## Contents

	Preface for instructors	xiv
	Acknowledgments	xviii
	Permissions	xix
1	Critical theory and you	1
	What does critical theory have to do with me? 1 What will I learn about critical theory from this book? 3 Critical theory and cultural criticism 6 Three questions about interpretation most students ask 9 My interpretation is my opinion, so how can it be wrong? 9 Do authors deliberately use concepts from critical theories when they write literary works? 10 How can we interpret a literary work without knowing what the author intended the work to mean? 11 Why feeling confused can be a good sign 11	
2	Using concepts from reader-response theory to understand our own literary	
	interpretations	13
	Why should we learn about reader-response theory? 13  Response vehicles 15  Personal identification 15  The familiar character 15  The familiar plot event 15  The familiar setting 15  Response exercises 16  Personal-identification exercise 16  Familiar-character exercise 18  Familiar-plot-event exercise 21  Familiar-setting exercise 23	

	How our personal responses can help or hinder interpretation 26  The "symbolic leap" 27  The difference between representing and endorsing human behavior 28  Using our personal responses to generate paper topics 29  Food for further thought 31  Thinking it over 31  Reader-response theory and cultural criticism 32  Taking the next step 35  Exercises for further practice 35  Suggestions for further reading 36
3	Using concepts from New Critical theory to understand literature
	Why should we learn about New Critical theory? 38  Basic concepts 41  Theme 41  Formal elements 41  Unity 43  Close reading and textual evidence 44  Interpretation exercises 45  Appreciating the importance of tradition: Interpreting  "Everyday Use" 45  Recognizing the presence of death: Interpreting "A Rose for Emily" 51  Understanding the power of alienation: Interpreting  "The Battle Royal" 57  Respecting the importance of nonconformity: Interpreting  "Don't Explain" 63  Responding to the challenge of the unknown: Interpreting  "I started Early—Took my Dog" 69  Food for further thought 74  Thinking it over 74  New Critical theory and cultural criticism 76  Taking the next step 78  Questions for further reading 80
4	Using concepts from psychoanalytic theory to understand literature

Why should we learn about psychoanalytic theory? 81

Basic concepts

83

38

81

110

The defenses 83 Core issues 84 Dream symbolism 86 Interpretation exercises Analyzing characters' dysfunctional behavior: Interpreting "Everyday Use" 86 Exploring a character's insanity: Interpreting "A Rose for Emily" 91 Understanding dream images in literature: Interpreting "I started Early—Took my Dog" 95 Recognizing a character's self-healing: Interpreting "Don't Explain" 99 Using psychoanalytic concepts in service of other theories: Interpreting "The Battle Royal" Food for further thought Thinking it over 104 Psychoanalytic theory and cultural criticism 106 Taking the next step Questions for further practice 108 Suggestions for further reading 109 Using concepts from Marxist theory to understand literature Why should we learn about Marxist theory? Basic concepts 112 Classism 112 Capitalism 113 Capitalist ideologies 114 The role of religion 116 Interpretation exercises 116 Understanding the operations of capitalism: Interpreting "Everyday use" 116 Recognizing the operations of the American Dream: Interpreting "The Battle Royal" 119 Analyzing the operations of classism: Interpreting "A Rose for Emily"

Resisting classism: Interpreting "Don't Explain"

my Dog" 131

Learning when *not* to use Marxist concepts: Resisting the temptation to interpret "I started Early—Took

