

THEORY: What is it?

PART THREE

ASKING QUESTIONS

- Some typical questions to ask when you approach a new theory or methodology:



Question One

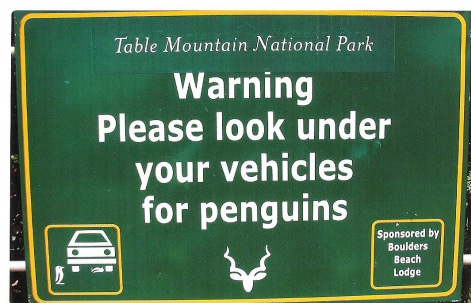
- What is the theory's attitude toward literature? According to this theory, what role does literature play in everyday life? In academic life?



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QUESTION TWO

- What does the theory take as its **object of study**? Individual texts? Literature as a whole? Language itself? Culture in general?



LOCATION: BOULDERS BEACH, SOUTH AFRICA. CREDIT: SCOTT DUNN
The diagram in the lower left looks more like the penguins are simply providing a free brake inspection.

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QUESTION THREE

- What is the theory's attitude toward a literary text's social, historical, political, conventional context?
- Does it seek to isolate the text from that context or
- to situate it within that context?



QUESTION FOUR

- What does the theory see as the function of literary criticism?
 - Explication?
 - Cultivation of "taste?"
 - Scientific enquiry?
 - Social Critique?
 - Political Agitation?



Left lane for mid-life crisis; right lane for abandoning New Year's resolutions.

QUESTION FIVE

- Is the theory generally conservative (upholding the *status quo*, **hegemonic**) or is it more radical (challenging the *status quo*, **counter-hegemonic**)?



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