

Russian Formalism

DE familiarization
By Victor Shklovsky



CRITICISM



Literariness

Chief Focus

The Formalists' chief focus of literary analysis was the examination of a text's **literariness**, the language employed in the actual text. Literary language, they asserted, is different from everyday language. Unlike everyday speech, literary language **foregrounds** itself, shouting, "Look at me; I am special; I am unique." Through structure, imagery, syntax, rhyme scheme, paradox and a host of other devices, literary language identifies itself as

deviations from everyday speech patterns, ultimately producing the defining feature of literariness, **defamiliarization**. Coined by the Russian Formalist Victor Shklovsky, defamiliarization is the process of making strange (**ostranenie**) the familiar, of putting the old in new light, what Shklovsky called a "sphere of new perception." By making strange the familiar, defamiliarization (or what some Russian Formalists call **estrangement**) slows down the act of perception of everyday words or objects, forcing the listener or reader to reexamine the image. For example, when we read in a poem the words "dazzling darkness," our attention is caught by the unusual pairing of these words. Our ordinary experience of everyday language is slowed down because we must now unpack the meaning of the author's choice of language. When we do so, poetry with its accompanying poetic diction has called attention to itself as poetry and to its literariness, allowing its listeners or readers to experience a small part of their world in a new way by intensifying the act of perception.



Artfulness and literariness

“The literariness or artfulness of a work of literature, that which makes it an aesthetic object, resides entirely in its devices, which should also form the sole object of literary studies. The aesthetic value or purpose of art, embodied in the devices, consists in creating in readers or viewers a heightened awareness, making them see things anew “

(Coleridge's *Freshness Of Sensation*, Ezra Pound's *Making It New*).

Artfulness and literariness



The purpose of art, then, is to lead us to a knowledge of a thing through the organ of sight instead of recognition. By “enstranging” objects and complicating form, the device of art makes perception long and “laborious.” The perceptual process in art has a purpose all its own and ought to be extended to its fullest.”
(5–6)



Defamiliarization

**To make the familiar
strange...
[the shock of the new]
is...**



Defamiliarization, estrangement, or...

ostranenie (остранение)

(n.) encouraging people to see common things as strange, wild, or unfamiliar; defamiliarizing what is known in order to know it differently or more deeply

Photo: Karl Brtling at <http://beautifulpeopleliveart.com/surrealist-photography/#jp-carousel-5033>



“The technique of art is to make objects ‘unfamiliar’, to make forms difficult, to increase the difficulty and length of perception because the process of perception is an aesthetic end in itself and must be prolonged. Art is a way of experiencing the artfulness of an object; the object is not important.”

(Shklovsky: Art as Technique)



Defamiliarization

**How is
Defamiliarization
achieved
in a text?**

It is achieved through foregrounding...



4.Foregrounding Vs Backgrounding

The throwing into relief ,Of the linguistic sign against the background of the norms Of ordinary language.

Devices Used to foreground

1. Unusual and Unreliable narrators.

A deranged person in Poe's The tell tale heart.

2. Language

Neologism

Complex and simple

Lack of punctuation

3. Disrupted narratives

Eg.virginia Woolf stream of consciousness.

4.Vulgarity of expression

5.Unconventional beginning and finals.



Early Spring Aubade

The branches outside this office window
too often block the light, but today the early
morning sun wavers, then prevails, stippling
this space with a tentative dawn that crawls
toward an even more fragile day. All the
failures
of my life on earth are erased in this quivering
grace that works its lacy way through its own
curious birth. This is the one appointed hour
that comes and gives and goes again—too
soon—
the briefest visit, that leaves this faltering glow,
the gift of a faint, definite urging, the finest
power we have—so close, *this* close to Love.

-Mary M. Brown

- Level 1: Sketch the scene with specific attention to setting
- Level 2: Take note of poetic devices: What are they and why are they used?
- Level 3: What else catches your attention? Why?
- Level 4: Outline main topics in a Formalist essay about this poem.

