



# A CLOSE LOOK AT CLOSE READING

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Scaffolding Students with  
Complex Texts

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## WHAT IS CLOSE READING?

Close reading is thoughtful, critical analysis of a text that focuses on significant details or patterns in order to develop a deep, precise understanding of the text's form, craft, meanings, etc. It is a key requirement of the Common Core State Standards and directs the reader's attention to the text itself.

Close reading includes:

- Using short passages and excerpts
- Diving right into the text without pre-reading activities
- Focusing on the text itself
- Rereading deliberately
- Reading with a pencil
- Noticing things that are confusing
- Discussing the text with others
  - Think-Pair Share or Turn and Talk frequently
  - Small groups and whole class
- Responding to text-dependent questions



## SELECTING A TEXT

Not every text is appropriate for students to read closely. For example, while students enjoy reading *Diary of a Wimpy Kid* books, these novels offer simple story lines and vocabulary that are easily understandable. When you are done reading them, they don't leave you pondering deep ideas. Close reading should leave you considering thought-provoking messages that go beyond the text.

Close read-worthy texts include enough complex ideas worthy of exploring and discussing to sustain one or more days of instruction. According to Tim Shanahan, close reading is a multi-day commitment to a text; you want students to read a text that offers rich enough vocabulary, ideas, and information to read, examine, and discuss over those days without feeling like you're beating a dead horse.

When selecting a text, you need to consider the three components of text complexity: Qualitative measures, Quantitative measures, and the Reader and the Task. Each of these is equally important when considering the complexity of a text.



Questions to consider:

### **Qualitative**

- Does this text offer ideas or information that further students understanding of the topic?
- Does the text include a text structure that ...
- Does the text follow familiar language conventions—sentence structures, word choices, etc.?
- What background knowledge do my students need to have to be successful with this text?

### **Quantitative**

- Is this text on an appropriate readability level for the students in my group? How can I scaffold my students to ensure their success with this text?  
\*The primary leveling tool used by the Common Core is Lexile. For more information or to find the lexile of a text, visit [Lexile.com](http://Lexile.com).

### **Reader and Task Considerations**

- How much prior knowledge do my students have about this topic?
- How interested are they?
- What will be difficult for my students in reading this passage?

[Appendix B](#) of the [Common Core State Standards](#) includes sample lists of exemplar texts that give you an idea of what complex texts look like in each of the grade level bands.

## WHAT MAKES TEXT COMPLEX?

Close reading should occur with appropriately complex text. There are a number of factors that contribute to text complexity.

- Vocabulary
  - *Academic and domain-specific terms*
  - *Tier 2 vocabulary*: high utility complex words that can be used in multiple contexts
- Syntax
  - *Coherence*—Are the events and concepts logically connected and clearly explained?
  - *Unity*—Do the ideas focus on the topic and not include irrelevant or distracting information?
  - *Audience appropriateness*—Does the text match the background knowledge of the target reader?
- Text structures
  - *Description*
  - *Compare and Contrast*
  - *Temporal Sequence*
  - *Cause and Effect*
  - *Problem and Solution*
- Text features
  - *Headings/subheadings*
  - *Signal words*

## STEPS IN CLOSE READING

There is no specific sequence in a close read; these steps are meant to generally guide you in crafting a lesson that scaffolds students and focuses on increasingly complex text dependent questions. Begin with questions about the big ideas in the text and gradually ask higher level questions.

### 1. FIRST READ: KEY IDEAS AND DETAILS

Set the purpose for reading and have students read text as independently as possible. Depending on the text complexity and the readers, the first read may be done independently, as a read aloud/think aloud, or paired or shared reading. The first read should be without building background; students should be integrating their background knowledge with the text as they read. Focus on the key ideas and details in the text, making sure that readers know the main idea, story elements, or key details that the author includes.

*Following the first read, have students Think-Pair-Share to assess what they have gleaned from the text. By listening to students as they share, you can determine the focus of the first read, etc.*

### 2. SECOND READ: CRAFT AND STRUCTURE

For a second, close read, select a portion or chunk of the text that is “close read worthy.” That is, have students reread a section that includes complex elements or ideas that they should explore to arrive at a deep understanding of the text. After rereading, students discuss the text with partners or in small groups, focusing on the author’s craft and organizational patterns. This may include vocabulary choices, text structure or text features that they author included.

