Biographical, Historical & Postmodern Criticism

**Biographical Criticism** relates author's life and thoughts to his or her work.

**Assumptions**
- Literary studies include knowledge of context in which work was created vs. literature manifesting "universal" transcendence of the conditions of its genesis (Plato)
- Don't equate work with the author's life. They are not the same.
- Avoid less than credible sources (speculative or controversial).

**Questions to ask:**
- How does the text reflect the author's life?
- Is the text an extension of the author's position on issues in the author's life?
- What about the author's life can aid in interpreting and understanding his or her work?

**Historical Criticism** or New Historicism is concerned with the period in which a text is produced

**Assumptions**
- Thematic elements are related to the culture, context, discourse, ideology and concept of self
- The reader places the text in the context of the historical period when it is written (historiography) or the period that is the setting of the work.

**Questions to Ask**
- How do events and zeitgeist (cultural feel) that surround the writing of a text lend meaning?
- If there is correlation in the work to historical figures, movements, documents or events, is there any bias in the work that would affect representational faithfulness?
- Is the use of historical elements serving to make a good story, or is it an attempt at revision?

**Postmodern Criticism** pertains to the relationship of language and meaning

**Assumptions**
- It rejects the certainty of meaning
- Analyzes the text and exposes its ambiguities
- Its goal is to upset the connection between text and perceived reality

**Questions to ask:**
- What assumptions or presuppositions predispose a text's meaning?
- How does the language, micro and macro, contradict itself?
- Can there be a fresh interpretation of a text?