**INTRODUCTION TO CRITICAL THEORY**

**PSYCHOANALYTIC CRITICISM – SIGMUND FREUD**

Aim: to summarise some key ideas of psychoanalytic criticism and apply them to *Hamlet.*

Read Chapter 3 of Sian Evans’s book *Through the Literary Looking Glass* and complete the notes below.

This type of criticism is probably most useful for analysing characters.

**Human Psyche**

The human mind is made up of three parts. Summarise these.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| The id |  |
| The superego |  |
| The ego |  |

What is meant by the phrase “resolution of the Oedipal Complex?”

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**Dream Work**

Summarise, using key words only, the following psychological processes.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Repression |  |
| Sublimation |  |
| Transference |  |
| Projection |  |
| Parapraxis |  |
| Displacement |  |
| Condensation |  |

Read *The Lord of the Flies* (or even a Sparknotes plot summary) and use the case study provided to see how this type of literary criticism can be applied.

Read the section called “Applying Freudian Analysis to Other Texts” (page 28) and add a few key words to get you thinking about how these theories can be applied to the character Hamlet.

Grappling with psychological issues \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Early childhood \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Lack of parent figure(s) \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Balance of ego, supergo, id \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Dreams \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**INTRODUCTION TO CRITICAL THEORY**

**PSYCHOANALYTIC CRITICISM – JACQUES LACAN**

Aim: to summarise some key ideas of Lacanian criticism and apply them to *Hamlet.*

Read Chapter 4 of Sian Evans’s book *Through the Literary Looking Glass* and complete the notes below.

Like Freudian analysis, this type of criticism is probably most useful for analysing characters.

**Language and Structuralism (and Post-structuralism)**

Some of this may become clearer after reading Chapter 7 on Structuralism.

Lacan believed that there is a close relationship between language and the unconscious.

* Meaning in language is the result of contrasts. No word makes sense in isolation.
* Meaning is fluid. Eg the word “ladies” may refer to a group of women, or to a public rest room.

**Development of self**

By successfully resolving the Oedipus Complex, children can develop from the **imaginary** state to the **symbolic** state. Add some key words to explain this from your reading of p35.

**Symbolic**

**Imaginary**

Summarise, in key words, the following stages of development, based on your reading of p36 – 37

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Mirror stage |  |
| The recognition of law |  |
| The discovery of language |  |

Look at Evans’s final sentences in this section on p37. How can this be related to the character Hamlet?

The child must “grasp a sense of self which is defined by sexual difference, exclusion from unconscious desires and absence from its mother. It begins to conceive of its own identity in terms of difference and similarity to other people … it encounters.”

**Other and other (one with a capital O and one without)**

What is the difference between other and Other?

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| other |  |
| Other |  |

**INTRODUCTION TO CRITICAL THEORY**

**MARXIST CRITICISM – KARL MARX AND ANTONIO GRAMSCI**

Aim: to summarise key Marxist ideas and apply them to *Thomas the Tank Engine* and *Underworld*.

This type of criticism is probably most useful for analysing power relationships between characters and the underlying ideologies implicit in the text.

Note down a few key words that summarise what Marx argued.

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Note down a few key words that summarise Gramsci’s notion of hegemony.

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**Applying a Marxist interpretation to *Thomas the Tank Engine***

After watching the episode “Trouble in the Shed” note down one or two aspects of the story that can be read through a Marxist lens.

**Build an argument**

In pairs or groups of three, choose 1 or 2 of the following topics and discuss responses. Either agree or disagree with the statements.

You will present your response to the class. Include specific examples from films as evidence that your argument is valid. At the end of the lesson, arguments may be compared.

* Films embed ideologies that support the status quo. They reinforce the existing hegemony.
* Films can bring about social change. They are very powerful tools to do things like change people’s attitudes to racism and prejudice.
* Film is dangerous. It is the “circus” in the bread and circuses that we are fed by the ruling élite. Film distracts us so we do not gain a political consciousness.
* Stuart Hall argues that while the media, including the film industry, claims to reflect reality, in fact they help shape reality.
* Since it is the rich and the powerful who make films, they naturally will make films that reinforce their views of the world.
* You’re forgetting about YouTube! You don’t have to be rich and powerful to make a film. Just upload footage from your phone to YouTube and you can change the world. Look at Syria, Libya, Egypt.

It’s Friday afternoon. You are probably tired. You are probably distracted after seeing Kate Beckinsale in a tight leather catsuit and looking spectacularly alluring. There is no way you are fit to concentrate on much more than a fill in the gaps exercise with some key words already emboldened for you. Here goes.

Len Wiseman’s 2002 film Underworld is worth studying because it is a **polysemic** text that is open to many interpretations. On one level, it is simply a **hybridised** action-vampire film that keeps its audience engrossed on an aesthetic level. The plot is intricate and the audience responds by wondering what will happen next.

Underworld is open to interpretation on a more intellectual level. It can be argued that the film is an **allegory** of the sort of class struggle that …………………………………… wrote about in his 1867 work Das Kapital. In the film, the vampires can be seen as representing the **bourgeoisie** or the aristocracy, while the lycans represent the **proletariat**. Most significantly, this is represented via the **mise-èn-scene.** The vampires live in a Gothic mansion with such details as ………………………………………………………………………………………

…………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………

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whereas the lycans live underground in sewers amid squalor. The lower status of the lynacs is further emphasised because it is literally as well as metaphorically beneath the vampires. Even minor **props** used on set reflect this. The vampires drink blood (Or is it red wine?) from …………………………………… while the lycans drink …………………………. from ……………………………………… clearly suggesting a lack of refinement.

Throughout the film, the vampires are portrayed as the heroes and the lycans the villains. One reason for this is that Selene’s first person voice-over has the effect of ………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………………… Another effect of this has been described by the critical theorist Stuart Hall, who believed that the media **projects** ideas that serve the interests of the ruling classes. In this case, the audience is almost **indoctrinated** into believing that the social positions of both lycans and vampires are fair and just.

This view that vampires are the heroes and lycans villains is also reflected in Antonio Gramsci’s concept of ……………………………………… in which the dominant class has the ability to project its own way of seeing the world as being normal, natural and common sense.