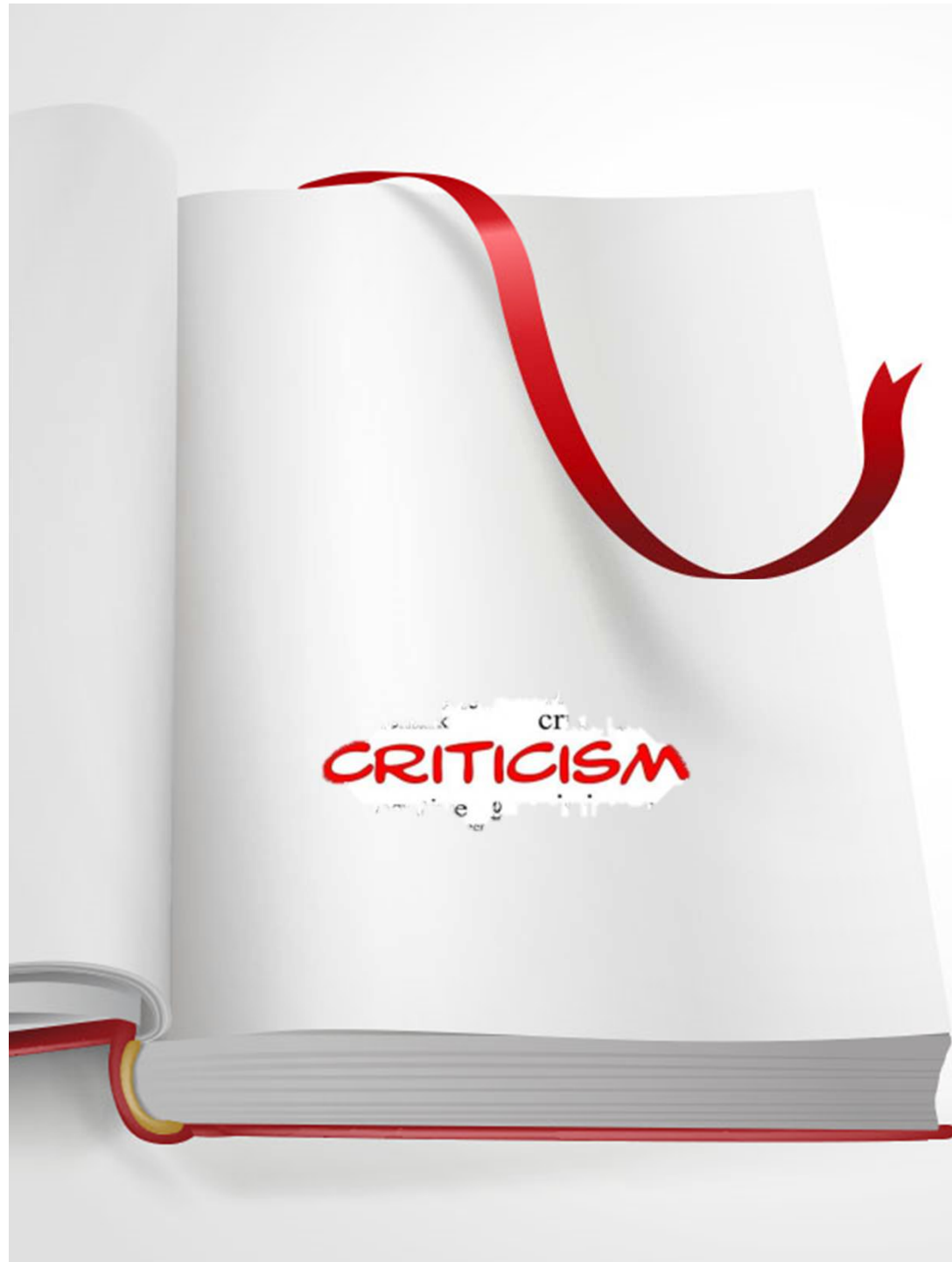


DE familiarization

- In “Early Spring Aubade” by Mary M. Brown, the first two lines of the poem depict a mundane image of life at work and the details that follow are supposed to describe the speaker’s experience relevant to the poem’s early spring subject. The reader may feel strange, however, on the use of the phrase ‘the prevails’ which by frequent usage refers to a verb in singular form synonymous to the terms ‘dominate’ and ‘control’. At a point, one may be caught pondering on whether ‘the prevails’ as a plural noun should constitute what can be concretely seen at the sight of a ‘wavering morning sun’. Somehow, the connection among ‘quivering grace’, ‘tentative dawn’, and the ‘briefest visit’ mentioned is defamiliarized by the ambiguity in ‘the prevails’ (Bressler, 51 & 52).

**THANK
YOU**





New Criticism

TEXT AS A FORM

HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT & ASSUMPTIONS

Prepared by
Lect. Huda Al-Hassani

Early Spring Aubade

by Mary M. Brown

The branches outside this office window
too often block the light, but today the early

morning sun wavers, then prevails, stippling
this space with a tentative dawn that crawls

toward an even more fragile day. All the failures
of my life on earth are erased in this quivering

grace that works its lacy way through its own
curious birth. This is the one appointed hour

that comes and gives and goes again—too soon—
the briefest visit, that leaves this faltering glow,

the gift of a faint, definite urging, the finest
power we have—so close, this close to Love.

-Mary M. Brown





Critical Questions

- What is the meaning of the title?
- What is the title's relationship to the rest of the poem?
- Where is the office located in line 1?
- What is the meaning of the word stippling in line 3?
- Are there other words in the text that need to be defined?
- In line how can the down "crawl toward an even more fragile day"?
- What is the relationship that Brown establishes between failures and grace?
- What kind of birth occurs in the poem?
- What is the gift referred to in the penultimate line of the poem?
- How is Brown defining the word Love in the poem's last line?
- What relationships between words or concepts is Brown establishing in the text?
- What of the poem's physical structure?
- Does the arrangement of the words, phrases, or sentences help establish relationships among them?
- What is the poem's tone?
- How do you know this is the tone, and what devices does Brown employ to establish this tone?
- What tensions does Brown create in the poem?
- What ambiguities?
- Does Brown successfully resolve these tensions by the poem's end?
- Based on the answers to all of these questions, what does the poem mean?
- In other words, what is the poem's form or its overall meaning?

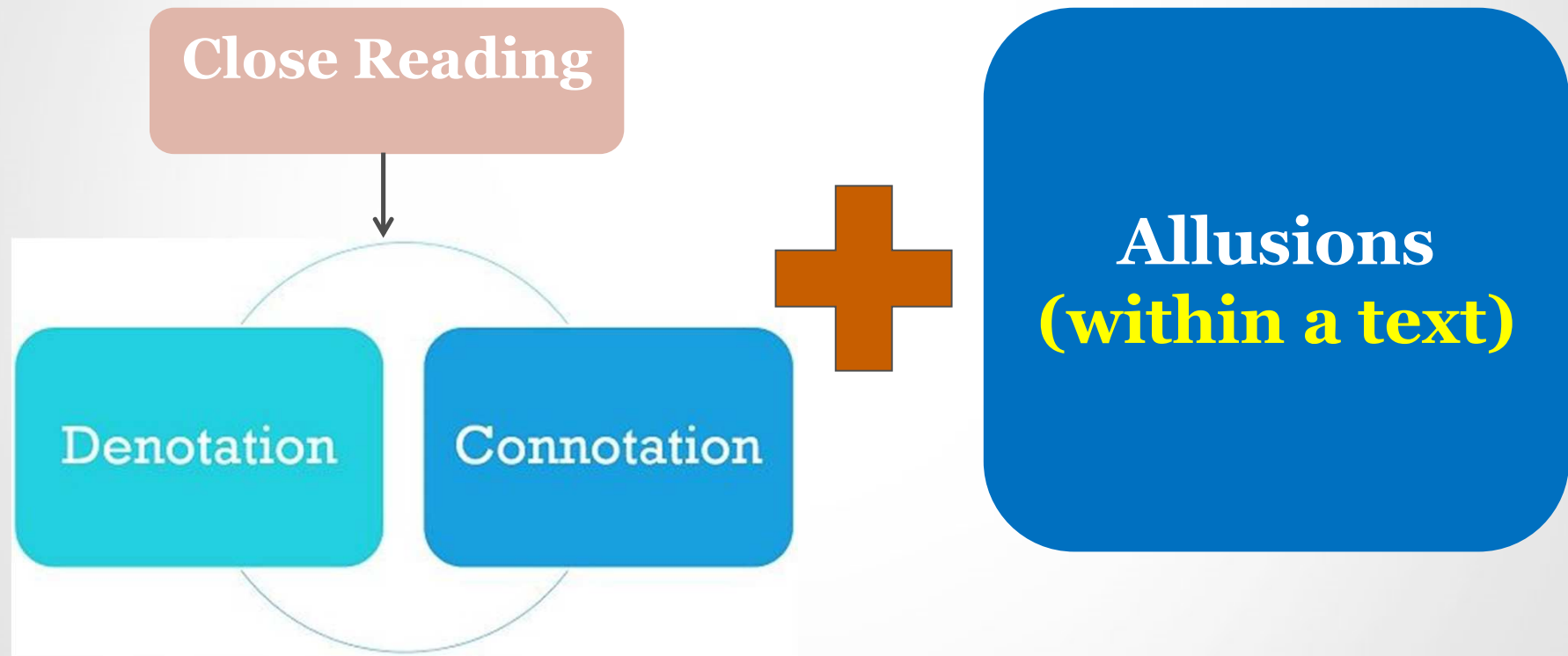
Methodology

Upon close examination of these discussion questions, a distinct pattern or methodology quickly becomes evident.

