about Feminist Literary perspective, and was able to understand that systems of oppression which define women as objects enable such atrocities to occur. With CLT in my theoretical toolbox I was able to make sense of some of the social ills I wanted to change in this world. I wish I had been introduced to these tools in adolescence, a time when I was desperate for some explanations and support for my suspicions that the world was not black and white.

Understandably, not all high school students are enraptured with social justice and issues of morality. Perhaps not all high school students want to view literature, or life, from multiple perspectives. However, analysis using multiple perspectives is no longer a frivolous privilege; it is a requirement in our day and age of globalism and multiculturalism.

### Definition and Rationale

To some, literary theory may seem arcane, a privilege of a fancy few, appropriate only for honors students and Advanced Placement classes. How can literary theory help all students? In *Critical Encounters in High School English: Teaching Literary Theory to Adolescents*, one of Deborah Appleman's students offers this response:

Critical lenses are about looking into elements of the world in different ways, thinking about things from different perspectives. This will never be a bad thing, no matter what the lenses are used to view. Seeing many different sides of stories only benefits everyone, everything.

-Mark, Grade 11 (Appleman, 2000, p. 1)

Literary theory offers multiple perspectives (Gregory, 1997). In an increasingly diverse society students must become conscious of the various perspectives that surround them. We live in a world where femininity is defined by both Brittany Spears and Sandra Day O'Connor. Homosexuality is condemned by Christian rights groups and championed on weekly sit-coms. Issues of race and culture have transgressed traditional binaries of black/white, male/female, native/foreigner, to include multi-racial, androgynous and transsexual, and dual-citizenship. It is the job of public education to provide lenses through which students make sense of such a world; reading Shakespeare, Milton, and canonical texts are no longer enough. We must choose carefully the lenses through which we view our changing world. Promoting a monist view of identity, reality, and American society through conventional literary analysis does not adequately prepare students to thrive in a complex, multicultural world.

### Purpose of the Project

The purpose of this project is to conduct a literature review on the historical context of Contemporary Literary Theory and its application in the secondary classroom, to clarify and articulate a rationale for its use at the secondary level, and to develop a 4-6 week unit teaching Contemporary Literary Theory in the secondary English classroom.

The unit plan will include goals/objectives, pedagogical approaches, materials needed, a variety of assessment strategies, and will be based on the study of a novel, Rudolfo Anaya's *Bless Me, Ultima*.

### Significance of the Project

Every approach to the study of literature has a theoretical framework, whether the teacher or student is aware of it. The study of English in the secondary school has traditionally followed the theoretical approaches of New Criticism and Reader-Response. Unfortunately, New Criticism has left our English classrooms a fallow landscape where univocal responses to literature include right and wrong answers, easily filled out on multiple-choice exams. Additionally, New Critical approaches have narrowed the field of study to canonical texts by Western male authors. In an increasingly diverse society, New Criticism has simply overstayed its welcome.

The Reader-Response approach has engaged adolescent learners by valuing the reader's experience and "transaction with the text" (Rosenblatt, 1976, p. 34-5). However, at times Reader-Response taken to the extreme has placed our students "on the psychiatrist's couch" rather than at the table of academics (Rosenblatt, 1976). Taken to an extreme, Reader-Response places too great a focus on the reader's feelings, and draws attention away from the words on the page.

We live in a diverse society, increasingly complicating our understanding of language, gender, class, and race. Traditional approaches to literary studies do not provide students with the skills they need to “read” the changing world around them. Contemporary Literary Theory helps students view issues from multiple perspectives, and helps them construct multiple ways of knowing.

---

One limitation of this project is the fact that the topic is relatively new to literary studies in general, especially at the secondary level. Many books have been written on the topic of Contemporary Literary Theory by academics in higher education. Many books have been written on the study of literature at the secondary level. Few books, however, have addressed the two issues in relation to one another. The next chapter will provide a review of literature on the history of Contemporary Literary Criticism and how CLT has been applied in the secondary classroom.



## CHAPTER II

### REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

#### Introduction

The goal of this chapter is to provide a review of the literature pertaining to literary theories and their application in the secondary Language Arts curriculum. First, I will describe the historical movements of Literary Criticism beginning with Aristotle's analysis of Greek drama, and leading to the Symbolist Movement, Formalism, New Criticism, and Reader-Response. Second, I will describe Contemporary Literary Criticism including Deconstruction, Marxist Literary Theory, Althusser's Theory of Ideology, and Feminist Literary Theory. Finally, I will address the current use of Contemporary Literary Theory in the secondary English Language Arts classroom.

#### Historical Movements in Literary Theory

##### *Aristotle*

Though there were theorists before Aristotle (384-332 B.C.) he is considered to be the first "modern" literary theorist (Mack, ed., 1997). His work is regarded as the foundation for the New Critical approach most commonly used in the secondary classroom. Aristotle presents his theoretical approach in *Poetics* (340's B.C.), the text currently used by many Language Arts teachers to teach the aspects of dramatic tragedy (Brown 1994). Aristotle answers the question 'what is a text?' by saying that a drama should be a representation of an "action." According to him, a play is driven by action, not characterization. Aristotle acknowledged a close relationship between the form and content of a play. In form, one finds meaning. In other words, Aristotle states, "It is in action that happiness and unhappiness are found" (Mack, 1997, p. 521).

Central Washington University English professor, Phil Garrison describes the interplay between form and content as Aristotle's concept of "magnitude." Aristotle considered Sophocles' *Oedipus* an archetypal play. The main character in *Oedipus* is a king, a high-ranking member of society; the tragedies that befall Oedipus befall the people in his kingdom. Because the king is a person of power, the consequences of the plot are far-reaching and yield a great "magnitude." The same "magnitude" would not exist in a play where the content involved a common citizen who had less influence on society.

Aristotle's notion of magnitude also relates to the plot structure (i.e. 'form') of a play. The form of the play must include events that are "probable" (Garrison, 2002). The factor of probability lends to the magnitude of the conclusion. However, the conclusion itself must involve a "reversal" of the character's status and "recognition" of his tragic situation. For Aristotle "magnitude," "reversal," and "recognition" are the aesthetic structures that construct meaning in plays.

Aristotle defined the author's role as creator of an experience (Mack, 1997). The author/playwright is an agent who consciously writes the meaning s/he wishes to convey. In this way, Aristotle claimed, the author exercises free will. Aristotle's theoretical approach ends with the role of the author. Aristotle did not address the role of the "reader" or audience, define the process of "reading the play," or discuss how individuals should approach a play (Mack, 1997).

Though it may seem far-reaching to describe a person in 332 B.C. as a "modern" theorist, literary theory, since Aristotle's time, has vacillated focus between form and content of the text. Aristotle's focus on the form of a play and the elements of plot laid

the foundation for the Symbolist Movement and other modern Formalist theoretical approaches which followed.

### *The Symbolist Movement*

The Symbolist movement emphasized 'pure form' (Bann & Bowlt, 1973). In *Russian Formalism: A Collection of Articles and Texts in Translation* Bann & Bowlt state, "The Symbolists tended to divide the literary product into form [aesthetics] and content [meaning] which was external to art" (p. 10). The Symbolists viewed form and content as entirely independent of one another. This description of Russian Symbolists sounds like descriptions of the Russian Formalists in Erlich (1965) and Baldick (1996).

### *Formalism*

Bann and Bowlt (1973) explain Russian Formalism as a response to the Symbolist Movement. In his book, *Criticism and Literary Theory, 1890 to the Present*, Baldick (1965) identifies Formalism as the most influential movement in literary theory since the 1890's. Formalism began as the artist's refutation to societal claims that art expresses social and moral beliefs and that writers have a responsibility to convey appropriate moral values. Formalist artists challenge the idea that the aesthetics of their medium is tied up with content. Formalists further argue that the value of one's art is not determined by its 'moral' message. Baldick states:

It [formalism] refuses to abide by the belief that a work of art should have a particular kind of 'content', whether factually truthful, morally wholesome, spiritually uplifting, or politically orthodox. (p. 10)

Formalism continued the debate about whether the moral content of a text was more significant than its aesthetic quality. The movement valued the text's aesthetic

quality more than its content. Formalists were concerned “with Art rather than with Life” (Baldick, 144). Here, Life means the experiences, personal or universal, communicated in literature.

Although Formalism was a predecessor of American New Criticism, it was not implemented in American secondary education directly. One reason Formalism was not widely taught in America was that the movement’s center of support existed outside the United States. Russian Formalism was the most significant movement under the broad tent of Formalism.

Russian Formalism enjoyed a short reign of supremacy, beginning in 1914 and suppressed eventually by a greater interest in social/moral content of the text by 1930 (Erich, 1965). Russian Formalism struggled with the debates between these two emphases. In his preface to Erlich’s *Russian Formalism: History-Doctrine*, Wellek (1965) summarizes the basis of the Formalist approach as a movement concerned with aesthetics over content:

Russian Formalism keeps the work of art itself in the center of attention: it sharply emphasizes the difference between literature and life; it rejects the usual biographical, psychological, and sociological explanations of literature. (p. 9)

Baldick (1996) supports Wellek’s perspective of Formalism as a movement towards greater aesthetic appreciation of art over the need for specific content. Both Erlich and Baldick describe the Formalist artist as one who employs aesthetic structures and techniques in order to elicit a desired response from the reader.

Slightly different than Baldick, Bann & Bowlt (1973) claim that the Russian Formalist position incorporates content into the concept of form, i.e. aesthetics. "Thus every element [form and content] inside a work of art is, according to the exact measure of its appropriateness to it, a formal part of the whole" (p. 10). Content is considered simply another component, like meter or rhyme, which contributes to the meaning of the text.

These three descriptions of Formalism illuminate the debate over the degree to which content is divorced from aesthetics when considering which components of a text constitute meaning. However, the primary contribution of the Formalist movement was a greater appreciation for aesthetics over specific content (Erich, 1996). It is this sensibility that instructs New Criticism.

### *New Criticism*

New Criticism originated in the 1920's and strengthened on the heels of Formalism, which faded in 1930. New Criticism continued to flourish through the 1950's (Baldick 1996) and remains today one of two key theoretical approaches to the study of literature in the secondary classroom (Rosenblatt, 1938).

Prior to New Criticism, study of literature relied heavily on literary-biographical study and literary-history. New Criticism divorces the study of literature from historical and biographical approaches (Baldick, 1996). In New Criticism the text exists as a "literary" item in and of itself, rather than as a product of a historical era. New Criticism is text-focused. Baldick describes the New Critical approach as "a knowledge *of* literature rather than merely a knowledge *about* it" (p. 13). Tate (1936) states this same sentiment in his own words:

The function of criticism should have been, in our time, as in all times, to maintain and to demonstrate the special, unique, and complete knowledge which the great forms of literature afford us. And I mean quite simply *knowledge*, not historical documentation and information. (p. 9)

The leaders of New Criticism were predominantly poets, not academics or philosophers. Key figures included poets T. S. Eliot, Allen Tate, Ezra Pound, and scholar R. P. Blackmur. The fact that the movement's leaders were writers was significant in the attention they bestowed on aesthetics. Poetry is a more stylistically finite art than fictional prose, resulting in a greater emphasis on aesthetics and form. The influence of poetics on New Criticism cannot be overlooked.

#### *T. S. Eliot*

T. S. Eliot is considered the father of New Critical scholarship. His brand of New Criticism is often referred to as Modernism, but for consistency, here I will continue to use the term New Criticism. Eliot published his strategies of critical analysis in two major works, *The Use of Poetry and the Use of Criticism* (1933) and *To Criticize the Critic* (1965).

*The Use of Poetry and the Use of Criticism* is Eliot's (1933) treatise on Literary Analysis. The introduction begins with a critique of literary studies that include the social sciences. Eliot (1933) addresses literary critic Richards' social approach to literature:

Mr. Richards, like every serious critic of poetry, is a serious moralist as well. His ethics, or theory of value, is one, which I cannot accept; or rather, I cannot accept any such theory which is erected upon purely individual-psychological foundations. (p. 7)

Eliot (1933) values aesthetics over content when he states, "We must remember too that poetry is not written simply to provide material for conversation" (p. 8). The critic should not talk about the meaning of the poem; s/he should experience the aesthetics of the poem. New Criticism supports the belief that a poem loses its intended meaning when prosaically summarized (Baldick, 1996).

In the final chapter of *The Use of Poetry and The Use of Criticism* titled "The Modern Mind," Eliot responds to earlier critics who incorporated the social sciences in their critiques and addresses the limitations of a theoretical approach that incorporates morality and the "message" of the poem:

Any theory which relates poetry very closely to a religious or a social scheme of things aims, probably, to *explain* poetry by discovering its natural laws; but it is in danger of *binding* poetry by legislation. (p. 131)

New Criticism holds that a poem can be analyzed scientifically because a poem is a whole unit constituted by finite aesthetic components (rhyme, meter, structure, etc). In spite of his rail against a moralistic criticism of poetry, Eliot (1965) does not entirely dismiss the importance of social sciences in literary criticism. He states:

That literary merit can be estimated in complete isolation, is the illusion of those who believe that literary merit alone can justify the publication of a book which could otherwise be condemned on moral grounds. (p. 25-6)

Eliot's (1933) belief is that the most a New Critic can hope for is an attempt to focus on the aesthetic aspects of *literary* criticism (Eliot's emphasis) over the moral and religious aspects of criticism. In order to do this, the preferred critic is the writer himself. Eliot states:

In so far as literary criticism is purely literary, I believe that the criticism of artists writing about their own art is of greater intensity, and carries more authority, though the area of the artist's competence may be much narrower. (p.26).

### *Allen Tate*

Allen Tate, another prominent poet and New Critic, published *Reactionary Essays on Poetry and Ideas* (1936), in which he professes his New Critical approach to literary studies. Tate condemns his contemporaries' historical approaches to criticism. "They are using social theories to prove something about poetry. It is a heresy that has, of course, reared its head before, yet never more formidably than now" (p. xi-x).

Tate (1936) acknowledges three kinds of readers: the innocent reader, the moralist/social reader, and the critical reader. Innocent and moralist/social readers rely on generalizations "so that they will not have to notice the poetry" (p. xi). Making generalizations is equal to ignoring poetic aesthetics in favor of prosaic summaries of the poem's meaning. A moralist/social reader holds the poet accountable for the appropriateness of the poem's message. The preferred critic is one who views the poem as a literary object, not a social message, or philosophical treatise (Tate, 1936).

The first chapter, in Tate's *Reason in Madness* titled "The present function of criticism" (1936) details his beliefs about New Criticism. This chapter criticizes prior theoretical movements that have included the social sciences, including positivism, historicism, psychologism, scientism, and biologism. Tate feels the incorporation of social sciences is an infiltration that will enslave students' minds:



The point of view that I am sketching here looks upon the rise of the social sciences and their influence in education, from Comtism to Deweyism, as a powerful aid to the coming of the slave society. (p. 7)

*Ezra Pound*

Ezra Pound's (1954) New Critical approach is scientific; he ascertains that the study of poetry is no more complex than the study of biology (Pound, 1954). According to Pound, a focus on "aesthetics" and "form" leads the critic to act as scientist and treat the text as "specimen." "In poetry there are simple procedures, and there are known discoveries, clearly marked," he writes (p. 19). For Pound, the adoption of scientific criticism liberates the critic from lesser social approaches. He states:

To avoid confusion, one should state at once that such method [New Criticism] has nothing to do with those allegedly scientific methods which approach literature as if it were something *not literature*, or with scientists' attempts to sub-divide the elements in literature according to some non-literary categoric division. You do not divide physics or chemistry according to racial or religious categories. (p. 19)

*R. P. Blackmur*

R. P. Blackmur (1935) is the most extreme aestheticist of the New Critics. Blackmur favors "close readings" in the study of literature. "Close reading" privileges the meaning of the words on the page over interpretation of the poem as an allegory. Blackmur's definition of poetry values aesthetics above all else and requires analytic methods of study. Blackmur states:

Poetry is life at the remove of form and meaning; not life lived but life framed and identified. So the criticism of poetry is bound to be occupied at once with the terms and modes by which the removed was made. (p. 269).

“Terms and modes” mentioned here are synonyms for the aesthetics of the poem.

Blackmur (1936) defines the process of reading as an “experience” rather than an interpretation of meaning. To focus on a poem’s literal/prosaic meaning is to neglect the true nature of the poem. “Literal knowledge is dead knowledge,” he writes (p. 270). The knowledge expressed by the poem is something different than conventional prosaic knowledge.

Blackmur criticizes other critics’ “prosaic,” meaning-based approaches to literary study, claiming that Santayana’s essay on Lucretius is a case in point. The essay struggles to find the meaning in Lucretius’ poem without giving proper attention to structure. This critical strategy ignores the “true” nature of the poem, says Blackmur:

Poetry is an idiom, a special and fresh saying, and cannot for its life be said otherwise; and there is, finally, as much difference between words used about a poem and the poem as there is between words used about a painting and the painting. (p. 280)

Blackmur also criticizes Van Wyck Brooks’ biographical approach in the study of Henry James, deeming such an approach to criticism “irrational” (Blackmur, 1936). According to Blackmur, the text is an objective art form, not a treatise on social issues. Brooks understands literature as an insight to the author’s life. As such, Brooks takes the text, “not as the objectification of mirroring of social experience” (p. 281), but as “a personal expression and escape-fantasy of the artist’s personal life in dramatic extension”

(p. 280). According to Blackmur, the problem with such a methodology is that it might mislead critics to conclude that *Hamlet* was a failure because it did not sufficiently express Shakespeare's personality (Blackmur, 1936).

### *New Criticism in Higher Education*

New Criticism was the first major literary theoretical movement that promoted its way of thinking via academia. Allen Tate held a fellowship at Princeton and helped to hire R. P. Blackmur as a professor (Baldick, 1936). New Critic R. P. Warren taught first in Louisiana then moved to University of Minnesota. E. R. Ransom taught at Kenyon College. W. K. Wimsatt René Wellek, and Cleanth Brooks held professorships at Yale University (Baldick, 1996).

