

Close Reading

Close reading is a careful analysis of a passage in order to identify larger themes in the text.
It lays the groundwork for a comprehensive analysis of the entire text.
In order to do this, attention is given to the details of the passage.

Readers must take note of:

Word choice:	any words that stand out
Syntax:	how sentences are arranged
Recurring imagery:	patterns
Literary devices:	metaphors, irony

A close reading is not a plot summary.
Avoid retelling or paraphrasing the story.

Steps to a close reading:

1. Read the text.
Take note of anything that stands out, seems unusual or makes you ask questions (phrases, passages, the turning point) and write notes in the margins.
2. Choose a passage.
3. Analyze the passage by asking and answering questions about it.
4. Develop a descriptive thesis statement.
This is not your final thesis statement. It is, simply, an attempt to consolidate what you have discovered.
5. Construct an argument.

Close reading of a passage takes it out of context in terms of the text.
You must be able to put the passage back into context when you finish your analysis.
You must be able to tie the passage to the rest of the text.

Close Reading: Noticing, exploring, and integrating

The *what*, *why*, and *so what* of Literature

The “process” of literature is simply the fact that a reader starts with his/her mind, beliefs, and understanding in one place; through reading (or listening), these things are moved to another place.

e.g., We might believe a character to be honest, and in one simple line, he/she tells a lie that brings us to another understanding.

Noticing – the “What” of literature.

How is language being used in a specific sentence or paragraph?

e.g., Does the narrator suddenly change tense or point of view?

Does the wording evoke a comparison between here and there – then and now – us and them?

Exploring – the “Why” of literature.

What reason might the author have for using this language?

e.g., Does this help to create atmosphere?

Does it develop a character?

Integrating – the “So What” of literature.

What is the relevance of this small part to the whole?

e.g., Does it introduce or accentuate the theme?

Does it make a social or moral statement?

Does it explain character motivation?

Material adapted from:

[Start Here - Write a Close Reading - Guides at University of Guelph \(uoguelph.ca\)](#)

[Close Reading - Purdue OWL® - Purdue University](#)

