

Feminist Criticism

Three Key Terms:

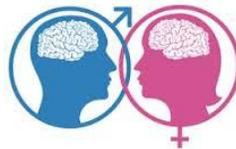
Patriarchy:	
Sexism:	
Feminist:	

<p>"Sex"</p> <hr/> <hr/> <p>"Gender" refers to the socially constructed roles, behaviours, activities, and attributes _____</p> <hr/>	
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Traditional Gender Roles

Men are:

Women are:



Six Core Feminist Beliefs

1. Women are oppressed by the patriarchy economically, politically, socially, and psychologically;
2. Woman is projected as *other*: she is objectified and marginalized, defined by her differences and perceived shortcomings
3. All of Western civilization is rooted in patriarchal ideology (e.g. Greek/Roman female monsters, Eve as origin of sin and death)

4. Biology determines sex (male or female, based on anatomy); culture determines our gender (masculine or feminine). This is reinforced through social programming
5. All feminist activity has the ultimate goal to change the world by promoting women's equality. So feminist activity can be seen as activism.
6. Gender issues play a part in every aspect of human production and experience, including creation/production of literature, whether we're aware of it or not

Questions feminists ask about literary texts:

- What does the work reveal about the operations (economically, politically, socially, or psychologically) of patriarchy?
- How are women portrayed? Relationship to the gender issues of the time the text was written/set?
- Does the work reinforce or undermine patriarchal ideology?
- What does the work suggest about the ways race, class and/or other cultural factors intersect with gender?
- How is the work "gendered" (i.e. how does it define masculinity and femininity)?
- What does the work imply about the ways in which women's situations in the world – economic, political, social, or psychological – might be improved?
- What does the history of the reception to the work tell us about the operations of the patriarchy?

Marxist Criticism



Bourgeoisie		Proletariat	
			

Five basic groups in Western society:

- underclass (homeless),
- lower class (limited career/educational opportunities),
- middle class (own a home/car, can send kids to college),
- upper class (two homes, nice vacations, luxury car, etc),
- the super-rich (the American 'aristocracy')

IDEOLOGY:

Undesirable (negative) ideologies promote repressive political agendas

Classism	
Patriotism	
Religion	
Consumerism	
Alienated Labour	

Use Value:

Exchange Value:

Sign Exchange Value:

Questions Marxists Ask About Literature:

- Does the work reinforce (intentionally or not) capitalist or classist values? Critics should expose and condemn that agenda.
- How might the work critique capitalism or classism? Critics should recognize if a text has a Marxist agenda.
- Is the work ideologically conflicted (e.g. condemns some capitalism but also celebrates overconsumption?)
- How does the text reflect (intentionally or not) the socioeconomic conditions of the time it was written or set?
- How might the work be seen as a critique of organized religion? Does religion in the text function to keep a character(s) from resisting oppression?