New Critics in institutions of higher education trained their students in New Critical study. Consequently, New Critic professors published literature textbooks for their classes that included New Critical strategies alongside anthologized works (Baldick, 1996). The textbooks *Understanding Poetry* and *Understanding Fiction* by Brooks & Warren (1938, 1943) are two examples of such works. Both books provided a New Critical method of literary study claiming that literature is an experience in itself. In *Understanding Poetry*, poetry is defined as its own kind of "knowledge" (p. xiii), different from knowledge as prosaic meaning. The "knowledge" of a poem comes from the experience of reading it which is a vastly different experience than reading prose. Brooks and Warren assert:

Because poetry-like all the arts-involves this kind of experiential knowledge, we miss the value of poetry if we think of its characteristic

knowledge as consisting of “messages,” statements, snippets of doctrine.

(p. xii)

This approach values aesthetics; however, unlike poets Eliot, Tate, and Pound, professors Brooks and Warren consider the significance of an aesthetics-based approach to criticism. “Poems come out of a historical moment, and since they are written in language, the form is tied to a whole cultural context” (p. xiv). In this way, New Critics begin to consider the appropriateness of addressing social context in literary criticism. Other New Critics take a more extreme aesthetic approach. Tate (1936) views the incorporation of social sciences such as history and philosophy into the study of literature a “heresy.”

Even with an openness to social context in the study of poetry, *Understanding Poetry* and *Understanding Fiction* present a New Critical approach. Questions posed after selections address issues of form and structure (Brooks & Warren, 1938). Analytical “close readings” are stressed. The value of study is the ability to read closely. In their introduction, “Letter to the Teacher,” Brooks and Warren define the ultimate goal of literary study. “Unless he [the student] does attempt to read analytically, it is doubtful whether any beneficial result can be had” (p. vii). The role of the reader is scientist, not aficionado. The goal of literary study is to develop skills that allow students to analyze any work critically (Brooks & Warren, 1943).

### Criticism in the Secondary Classroom

#### *New Criticism*

The Literary Theory that has most influenced the study of prose and poetry in the secondary English classroom is New Criticism. New Critical textbooks written at the

college level led the way for New Critical textbooks at the secondary level. In her book, Appleman (2000) states, "The influence of the New Critical perspective, most notably the work of I. A. Richards and the anthologies of Brooks and Warren, took hold of the secondary English classroom in the 1930's and is still felt today" (p. 4).

Literature textbooks used within this author's own classroom reveal a strong New Critical influence. *McDougal Littell: Literature and Language, Orange Level* (1994) is organized by a variety of categories. One of those categories is genre. The heading titles include "Elements of Fiction, Elements of Poetry, Elements of Nonfiction, and Elements of Drama." These headings resonate with T.S. Eliot's and E. Pound's claims that literature can be analyzed scientifically.

Every thematic unit in the above textbook includes a section titled "Language from Literature." This section is devoted to vocabulary development, grammar skills, and writing drills to practice a specific literary device. The clear focus on language harkens back to R.P. Blackmur's focus on "terms" and "modes." Aesthetics of the writing are held to be more important than literal meaning. This point is further supported within *Prentice Hall: Literature, Platinum Level*. This text separates units by specific literary devices titled "Plot, Characterization, Point of View, Setting, Symbol/Tone/Irony, and Theme." By studying literature through the lens of literary devices, students are taught that the prosaic meaning of texts is less important than the parts that make up the text.

#### *Reader-Response Theory*

Reader-Response theory is commonly employed in the secondary classroom side by side with New Criticism. Rosenblatt's (1938) *Literature as Exploration* is the seminal

text for the movement. Rosenblatt's (1938) Reader-Response theory fills in the gaps left by the New Critical approach by placing greater emphasis on social sciences and the message of a text.

Reader-Response challenges the Formalist and New Critical views that form and content are separate. Whereas New Criticism distinguishes between form and content in the attempt to elevate the value of literary aesthetics over the text's moral message, Reader-Response deems the most valuable contribution of literature to be its social-moral message. "We [readers] are concerned with social and psychological insights as they flower from the actual esthetic experience [of literature]," Rosenblatt writes (p. 31). Contradicting Bann & Bowlt, Rosenblatt (1938) claims there is no exclusivity between the components of a text and the text's meaning:

The thesis of this book is that no contradiction should exist between these two phases [form and content] of art-that, in fact, they are inextricably interrelated. Those who see in literature only social documents and those who admit only so-called pure esthetic values offer equally limited insights. (p. 23-4)

Unlike previous schools of thought, which clearly separated aesthetics from meaning, Rosenblatt's (1938) theory invites the social sciences, (sociology, psychology, history, and philosophy) into literary study. Most important to Reader-Response is the discipline of psychology because of its concern with the individual's emotions and motivations. Rosenblatt contends:

It is imperative . . .that undergraduate and graduate programs [Literary Studies] provide time for building up a sound acquaintance with at least

the general aspects of current scientific thought on psychological and social problems. (p. 23)

Rosenblatt (1938) defines the reading process as a “transaction” between reader and text. The reader interacts with the text in order to create meaning. This point aligns itself with constructivist pedagogy. Constructivist pedagogy states that students learn when constructing their own knowledge through interaction with the content. In Reader-Response, the reader actively engages in the text, and the text itself is “active.”

Rosenblatt contends:

The literary work exists in the live circuit set up between reader and text: the reader infuses intellectual and emotional meanings into the pattern of verbal symbols, and those symbols channel his thoughts and feelings.

(p. 25)

Reader-response defines literary study as interpretive. An individual’s personal attitudes and background experiences contribute to his/her understanding of a text.

One reason for the popularity of Reader-Response theory in the secondary classroom is its attention to the needs of adolescents. *Literature as Exploration* was one of the first texts to consider younger adolescents rather than college co-eds as target students. Rosenblatt claimed that the adolescent reader was self-conscious and very egocentric (Rosenblatt, 1938). Analytical approaches to literature, such as New Criticism, are external to the student’s experience and thus not developmentally appropriate for adolescents. Rosenblatt claims that Reader-Response allows “the youth to ‘live through’- and to reflect on much that in abstract terms would be meaningless to him” (p. 182).

The ultimate goal of Reader-Response's focus on the student's experience is to mold students into life-long readers. Rosenblatt (1938) maintains, "Few teachers of English today would deny that the individual's ability to read and enjoy literature is the primary aim of Literary Study" (p. 64). Engagement with and enjoyment of literature is encouraged in Reader-Response theory.

### Contemporary Literary Criticism

Clearly, many movements of literary theory including Aristotle, Formalism, Structuralism, New Criticism, and Reader-Response have preceded today's approach to criticism. The terms "Contemporary Literary Theory" (CLT) or "Contemporary Literary Criticism" (CLC) refer to a specific movement of postmodernist thought beginning in the 1960's (Lodge, 1988). This recent move in criticism incorporates the social sciences, including psychology, history, linguistics, and cultural studies.

The subtopics of Deconstruction, Marxism, Althusser's theory of ideology, and Feminism often go under the unifying name of "Theory" (Lodge, 1998, p. xii). These four schools of criticism share ideological beliefs about human nature and the nature of language, politics, and history (Lodge, 1998). Lodge states:

Literary Criticism can no longer be taught and practiced as if its methods, aims, and institutional forms were innocent of theoretical assumptions and ideological implications. (p. xii).

Some of these shared assumptions include:

- Absolute Truth is an impossibility.
- All aspects of society are socially constructed.
- Language is the building block of reality.



- Language is “slippery” because it relies on an arbitrary relationship between sign and signified.
- All thought exists in a historical context (Montag, 1999).

### *Deconstruction*

In 1966 Jacques Derrida gave a lecture at Johns Hopkins University that spawned the Deconstruction movement into the realm of Western Philosophy. Ironically, the attempt to state exactly what Deconstruction is flies in the face of what the movement stands for. Therefore, in the attempt to summarize “Deconstruction is X,” some meaning may be lost.

Deconstruction might be best explained through the following key ideas: binaries, centrality, and textuality. In *Of Grammatology* (1976), Derrida first refutes a notion of binaries in language. Derrida deconstructs Ferdinand de Saussure’s Formalist explanation of language. In *Course in General Linguistics*, Saussure, (1965) a structuralist linguist, describes language as a binary of the *sign* and the *signified*. The *sign* is the word itself, e.g. cow. The *signified* is the meaning or concept, e.g. a large grazing mammal that is commonly milked for human consumption. Saussure separates the sound of the word from meaning, and places greater importance on the sound than the meaning. For Saussure the sound is primary because it is necessary in order for one to understand the meaning. Because sound is primary, Saussure concludes that speech is more natural and more important than writing.

If language is binary (as described by Saussure) then understanding meaning in terms of binaries follows naturally. Here, Derrida takes issue. With Saussure’s understanding of language we comprehend *black* only in comparison to *white*, *good* only

in opposition to *evil*, *male* only in opposition to *female*. Derrida contends that understanding language in terms of binary opposites creates inequality between the terms. It is the inequality between oppositional terms that creates the real-world inequalities between whites and blacks, males and females, and concepts of good and evil (p. 45).

The concept of centrality as refuted in *Of Grammatology* derives from this concept of binaries. Deconstruction *decenters* the central term of what we read. Every text contains a central theme or term, which Derrida contends is prized above a contrasting marginal term (Powell, P. 26). Powell provides an example of decentered reading in the following haiku:

How mournfully the wind of autumn pines  
Upon the mountainside as day declines.

The centered way of reading this poem is to read the word *pine* as a verb. Perhaps this poem had been read for years understanding *pine* as a verb. Reading the poem understanding *pin*es as a noun decenters the meaning of the poem.

Decentering and questioning binary opposites is made possible by Derrida's claim that all thought and language exist in "textuality" (Derrida, 60). Language is the building block of reality, thus any method by which we can interpret and subvert language can be used to interpret and subvert the world around us. For example, if we can subvert the commonly shared idea that the word *white* is of greater significance than its binary *black*, then a concept like racism can be subverted as well.

The purpose of applying Deconstruction Criticism to literature is to decenter texts that have been historically interpreted as having one meaning. Take for example, the commonly held interpretations of Shakespeare's *Hamlet*. The relationship between

Hamlet and Ophelia upholds a binary understanding of gender roles. The concept of centrality is upheld by the constant focus on Hamlet's character above all other characters. A deconstructive reading that dismantles binaries and centrality, and focuses on identifying the textuality of the play would lead the reader to different conclusions of the play's meaning.

### *Marxist Literary Theory*

Deconstruction might be described as a "close up" approach to analysis. It zooms in on the level of the word in a text. In contrast, Marxist Literary Theory is a wide-angled lens that draws its focus back to social influences upon the text. Marxist Literary Theory considers the presence of politics, economics, and ideology within a text. This approach enlists the theories of Karl Marx from the nineteenth century, but it did not gain prominence until the mid-twentieth century with Terry Eagleton's *Marxism and Literary Criticism* (1976).

The foundation for Marxist Literary Criticism is Karl Marx's 1848 *Communist Manifesto*. Here Marx addresses the questions "Why is there oppression in the world?" and "How is it upheld?" The answers to these questions include some basic assumptions: the world's history is one of class struggle, capitalism is an innately oppressive system which divides society into two classes, the oppressors and the oppressed, and oppression is maintained by those who own the means of production (p.1-2, 6). Though Marx's answers emphasize sociology and economics, these theories can be directly applied to the study of literature.

According to Marx, human history is one of struggle, and an author is subject to his/her cultural and political history. S/he cannot act outside the oppressive forces of

class struggle. For example, an author from an affluent background is as influenced by his/her upbringing as is someone from a deprived upbringing. The consequence of this reality is that the author's text is also product of its historical context; all texts will include a depiction of human struggle. A reader employing Marxist theory identifies and questions the struggles latent in the text. Appleman states the reader should "interrogate rather than simply acknowledge the texts that constitute our cultural heritage" (p. 60).

Marx's claim that human history is one of struggle holds repercussions for the reader as well as the text. Just as the writer is not free from history, neither is the reader free from his/her place within human history. McCormick (1995) argues that the reader must understand his/her own role within the social context; "students can see that they, as readers, are socially constructed subjects, that texts are also constructed in particular social contexts (p. 307).

While the reader acknowledges his/her status while reading, Marxist theory instructs the very method of reading itself. Reading is a study of culture, politics, and society. Bonnycastle (1996) defines literary studies with a Marxist approach as placing "the study of literature in the context of important social questions" (p. 199). This detail begs the question, 'What is the relationship between meaning and language?' Although Marxist criticism does not address this question directly, language is framed in the struggle for class equality. Students understand how a wealthy person's use of language is valued over a poor person's use of language. This bias comes from a pervading ideology that society assigns greater importance to the wealthy than the poor. Marxist criticism asks the reader to challenge this assumption. Eagleton (1989) states:

The text may appear to be free in its relation to reality, but it is not free in its use of ideology. Ideology here refers not only to conscious political doctrines but to all those systems of representation which shape the individual's mental picture of lived experience. (p. 42)

As stated above, Marx's common assumptions were that human history includes class struggle, capitalism is an innately oppressive system, and class oppression is upheld by those who own the means of production. To Marx, economic inequalities explain the constant replication of oppressive systems. His theories, which address the impact of ideology on human oppression were extended by Louis Althusser nearly a century later.

#### *Althusser's Theory of Ideology*

Louis Althusser, born in Algeria, was a Marx scholar within the context of French Deconstruction in the 1960s-1970s. Althusser's basic assumptions derive from Marx; the State is a 'machine' of repression; the ruling bourgeoisie own the means of production while the ruled proletariat class is oppressed and alienated from its own labor.

Althusser's aim is to address the issue of inequality in French society by analyzing how ideology functions in society. Althusser refers to Marx in his analysis, favoring a view of Marx as philosopher of ideology, not philosopher of "humanism" and "history" (Althusser, 1971).

Althusser first published his essay, "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses," in 1970. In it, he argues that capitalism produces an oppressive society of haves and have-nots. His essay explains how Ideology functions to reproduce this oppression as it "reproduces the conditions of production" (p. 127).

Althusser asks “what is a society?” He states that societal structure can be broken down into two components: Infrastructure and Superstructure. The Infrastructure is the economic base of a society. It includes the forces of production like factories, labor, raw materials, and workers. The Superstructure is two-fold and is supported by the Infrastructure. The two levels of the Superstructure are the 1) politico-legal level, and 2) the Ideological level. (i.e. religion, philosophy, family, culture). In order to overthrow the oppressive capitalist society, “the proletariat must seize state power and replace it with radical change” (p. 141). The proletariat must destroy all pieces of the state apparatus. This includes changing politics and ideologies included in the State Apparatus

The State Apparatus includes two minor apparatuses. The apparatus with which most people are familiar is what Althusser calls the Repressive State Apparatus or RSA. This includes Government, Administrative agencies, police and military. The RSA “functions in violence” (p. 143), meaning its forces are obvious and direct. The second apparatus is the Ideological State Apparatus, ISA. This apparatus includes religion, family, culture, and education. The ISA “functions by ideology” rather than violence (p. 143); the ISA is more subtle, though it acts upon the individual with a force equal to the RSA.

Althusser claims that most individuals are aware of the RSA because it functions publicly, and as one unified force. The ISA, however, functions through private channels and has a pluralistic force, affecting many strands of an individual’s experience simultaneously.

An Althusserian critical approach begins with a traditional Marxist approach. The reader looks for political and historical influences in the text, author, and reader. Next,

the Althusserian reader looks for the subtle ideological influences in a text. In America's capitalist society the RSA does not function via literature much. Occasionally, a book is banned or censored through legal measures. Such oppression is easy to recognize. ISAs function consistently through literature and Althusserian Criticism sheds light on these influences.

Ironically, Althusser calls education the foremost ISA at work in contemporary society. In previous centuries, religion was the most insidious ISA at work. Now education is the place where ideology is reproduced in order to bolster the repression existent in capitalist society.

Thus, an Althusserian critical approach focuses on the presence of ideology within a text. The following are Althusser's theses on the nature of ideology. He begins with the common view that Ideology has no history. Althusser feels this accepted view of ideology is "a pure dream, empty and vain" (p. 160). This accepted view places ideology outside history, and thus outside material constructs. Althusser acknowledges this view and then refutes it in his first thesis; ideology is eternal and has a history of its own (p. 160-1). Ideology then becomes a "representation of the imaginary relationship of individuals to their real condition of existence" (p. 162).

Althusser's second thesis, Ideology has a material existence, (p. 164) places Ideology within a material construct. Thus, Ideology functions materially, rather than spiritually or theoretically. The Ideological State Apparatus is a material, physical force initiated by such apparatuses as the church, school, and family. The physicality of Althusser's understanding of Ideology is best summed up in Pascal's saying, "Kneel

down, move your lips in prayer, and you will believe” (p. 168). The material instructs the mental.

### *Feminist Literary Criticism*

Like Marxist Literary Theory and Althusser’s Theory of Ideology, Feminist Literary Theory provides a “wide-angled” view of the text. Where Marxism approaches the text from a set of shared views on history in terms of politics and economics, Feminist Theory approaches the text from a set of shared views about history in terms of society and gender. Appleman (2000) points out the purpose of Feminist Literary Criticism is to raise the reader’s awareness of how issues of gender are constructed in the text:

As students read and interpret literary texts, feminist theory can help them to notice salient issues of gender—the portrayal of women in the world of the novel, the gender of the author and what relevance it may bear to how the work is both written and received.

(p.76-7)

Though there are shared views among various Feminist theorists, there is no one unified approach in implementing Feminist Criticism, as explained by Elaine Showalter (1987) in Editor Shari Benstock’s 1987 publication, *Feminist Issues in Literary Scholarship*.

There is no Mother of Feminist Criticism, no fundamental work against which one can measure other feminisms. Feminist criticism has been rather a powerful movement than a unified theory. (p. 45)



Though there may be no seminal feminist theorist, there are certainly key assumptions and perspectives shared in Feminist thought.

