Close Reading: A Key to Teaching Constructed Response

Bonnie Goonen & Susan Pittman – May 26, 2015

Introductions

Welcome!

Session Objectives

In this session, we will:

- Strategies to enhance students' close reading skills
- Discuss the importance of close reading in teaching constructed response
- Share resources and ideas

Similar Skills – Different Content

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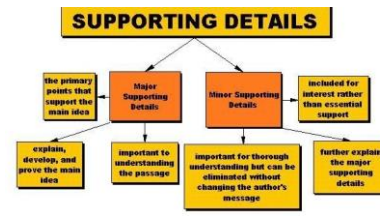
What do students need to know and be able to do across content areas?

- Read closely and extract information from complex text
- Analyze what they have read
- Make logical inferences or valid claims
- Evaluate evidence gleaned from text
- Express information or findings in words (extended response or short answer)

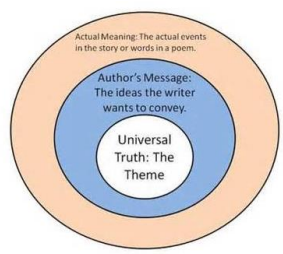
Student Challenges

- Understand specific details and main ideas in a written source
- Determine which details support main idea



Student Challenges

- Identify theme or element that supports a theme



Student Challenges

- Analyze relationships within written sources

- Examine form, content, and organization
- Examine the author's purpose and perspective
- Identify the author's claim and the reasons
- Determine if evidence is sufficient and accurate
- Determine logical fallacies (errors in reasoning)

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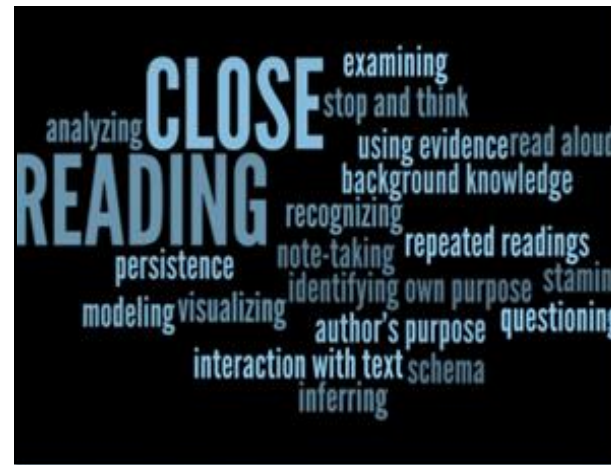
Building Close Reading Skills



What Is Close Reading?

Methodical investigation of a complex text through . . .

- Answering text-dependent questions
- Unpacking the text's meaning
- Directing students to:
  - examine and analyze text at a deep level of critical thinking
  - focus on word/sentence meaning
  - focus on development of events and ideas
  - extract evidence from the text
  - make inferences based on what they have read

Why Depth of Close Reading Matters

Close reading instruction:

- Requires careful attention to how the text unfolds through asking text-dependent questions.
- Focuses on building knowledge through the strategic use of text-dependent questions.
- Prepares students for the kinds of reading tasks they will encounter after graduation.

> *" If you don't have the time to read, you don't have the time or the tools to write. Simple as that!"*
>
> *Stephen King*

Despite its name, close reading has a lot more to do with writing than reading! (Fisher)

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Patterns of Organization for Non-fiction Text

- Description

- Sequence and Order

- Compare and Contrast

- Cause and Effect

- Problem and Solution

Effective readers use text structure to . . .

- Predict what is to be read
- Comprehend/understand text
- Observe the way the author has organized the text
- Look for key words and concepts
- Note the different headings and subheadings
- Notice and interpret graphics

Effective Readers Analyze and Evaluate Text

Analyze

- Examine form, content, and organization
- Examine the author's purpose and perspective
- Identify the author's claim and the reasons
- Determine if evidence is sufficient and accurate
- Determine logical fallacies (errors in reasoning)

Evaluate

- Evaluate the purpose of the passage
- Recognize the main claim and evaluate how it is expressed
- Understand and evaluate the structure of the text
- Evaluate the reliability of evidence included
- Understand and evaluate reasoning about the evidence

"A careful and purposeful rereading of a text."

— Dr. Douglas Fisher
San Diego State University

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Steps to Take . . .

Step 1 – Find the Right Text

The text should be:

- Complex
- Content-rich nonfiction or informational
- Short passages
- Applicable for multiple purposes

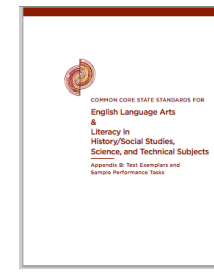
Step 2 – Do Your Pre-Work

Identify the most important thing for students to learn, and then:

- Create a series of TDQs (text-dependent questions)
- Identify key words
- Determine the annotation symbols
- Chunk the text
- Develop a reflection activity

Finding the right text

- Examples of text and sample tasks can be found on pages 77 – 183 [starting at grades 6-8 and moving up to grade 12 and CCR] at http://www.corestandards.org/assets/Appendix_B.pdf



Finding the right text

- Qualitative Measures of Text Complexity
  - Language conventionality and clarity
    - Literal vs. figurative
    - Clear vs. ambiguous
    - Contemporary or familiar vs. archaic or unfamiliar
    - Conversational vs. academic
  - Knowledge demands
    - Simple theme vs. complex or sophisticated theme
    - Single theme vs. multiple themes
    - Everyday knowledge required vs. specialized knowledge
    - Few references to other texts vs. many external references

Finding the right text

- Quantitative Measures of Text Complexity
  - Use of "Lexiles"
  - Lexile Ranges:
    - Grades 6 – 8: 955 – 1155
    - Grades 9 – 10: 1080 – 1305
    - Grades 11 to CCR: 1215 – 1355
- Considerations based on readers and tasks: Remember that
  - Ability to read complex text does not develop in linear fashion
  - Students reading below level need additional support
  - Students will need scaffolding even as their skills improve
    - Instruction should move towards decreasing scaffolding and increasing independence

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Rigorous Text-Dependent Questions should not be . . .

