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# Overview

## What Is Close Reading?

**Close reading** is thoughtful, critical analysis of a text. Close-reading instruction gives your students guided practice in approaching, understanding, and, ultimately, mastering complex texts. This type of instruction builds positive reading habits and allows students to successfully integrate their prior experiences and background knowledge with the unfamiliar text they are encountering.

There are certain factors that differentiate close-reading instruction from other types of reading instruction. These factors include the types of **texts** used for instruction, the **tasks** students are asked to perform, and the **questions** they are expected to answer. For detailed information on these factors, see “A Closer Look” on pages 4–5.

## What Are Text-Dependent Questions?

**Text-dependent questions (TDQs)** can only be answered by referring explicitly back to the text. They are designed to deepen the reader’s understanding of the text, and they require students to answer in such a way that higher-level thinking is demonstrated. To be most effective, TDQs should address all that a reading passage has to offer; the questions asked should prompt students to consider the meaning, purpose, structure, and craft contained within the text.

## How Is This Guide Organized?

The units in *Close Reading with Text-Dependent Questions* are divided into two sections. Each of the twenty **Section I Units** (pages 8–87) is a four-page unit.

<b>Page 1</b> <b>Close-Reading Passage</b>	This page contains a short, complex, high-interest reading passage. Parts of the passage are numbered for easy reference, and space for annotation is provided in the left margin and between lines of text.
<b>Page 2</b> <b>Close-Reading Tasks</b>	Students are guided to read the passage, summarize it, reread and annotate it, and meet with a partner to discuss and define the author’s word choices.
<b>Page 3</b> <b>Text-Dependent Questions</b>	Students are asked to display a general understanding of the text, locate key details within it, cite evidence, and begin to use tools such as inference.
<b>Page 4</b> <b>More TDQs</b>	Students examine the structure of the text and the author’s purpose. They form opinions and use evidence to support and defend claims. A research prompt encourages choice, exploration, and cross-curricular connections. ( <b>Note:</b> Monitor students’ Internet research for content appropriateness.)

Each of the two **Section II Units** (pages 88–91) contains two pages.

<b>Page 1</b> <b>Close-Reading Passage</b>	This page contains a short, complex, high-interest reading passage. Parts of the passage are numbered for easy reference, and space for annotation is provided in the left margin and between lines of text.
<b>Page 2</b> <b>Peer-Led Tasks</b>	This page guides groups of students through a series of peer-led tasks in which each member is assigned a different role. Students become teachers to one another as they work together to analyze a text.

# A Closer Look

*Close Reading with Text-Dependent Questions* focuses on the three main components of close-reading instruction: the **texts** students are asked to read, the **tasks** they are instructed to perform, and the **text-dependent questions (TDQs)** they are expected to answer thoughtfully and accurately.

## The Texts

- ✓ short
- ✓ complex
- ✓ high-interest
- ✓ multi-genre

Not all texts are appropriate for close-reading instruction. Passages need to be written in a manner that invites analysis and at a level that requires slow, careful, deliberate reading. The texts in this guide achieve these goals in a number of ways.

- **Length:** Close-reading passages should be relatively short because the rigorous work required of students could make longer passages overwhelming.

Each unit in this guide contains a one-page passage of about 375–400 words. This is an ideal length to introduce and explore a subject, while allowing students of this age to conduct an in-depth examination of its content and purpose.

- **Complexity:** The best way to foster close reading of informational or fictional text is through text complexity. Writing achieves a high level of text complexity when it fulfills certain factors. The **purpose** of the text is implicit or hidden in some way, and the **structure** of the text is complex and/or unconventional. The **demands** of the text ask students to use life experiences, cultural awareness, and content knowledge to supplement their understanding. The **language** of the text incorporates domain-specific, figurative, ironic, ambiguous, or otherwise unfamiliar vocabulary.