The first assumption is that sexism exists and the history of literary study has been centered around the male perspective. Most American high school curricula addresses a canon of “great works” which includes predominantly white, western male writers such as Shakespeare, Steinbeck, Dickens, Golding, Fitzgerald, and Hemingway ignoring talented female authors such as Willa Cather, Alice Walker, Virginia Woolf, and Zora Neale Hurston.

A second shared perspective of Feminist Criticism is that the author’s frame of reference is significant to the study of a text. Instead of accepting the male perspective as “normal” or “neutral,” the Feminist approach asks the reader to consider each author’s approach as unique. Aristotle provides an explanation of how the male perspective has been considered “neutral.” “The female is a female by virtue of a certain *lack* of qualities. . . we should regard the female nature as afflicted with a natural defectiveness” (e.d. Nicholson, 1997). Once the reader accepts that the male perspective is not “neutral,” but unique, then a woman’s perspective can be considered unique without being “lacking.”

Considering how point of view differs between female and male characters is another way the Feminist lens can be applied. Appleman (2000) offers the exercise of analyzing characters’ personalities from both male and female perspectives. Here is an example of a “traditional” analysis of Ophelia from Shakespeare’s *Hamlet*:

Innocent, typical daughter and sister, who desires Hamlet.

Emotional, young innocent, weak, fragile; she needs protection. (p. 80)

Here are statements analyzing Ophelia from a feminist perspective:

Trapped in a traditional role, she's always being told what to do by a man-her father, brother, Hamlet.

Ophelia's fears and concerns are dismissed as frivolity because of her gender. (p. 80)

---

### Contemporary Literary Theory in the Secondary Classroom

The introduction of Contemporary Literary Theory (CLT) into the high school English class is a relatively recent phenomenon. To date, the most extensive work on the subject is: *Critical Encounters in High School English: Teaching Literary Theory to Adolescents* by D. Appleman (2000). Although CLT includes all facets of postmodern literary scholarship, Appleman addresses three literary theories: Feminist Literary Theory, Marxist Literary Theory, and Deconstruction, claiming that today's English/Language Arts teacher is responsible for raising consciousness around issues of gender, class, politics, and language.

Appleman gives three main reasons for teaching CLT in the secondary English classroom: First, CLT positively affects teaching practice. Second, CLT encourages multiple perspectives that are necessary to function in our increasingly diverse society. Third, skills developed in the study of CLT help students to "read" the world around them. (p. 2-4)

Appleman's "thesis" renders a clear connection between Literary Theory and the issue of multiculturalism and multiple perspectives. "The guiding assumption of the book is that the direct teaching of literary theory in secondary English classes will better prepare adolescent readers to respond reflectively and analytically to literary texts, both

'canonical' and multicultural" (p. 2). This desire to raise consciousness is not limited to multiculturalism, however. The greater issue is raising consciousness about ideologies in general. Bonnycastle (1996) affirms this in Appleman (2000):

The main reason for studying theory at the same time as literature is that it forces you to deal consciously with the problem of ideologies . . . If you are going to live intelligently in the modern world, you have to recognize that there are conflicting ideologies and that there is no simple direct access to the truth. (p. 19)

According to Appleman, CLT improves teaching practice because it requires the student to engage with the text and construct meaning based on an interaction with it, leading to a Constructivist teaching approach. Constructivism is "less a matter of transmittal of an objective and culturally sanctioned body of knowledge, and more a matter of helping individual learners learn to construct and interpret for themselves" (Applebee, in Appleman, 2000, p. 21).

For example, Appleman describes the pedagogical changes one teacher, Martha, experienced as a result of incorporating CLT into a classroom previously dominated by New Criticism. For the first part of her career, Martha "taught literary terms, interpreted texts for symbol and themes, assigned study guides for novels, tested for vocabulary, and was especially adept at teaching her students to write academic papers" (p. 118). Martha comments on her perception of her earlier New Critical teaching, saying, "I suppose the natural reply is that I expected to teach content to students, to pour information into their heads" (p. 118).

Martha's New Critical pedagogy created a teacher-focused classroom. After Martha incorporated CLT in her classroom she became an "off to the side" teacher (Appleman, 2000). Martha's role evolved from one who "pours information" into her students' heads to one who is a "nudger" of minds. Martha hopes that "students see [her] as a collaborator and co-conspirator in their learning" (p. 121). Students are given greater agency in their learning than they were before.

Other researchers too, address the benefits of incorporating CLT into the classroom. The benefits fall under the same three categories defined by Appleman: (2000) improving teaching practice, giving students multiple perspectives, and applying the skills of theory to "reading" the world.

#### *Improving Teaching Practice*

Hines and Appleman (2000) conducted three separate qualitative case studies to show that "contemporary literary theories can enrich literature instruction in both high school and college classrooms" (p. 142). Traditional teaching methods in Literature classrooms have forced students to "write and speak for the teacher-as-examiner displaying rather than creating knowledge as they read"(p. 142). New Critical pedagogy also affects choices in curriculum. Students traditionally read "canonical texts by males of Eurocentric heritage"(p. 142). The following four examples describe how Literary Theory has direct impact on methodology.

One teacher, Ann, who employs New Criticism in her classroom has "teacher-focused" discussions (Hines & Appleman, 2000). Ann's "focus is on explication of the text rather than on exploration of readers' experiences" (p. 150). Knowledge developed by students tended to be "univocal" and "monologic" (p. 151).

Another teacher, Richard, employs contemporary Marxist Literary Theory in his classroom. Richard approaches the study of English from a historical perspective. His attention to political influences of oppression in literature results in his use of diverse texts, including advertisements and other forms of media (Hines & Appleman, 2000). Discussions in Richard's class involve students challenging one another's views and their own. Students make connections between texts and their own experiences, which stimulated their desire to learn (Hines & Appleman, 2000). Richard's pedagogy is less teacher-focused. Therefore, "the overall patterns of discourse [in the classroom] still suggest a less teacher-centered approach that is typified in prior research" (p. 157).

A third teacher, Maggie, incorporates a multiplicity of critical theories in her classroom (Hines & Appleman, 2000). Maggie's goal in teaching literature is "using literature and literary theories as a way to encourage students to explore the promises and possibilities of interpretation" (p. 158). Like Richard, Maggie's teaching role is "less central" (p. 159). Her constructivist approach presents her to the students as a "co-explorer" of the text (p. 161). Class discussions are student focused and students are treated as "meaning-makers in their own right" (p. 163).

Delia (1987) also asserts that Contemporary Literary Theory improves students' abilities to discuss literature. New Critical approaches to English in the secondary classroom involved study of canonical texts and resulted in narrow responses. She states, "I do not believe that students learn to think by reading thoughtfully written articles" (p. 180). Instead, comparing texts while employing literary theory teaches students to evaluate different discourses (Delia, 1987).

Contemporary Literary Theory is compatible with a constructivist classroom (Leggo, 1998). Students are empowered to construct meaning while they interact with the text. Willinsky (1998) states that theory can focus students' minds on "specific aspects of the text" (246), which develops their reading skills. Scholes (1984) addresses benefits in teaching writing through use of CLT. Contemporary Theories address a multiplicity of discourses, and the notion of discourses benefits students. He asserts:

As teachers of writing we have a special responsibility to help our students gain awareness of discourse structures and the ways in which they both enable and constrain our vision. And the only way to do this is to read and write in a range of discursive modes. (p. 662)

Additionally, Rabinowitz & Smith (1998) advocate critical approaches to reading literature in *Authorizing readers: Resistance and respect in the teaching of literature*. Zitlow's (2000) review of the book verifies that a critical approach to teaching, "decenters the teacher as authority on textual meaning, but at the same time the teacher is foregrounded as an expert on the conventionality of how texts work" (p. 129). The decentering of the teacher provides greater student access to his/her own learning (Rabinowitz & Smith, 1998).

### *Multiple Perspectives*

High school teachers Ladd and Part (2002) teach Literary Criticism to encourage students of literature to make observations from multiple perspectives. Ladd teaches Feminism and Deconstruction directly to her students. She assigns a research paper in which students must apply one literary theory to an American short story. Part teaches Feminist Critique, Postmodernism, and Deconstruction to her students, applying the

theories to the 1956 film *The Red Balloon*. “Students are both amused and amazed at the variety of interpretations of what at first seems a simple, straight-forward story” (Part, 2002).

Education Professor, Johnson (2002), incorporates critical theory into Literature circle discussions. In small group discussions, Johnson encourages her students to address issues of race, gender, and class raised in the novel. Using a critical stance towards literature opens “a window through which [students] see different perspectives” (personal communication). Students learn that they do not always share similar perspectives as their fellow classmates. For example, while reading a novel in which the race of the protagonist was not specified a white female student assumed that the character was African-American because the student could not relate to the protagonist. An African-American female in the class assumed that the protagonist was white because the protagonist, “did not talk like black people [she] knew” (personal communication).

Although Professors Harste & Leland (2002) do not employ a specific literary theory, they too promote the concept of Critical literacy. They teach their pre-service teachers to raise consciousness around issues of race, gender, and class. Three levels of response are detailed:

1. Literal response: The student takes stock of the text’s literal meaning
2. Inquiry: The student questions which implicit and explicit meanings are conveyed in the text.
3. Interrogation: The student attempts to challenge the relationships of power expressed in the text. (Personal communication)

Kolakowski (1990) and Lynn (1990) provide clear examples of the application of critical theory to a text. Kolakowski (1990), a professor at Oxford University, demonstrates the multiple perspectives gained through theory by describing his hate for gardening using the lenses of Marxism, Psychoanalysis, Existentialism, Structuralism, and Analytical Philosophy. His article provides startlingly different perspectives on a common activity, thus demonstrating for his students that different critical lenses construct different versions of Truth.

Lynn (1990), a professor at the University of South Carolina-Columbia, participates in a similar exercise, applying the theories of Feminism, Psychoanalysis, New Criticism, Structuralism, and Deconstruction to one essay for the benefit of his students. Each response to the essay communicates the value of multiple perspectives in reading a text.

Harste & Leland (2002) identify four levels of understanding. As the student progresses through the levels, s/he increasingly applies his/her textual understanding to the “real” world.

1. The student recognizes larger systems of meaning that operate in society.
2. The student identifies his/her role in maintaining systems of power and oppression.
3. The student modifies his/her practices for different social relationships.
4. The student calls for community action i.e. activism. (Personal Communication)

Beach (1987) also addresses the benefits of critical literary study for students in making sense of the “real” world. Multiple discourses present in literature such as gender, race, class, and politics are equally present in society. “There is no real/imaginary binary



between our world and the world of text when it comes to our methods of understanding” (Beach, 1987, p. 177). Ultimately, Beach (1987) wants to raise students’ awareness about the social issues affecting their construction of meaning in the “real” world.

Zitlow’s (2002) review of Appleman’s *Critical Encounters in High School English* validates Appleman’s aim to prepare students to “read” the world. Zitlow quotes one student’s comment about literary theory. “It [critical theory] emphasizes the social nature of reading, politicizes reading and the work reading can do in the world” (p. 128).

Another student comments:

[Critical theory] provides stances and lenses for responding to texts and abets a reader’s response in ways that can enliven, shock, and even transform the way we think about the text and about the world. (p. 129)

Based on my review of literature, clearly Contemporary Literary Theory has value as a pedagogical approach for secondary English/Language Arts students. The following chapter will introduce a unit plan on Teaching Contemporary Literary Theory in the secondary English classroom. It includes a rationale, a description of the project, strategies/approaches to be used, and a definition of terms.

## CHAPTER III

### METHODOLOGY

#### Introduction

This chapter will introduce the Contemporary Literary Theory unit I've developed for use in the secondary English Language Arts classroom. It provides a rationale for teaching CLT at this level, unit description, classroom context, goals/aims of unit, pedagogical approach, strategies, and definition of terms.

#### Rationale

Completing a literature review about the historical context of theoretical approaches used at the secondary level helped me gain an awareness of the controversy that surrounds this topic. A variety of questions have been raised: What theoretical approaches are developmentally appropriate for adolescents? What is the balance between understanding aesthetics and content of a text? Should the social sciences be included in the study of literature? I have come to the conclusion that CLT, with its balance of close reading of a text and broad reading for meaning, is appropriate for adolescents, and that the inclusion of sociology, history, and politics within this theoretical approach are positive and do not detract from the study of literature. However, at the moment when I am convinced that CTL is of benefit to our students, Appleman (2000) expresses the views of the wary:

Literary Theory? When guns go off in school hallways and on playgrounds? When 14-year-old children become mothers and fathers? When adolescents kill each other and themselves with frightening

frequency? When many children and grownups don't read anything at all, let alone theory? (p. 2)

D. Appleman (2000), who has written "the book" on incorporating CLT into the high school curriculum, identifies some people's resistance to the approach. CLT is controversial both because it illustrates the influence of politics and philosophy on the study of literature and because it is sometimes viewed as an approach for intellectual elitists.

Though literary theory has much to offer high school English curricula and the study of literature in general it has been met with resistance if not outright disdain. The debate between theory proponents and antagonists is so heated that entire organizations take pro-or anti- theory stances. Willinsky (1998) names the Association of Literary Scholars and Critics as an anti-theoretical organization, claiming that the anti-theoretical would rather "have us keep our eyes on the pages of greatness, that we might avoid looking up and noticing, perchance, the theories of gender and institution that govern our reading practices"(246).

The primary argument against contemporary theory is that theory proponents are dragging critical, negative perspectives into the ivory tower of "great" literature. Theoreticians are airing the dirty laundry of gender and class oppression in classic works and extremists are applying political analysis to literature where politics simply is not the point. The argument against theory exists within specific opposition to postmodernism in general.

Appleman offers, at length, a rationale for teaching CLT in the high school classroom as well as case studies that exemplify specific teaching methods. Taking cues

from her, I see five major benefits to incorporating literary theory in the curriculum. Introducing students to CLT improves 1) students' ability to take multiple perspectives; 2) students' ability to think critically and use higher order reasoning; 3) students' recognition of diversity within the classroom and greater world; 4) students' ability to "read" and make sense of their world; 5) students' active participation in their own learning through constructivist approaches. In her preface to *Critical Encounters*, Appleman (2000) states the greatest benefit literary theory offers students:

I hope that these approaches to reading literature will help students learn to read from a multiplicity of perspectives and, most of all, will encourage young people to develop the intellectual flexibility they need to read not only literary texts but the cultural texts that surround and often confuse them. (xiii)

#### *Unit Description*

Chapter Four is a unit plan to be used in a year-long sophomore honors Language Arts classroom. The sophomore curriculum is primarily a study of world literature with focus on themes of culture, community, and conflict. The unit plan is designed for a 4-6 week study of Contemporary Literary Theory using Rudolfo Anaya's award-winning novel, *Bless Me, Ultima*. In addition to *Bless Me, Ultima*, students will read from J. Powell's *Derrida for Beginners* and complete exercises adapted from D. Appleman's *Critical Encounters: Teaching Literary Theory to Adolescents*. The novel *Bless Me, Ultima* is the only text in the class that addresses Latin American and Hispanic culture. Other texts taught in the class include *Raisin in the Sun*, *Night*, *The Chosen*, *Of Mice and Men*, and *Julius Caesar*.

### *Classroom Context*

I am a second year teacher; this unit was developed for use with two 10<sup>th</sup> grade honors language arts classes at Evergreen High School in Seattle, Washington. As for economic and ethnic demographics, Evergreen is one of the poorest schools in King County serving over 70% of its students with free or reduced lunch. The Evergreen High School student body is 34.7% White, 34.3% Asian/Pacific Islander, 16.4% Hispanic, 12.5% African-American, and 2.1% Native American. Honors classes at the school tend to have a higher percentage of Asian and White students, close to 40% Asian, 40% White, with the remaining 20% distributed among Hispanics, African-Americans, and Pacific Islanders. Within the category of Asian-American, most Asian students found in Evergreen Honors classes are Vietnamese and/or Cambodian.

### *Goals/Aims of Unit*

Specific learning objectives, Washington State Essential Academic Learning Requirements, are included for each lesson plan found in Chapter Four. The general goals and aims of the unit are:

1. Students will understand the frameworks of Feminist Literary Theory, Marxist Literary Theory, and Deconstruction.
2. Students will apply their understanding of the above literary theories by analyzing the novel *Bless Me, Ultima* through each theoretical lens.
3. Students will transfer their understanding of the above literary theories by analyzing “real-world” examples through each theoretical lens.
4. Students will develop an understanding and appreciation of the historical and cultural factors contributing to Mexican-American literature and culture.

5. Students will improve their reading comprehension through use of new vocabulary building strategies and active reading notes.
6. Students will improve their expository writing skills through informal and formal writing assessments.

### *Pedagogical/Approach*

This unit introduces students to the frameworks of Feminist Literary Theory, Marxist Literary Theory, and Deconstruction and teaches application of these theories using the novel *Bless Me, Ultima*. Additionally, the unit introduces students to Mexican-American culture through study of historical events, figures in history, language, religion, and folk legends.

Completing a literature review validated my plan of incorporating the study of literary theories with the study of *Bless Me, Ultima*. The qualitative case studies conducted by Hines and Appleman (2000) exemplified how literary theory increases students' ability to consider multiple perspectives in their reading comprehension. Additionally, students became more responsible for their learning, as class discussions became student-driven rather than teacher-driven. This approach raised the general level of analysis and critical thinking as students became "meaning-makers in their own right" (p.163). Hine's and Appleman's findings, in connection with studies conducted by Rabinowitz & Smith (1998), Johnson (2002), and Harste & Leland (2002), support my conclusion that the study of literary theory is conducive to employing constructivist strategies in the classroom. Constructivist pedagogy defines the student as responsible for his/her own learning. Students construct meaning by connecting their personal experiences to the academic curriculum.

*in those particular case studies. pre/post assessment*

Throughout the unit, constructivist strategies are applied in order to increase student engagement. In addition to constructivist methods literacy strategies including pre-reading activities, Accountable Talk™ (Resnick, 1999), Socratic seminars, and co-constructed charts will be used.

