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## **Fantasy Theme Criticism**

### **History**

Ernest G. Bormann developed fantasy-theme criticism to analyze communication in small groups. He graduated in 1949 from the University of South Dakota and in addition to teaching at several other universities, began at the University of Minnesota in 1959.

### **Symbolic Convergence**

Symbolic convergence is based on the assumptions that: 1) reality changes as the symbols used to represent it change, and 2) meanings for symbols may converge to create a shared reality.

When individuals come together to form a consensus of shared symbolic realities, a group can be created to achieve understanding. Emotions, symbols, codes (either visual or verbal) and a common theme are all elements of symbolic convergence. The text also refers to this as the rhetorical vision.

### **Fantasy-Theme Criticism**

Fantasy, in the context of this school of criticism is, “the creative and imaginative interpretation of events” (Foss, 110). It deals with events from the past, the future, or current happenings that do not immediately deal with the group. A story is told from the group’s perspective that revolves around their shared fantasy. Using agreed-upon symbols and code words they form their shared reality. These elements may mean nothing to the outsider, but will make complete sense when viewed from within the context of the shared fantasy.

## **Using Fantasy-Theme Criticism to Analyze an Artifact**

In fantasy-theme criticism, the analysis is based on the characters, their actions and the settings in which they occur. These factors are both organized and artistic in nature to explain a situation or experience. Two units are used for this type of analysis:

### **Unit 1 – Fantasy Theme**

#### Character Themes

These will be used to describe the agents and actors in the story, and will have motives and characteristics associated with them.

#### Action Themes

Also called plotlines, these themes deal with the actions the agents/actors engage in to create the drama.

#### Setting Themes

This category can include the actual name of the place where the actions take place, but can also describe the characteristics of the scene.

### **Unit 2 – Rhetorical Vision**

This involves putting together the shared fantasies and fantasy themes, resulting in the group's common interpretation of reality. The participants in the rhetorical vision form a rhetorical community.

## **Media Used**

Scene from the movie Miracle:

Links: [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vwpTj\\_Z9v-c](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vwpTj_Z9v-c)

Understanding Gang Life by Nanon Williams:

<http://home4.inet.tele.dk/lepan/lene/nanon/nanon1.htm>