



Method Theory

Finding Meaning in Literature and
Changing Your Life



IT WAS THE BEST OF
TIMES, IT WAS THE...
HELLO? IS ANYONE
GETTING THIS??



Advisory

- The following contains blasphemy towards classic novels and fundamental components of reading. Please remain seated and logged on.
- “Method Theory” is all about the individual. It’s not closed-minded or narcissistic, it’s personal (and narcissistic)
- This is a suggestion, not a fact.
- Meaning and connection are similar but different.
- This needs to be simple...

My Life With Books



All Apologies to my Teachers



“When I stepped out into the bright sunlight, from the darkness of the movie house, I had only two things on my mind: Paul Newman and a ride home...”

-The Outsiders
S.E. Hinton



“College was very confusing times...”

Literary Theory

- Systematic study of literature
- Principles and methods to understand a text; reading a text through a different lens
- Forms a relationship between text and reader
- Each consist of "do's" and "don'ts"
- Finding meaning varies depending on theory

Formalism

Pros

- Centered around the text itself
- Does not require much research into the context of the text
- Emphasis on formal devices of text; motifs, plot, grammar...

Cons

- Writer/Context does not matter
- No outside influences
- Difficulty in finding meaning/connection and allowing reader to be an individual.

Marxism

Pros

- Recognizing class conflict and distinctions
- New ways of understanding social, economic, and political paradigms and relations
- Emphasizes the author, historical context, and changing world

Cons

- More about the text and content than the reader
- Facts over beliefs

Gender, Sexuality, and Race

- Feminism Theory
- African-American Theory
- Queer Theory
- Principles and ideology to analyze the text; economic, social, political, and psychological forces
- Useful in finding meaning in older text
- Politics and ethics over individual views

Reader-Response

- Autobiographical; places the reader at the forefront
- Recognizes that different people view texts differently
- Too subjective; no criteria (that's bad?)
- Does not solve the problem I was having with making a connection
- Based on experience; what if you don't have any?

The Slow, Agonizing Birth of Method Theory

- It took me five years to finish reading F. Scott Fitzgerald's "Winter Dreams..."



Winter Dreams...

Dexter Green cadies at a golf course where he meets Judy Jones; first meeting she throws a tantrum, Dexter quits. Years later, he becomes a successful businessman, returns to the club, meets Judy again, she's dating someone but leaves him to go on a date with Dexter, he falls for her.

They have an on again off again relationship that summer until Dexter leaves and becomes engaged; engagement ends as Judy returns once more to Dexter.

They don't last and Dexter is called away by World War I. They never see each other again; Dexter becomes more successful, finds out that Judy ended up marrying an awful man and her allure has faded; this realization crushes Dexter because the illusion of that love is now over.

Come Together...Over Me

- This experience mirrored the text
- Literary Theory helped but there was no emotion
 - Any theory is possible if you use personal connection
- My meaning is my own
- There is a connection beyond the text
- The meaning is now more important than the text

Method Theory

- Begins where Literary Theory ends; the analysis of a text is just the beginning
- Use a text for what you need
- Combines principles of:
 - Literary Theory (finding a lens to view a work, most notably R/R)
 - Method Acting (developing a connection, even if there isn't one)
 - Metacognition
 - Action
- Main goals are seeking a greater meaning/connection with end results that extend beyond the text
- There has to be a lot of yourself in this...there is no holding back

