**Four approaches to reading and related concepts and theories**

**Theorists pose question of texts, develop terms and concepts and apply a myriad of reading strategies. There is a high degree of overlap between theories and the strategies employed.**

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| **Author-centred** | **Text-centred** | **Reader-centred** | **World-context centred** |
| **author god** generates text: *auctores*, custodians of knowledge | New Criticism 1930s-1960s | **Role of reader** in meaning making acknowledged 1960s | Whose **interests** are served by representations of the world in texts? |
| **name** guarantees quality, originality, individualism, creativity e.g. 19C Romantic movement | meaning found in **words on the page**, text autonomous | Readers **relate to others’ experiences**, expand horizons | **Marxism** emphasises structural class-based inequalities |
| **gifted individual**, themes related to life, transcends culture, best moral values, aesthetic skills | text **stable** with ‘true’ meaning; disciplined, objective reading | Led to growth pedagogy 1970s, 1980s | **Feminism** focuses on issues related to gender; first, second, third wave feminism |
| **biographical information** assists interpretation - text reflects life and times of author | **closely examine** language and structure | Encouraged **empathy** | **LATER**  post-colonial theory and queer theory |
| particular **language choices** may be typical of author | **focus on** figurative language including symbolism | **Meaning not fixed** | **Cultural materialism**  **new historicism** both grew out of Marxist theory |
| **textual features** may reflect author’s intentions/visions,  author interprets their world and times | **literature to resolve** moral, psychological and spiritual dilemmas e.g. dualities: love/hate, thought/feeling, | **LATER**  recognize cultural experience reader brings to text | Feminists develop different emphases e.g. **French, Anglo-American, black, queer**… |
| **LATER**  **intentional fallacy** – author’s stated purpose cannot determine all legitimate readings, one reading among others | all parts of text work together to create **harmonious whole** | Meaning **continually renegotiated** | Common assumption is that societies are profoundly **inequitable** as a result of structural inequalities |
| **biographies**etc. open to interpretation, partial, biased etc.  not possible to read author’s life directly off text – trace instead trace competing **discourses** | **Structuralism** another historical approach, **Saussure, genre studies, intertextuality, narratology**: explore recurrent patterns and motifs, ‘universal’ narrative structures. | Texts are received differently by readers at different historical moments - **horizon of expectations** (Jauss 1982) | In any society particular **social groups and their values may prevail** at a particular time |
| **implied author** – imagined figure, different to historical writer | **semiotic analysis** – system of signs | **Implied reader, invited reading, alternative reading, resistant reading\*** | Readers either **negotiate with or resist** discourses and ideologies in texts. |
| **death of author** (Barthes 1978) – multiple readings possible | **LATER - poststructuralists**  incoherences, contradictions, disunities in texts | Readers fill **gaps** drawing on prior knowledge | All texts are partial - biased |
|  | **‘harass’ the text** to make it conceal what it tries to conceal | Multiple readings | **Silences** |
|  | **gaps, silences, contradictions, binary oppositions** (privileged half, not dualism), **semiotics** – used as social/political activity | **Interpretive communities** Fish 1980 | **Political consequences** to accepting particular views of the world as being natural |
|  | no single, fixed meaning;  **discourse, ideology** important |  | **Close analysis of texts:** **gaps, silences, binary oppositions, myth, semiotics** etc. |