*Use a Text Dependent Question to focus or set a purpose for a close rereading. After students share with partners or in small groups, have groups share out with entire class to assess understanding.*

### 3. THIRD READ: INTEGRATION OF KNOWLEDGE AND IDEAS

The third close reading of a text should go even deeper, requiring students to synthesize and analyze information from several texts or media. They may record their ideas on sticky notes, graphic organizer, or a thinking sheet.

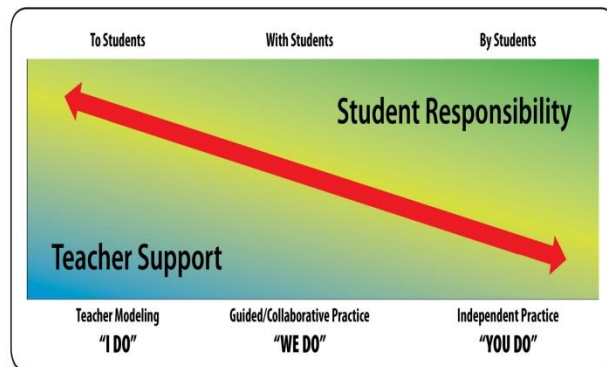
*Have students journal a response to a Text Dependent Question. Focus the discussion on text evidence.*

## SCAFFOLDING STUDENTS IN CLOSE READING

While the goal for students is to read complex texts independently, not all students will be able to achieve that immediately. Scaffolding instruction is a model in which the teacher supports students and gradually releases responsibility to the student. Pearson and Gallagher (1983) coined this term based on the 1970's work of Vygotsky. A key model in scaffolding instruction is the Gradual Release of Responsibility. In this model, the teacher begins by modeling, offering students the highest level of support. As instruction continues and the teacher monitors students' learning progress, he/she gradually releases responsibility to the students, guiding students' progress and eventually observing as they practice the skill independently (Pearson and Gallagher, 1983).

Close reading may be scaffolded through these teaching methods:

- *Shared reading*
- *Interactive read aloud*
- *Comprehension Toolkit lessons*
- *QAR*
- *Literature circles*
- *Questioning the author*
- *Reciprocal teaching*
- *Connecting to themes/essential questions*
- *Post-its*
- *Think sheets*
- *Jigsaws*



For students who are struggling, you may support them through a Think-Aloud, reading the text to the students and modeling your thinking as you answer a Text Dependent Question. As students become more proficient in reading, discussing, and analyzing text, you may gradually release the responsibility for reading & thinking to them. The idea is to offer just the right amount of support so that students can be successful.

