

Close Reading

READING TO WRITE

People read differently for different purposes. When you read in order to cram for a quiz, you might scan only the first line of every paragraph of a text. When you read for pleasure, you might permit yourself to linger for

SUGGESTED CLOSE READING CHECKLIST

As stated above, close reading is a necessary skill that will be very useful to you no matter your discipline or your eventual profession. Your classes, your work, your government, and even your pastimes will require you to read or evaluate something difficult, to find hand- and footholds in the material, and make sense of it. In general, "close reading" simply means analyzing a text—be it a photograph, a short story, a poem, a scholarly essay, an operation manual, a tax form, a television commercial—very carefully, crystallizing main ideas, and then drawing conclusions or making decisions based on your analysis.

In other words, close reading means reading a text closely: looking at the details and discussing how those details lead you to make conclusions about the text. The idea is to look at the little pieces and see how they connect to the whole. Close reading is a writing strategy meant to help you gain a better understanding of your reading of a text and to provide you with the necessary textual evidence to support that reading. The goal of any close reading is the following:

an ability to

- Write down key ideas, pages to return to, terms, and quotes that may be helpful in your own understanding and argument.
- d. Also try to discover the meaning of key words and concepts from the reading. Some terms have specialized definitions that you will learn only from context. Two good places to look online are: www.dictionary.com and www.wikipedia.com.
 - e. Pay close attention to the . How does the language itself work in the text?
 - f. . For whom was it written?
By whom? Why? Has it been well received?
2. Next, look for ways that the data is connected. Look for patterns. See if there are parallel structures or ideas. Note the structure of the passage and see if the structure is related to the content in any way. Do you see anything being compared or contrasted? Do these pieces fit together in any meaningful ways? What theme(s) does the work develop? Why is the text or passage or statement important? What are its overall claims? Remember to focus on the "how" and "why"—don't just summarize what the text does— the text and figure out and explain how the language is down what it's doing.
 3. Finally, report your findings. This is when you communicate the conclusions you have made. You will always need to refer to your data to illustrate, support, and explain your findings. That means paraphrasing or using quotes from the original text. Along with explanations of why those details are important to your discussion. A good rule of thumb is "introduce, quote, explain" when using others' words in an essay. First, introduce the quote and give it some context, then quote the essential part of the passage, and then explain how that quote ties into your conclusions. Remember, your goal is to show how these small details contribute to the overall meaning of the text.