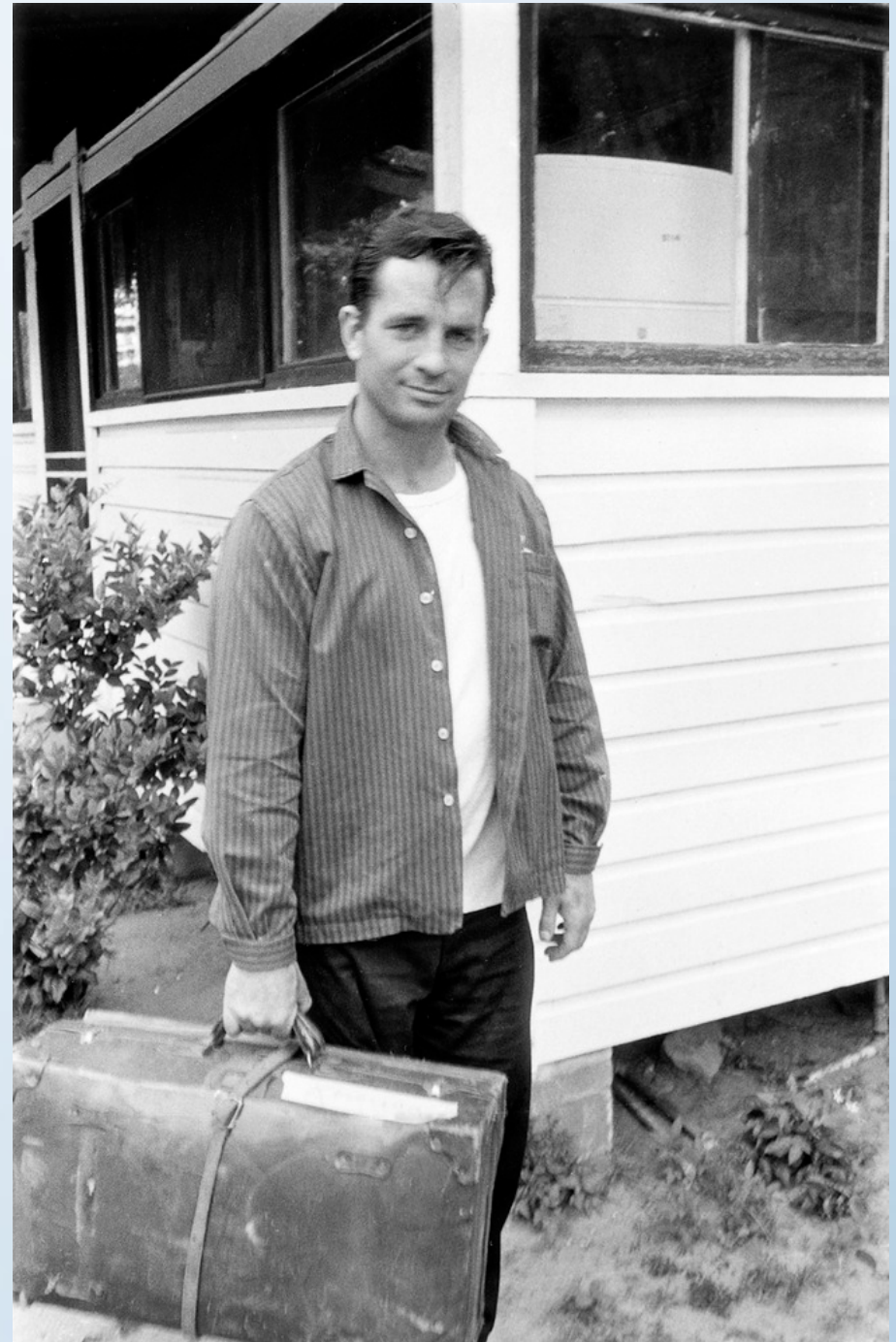
Method Acting/Reading

- Connection between reader and text
- Activating emotions, experiences, drawing on memory for a "performance"
- Substitutions
- Physical Transformation



“On the Road”

- I felt disconnected with Kerouac's novel
- I had to find meaning in it
- Made a physical change
- A stronger connection formed, new meaning developed



