

the text, think about whether it is significant, and consider its depth, logic, and fairness. Reading strategies involved in the fourth reading include making text connections, visualizing the meaning of the text, and reflecting on reading.

Four Lessons for Introducing the Fundamental Steps of Close Reading

Here are four lessons that gradually introduce students to close reading. Consider these tips before you jump into the lessons:

- **First, model, model, model.** Our students need lots of experiences with texts, and they need lots of experiences watching us work with texts. When we show students how to interact with texts, our teaching will stick.
- **Second, take it slow.** Students don't usually have well-developed "thinking muscles." We need to help them exercise their thinking brains a little bit at a time. If we just throw students into the reading without breaking the learning sequence into chunks, our students might just "drown" and give up!
- **Third, take the teaching suggestions with a grain of salt.** I created these teaching moves after working with students and teachers in many different contexts, but that doesn't mean that the teaching will work for you as written. Feel free to make the lessons your own!

SAMPLE LESSON: Close Reading a Picture

This is the simplest introduction to teaching close reading.

LESSON OBJECTIVE: Reading a picture or an image

Reading a picture is something we do every day, especially when we look at advertisements in magazines, newspapers, or another venue, like a webpage. In fact, companies *depend* on us to read advertisements and bring meaning to the picture. Reading a picture is a great way to help students begin to look closely at an image and think about the embedded meaning.

MATERIALS NEEDED: Projector for sharing the image with the class; projectable image ready (see *Boy and His Dog*).

GROUPING: Large or small group

TIME: 10 minutes

Step 1. Have Students Examine the Picture

Tell your students to look at the picture of the boy and his dog for a moment. Then say:

"As you look at the picture, what goes through your mind?"

Step 2. Model Your Thinking Aloud for the "First Read"

After the students have looked at the picture for a minute or two, model a think-aloud about the picture. You might say:

"At first glance, after the quick reading, I am thinking, 'Oh, it's a boy and a dog.' But then, I take a longer look, and I notice some details in the picture. I notice that the boy



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Boy and His Dog

is talking to the dog, that he is leaning in and holding the dog’s leg firmly. It appears that the dog is in the boy’s lap. I also notice that the dog looks relaxed and somewhat content with the position he is in in relation to the boy. It also appears that they are in a park and that the dog has some sort of scarf around its neck.”

Step 3. Encourage Students to Share Their Thinking

Give students a few more seconds to look at the picture after you finish your short think-aloud. Invite students to share their thinking. You might want to write down their thoughts and ideas as they share.

Step 4. Encourage Students to Probe Deeper With Their Thinking

After several students have shared, ask the class to probe deeper and read the picture more closely. A close reading should take them deeper into the context of the picture than what might be perceived at first glance. To get the conversation started, you could say:

“We could wonder about the relationship between the boy and the dog. I wonder if the artist was portraying a utopia vision of what childhood should look like, where every child has a pet. You might find absolutely no connection to the picture as it might not show what you think of as an owner–pet relationship. Maybe we could also look at the picture and see if it is saying anything about our world. I think a bit of a stereotype is portrayed in the picture about how every child should have a pet and be in love with his best friend.”

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SAMPLE LESSON: Close Reading a Cartoon

Another simple way to begin to teach close reading is to read a cartoon.



Cartoon for Close Reading
Exercise

LESSON OBJECTIVE: Reading a picture or an image

Reading a cartoon provides different opportunities for discussion than the previous lesson provided. Students need to spend more time with the third and fourth readings to determine the meaning of the picture and accompanying text, as well as to examine their feelings and thoughts about the cartoon, to understand what it means to them.

MATERIALS NEEDED: Projector for sharing the image with the class; projectable image ready (see *Cartoon for Close Reading Exercise*).

GROUPING: Large or small group

TIME: 10 minutes

Step 1. Have Students Examine the Cartoon

Begin with the first reading. Remember, you are asking students to consider the essential question, “What does the text say?” You might say:

“Think about what this cartoon says. *[Pause, giving students a minute to examine the picture.]* This is our ‘first read’ of the picture. I am noticing that the cat, obviously injured, is describing the suspect to the police artist and the police artist is drawing the suspect as the cat talks.”

