

Applying Literary Theory I

Literary theory is central to analyzing literature much like a proper toolbox is central to building a house. You could still build a house even if you did not have the proper tools, but if you did, the house would be built faster and would be sturdier. So it is with theory. You can analyze texts without any knowledge of theory, but you'll be better and faster if you understand different approaches. What better way to understand than to apply these approaches?

Here's a nursery rhyme:

Jack and Jill went up the hill
To fetch a pail of water
Jack fell down and broke his crown
And Jill came tumbling after.

Now, let's examine the rhyme using the following approaches:

- Feminist
- Marxist
- Archetypal
- Freudian

Your job is to go out and find a nursery rhyme or two and try applying a literary theory to it. Things you must do for this exercise:

1. Take risks. What you're interpreting and how you're interpreting it may sound wack. That's okay. It may be wack, but you have to start breaking down boundaries. Sometimes there are rights and wrongs with theory, but not for this exercise—everything is right (it's like brainstorming).
2. What you write should be about one paragraph (don't forget to include the rhyme).
3. Be prepared to present your rhyme(s) and ideas to the class. Remember to use the language that you've learned from your literary theory sheet.