The family 83

5

Repression and the unconscious 83

6

Food for further thought 133

Homophobia

175

The woman-identified woman 176

Homosocial activities 176

Homoerotic imagery 177 Queer theory 177

	Thinking it over 133	
	Marxist theory and cultural criticism 134	
	Taking the next step 137	
	Questions for further practice 137	
	Suggestions for further reading 138	
6	Using concepts from feminist theory to understand literature	139
	Why should we learn about feminist theory? 139	
	Basic concepts 141	
	Patriarchy 141	
	Traditional gender roles 142	
	The objectification of women 142	
	Sexism 143	
	The "cult of 'true womanhood" 143	
	Interpretation exercises 144	
	Rejecting the objectification of women: Interpreting "The Battle Royal" 144	
	Resisting patriarchal ideology: Interpreting "Don't Explain" 147	
	Recognizing a conflicted attitude toward patriarchy:	
	Interpreting "Everyday Use" 151	
	Analyzing a sexist text: Interpreting "A Rose for Emily" 155	
	Understanding patriarchy's psychological oppression	
	of women: Interpreting "I started Early—Took my Dog" 162	
	Food for further thought 166	
	Thinking it over 166	
	Feminist theory and cultural criticism 167	
	Taking the next step 169	
	Questions for further practice 169	
	Suggestions for further reading 170	
7	Using concepts from lesbian, gay, and queer theories	
	to understand literature	172
	Why should we learn about lesbian, gay, and queer	
	theories? 172	
	Basic concepts 175	
	Heterosexism 175	

172

206

178 Interpretation exercises Rejecting lesbian stereotypes: Interpreting "Don't Explain" 178 Analyzing homophobia: Interpreting "The Battle Royal" 182 Recognizing the woman-identified woman in a heterosexual text: Interpreting "Everyday Use" 185 Using queer theory: Interpreting "A Rose for Emily" Drawing upon context: Interpreting "I started Early-Took my Dog" 194 Food for further thought 198 Thinking it over 198 Lesbian, gay, and gueer theories and cultural criticism 200 Taking the next step 202 Questions for further practice 202 Suggestions for further reading 204 Using concepts from African American theory to understand literature Why should we learn about African American theory? 206 Basic concepts 209 African American culture and literature 209 Racism 211 Forms of racism 211 Double consciousness 213 Interpretation exercises 213 Analyzing the overt operations of institutionalized racism: Interpreting "The Battle Royal" 213 Recognizing the "less visible" operations of institutionalized racism: Interpreting "Don't Explain" Understanding the operations of internalized racism: Interpreting "Everyday Use" 222 Exploring the function of black characters in white literature: Interpreting "A Rose for Emily" 228 Learning when not to use African American concepts: Resisting the temptation to interpret "I started Early—Took my Dog" 234 Food for further thought 237 Thinking it over 237 African American theory and cultural criticism 239 Taking the next step 242 Questions for further practice 242

Suggestions for further reading 244

9	Using concepts from postcolonial theory to understand literature	245
	Why should we learn about postcolonial theory? 245	
	Basic concepts 248	
	Colonialist ideology 248	
	The colonial subject 249	
	Anticolonialist resistance 250	
	Interpretation exercises 251	
	Understanding colonialist ideology: Interpreting "The Battle Royal" 251	
	Analyzing the colonial subject: Interpreting "Everyday Use" 257	
	Exploring the influence of cultural categories: Interpreting "A Rose for Emily" 264	
	Appreciating anticolonialist resistance: Interpreting "Don't Explain" 268	
	Recognizing the othering of nature: Interpreting "I started Early—Took my Dog" 273	
	Food for further thought 277	
	Thinking it over 277	
	Postcolonial theory and cultural criticism 279	
	Taking the next step 282	
	Questions for further practice 282	
	Suggestions for further reading 284	
1(	Holding on to what you've learned	285
	A shorthand overview of our eight critical theories 285	
	A shorthand overview of our literary interpretation exercises 286 "Everyday Use" 287	
	"The Battle Royal" 288	
	"A Rose for Emily" 290	
	"Don't Explain" 291	
	"I started Early—Took my Dog" 292	
	A shorthand overview of the range of perspectives offered by each	
	theory 293	
	Critical theory and cultural criticism revisited 297	
	Critical theory and an ethics for a diverse world 300	
A	ppendices	
	Appendix A: "I started Early—Took my Dog" (Emily Dickinson, c. 1862)	20
	Appendix B: "A Rose for Emily" (William Faulkner, 1931)	30 30
	Expression D. 21 1000 Joi Linuy (William Faulkriet, 1901)	$\mathcal{I}$

	Contents	xiii
Appendix C: "The Battle Royal" (Ralph Ellison, 1952)		311
Appendix D: "Everyday Use" (Alice Walker, 1973)		323
Appendix E: "Don't Explain" (Jewelle Gomez, 1987)		330
Appendix F: Additional literary works for further practice		338
Index		344