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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.

Page 1 Close-Reading Passage	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.
Page 2 Close-Reading Tasks	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.
Page 3 Text-Dependent Questions	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.
Page 4 More TDQs	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. (Note: Monitor students’ Internet research for content appropriateness.)

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

Page 1 Close-Reading Passage	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.
Page 2 Peer-Led Tasks	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 375–425 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.

Sampling Snot

- 1 Karina Acevedo-Whitehouse tied herself to a boat. Then she leaned overboard as far as she could. She was trying to catch something. Despite the danger she put herself into, it wasn't working. Karina was not accomplishing her goal. Karina was a veterinarian and a conservation biologist. She was trying to collect whale snot.
- 2 Scientists knew very little about the fungi, bacteria, and viruses that lived inside whales. This was due to the marine mammal's massive size. It's not so easy to take a blood sample or any other kind of specimen from an animal swimming free in the ocean. It's especially difficult when it's from an animal so huge and powerful that one turn of its body or flip of its tale could mean a scientist's untimely death.
- 3 When a whale spouts, warm snot, vapor, and other biological materials come rocketing out of its blowhole. After seeing some huge whale 'blows' in the Gulf of California, Karina realized that if she could obtain a snot specimen, she could use it to see what was living inside a whale's lungs. When Karina's initial attempts failed, she didn't give up. Instead of leaning over the boat, she attached petri dishes to long poles that she could hold over blows. This worked fine for whales like the grey and sperm whales, because they didn't mind being close to a boat. For shy whales, such as the blue whale, Karina used toy helicopters that were remote-controlled.
- 4 Karina's idea and sampling techniques proved to be a step in the right direction. Other scientists began looking at whale snot, too. They used it to analyze the mammal's DNA and microbiome. They used it to check the whale's stress and pregnancy hormones.
- 5 Today, poles and toy helicopters are old hat. A special drone called a SnotBot is being tried. The SnotBot can fly closely along the water. When a whale surfaces and blows, the drone automatically moves into position and collects its bounty. It then returns to the research boat to drop off its treasured samples before immediately going back out. The drone can find its way back to the research boat even when it is half a mile away. This means that scientists no longer have to chase in their noisy boats after whales. The SnotBot can do all the collecting while the whales are left in peace.

Your Name: _____ Partner: _____

Sampling Snot (cont.)

First

Silently read "Sampling Snot." You might see words you do not know. It is likely there will be parts you do not understand. Keep reading! Determine what the story is mainly about.

Then

Sum up the story. Write the main idea and most important information. If someone reads your summary, that person should know it is this story you are writing about.

**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 words in the text.

massive

specimen

obtain

initial

bounty

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 _____

I agree because in the passage, _____

b. My word: _____

I think that in this passage, this word must mean _____

My partner agrees because in the passage, _____

Your Name: _____

Sampling Snot *(cont.)*

Now

Answer the story questions below.

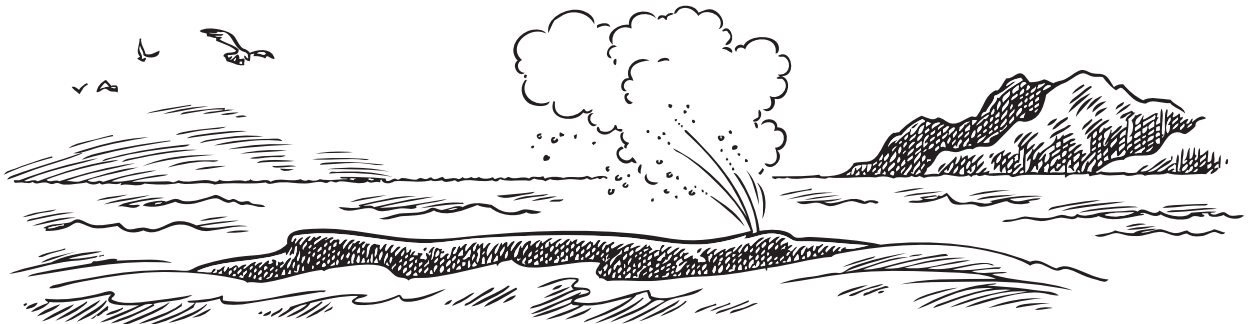
1. What are scientists using whale snot for? Give specific examples from the text.

2. What advantages does the SnotBot have over a pole or a toy helicopter?

3. In paragraph 5, it says that poles and toy helicopters are "old hat." What does this expression mean in the way it is used here?

How does the story help you know? _____

4. Are all whale types equally comfortable around people? Defend your answer using evidence from the text.



Your Name: _____

Sampling Snot (cont.)

Then

Reread the entire story one last time. As you read, think about how information about Karina is spread throughout the story.

5. Analyze the seven sentences in paragraph 1. Why do you think the author wrote each part of paragraph 1 in the way she did? What is the author's purpose for the following:

a. the first sentence by itself? _____

b. the first five sentences together? _____

c. the sixth sentence? _____

d. the seventh (last) sentence? _____

6. In which other paragraphs is Karina mentioned? Check each box that applies.

☐ 2

☐ 3

☐ 4

☐ 5

Did weaving in the story of an actual scientist help you understand how science works? Explain.

7. Why is paragraph 2 important? What purpose does this paragraph serve in the story?

Why is paragraph 5 important? What purpose does this paragraph serve in the story?

**Learn
More**

Draw a picture of what you think the SnotBot drone might look like. Then compare your picture to what can be seen on the Internet.