Literary Theory and Making Meaning:

- are ways throughout history that literature… culture – have been “thought” about

- glasses/filters/perspectives through which we understand our world and, in particular, the literature we read

- reading a piece of lit. with a different perspective adds “meaning”

- each literary theory (filter/glasses) draws attention to certain features of the text, illuminating meaning

Formalism: maintains a piece of literature is a structure of words artfully arranged so that content and form make up the total meaning of a text; a Formalist seeks meaning through a “close reading” of the text and does not venture “outside” of its structure.

A Formalist looks at the text for many things:

1. diction – choice of words, denotation (definition), connotation (figurative meaning)

2. syntax – sentence structure

3. paragraph – length, development, coherence, emphasis, purpose

4. dialogue

5. style

6. narrator – point of view, why does the author choose to tell the story in this way?

7. tone – attitude of speaker/narrator

8. atmosphere

9. setting

10. character

11. plot

12. symbolism

13. theme

14. structure

15. title