As for the scope and sequence of the unit, students will be introduced to theoretical approaches in isolation and then will be provided opportunities for guided practice and application. Week one introduces the concepts of cross-cultural communication and multiple perspectives. Students will read a short story I wrote titled “The Farmer’s Death.” Students will write persuasive essays from the perspective of different characters in the story. The metaphor of reading stories through different lenses will be introduced.

Week two is an introduction to the novel and to Feminist Literary Theory. Students will learn terms and basic frameworks to discuss issues of gender in the novel and in society. This introduction to Feminist Literary Theory includes the study of three important women in Mexican-American culture, La Virgen de Guadalupe (the Virgin Mary), La Llorona (a folk figure), and La Malinche (the native woman who became wife and translator to the explorer Cortes). Students will apply Feminist Literary Theory by analyzing how these three women are portrayed in the novel.

In weeks three and four students will learn basic frameworks of Marxist Literary Theory and will complete a short research project on an historical event related to Mexico or Mexican-Americans. They will apply Marxist Literary Theory by developing a social ladder depicting the status of each major character in the novel in relation to the power s/he holds over Antonio’s actions and choices. The research project will be done in pairs.

Students will have two days to do research and then they will write short summary essays on their assigned topics.

Week five will introduce the framework of Deconstruction. Students will read from J. Powell's *Introduction to Derrida*. In addition to Deconstruction, students will participate in discussions in longer Socratic Seminars, and do extended writing assignments. At this point in the unit, students will be 3/4 of the way through the novel and will be preparing for a final essay and a take-home exam on the novel which will take place during week six.

#### *Assessment Strategies*

Various assessment strategies will be employed throughout the unit, including reading quizzes, active reading notes, Socratic Seminars, essays, and a written take-home exam.

Week one, students will begin to take short quizzes on their daily reading assignments. The primary purpose of these quizzes is to hold students accountable for the assigned reading and to assess their literal understanding of character, plot, and setting in the novel. These check quizzes will be worth 5-10 points each and will cover the first 10 chapters of the novel.

Taking Active Reading Notes is a during-reading comprehension strategy. In a T-chart format students copy significant quotes from the text in one column and then process their thinking about the quotes in the following column. Students' thinking may include predictions, summaries, questions, or interpretations. These Active Reading Notes will be used in terms of assessing the students' initial comprehension and thinking



about the novel. Students will take Active Reading Notes specific to understanding Feminist Literary Theory.

Socratic Seminars are text-based, all-class discussions. Students select passages of interest or passages related to a given literary theory prior to the seminar. Socratic Seminars allow the teacher to assess students' ability to apply a literary theory to specific passages in the novel. Additionally, Socratic Seminars allow teachers to assess students' general comprehension of the novel.

A variety of essays and informal writing assignments are employed throughout the unit. Informal writing assignments are used to assess students' ability to analyze a passage through the lens of a given theoretical approach. These informal writes will be worth 20-30 points. Full essays will be worth 50 points. Like the informal writes, essays are used to assess the students' ability to apply a theoretical approach; additionally, essays assess students' ability to develop a thesis statement, organize a logical argument, and provide textual evidence for a thesis statement.

The final exam for this unit of study will require the student to write one-page responses to four questions dealing with one or more literary theories. The final exam will be worth 100 points

#### Definition of Terms

The following terms will be used throughout the unit plan:

**Althusser's Theory of Ideology:** Louis Althusser, a French Marxist, addresses the role of ideology in society. He claims that ideologies about every issue (gender, politics, family structure) permeate our society. The study of literature should be about identifying the ideologies supported in the text.

**Contemporary Literary Theory:** A movement of postmodern theories for the study of literature. Included under the tent of Contemporary Literary Theory most often are: Feminism, Marxism, Althusser's theory of ideology, Deconstruction, and Post-structuralism.

**Deconstruction:** A movement that views language as "slippery." Language constructs reality; we can only 'know' through the syntax of language, and that syntax is always shifting. Deconstructive reading identifies the binaries present in the text and judges which side of the binary is privileged, e.g. white vs. black, male vs. female, rich vs. poor.

**Feminist Literary Theory:** The range of Feminist Literary Theories is as varied as there are theories of feminism. Mostly this form of criticism is concerned with representations of gender and sexuality in a text.

**Formalism:** A movement (1890-1930) that valued the aesthetics of a text over its message and that divorced Literary study from any social sciences including History, Sociology, Psychology, or Philosophy.

**Literary Theory:** A philosophical framework that answers the following questions:

- What is a text?
- What is the author's role?
- What is the reader's role?
- How do we define the process of reading?
- What is the nature of language?
- What are the goal of literary studies?
- What is the relationship between form and content.

**Marxist Literary Theory:** This theoretical approach to literature is concerned with issues of power and economic oppression in the text. Some Marxist Theorists are more concerned with class struggle; others are more concerned with the political themes in the text.

**New Criticism:** A literary movement centered in America from 1920 to 1950. Poets T. S. Eliot, Allen Tate, and R.P. Warren were key figures. New Criticism values the aesthetics of the text over a specific content. New Criticism was the first literary theoretical movement to influence the universities, and remains the primary literary theory employed in secondary English classrooms.

**New Historicism:** The return to an historical approach of literary studies in the 1960's-70's; the movement challenges the notion of a canon. New Historicism assumes that whole cultures are represented in texts. New Historicism pushed for the incorporation of previously marginalized works into college curriculum.

**Postmodernism:** A movement that values perspectives over Truths. It is anti-foundational, and understands all aspects of culture and identity as socially constructed. Finally, language is the building block of reality. Language constructs the realities that we live in, thus reality exists among a variety of discourses.

**Post Structuralism:** This term is sometimes used synonymously with postmodernism.

**Reader Response:** A literary theory that values the reader's "transaction" with the text. This theory incorporates psychology into the study of literature because it considers the reader's emotional response to the literature to be most significant.

**Structuralism:** A philosophical movement that attempted to provide social sciences such as history, anthropology, and literary criticism with a scientific basis. Key thinkers in the movement included Jean Piaget, Levi Strauss, and Ferdinand de Saussure.

## CHAPTER IV

## UNIT PLAN

## Lesson Plans

*Week One***Day 1****Lesson Plan #1: Pre-reading activity**

**Lesson Topic:** Compare/Contrast recurring theme of cross-cultural communication in prior novels: *Raisin in the Sun*, *Night*, *The Chosen*

**Rationale Statement:** *Bless Me, Ultima* addresses the theme of cross-cultural communication in the binaries experienced in Antonio's life. Catholicism vs. Ultima's paganism, Male vs. Female, La Virgen vs. La Malinche, Good vs. Evil, English vs. Spanish.

**Lesson Objective:** Students will chart qualities of cross-cultural communication after having responded to the following prompt in a response journal.

Consider the following moments of cross-cultural communication in the works we've read so far this year.

From *Raisin in the Sun*:

- Walter Younger's communication with Mama.
- The Younger family's communication with Mr. Lindner.

From *Night*:

- Elie Wiesel's communication with German Soldiers.

From *The Chosen*:

- Danny's communication with his father and Reuven.
- Reuven's communication with Reb Saunders.

In thinking about these examples can you make a generalization about the qualities, descriptors of cross-cultural communication? What are some of the lessons and/or issues that arise when such communication is attempted?

**Essential Learnings and Grade Level Expectations Addressed (Benchmark 3):**

Reading 2.1.5 Comprehend important ideas and details: Organize information to support a prediction or inference in a self-created graphic organizer.

Reading 2.2. Expand comprehension by analyzing, interpreting, and synthesizing information and ideas.

Reading 2.2.3 Analyze story elements: how recurring themes are treated by diverse authors or in different genres.

Reading 3.3. Read for literary experience

Writing 2.2 Write for different purposes. To make inferences or draw conclusions.  
To present an analytical response to literature.

### Lesson Initiating Activities (Anticipatory Set)

Purpose	Time (min)	Activities-Teachers and Learners	Materials
<b>1. Management and Organizational Strategies</b>	1 min	Teacher will make prompt available on overhead projector.	Overhead
<b>2. Tie-in to prior knowledge.</b>	5 min	Teacher will introduce a new novel unit by asking students to recall which texts they have studied this year.  Teacher will activate student's knowledge of cultural values represented in each text: <i>Raisin in the Sun, Night, The Chosen</i>	
<b>3. Stimulate, motivate and develop readiness.</b>	3 min	Teacher will introduce and define the term <i>cross-cultural communication</i> . Teacher will ask students' to list, as a class, moments of <i>cross-cultural communication</i> in these three works.	

### Lesson Learning Activities

Objective	Time	Activities (teacher and learner)	Materials	Assessment
Students will write a response journal entry to the following prompt: Consider the following moments of cross-cultural communication in the works we've read so far this year.	1 min	Teacher will introduce prompt on overhead projector. Students will write for 10-15 minutes individually.	overhead projector	Teacher will walk around during writing time and check for understanding
	10-15 min			
	5 min	After students have worked independently, they will discuss in groups of four what specific issues, themes, lessons, and conflicts they identified.	Graphic organizer (see attached)	Teacher will informally check for understanding



Name \_\_\_\_\_

Per \_\_\_\_\_

**Graphic Organizer: Recurring themes, lessons, conflicts, issues about**  
*Cross-Cultural Communication*

Conflicts	Topic of Conflict	Themes	Lesson Learned



**Day 2****Lesson Plan #2**

**Lesson Topic:** Introduction to Multiple Perspectives:

**Rationale Statement:** Every mode of literary studies enlists a specific theoretical perspective. Before introducing literary theory directly, students will learn that literature can be read from multiple perspectives.

**Lesson Objective:**

Students will know and be able to apply the terms multiple perspective, economics, gender, socioeconomic class, and will use these terms when reading the short story "The Farmer's Death," (adapted by this author) from the perspectives of gender, class, economics, and politics.

**Essential Learnings Addressed (Benchmark 3):**

Reading 2.31 Analyze literary text for similarities and differences and cause and effect relationships.

Reading 2.4.3 Analyze the effectiveness of the author's use of persuasive devices such as bias, stereotype, over-generalization, association, to influence an audience.

Reading 2.4.6 Analyze text to make a generalization, express insight, or respond to connecting to other texts or situations.

**Lesson Initiating Activities (Anticipatory Set) (Day Two)**

Purpose	Time (min)	Activities-Teachers and Learners	Materials
<b>1. Management and Organizational Strategies</b>	1 min	Teacher will have a story handout for each group of four students.	Copies of the "Farmer's Death."
<b>2. Tie-in to prior knowledge.</b>	3 min	Teacher will review expectations for group work.	
<b>3. Stimulate, motivate and develop readiness.</b>	3 min	Teacher will explain that the students will read this aloud in their group. Students will be responsible for considering the fault of each of the four characters in the story.	

### Lesson Learning Activities

Objective	Time	Activities (teacher and learner)	Materials	Assessment
<u>Cognitive objective:</u> Students will be able to define the following terms: Multiple perspectives, economics, gender, socioeconomic class.	5 min	Students will read story aloud in groups.	Copies of "Farmer's Death" (attached)	Teacher will walk around room and check for on-task behavior.
Students will consider a tale, "Farmer's Death" from the perspectives of gender, class, economics, and politics.	8 min	Students will discuss the four guiding questions at the bottom of the story.		
<u>Affective objective:</u> Students will work collaboratively in groups of four.	10 min	Students will complete "Fault" graphic organizer, detailing how each character is responsible for the Farmer's death.	"Fault" Graphic Organizer (attached)	Students will share with entire class.
	10 min	Next, teacher will discuss how each character is responsible due to differences in qualities of his/her identity. Teacher will make reference to students' earlier responses on "Fault" graphic organizer. Students will complete the graphic organizer, "Qualities of each character."	"Qualities" Graphic Organizer (attached)	Students will have class discussion about how different aspects of identity such as gender, class, political status influence our perspectives of a given situation.
	10 min	Students will share their "Qualities" graphic organizers with the entire class in a discussion.		

### Lesson Concluding Activities

Purpose	Time	Activities (teachers and learners)	Materials
<b>1. Summary and review of lesson.</b>	5 min	Finally, students will create a class list of "aspects" or "components" that comprise an individual's perspective. E.g. gender, race, ethnicity, class, age, religion.	Butcher paper
<b>2. Readiness and/or motivation for next day's lesson</b>	1 min	Teacher will tell students that tomorrow we will begin a writing project to continue the discussion of multiple perspectives	

### The Farmer's Death

In a kingdom far, far away lived a beautiful Queen. The Queen was unhappy. Her marriage to the King was not one of love, but rather one of political power. The Queen's family owned miles and miles of land adjacent to the King's castle and by marrying the Queen the King doubled the size of his kingdom.

Five years passed and the marriage was not a happy one. The King was unfaithful to his wife and had many affairs with the young servant maids of the castle. One day the Queen was walking through the market when she tripped and fell. A lowly farmer knelt down and helped the Queen up. As she thanked him they began to talk. Every week when the farmer came to the castle to sell his grain he would meet the Queen in private to talk. Eventually their friendship grew to love. A romantic affair had begun.

When the King learned of his wife's affair he warned her that he had instructed the castle guard to kill the farmer if he ever returned to the castle. The Queen warned the farmer not to come. The farmer was so in love with the Queen that he said he would risk death to see her again. The next day he tried to sneak through the castle gates, but was caught and killed by the guard.

WHO IS ULTIMATELY RESPONSIBLE FOR THE FARMER'S DEATH?

The king who ordered his death?

The queen who did not convince him to stay away?

The guard who actually committed the murder?

The farmer who did not listen to the warning?

Names:

Faults of "Farmer's Death"

Character	Ways each character contributed to the farmer's death.
Farmer	
Queen	
King	
Guard	

Names:

**Qualities of each Character that were significant to their Fault**

What aspects of each character's identity impacted their degree of fault for the Farmer's Death?

<b>Character</b>	<b>Aspects of Identity</b>
<b>Queen</b>	
<b>King</b>	
<b>Guard</b>	
<b>Farmer</b>	

**Days 3-5**

**Lesson Plan #3:** Persuasive Essay on “The Farmer’s Death.”

**Lesson Topic:** Multiple Perspectives and Persuasive Writing

**Rational Statement:** Students will continue practicing reading literature from multiple perspectives. Additionally, this lesson requires students to follow the steps of the writing process while working in collaborative groups of four.

**Lesson Objective:** Student will write a persuasive essay related to the story “The Farmer’s Death.” Students will follow the steps of the writing process while working collaboratively in groups of four during the pre-writing and editing steps. Drafting and revising will be done independently.

**Essential Learnings Addressed (Benchmark 3):**

Writing 1.2 Use style appropriate to audience and purpose

Writing 2.1 Write for different audiences

Writing 2.0 Write for different purposes

Writing 3.1-5 Write using the steps of the writing process.

Writing 4.1 Assess own strengths and needs for improvement

Writing 4.2 Seek and offer feedback

**Lesson Initiating Activities (Anticipatory Set)**

Purpose	Time (min)	Activities-Teachers and Learners	Materials
<b>1. Management and organizational strategies</b>	2 min	Teacher will organize students into groups of four. (See “Writing Groups” chart.)	“Writing Groups” Chart
<b>2. Tie-in to prior knowledge.</b>		Students will take out their “Faults” and “Qualities” worksheets.	“Faults,” “Qualities” worksheets
<b>3. Stimulate, motivate, and develop readiness.</b>	5 min	Teacher assigns each group one character from the story whom they will be “blaming” for the Farmer’s death.	

**Lesson Learning Activities**

Objective	Time	Activities (Teacher and Learners)	Materials	Assessment
Student will write a persuasive essay related to	10 min	In groups of four students will brainstorm why their	“Faults” and “Qualities” worksheets	Teacher walks around class and monitor on-task behavior. Teacher is available to answer

the story "The Farmer's Death."	35 min	assigned character was most at fault for the farmer's death.  Students begin drafting, individually, their essays.		student questions
	Day 4	Students peer-edit essays in writing groups of four. (See attached writing group chart. See attached rubric).	Rubric for Assessing: Persuasive Essay on Farmer's Death	Teacher will collect peer edit forms with final drafts of essays.
	Day 5	Students assess and rank papers 1-4 within editing groups. Writing groups are awarded prizes. (See attached writing groups chart).	Rubric for Assessing: Persuasive Essay on Farmer's Death	

### Lesson Concluding Activities

Purpose	Time	Activities (Teacher and Learners)	Materials
<b>1. Summary and review of the lesson.</b>	5-10 min	Students assess their writing strengths and weaknesses in their journals. Students set writing goals for their next essays.	Writing journals
<b>2. Readiness and/or motivation for next day's lesson</b>	5 min	Teacher tells students that they will be beginning the new novel, <i>Bless Me, Ultima</i> on Monday next week and that we will be reading the novel from multiple perspectives, just as we have with this short story.	

### “Writing Groups” Chart

Writing = Letter Groups, e.g. group A  
Editing = Number Groups, e.g. group 1

	1	2	3	4
<b>A</b>	Student A1	Student A2	Student A3	Student A4
<b>B</b>	Student B1	Student B2	Student B3	Student B4
<b>C</b>	Student C1	Student C2	Student C3	Student C4
<b>D</b>	Student D1	Student D2	Student D3	Student D4
<b>E</b>	Student E1	Student E2	Student E3	Student E4
<b>F</b>	Student F1	Student F2	Student F3	Student F4
<b>G</b>	Student G1	Student G2	Student G3	Student G4
<b>H</b>	Student H1	Student H2	Student H3	Student H4

### “Writing Groups” Chart

Writing = Letter Groups, e.g. group A  
Editing = Number Groups, e.g. group 1

	1	2	3	4
<b>A</b>				
<b>B</b>				
<b>C</b>				
<b>D</b>				
<b>E</b>				
<b>F</b>				
<b>G</b>				
<b>H</b>				



## Rubric for Assessing: Persuasive Essay on "Farmer's Death"

Teacher Name: **Ms. Young**

Student Name: \_\_\_\_\_

CATEGORY	4	3	2	1
Introduction (Organization)	The introduction is inviting, states the main topic and previews the structure of the paper.	The introduction clearly states the main topic and previews the structure of the paper, but is not particularly inviting to the reader.	The introduction states the main topic, but does not adequately preview the structure of the paper nor is it particularly inviting to the reader.	There is no clear introduction of the main topic or structure of the paper.
Commitment (Voice)	The writer successfully uses several reasons/appeals to try to show why the reader should care or want to know more about the topic.	The writer successfully uses one or two reasons/appeals to try to show why the reader should care or want to know more about the topic.	The writer attempts to make the reader care about the topic, but is not really successful.	The writer made no attempt to make the reader care about the topic.
Support for Topic (Content)	Relevant, telling, quality details give the reader important information that goes beyond the obvious or predictable.	Supporting details and information are relevant, but one key issue or portion of the storyline is unsupported.	Supporting details and information are relevant, but several key issues or portions of the storyline are unsupported.	Supporting details and information are typically unclear or not related to the topic.
Grammar & Spelling (Conventions)	Writer makes no errors in grammar or spelling that distract the reader from the content.	Writer makes 1-2 errors in grammar or spelling that distract the reader from the content.	Writer makes 3-4 errors in grammar or spelling that distract the reader from the content.	Writer makes more than 4 errors in grammar or spelling that distract the reader from the content.
Conclusion (Organization)	The conclusion is strong and leaves the reader with an understanding of what the writer is "getting at."	The conclusion is recognizable and ties up almost all the loose ends.	The conclusion is recognizable, but does not tie up several loose ends.	There is no clear conclusion, the paper just ends.

