

Feminist literary criticism wishes to examine, among other things:

- *how* women and men are represented (or not) in a given work
- *how* and *why* certain gender archetypes, paradigms and stereotypes are either written into our stories or undermined by them
- and *what effect it has* on a culture when an author does or does not appear to recapitulate conventional ways of understanding patriarchy, the constructed nature of gender definitions, and ingrained sexism in literature

Feminist Theory sees the different modes of literary production (stories, poems, songs, plays, essays) as “sites” upon which we project certain problematic cultural paradigms of what it is to be a woman or a man. It also sees literary works generally as the places from which both destructive *and* liberating ideas of sex and gender originate. Our literary works help “create” us, but they also reflect us.

Using the Shakespeare discussion questions from the website and the Germaine Greer interview, write a **5 page (minimum)** essay in which you make an observation or an argument about something you see happening in *King Lear*, an analysis that is in line with the major principals and concerns of feminist literary critique outlined above and in the Lynn text. Make a single, important point about some specific element of the writing, some particular characterization of women or entrenched stereotype either underwritten or overturned in the play, relying heavily on textual support for your assertions, as always. Referencing only one or a couple specific characters in the play, or one or a couple specific emblematic scenes that will help support and illustrate your point about the work in general is all that is required here – do not try to write about the whole play.

Your thesis statement should be a direct response to one of the discussion questions from the website. The second paragraph of your essay should be a comprehensive explanation of the major tenets of Feminist Criticism. The third paragraph should briefly summarize the work. Subsequent paragraphs should focus on a specific aspect of Shakespeare’s play that helps you more fully explore and address your thesis contention about his storytelling, his characterizations of women and men, his language patterns, or his statements about sex, gender and patriarchy.

If you need additional help with the construction of this kind of political-textual analysis, look at the sample feminist critique essay on pp 250-252 in *Texts and Contexts*.

As always, I will be looking to see that you successfully address these important components of the assignment in your **5 page (minimum)** essay:

- Introduce the play, the characters and the scene(s) you will be analyzing as you begin your textual analysis – Discuss the setting, the time frame, the plot, etc. of each section you examine
- Summarize also the major tenets of Feminist Criticism before you begin your analysis, and remember to discuss the specific vocabulary terms you have already learned for this body of theory
- Be specific in your argumentation: Develop a sound thesis argument in response to the discussion questions I have provided on the website for Feminist criticism and Shakespeare
- Develop your body paragraphs according to the model you have already learned: state a topic point, introduce and insert textual support, analyze this textual material, link your discussion back to the main point of your paragraph and to your thesis
- Write in the 3rd person, present tense, and do not use I or you

- Do a Works Cited list for this assignment, and cite your sources correctly after each quotation — when quoting lines from the play, make sure to reference them by act, scene *and* line number