

The Social Context(s) of a Text

(a text is any form of communication between persons: conversation, song, film, essay, novel, etc.)

Social Context is defined as the circumstances or factors that form or inform the content, form, production, and interpretation of a text.

When you read, you enter into a transaction or a relationship with the text, and by extension its author. This relationship goes back and forth as you try to make meaning as you read, as you use cues and clues in the text and from your own life to understand what you read. This relationship is not fixed, which explains why when you reread a text years later the meaning you get from it is different. The text did not change, you did and so did the circumstances for reading it again.

When a person writes you create this relationship between the text and your future readers. So, the you / the writer is also a product of your life and times and so these cannot help but be infused into your work, however consciously or unconsciously.

The bottom line is that whenever you READ, it is important to take into account all of these factors in order to make sense of what you read.

The Social Context of the **Interpretation / Reading of the Text:**

- Of you, the Reader / Interpreter / Viewer, as a person: age, race, values, experiences, hobbies, family, friends, religion, previous reading experiences, etc.
- Of the socio-historical times in which the reader lives
- Of the conditions influencing the reading: reason / purpose for reading (eg school, work, or pleasure), the classroom scenario, the assignment
- Of the critical lens through you are analyzing the text: feminism, gender theory, genre theory, structuralism, etc.

Social Context of the **Writing/Production of the Text:**

- Of the writer / producer as a person: values, beliefs, personal experiences, family, biography, interests, hobbies, race, gender, age, etc.
- Of the socio-historical times in which the writer / producer lived: war, revolution, terrorism, civil rights, colonialism, globalization, social media, global warming, the plague, religious freedom, feminism, etc.
- Of the condition influencing the production – is classroom, writing community, paid on spec, freelance, etc.
- Of the publishing and consumption market of the day: was the genre re-popularized? How was the author paid? Did they have to change their name to be published? Were they only published after death? Were they exiled or jailed for their work? How accessible was the work?

Social Context within the **Text:**

How all the elements of text interrelate including genre, text type, purpose, tone, mood, topic/theme, relationships, literary elements, literary techniques, etc.