*Week Two*

**Day 6:**

**Lesson Plan # 4**

**Lesson Topic:** Introduction to *Bless Me, Ultima*.

**Rationale Statement:** Before assigning the novel the teacher will take one class period to take care of logistics such as checking out texts, passing out unit calendar (see attached), and explaining requirements of the unit, for example daily check quizzes. The teacher will also read the first chapter out loud to the students as a way to engage the students in the text.

**Lesson Objective:** Students will understand the time schedule and grading requirements of the unit. Students will be engaged in the first chapter of the text.

**Essential Learnings Addressed (Benchmark 3):**

Reading 2.1 Demonstrate evidence of reading comprehension

**Lesson Initiating Activities (Anticipatory Set)**

Purpose	Time (min)	Activities-Teachers and Learners	Materials
<b>1. Management and Organizational Strategies</b>	1 min	Teacher passes out Unit Calendar, Spanish Vocabulary worksheet	Unit Calendar Spanish Vocabulary
<b>2. Tie-in to prior knowledge.</b>	2 min	Teacher reminds students that this unit studying <i>Bless Me, Ultima</i> will be similar to prior units studying other novels.  Teacher tells students that their first homework assignment will involve reading the first chapter from multiple perspectives.	
<b>3. Stimulate, motivate and develop readiness.</b>	2 min	Teacher checks that all students have worksheets and are prepared to discuss the unit.	

### Lesson Learning Activities

<b>Objective</b>	<b>Time</b>	<b>Activities (teacher and learner)</b>	<b>Materials</b>	<b>Assessment</b>
Students will understand the time schedule and grading requirements of the unit. Students will be engaged in the first chapter of the text.	15 min	Teacher reviews and explains Unit Calendar, Spanish Vocabulary worksheets.  Teacher explains the requirements of the unit: Check quizzes, in-class timed writes, expository essays, active reading notes, final essay and exam.  Teacher reads Chapter one out loud to students. Together, students and teacher identify Spanish vocabulary terms for their worksheet.	Unit Calendar, Spanish Vocabulary worksheets	Teacher asks questions to check for understanding.  Teacher answers all student questions.

### Lesson Concluding Activities

<b>Purpose</b>	<b>Time</b>	<b>Activities (teachers and learners)</b>	<b>Materials</b>
<b>1. Summary and review of lesson.</b>	2 min	Teacher answers all student questions, and asks some summarizing questions to check for student understanding.	
<b>2. Readiness and/or motivation for next day's lesson</b>	1 min	Teacher assigns reading for tonight; extra class time is for silent reading.  Student homework for the first day is to complete the "Multiple Perspectives" Worksheet on Chapter 1. (See attached)	Multiple Perspectives worksheet

**Calendar for Contemporary Literary Theory and *Bless Me, Ultima***

<b>Monday</b>	<b>Tuesday</b>	<b>Wednesday</b>	<b>Thursday</b>	<b>Friday</b>
<b>1.</b> Cross-Cultural Communication	<b>2.</b> Multiple Perspectives	<b>3.</b> Persuasive Essay	<b>4.</b> Persuasive Essay cont. . .	<b>5.</b> Persuasive Essay cont. . .
<b>6.</b>      <b>Read Ch 1</b>	<b>7.</b> <b>Quiz Ch1</b>  Feminist Lit Theory  Ch 2	<b>8.</b> Quiz Ch2    Ch 3+(articles)	<b>9.</b> Quiz Ch3 <i>Socratic Seminar</i> on Mexican Gender Icons Ch 4	<b>10.</b> Quiz Ch4    Ch 5
<b>11.</b> Quiz Ch5  Mexican History Papers  Ch 6	<b>12.</b> Quiz Ch6  Marxist Lit Theory  Ch 7-8	<b>13.</b> Quizzes Ch7-8    Ch 9-10	<b>14.</b> Quizzes Ch9-10    Ch 11-12	<b>15.</b> Quizzes Ch11- 12 <i>Mexican History papers due.</i> Ch 13-14
<b>16.</b>  <i>Power Point Due</i>  Ch 15	<b>17.</b>  <i>Power Point cont. . .</i>  Ch 16	<b>18.</b>  Deconstruction Lit Theory  Ch 17	<b>19.</b>    Ch 18-19	<b>20.</b>    Ch 20
<b>21.</b>  Althusser's Theory of Ideology  Ch 21	<b>22.</b>    Ch 22 (end)	<b>23.</b>  Take home exam given. (Due following Thursday).	<b>24.</b>    	<b>25.</b>  <b>Final Exam on novel</b>
<b>26.</b>    	<b>27.</b>    	<b>28.</b>    	<b>29</b> <i>Take Home Exam Due.</i>	<b>30.</b>    



Name \_\_\_\_\_

Period \_\_\_\_\_

**Multiple Perspectives in *Bless Me, Ultima***

Read the first chapter in *Bless Me, Ultima* and then work in groups of four to answer the following questions about the novel. The purpose of this assignment is to start thinking about reading from multiple perspectives, not only your own. **Every answer must include direct support from the text.**

1. List all the characters that appear or are mentioned in Chapter 1.

2. From whose point of view is the story told?

3. Summarize the chapter from that character's point of view (that is, according to the character you identified as the narrator). Be brief.

4. Now pick another character from those you listed in question 1. Summarize the chapter from *that* character's point of view.

5. Now reread the last two paragraphs and predict what kind of person Ultima is. How will she be treated by the narrator's family? What makes you think so?

**Day 7** Check quiz Ch 1 given on day 7

Name \_\_\_\_\_

**Ch 1 Quiz**

Fill in the following family tree with appropriate names.

1-5                      **Father** \_\_\_\_\_                      **Mother** \_\_\_\_\_  
**Sister** \_\_\_\_\_                      **Sister** \_\_\_\_\_                      **Protagonist** \_\_\_\_\_

6. What was the father's original occupation? \_\_\_\_\_
7. What was the original occupation of the Mother's family? \_\_\_\_\_
8. What animal accompanies Ultima? \_\_\_\_\_
9. Why does Ultima come to live with the protagonist's family?
10. What are the events in the protagonist's dream sequence, expressed in italics?

**Lesson Plan #5****Lesson Topic:** Feminist Literary Theory

**Rationale Statement:** We begin with Feminist Literary Theory in our introduction to theory because gender stereotypes are incredibly relevant to the lives of adolescents.

**Lesson Objective:** Students will define the following terms:

Gender  
 Sex  
 Stereotypes  
 Feminism  
 Femininity  
 Masculinity  
 Social construction

Students will construct their own definition for feminism, using gender stereotypes agreed upon by the class.

**Essential Learnings Addressed (Benchmark 3):**

Reading 1.3 Student builds vocabulary through wide reading  
 Communication 1.1. Student uses listening and observation skills to gain understanding.  
 Communication 2.0 Student communicates ideas clearly and effectively.  
 Communication 3.0 Student uses communication strategies and skills to work effectively with others.



### Lesson Initiating Activities (Anticipatory Set)

Purpose	Time (min)	Activities-Teachers and Learners	Materials
<b>1. Management and Organizational Strategies</b>	1 min	Students will take out blank sheets of paper for a Think-Pair-Share activity	notebook paper
<b>2. Tie-in to prior knowledge.</b>	2 min	Teacher reminds students that they will be addressing the issue of gender as one aspect of identity, as discussed the day before. Teacher reminds students about the importance of Multiple perspectives.	
<b>3. Stimulate, motivate and develop readiness.</b>	3 min	Teacher asks students to consider the stereotypes that exist about gender.	

### Lesson Learning Activities

Objective	Time	Activities (teacher and learner)	Materials	Assessment
Students will define the following terms: Gender Sex Stereotypes Feminism Femininity Masculinity Social construction	4 min	Individually, students will construct two lists. One will be commonly held stereotypes about females and males. The other list will be "true" generalizations that can be made about the genders.	Student's notebook paper	
	15 min	Next, students will be split in half with same sex groups. Within each of the two groups every student will share his/her answers, and each group will construct a cumulative list.	butcher paper	
Students will construct their own definition for feminism, using gender stereotypes agreed upon by the class.	10 min	The two groups will share their responses with each other.		
	4 min	Teacher will introduce the concept of separating the answers into two categories: <i>biological</i> and <i>socially constructed</i> .		

	8 min	Through a majority vote students will identify which category each answer belongs to.		
	8 min	Teacher will provide definitions for above listed terms: <i>biological determinism</i> (the biological make up of the two sexes, including physical and hormonal differences, is a determining factor for what we define as gender differences) and <i>socially constructed</i> (social and societal influences such as religion, family, politics, and media are the determining factors for what we accept as gender differences) while students complete guided notes.	Feminism Guided notes (attached)	
		Students will share their responses to common events listed in guided notes.		

### Lesson Concluding Activities

Purpose	Time	Activities (teachers and learners)	Materials
<b>1. Summary and review of lesson.</b>	5 min	Teacher will ask for students to explain the difference between sex and gender. Teacher will ask for examples  Teacher will ask students to explain difference between biological determinism and social construction	
<b>2. Readiness and/or motivation for next day's lesson</b>		Homework: Students will take home worksheet "The Feminist Lens: Gendered Characters in <i>Bless Me, Ultima</i> ."  Students will be prepared to share their answers in class the next day.	

Name \_\_\_\_\_

### **Feminist Literary Theory Guided Notes**

Please write down your own understanding of what feminism is. When you think of the word feminism what do you think of? (be honest) Your answer may take the form of a definition, emotional response, or example.

**Feminism:**

Here is the working definition we will be using throughout the study of *Bless me, Ultima*

**Feminism:**

Here are some terms that we need to know in order to discuss feminist literary theory:

**Gender:**

**Sex:**

**Stereotypes:**

**Social construction:**

**Biological Determinism:**

Now we are going to try out a little feminist theory on some common events in American society. What is the mainstream or general thought about the following events? What might be a feminist response to these events?

	<b>Mainstream response</b>	<b>Feminist response</b>
<b>Common attire for boys and girls at Prom</b>		
<b>Miss America Pageant</b>		
<b>History of all male presidents</b>		
<b>Existence of "Supermodels"</b>		

## Teacher's Definitions of Terms

**Feminism:**

The idea that no assumptions should be made about an individual's gender identity based on his/her sex. For example in an "ideal" world gender stereotypes would no exist. You could not assume that people with xy chromosomes are "masculine."

**Gender:**

Gender distinguishes between men and women on the basis of social differences we consider femininity and masculinity.

**Sex:**

The biological differences that distinguish men by their xy chromosomes and women by their xx chromosomes. Defining the difference between men and women in terms of sex also allows for the uniqueness of hermaphrodites without requiring them to fit within a dual gender norm.

**Stereotypes:**

Conventionally accepted norms or beliefs about differences between the genders.

**Social construction:**

The idea that society influences are responsible for the differences between the sexes rather than biological factors.

**Biological Determinism:**

The idea that the biological make up of an individual is the primary determining factor for what we define as gender differences.

Adapted from D. Appleman's *Critical Encounters: Teaching Literary Theory to Adolescents*.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Period \_\_\_\_\_

### The Feminist Lens: Gendered Characters in *Bless Me, Ultima*

#### 1. What is the feminist Lens?

Feminist literary criticism helps us look at literature in a different light. It applies the philosophies and perspectives of Feminism to the literature we read. There are many different kinds of feminist literary theory. Some theorists examine the language and symbols that are used and how that language and use of symbols are "gendered." Others remind us that men and women write differently, and analyze how the gender of the author affects how literature is written. Many feminist critics look at how the characters, especially the female characters "reinforces or undermines" sexual stereotypes (Lynn, 1998). Feminist literary theory also suggests that the gender of the reader often affects our response to a text. For example, feminist critics may claim that certain male writers address their readers as if they were all men and exclude the female reader.

Like feminism itself, feminist literary theory asks us to consider the relationships between men and women and their relative roles in society. Much feminist literary theory reminds us that the relationship between men and women in society is often unequal and reflects a particular patriarchal ideology. Those unequal relationships may appear in a variety of ways in the production of literature. Feminist theorists invite us to pay particular attention to the patterns of thought, in creating relationships between men and women.

#### 2. Consider Ultima, Mamá, and Papá in *Bless Me, Ultima*.

For each character, write two descriptive statements—one from a "traditional" masculine perspective and the second from a feminist perspective. Hint. . .Antonio's perspective on these two women is fairly "traditional."

*Ultima:*

Traditional Statement:

Feminist Statement:

*Mamá:*

Traditional Statement:

Feminist Statement:

*Papá:*

Traditional Statement:

Feminist Statement:

## Day 8 Check quiz Ch 2 given day 8

### Ch 2 Quiz

1. Antonio's father is visited by a very upset friend, Chavez. What is Chavez upset about?

2. Why is Lupito crazy?

3. Where is Antonio, physically, when Lupito dies?

1. Select the sentence that best describes the purpose of the dream sequence at the end of Ch 2.
  - a. It expresses how much tension is felt between Antonio's parents.
  - b. It shows how much Antonio's brothers love their father.
  - c. It suggests the incredible responsibility Antonio feels to please both parents.
  - d. It shows how psychologically unstable Antonio feels.
2. The dream sequence suggest that Antonio's mother is
  - a. Happy that Antonio is growing up.
  - b. Unhappy that Antonio is growing up.

### Lesson Plan #6

**Lesson Topic:** Introduction to the idea of gender icons: La Malinche, La Virgen de Guadalupe, and La Llorona

**Rationale Statement:** Rudolfo Anaya's novel enlists the iconic figures of La Malinche and La Virgen as icons for Mexican femininity. In order to study *Bless me, Ultima* through a feminist lens students must be familiar with the cultural constructs of these two figures.

**Lesson Objective:** Students will complete a series of guided notes about Mexican history and the two women. Additionally, students will apply their knowledge to analyzing a passage from the novel. Students will work in groups to complete the analysis.

### Essential Learnings Addressed (Benchmark 3):

Reading 2.1.1 Apply comprehension strategies for complex narratives: monitor for meaning, create mental images, and generate and answer questions.

Reading 2.1.5 Apply comprehension strategies for complex narratives (literary): determine importance and summarize main idea/themes and supporting details.

Reading 2.3.1 Analyze literary text for similarities and differences and cause and effect relationships.

Reading 2.4.5 Analyze treatment of concepts within, among, and beyond multiple texts.

Reading 3.4.3 Understand and analyze recurring themes in literature.



### Lesson Initiating Activities (Anticipatory Set)

Purpose	Time (min)	Activities-Teachers and Learners	Materials
<b>1. Management and Organizational Strategies</b>	1 min		
<b>2. Tie-in to prior knowledge.</b>	2 min	We will be continuing the discussion of gender stereotypes. Teacher will discuss with students how the prior lesson on sex vs. gender allowed us to identify gender stereotypes, gender icons. Today we will discuss gender icons within Mexican culture.	
<b>3. Stimulate, motivate and develop readiness.</b>	3 min	With teacher help, students will list 3-5 gender icons that appeared repeatedly on their lists of gender stereotypes. E.g. the pure virgin, the slut, the dumb blonde, the jock, the rebel, the aggressive male, the passive female.	guided notes

### Lesson Learning Activities

Objective	Time	Activities (teacher and learner)	Materials	Assessment
Students will complete a series of guided notes about Mexican history and the two women.	10 min	Students will read two articles about La Malinche and La Virgen de Guadalupe.	articles (attached)	Students will complete a written assignment, analyzing a passage using information from these notes.
	15 min	Teacher will work through the guided notes. Teacher will use lecture style while eliciting answers from students.	guided notes (attached)	

### Lesson Concluding Activities

Purpose	Time	Activities (teachers and learners)	Materials
<b>1. Summary and review of lesson.</b>	Done outside	Students will answer the final questions on the guided notes.	guided notes

	of class.		
<b>2. Readiness and/or motivation for next day's lesson</b>		<p>Students will re-read Chapters 1-2, read Chapter 3, and will list every quote dealing with either La Malinche or La Virgen on their Feminist Lit Theory notes.</p> <p>Tomorrow will be an all class Socratic Seminar on Chapters 1-3 and the topic of <b>Feminist Literary Theory</b>. Students will be expected to have quotes in their Feminist Literary Theory Notes ready to prompt a discussion.</p>	Feminist Lit Theory notes (attached)

Name \_\_\_\_\_

**Mexican Gender Icons:  
La Malinche, La Virgen de Guadalupe, La Llorona**

A gender icon is \_\_\_\_\_

An example of a female gender icon from mainstream American culture is.

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**La Malinche**

**I. Time period**

**II. Culture**

**III. Significant event**

**IV. Stereotypes**

**A.**

**B.**

**La Virgen de Guadalupe**

**I. Time period**

**II. Culture**

**III. Significant event**

**IV. Stereotypes**

**A.**

**B.**

**La Llorona**

Name \_\_\_\_\_

### Feminist Literary Theory Notes

**Objective:** To identify moments in *Bless Me, Ultima* where you, the reader, can use the feminist lens to better understand the text.