# CLOSE READING SAMPLE LESSON

Teacher: <b>Burke</b>	CCSS: 3.RI.6; 3.RI.9	Grade: <b>3</b>	Date: 10/5/12
<p>Text (worthy of a close read):  <i>Saving Their Native Language (Comprehension Toolkit Text)</i>  <b>Focus chunk/portion for close read</b>  <i>(photocopy or mark section)</i>  <i>Why Learn the Language—2 paragraphs in section</i></p>	<p><b>Steps</b></p> <p>1. <b>FIRST READ (<i>Key Ideas &amp; Details</i>)</b>          Students read text (<i>*Do not activate prior knowledge or use pre-reading activities</i>)</p> <p><i>Set purpose: Read to find out why the Cherokee language needs to be saved.</i></p> <p><i>Think-Pair-Share to check understanding (Use to focus close reading.)</i></p>		
<p><b>Complex ideas that require close reading</b></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Vocabulary      <input type="checkbox"/> Text Structure      <input type="checkbox"/> Coherence</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Syntax            <input type="checkbox"/> Text Features      <input type="checkbox"/> Audience Appropriateness</p> <p><i>Cherokee words</i>  <i>Disappearing language</i></p> <p><b>Text-Dependent Question(s)</b>  <i>Select 2-3 high cognitive level questions that will require students to use the author's words. Prompt to use text evidence. (These can correspond to the three steps in the lesson.)</i></p> <p>1. <i>Tell a reason that Lost City Elementary teaches Cherokee to its students.</i></p> <p>2. <i>Find evidence in the text that the author believes it is important to teach Cherokee to children.</i></p> <p>3. <i>How does the information in this article compare with other texts in the <u>Let's Learn</u> theme?</i></p>	<p><i>Tell your partner a reason that Lost City Elementary School teaches Cherokee to its students.</i></p> <p>2. <b>SECOND READ (<i>Craft &amp; Structure</i>)</b>          Reread selected chunk focusing on text dependent question  <i>Independent Reading Read Aloud, Think Aloud, Shared, Paired,</i>  <i>Model finding text evidence to answer question # 2.</i></p> <p><i>Students use pencils, post-it or highlighters to mark text portions of text that will aid in citing text based evidence</i>  <i>Discuss in small and whole group</i></p> <p><i>Students work with partners to find text evidence to answer question # 2; share responses and discuss.</i></p> <p>3. <b>THIRD READ (<i>Integration of Knowledge and Ideas</i>)</b>          Reread selected chunk focusing on text dependent question  <i>Modes: independent, shared, paired reading; read aloud/ think aloud</i>  <i>Discuss the theme: Let's Learn: Why is Learning Important? Revisit <i>Earth Smart</i>, article on p. 70 in <i>Treasures</i>. Model and guide students to answer question # 3.</i>  <i>Students use pencils, post-it or highlighters to mark text portions of text that will aid in citing text based evidence</i></p> <p><i>Discuss in small and whole group</i>  <i>Journaling with text dependent question</i>  <i>Model crafting a journal entry citing text evidence to answer question # 2.</i></p>		



## **SAVING THEIR NATIVE LANGUAGE (ARTICLE)**

From Comprehension Toolkit Texts grades 3-5 (part of UNICEF article)

# CLOSE READING TEMPLATE

Teacher:	CCSS:	Grade:	Date:
<p>Text (worthy of a close read):</p> <p><b>Focus chunk/portion for close read</b> <i>(photocopy or mark section)</i></p>	<p><b>Steps</b></p> <p><b>4. FIRST READ (<i>Key Ideas &amp; Details</i>)</b>            Students read text (<i>*Do not activate prior knowledge or use pre-reading activities</i>)</p> <p>Think-Pair-Share to check understanding (<i>Use to focus close reading.</i>)</p> <p><b>5. SECOND READ (<i>Craft &amp; Structure</i>)</b>            Reread selected chunk focusing on text dependent question  <i>Independent Reading Read Aloud, Think Aloud, Shared, Paired,</i></p> <p>Students use pencils, post-it or highlighters to mark text  <i>portions of text that will aid in citing text based evidence</i>            Discuss in small and whole group</p> <p><b>6. THIRD READ (<i>Integration of Knowledge and Ideas</i>)</b>            Reread selected chunk focusing on text dependent question  <i>Modes: independent, shared, paired reading; read aloud/ think aloud</i></p> <p>Students use pencils, post-it or highlighters to mark text  <i>portions of text that will aid in citing text based evidence</i></p> <p>Discuss in small and whole group            Journaling with text dependent question</p>		
<p><b>Complex ideas that require close reading</b></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Vocabulary      <input type="checkbox"/> Text Structure      <input type="checkbox"/> Coherence</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Syntax            <input type="checkbox"/> Text Features      <input type="checkbox"/> Audience Appropriateness</p> <p><b>Text-Dependent Question(s)</b>  <i>Select 2-3 high cognitive level questions that will require students to use the author's words. Prompt to use text evidence. (These can correspond to the three steps in the lesson.)</i></p> <p>1.</p> <p>2.</p> <p>3.</p>			

# TEXT DEPENDENT QUESTIONS



**Text Dependent Questions** are a critical element in the Common Core State Standards. They require students to dig deeply into the text to answer them. In fact, a text dependent question cannot be answered without using the text; background knowledge and prior experiences should not be included or considered.

To craft effective text dependent questions, you must read and understand the text thoroughly and deeply. As you plan a lesson, begin with the end in mind: what do you want students to be able to know and do as a result of the lesson? This may be a written or oral response.

