Close Reading

Close reading asks students to read and re-read a text purposefully. The goal is for students to understand what they read by carefully analyzing the text. When students “close read,” they focus on what the author has to say, what the author’s purpose is, what the words mean, and what the structure of the text tells us.

During close readings, the reader observes the facts and details about the text so they can interpret the observations and make meaning. Below are the major steps in a close reading strategy. It’s important to model and practice these steps with students as they grow as readers.

Steps to Close Reading

1. Set the purpose.
   a. What are students looking for? Are students looking for the main idea or the author’s argument?

2. Number paragraphs.
   a. Have students number the paragraphs for easy citation of text.

3. Read the text as individuals, whole class, pairs, etc.
   a. It can be helpful to read the text out loud the first time. The teacher, a confident reader, or the class can take turns or in small groups to read the text out loud.
   b. At this time, students may circle words that are unfamiliar to them. After the first reading, ask students to share their circled words with the class. As the teacher, you may decide which words need defining immediately and which definitions students should uncover through careful reading.

4. Re-read the text.
   a. Ask students to re-read the text silently or with a partner. During the re-read of a text, students use close reading symbols to note specific words or phrases.
      i. For example, students may highlight important words, underline the main idea, label supporting details, identify questions for clarity, circle unknown words, and star interesting information.

5. Read the text for a final time.
   a. During the final reading, students can make connections and discuss their observations.