**Methods:**

1. List passages/quotes where La Malinche, La Virgen, or La Llorona is mentioned.
2. List passages/quotes where female characters' perspectives are expressed.
3. List passages/quotes where opinions about women are mentioned.

**Provide the definition below.**

**Feminist Literary Theory is :**

La Malinche

Quotes	Page #	Significance

La Virgen de Guadalupe

Quotes	Page #	Significance

La Llorona

Quotes	Page #	Significance



Women's perspectives

Quotes	Page #	Significance

Quotes about Women

Quotes	Page #	Significance

**Day 9 Check Quiz Ch 3 given.**

Name \_\_\_\_\_

**Ch 3 Quiz**

1. On the following chart, list all the characters you know so far; identify their relationship to Antonio & briefly describe each.

Name	Relation to Antonio	Description

**Lesson Plan # 7****Lesson Topic:** Socratic Seminar

**Rationale Statement:** A Socratic Seminar is student-led all-class, text-based discussion. It is a constructivist method that increases student talk while decreasing teacher talk. Socratic Seminars increase student engagement in the text and develop reading comprehension as well as communication skills.

**Lesson Objective:** Student will participate in a student-led Socratic Seminar about chapters 1-3 and the implications for Feminist Literary Theory within these three chapters.

**Essential Learnings Addressed (Benchmark 3):**

Reading GLE 2.1.5 Apply Comprehension-monitoring strategies for complex narratives: synthesize ideas from selections to make predictions and inferences.

Reading GLE 2.1.6 Apply Comprehension-monitoring strategies for complex narratives: monitor for meaning, create mental images, and generate and answer questions.

Reading GLE 2.1.7 Apply Comprehension-monitoring strategies for complex narratives: determine importance and summarize the text.

Communication 1.0. The student uses listening and observation skills to gain understanding.

Communication 2.0 The student communicates ideas clearly and effectively.

Communication 3.0 The student uses communication strategies and skills to work effectively with others.

### Lesson Initiating Activities (Anticipatory Set)

Purpose	Time (min)	Activities-Teachers and Learners	Materials
<b>1. Management and Organizational Strategies</b>	3 min	Teacher organizes students into one large circle.	
<b>2. Tie-in to prior knowledge.</b>	2 min	Teacher reminds students of guidelines of Socratic Seminar. (Students have already participated in many Socratic Seminars prior to this unit). Guidelines include: respecting others, listening, no interruptions, no aggressive debate, refer to the text, stay on topic.	
<b>3. Stimulate, motivate and develop readiness.</b>	3 min	Teacher reminds students to refer to both their “Feminist Literary Theory Notes” and the novel.	Feminist Literary Theory Notes <i>Bless Me, Ultima</i>

### Lesson Learning Activities

Objective	Time	Activities (teacher and learner)	Materials	Assessment
Student will participate in a student-led Socratic Seminar about chapters 1-3 and the implications for Feminist Literary Theory within these three chapters.	45 min	Students will lead a discussion without teacher guidance. Students will ask questions, refer to the text, respond and extend topics of conversation.  Teacher will monitor the students’ ability to stay on topic, refer to the text, facilitate their own discussion.		Teacher monitors discussion, and topics discussed. Topics left over or misunderstood will be addressed the following class period.

### Lesson Concluding Activities

Purpose	Time	Activities (teachers and learners)	Materials
<b>1. Summary and review of lesson.</b>	10 min	Teacher restates the topics and passages that have been discussed.  Students reflect verbally on what went well in the seminar and what they as a class can improve on.	
<b>2. Readiness and/or motivation for next day's lesson</b>	1 min	Teacher reminds students that their reading assignment for the evening is Ch 4.	

**Day 10** Check Quiz Ch 4 given.

#### Ch 4 Quiz

Check those statements and or questions that are discussed by Antonio and Ultima in Ch 4.

\_\_\_ Why he must learn English

\_\_\_ Why his parents are so different

\_\_\_ How does one find oregano in the llano?

\_\_\_ How will he choose a profession?

\_\_\_ How many years of training are necessary to become a curandera?

\_\_\_ How will he know when he is in love?

\_\_\_ Can the river speak?

#### Lesson Plan # 8

**Lesson Topic:** Applying Feminist Literary Theory to *Bless Me, Ultima*

**Rationale Statement:** Students have learned much about the difference between sex and gender. Students have identified gender stereotypes and icons in mainstream American culture; additionally, students have begun to look for moments in the novel that address gender stereotypes in Mexican culture. This assignment will bridge the student's awareness of gender issues in the novel to the ability to apply Feminist Literary Theory via a close reading.

**Lesson Objective:** Students will apply Feminist Literary Theory via a close reading of a self-selected passage.

### Accommodations for Special Needs:

#### Essential Learnings Addressed (Benchmark 3):

Reading 3.4.3 Understand and analyze recurring themes in literature.

Reading 2.1.5 Apply comprehension monitoring strategies for complex narratives and expositions: synthesize ideas from selections to make predictions and inferences.

Writing 1.0 Student writes clearly and effectively.

Writing 2.0 Student writes for a variety of forms for different audiences and Purposes.

### Lesson Initiating Activities (Anticipatory Set)

Purpose	Time (min)	Activities-Teachers and Learners	Materials
<b>1. Management and Organizational Strategies</b>	1 min	Students begin discussion as part of entry task.	
<b>2. Tie-in to prior knowledge.</b>	5 min	Students answer entry task question in small groups: "What is a mainstream view of the Miss American Pageant? How would a feminist view the pageant?"	
<b>3. Stimulate, motivate and develop readiness.</b>	3 min	<p>Teacher refers to feminist literary theory guided notes, where students discussed mainstream and feminist responses to a variety of common cultural events.</p> <p>Students share their responses from small group discussions with the entire class.</p> <p>Teacher checks for understanding of the concepts of "mainstream" and "feminist" perspectives.</p>	

### Lesson Learning Activities

Objective	Time	Activities (teacher and learner)	Materials	Assessment
Students will apply Feminist Literary Theory via a close reading of a self-selected passage.	40 minutes	<p>Teacher provides <u>Close Reading Analysis (Feminist Literary Theory)</u> handout to students.</p> <p>Students turn to page 43, and on a separate piece of paper answer the questions on the handout.</p>	Handout.	Teacher will grade answers, looking for ability to apply feminist literary theory to a given passage.

### Lesson Concluding Activities

Purpose	Time	Activities (teachers and learners)	Materials
<b>1. Summary and review of lesson.</b>	Next day, 5 minutes	Teacher shares 3 strong responses and class discusses the qualities of applying Feminist Literary Theory.	3 excellent student examples.
<b>2. Readiness and/or motivation for next day's lesson</b>		<p>Next we will be moving on to Marxist Literary Theory, the idea of applying a philosophy to a text will remain the same. Instead of gender we will be looking at the text through the lens of class and power.</p> <p>An extension assignment is provided. This worksheet may be used to provide advanced students with another method of exploring FLT, or it could provide struggling students with more practice.</p>	

## A Close Reading of p43-5 using Feminist Literary Theory

A “close reading” is an analysis technique where the reader focuses on a short passage rather than the entire work. Your goal in this assignment is to think deeply about the issue of gender in one small passage from *Bless Me, Ultima*

The passage is found on p. 43-5. The passage discusses the difference between La Virgen de Guadalupe and God. Re-read the passage and consider the following questions while you read.

- What stereotypes are being made about men and women’s personalities?
- What is Antonio’s bias about the two figures?
- Does the distinction being made about La Virgen and God remind you of any other issues in the text? Which ones? Why?

Now that you have re-read the passage, answer the following questions, on a separate piece of paper, in no more than one-page responses. Be sure to include direct quotes.

1. What qualities does La Virgen possess?
2. What qualities does God possess?
3. How are God and La Virgen juxtaposed against each other?
4. How is the juxtaposition of Maria Luna and Gabriel Marez similar to the juxtaposition of La Virgen to God?
5. Most feminists would argue that an individual regardless of gender has the right to develop any personality qualities, no matter if they are traditionally feminine or masculine. How might a feminist critique the descriptions of La Virgen and God?



**Extension Assignment for Feminist Literary Theory**

Name \_\_\_\_\_

**Purpose statement:** Identify direct quotes related to male and female characters in *Bless Me, Ultima* in order to draw a conclusion about underlying gender stereotypes.

**Directions:** Identify quotes for the characters listed. Fulfill the minimum number of quotes, but feel free to add more.

**Male****Female**2 Quotes: Gabriel Marez2 Quotes: Maria Luna2 Quotes: about Lupito and Chavez3 Quotes about Ultima

3 quotes about *God*3 Quotes about *Virgen de Guadalupe*

Once you have listed these quotes discuss as a group and determine a conclusion you can draw about gender identities *in general*. Be able to complete the following statements:

Men tend to be:

Women tend to be:

Men tend to do:

Women tend to do:

*Week Three*

**Day 11.** Check quiz Ch 5/6 given.

**Ch 5/6 Quiz**

Name \_\_\_\_\_

1. Where is Antonio going in Ch 6?
2. What does Antonio's mother hope he will become?
3. Choose the word that best describes Antonio's attitude about the first day of school.
  - a. Anxiety
  - b. Contentment
  - c. Terror
  - d. Apathy
2. What do Antonio's parents argue about the morning of his first day of school?
5. What natural occurrence does Antonio compare to an evil spirit?

**Lesson Plan # 9**

**Lesson Topic:** Mexican-American History Paper

**Rationale Statement:** The novel *Bless Me, Ultima* centers around the Mexican-American experience. This paper assignment helps students learn the significant factors of one event within Mexican History

**Lesson Objective:** Students will work with partners to research a historical event and write a one page informational summary about that historical event.

**Essential Learnings Addressed (Benchmark 3):**

Reading GLE 2.1.7 Apply comprehension-monitoring strategies for informational texts: determine importance and summarize the text.

Writing 1.2 Use style appropriate to audience and purpose

Writing 2.2 Write for different purposes

Writing 2.3 Write in a variety of forms.

### Lesson Initiating Activities (Anticipatory Set)

Purpose	Time (min)	Activities-Teachers and Learners	Materials
<b>1. Management and Organizational Strategies</b>	1 min	Place students in pairs, chosen by teacher.	
<b>2. Tie-in to prior knowledge.</b>	3 min	Teacher asks students how the culture of the characters or author impact a novel. Examples such as <i>Raisin in the Sun</i> , <i>Night</i> , <i>The Chosen</i> are referred to. How would the novels be different if they were not about African-Americans, Jews, Orthodox Jews?	
<b>3. Stimulate, motivate and develop readiness.</b>	3 min	Teacher has students list things they notice about Antonio's culture and history that are related to being Mexican-American.  Possible answers include: Large family Catholic Gender roles Traditional beliefs of Ultima	

### Lesson Learning Activities

Objective	Time	Activities (teacher and learner)	Materials	Assessment
Students will work with partners to research a historical event and write a one page informational summary about that historical event.	35 min	Teacher passes out instructions for One-Page Mexican-American History Paper.  Teacher reviews instructions with students, answering questions.  Students have remaining time in class to research their topics from the in-class books. Citations and notes are taken.	One Page Summary Paper on Mexican-American History  Selection of library texts related to the topics.	Teacher moves throughout the classroom and monitors student activity and checks for understanding.

**Lesson Concluding Activities**

<b>Purpose</b>	<b>Time</b>	<b>Activities (teachers and learners)</b>	<b>Materials</b>
<b>1. Summary and review of lesson.</b>	5 min	<p>Teacher reminds students that final draft of paper is due Friday.</p> <p>Students put together all their notes.</p>	
<b>2. Readiness and/or motivation for next day's lesson</b>		Teacher tells students that tomorrow they will begin discussing the novel through the lens of Marxist Literary Theory.	

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Partner \_\_\_\_\_

### **One-Page Summary Paper on Mexican-American History**

This week you will be working on a mini research project in order to learn more about one aspect of Mexican History. You will be working in partners to complete this project. Your partner and you will choose one of the following topics:

- The Mexican-American War
  - What were the factors leading up to the war?
  - Who were the key players?
  - Ramifications of the war for Mexico? America?
- Cortes' conquest of Tenochtitlan.
  - Why did Cortes' enter the city?
  - What challenges did Cortes face?
  - What were his successes?
  - Ramifications?
- Battle of the Alamo
  - What were the factors leading up to the war?
  - Who were the key players?
  - Ramifications of the war for Mexico? America?
- Religions commonly found in Mexican-American culture.
  - What are they?
  - What are some of the defining features of each religion?
  - Percentages of Mexican-Americans following each religion?
- Economic, Social Status of Mexican-Americans in America
  - Percentages of Mexican-Americans in America?
  - Percent in upper class, middle class, poverty?
  - Most densely populated state?
  - Reasons for immigration to America?
- What is the ethnic/racial make up within Mexico?
  - What languages are spoken?
  - What is the population?
  - How do these ethnic groups fit into economic classes?
  - Where do you find concentrated numbers of certain ethnic groups?
- Mexico's Political System
  - What is the political system? President/Prime Minister
  - Who is allowed to vote?
  - What political systems have existed in Mexico?
  - What civil rights are protected by the constitution?
  - Map with regions/states.

With your partner, choose which topic you would like to research.

**Requirements for the Paper:**

- The paper may only be one page, double spaced, 12 pt, Times New Roman.
- Your goal is to *summarize* the *most important* facts related to your topic.
- You will be graded on clarity, conciseness, grammar and spelling.

**Think of it this way: your job is to write the most informative paper possible, but you only have one page to work with.**

---

- All sources you use for research must be cited. Here is an example citation for a book with author.

last name, first name. Title; city, date. (page number)

Rodriguez, Frank. Art and Architecture of Mexico; Mexico City, 1987.  
(p.23-35)

**THIS PAPER IS WORTH 40 POINTS**

**Day 12** Check quiz 7 given.

**Quiz Ch 7**

Name \_\_\_\_\_

1. What does Antonio's dream predict will occur?

2. What are Antonio's three brothers' names? \_\_\_\_\_

3. Translate the following words from Spanish to English.

Spanish	English
La Madre	
El Padre	
La Grande	
Pecado	
Ay Dios Mio	
Que Suerte	
Que Lastima	

**Lesson Plan # 10**

**Lesson Topic:** Marxist Literary Theory (Lecture)

**Rationale Statement:** Marxist Literary Theory is commonly taught at the college level. In the study of contemporary literary theories Marxist theory is pervasive. By studying the theories of Karl Marx, students understand how history, politics, and economics influence the reading of a text.

**Lesson Objective:** Students will take notes on historical foundations of Marxist Theory and Marxist Literary Theory

**Essential Learnings Addressed (Benchmark 3):**

Reading 1.3 Student builds vocabulary through wide reading

Communication 1.1. Student uses listening and observation skills to gain understanding.

Communication 2.0 Student communicates ideas clearly and effectively.

Communication 3.0 Student uses communication strategies and skills to work effectively with others.



### Lesson Initiating Activities (Anticipatory Set)

Purpose	Time (min)	Activities-Teachers and Learners	Materials
<b>1. Management and Organizational Strategies</b>	1 min	N/A	Overhead of guiding notes
<b>2. Tie-in to prior knowledge.</b>	5 min	Feminist Literary Theory was the analysis of literature through a focus on gender and gender stereotypes. Marxist Literary Theory will be an analysis of the text with the emphasis of economic and political power.	
<b>3. Stimulate, motivate and develop readiness.</b>	3 min	Begin discussion with the discussion of which cliques in the school community have power, and which do not.	

### Lesson Learning Activities

Objective	Time	Activities (teacher and learner)	Materials	Assessment
Students will take notes on historical foundations of Marxist Theory and Marxist Literary Theory	20 minutes	Teacher gives a direct instruction lecture on the foundations of Marxism, using guiding notes.	Overhead facsimiles of "Guiding Notes"	Assessment will be at a later date, when students apply guiding principles of Marxist theory to the text.

### Lesson Concluding Activities

Purpose	Time	Activities (teachers and learners)	Materials
<b>1. Summary and review of lesson.</b>	5 min	Students turn in their notes for teacher to review. Teacher returns notes to students. Students will use information from notes in order to analyze the text through the Marxist lens.	

<b>2. Readiness and/or motivation for next day's lesson</b>	2 min	Students will consider a power struggle in the novel in order to apply Marxist theory to the novel the next day.	
---	-------	--	--

## Guided Notes for Marxist Literary Theory Lecture

“No book is genuinely free from political bias.”

~George Orwell

### Marxist Literary Theory

- A lens through which to view literature
- Politics are involved in literature.
- Notice which characters have “power” in the novel.

### Karl Marx

- Born in Prussian to Jewish rabbinical family
- Wrote Communist Manifesto, 1848 with Freidrich Engels

“The philosophers have only interpreted the world in various ways; the point is to change it.” ~Karl Marx.

“All history is a history of struggle”= life is struggle between the powerful and those without power.

<b>Owner/Bourgeoisie</b>	<b>Worker/Proletariat</b>
Owns means of production	Owns nothing; is alienated by his labor
Feels control over his job	Has little control

**Days 13, 14, 15** Check quizzes 8, 9, and 10 given.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

**Ch 8 Quiz**

1. The beginning of the chapter mentions that the \_\_\_\_\_ season is ending while \_\_\_\_\_ begins.

2. Why does Antonio compare his brother Leon to Lupito from Ch 1?

3. Is it the Marez or Luna side of the family that influences Antonio's brothers to leave home? Explain why?

4. Choose a theme from below and explain in no more than one paragraph how it is expressed in Ch 8.
- Immoral indulgences lead you nowhere.
  - Children must live out their own dreams
  - Childhood cannot go on forever.
  - You can't always help the ones you love.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

**Ch 9 Quiz**

1. What is Rosie's house?

2. Where do the brothers decide to go?

3. Which brother stays?

4. What does this brother say all girls want from men?

5. What does Antonio accomplish in school this year?

6. Antonio and Samuel fish in the River of \_\_\_\_\_

Name \_\_\_\_\_

### Ch 10 Quiz

1. What was killing Antonio's uncle?
2. Whom does Ultima take with her to cure Antonio's uncle?
3. Whom did the Luna family ask for help before asking Ultima?
4. Give an example of Magical Realism in this chapter.
5. Choose the word that best describes the mood of this chapter.
  - a. Suspenseful
  - b. Thrilling
  - c. Confusion
  - d. Unsettling

### Lesson Plan #11

**Lesson Topic:** Applying Marxist Literary Theory to *Bless Me, Ultima*

**Rationale Statement:** Students have learned the historical foundations and guiding principles of Marxist theory and are reading to apply it to the text.

