

# Close Reading



THE ART AND CRAFT OF ANALYSIS

# Literary Writing



- Invites close reading and asks readers to:
  - Put it in context
  - Focus on themes
  - Focus on techniques
  - Respond to it in some way (writing)

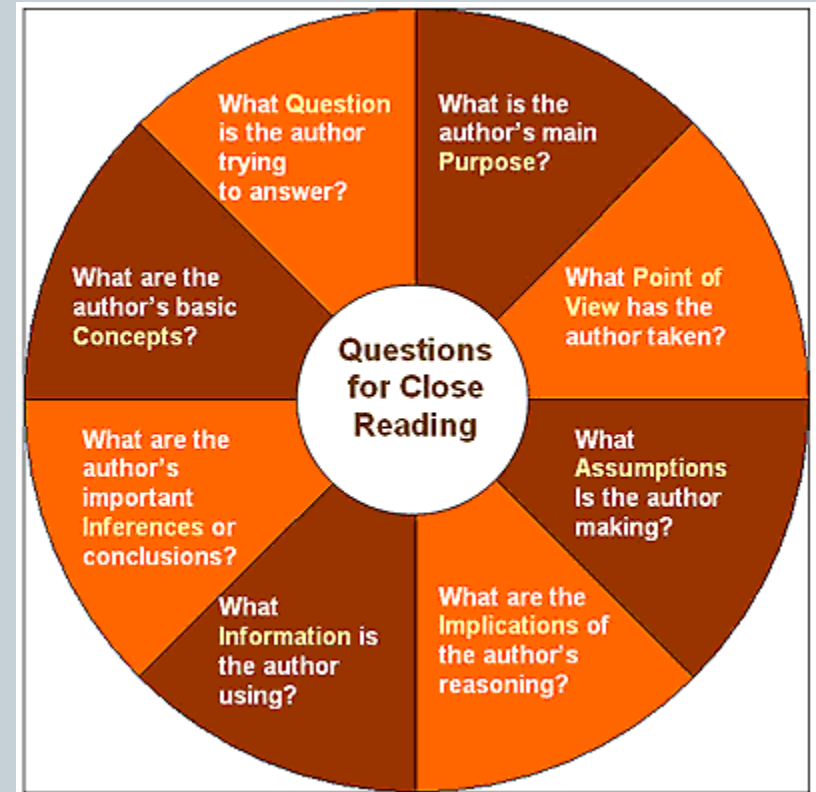
# Close Reading



**ANALYSIS OF A TEXT**

# What happens when you read closely?

- You develop an understanding of a text that is based first on the words themselves and then on the larger ideas those words
- You start with **small details** and spend time thinking about them to discover how they affect the text's larger meaning.



# What are the small details?



- Make a list in your notes of what you would consider the “small details.”
- Some suggestions:

punctuation  
words  
clauses

# How do you respond?



- When you write about a close reading you **start with the larger ideas and use the small details to support** your interpretation.

# You know this



- This is something you do every day as you respond to people, situations, as well as texts.
- You are aware of content and purpose as you recognize subject, speaker, and audience on a conscious level or an intuitive level.
- Think about conversations you have...you witness and analyze style too:
  - Body language
  - Gestures
  - Facial expressions
  - Tone of voice
  - Volume
  - Sentence structure
  - Colloquialisms
  - vocabulary

# Textual Example



**THE CONCLUDING PARAGRAPHS FROM THE  
ESSAY:**

**“WHERE NOTHING SAYS EVERYTHING”  
BY SUZANNE BERNE**

This essay details her visit to Ground Zero in New York.



# Unable to get a ticket to the site, Berne goes to a deli with a view of Ground Zero p. 35



“And there, at last, I got my ticket to the disaster.

I could see not just into the pit now, but also its access ramp, which trucks had been traveling up and down since I had arrived that morning. Gathered along the ramp were firefighters in their black helmets and black coats. Slowly they lined up, and it became clear that this was an honor guard, and that someone’s remains were being carried up the ramp toward the open door of an ambulance.

Everyone in the dining room stopped eating. Several people stood up, whether out of respect or to see better, I don’t know. For a moment, everything paused.

Then the day flowed back into itself. Soon I was outside once more, joining the tide of people washing around the site. Later, as I huddled with a little crowd on the viewing platform, watching people scrawl their names or write “God Bless America” on the plywood walls, it occurred to me that a form of repopulation was taking effect, with so many visitors to this place, thousands of visitors, all of us coming to see the wide emptiness where so many were lost. And by the act of our visiting—whether we are motivated by curiosity or horror or reverence or grief, or by something confusing that combines them all—that space fills up again. “

# Analyze...



## Context and Purpose:

- **Speaker:**
  - Writer, non-New Yorker
- **Audience:**
  - Those across the nation affected by 9-11.
- **Purpose:**
  - Describe her experience to other Americans.

## Style:

- To look at the author's style is to look at the language.

# Analyzing Style



**JUST AS YOU ANALYZE BEYOND THE SPOKEN  
CONVERSATION YOU CAN ANALYZE BEYOND  
THE WORDS ON THE PAGE.**

# What we talk about when we talk about style



- Tone
- Sentence structure
- Vocabulary

These things make up style and are key to understanding layers of meaning.

## P. 37 Style Questions for Berne piece:



- Why is the first paragraph one sentence?
- In that paragraph, why does Berne call the empty space “the disaster”?
- Why does the third sentence begin with “Gathered” rather than “Firefighters”?
- What examples of figurative language appear in the fourth paragraph?
- Does the word *huddled* in the fourth paragraph remind you of anything else you have read?
- What is the effect of the dashes in the final sentence?

# Breakdown of the Questions



- The two main things we are looking at in the writing:
  1. Word choice
  2. Word arrangement
- Word choice is called **diction**.
- Word arrangement is called **syntax**.

# Style as Tropes and Schemes



**Trope = artful diction**

- Metaphor
- Simile
- Personification
- hyperbole

**Scheme = artful syntax**

- Parallelisms
- Juxtapositions
- Antitheses

# Diction Questions



- Which of the important words in the passage (verbs, nouns, adjectives, and adverbs) are general and abstract? Which are specific and concrete?
- Are the important words formal, informal, colloquial, or slang?
- Are some words non-literal or figurative, creating figures of speech?



# Syntax Questions



- What is the order of the parts of the sentence? Is it the usual (subject-verb-object), or is it inverted?
- Which part of speech is more prominent—nouns or verbs?
- What are the sentences like? Are they **periodic** (moving towards something important at the end) or **cumulative** (adding details that support an important idea in the beginning of the sentence)?
- How does the sentence connect its words, phrases, and clauses?

# Talking with the Text



**HOW TO GENERATE YOUR OWN QUESTIONS  
TO DO A CLOSE READING**

# 3 ways of interacting with a text



1. Annotation
2. Dialectical journal
3. Graphic Organizer

# JFK's Inaugural Address p. 52-53



- A veritable glossary of tropes and schemes!
- Read aloud
- Go over questions on p. 55 (answers follow)