"We all begin as close readers. Even before we learn to read..." – Francine Prose

Close Reading

"Essentially, close reading means reading to uncover layers of meaning that lead to deep comprehension." (Boyles, 2012)

One effective strategy, geared towards building reading comprehension and critical thinking skills, is 'close reading.' "A significant body of research links the close reading of complex text—whether the student is a struggling reader or advanced—to significant gains in reading proficiency and finds close reading to be a key component of college and career readiness." (Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers, 2011, p. 7)

Normally readers are reading for plot, or main idea, but close reading has readers focus on techniques, vocabulary, literary devices, context, precise content, and the multiple meanings a word or phrase might unlock. "Close reading invites students to examine the deep structures of a piece of text, or, as Alder and Van Doren (1940/1972) described it, to "x-ray the book... [for] the skeleton hidden between the covers" (p. 75). These deep structures include the way the text is organized, the precision of its vocabulary to advance concepts, and its key details, arguments, and

inferential meanings" (Fisher & Frey, 2012).

Close reading requires students reread a text multiple times through different lenses, to construct meaning. It is a teaching strategy that can be scaffolded for any age group, and works best when incorporating all of the 'Key Features of Close Reading,' including limited frontloading, and discussion of the text. Limited frontloading is the key feature that surprises some teachers, as students are encouraged to discover the content of the text themselves, through multiple readings, rather than through previewing. The inclusion of cooperative learning techniques, during the process, is integral to ensuring a deeper understanding, by allowing clarifications and consolidation of information.
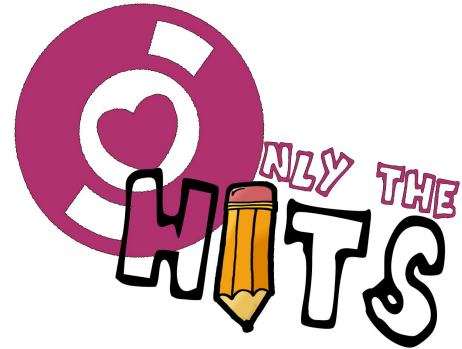
Key Features of Close Reading:

1. Short Passages
2. Complex texts
3. Limited Frontloading
4. Repeated Readings
5. Text Dependent Questions
6. Annotations
7. Discussion of the Text
(Fisher & Frey, 2012)

Suggested text length:
3 paragraphs – 2 pages

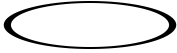**Ensure text is complex enough to warrant multiple readings.*

Process:
There is multiple ways to approach close reading. This is one example:

1 - Just Read! (Teacher reads)

2 - Second Reading - Students highlight main idea(s) in blue, details in yellow, interesting facts in pink, and circle confusing words or statements. Students underline specific literary devices, thematic symbols, or figurative language the teacher cued them to look for. (Teacher or expert student reader reads during process)

3 - Learning Group - Each member of a learning group shares one interesting or confusing fact with their group.

4 - 3rd Reading - Students annotate right side of page with questions about the text, based on context and prior knowledge, and make connections to the world, their own lives or other texts. (Teacher or member of each learning group reads during process)

5 - Learning Group - Students check with their learning group to answer questions, or clarify confusing parts. Each student shares one connection they made in the text, with their group.

6 - 4th Reading - Students annotate left side of page with inferences, answers to text-dependent questions, and arrows pointing to evidence. (Independent reading or member of each learning group reads during process)

7 - Class Discussion - Discuss proposed main ideas, and supporting details. Appreciate literary devices, approaches, language, mood, tone, content, theme, author's purpose and other aspects of the text. Connect to unit/course goals.

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Annotations Anchor Chart

Blue Highlighter	Main Idea
Yellow Highlighter	Details
Pink Highlighter	Interesting Facts
⬭	Confusing words/statements
<u>Underline</u>	Thematic clues, literary devices, internal/external conflict
?	Questions
∞	Connections
!	Answers to text-dependent questions
→	Evidence supporting main idea or answers to text-dependent questions