

MIDTERM STUDY SHEET  
English 117B

} courtesy of Jeanne Castello

**New Criticism:** Don't do it

**Philosophical/Epistemological:** How do the characters acquire knowledge? What kind of knowledge do they call upon or rely upon? Where does this get them? What does it suggest about them and the society they live in?

**Structuralism:** We've been over this. . .map out the structural relationships/positions suggested in the passage. Discuss the character(s)' place within the structure you are describing. How does this position define his behavior and/or constrain it? Is the structure you describe similar or conflicting with other structures or relationships in the play?

**Psychoanalysis (Miller style):** How would you describe the family dynamics suggested by the passage? How do these dynamics affect the character(s)' behavior. How do such ideas as "narcissistic disorder," "introjection," "perversion," "depression/grandiosity", etc. etc. help to explain what's happening in the passage?

**New Historicism:** What are the relations of power suggested by the passage? How is power operating, either explicitly or secretly in the play? What might threaten that operation of power? How do those with authority attempt to contain those subversive threats? Also, what external events does the passage point to, an understanding of which might help elucidate the passage?

**Feminist Criticism:** Ask many of the questions above but with a special emphasis upon the way in which gender (female in particular, but male as well) is presented/constructed in the play. What does this presentation suggest about the position of women in the play, even Renaissance society?

**Anthropological:** Focus on the major "ideological practices" of the play—death is the one we discussed—and talk about the cultural/ritual aspect of them. What "work" do they do, both for individuals and groups? You may also want to look at how a culture or a person constructs its unity out of the process of creating and denigrating the opposite (woman, death, etc.).

**Cultural Materialism:** The questions are similar to those asked by New Historicists, but where they would be interested in the folks on top (kings, fathers, God etc.), Cultural Materialists focus on the marginal groups/characters. They ask how is power subverted from these margins? Is there possibility for alternative political worlds? for change?

**Generic Criticism:** What is tragic about the play? Think in social as well as individual terms.

or comedic, etc, etc

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