

**Table 8.3: Critical Lenses**

Critical Lens	Description	Questions
<b>Reader Response</b>	Examines the effect of a text on the reader	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How did the text make you feel?</li> <li>• What do you think the text means?</li> <li>• What parts of the text did you identify with?</li> <li>• What experiences did the text remind you of?</li> </ul>
<b>Formalist or New Criticism</b>	Examines the various components of a text to draw conclusions about its meaning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What literary elements, literary devices, symbolism, and themes are in the text?</li> <li>• What are the strengths and weaknesses of the text?</li> <li>• What is the purpose of the text, and does it accomplish that purpose?</li> </ul>
<b>Historical or Biographical Criticism</b>	Examines a text within its historical context (social, political, economic, cultural, or intellectual climate)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How did historical context influence the events and themes in the text?</li> <li>• What does this text tell us about its author? Why did he or she write it?</li> </ul>
<b>Feminist or Gender Criticism</b>	Examines gender roles in a text	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What gender roles or identities are present in the text?</li> <li>• Does the text portray characters positively or negatively depending on their gender?</li> <li>• How does the text affirm or reject sexist ideas?</li> </ul>
<b>Marxist and Social Power Criticism</b>	Examines social class in a text	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How does the text portray social classes?</li> <li>• Does the text portray characters positively or negatively depending on their social class?</li> <li>• How does the text relate power to money and social class?</li> </ul>
<b>Psychological Criticism</b>	Examines a text as an expression of the mind, feelings, and desires of its author	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What psychological conflicts drive the characters or the plot?</li> <li>• What psychological concepts can help us understand the way the author sees the world?</li> </ul>
<b>Archetypal Criticism</b>	Examines patterns and models of storytelling across many texts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What universal themes, situations, symbols, and characters are present in the text?</li> <li>• How is the hero or villain similar to heroes or villains in other stories?</li> </ul>

*Note: This is a partial list. For a complete list and descriptions of critical lenses to use for literary criticism, visit “Literary Theory and Schools of Criticism” at <http://owl.english.purdue.edu> (Purdue University’s Online Writing Lab).*

*Source: Appleman, D. (2009). Critical encounters in high school English: Teaching literary theory to adolescents (2nd ed.). New York: Teachers College Press.*