**Lesson Objective:** Students will analyze the main characters in the novel through a Marxist lens; students will rank the characters in order based on who possesses power over Antonio. These rankings will be presented in groups via a Power Point presentation.

#### Essential Learnings Addressed (Benchmark 3):

Reading 2.1.4 Apply comprehension monitoring strategies for complex narratives.

Reading 2.1.5 Apply comprehension strategies for complex narratives (literary): determine importance and summarize main idea/themes and supporting details.

Reading 2.1.6 Apply comprehension monitoring strategies for complex narratives, and expositions: generate and answer questions.

Reading 2.3.1 Analyze literary text for similarities and differences and cause and effect relationships.

Reading 2.4.1 Analyze narrative/literary text to draw conclusions and develop insights.

### Lesson Initiating Activities (Anticipatory Set)

Purpose	Time (min)	Activities-Teachers and Learners	Materials
<b>1. Management and Organizational Strategies</b>	1 min	Students receive attached worksheet, "Applying Marxism to <i>Bless Me, Ultima</i> "	Worksheet
<b>2. Tie-in to prior knowledge.</b>	5 min	Students use knowledge of Marxist guiding principles in order to complete their analysis of the novel.	
<b>3. Stimulate, motivate and develop readiness.</b>	3 min	Remind students of prior lesson on Marx and Marxist theory	

### Lesson Learning Activities

Objective	Time	Activities (teacher and learner)	Materials	Assessment
Students will analyze the main characters in the novel through a Marxist lens; students will rank the characters in order based on who possesses power over Antonio. These rankings will be presented in groups via a Power Point presentation.	25 min	Day 13-Students will work independently for 20-30 minutes.		Students will share their findings via power point for the class.
	40 min	Students will finish work at home if they do not finish in class. Day 14-Students will work in groups of 4, sharing their social ladders. Through discussion and compromise they will create one group social ladder that they can all agree upon.		
	30 min	Day 15-Students will create Microsoft Power Point presentations of their ladders to be presented the following Monday, Day 16.		
	20 min	Additionally, Students will read the short summary of Althusser's Theory of Ideology as one example of a Marxist Theorist.	"Althusser's Theory on Ideology"	

**Lesson Concluding Activities**

<b>Purpose</b>	<b>Time</b>	<b>Activities (teachers and learners)</b>	<b>Materials</b>
<b>1. Summary and review of lesson.</b>	5 min	After presentations students reflect on others' Power Point presentations.	Lap top and projector
<b>2. Readiness and/or motivation for next day's lesson</b>	1 min	Next lesson will be on Deconstruction, an entirely different lens through which to view a text.	

Name \_\_\_\_\_

### **Althusser's Theory on Ideology**

Louis Althusser, born in Algeria in the early 1900's, wrote on the topic of "Ideology." Althusser identified two apparatuses that affect our actions, the Repressive State Apparatus, RSA, includes Government, police, and military; its forces are direct and obvious. For example, the rules established by the law and police affect our actions in society. The second ideological force is the Ideological State Apparatus, ISA, which includes religion, family, culture, and education. ISAs influence our behaviors, but are generally subtler.

This lens requires the reader to consider the "Repressive" and "Ideological" apparatuses that influence the character's actions. The following are questions that Althusserian critics would ask:

1. What ideological forces (Religion, Family, Culture) influence the protagonist?
2. How does (Religions, Family, Culture) affect the protagonist's actions?
3. What repressive forces (law, military, government, politics) influence the protagonist?

Name \_\_\_\_\_

## Reading A Novel through the Marxist Lens

1. An ideology is a view of the world, a prevailing set of beliefs about the way the world works. What are some examples of ideologies that you have come across in the book so far?

---

2. Marxist criticism pays a lot of attention to social structures that allocate (assign) power to groups. List some of the social groups represented in the novel.
3. Name some of the primary power struggles in the novel.







## Power Point Presentation on Marxist Social Ladder

Student Names \_\_\_\_\_

CATEGORY	4	3	2	1
<b>Speaks Clearly</b>	Speaks clearly and distinctly all (100-95%) the time, and mispronounces no words.	Speaks clearly and distinctly all (100-95%) the time, but mispronounces one word.	Speaks clearly and distinctly most ( 94-85%) of the time. Mispronounces no more than one word.	Often mumbles or can not be understood OR mispronounces more than one word.
<b>Posture and Eye Contact</b>	Stands up straight, looks relaxed and confident. Establishes eye contact with everyone in the room during the presentation.	Stands up straight and establishes eye contact with everyone in the room during the presentation.	Sometimes stands up straight and establishes eye contact.	Slouches and/or does not look at people during the presentation.
<b>Volume</b>	Volume is loud enough to be heard by all audience members throughout the presentation.	Volume is loud enough to be heard by all audience members at least 90% of the time.	Volume is loud enough to be heard by all audience members at least 80% of the time.	Volume often too soft to be heard by all audience members.
<b>Power Point graphics</b>	All graphics are large and clear enough to be read by all audience members.	Most graphics are large and clear enough to be read by all audience members.	Some graphics are large and clear enough to be read by all audience members.	Most graphics are too small or too unclear to read by audience members.
<b>Content</b>	Shows a full understanding of the topic, and explains choices thoroughly.	Shows a good understanding of the topic, and explains choices adequately.	Shows a good understanding of parts of the topic. Fails to explain reasons for choices.	Does not seem to understand the topic very well. Fails to explain reasons for choices.

**Days 18 and 19****Lesson Plan # 12****Lesson Topic:** Deconstruction

**Rationale Statement:** Deconstruction is the basis for most all Contemporary Literary Theory. It is the most difficult to grasp; thus, it has been saved for last within the unit.

**Lesson Objective:** The first day students will deconstruct a short passage from *Bless Me, Ultima* using a guiding worksheet. The second day students will write one-page paper responses to literary prompts, including the concepts of *centrality*, *decentering*, and *binary of opposites*.

**Essential Learnings Addressed (Benchmark 3):**

Writing 1.0 Student writes clearly and effectively.

Writing 2.0 Student writes for different audiences and purposes.

Writing 3.0 Student understands and uses the steps of the writing process.

Reading 2.1.4 Apply comprehension monitoring strategies for complex narratives.

Reading 2.1.5 Apply comprehension strategies for complex narratives (literary): determine importance and summarize main idea/themes and supporting details.

Reading 2.1.6 Apply comprehension, monitoring strategies for complex narratives, and expositions: generate and answer questions.

Reading 2.3.1 Analyze literary text for similarities and differences and cause and effect relationships.

Reading 2.4.1 Analyze narrative/literary text to draw conclusions and develop insights.

**Lesson Initiating Activities (Anticipatory Set)**

<b>Purpose</b>	<b>Time (min)</b>	<b>Activities-Teachers and Learners</b>	<b>Materials</b>
<b>1. Management and Organizational Strategies</b>	1 min	Pass out reading selections from Jim Powell's <i>Derrida for Beginners</i> .	Photocopied packets.
<b>2. Tie-in to prior knowledge.</b>	5 min	Teacher will remind students that they will be using a new Lens of literary theory to address themes related to the religions presented in the text: Catholicism, The Golden Carp, and Ultima's healing.	
<b>3. Stimulate, motivate and</b>	10 min	Teacher has class respond to the following words as quickly as	N/A

<b>develop readiness.</b>		<p>they can: black, small, good, woman, etc. .</p> <p>Students will most likely chorus back the opposites: white, big, evil, man, etc. . .</p> <p>Teacher points out that there is a concept of opposites that is nearly unconscious in our minds.</p>	
---------------------------	--	--	--

### Lesson Learning Activities

Objective	Time	Activities (teacher and learner)	Materials	Assessment
<p>The first day students will deconstruct a short passage from <i>Bless Me, Ultima</i> using a guiding worksheet. The second day students will write one-page paper responses to literary prompts, including the concepts of <i>centrality</i>, <i>decentering</i>, and <i>binary of opposites</i>.</p>		<p>Students will read a selection (pages 21-30) from Jim Powell's <i>Derrida for Beginners</i> (1997)</p> <p>Day 18-Students will hold small group discussions to make sense of the reading. Next they will work through the "Intro to Deconstruction" worksheet. They may work independently or with a partner.</p> <p>Day 19- Students will build on their understanding of Deconstruction in more extended writing. Each student will respond to the following prompts in one-page papers.</p> <p>1. In the novel, and in Antonio's life Catholicism is the center of his religious world. How does Catholicism's position at the center marginalize Antonio's perspective of the Golden Carp and Ultima's healing?</p> <p>2. Man/Woman is one binary present in the novel. Which of the two is "privileged" in the novel? Give textual evidence to support your thesis.</p>	<p>Attached photocopies of p 21-30, <i>Derrida for Beginners</i></p> <p>"Deconstruction Paper" worksheet</p>	<p>Teacher will review student worksheets and will field questions both days.</p> <p>Student Essays (see attached rubric)</p>

		3. Ultima is a very unique female character in the novel. How are females portrayed in general in the novel and does Ultima subvert/decenter the mainstream portrayal of women in the novel?		
--	--	--	--	--

### Lesson Concluding Activities

Purpose	Time	Activities (teachers and learners)	Materials
<b>1. Summary and review of lesson.</b>	20 minutes	A week later-Students share their papers with one another; they assess each other's papers with the attached rubric.	Rubric for Deconstruction Papers
<b>2. Readiness and/or motivation for next day's lesson</b>	2 min	The first of the papers has been done, now we are on our way to the final exam.	

# DERRIDA

KING COUNTY LIBRARY SYSTEM



93776086

M POWELL

ILLUSTRATED BY VAN BELL

*Writers and Readers* 

Please note: Content on this and the following pages was redacted due to copyright concerns.













Name \_\_\_\_\_

Period \_\_\_\_\_

### Intro to Deconstruction

Deconstruction is, by far, the most difficult critical lens for people to understand. It is an intellectually sophisticated theory that confuses many very smart people, but we think so much of you, that we know you can understand it. It questions many of the basic assumptions that have guided us in the past. In the traditional study of literature, those basic assumptions include:

- ❖ Language is stable and has meaning we can all agree on.
- ❖ The author is in control of the text s/he writes.
- ❖ Works of literature have an internal consistency.
- ❖ You can take the author's word for what s/he writes.

Deconstruction calls all of these assumptions into question. It asks you to read resistantly, to not accept a piece of writing at face value, and to question the assumptions that the writing asks you to make. It is this resistance that will be a useful skill in the "real world." It helps us to become careful and skeptical consumers of culture, not passive recipients of "great works."

Deconstructionist critics ask us to probe beyond the surface or recognizable constructs of a finished story or piece of writing. By "construct" we mean something that has been constructed by mental synthesis. That is, constructs are created when we combine things we know through our senses or from our experiences. They do not exist naturally; they are the products of our intervention into the order of the universe. When we re-examine and challenge the constructs employed by the literary writer, we "deconstruct". The term does NOT simply mean to take it apart. It means we look below the surface of the text-to peel away the layers like an onion. In the traditional sense when we *analyze* a text we put it back together the way it was and appreciate it more. When we *deconstruct* a piece of literature, we realize that there is something wrong or incomplete or dishonest, with how it was put together in the first place.

Here is one good explanation of deconstruction:

"Having been written by a human being with unresolved conflicts and contradictory emotions, a story may disguise rather than reveal the underlying anxieties or perplexities of the author. Below the surface, unresolved tensions or contradictions may account for the true dynamics of the story. The story may have one message for the ordinary unsophisticated reader and another for the reader who responds to its underlying [meanings]. Readers who deconstruct a text will be 'resistant' readers. They will not be taken in by what a story says on the surface but will try to penetrate the disguises of the text. . .(Guth & Rico, 1996, p.366).

Here is another useful definition:

"Deconstruction is a strategy for revealing the under layers of meaning in a text that were suppressed or assumed in order for it to take its actual form. . . .Texts are never simply

unitary but include resources that run counter to their assertions and/or their authors' intentions" (Appignanesi & Garratt, 1999, p. 80).

We're going to play with deconstruction today in three steps: first with some common metaphors, then with *Bless Me, Ultima*.

### 1. Unpacking Metaphors

Let's take some metaphors and see if there is anything false or unintended about their meaning. Under each, please write the obvious surface meaning, and an unintended meaning that may lie beneath the surface.

*Love is a rose.*

intended meaning

unintended meaning

*You are the sunshine of my life.*

intended

unintended

*The test was a bear.*

intended

unintended

## 2. Reconsidering a Reading

Now, think of a part in *Bless Me, Ultima* where the intended message may be inconsistent or conflicted. With a partner complete the following statements about *Bless Me, Ultima*:

I think the main idea the author was trying to construct in chapter \_\_\_\_ was:

---

But this construct really doesn't work. The idea falls apart. The language and construction of the text aren't able to convey what the author meant to convey. There are places in the text where it just doesn't work. For example:

so in the end, even though the author mean the work to say

it really said

(optional) I'd also like to say that:

### **Deconstruction Papers on *Bless Me, Ultima***

The end of the unit is fast approaching and the time for final papers has come. You will be writing three 1-page papers using the lens of Deconstruction to “deconstruct” some issues in *BMU*.

Each paper must contain a thesis, supporting quotes from the text, grammatically correct writing, and a conclusion. One page is not a lot of space, so be concise and get to the point. Here are your three prompts

1. In the novel, and in Antonio’s life Catholicism is the center of his religious world. How does Catholicism’s position at the center marginalize Antonio’s perspective of the Golden Carp and Ultima’s healing?
2. Man/Woman is one binary present in the novel. Which of the two is “privileged” in the novel? Give textual evidence to support your thesis.
3. Ultima is a very unique female character in the novel. How are females portrayed in general in the novel and does Ultima subvert/decenter the mainstream portrayal of women in the novel?

### **Deconstruction Papers on *Bless Me, Ultima***

The end of the unit is fast approaching and the time for final papers has come. You will be writing three 1-page papers using the lens of Deconstruction to “deconstruct” some issues in *BMU*.

Each paper must contain a thesis, supporting quotes from the text, grammatically correct writing, and a conclusion. One page is not a lot of space, so be concise and get to the point. Here are your three prompts

1. In the novel, and in Antonio’s life Catholicism is the center of his religious world. How does Catholicism’s position at the center marginalize Antonio’s perspective of the Golden Carp and Ultima’s healing?
2. Man/Woman is one binary present in the novel. Which of the two is “privileged” in the novel? Give textual evidence to support your thesis.
3. Ultima is a very unique female character in the novel. How are females portrayed in general in the novel and does Ultima subvert/decenter the mainstream portrayal of women in the novel?



**Day 20**

Today is a workday for students to complete any of the following assignments:

- Feminist Literary Notes
- Spanish Vocabulary Terms
- Deconstruction Papers
- Intro to Deconstruction Worksheet
- Silent reading

*Week Five***Days 21-25**

This is the final week of the unit. The final "Take Home Exam" will be given on Monday and students have a week to work on it. Class periods will be devoted to writing, editing, and reading. One day may be used for an all class Socratic Seminar on any topics students wish to discuss.

Students will receive "Literary Theories: A Sampling" worksheet to help them with their final exams.

Final Exams will be due the following Monday and books will be collected on that day.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

**Take Home Exam for *Bless Me, Ultima***

On a separate sheet of paper answer the following questions, TYPED. Each question should be answered in no less than half a page and no more than a page and a half.

1. Explain the influences from characters of both genders on Antonio's coming of age. Explain not only how those characters influenced him, but also how their genders impacted his growing up.
2. Of the many religious influences Antonio faces, Catholicism, The Golden Carp, and Ultima's magic, which "religion" influences him most greatly?
3. From your Marxist Social Ladder choose two characters whom are next to one another and explain why you put the one above the other.
4. If *Bless Me, Ultima* were a book of propaganda, trying to influence you to act or think a certain way, what is one of its messages and how is it presented in the novel?

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Period \_\_\_\_\_

### Literary Theories: A Sampling of Critical Lenses

Literary theories were developed as a means to understand the various ways people read texts. The proponents of each theory believe their theory is *the* theory, but most of us interpret texts according to the rules of several different theories at a time. All literary theories are lenses through which we can see texts. There is nothing to say that one is better than another or that you should read according to any of them, but it is sometimes fun to “decide” to read a text with one in mind because you often end up with a whole new perspective on your reading.

What follows is a summary of some of the most common schools of literary theory. These descriptions are extremely abbreviated, and none of them fully explains what the theory is all about. But it is enough to get the general idea. Enjoy!!

**Feminist Criticism.** A feminist critic sees cultural and economic disabilities in a “patriarchal” society that have hindered or prevented women from realizing their creative possibilities and women’s cultural identification as a merely negative object, or “Other,” to man as he defining and dominating “Subject.” There are several assumptions and concepts held in common by most feminist critics.

1. Our civilization is pervasively patriarchal.
2. The concepts of “gender” are largely, if not entirely, socially constructed, effected by the patriarchal biases of our civilization.
3. Writings that have been considered great literature are mostly patriarchal. Such writings lack autonomous female role models, are implicitly addressed to male readers, and leave the woman reader feeling like an outsider.

This is somewhat like Marxist criticism, but instead of focusing on the relationships between the classes it focuses on the relationships between the genders. Under this theory you would examine the patterns of thought, behavior, values, enfranchisement, and power in relations between the sexes.

