

PART 1

UNDERSTANDING CLOSE READING

"The eternal silence of the great white desert."

OBJECTIVE:

Students learn what it means to read a text closely by attending to and analyzing textual details. Students analyze visual-based texts.



ACTIVITIES

1- INTRODUCTION TO UNIT

The teacher presents an overview of the unit, discussing the purposes and elements of close reading.

2- LOOKING CLOSELY FOR DETAILS

Students are oriented to the idea of attending to details through examining images.

3- READING CLOSELY FOR DETAILS

Students use guiding questions to look closely for details in a text.

4- ATTENDING TO DETAILS IN MULTI-MEDIA

Students use guiding questions to look closely for details in a multi-media text and write a few sentences explaining something they have learned.

5- INDEPENDENT READING/RESEARCHING ACTIVITY

Students use guiding questions to independently explore a multi-media website.

ESTIMATED TIME: 3-4 days

MATERIALS:

Texts #1-4
Guiding Questions Handout
Reading Closely Checklist



ALIGNMENT TO CCSS

TARGETED STANDARD(S): RI.7.1 RI.7.2

RI.7.1: Cite several pieces of textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.

RI.7.2: Determine two or more central ideas in a text and analyze their development over the course of the text; provide an objective summary of the text.

SUPPORTING STANDARD(S): RI.7.4

RI.7.4: Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including figurative, connotative, and technical meanings; analyze the impact of a specific word choice on meaning and tone.



ACTIVITY 1: INTRODUCTION TO UNIT

The teacher presents an overview of the unit, discussing the purposes and elements of close reading.

INSTRUCTIONAL NOTES

Introduce the central purpose of the unit – to develop the skills and habits of a close reader:

- 1) Initially approaching and surveying a text
- 2) Using questions to examine the text's topic, information, and structure
- 3) Questioning further to investigate the text
- 4) Analyzing key details and language to deepen understanding
- 5) Explaining what one has come to understand as a reader

INTRODUCTORY ANALOGY

To introduce the unit and establish a link between questioning, close examination, and deepening understanding, you might use an analogy from another field that requires careful study and analysis. For example:

- Compare the process of “close reading” to the analytical processes used by other experts, such as musicians, scientists, or detectives;
- Present a CSI video that demonstrates how a detective asks herself questions when first approaching a crime scene.

Use any of these analogies to illustrate how experts in various fields are able to analyze and understand artistic works, phenomena, places, events or situations because their training focuses them on details that the uninitiated do not typically notice. This training often involves a set of *guiding questions* that experts ask themselves to direct their attention to key elements of their fields of study.

A musician might ask herself, “How do the sounds of the various instruments work together?” A crime scene investigator might ask, “What evidence suggests how the perpetrator came and went from the scene?” These more general questions lead the experts to then ask specific questions directly related to the object of investigation. For example, the general question concerning the perpetrator's coming and going might lead the investigator to notice a set of muddy footprints. She then might ask, “What are the size and type of the shoes that left these muddy footprints?” Experts ask these questions so that they clearly understand what they are studying and can clearly communicate their understanding to others.

LINK THE ANALOGY TO QUESTIONING SKILLS

- Using the introductory analogy as a reference point, explain that effective readers also use guiding questions to help them look for evidence in texts.
- Introduce the Guiding Questions (GQ) Handout, orienting students to both the structure of the document and the questions in each row, and explaining that these are a general set of guiding questions that can direct their attention to key evidence in texts as they read.

PREVIEW THE TEXTS AND CHECKLISTS

- Show students the Text Set Table indicating that there are connections among the texts but do not stipulate what those connections are.
- Let them know they will be reading and studying those texts with increasing independence, and will be expected to lead a group discussion about one of the final three texts.
- Introduce the Reading Closely Checklist and the Text-Centered Discussions (TCD) Checklist and

ACTIVITY 2: LOOKING CLOSELY FOR DETAILS

Students are oriented to the idea of attending to details through examining images.

INSTRUCTIONAL NOTES

TEXTUAL NOTES

The first close reading experience presents students with two photo collages, made up of images from the expeditions of: 1) Roald Amundsen, the Norwegian explorer who reached the South Pole first on December 14, 1911; and 2) Robert Falcon Scott, the British explorer who reached the Pole later in January, 1912, and who ultimately perished on his way back. The collages are centered around portraits of Amundsen and Scott, with photos of their expeditions surrounding their weathered faces. Students will be reading texts from each of these explorers. However, introduce the photo collages with minimal contextual information.

