We can categorize three different groups of theories, regarding the location of meaning

1. *World Behind the text* (Author-centered)

2. *World Within the text* (Text-centered)

3. *World in front of the text* (Reader-centered)

Interpretation will be impaired when any one world is given exclusive reign while neglecting the other two!

Interpreting a text well requires the following from you.

1. Observe text
2. Ask key text driven questions
3. Answer questions using textual evidence and interpretive tools (word studies/cultural historical background, etc.)

We can use the same three big questions each time we seek to interpret a text

1. What do we know?
2. What happens in the text or what is the text seeking to describe or explain?
3. What does the text mean?

**Read the extracts below and answer the questions about each text. You may need to do some research to answer the ‘what do we know?’ questions.**

The extracts below are taken from Charles Darwin’s famous book *The Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection*.

“If it could be demonstrated that any complex organ existed, which could not possibly have been formed by numerous, successive, slight modifications, my theory would absolutely break down. But I can find no such case.”

“I see no good reasons why the views given in this volume should shock the religious views of anyone.”

**?**

The extract below is taken from the Gospel of *John* Chapter 11

**23**Jesus said to her, “Your brother will rise again.”

**24**Martha answered, “I know he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day.”

**25**Jesus said to her, “I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me will live, even though they die; **26**and whoever lives by believing in me will never die. Do you believe this?”

**27**“Yes, Lord,” she replied, “I believe that you are the Messiah, the Son of God, who is to come into the world.”

The first question we will ask is ‘what do we know?’ This means asking questions about the text like:

1. Who is the author of the text?

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1. What do we know about the author of the text?

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| --- | --- |
|  |  |

1. When was the text written?

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| --- | --- |
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1. Who was the text first told to? /who was the text written for?

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| --- | --- |
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1. Where does the text extract fit in the complete text?

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The second question we will ask is ‘what happens in the text?’ This means asking questions about the text like:

1. What characters, people, things or places are involved in the text?

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1. What happens in the text?

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1. Is there anything in the text I don’t understand?

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The third question we will ask is ‘what does the text mean?’ This means asking questions about the text like:

1. What do I think my friends and family would think of this text?

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1. What do I think of this text?

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1. What do I think someone who believed in Jesus would think about this text?

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1. How could this text change the way someone thought about this topic?

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