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Introduction

What Is Close Reading?

Close reading is thoughtful, critical analysis of a text. When using the strategy, students focus on significant details or patterns in order to develop a deep, precise understanding of the text. The reader directs their attention to the text itself instead of relying on background knowledge for comprehension and re-reads a text multiple times to look closely at its meaning. This strategy is meant to level the playing field for students; if everyone has to answer questions using only information from what they read, all should be able to do so equally well. Those who have a wealth of background information have less of an advantage over those who don't. Close reading includes the following:

- Using short passages and excerpts
- Diving right into the text with limited pre-reading activities
- Focusing on the text itself instead of making connections to or relying on prior knowledge
- Re-reading deliberately
- Reading with a pencil to mark and make notes during reading, including thoughts on interesting or exciting parts, questions or other ideas
- Noticing things that are confusing and using fix-up strategies to make sense of the text (such as re-reading or studying pictures or other text features)
- Discussing the text with others
- Using Think-Pair-Share or Turn-and-Talk frequently
- Working in small groups and as a class
- Responding to text-dependent questions

Steps in a Close Reading Lesson

Have your students re-read your chosen text several times over several days and use the question stems on page 3 and the graphic organisers on pages 4–22 to help students focus their thoughts.

The following steps are meant to guide you in crafting a lesson that scaffolds students and focuses on increasingly complex text-dependent questions.

1. FIRST READ: Key Ideas and Details

Here you will focus on the most important elements of the text – key ideas and details. Set the purpose

for reading, and have students read text as independently as possible. The first read should be done without building background knowledge; students should be making meaning from the text as they read. Focus on the big ideas in the text, making sure that readers know the main idea, story elements and supporting details. They may use graphic organisers to shape their thinking.

Following the first read, pose a text-dependent question (see question stems on page 3), reminding students to find evidence from the text to support their answers. Then, have students Think-Pair-Share to assess what they have gleaned from the text. By listening as they share, you can determine how well the students understand the big ideas of the text, helping you focus future close readings.

2. SECOND READ: Craft and Structure

Here you will focus on how the text works. Use a text-dependent question to focus and set a purpose for re-reading. For the second close read, have students re-read a section that includes complex elements or ideas that they should explore to arrive at a deeper understanding of the text.

After re-reading, students should discuss the text with partners or in small groups, focusing on the author's craft and organisational patterns. This may include vocabulary choices, text structure or text features that the author included. Students use graphic organisers to record their ideas. After students share with partners or in small groups, have groups share with the entire class to assess understanding.

3. THIRD READ: Integration of Knowledge and Ideas

Here you will focus on what the text means to the reader and how it connects to other experiences. This reading of a text should go even deeper, requiring students to synthesise and analyse information from several texts or media. This is the perfect opportunity for students to relate the text they are reading to a theme or another text on a similar topic. They may record their ideas on sticky notes or graphic organisers. Have students journal a response to a text-dependent question. Focus the whole-class discussion on finding text evidence to support their ideas.

Name _____

Date _____

Story

Elements

Characters

Setting

Title

Problem

Solution

Name _____

Date _____

Be a Word Sleuth!

Word I don't know

The text says

So I think the word means

Word I don't know

The text says

So I think the word means

Word I don't know

The text says

So I think the word means

Word I don't know

The text says

So I think the word means

Name _____

Date _____

What's the Problem?

What is the problem faced by the character?

Why does the problem occur?

List three important events relating to the problem.

1 _____

2 _____

3 _____

How is the problem resolved?



One Big Leap!

Kelly stretched the piece of red string across the white rug. That finish line would be as easy to spot as a beach ball on the sand. She handed a small, purple paper frog to her younger brother.

Henry frowned. "The other frog is green, which is my favourite colour. Besides, real frogs are green, not purple."

"Frogs come in many colours. I made the frogs, so I get first choice," Kelly said. She placed the frog on the floor and rested one finger on its back. "Press here; then slide your finger off, and the frog will jump forward. The first frog to cross the finish line wins."

Henry was ready when Kelly shouted, "Go!"

The green frog leaped forward. Kelly crawled after it and pressed on its back again. Whoosh! The frog leaped forward again. When Henry pressed on his frog, it flew up in the air and flipped over. He tried again and again. The frog had barely moved forward when Kelly shouted, "I win! Let's race again!"