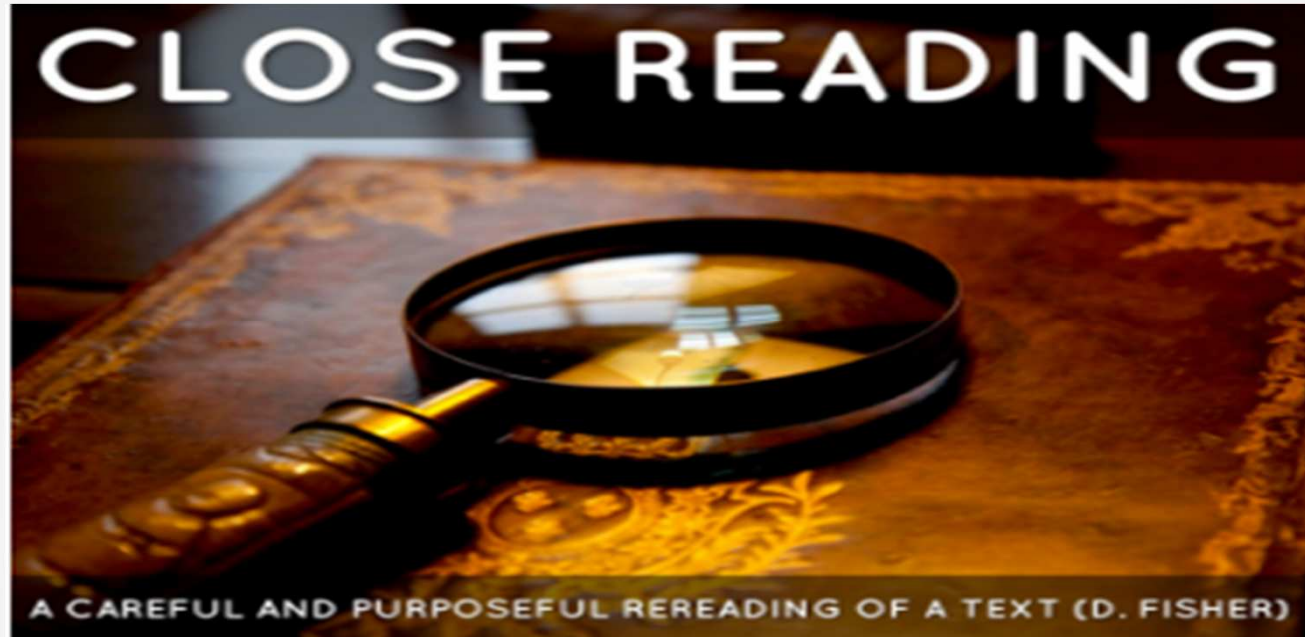
1. This particular interpretive model begins with a **close analysis** of the poem's individual words, including both **denotative** and **connotative** meanings,
1. then moves to a discussion of possible **allusions** within the text.



Methodology



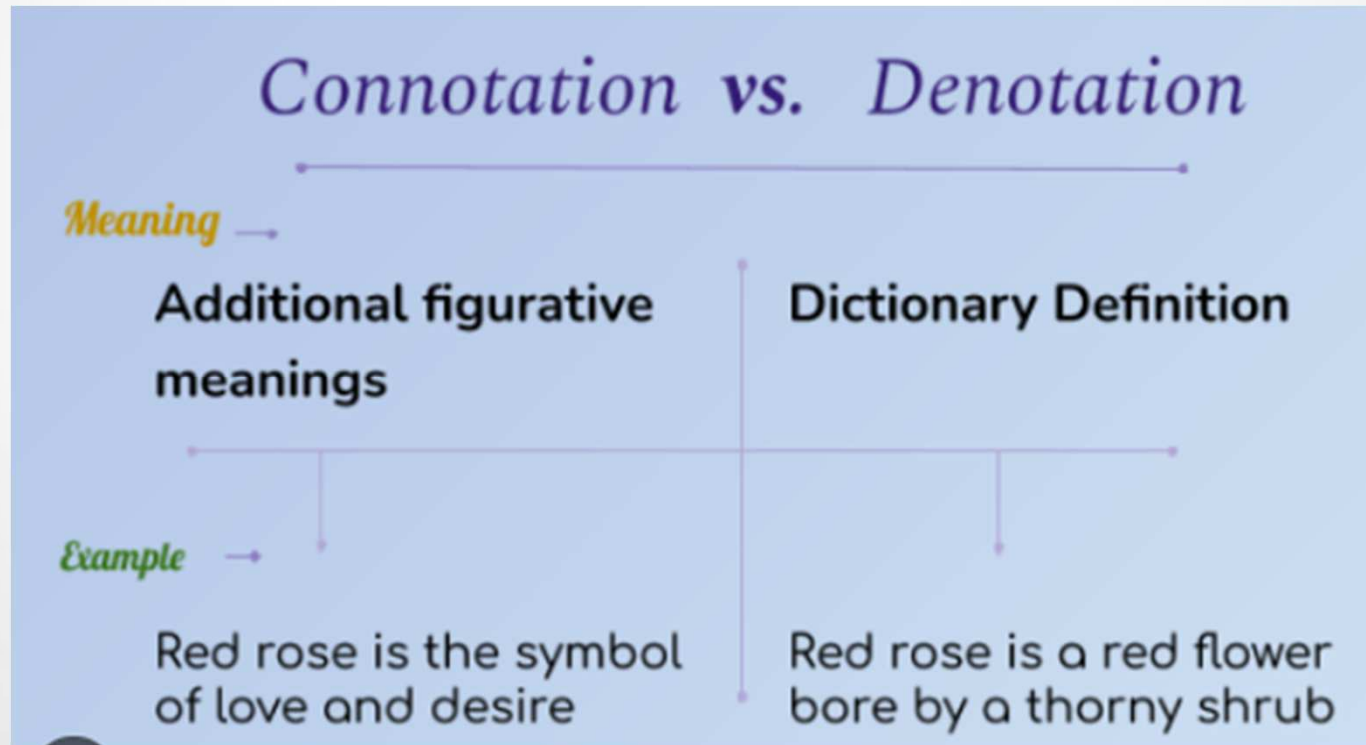
Close Reading



- In literary criticism, close reading is the careful, sustained interpretation of a brief passage of a text. A close reading emphasizes the single and the particular over the general, via close attention to individual words, the syntax, the order in which the sentences unfold ideas, as well as formal structures.



Connotation vs Denotation



Allusion

WHAT IS ALLUSION?

ALLUSION DEFINITION

- Allusion is a form of figurative language in which an object, person or idea is brought to mind without directly mentioning the name of what is being referred to. In most cases, allusion is used to divert the mind to something which is not within the general context of the current conversation and is often left to the imagination of the listener or reader to create the reference for themselves.
- When used as a literary device, allusion is usually used in order to reference a part of the text which appeared earlier on or another text for example an allusion to a book written by Steven King.



