

NAME: _____ PERIOD: _____ DATE: _____

HOW TO COMPLETE A CLOSE READING

To do a close reading, you choose a specific passage and analyze it in fine detail, as if with a magnifying glass. Then, comment on points of style and your reactions as a reader. Close reading is important because it is the building block for larger analysis. Your thoughts evolve not from someone else's truth about the reading, but from your own observations. The more closely you can observe, the more original and exact your ideas will be.

To begin your close reading, ask yourself several specific questions about the passage. The following questions are not a formula, but a starting point for your own thoughts.

I. First Impressions:

- What is the first thing you notice about the passage?
- What is the second thing?
- Do the two things you noticed complement each other? Or contradict each other?
- What mood does the passage create in you? Why?

II. Vocabulary and Diction:

- Which words do you notice first? Why?
- How do the important words relate to one another?
- Do any words seem oddly used to you? Why?
- Look up any unfamiliar words.

III. Discerning Patterns:

- What is the sentence rhythm like? Short and choppy? Long and flowing? Does it build or stay even?
- Look at the punctuation. Is there anything unusual about it?
- Is there any repetition within the passage? What is the effect of that repetition?
- What is left out or kept silent? What would you expect the author to talk about that was avoided?

IV. Point of View and Characterization:

- How does the passage make you react?
- What does it make you think about?
- Are there descriptions that appeal to the senses? Why might the author have chosen that?
- How would you describe the style?

V. Symbolism:

- Are there metaphors and/or similes? What kinds?
- Is there any kind of symbolism mentioned? How come?
- How might objects represent something else?
- Does anything have traditional connotation or meaning? What about religious or biblical significance?

HOW TO BEGIN A CLOSE READING

1. Read with a pencil in hand, and annotate the text.

"Annotating" means underlining or highlighting key words and phrases—anything that strikes you as surprising or significant, or that raises questions—as well as making notes in the margins. When we respond to a text in this way, we not only force ourselves to pay close attention, but we also begin to think with the author about the evidence—the first step in moving from reader to writer.

2. Look for patterns in the things you've noticed about the text—repetitions, contradictions, similarities, etc.

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3. Ask questions about the patterns you've noticed—especially how and why.