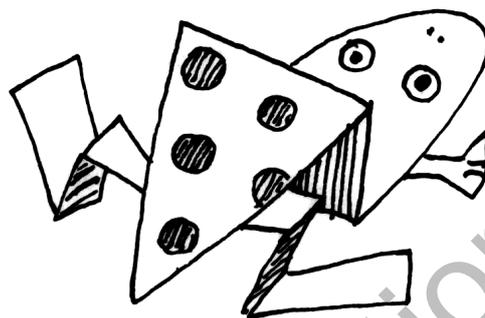
Henry asked, "Can you show me again how to make the frog jump?"

Kelly showed Henry. When they raced again, Henry's frog didn't act like an acrobat doing tricks, but it didn't keep up with Kelly's frog, either. Instead, it leaped right and left and even moved backward one time.

"I win. Let's race again!" Kelly shouted.

"Please, may I try the green frog?" Henry asked.

Kelly sighed and traded frogs with Henry. Henry smiled from ear to ear. "Thank you!"



Henry pressed on the green frog's back and quickly slid his finger off of it. The frog leaped forward, and Henry scrambled after it. As his frog got closer to the finish line, Henry noticed that Kelly's frog was beside his frog. The race was going to be close. Henry pressed again on the frog's back. The frog took one big leap over the finish line. "I win!" shouted Henry.

Kelly said, "Actually, I won. Both frogs are mine, since I made them. Let's race again."

Henry frowned. "I don't want to race anymore," he said.

Kelly raced the green frog with her right hand and the purple frog with her left hand. Kelly liked that one of her frogs won every time. She didn't like that her other frog lost every time. Kelly thought about how Henry must have felt. She went to her room, got some paper, and brought it to Henry's room.

"Henry, would you like to learn how to make your own frog?"

Henry picked a piece of dark green paper with light green polka dots. Kelly helped him fold the paper into a frog.

"Now, let's have a real race," Kelly said.

The Everlasting Storm



Thunder rumbles. A bolt of lightning cuts across the night sky. Another bolt closely follows it. This is the start of a chain of bright, colourful bolts. One comes about every two seconds. The storm will likely last about 10 hours. It happens every night. It is called the Catatumbo Lightning, and it has been happening for thousands of years. Some call it the Everlasting Storm.

The storm takes place in an area in Venezuela. It is where the Catatumbo River meets Lake Maracaibo. People who live there are used to the night lightning. They enjoy seeing it. Then they put down their blinds to sleep.

The lightning comes about 300 nights each year. It doesn't usually take a long break. But in 1906, there was an earthquake. It caused a tsunami, a huge sea wave. The lightning stopped for three weeks. Then in 2010, the area went for a long time with little rain. The lightning stopped for six weeks. It was the longest break there has been in the storm. The people living there missed the lightning. They worried it would not come back. Fishermen use the lightning to guide their boats back to shore. Without their lightning lighthouse, it is not as safe to sail in the dark.

What causes so much lightning in one place? Not everyone agrees on the answer. One group of scientists

thinks it is caused by methane gases. Oil under the lake makes methane gas. It bubbles up into the air over the lake. The scientists think the gas in the air makes it easier for lightning to happen.

Another group of scientists say there is not enough gas in the air there to cause all that lightning. They think the weather and geography are the cause. The lake is in a very sunny area. The water in the lake is like the water in a tea kettle. As it heats up, some of the water turns to steam or vapor. This puts a lot of water in the air above the lake. The lake is near the Caribbean Sea, and warm winds form over the sea. They blow over the lake and pick up the wet air there. There are mountains on the other three sides of the lake. The mountains trap the wind, and cool air comes down from the mountaintops. It crashes into the warm wet air from the sea. This causes thunderclouds to form. The lightning comes from the thunderclouds.

The cause of the Everlasting Storm may never be known for sure. But the people in Venezuela hope it lasts for thousands more years.

Fast Facts about the Catatumbo Lightning

- Up to 3600 bolts of lightning flash in one hour.
- You can see it as far as 400 kilometres away.
- The area holds a world record for the place with the most lightning.