

# EXTRINSIC CRITICISM – Key Questions to Ask and Answer

## Historical, Post-Colonial, Cultural Studies

- How does the author's biography influence his/her work?
- How does the history surrounding the work influence it?
- How has the *culture* surrounding the writer influenced the work?
- How does the *writing* surrounding the work influence that work?
- How does the ideology of imperialism, including the practice of race, influence the work?

\* Read the following story, "Reunion" by John Cheever

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1jfJm8mmXkpX7xMD70QTrUdf8S4szF01U3PdYrHHjKOl/edit?pli=1>

You'll be given a sample essay based on this story.

## Psychological Criticism

- How do various complexes (Oedipal, for example) manifest themselves in the work?
- How does the writer or a character in the work manifest various "defense mechanisms"?

---Isolation: What is author or character (hereafter, "A/C") **not feeling** that they should?

---Intellectualization: How is A/C **escaping** feelings by intellectualizing them?

---Repression: What is A/C **ignoring**?

---Projection: How is A/C **disguising** a feeling by putting it onto something/someone else?

---Displacement: How is A/C **downplaying** a feeling, usually by blaming him/herself?

---Denial: How does A/C **deny** what he or she knows or feels?

---Reversal: How does A/C **turn around** a thought or feeling, usually so he/she blames himself?

---Reaction Formation: How does A/C **convince him/herself** that what's happening is the opposite of what's actually happening?

## Feminist, Post-Feminist, Queer Theory

- What role does sex and gender play in the work?
- What would happen to the work if the gender of main characters were changed?
- What image of women is conveyed in the work?
- How is the relationship between men and women depicted?