Step 2. Encourage Students to “Read” the Picture Again

Give students a few more seconds to look at the cartoon after you share your thoughts. Invite students to share their thinking. You might want to write down their thoughts and ideas as they share. You can say:

“In the second reading, we need to think about how the artist shows us what the text says. Remember, we focus on ‘How does the text say it?’ This author says it through the illustration’s details. Notice the cat’s hand waving in the air as he describes the suspect. Notice the injuries of the cat and the suspect he is describing, the dog. Look at the context of the room the two characters are in. It is sparse. Notice the look on the face of the police artist, and the ability of the police artist to capture what the cat is describing.”

Step 3. Encourage Students to Examine the Picture and Evaluate Meaning

Rally the class and get the students talking about the cartoon. Focus on students thinking about whether the cartoon is funny or not, and encourage them to explain why using details from the cartoon. You can say:

“In the third reading, we ask the question, ‘What does the text mean?’ *[Pause for a minute.]* I want you to think about what the text means. In this simple cartoon, the artist is trying to get us to smile and to laugh. A process that is used in police work is made funny because it is a cat that is injured and describing the suspect, which is a dog. When considering the context of this cartoon, we know that it was written in the United States where the relationship between dogs and cats is considered adversarial. That is what makes us smile when looking at the cartoon!”

Step 4. You’re Done!

Your students just did a close reading with three “readings” of the cartoon. First they thought about literal meaning of the cartoon; after the third reading, they asked answered questions about text meaning; and they also evaluated the picture and accompanying text to determine the deeper meaning of the cartoon.

SAMPLE LESSON: Close Reading a Short Article

When moving from a picture or cartoon to text in terms of teaching close reading, use short, easy-to-understand text that discusses new ideas or provides information.

LESSON OBJECTIVE: Close reading of a short article

Reading a short article may be something you do in your classroom already. In this lesson, you walk your students through the text with three readings. In teaching close reading, don’t preteach vocabulary or provide background knowledge; instead, let the students delve into the text on their own, noting their ideas and thoughts in the margins. This lesson assumes that you have taught students to annotate a text; see *Prereading and Think-Aloud Lessons for Main Idea and Details* in Part III.

MATERIALS NEEDED: Copy of article “A Day at School in Kyrgyzstan” for each student (see pages 18 and 248); chart or projector to record notes and ideas



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GROUPING: Large or small group

TIME: 40 minutes or two 20-minute sessions. You can teach the first and second reading in 20 minutes and the third reading in another 20-minute session. It helps to break it up if your students’ “thinking muscles” are getting tired!

Step 1. Have Students Read the Text Through for the First Time

Have students read the article “A Day at School in Kyrgyzstan,” by Kathryn Hulick. Say:

“We have learned to closely read a picture and a cartoon as a warm-up for learning to closely read a text. Today we are going to closely read ‘A Day at School in Kyrgyzstan.’ Because we are focused on a close read right now, I am going to teach you the steps of close reading while you are practicing with this article. When we do a close reading, we start by jumping in and reading the text. We don’t talk about the text first; we talk about it *after* we give it a go. You can mark up the page with your ideas about the text. Remember, just like when we examined the picture and the cartoon, we are thinking about the question, ‘What does the text say?’”

Circulate the room while students read, reminding them to annotate the text. If you created a text annotation chart from previous teaching (see *Annotating Text* in Part III), you can point to it to remind students how to take notes in the margins while reading.

Step 2. Go Through the Text as a Group and Paraphrase Sentences

Once students learn to closely read a text on their own, they will paraphrase the text and take notes as they read. Because this is the students’ first lesson in close reading, you will complete the paraphrasing process as a group, to teach the process of paraphrasing and capturing what the text says. Say:

“Now that we have read the text, we are going to examine the text closely as a group. We are going to look at the text line-by-line and paragraph-by-paragraph and say the text in our own words.”