The passages in this guide contain all of these different types of language and ask students to decipher their meanings in the context of the parts (words, phrases, sentences, etc.) around them. The passages meet the purpose and structure criteria by delaying key information, defying reader expectations, and/or including unexpected outcomes — elements that challenge students to follow the development of ideas along the course of the text. Students must combine their prior knowledge with the information given in order to form and support an opinion.

- **Interest:** Since close reading requires multiple readings, it is vital that the topics covered and style employed be interesting and varied. The passages in this resource will guide your students down such high-interest avenues as adventure, invention, discovery, and oddity. These texts are written with humor and wonder, and they strive to impart the thrill of learning.
- **Text Types and Genres:** It is important to give students experience with the close reading of a wide variety of texts. The passages in this guide are an equal mix of fiction and nonfiction; and they include examples and/or combinations of the following forms, text types, and genres: drama, poetry, descriptive, narrative, expository, and argumentative.

- **Lexile-Leveled:** A Lexile measure is a quantitative tool designed to represent the complexity of a text. The passages featured in this resource have been Lexile-leveled to ensure their appropriateness for this grade level.

# A Closer Look *(cont.)*

## The Tasks

- ✓ read and reread
- ✓ summarize
- ✓ annotate
- ✓ collaborate
- ✓ connect
- ✓ illustrate
- ✓ cite and support
- ✓ ask and answer

An essential way in which close-reading instruction differs from other practices can be seen in the tasks students are asked to perform. This resource focuses on the following student tasks:

- **Read and Reread:** First and foremost, close reading requires multiple readings of the text. This fosters a deeper understanding as the knowledge gained with each successive reading builds upon the previous readings. To keep students engaged, the tasks associated with each reading should vary. When students are asked to reread a passage, they should be given a new purpose or a new group of questions that influences that reading.
- **Annotation:** During at least one reading of the passage, students should annotate, or make notes on, the text. Annotation focuses students' attention on the text and allows them to track their thought processes as they read. It also allows students to interact with the text by noting words, phrases, or ideas that confuse or interest them. When writing about or discussing a text, students can consult their annotations and retrieve valuable information.
- **Additional Tasks:** Collaboration allows students to discuss and problem-solve with their partner peers. An emphasis is placed on demonstrating an understanding of unfamiliar words in context and applying academic vocabulary in new ways. Throughout, students are prompted to cite evidence to support claims and reinforce arguments. Often, students are asked to illustrate written information or connect text to visuals. A section of peer-led activities (pages 88–91) encourages students to ask and answer peer-generated questions.

For more information  
about annotation,  
see pages 6–7  
of this guide.

## The TDQs

- ✓ general
- ✓ key details
- ✓ word choice
- ✓ sequence
- ✓ structure
- ✓ purpose
- ✓ inference
- ✓ opinion

**Text-dependent questions** (TDQs) emphasize what the text has to offer as opposed to the students' personal experiences. This helps students focus on the text — from the literal (what it says) to the structural (how it works) to the inferential (what it means).

The TDQs in this resource ask students to demonstrate a wide range of understanding about the text. There is a progression from questions that ask for general understanding to those that require deeper levels of focus. The first question or two are relatively easy to answer, as this promotes student confidence and lessens the possibility for discouragement or disengagement. Subsequent questions delve into increasingly higher-order involvement in the text. Students are asked why a passage is written the way it is and if they feel that the author's

choices were ultimately successful. This type of instruction and questioning not only makes students better readers, it also makes them better writers as they consider the decisions authors make and the effects those choices have on the text and the reader.