## Close Reading Routine

Ask text dependent questions as part of a close reading routine. After an initial reading, encourage students to go back to the text to find details in the text to support their answers. Reread the text several times over several days. Each time students reread a text, it should be with a different lens or focus. Align the focus with the Common Core State Standards:

- **First Read**—focus on most important elements of a text (*Key Ideas and Details*)
- **Second Read**—focus on how the text works (*Craft and Structure*)
- **Third Read**—focus on what the text means to the reader and how it connects to other experiences (*Integration of Knowledge and Ideas*)



## Question Stems

The question stems on the following pages are samples of the types of questions that require students to revisit and use information in a text. There are sample questions for each CCSS Standard, sorted by category (Key Ideas and Details, Craft and Structure, Integration of Knowledge and

Ideas). **CCSS Standard 10** focuses on the depth and breadth of the texts that students read and is addressed continuously in reading instruction.

## Quote Accurately

**CCSS Standard 1** requires students to be able to “quote accurately and appropriately.” That is, they have to select the right information and details from the text to support their answer. Students should also be able to use proper punctuation to quote an original text as well as paraphrase the author’s words. Have students orally quote sections of text, as well as model and guide them in adding quotes to their writing.



## Revisiting the Text

Effective Text Dependent Questions require students to go back to the text to find specific words and phrases that can be used as evidence to prove or support an answer. Pair a question with a cue to direct students back to the text to the end of your Text Dependent Question.

### Use one of these cues after a text dependent question:

- Remember to use textual evidence to support your ideas.
- Remember to use words and phrases from the text to prove your answer.
- Be sure to include specific evidence from the text to support your ideas.
- Include specific words and phrases from the text to support your opinion.
- Use specific details from the text or illustrations to support your ideas.
- Inferences should be supported by text.
- What in the text helped you to know?
- What words and phrases did the author use that led you to your answer?

# TEXT DEPENDENT QUESTIONS

## Key Ideas and Details

**1. Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and to make logical inferences from it; cite specific textual evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions drawn from the text.**

- What are the key ideas in this text/story?
- What inference can you draw about \_\_\_\_\_?
- Who was the most important character in the story?
- Who, what, where, when, how questions
- What key details help support the main idea of \_\_\_\_\_?
- What key details and/or examples support the main idea of \_\_\_\_\_?

**2. Determine central ideas or themes of a text and analyze their development; summarize the key supporting details and ideas.**

- Retell the story.
- What is the theme of the story?
- What message was the author trying to share?
- What was a moral or lesson in the story?
- Summarize the text.
- Retell the (fables, folk tales from diverse cultures).
- What is the main idea of this text?
- What are the 2 or more main ideas in this text?
- What key supporting details did the author cite?

**3. Analyze how and why individuals, events, and ideas develop and interact over the course of a text.**

- Identify characters/ setting/major events.
- Compare and contrast (characters/setting/ events).
- Explain how \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ interact in this story.
- Describe how (name of character) responds to/feel about (major event/challenge).
- Explain how (name of character) changed in the story.
- What does \_\_\_\_\_ think about \_\_\_\_\_?
- Why does [character do this action]?
- How does \_\_\_\_\_ show persistence (or other character trait) in \_\_\_\_\_?
- How does this help the reader learn more about \_\_\_\_\_'s character?
- Based on what you have read about \_\_\_\_\_ so far, did his actions surprise you?
- What clues tell you that \_\_\_\_\_ is friendly (etc.)?
- What does \_\_\_\_\_'s conversation with \_\_\_\_\_ reveal?
- What event did the author include to show the reader \_\_\_\_\_?
- Describe connections between \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ (ideas/details).
- Explain relationships or interactions between 2 or more (individuals, events, ideas, concepts) in this text based on specific information in it.
- Explain the procedures described in this article.

# TEXT DEPENDENT QUESTIONS

## Craft and Structure

4. Interpret words and phrases as they are used in a text, including determining technical, connotative, and figurative meanings, and analyze how specific word choices shape meaning or tone.

- What does (word or phrase from the story, figurative language, sensory word,) mean?
- What does *Herculean* (or other Mythology vocabulary) mean in this story?
- Describe how words and phrases (regular beats, alliteration, rhymes, repeated lines) supply rhythm and meaning in a story, poem or song
- Explain the meaning of (general academic vocabulary word).
- Explain what (domain/content specific word) means.