Looking for Patterns



Following this discussion, the teacher/critic searches for any patterns.

Patterns

words

phrases

clauses

sentences

figures of speech

allusions

symbols

point of view

tone

any other poetic devices



The Poem's Meaning

After ascertaining how all the aforementioned information interrelates and finally coalesces in the poem, the critic can then declare what the poem means.

The poem's overall meaning or form depends almost solely on, **the text** in front of the reader.

No library research, no studying of the author's Russian Formalism and life and times, and no other extra textual information is needed, except, perhaps, a dictionary.

The poem itself contains all the necessary information to discover its meaning.

This method of analysis became the dominant school of thought and interpretative methodology during the first two-thirds of the twentieth century in most high school and college literature classes and in both British and American scholarship.



Definition/ New Criticism (a dominant school)

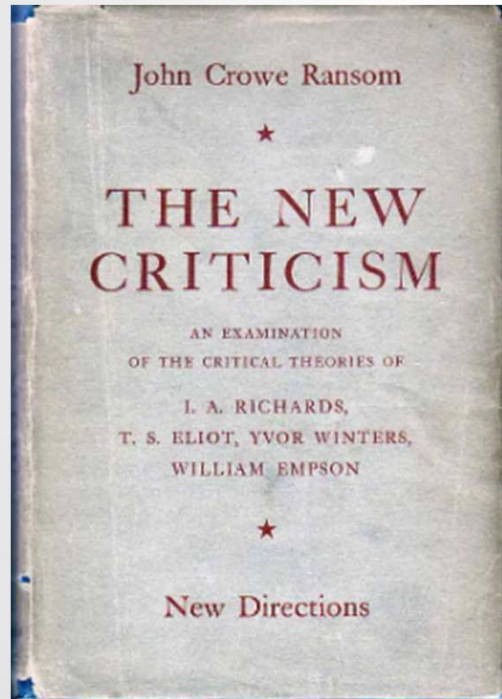


This approach to literary analysis provides the reader with a formula for arriving at the correct interpretation of a text using- for the most part- only the text itself.

Using New Criticism's clearly articulated methodology, any intelligent reader, say its adherents (called New Critics), can uncover a text's hitherto so-called hidden meaning.

The New Criticism

by John Crowe Ransom



The term New Criticism came into popular use to describe this approach to understanding literature with the 1941 publication of John Crowe Ransom's *The New Criticism*, a work that contained Ransom's personal analysis of several of his contemporary theorists and critics.



John Crowe Ransom





FURTHER READING

Bressler, E., C., 2011. *Literary Criticism_ An Introduction to Theory and Practice* (ed 5th). NY: Pearson.

**THANK
YOU**



New Criticism

TEXT AS A FORM



CRITICISM

Early Spring Aubade

by Mary M. Brown

The branches outside this office window
too often block the light, but today the early

morning sun wavers, then prevails, stippling
this space with a tentative dawn that crawls

toward an even more fragile day. All the failures
of my life on earth are erased in this quivering

grace that works its lacy way through its own
curious birth. This is the one appointed hour

that comes and gives and goes again—too soon—
the briefest visit, that leaves this faltering glow,

the gift of a faint, definite urging, the finest
power we have—so close, this close to Love.

-Mary M. Brown





Critical Questions

- What is the meaning of the title?
- What is the title's relationship to the rest of the poem?
- Where is the office located in line 1?
- What is the meaning of the word stippling in line 3?
- Are there other words in the text that need to be defined?
- In line how can the down "crawl toward an even more fragile day"?
- What is the relationship that Brown establishes between failures and grace?
- What kind of birth occurs in the poem?
- What is the gift referred to in the penultimate line of the poem?
- How is Brown defining the word Love in the poem's last line?
- What relationships between words or concepts is Brown establishing in the text?
- What of the poem's physical structure?
- Does the arrangement of the words, phrases, or sentences help establish relationships among them?
- What is the poem's tone?
- How do you know this is the tone, and what devices does Brown employ to establish this tone?
- What tensions does Brown create in the poem?
- What ambiguities?
- Does Brown successfully resolve these tensions by the poem's end?
- Based on the answers to all of these questions, what does the poem mean?
- In other words, what is the poem's form or its overall meaning?

