

FEMINIST CRITICISM / SHAKESPEARE QUESTION PROMPTS

Question Prompt 1:

What's the purpose of Feminist Criticism? As an analytical tool, how does it help us understand literature better, and what exactly does it help us to understand? What are we supposed to examine and talk about when we interpret a work of literature from a feminist perspective? What does it mean to "gender the text"? Does this theoretical approach share any particular similarities with Deconstruction? Which ones? What does Lynn mean when he says that feminist practice seeks to "replace dualism with diversity and consensus with variety" and that, as feminists, "our comfortable assumptions [about gender definitions] ought be destabilized, opening up our thinking" (222)? Is this theoretical approach either more or less overtly "political" in nature than other theoretical approaches we've studied this term? Why do you think so?

Reference specific passages to help you address these questions, and be specific in your answers.

Question Prompt 2:

Using the Shakespeare material you read this week as a starting place, try out some of the theoretical principals you've learned from your recent study of Feminist Theory. Do you see any of the sisters falling that of an archetypal "Mary" figure that Lynn references in "Gendering the Text" (i.e. the virgin saint-mother, the innocent paragon of virtue, the nurturer and defender of purity, etc.)? Or perhaps you see some of them depicted by Shakespeare as that alternate "Eve" archetype (i.e. the evil seductress, the conniving bitch, the manipulator, the reason for Man's fall into temptation and animal desire, etc.)? Or do the sisters transgress these limiting and reductive stereotypes altogether, transformed by Shakespeare into empowered female characters much more subversive as character types, much more complex and not so easily defined by simple good/bad binary descriptions?

Look again at the vocabulary terms at the end of Chapter 8 in *Texts and Contexts* to help you with this discussion response. Reference **specific scenes from the play** to help you address these questions, and be specific in your answers.

Question Prompt 3:

Using the Shakespeare material you read this week and last week as a starting place, continue the same work you started in last week's discussion forum: try out some of the theoretical principals you've learned from your recent study of Feminist Theory. Does the patriarchal ideology you see embedded in *King Lear* help to further stereotype, distort, ignore, or repress "authentic" female experience? Why might we choose to view Shakespeare's characterizations of women in this play as either problematic or liberating, or both, or something else?

Look again at the vocabulary terms at the end of Chapter 8 in *Texts and Contexts* to help you with this discussion response. Reference **specific scenes from the play** to help you address these questions, and be specific in your answers.