EXAMINE IMAGES IN SMALL GROUPS

- Students examine the image(s) in small groups and answer the question “What stands out to me as I examine this image?”
- In their groups, students find several details that stand out to them, with one group member serving as a recorder of all their details.
- Groups may consult the GQ Handout for further questions to help them focus on details.
- Groups discuss what the details suggest to them and identify any new questions they have after examining and discussing the details.

MODEL TEXT QUESTIONING SEQUENCE

Guiding Question(s):

- 1- What is this text (photo collage) mainly about?
- 2- What stands out to me as I first examine this text?

Text-specific Question(s):

- 1- What do I notice about each of the explorers' faces? What sort of men do they appear to be?
- 2- What do the details of the photos suggest about the place that the men explored? Why are there flags in the photos?
- 4- What do I think might have happened to the explorers and their expeditions?

NOTE: Throughout the unit Model text-specific questions associated with Guiding Questions have been provided in the material. These questions are included to illustrate the process and possibilities; teachers are encouraged to develop their own text-specific questions based on their own analysis.

CLASS DISCUSSION & SUMMARIZING ACTIVITY

- Lead a discussion on what the groups noticed about the images and the questions they had
- Discuss how these questions are “text-specific” – questions that:
 - ⇒ Emerge from looking closely at the image
 - ⇒ Prompt them to look for more details
 - ⇒ Lead to a greater understanding of the image.
- Students list three details they think are “key” for them in understanding something that is going on in one of the images.
- Students write a caption that summarizes what they think the image is about and share and compare their captions/titles, noting the details that have led to what they have written.

At this stage, definitive answers do not need to be established for questions students pose. The purpose of the exercise is for students to get a sense of how close examination of texts leads to questions which in turn lead to further examination of textual detail, and an ability to communicate meaning to others.

ACTIVITY 3: READING CLOSELY FOR DETAILS

Students use guiding questions to look closely for details in a text.

INSTRUCTIONAL NOTES

TEXTUAL NOTES

Text #2 is an excerpt from early in R. F. Scott's "Last Expedition," his journal documenting the 1911 exploration of the South Pole. It allows for introduction of the narrative journal form used in many of the unit's texts, and sets up a comparison with later Scott entries. In this excerpt, Scott's "Impressions" read almost like images in a prose poem, and allow for close attention to details, words, and phrases.

READ TEXT #2 ALOUD

- Direct students to the questions listed under "Topic, Information, and Ideas" in the Questioning Texts row of the GQ Handout.
- As you read the passage aloud, students think about the question:
⇒ "What information or ideas does this text present?"
- Ask students to record/share their responses to the question, making sure that students refer to the text to support their responses.

INDEPENDENT READING

- Before students re-read the passage independently, direct students to the questions listed under "Language" in the Questioning Texts row of the GQ Handout.
- Students think about the question:
⇒ "What words or phrases stand out to me as I read?"
- While reading independently, students mark details they notice (electronically or with a pencil/highlighter).

CLASS REVIEW & PARAPHRASING

- As a class, students:
⇒ Compare the details they have noticed and marked.
⇒ Discuss what the details suggest to them.
⇒ Identify any new questions they have after examining and discussing the details.
- Introduce the concept of a "paraphrase," and model paraphrasing a sentence from the passage.
- Individually, students draft a paraphrase of one of the details that stood out to them.

MODEL TEXT QUESTIONING SEQUENCE

Guiding Question(s):

- 1- What words or phrases are powerful or unique?
- 2- What do the author's words cause me to see or feel?

Text-specific Question(s):

- 1- What "impressions" do I get from one of Scott's short phrases? What other phrase offers a contrasting impression?
- 2- How does Scott depict the "blizzard" and the "crevasse" mentioned in line 25. How does this set of images contrast with the depiction of the "vast silence" and "marching column" in the final lines?

ACTIVITY 4: ATTENDING TO DETAILS IN MULTI-MEDIA

Students use guiding questions to look closely for details in a multi-media text and write a few sentences explaining something they have learned.

