Reading/Writing/Thinking like a...

LITERARY STUDIES SCHOLAR

How to analyze literature, films, media, and other cultural texts

Literary studies is an interdisciplinary field that explores the production, dissemination, and interpretation of texts and cultural artifacts. This can include works of fiction, poetry, drama, non-fiction, and visual media. Literary scholars often focus on the close analysis of texts, the study of literary history and movements, and the examination of the relationship between literature and cultural, historical, and political contexts. The field also includes a strong tradition of theory, which considers the ways in which literary texts reflect and shape power dynamics, identity formation, and social norms. Coursework in literary studies may also consider questions of aesthetics, genre, form, and style, as well as the relationship between literature and other artistic and cultural practices.

According to the latest research on literary studies, "literary scholars analyze texts as aesthetic objects in order to reveal critical insights about representational forms and social worlds" (Storm & Rainey, 2022, p.6). This one pager provides teachers and students with a snapshot of those key literary questions and practices in addition to providing tutorials and mentor texts. The goal of this resource is to scaffold the **literary literacies** required for students to develop their own lines of inquiry and become producers of literary knowledge. That said, these practice are merely a jumping off point and should be hybridized, remixed, and supplemented by students own discourses, literacies, and funds of knowledge.

KEY QUESTIONS

CONTEXTUALIZE
• Who is the author or creator? How is he or she connected with this topic or issue?
• **Personal Connection:** How does this topic connect to me and/or society?
• **Prior Knowledge:** What do I know or believe about the topic or issue?
• **Prediction:** What do I predict will be the author/creators message?

CLOSE READING/VIEWING
• What is the form of the text?
• **Paraphrase:** What is the message of the text?
• What is the literal meaning of the text?
• Who is the audience? Who is the speaker?
• What is the overall tone of the piece
• What is the theme(s) of the piece?

CONNECTIONS
• What does the author or creator want me to feel. Why?
• In what ways can I relate to the text?
• What inferences can be drawn from absences, omissions, or silences in the text?

LITERARY PRACTICES

NOTICING
- Identifying elements of form and analyzing their effect
  - examining literary devices (e.g., metaphor, imagery, flashbacks)
  - examining patterns (e.g., repetition of phrasing, scene structure)
  - examining confusing elements (e.g., peculiar or ambiguous word choice, misalignment between component parts)
- Considering convention
  - identifying adherence to convention (e.g., invoking common trope)
  - identifying breaks with convention (e.g., using "wrong" number of lines in a sonnet) Considering and tracing textual references (e.g., places, people, events, other texts)

PUZZLING
- Generating productive literary questions or puzzles to pursue
- Seeking a robust and preferred interpretive reading by recursively considering possibilities

THEORIZING
- Employing critical theories
- Examining potential relationships among social, historical, political, and cultural contexts of texts, authors, and readers
- Considering contexts of production and reception (e.g., the author, the readership, publication details)
- Entering and extending relevant scholarly conversations

Rainey, E.C., & Storm, S. (2022). Teaching literary literacy. In K.A. Hinchman & H.K. Sheridan-Thomas (Eds.), *Best Practices in Adolescent Literacy Instruction* (3rd ed.). Guilford.

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