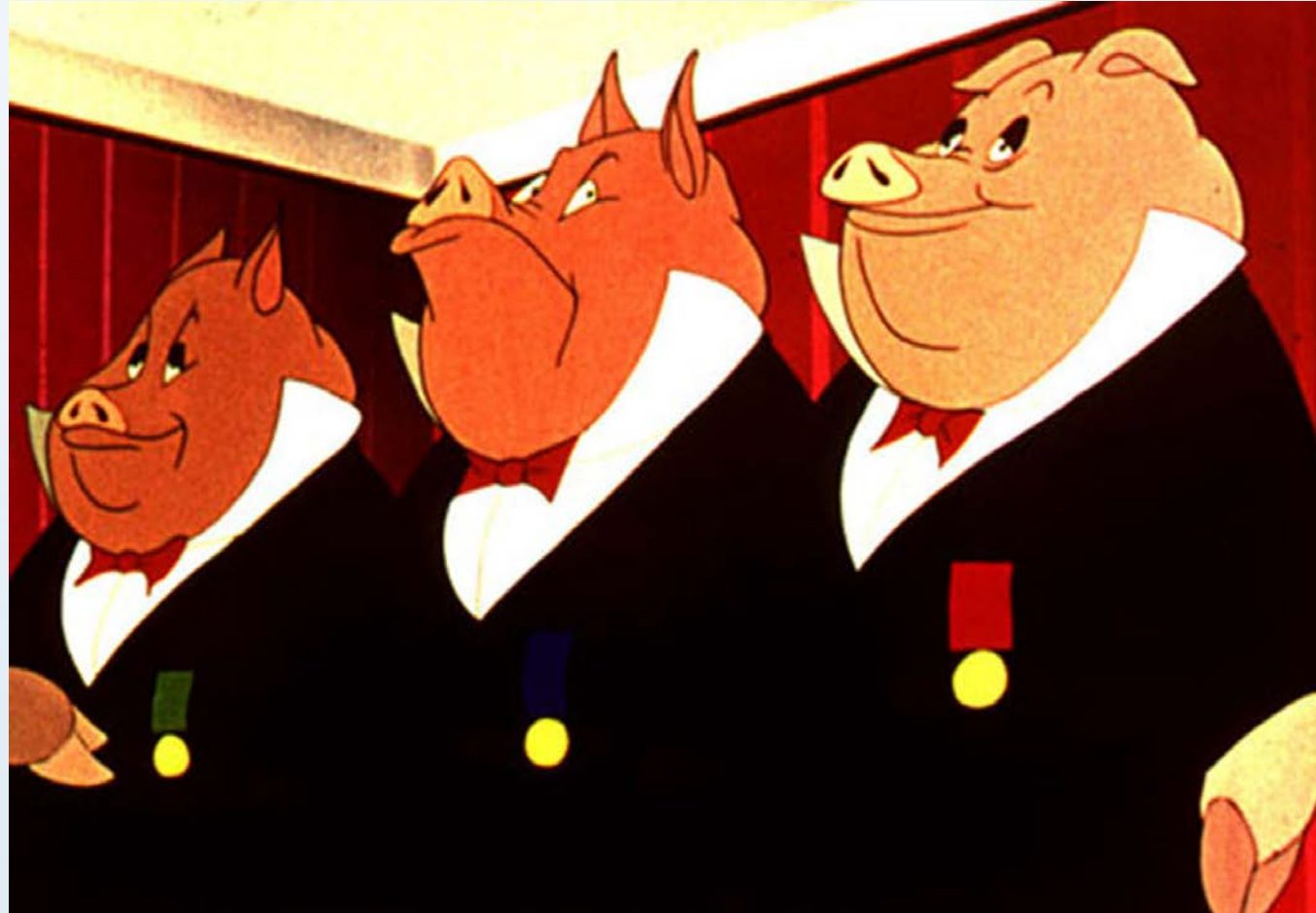
Metacognition

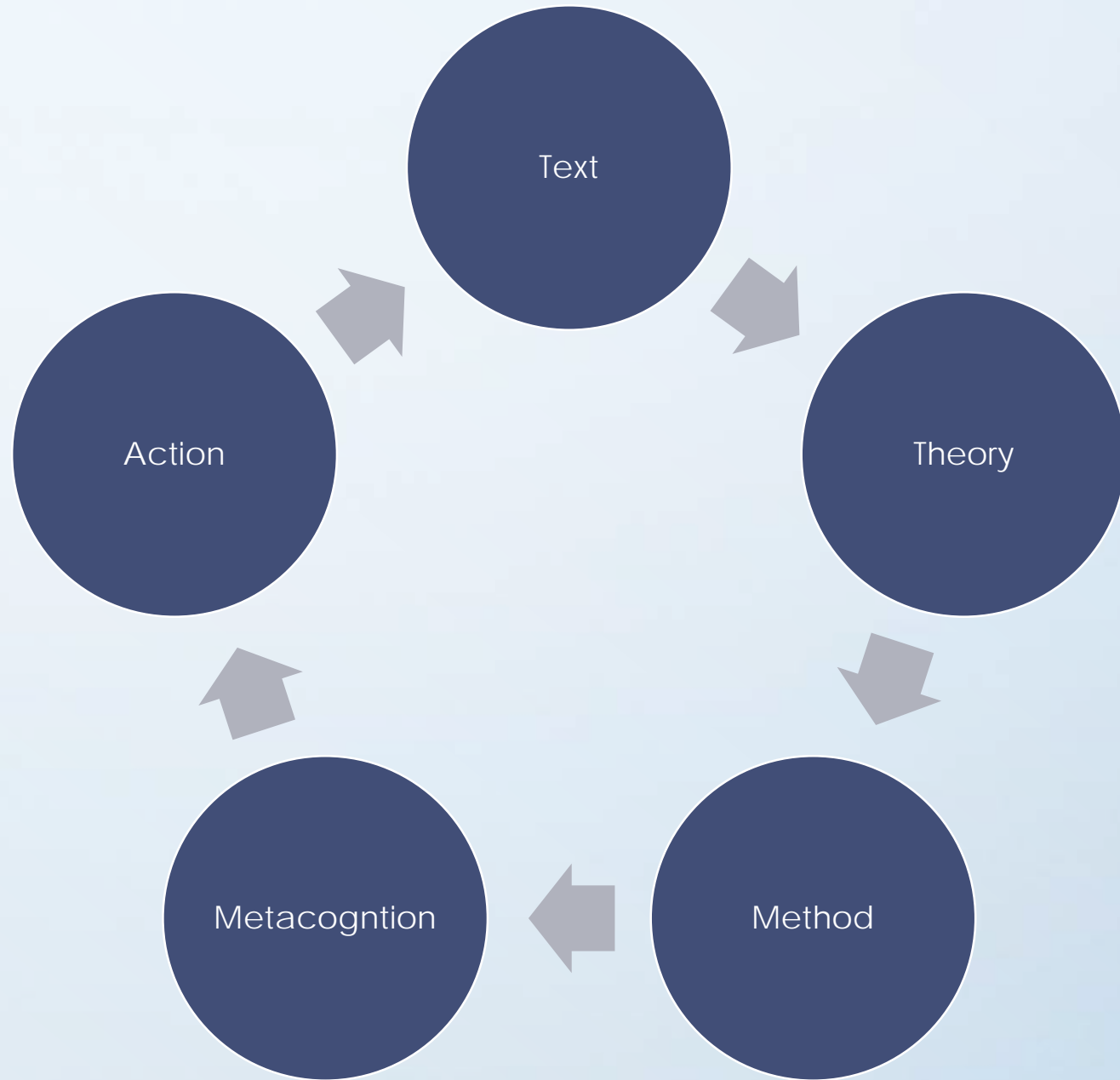
- To understand the process and meaning
 - If the process is up to the reader, then they really, really need to know what it all meant.
- To boost motivation
- To support assumptions
- Metacognitive Questions
 - How do you know that?
 - How did I figure out meaning in the text?
 - Knowing “This,” I now know “that”

Action

- Finding a way to take action; to transfer the meaning you find in the book into your life
- Does not have to be a monumental act
 - “Mother’s anxiety”
- Let the character guide us
- The book does not go back on the shelf

The Accidental Vegetarian





"The Red Wheelbarrow"

-William Carlos Williams

so much depends

upon

a red wheel

barrow

glazed with rain

water

beside the white

chickens.

Finding Meaning Using Method Theory

- Theory
 - What Literary Theories could help analyze the poem?
- Method
 - How will I make a connection?
 - Have I experienced this?
 - Should I intentionally experience this?
 - Substitutions?
- Metacognition
 - How do I know this?
- Action
 - Knowing what I know, what should I do?

Finding Meaning with Method Theory

so much depends
upon
a red wheel
barrow
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chickens.

- Theory
 - Marxist Theory
- Method
 - Working in the garden with my dad
 - Wheel barrow is him, I'm the chickens
- Metacognition
 - My relationship with him is important
- Action
 - Coming to terms with my working class roots and building a better relationship with my dad

O Captain! My Captain!

- To develop this into a curriculum
- A struggle for students at first
- This is about them; diversity
- Reflection on childhood
- Group discussions
- Incorporating film, music, television, and art...

Death Bed Version

- Writing exercises to flesh out connections
 - Therapeutic uses
- Literary theory is about reflection, Method theory is about growth.
- See how other's use it
- Incorporating other acting techniques
- Other art forms as well

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Work Cited