5. Analyze the structure of texts, including how specific sentences, paragraphs, and larger portions of the text (e.g., a section, chapter, scene, or stanza) relate to each other and the whole.

- What was the (problem/solution)?
- Describe the story structure, including beginning, middle, and ending.
- Describe the (action, setting) in the story.
- What might have happened if \_\_\_\_\_ hadn't happened first?
- How do (series of chapters/scenes/stanzas) fit together to provide overall structure in this text?
- What kind of text is this? (story, poem, drama, etc.) How do you know?
- How do you know this selection is (fiction, nonfiction)?
- Explain the (structure elements: verse/rhythm/ meter of this poem).
- Explain the (structure elements: cast of characters/settings/descriptions/ dialogue/stage directions) of this drama/play.
- How did the author organize the ideas in the (article/ book/etc.)?
- Explain how you know that the author used a \_\_\_\_\_ text structure.
- What text features (headings/table of contents/glossaries/electronic menus/ icons) did the author include to help the reader?
- How did search tools (key words/ side bars/hyperlinks) help the reader?

6. Assess how point of view or purpose shapes the content and style of a text.

- From what point of view is this story told?
- Who is narrating the story? How do we know?
- Through whose eyes did you see this story?
- Read (two or more accounts of the same event/topic). Analyze the information the authors present.
- What similarities and/or differences are there in (titles of two texts on similar topics)?
- How does the author feel about (topic)?
- How did the graphics help you understand the section about \_\_\_\_\_?
- Distinguish between information provided by pictures and words in the text.
- How does your own point of view compare to the author of \_\_\_\_\_?

# TEXT DEPENDENT QUESTIONS

## Integration of Knowledge and Ideas

**7. Integrate and evaluate content presented in diverse formats and media, including visually and quantitatively, as well as in words.\***

- Describe (character/setting/event). Use specific examples from the illustrations and/or words.
- How did the illustrations and words in print or digital text help the reader understand characters/setting/ plot.
- How do the (visual/multimedia elements) help the reader understand the author's message?
- What was the tone of the story/text? How do you know?
- How does this selection connect to the theme of \_\_\_\_\_?
- How does this selection connect to (other text we have read, content area, etc.)
- How is \_\_\_\_\_ in paragraphs 1 and 2 like that same idea in paragraphs 3 through 6?
- How is \_\_\_\_\_ shown in paragraphs 7-11?
- What mood does the author create? What details in the text help to create the mood?
- Use illustrations and details in a text to describe key ideas.

**8. Delineate and evaluate the argument and specific claims in a text, including the validity of the reasoning as well as the relevance and sufficiency of the evidence.**

- *Not applicable in Reading Literature*
- Identify the reasons an author gives to support his key point(s).
- Explain how author uses reasons and evidence to support the main idea of \_\_\_\_\_.
- Identify which reasons/evidence support which point(s).
- Describe logical connections between particular sentences and paragraphs.

**9. Analyze how two or more texts address similar themes or topics in order to build knowledge or to compare the approaches the authors take.**

- Compare and contrast the adventures of \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_.
- Compare and contrast (titles from the same genre/ theme/ topic).
- Compare and contrast 2 versions of the same story.
- Compare and contrast \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ (stories/myths, etc. with similar themes/ topics).
- Identify similarities and differences between two texts on the same topic.
- Read several texts on the same topic. Write/Prepare a speech using information from each of source.
- Read two texts about \_\_\_\_\_. Compare and contrast the most important points and key details presented in each text.

## RESOURCES

- Kathy Bumgardner
  - [KBumReading.org](http://KBumReading.org)
- School Improvement in Maryland
  - [mdk12.org](http://mdk12.org)
- McGraw-Hill Professional Development
  - [MHPDonline.com](http://MHPDonline.com)
- Achieve the Core
  - [AchieveTheCore.org](http://AchieveTheCore.org)
- Tim Shanahan's Blog
  - [ShanahanOnLiteracy.com](http://ShanahanOnLiteracy.com)
- *Text Complexity: Raising Rigor in Reading*
  - Doug Fisher, Nancy Frey, Diane Lapp, 2012
  - [Reading.org](http://Reading.org)