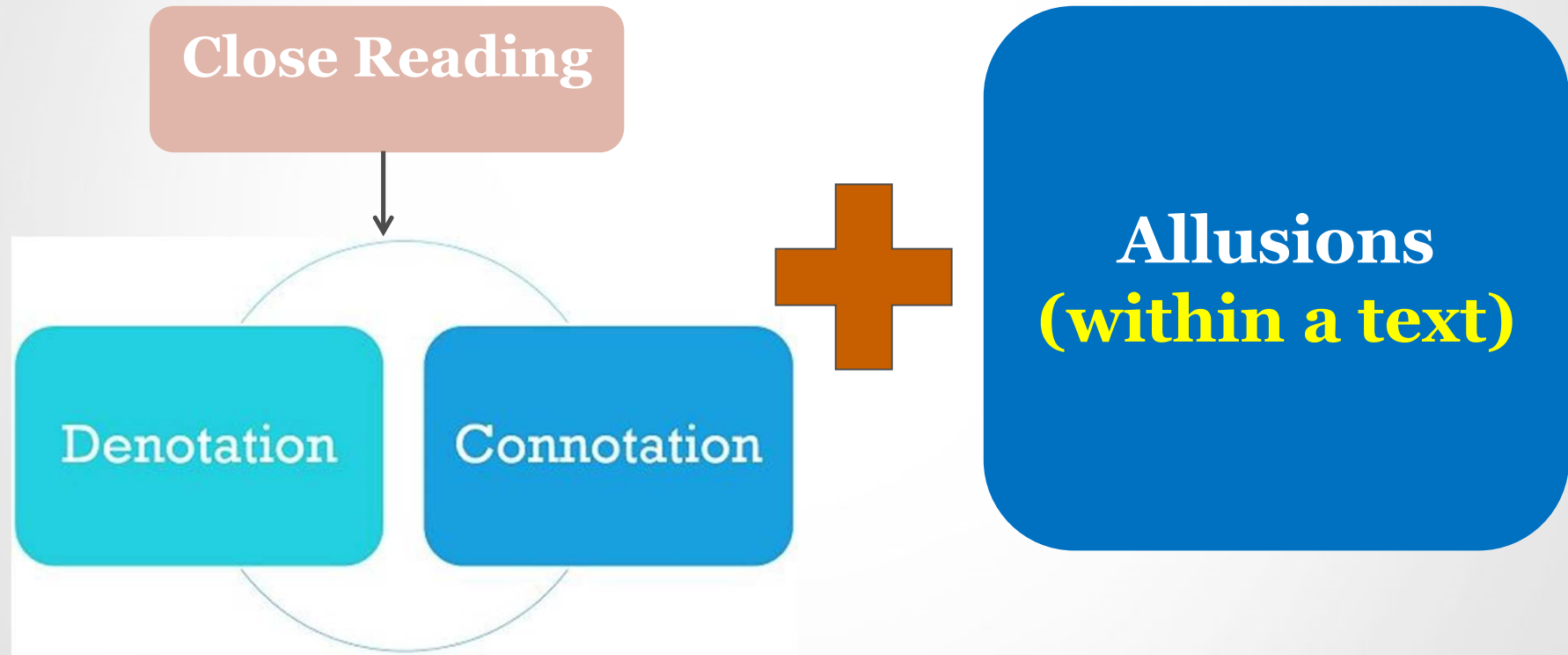
Methodology

Upon close examination of these discussion questions, a distinct pattern or methodology quickly becomes evident.

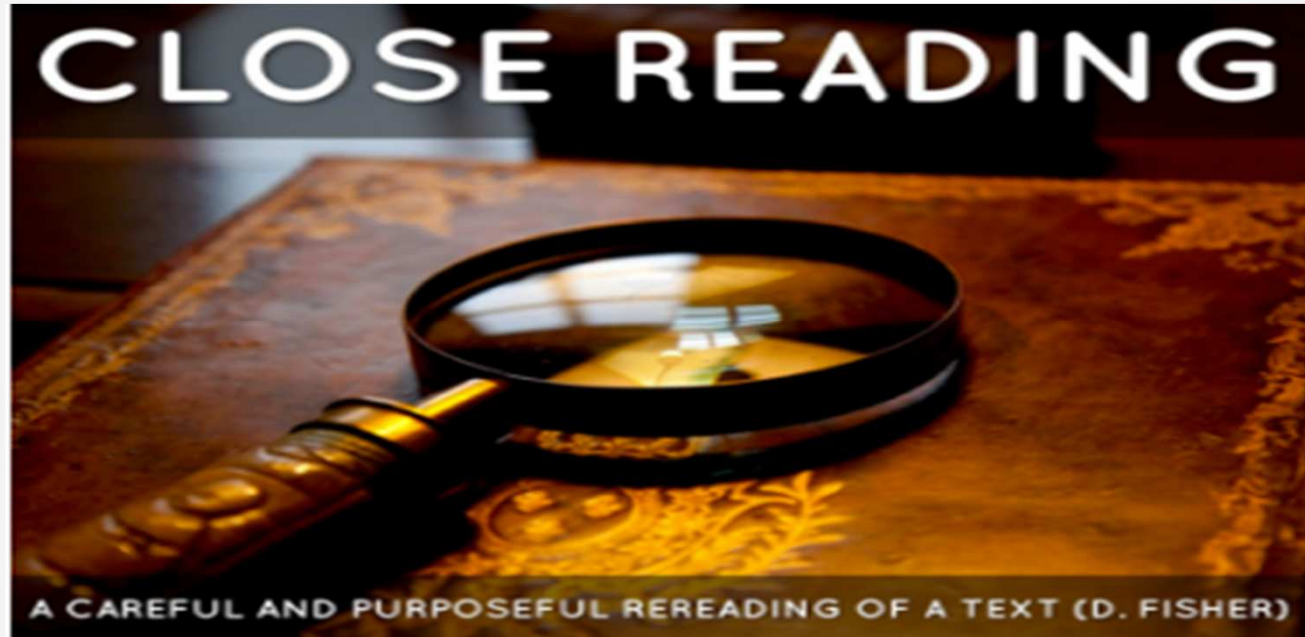
1. This particular interpretive model begins with a **close analysis** of the poem's individual words, including both **denotative** and **connotative** meanings,
1. then moves to a discussion of possible **allusions** within the text.



Methodology



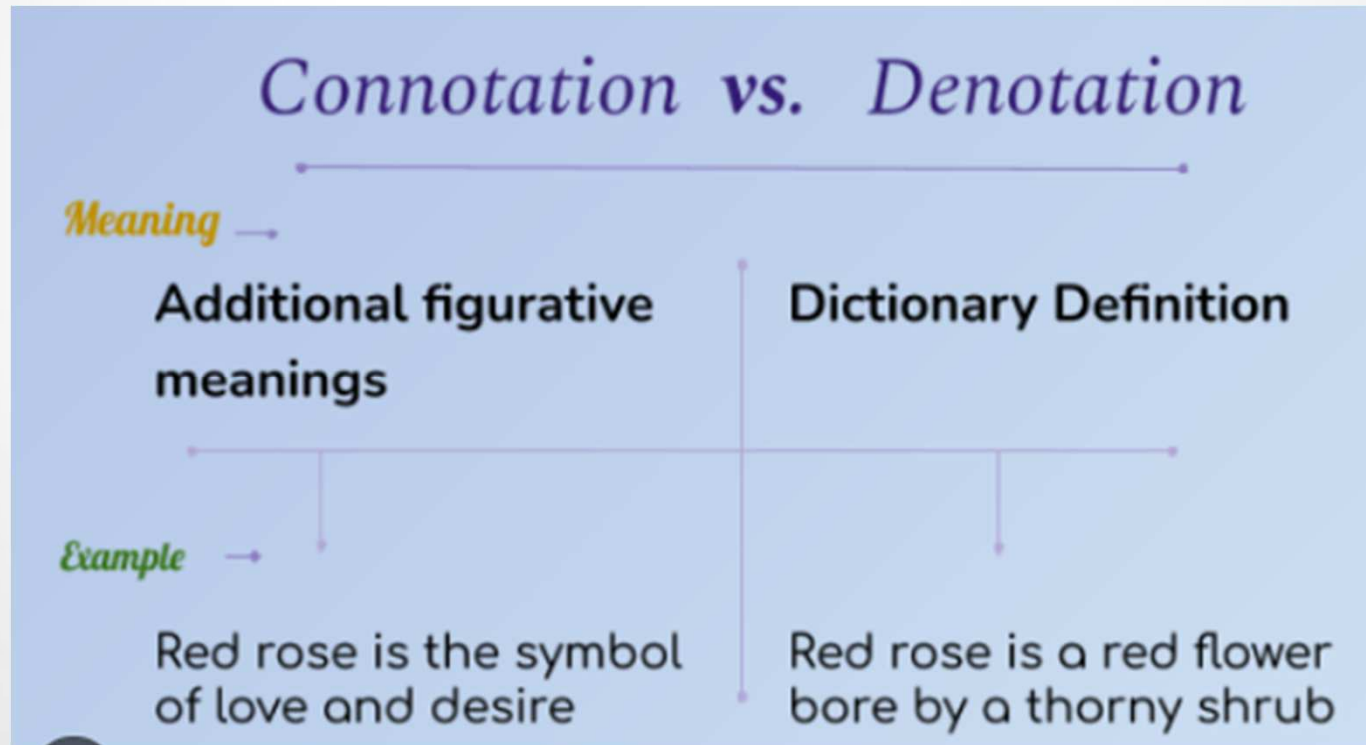
Close Reading



- In literary criticism, close reading is the careful, sustained interpretation of a brief passage of a text. A close reading emphasizes the single and the particular over the general, via close attention to individual words, the syntax, the order in which the sentences unfold ideas, as well as formal structures.



