Reader-response criticism:

The systematic examination of the aspects of the text that arouse, shape, and guide a reader's response. According to reader-response criticism, the reader is a producer rather than a consumer of meanings. In this sense, a reader is a hypothetical construct of norms and expectations that can be derived or projected or extrapolated from the work and may even be said to inhere in the work. Because expectations may be violated or fulfilled, satisfied or frustrated, and because reading is a temporal process involving memory, perception, and anticipation, the charting of reader-response is extremely difficult and perpetually subject to construction and reconstruction, vision and revision.

Reader-response criticism, however, does not denote any specific theory. It can range from the phenomenological theories of Wolfgang Iser and Roman Ingarden -- both of whom argue that although the reader fills in the gaps, the author's intentional acts impose restrictions and conditions -- to the relativistic analysis of Stanley Fish, who argues that the interpretive strategy of the reader creates the text, there being no text except that which a reader or an interpretive community of readers creates. (See also Constance School of Reception Aesthetics, Implied reader, Reception theory.)