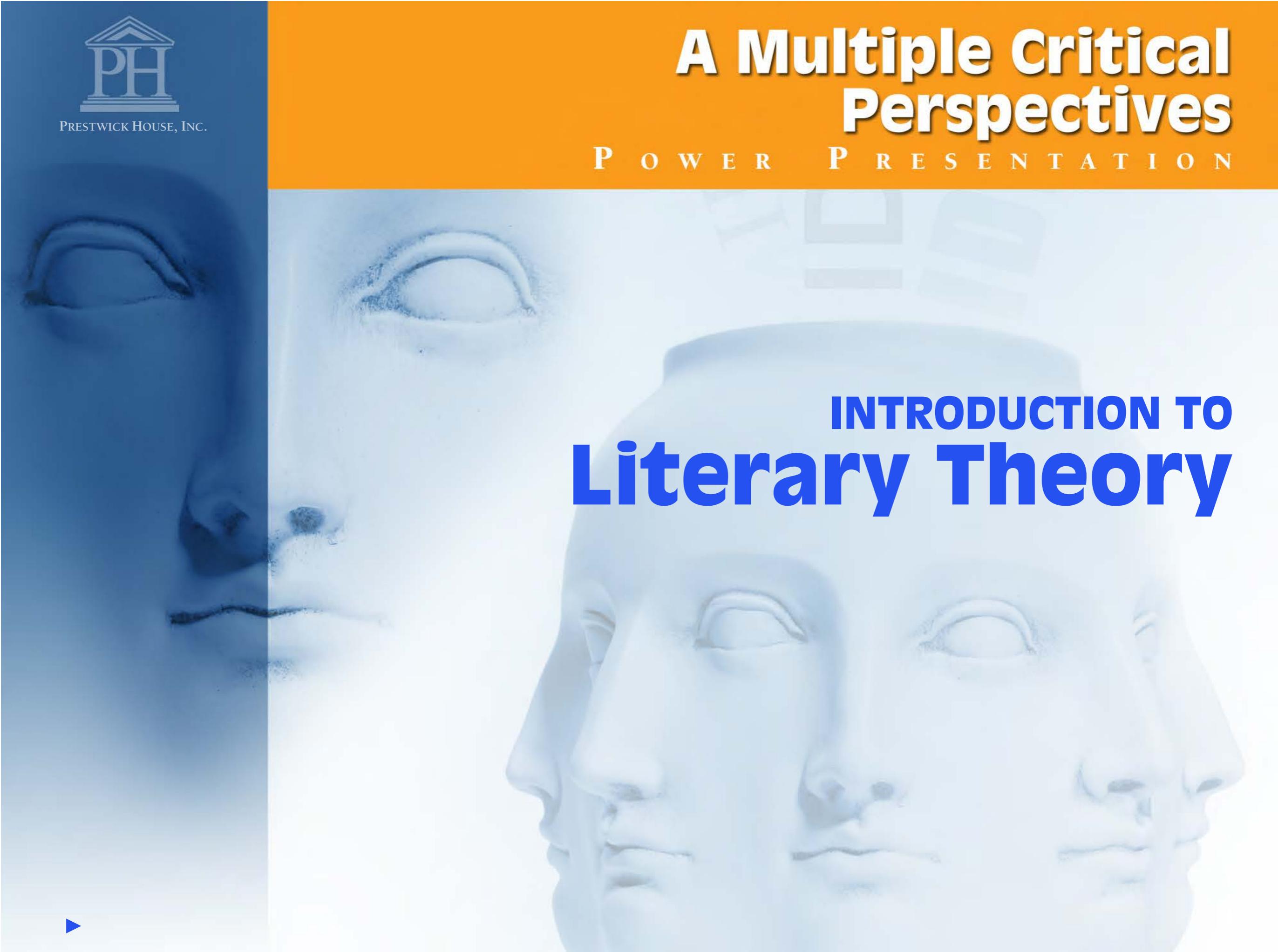




PRESTWICK HOUSE, INC.

