



Illinois Wesleyan University
Digital Commons @ IWU

John Wesley Powell Student Research
Conference

2012, 23rd Annual JWP Conference

Apr 14th, 11:00 AM - 12:00 PM

A Schema-Theoretic Approach to Agreement and Disagreement in Literary Interpretation

Amy Fairgrieve
Illinois Wesleyan University

Wes Champman, Faculty Advisor
Illinois Wesleyan University

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.iwu.edu/jwprc>

Fairgrieve, Amy and Champman, Faculty Advisor, Wes, "A Schema-Theoretic Approach to Agreement and Disagreement in Literary Interpretation" (2012). *John Wesley Powell Student Research Conference*. 2.

<https://digitalcommons.iwu.edu/jwprc/2012/oralpres13/2>

This Event is protected by copyright and/or related rights. It has been brought to you by Digital Commons @ IWU with permission from the rights-holder(s). You are free to use this material in any way that is permitted by the copyright and related rights legislation that applies to your use. For other uses you need to obtain permission from the rights-holder(s) directly, unless additional rights are indicated by a Creative Commons license in the record and/ or on the work itself. This material has been accepted for inclusion by faculty at Illinois Wesleyan University. For more information, please contact digitalcommons@iwu.edu.

©Copyright is owned by the author of this document.

Oral Presentation O13.2

**A SCHEMA-THEORETIC APPROACH TO AGREEMENT AND DISAGREEMENT IN
LITERARY INTERPRETATION**

Amy Fairgrieve and Wes Chapman*
English Department, Illinois Wesleyan University

In this paper I undertake explain how we come to agree or disagree about interpretations of literary texts. The foundation for my argument is schema theory, a cognitive theory of memory structure, which I use to demonstrate how each of us develops an overall interpretation of a given story or poem. I consider how schema content is formed through cultural and individual experiences, then suggest several patterns of schema usage that occur as we read and lead to a unique interpretation. Finally, I discuss how schematic learning experienced when we discuss literature with others affects whether we agree or disagree with them. In order to support this argument, I draw from my own empirical research, consisting of undergraduate English students reading and responding to a set poem. I also draw from important figures in cognitive theory such as David Rumelhart, Mark Turner, Gilles Fauconnier, and Patrick Colm Hogan.