## Movie-Watching Locusts

- 1 Locusts are some of the most destructive insects on the planet. In the solitary phase, these short-horned grasshoppers are harmless. One locust can't do much damage. This all changes when locusts swarm. Large swarms can consist of billions of insects. Some swarms are so huge that when the locusts take flight, they darken the sky for days. The air roars with the sound of their wings. When they land, they consume everything. They will eat every bit of green in minutes. Nothing is left but bare ground.
- 2 Scientists have studied why locusts swarm. One scientist did something else with these destructive insects. The scientist's name was Dr. Claire Rind, a biologist and a robotics expert. Rind made the locusts watch a movie. She made them watch *Star Wars*.
- 3 Rind wanted to design a collision-avoidance system for cars. She wanted to make cars that wouldn't crash into each other. Rind knew that locusts don't bump into each other, even when there are so many insects that the swarm blocks out the sun. Locusts have simple eyes and brains, and yet they avoid collisions. Rind wanted cars to be able to do what locusts do.
- 4 While the locusts watched *Star Wars*, Rind kept track of what was going on in their eyes and in their brains. She found out that locusts have special neurons that respond to objects moving at them. (A neuron is a special cell that carries messages between the brain and other parts of the body.) *Star Wars* was the perfect movie to have the locusts watch, because it contains several scenes where spaceships seem to fly toward the viewer, away from the viewer, and to the left and right of the viewer.
- 5 Once Rind understood how the locust's neural system worked, she made a robot. It had cameras for eyes, and its inner workings reacted in the same way the locusts' neural system did. Rind sent her robot zooming through an obstacle course. It did hit some obstacles, but the project was off to a great start. Thanks to movie-watching locusts, the robot was able to avoid collisions about nine out of ten times!

Your Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Partner: \_\_\_\_\_

**Movie-Watching Locusts** *(cont.)***First**

Silently read "Movie-Watching Locusts." You might see words you do not know and read parts you do not understand. Keep reading! Determine what the story is mainly about.

**Then**

Sum up only paragraphs 2–5 of the story. Write the main idea and most important information. If someone reads your summary, that person should know it is this story that you are writing about, not a different story!

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**After  
That**

Read the story again. Use a pencil to circle or mark words you don't know. Note places that confuse you. Underline the main action or idea of each paragraph.

**Next**

Meet with your partner. Help each other find these new words in the text.

solitary

swarm

consume

collision

obstacle

Read the sentences around the words. Think about how they fit in the whole story. Discuss how the author helped you know what the words meant. Then pick one word each. Make sure you each choose a different word. Fill in the blanks.

**a.** My partner's word: \_\_\_\_\_

My partner thinks that in this passage the word must mean \_\_\_\_\_

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I agree because in the passage, \_\_\_\_\_

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**b.** My word: \_\_\_\_\_

I think that in this passage this word must mean \_\_\_\_\_

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My partner agrees because in the passage, \_\_\_\_\_

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Your Name: \_\_\_\_\_

## Movie-Watching Locusts *(cont.)*

Now

Answer the story questions below.

1. What does Rind want to design? \_\_\_\_\_

Why? \_\_\_\_\_

2. Why does the phrase "the air roars with the sound of their wings" help you understand how large a locust swarm can be?

3. Which movie did Rind have locusts watch? \_\_\_\_\_

Why did Rind choose this movie? \_\_\_\_\_

Can you think of another movie that would have worked just as well as this one? Name the movie, and explain your answer.

4. Use the information given in the story to answer this question: Is the robot system that Rind made ready to be tested in cars? Why or why not? Defend your answer with evidence from the text.

Your Name: \_\_\_\_\_

## Movie-Watching Locusts *(cont.)*

Then

Reread the entire story once more. Think about how paragraph 1 relates to the rest of the story.

5. What is paragraph 1 mainly about? Sum it up in two or three sentences.

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6. Was paragraph 1 necessary for the rest of the passage to make sense? Explain.

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Why do you think the author included it? What do you think she hoped that readers would take from it?

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7. Imagine you are the one writing the story about locusts watching *Star Wars*. Using information from the story you just read, write the first two lines of the "newer and better" story. Make it exciting. Hook your reader into wanting more!

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Learn  
More

Find out more about locusts by looking in books or online. On the back of this paper, write one paragraph discussing what you have learned. Your paragraph should have at least five facts.