



ELA Virtual Learning

Composition and Reading 2

April 17, 2020



Composition and Reading II

Lesson: April 17, 2020

Objective/Learning Target:

Students will practice “close reading” by evaluating the purpose of close reading, analyzing common close reading questions, and looking at model close readings that exemplify the practice.



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Answer the following questions in your notebook.

Starting Question(s):

- 1. Is there such a thing as a “true” reading of a text?**
- 2. How much say should an author have over how their text is interpreted?**
- 3. If a majority of readers agreed on the meaning of a text, would that meaning become the “true” one? Why, or why not?**



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Background:

Close reading, an aspect of a movement called “New Criticism”, is a method of literary analysis which focuses on the specific details of a passage or text in order to discern some deeper meaning present in it. The meaning derived from the close reading is the reader’s interpretation of the passage or text. To do a close reading, you choose a specific passage and analyze it in fine detail, as if with a magnifying glass. You then comment on points of style and on your reactions as a reader. Close reading is important because it is the building block for larger analysis.



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Lesson/Activity:

I would like for you to look at some example questions for reader response. Which section sticks out to you the most? Why? Nothing to write quite yet, just consider the question as you read.

[Close Reading Example Questions](#)



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Lesson/Activity/Practice 1:

Here are a few examples of Close Reading. Which method or example felt the most accessible to you and why? Write the answer in your notebook.

[Close Reading Examples by Method](#)



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Practice 2:

Complete the following practice in your notebooks.

Do a close read of **two** of the three stories that we have read so far. What is the deeper meaning that you, without any consideration for modes of criticism that we have addressed previously, pull from this text? Remember that in “new criticism”, you are the one that is providing the significance and the meaning.



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Practice 2 *Example*:

In Stetson's short story "The Yellow Wallpaper," it is interesting to note the types of plants that are present within the narrator's hallucinations. The narrator references "toadstools" as a recurring pattern in the wallpaper of her room; the narrator uses toadstools and other fungi as a symbolic image referencing the decay of the room. In common practice, a reference to fungi would indicate death or decay, but this could also be seen as an inversion of traditional floral imagery. In the story, the narrator is upset at being confined in her room, and seeks escape from the repressive treatment of her doctor husband. She hopes to invert the nature of her confinement so that she may have more autonomy, mirroring the struggle of women's social standing at the time. The narrator, perhaps inadvertently given her mental state, is exerting her autonomy over her space by altering the interpretation of the images that surround her. The narrator takes something that is traditionally beautiful and lively and turns it into something else. But this subversion does not necessarily indicate death. The fungi that the narrator sees still indicate life, just not in the traditional sense. The narrator is changing what *type* of life is in her surroundings, subverting traditional modes of beauty and asserting more control by proving the wallpaper, like herself, still contains life and vitality, but on her own terms.