A Multiple Critical Perspectives

P O W E R P R E S E N T A T I O N



INTRODUCTION TO **Literary Theory**





Introduction to Literary Theory



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FORMALISM
MARXISM
ARCHETYPE
NEW HISTORICISM
FEMINISM





What is literary or critical theory?

What do you mean by “critical perspective”?

The terms “literary theory” and “critical theory” refer to essentially the same fields of study. They both address *ways of looking at literature* beyond the typical plot-theme-character-setting studies.



What are the benefits of studying a work from more than one critical perspective?

There are several benefits:

- One of the views is likely to affirm your perspective and speak to what you see in the literature you are studying.
- Studying a view different from yours—not to disagree with it, but to understand it—helps you understand those who hold that view.
- Studying a work from more than one view gives you a deeper understanding of the author's work and a better appreciation for the richness of it.



What are the most common or popular critical theories?

This presentation will introduce you to the following critical theories:

- Feminist
- Marxist
- Psychoanalytic or Freudian
- Archetypal or Mythological
- New Historicism
- Formalism



Three main areas of study and points of criticism exist in the Feminist Theory:

1. differences between men and women
2. women in positions of power and power dynamics between men and women
3. the female experience



Examining “Cinderella” from a Feminist Perspective

- Consider the potentially misogynist theme of abused-girl-waiting-to-be-rescued-by-prince.
- Consider the values conveyed in the portrayal of the “good girl” as physically beautiful and the “wicked girls” as physically ugly.



Four main areas of study:

- economic power ↗
- materialism versus spirituality ↗
- class conflict ↗
- art, literature, and ideologies ↗



Examining “Cinderella” from a Marxist Perspective

Consider Cinderella as a representative of the proletariat:

- oppressed by her bourgeoisie stepmother and stepsisters, who have stolen her rightful inheritance and turned her into a servant in her own home;
- desiring to join the ranks of the bourgeoisie by marrying the prince.



Main areas of study/points of criticism of the first view are:

There are strong Oedipal connotations in Freudian theory:

- the son's desire for his mother
- the father's envy of the son and rivalry for the mother's attention
- the daughter's desire for her father
- the mother's envy of the daughter and rivalry for the father's attention.

Of course, these all operate on a subconscious level to avoid violating serious social mores.



Examining “Cinderella” from a Psychoanalytic Perspective

- Consider Cinderella as a representative of the id—expressing desire.
- Consider the stepmother and stepsisters as representatives of the superego—preventing the id from fulfilling its desire.
- Consider the fairy godmother and the prince as representatives of the ego—negotiating between the id and the superego and allowing the desires of the id to be fulfilled in a socially acceptable manner.



Three main points of study:

1. archetypal characters ↗
2. archetypal images ↗
3. archetypal situations ↗



Examining “Cinderella” from an Archetypal Perspective

- Examine the stepmother and stepsisters as archetypal villains.
- Examine the chores Cinderella must complete (especially involving the beans in the fireplace in Grimm version) as the archetypal catalogue of difficult tasks.



Main areas of study/points of criticism:

Traditional history is, by its nature, a subjective narrative, usually told from the point of view of the powerful.

- The losers of history do not have the means to write their stories, nor is there usually an audience interested in hearing them. Most cultures, once dominated by another, are forced to forget their past.
- To maintain its sovereignty, the culture of power simply does not allow the defeated culture to be remembered.



Examining “Cinderella” from a New Historicist Perspective

- What can we infer about the society in which this story—considering, especially, the violence and vengeance in the Grimm version—would evolve and be told to young children?
- What can we infer about property and inheritance laws in the society in which “Cinderella” evolved? What can we infer about the society’s view of royalty and monarchic power?



Three main areas of study:

1. form and unity 
2. diction 
3. incongruities or inconsistencies 



Examining “Cinderella” from a Formalist Perspective

- Look for symbolic, or some other, significance for the specific items and animals chosen (for the coach and staff) and/or the numbers of each chosen.
- Compare the speech patterns of Cinderella and the stepmother and stepsisters. Are there noticeable differences in cadence? Do any use more (or less) figurative or poetic language than the others? Do any speak noticeably more (or less) than the others?