See an example of paraphrasing “A Day at School in Kyrgyzstan” in *Paraphrasing Example* on page 19. This is the time to discuss difficult vocabulary with your students; however, your focus needs to be on words that the students identify as hard, not on words that you have chosen to teach! In a close reading, you don’t teach vocabulary. Save that for a different lesson—for example, *Understanding Key Vocabulary* in Part III.

Step 3. Read the Text for a Second Time and Focus on How the Text Says What It Says

In the second reading of the text, you are focused on asking a different question, “How does the text say it?” This reading is concentrated on what the text says *and* how the author says it. Say:

“Now I want you to read the text a second time. This time, while you are reading, think about what the text says—you can look at our paraphrasing chart to help you remember—and then think, ‘How does the text say that?’ For example . . . Once you are done with the second reading, we are going to talk about how the text says what it says all together as a group.” [*Circulate and monitor students as they read the text the second time, and encourage them to think about what the text says (remember, the information is recorded on the chart you created with them) and how it says it.*]

Step 4. Go Through the Text as a Group and Discuss How the Text Says What It Says

During the second reading, students may begin making inferences about the text. Making and analyzing inferences requires students to deeply interpret the text by applying background knowledge and supporting conclusions, for which you will support them in this step. Encourage students to look at the craft and structure of the text as well as to begin thinking about how the ideas in the text connect to each other, or to other things. Say:

“Let’s talk about what you noticed in the article about how it says what it says. I know that it’s funny to think about that. You may be thinking, ‘Well, it just says it!’ but authors use craft and structure to write their ideas down. Authors also use things they know about the subject of the article to write. Let’s use our paraphrasing chart to help us. The first thing on our paraphrasing chart is . . . *[Refer to an example on the chart you created with the class (see Paraphrasing Example for guidance).]* Now, let’s think, ‘How does the author say this?’ I am noticing that, in the article, the author . . .”

Walk the students through the article, examining what the text says and how the text says it. Encourage your students to think about the directness or indirectness of sentences (do the sentences present the main idea simply?), metaphors in the text, and the text structure. Help them make inferences about what the author might know and how the author shows what he or she knows in the writing. It helps to have students talk about and tie ideas in the text to concrete examples in the real world. Encourage students to compare their life to the life of a student in Kyrgyzstan.

Step 5. Read the Text for a Third Time and Focus on Text Meaning

This reading is focused on the analysis of the text. The essential question asked in this pass through the text is “What does the text mean?” This analysis includes identifying the author’s purpose and making conclusions about the concepts and the implications of the text. Encourage students to consider some essential ideas about the author’s thinking:

- The question the author is trying to answer
- The basic concept the author is portraying
- The author’s purpose in writing the article
- The author’s point of view
- Assumptions the author is making
- The implications of the author’s reasoning
- The information the author chooses to use, or to leave out

Say:

“Now we are going to read the text a third time. This time, I want you to think carefully about the author’s meaning. Ask yourself, ‘What does the text mean?’ as you read. I want you to start by thinking about the author’s purpose. Why did the author write this article? What does the author want us to think about? What does the central or ‘big’ idea in this article mean in our world? That last question is a big question, so I’ll repeat it: ‘What does the big idea in this article mean in our world?’ We are going to discuss this question and what we think the author’s purpose was in writing this article once you are done reading it again.

“Don’t get tired! I know that you have looked at this article two times already—but I think we can learn some things by looking at it again. Now, give it a go and write your ideas down in the margins just like we’ve done before.”

A Day at School in Kyrgyzstan

by Kathryn Hulick

It's 7:30 a.m. and I'm on my way to school. I'm wrapped in a gigantic coat, hat, and scarf to keep out the winter chills as I walk. It's still dark out, but I pass vendors setting up shops, families driving donkey carts, and men standing outside their cars. I also pass groups of students, who wave to me and say, "Hello, Miss Kathryn!"

