

## Close Reading

Authors write every word carefully and with intention, and it follows that we should read the same way. Close reading helps us understand a text more fully and is important when we write essays about a text. Reading closely and critically also develops our own skills as writers, as we are able to evaluate which techniques we like, which work, and which don't.

### Close Reading is a Process

1. *While we read*, we need to think about what we're reading by asking questions, taking notes, and going back and rereading as new information reveals itself to us.
2. *After we read*, we need to evaluate and synthesize our notes and observations to connect them to the broader context of the text.
3. *When we write*, we need to express how particular passages and techniques are used to further the meaning of the whole text and whether they are effective in doing so.

### Techniques For Close Reading

While we read:

- **Annotate:** Write notes and questions in the margins. Make your own system of signals. For example, use an asterisk to signal something that seems important or stands out, an underline to signal significant words or phrases, and a question mark to signal something you don't understand.
- **Bookmark:** When you come across an interesting page or passage, bookmark it.
- **Summarize:** At the end of a section, summarize main ideas and your initial impressions.
- **Reread:** As you read and discover new information, go back to parts that might have been clarified or have a new meaning, especially the parts that you did not understand during the first readthrough.

After we read:

- **Find patterns:** Look back at your notes to find any connections or repetition.
- **Choose your section(s):** Based on your notes and what you bookmarked, choose a passage or passages to look at in more depth.
- **Get specific:** Once you've chosen your passages, look again at the smaller details and how they connect back to the larger purpose. Take more notes.

When we write:

- **Prewrite:** Write down all of your ideas about the text as a whole and the passage(s) you chose specifically. Make a list of questions and try to answer them.
- **Make a thesis:** Based on your pre-write, create an argument about the text that is supported by close reading you've done.
- **Integrate quotes:** Your reader isn't going to immediately understand all the ideas you worked so hard to come up with. Give the quote context and analyze it in depth.
- **Ask yourself "How?" and "Why?":** Continue to further your understanding and analysis as you write by asking yourself "how?" and "why?" Why did the author use this word? How does this affect the meaning of the story? How does this tie back to my argument?