Connotation vs Denotation



Allusion

WHAT IS ALLUSION?

ALLUSION DEFINITION

- Allusion is a form of figurative language in which an object, person or idea is brought to mind without directly mentioning the name of what is being referred to. In most cases, allusion is used to divert the mind to something which is not within the general context of the current conversation and is often left to the imagination of the listener or reader to create the reference for themselves.
- When used as a literary device, allusion is usually used in order to reference a part of the text which appeared earlier on or another text for example an allusion to a book written by Steven King.



Looking for Patterns



Following this discussion, the teacher/critic searches for any patterns.

Patterns

words

phrases

clauses

sentences

figures of speech

allusions

symbols

point of view

tone

any other poetic devices



The Poem's Meaning

After ascertaining how all the aforementioned information interrelates and finally coalesces in the poem, the critic can then declare what the poem means.

The poem's overall meaning or form depends almost solely on, **the text** in front of the reader.

No library research, no studying of the author's Russian Formalism and life and times, and no other extra textual information is needed, except, perhaps, a dictionary.

The poem itself contains all the necessary information to discover its meaning.

This method of analysis became the dominant school of thought and interpretative methodology during the first two-thirds of the twentieth century in most high school and college literature classes and in both British and American scholarship.



Definition/ New Criticism (a dominant school)

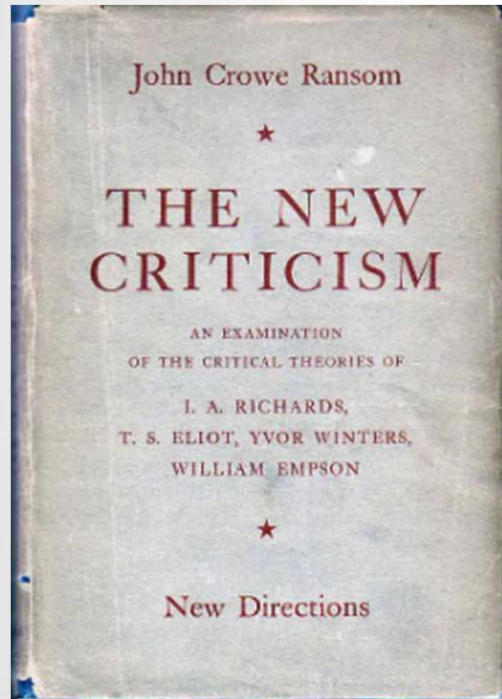


This approach to literary analysis provides the reader with a formula for arriving at the correct interpretation of a text using- for the most part- only the text itself.

Using New Criticism's clearly articulated methodology, any intelligent reader, say its adherents (called New Critics), can uncover a text's hitherto so-called hidden meaning.

The New Criticism

by John Crowe Ransom



The term New Criticism came into popular use to describe this approach to understanding literature with the 1941 publication of John Crowe Ransom's *The New Criticism*, a work that contained Ransom's personal analysis of several of his contemporary theorists and critics.