**Marxist Criticism.** A Marxist critic bases theory and examining literature on the economic and cultural theory of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, especially on the following claims:

1. The evolving history of humanity, its institutions and its ways of thinking are determined by the changing mode of its “material production”-that is, of its basic economic organization.
2. Historical changes in the mode of production affect essential changes both in the make-up and power relations of social classes; social classes carry on a conflict for economic, political, and social advantage.
3. Human thought in any era is made up by an ideology, i.e. a set of concepts, beliefs, values, and ways of thinking and feeling through which human beings perceive, and by which they explain, what they take to be reality. A Marxist critic typically hopes to “explain” the literature in any time period by revealing how the author presents different economic classes and ideologies.

This school of critical theory focuses on power and money in works of literature. Who has power/money? Who does not? What happens as a result?

**Deconstruction.** Deconstruction is, by far, the most difficult critical theory for people to understand. It was developed by some very smart (or unstable) people who declare that it is nearly impossible to derive meaning from literature because language is “slippery.” We will focus mostly on the work done by Algerian-French academic Jacques Derrida in the 1960’s. Derrida uses these three concepts to approach a text: “Centrality,”

“Marginality,” and “Binaries.” Here are the following claims about each concept:

1. “Centrality” refers to the central rule, concept, or status accepted in a civilization. For example Masculinity is the central gender to Western civilization because the world is run by men both in the home and in the public arena. Heaven is the “central” idea of the afterlife if you live in a predominantly Christian culture.
2. “Binary” refers to the fact that the world is artificially constructed on a system of binaries. We can only understand words and concepts in comparison to opposite binaries. For example we know what “good” means because we know what “evil” means. We understand “female” in relation to “male.”
3. “Marginality” refers to the understanding that in every binary one term will be Central while the other will be “marginal” or oppressed. For example if you distinguish between race, gender, class in human society there will always be a powerful difference between Men/Women, White/Black, Adult/Child, God/Atheist. Can you guess which of the pair is Central and which is “marginalized?”

Ultimately, Derrida does not believe that the world is built on essential binaries. He suggests that literature reinforces these binaries, but the reader should try to “deconstruct” such binaries in the hope that white, black, men, women, can all exist and be understood on equal ground.

**Althusser’s Theory on Ideology** Louis Althusser, born in Algeria in the early 1900’s, wrote on the topic of “Ideology.” Althusser identified two apparatuses that affect our actions, the Repressive State Apparatus, RSA, includes Government, police, and military; its forces are direct and obvious. For example, the rules established by the law and police affect our actions in society. The second ideological force is the Ideological State Apparatus, ISA, which includes religion, family, culture, and education. ISAs influence our behaviors, but are generally subtler.

This lens requires the reader to consider the “Repressive” and “Ideological” apparatuses that influence the character’s actions. The following are questions that Althusserian critics would ask:

1. What ideological forces (Religion, Family, Culture) influence the protagonist?
2. How does (Religions, Family, Culture) affect the protagonist’s actions?
3. What repressive forces (law, military, government, politics) influence the protagonist?

## CHAPTER V

## DISCUSSION

## Summary

My review of literature related to the historical context of literary theory and its use in secondary education revealed that little work has been done bridging Contemporary Literary Theory and the secondary English Language Arts curriculum. CLT offers students multiple lenses to view literature and media. Analysis using multiple perspectives is no longer a frivolous privilege; it is a requirement in our multicultural, global age. Public education should be to provide students with the lenses through which to view and make sense of an increasingly complex world. Though secondary education has not to this point included CLT in its curriculum, it ought to.

The purpose of this project was to develop a 4-6 week unit for an Honors Sophomore Language Arts class teaching Contemporary Literary Theory and its application to Rudolfo Anaya's award-winning *Bless Me, Ultima*.

The goals of the unit were to develop 1) students' ability to consider multiple perspectives; 2) students' ability to think critically and use high order reasoning; 3) students' recognition of diversity within the classroom and greater world; 4) students' ability to "read" and make sense of their world; and 5) students' active participation in their own learning through a more constructivist classroom. The unit plan included a rationale, unit description, classroom context, goals/aims, pedagogical approach, and assessment strategies.

The pedagogical approach was primarily constructivist. Students enlisted a variety of methods to build their understanding of CLT and the novel. They applied

contemporary literary theories to real-world issues, and made personal connections to the theories and the text. Students participated in paired, small group, and whole-class discussions in order to apply CLT to the novel. Final assessments involved open-ended written responses rather than recall of the text.

### Reflection and Analysis

I began this project with the hopes that students would become passionate readers and critics of literature once they became introduced to CLT. My assumption was that students' perceived irrelevance between the assigned literature and their lives contributed to their apathy and tendency to accept the teacher's lone interpretation of the text. If students were to see how relevant issues like gender, class, race, and social status played out in literature perhaps, they would make more personal connections with text, find meaning applicable to their lives, and become more engaged readers.

Many students are passionate about issues of gender, class, race, and social status. However, the depth of their understanding of these issues is limited. Many have only a shallow, mainstream familiarity with any one of these topics. Additionally, making connections between theory and text is a difficult task for anyone. It requires a high level of critical thinking and abstract thought. Secondary students are certainly capable of understanding the frameworks of CLT, but I was reminded that it is hard work. In my own classroom I observed the following:

1. Students were able to make meaning of the novel from multiple perspectives including class, gender, and cultural differences. In our work on Feminist Literary Theory, students discussed the different perspectives of the mother and father in the novel. During our work on Marxist Literary Theory students developed a

social ladder in which they ranked characters in relation to their “power” over the protagonist, Antonio’s, choices. Students were able to recognize how class and gender influenced a character’s perspective on a given issue.

2. Students were forced to use critical thinking when applying a theoretical framework to a close reading or literary analysis. One question on the final written exam asked students to choose two characters next to each other on the Marxist Social Ladder and explain why one is ranked higher than the other. Here students applied the concepts of the bourgeoisie and proletariat in relation to having or not having power over Antonio.
3. Unprompted by the teacher, students connected Feminist and Marxist Literary Theories to experiences in their own lives. In a class brainstorming session about gender stereotypes students came to agreement that most stereotypes about males are negative (for example, males are violent, aggressive, dirty, smelly, and overbearing). More stereotypes about females were generally positive. Females were identified as neat, tidy, pure, kind, loving, and organized.
4. Teaching CLT was conducive for designing constructivist lessons in which students were responsible for their own learning. Lessons were designed to include student-led discussion, reflective writing, and opportunities for students to include diverse perspectives on the novel.

As determined from the literature review, little work has been done to connect Contemporary Literary Theory to secondary English Language Arts curricula. Therefore, the development of such a curriculum and my initial efforts to teach it were challenging.

What did I learn?

First, CLT is difficult content in and of itself, and the application of CLT to a novel is also challenging for students. Students found learning three different theoretical approaches overwhelming. In the future, I plan to introduce one literary theory per novel unit rather than attempting to teach Feminism, Marxism, and Deconstruction all at once.

Second, this unit was challenging for students because *Bless Me, Ultima* is a complex text in and of itself. Perhaps using a novel with a lower reading level would be better for students as they struggle with the high level critical thinking required by CLT. Books I'm considering using instead are *Of Mice and Men* and *The Chosen* because of their simpler narrative structures. *Of Mice and Men* has ample opportunities to discuss issues of gender and economic/political class. *The Chosen* is rich with the multiple perspectives of its four main characters on a common issue, the friendship between two Jewish boys.

Third, *Bless Me, Ultima* is a highly controversial novel. It has been challenged due to mature language, violence, the mention of witchcraft, and its discussion of religion. CLT proved to be controversial in my classes because some parents and administrators did not understand that teaching about Marxist literary theory is not in fact teaching children to be Marxists. Teaching Feminist Literary Theory raises sensitive issues of gender identity and sexuality. Next time I plan to develop an action plan to present to administrators and parents detailing the content and purpose of teaching a unit on CLT. In fact, I was asked by my principal to provide such an action plan to a small group of parents who had questioned my intentions in teaching CLT and *Bless Me, Ultima*.

Fourth, I found students were more successful applying CLT to their lives than they were applying it to literature. In the future I'll incorporate more media and popular culture into the novel unit. For example, I plan to use Jean Kilbourne's film *Killing us*



*Softly* as an example of how Feminist Theory can be applied to issues in advertising. I might also develop a more in-depth activity where students chart the social ladder of cliques at their school. Though students find learning about CLT challenging, they buy into learning about CLT when it is made relevant to their own lives.

Finally, assessing students' understanding is always a challenging task for teachers; it is an area in which I have much to learn as a third-year teacher. In this unit, most of my assessments were written. I did not do diagnostic/pre-reading assessments which would have proved useful in assessing student growth. I did not vary assessments to include visual and oral opportunities for students. Perhaps the most effective assessment tool I had in this unit was students' active reading notes. These notes expressed students' reflections, questions, and understanding of the novel. This first time through, however, I did not use these effectively to instruct my own teaching. I collected the notes at the very end of the unit; if I had collected them once or twice during the unit they would have provided constructive feedback as to my students' comprehension of the novel and application of CLT.

#### Recommendations for Further Research

Teaching Contemporary Literary Theory in the secondary classroom is a recent phenomenon. Beyond D. Appleman's *Critical Encounters: Teaching Literary Theory to Adolescents*, very little work has been done. Based upon my new efforts in teaching CLT, I have several recommendations for further research in this area:

1. A study should be conducted to determine whether application of CLT to literature improves students' literary analysis performance on standardized tests like the Washington Assessment of Student Learning.

2. A study should be conducted on the developmental appropriateness of applying literary theory to text at the high school level.
3. Secondary English Language Arts teachers need greater professional development on the frameworks of CLT.
4. A study should be done on the impact of teaching literary theory explicitly to intermediate and middle level students. For example, New Criticism and Reader Response are more developmentally appropriate than CLT for intermediate and middle level students. What is the benefit in reading comprehension when students understand the framework of their reading?
5. Work should be done incorporating CLT into pre-existing Readers Workshop models in order to determine the effectiveness of this approach in hooking adolescent readers into the reading process and improving comprehension and analysis.
6. Finally, the dialogue around CLT in the Secondary English Classroom must remain open and vibrant. The gaps of communication between secondary and higher education faculty must be bridged through collaborative research that will benefit both teachers and students.

~~REFE~~ References.  
WORKS CITED

- Althusser, L. (1971). *Lenin and philosophy and other essays*. New York: Monthly Review Press.
- Applebee, A. et al. (1994). *McDougal Littell Literature and Language: Orange Level*. Evanston, Illinois: Mcdougal Littell.
- Appleman, D. (2000). *Critical Encounters in High School English*. New York: Teacher's College Press.
- Baldick, C. (1996). *Criticism and Literary Theory, 1890 to the Present*. London: Longman Group Unlimited.
- Bancroft, M. (1994). Why English in the high school curriculum? *English Journal*, December 1994, 23-24.
- Bann, S. & J. Bowlt. (Eds.). (1973). *Russian Formalism: A Collection of Articles and Texts in Translation*. Edinburgh: Scottish Academic Press.
- Beach, R. (1998). Constructing real and text worlds in responding to literature. *Theory into Practice*, 37, (3), 175-185
- Beach, R. & Freedman, K. (1992). In Moran, C. and E. Penfield (Eds.). *Conversations: Contemporary critical theory and the teaching of literature*. Urbana, Illinois: National Council of Teachers of English.
- Blackmur, R. P. (1935). *The double agent: Essays in craft and elucidation*. New York: Arrow Editions.
- Bloom, A. (1987). *The closing of the American mind*. New York: Simon and Schuster.
- Bonnycastle, S. (1996). *In Search of Authority*. (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.) Peterborough, Ontario: Broadview Press.

- Brooks, C. & R. P. Warren. (1938). *Understanding poetry*. New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, Inc.
- Brooks, C. & R. P. Warren. (1943). *Understanding fiction*. New York: F. S. Crofts & Company, Inc.
- Brown, L. (personal communication, Fall semester 1994).
- Comment & response. (1998). *College English*, 60, 84-93.
- Corcoran, B. (1992). Reader stance: From willed aesthetic to discursive construction. In J. Many & C. Cox (Eds.) (1992). *Reader stance and literary understanding: Exploring the theories, research and practice* (pp. 49-71). Norwood, NJ: Ablex.
- Cox, S. T. (1992). Perspectives on stance in response to literature: A theoretical and historical framework. In J. Many & C. Cox (Eds.), *Reader stance and literary understanding: Exploring the theories, research and practice* (pp. 11-22). Norwood, NJ: Ablex.
- Delia, M. (1987). Toward a more humanistic discourse in the English classroom. *Clearinghouse*, 61, 179-181.
- Eagleton, T. (1976). *Marxism and Literary Criticism*. London:
- Eagleton, T. (1983). *Literary Theory: An Introduction*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Earnest, L. (1995). Laguna panel decides book is suitable for 9<sup>th</sup>-graders: Orange County Edition. *Los Angeles Times*, p.12
- Eliot, T. S. (1933). *The use of poetry and the use of criticism: Studies in the relation of criticism to poetry in England*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Eliot, T. S. (1965). *To Criticize the critic and other writings*. New York: Octagon

## Books.

- Emig, J. (1992). Our missing theory. In Moran, C. and E. Penfield (Eds.). *Conversations: Contemporary critical theory and the teaching of literature*. Urbana, Illinois: National Council of Teachers of English.
- Erlich, V. (1965). *Russian Formalism; History-Doctrine*. The Hague: Mouton & Co.
- Gallagher & Greenblatt. (2000). *Practicing New Historicism*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.
- Garrison, P. (Personal communication, February, 2002). World literature course. Ellensburg, WA: Central Washington University.
- Gregory, M. (1997). The many-headed hydra of theory vs. the unifying mission of teaching. *College English*, 59, 41-58.
- Harste, J. C. & C. Leland. (2002). Critical literacy, the arts and curriculum. Presentation at National Council of Teachers of English Spring Conference. Portland, OR.
- Hines, M. B. & D. Appleman. (2000). Multiple ways of knowing in literature classrooms. *English Education*, 32, 141-167.
- Ianni, F. (1989). *The search for structure: A report on American youth today*. New York: Free Press.
- Johnson, H. (2002). Transcending borders: Middle level Students' cross-cultural engagements in literature discussions. Presentation at National Council of Teachers of English Spring Conference. Portland, OR.
- Kecht, M. (ed.) (1992). *Pedagogy is Politics: Literary Theory and Critical Teaching*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press.
- Kolakowski, L. (1990). The general theory of not-gardening. *Harper's Magazine*, 281,

32.

Ladd, M. (2002). Steps for teaching the research paper. Presentation at National Council of Teachers of English Spring Conference. Portland, OR.

Langer, J. (1998). Thinking and doing literature: An eight-year study. *English Journal*, 87, 16-23.

Leggo, C. (1998). Open(ing) texts: Deconstruction and responding to poetry. *Theory into Practice*, 37, 186-192.

Lynn, S. (1990). A passage into critical theory. In Moran, C. & E. Penfield. (Eds.), *Conversations: Contemporary critical theory and the teaching of literature* (p 99-13). Urbana, IL: National Council of Teachers of English.

McCormick, K. (1995). Reading lessons and then some: Toward developing dialogues between critical theory and reading theory. In J. F. Slevin and A. Young (Eds.), *Critical Theory and the teaching of literature: Politics, curriculum, pedagogy* (pp 292-315). Urbana, IL: National Council of Teachers of English.

Mack, M. (ed.). (1997). *The Norton Anthology: World Masterpieces: Expanded Edition in One Volume*. New York: W. W. Norton & Company.

Many, J. & D. Wiseman. (1992). Analyzing versus experiencing: The effects of teaching approaches on students' responses. In J. Many & C. Cox (Eds.) (1992). *Reader stance and literary understanding: Exploring the theories, research and practice* (pp. 250-276). Norwood, NJ: Ablex.

Many, J. & C. Cox. (Eds.) (1992). *Reader stance and literary understanding: Exploring the theories, research and practice*. Norwood, NJ: Ablex.

Moran, C. & E. Penfield (Eds.). (1990). *Conversations: Contemporary critical theory*

*and the teaching of literature.* Urbana, Illinois: National Council of Teachers of English.

Montag, W. (personal communication, 1999). Course in Literary Criticism. Los Angeles: Occidental College.

Part, L. L. (2002). Literary criticism: The practice stage. (Personal handout). National Council of Teachers of English Spring Conference. Portland, OR.

Pound, E. (mcmliiv). *Literary essays of Ezra Pound.* New York: New Directions Books.

Powell, J. (1997). *Derrida for Beginners.* New York: Writers and Readers Publishing, Inc.

Resnick, L. (1999). Making America Smarter. *Education Week Century Series, 18 (40), 38-40.*

Rosenblatt, L. (1976). *Literature as Exploration.* New York: Noble and Noble Publishers Inc.

Saussure, F. (19??). *A Course in General Linguistics.*

Scholes, R. (1984). Is there a Fish in this text? *College English, 46, (7), 653-664.*

Scholes, R. (1985). *Textual power: Literary theory and the teaching of English.* New Haven and London: Yale University Press.

Sherwood, R. (1973). Viktor Shklovsky and the development of early Formalist theory on prose literature. In Bann, S. & J. Bowlt. (Eds.). (1973). *Russian Formalism: A Collection of Articles and Texts in Translation.* Edinburgh: Scottish Academic Press.

Shrofel, S. & M. Cherland. (1998). Two teachers theorize about practice: The politics of "doing" Macbeth. *Theory into Practice, 37, 229-237.*

Tate, A. (1936). *Reactionary essays on poetry and ideas*. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons.

Tate, A. (1941). *Reason in madness: Critical essays*. New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons.

Thompson, e. (pub). (1994). *Prentice Hall Literature: Platinum*. New Jersey: Prentice Hall.

Tompkins, J. (ed). (1980). *Reader-response criticism: From formalism to post-structuralism*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.

Willinsky, J. (1998). Teaching literature is teaching in theory. *Theory into Practice*, 37, 244-250.

Zitlow, C. (2002). Professional links. *English Journal*, January 2002, 128-132.