

**NOTES**

Chapter 6 “Columbus Did What? Postcolonialism in the Literature Classroom” in *Critical Encounters in High School English: Teaching Literary Theory to Adolescents* by Deborah Appleman defines Postcolonialism as a way of seeing the world that helps us make “connections among all the domains of our experience—the psychological, ideological, social, political, intellectual, and aesthetic—in ways that show us just how inseparable these categories are in our lived experiences of ourselves and our world” (85).

Reading a text with a postcolonial lens requires the reader to question the construction of a worldview that inherently privileges the perspectives of those who constructed it.

Assumptions of Postcolonialism

1. Colonialism is a powerful, often destructive historical force that shapes not only the political futures of the countries involved but also the identities of colonized and colonizing people.
2. Successful colonialism depends on a process of “Othering” the people colonized. That is, the colonized people are seen as dramatically different from the lesser than the colonizers.
3. Because of this, literature written by colonizing cultures often distorts the experiences and realities of the colonized people. Literature written by colonized people often includes attempts to articulate more empowered identities and reclaim cultures in the face of colonization (Appleman 151).

Strategies for Reading with a Postcolonial Lens

1. Search the text for references to colonization or to currently and formerly colonized people. In these references, how are the colonized people portrayed? How is the process of colonization portrayed?
2. Consider what images of “Others” or processes of “Othering” are present in the text. How are these “Others” portrayed?
3. Analyze how the text deals with cultural conflicts between the colonizing culture and the colonized or traditional culture (Appleman 151).

Questions Postcolonialists ask about Literary Works

1. How is the text shaped by its (intention or unintentional) representation of cultural difference (the ways in which race, class, sex, gender, religion, cultural beliefs, and customs combine to form individual identity)?
2. Does this representation support or undermine colonialist ideologies? (Tyson 452).

References

- Appleman, Deborah. (2009). *Critical Encounters in High School English: Teaching Literary Theory to Adolescents* (2nd ed). Urbana, Illinois: NCTE.
- Tyson, Lois. (2006). *Critical Theory Today: A User Friendly Guide* (2nd ed). New York, NY: Routledge.