

**NOTES**

Chapter 5 “*The Social Construction of Gender: A Lens of One’s Own*” in *Critical Encounters in High School English: Teaching Literary Theory to Adolescents* by Deborah Appleman defines constructions of gender, as “constructions that hold both females and males hostage, in adolescence and beyond, to limiting social expectations of behavior” (66).

Reading texts with a gender lens requires the reader to examine the patterns of thought, behavior, values, enfranchisement, and power in relations between the sexes.

Assumptions of Gender Constructions

1. The work doesn’t have an objective status, an autonomy; instead, any reading of it is influenced by the reader’s status, which includes gender, or attitudes toward gender.
2. In the production of literature and within stories themselves, men and women have not had equal access.
3. Men and women are different: They write differently, and write about their reading differently. These differences should be valued (Appleman 149).

Strategies for Reading with a Gender Lens

1. Consider the gender of the author or the characters: What role does gender or sexuality play in this work?
2. Specifically, observe how sexual stereotypes might be reinforced or undermined. Try to see how the work reflects or distorts the place of women (and men) in society.
3. Look at the effects of power drawn from gender within the plot or form (Appleman 149).

Questions Gender Constructionists ask about Literary Works

1. How is the text shaped by its (intentional or unintentional) representation of patriarchal and/or matriarchal norms and values?
2. Does this representation support or undermine these norms and values? (Tyson 451).

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.