

Formalist criticism

[Linguistics](#), [English](#)



Formalist Criticism Introduction This type of criticism involves analysis of literary for their form rather than interpretation of the meaning of a text, instead a formalist criticism involves understanding the manner in which the meaning is communicated. Simply, it is a critical method of analyzing, interpreting and evaluating the intrinsic features of a text (VanderMey, 49). According to Bogel (16), basic elements for perform a formalists criticism of texts include the use of grammar, meter and tropes.

Characteristics

In conducting a literary analysis, the following key characteristics will be associated with formalism criticism: tension, intentional fallacy, affective fallacy, external form and objective correlative. Tension refers to the fundamental cohesiveness of the work, and frequently involves irony and paradox. Intentional fallacy refers to the perception that the meaning of a work may be determined by the intent of the writer. Affective fallacy is the belief that the meaning or value of a work may be deduced from the manner in which it affects the reader. External form is the overlaying trappings of a work, such as rhyme, scheme, and meter, amongst others. Objective correlative refers to the collection of circumstances, objects and /or activities that evoke certain emotion immediately.

Application: Water for Elephants.

First to perform this analysis it is important to select and underline the key words for the thesis above (thesis is used for the sentence loosely)

This thesis does not limit and focus what the writer had intended to say regarding the object. This thesis is very unclear as it as the words fail to

produce any cohesive meaning. The three key words are so unrelated within the context of the thesis to the extent that they fail provide any focus on object and subject of the short sentence.

Secondly, the sentence does not seem to mirror the theme of the story.

Perhaps the main theme is the story is love; however, while adjoining the journey to the key character obviously builds the theme, though it is unclear.

Structure

The story is a narrative told as flashback by Jacob, and it begins to describe his life in the nursing home and the dilemma he runs into when someone claims that they gave water to the elephants, and so the book converts into a total flash back where Jacob narrates his life in the circus. In the book, the author applies varying language techniques such as broken English and everyday slang. For instance, the author paints a scene where Camel pleads with Blackie to free Jacob, “... I’m tellin ya! ...need no trouble, let I’m go! (Gruen, 193)

This category of syntax provides a deep insight into the setting of the novel, although the storyline is set in first person, and the writer converses in a different dialogue to allow the reader gain incisive insight into the characters. Flashback is used in the book to provide a portrayal of the changes in Jacob’s life to his old age, and then it shows the manner in which Jacob ponders over his past and trying to rekindle his present.

Conclusion

In this type of literary criticism, text analysis is primal, and the manner in which the meaning is communicated through the text becomes the major

focus of the analysis. Basically text elements such as grammar, meter and tropes become important for the analysis. In the novel water for elephants the structure and syntax were used for formalism criticism in this paper.

Works Cited

Bogel, Fredric V. *New Formalist Criticism: Theory and Practice*. , 2013. Print.

VanderMey, Randall, et al. *The College Writer: Brief 2009 MLA Update Edition*. Cengage

Learning, 2009.

Davis, Todd F, and Kenneth Womack. *Formalist Criticism and Reader-Response Theory*.

Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave, 2002. Print.

Gruen, Sara. *Water for Elephants: A Novel*. Chapel Hill, N. C: Algonquin Books, 2006. Print.