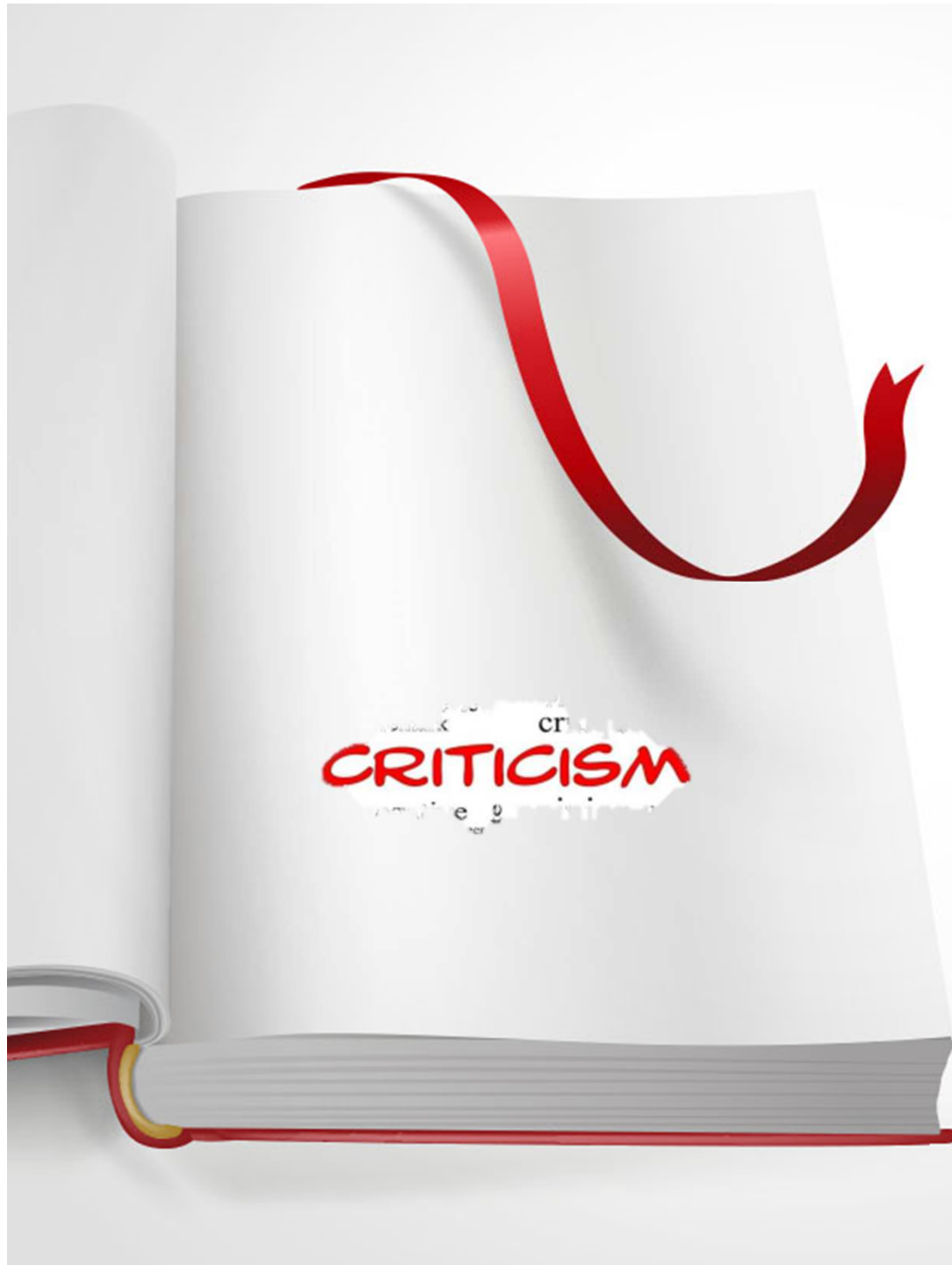


John Crowe Ransom



**THANK
YOU**





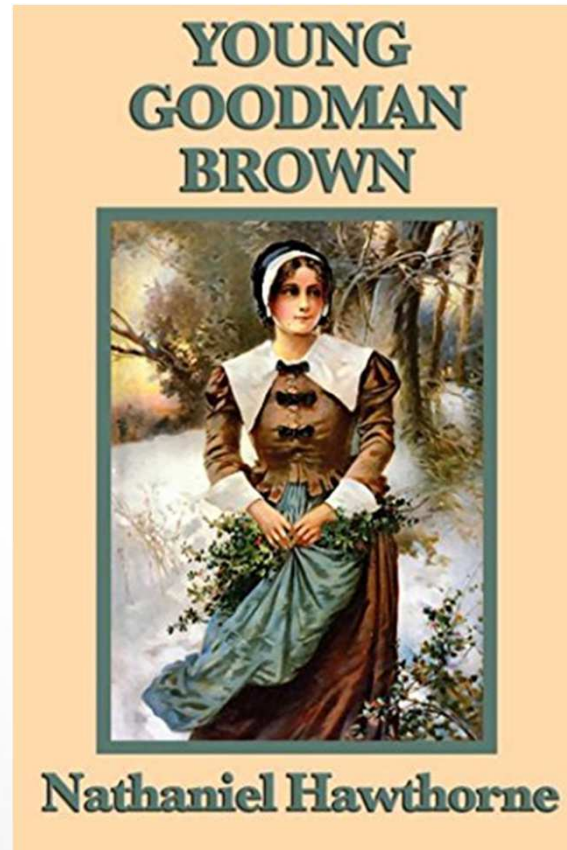
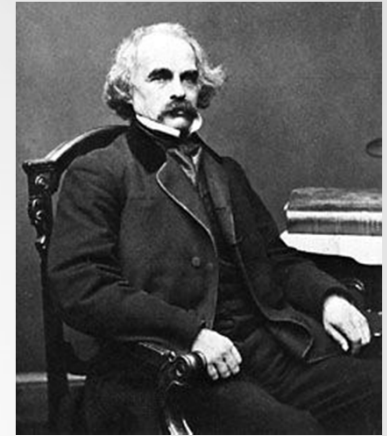
Reader- Oriented Criticism

METHODOLOGY

**Prepared by
Lect. Huda Al-Hassani**

“Young Goodman Brown”

By Nathaniel Hawthorne



Readers:
Student ‘A’s, ‘B’s, ‘C’s, ‘D’s





“Young Goodman Brown”

By Nathaniel Hawthorne

1835

And there they stood, the only pair, as it seemed, who were yet hesitating on the verge of wickedness, in this dark world. A basin was hollowed, naturally, in the rock. Did it contain water, reddened by the lurid light? or was it blood? or, perchance, a liquid flame? Herein did the Shape of Evil dip his hand, and prepare to lay the mark of baptism upon their foreheads, that they might be partakers of the mystery of sin, more conscious of the secret guilt of others, both in deed and thought, than they could now be of their own. The husband cast one look at his pale wife, and Faith at him. What polluted wretches would the next glance show them to each other, shuddering alike at what they disclosed and, what they saw!

“Faith! Faith!” cried the husband. “Look up to Heaven, and resist the Wicked One!”

Whether Faith obeyed, he knew not. Hardly had he spoken, when he found himself amid calm night and solitude, listening to a roar of the wind, which died heavily away through the forest. He staggered against the rock and felt it chill and damp, while a hanging twig, that had been all on fire, besprinkled his cheek with the coldest dew.

The next morning, young goodman Brown came slowly into the street of Salem village, staring around him like a bewildered man. The good old minister was taking a walk along the graveyard, to get an appetite for breakfast and meditate his sermon, and bestowed a blessing, as he passed, on goodman Brown. He shrank from the venerable saint, as if to avoid an anathema. Old deacon Gookin was at domestic worship, and the holy words of his prayer were heard through the open window. “What God doth the wizard pray to?” quoth goodman Brown. Goody Close, that excellent old Christian, stood in the early sunshine, at her own lattice, catechising a little girl, who had brought her a pint of morning’s milk. Goodman Brown snatched away the child, as from the grasp of the fiend himself. Turning the corner by the meeting-house, he spied the head of Faith, with the pink ribbons, gazing anxiously forth, and bursting into such joy at sight of him, that she skipt along the street, and almost kissed her husband before the whole village. But, goodman Brown looked sternly and sadly into her face, and passed on without a greeting.

Had goodman Brown fallen asleep in the forest, and only dreamed a wild dream of a witch-meeting?

Be it so, if you will. But, alas! it was a dream of evil omen for young goodman Brown.

Reader- Oriented Criticism

METHODOLOGY

Adherents of reader-oriented theory and practice fall into three distinct groups:

- **Structuralism (Gerald Prince)**
- **Phenomenology (Hans Robert Jauss) & (Wolfgang Iser)**
- **Subjective Criticism (Norman Holland) & (David Bleich)**





Structuralism – Student ‘B’s

- Student 'B's interpretation at the beginning of this chapter represents the focus of the first group.
- Similar to all reader-oriented critics, this group believes that the reader must be an active participant in the creation of meaning.
- For these critics, however, the text has more control over the interpretative process than does the reader.
- A few of these critics lean toward New Critical theory, asserting that some interpretations are more valid than others, while others differentiate between a text's meaning and its significance.
- For them, the text's meaning can be synonymous with its author's intention, while its significance can change from one context or historical period to another.
- Notwithstanding these variations, the majority of critics in this first group belong to a school of criticism known as structuralism.



