



The Close Reading Strategy

Sometimes when reading through a text for the first time a reader can miss details that would help form deeper understanding. Rereading a text a second time for the purpose of looking very closely for important details is a strategy called close reading. The name, close reading, describes the strategy perfectly! Coach your child to use the close reading strategy by performing the five following steps.

- 1. Number the Paragraphs:** Good readers and writers are able to cite and refer to the text in discussions with others. One simple way to do this is by numbering each paragraph or section in the left hand margin. When your child refers to the text, this numbering allows your child to state which paragraph he or she is referring to so others can follow the ideas being explored.
- 2. Chunk the Text:** Reading a full page of text can quickly become over-whelming. Breaking up the text into smaller sections (or chunks) makes the page much more manageable. Your child can do this by drawing a horizontal line between paragraphs to divide the page into smaller sections. Look at the paragraphs to see where natural chunks occur. Paragraphs 1-3 may be the hook and thesis statement, while 6-8 may be the paragraphs where the author addresses the opposition. It is important to understand that there is no right or wrong way to chunk the text, as long as your child can justify why he or she grouped certain paragraphs together.
- 3. Underline and Circle with a Purpose:** Have your child underline and circle very specific things. Ask your child to think about what information he or she wants to take from the text, and look for those elements. It is simply a matter of considering what is most important. For example, when studying an argument, your child would likely underline all “claims” (or beliefs) made by the author. Your child will quickly discover that the author makes multiple claims throughout the argument.

Here’s another example. When studying poetry, underlining uses of imagery throughout the poem would make sense. Have your child also try the strategy of circling key terms in the text. Key terms include words that are defined or are repeated often. If your child only circles five key terms in the entire text, it becomes obvious what the entire text is about.

- 4. Summarize What the Author Says in the Left Margin:** Have your child summarize each chunk by writing summaries in ten words or less in the left margin. The chunking allows your child to easily review all of the summaries to better understand the text as a whole.
- 5. Dig Deeper With Notes in the Right Margin:** In the right-hand margin, have your child complete a specific task for each chunk. These tasks may include:
- Use a power verb to describe what the author is DOING, such as describing, illustrating, arguing, etc. (e.g., “Comparing the character of Hamlet to his father.”)
 - Represent the information with a picture. This is a good way to be creative and visually represent the chunk with a drawing.
 - Ask questions that dig deeper into the text, such as what ideas might be implied by the text, what might have caused something to happen, what might happen as a result of an action, etc.
 - There are many other things your child can write in the margins to help develop deeper understanding. The main purpose of the close reading strategy is to think about what the author is saying, implying or asking.

Example of the Close Reading Strategy Applied

What NBA Stars and Occupy Wall Street protesters have in common

Source: Paul Frymer and Dorian T. Warre, *Bangor Daily News*, November 2, 2011

<p><u>Saying?</u></p>	<p>1 <u>LeBron James is as far as you can get from the 99 percent.</u></p>	<p><u>Doing?</u></p>
<p>LeBron has little in common with the 99%</p>	<p>2 <u>The NBA superstar is paid more than \$1 million a year as a forward for the Miami Heat and has a \$90 million contract with Nike. After his team lost the NBA finals to Dallas in June, he told griping fans to go back to the humdrum reality of “the real world,” while he retreated to his recently purchased \$9 million home in South Beach.</u></p> <p>3 <u>So James may seem to share nothing with the 99 percent – in Occupy Wall Street’s terms, the vast majority of American workers, who suffer in a culture of unabashed greed that has created a historic gulf of inequality between the richest Americans and everyone else.</u></p>	<p><u>Contrast:</u> LeBron James to the 99%</p>
<p>LeBron is like the 99% b/c he is controlled by an owner</p>	<p>4 <u>But he and the other NBA players have something important in common with the 99 percent. James is an employee of the Miami Heat. Despite his recent tweet hinting that he will try to join the National Football League if the NBA lockout continues, he finds himself, like most Americans, beholden to the owners and managers who control his workplace and industry. If the owners want to lock out the workers, or leave the country in search of greater profits, he – like American workers whose jobs have disappeared overseas – is left with few options. He is beholden to team owners who are not always upfront about their revenue and profits, and who are claiming a right to make more money without equitably sharing it with the workers who make the huge windfalls possible.</u></p>	<p><u>Compare:</u> NBA players to the 99%</p>