- Low-level, literal, or recall questions
- "Right there" questions
- Focused on comprehension strategies
- Just questions . . .

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Text-Dependent Questions

- Do ***NOT*** rely on . . .
  - Personal opinion
  - Background information
  - Imaginative speculation

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Text Dependent Questions

- Answered through close reading
- Evidence comes from text, not information from outside sources
- Understanding beyond basic facts
- Not recall

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Text Dependent Questions

Can be used to . . .

- Identify key ideas in complex text

Should cause students to think at higher levels by . . .

- Making logical inferences
- Drawing conclusions
- Engaging in arguments based on what the text says

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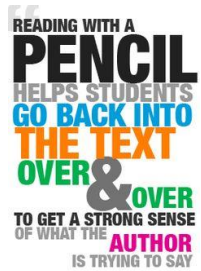
Steps to Take . . .

Step 3 – Teach Students to Read with a Pencil

- Number the paragraphs
- Underline major points
- Highlight or circle key words/terms
- Use the following symbols
  - ? – for something that is confusing or that they don't understand (explain why)
  - ! – something that is surprising (explain why)
  - E – example or evidence that supports major points (write a note)



Steps to Take . . .

Step 4 – Discuss Students' Responses to TDQs

- Use TDQs from your pre-work
- Have students:
  - Provide their answers
  - Indicate where they found the answer
  - Provide the evidence that supports their answers

Step 5 – Have Students Write About What They Read

- Provide students with a prompt
- Have students write about what they read, using evidence from the text

Putting the Process to Work

Step 1 – Find the Right Text

Step 2 – Do Your Pre-Work

Step 3 – Teach Students to Read with a Pencil

Step 4 – Discuss Students' Responses to TDQs

Step 5 – Have Students Write About What They Read

Use Close Reading with Pros/Cons of DST

Evidence supporting Pro side of argument

Benefits of DST

Many studies have investigated the benefits and costs of DST. *Research in the 1970s found that DST saved about 1% per day in energy costs*. On average, most electricity used is for lighting and appliances. It makes sense that *more sun at the end of the day meant less need for electricity*. This follows right along with Ben Franklin's argument over 200 years ago.

Supporters of DST also claim that more sunlight saves lives. *Studies have indicated that traveling home from work or school in daylight is safer*. *Nearly three decades of research shows an 8-11% reduction in crashes involving pedestrians and a 6-10% decrease in crashes for vehicle occupants after the spring shift to DST.*

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Use Close Reading with Pros/Cons of DST

Evidence supporting **Con** side of argument

Arguments against DST

Opponents of DST cite other studies that disagree with these outcomes. **A 2007 study in California indicated that DST had little or no effect on energy consumption that year.** A **three-year study of counties in Indiana showed that residents of that state spent $8.6 million more each year for energy, and air pollution increased** after the state switched to DST. The **researchers theorized that the energy jump was caused in part by increased use of air conditioning as a result of maximizing daylight hours**.

Recent research has also brought into question the safety aspect of the yearly switch to and from DST. In **one study, pedestrian fatalities from cars increased immediately after clocks were set back in the fall.** Another **study showed 227 pedestrians were killed in the week following the end of DST, compared with 65 pedestrians killed the week before DST ended**.

Use TDQs

- Why did Ben Franklin support the idea of DST back in 1784?
- Based on evidence from the article, when did Congress pass the Uniform Time Act of 1966?
- Based on the research, how much energy was saved in the 1970s?
- Based on the article, why do supporters of DST claim more sunlight saves lives?
- What were the results of the study conducted in Indiana?
- According to the article, why do those who oppose DST believe there is little or no benefits to safety?

Effective Readers Can . . .

- Locate key information
- Distinguish between main ideas and supporting details
- Modify reading based on difficulty of text
- Ask questions before, during, and after reading
- Monitor their comprehension
  - Evaluate new information
  - Connect new information with existing ideas
  - Organize information in ways that make sense

Effective Argumentative Writers Need to . . .

- Locate key information or evidence
- Distinguish between main ideas and supporting details
- Ask questions before, during, and after reading
- Monitor their comprehension
  - Evaluate new information
  - Connect new information with existing ideas
  - Organize information in ways that make sense

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Putting the Two Together

Effective reading and writing skills enable students to:

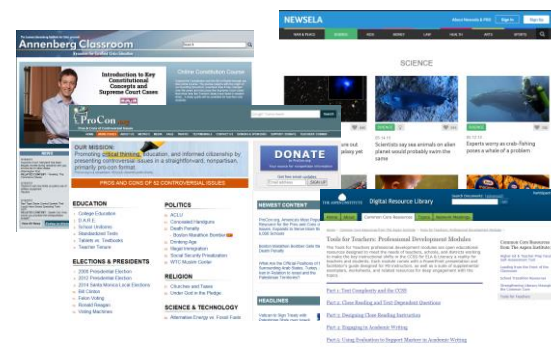
- Read complex text
- Identify text structure
- Look for key words and phrases
- Unpack the prompt
- Develop a claim or argument
- Find the evidence that supports that claim or argument
- Analyze and evaluate the evidence
- Explain how the evidence is connected to the claim or argument

Don't Forget the PLDs (Performance Level Descriptors)

- Provides descriptors for each performance level
  - Below Passing
  - Passing
  - Passing with Honors

http://www.gedtestingservice.com/educators/pld

Access Online Reading Materials



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