INSTRUCTIONAL NOTES

TEXTUAL NOTES

The multi-media text [#3] is a 10 minute video that presents an historical narrative about Amundsen's 1911 exploration of Antarctica, and also provides background information about the races to reach the North and South Poles first. In format, the video uses a combination of photographs, maps, visual images, text, sound effects, and narration to tell its story, and thus challenges students to simultaneously view, read, and listen for important details.

VIEW THE VIDEO

- Students view the video with no additional context provided, other than what they bring from studying the previous texts.
- Students think about a guiding question (i.e. "What information or ideas does this text present?") as they watch the video.

CLASS DISCUSSION AND RE-VIEW OF VIDEO

- Before re-viewing the video, briefly discuss students' initial observations.
- Use some of students' observations to craft a specific question about the video to guide the re-view. Alternatively, additional guiding questions can be used.
- Students record key details in a two-column notes format.
⇒ Note details sequentially in the first column of their notes, then highlight details they see as important, and explain (in the second column) why they see those selected details as important.

SMALL GROUPS WRITE ABOUT THE VIDEO

- Student small groups discuss the details they have selected, and their thinking about the importance of those details in helping them understand the video.
- Students share their notes and collaboratively write a few sentences explaining something they have learned from the video, referring to key details that have led to their understanding.
- Volunteers from each group read their sentences to the class.
- As a class compare what the groups saw, including how clearly and accurately they are able to communicate their understanding
- Reflect on the "close reading" experience of watching a video, using the Reading Closely Checklist to guide the reflective discussion. This reflective discussion is an opportunity for students to self-assess their ability to read closely and identify areas where they can improve as a reader over the course of this unit.

MODEL TEXT QUESTIONING SEQUENCE

Guiding Question(s):

- 1- How is the text (video) organized?
- 2- What do I learn about the topic as I read (view)?

Text-specific Question(s):

- 1- What details from the video suggest how difficult it was to survive the journey to the Pole?
- 2- Why does Amundsen say "it was like being a boy again" to reach the Pole first?
- 3- At the end of the video, what does Amundsen suggest when he says, "Victory awaits him, who has everything in order. Luck we call it."?

ACTIVITY 5: INDEPENDENT READING/ RESEARCH

Students use guiding questions to independently explore a multi-media website.

INSTRUCTIONAL NOTES

This activity is an optional extension of Part 1 where students can enrich their skills of looking for details with web-based text. It is recommended for students who have access to a computer either as an individual or in groups. Accessing an informational site can not only help students apply close reading skills in the context of Internet research, but also enrich their understanding of the topic and other texts they will encounter in the unit. Students might be expected to develop deeper understanding of a part of the website through close reading and viewing, and to bring details and information they have found back to a small group discussion.

TEXTUAL NOTES

The recommended website [Text #4] is the UNESCO World Wonders Project's "Scott's Hut and the Explorers' Heritage of Antarctica," which includes both historical and contemporary information. Students can do a virtual 360 degree exploration of the areas around and inside the hut (noting key details). They can also search for related information, photographs, videos (including the Amundsen video), and 3D models using links found on the website. There are also many other good websites devoted to the Arctic environment and exploration (see text list).

MODEL TEXT QUESTIONING SEQUENCE

Guiding Question(s):

- 1- How is the website organized?
- 2- What do I learn about the topic as I read (explore the website)?

Text-specific Question(s):

- 1- What details do I notice in the landscape surrounding Scott's hut? How might the area be different in the midst of the endless Arctic night or an intense blizzard?
- 2- What was Scott's name for the hut - and what does that suggest? Where was/is it located?
- 3- What equipment and supplies were left in the hut by the explorers, and how might they have been used?

ASSESSMENT OPPORTUNITIES

Students' captions and paraphrases for Texts #1 & 2 can be reviewed to see if they are able to generalize from details, and might provide a pre-assessment of skills before students read and analyze more challenging passages in Parts 2-5. These short, informal writing samples should also be reviewed for evidence that students are able to clearly explain their thinking about the texts they are reading. The reflective conversation using the Reading Closely Checklist is an opportunity for students to self-assess. Student conversations in small groups, particularly in relation to Text #3 (the video), also can provide rich initial evidence of their emerging thinking, and of the skills related to Text-Centered Discussions that they bring into the unit, since they will be demonstrating those discussion skills in Part 5.