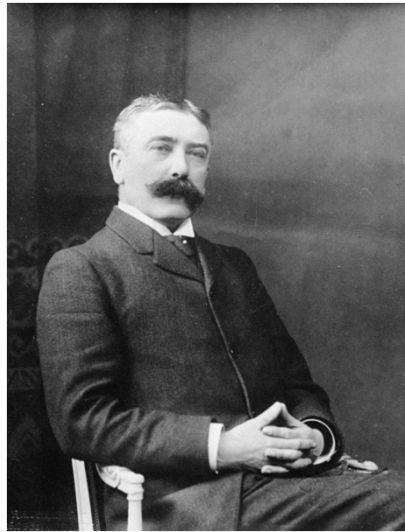
Structuralism – Student ‘B’s

“Young Goodman Brown”

By Nathaniel Hawthorne

Student B objects, declaring that Student A’s interpretation is not relevant for the twenty-first century. Student A is correct, claims Student B, when she notes that Goodman Brown realizes the evil in others; however, Brown does not recognize the evil in himself. Hawthorne’s chief purpose in “Young Goodman Brown” is to show the hypocrisy within all of us. The story’s significance rests in how its meaning can be applied today. Such hypocrisy and prejudice, contends Student B, still exist in our university town. We all have the potential to be Goodman Browns, people filled with prejudice and hypocrisy, thinking that we alone know and understand truth and goodness.

Structuralism - Adherents





Structuralism – Jonathan Culler



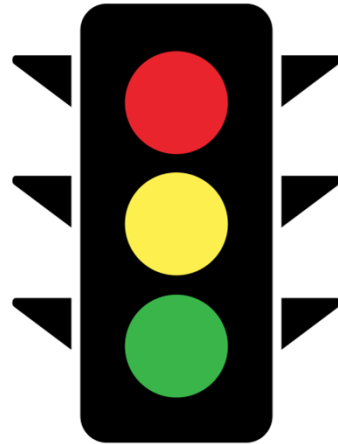
- Jonathan Culler in his early works-look for specific **codes** within a text that allow **meaning** to occur.
- These **codes or signs** embedded in the text are part of a larger system that allows **meaning** to occur in all facets of society, including literature.



Structuralism - Jonathan Culler: Example



Traffic Signs



- For example, when we are driving a car and we see a red light hanging above an intersection, we have learned that we must stop our car.
- Both the red light and the sirens are signs or codes in our society that provide us with ways of interpreting and ordering our world.

Ambulance



- Or when we hear a fire engine or an ambulance siren, we have learned that we must drive our car to the side of the road.



Structuralism - Assumptions

- According to structuralist critics, a reader brings to the text a predetermined system for ascertaining meaning (**a complex system of signs or codes like the sirens and the red light**) and applies this sign system directly to the text.
- The **text** becomes important because it contains **signs** or **signals** to the reader that have preestablished and acceptable interpretations.
- Many structuralists are, therefore, more concerned about the overall **system of meaning** a given society has developed (called langue by linguists) than with textual analysis itself and concentrate their efforts on what a reader needs to know about interpreting any sign (such as a road sign or a word) in the context of acceptable societal standards.

Structuralism

Linguistic Theory of Communication and Interpretation

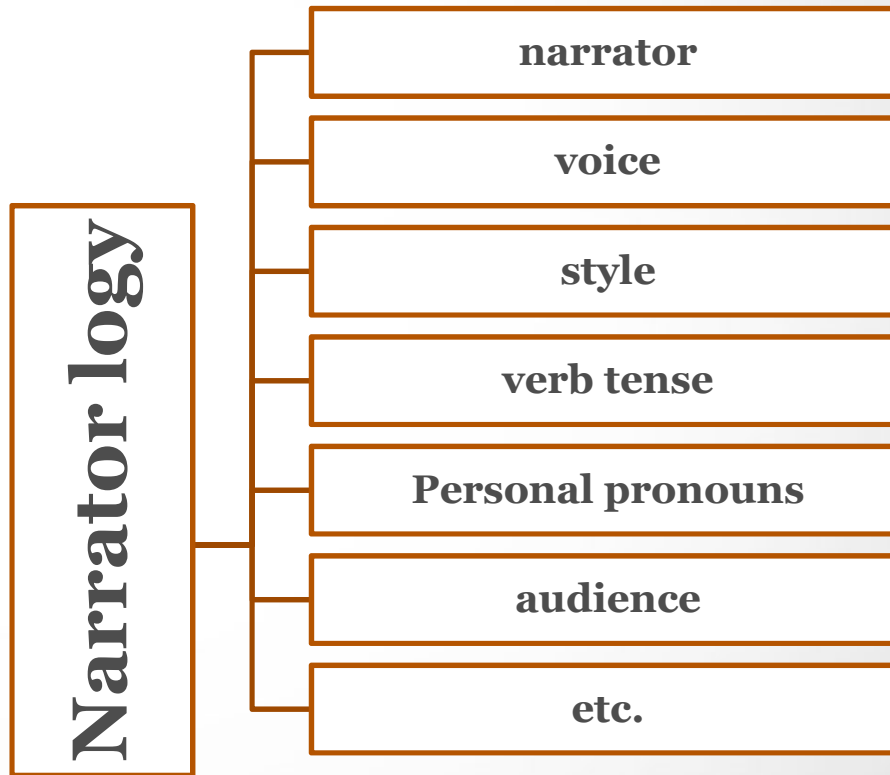


- Because of this emphasis, structuralists seem to push both the text and the reader to the background and concentrate their attention on a linguistic theory of communication and interpretation.
- Since structuralism has become a springboard for many other twentieth- and twenty-first-century theories of literary criticism, its significance to literary theory and practical criticism will be explored at length in the next chapter. Meanwhile, the ideas of one leading structuralist, Gerald Prince, will illustrate the methodology of structuralism.

Methodology of Structuralism – Gerald Prince (1970s)



Gerald Prince





Methodology of Structuralism – Gerald Prince

- Prince noted that critics often ask questions about the story's **point of view**—omniscient, limited, first person, and so on—but rarely do they ask about the person to whom the narrator is speaking, the narratee.
- Usually, the narratee is **not** the **actual person** reading the text, for Prince argues that the narrative itself—that is, the story—produces the narratee.
- By first observing then analyzing various **signs in the text**, such as pronoun reference; direct address ("Dear reader"); gender, race, and social class references; and writing style, Prince believes it is possible not only to identify the narratee but also to classify stories based on the different kinds of narratees created by the texts themselves.



Methodology of Structuralism – Gerald Prince

Such narratees may include

- **the real reader** (the person actually reading the book),
- **the virtual reader** (the reader to whom the author believes he or she is writing), and
- **the ideal reader** (the one who explicitly and implicitly understands all the nuances, terminology, and structure of a text).



Methodology of Structuralism – Conclusion

- Although such an approach relies heavily on **textual analysis**, Prince's concerns about **the reader** place him in the reader-oriented school of criticism.
- Other structuralists such as **Jonathan Culler** who distance themselves from Prince and this kind of close reliance on the text to generate meaning will be discussed in Chapter 5.



FURTHER READING

Bressler, E., C., 2011. *Literary Criticism_ An Introduction to Theory and Practice* (ed 5th). NY: Pearson.

**THANK
YOU**