I am their teacher, a Peace Corps volunteer in Kyrgyzstan, a small country in the mountains of Central Asia. When I arrive at school, I climb the stairs to the third floor and unlock my classroom. It's a large room, with a row of windows and posters and maps all over the walls. The white board I bought leans against an ancient, unusable blackboard across the room from the windows. I flick the lights. Nothing happens. "Svet Jok," I think to myself, the Kyrgyz words for "No electricity." Although the sun is rising, it's still dark in the building. My first class, 11th grade, piles into the room, speaking among themselves in a mix of Russian and Kyrgyz. My job is to teach them English. It's going to be hard to follow my lesson plans when the students can't even see the white board, and it's so cold in the room that we're all still wearing our bulky coats and hats! Luckily, the lights blink on near the end of my first lesson. I ask my students to finish writing letters to their pen pals in America for homework.

A Kyrgyz high school goes up to the 11th grade. After graduation, many students will get married. The brightest students will go to university for five years, however most of them will end up back in this village, raising families, taking care of livestock and farming beans and potatoes. A select few will work their way to a job in the capital city of Bishkek. The common dream, however, is to travel to America or Europe, which is only possible if they first learn English.

For now, they are still students and teenagers. They giggle and whisper to each

other in my class. They write to their pen pals about Britney Spears and 50 Cent, who they like as much as popular Russian, Turkish, and Kyrgyz pop stars. They watch American action movies, dubbed in Russian, on TV. A few kids have cell phones and collect clips of music to play for their friends. They do homework, take tests, play sports, and organize talent shows. But being students is just one aspect of their lives. When they go home after school, the girls make soup and bread from scratch, haul water in buckets and basins, and take care of younger siblings. The boys tend cows and sheep, learn to repair cars, and work in the fields.

Even in school, students are responsible for more than their homework. Students stay together in the same group of about 20 kids from first grade until graduation, meaning that classmates are like brothers and sisters. Each class has its own homeroom, and the students are responsible for the upkeep of this room. That's right, the students spend at least one afternoon every week with buckets, mops and dusting cloths cleaning their own classroom! When the weather is warm in the spring and fall, the director of the school may call a subotnik, which means that instead of classes, the whole school works outside cleaning up trash, gardening, and raking.

But today it's the middle of December. I wait ten minutes for my next class and finally one girl peeks in, "Sorry, Miss Kathryn! We have no lesson today. We are in the Actovny Zal." That's Russian for "auditorium." I follow her downstairs and discover my students lined up on the stage, singing a song about winter to a group of teachers. If there's a performance going on, there probably won't be any lessons for the rest of the day. As I settle in to watch the show, I am full of hope for the futures of these students of mine, who juggle being teenagers, housekeepers, farmers, custodians, and entertainers all at once.

Paraphrasing Example

For the first four paragraphs of the text of
“A Day at School in Kyrgyzstan” by Kathryn Hulick

What the Text Says	Saying This in Our Own Words
<p>It's 7:30 a.m. and I'm on my way to school. I'm wrapped in a gigantic coat, hat, and scarf to keep out the winter chills as I walk. It's still dark out, but I pass vendors setting up shops, families driving donkey carts, and men standing outside their cars. I also pass groups of students, who wave to me and say, "Hello, Miss Kathryn!"</p>	<p>A person is going to school in the morning. It is cold and dark because it is winter.</p>
<p>I am their teacher, a Peace Corps volunteer in Kyrgyzstan, a small country in the mountains of Central Asia.</p>	<p>The person going to school is a teacher in Kyrgyzstan.</p>
<p>When I arrive at school, I climb the stairs to the third floor and unlock my classroom. It's a large room, with a row of windows and posters and maps all over the walls. The white board I bought leans against an ancient, unusable blackboard across the room from the windows. I flick the lights. Nothing happens. "Svet Jok," I think to myself, the Kyrgyz words for "No electricity."</p>	<p>The classroom seems sparse and doesn't have electricity.</p>
<p>Although the sun is rising, it's still dark in the building. My first class, 11th grade, piles into the room, speaking among themselves in a mix of Russian and Kyrgyz. My job is to teach them English. It's going to be hard to follow my lesson plans when the students can't even see the white board, and it's so cold in the room that we're all still wearing our bulky coats and hats! Luckily, the lights blink on near the end of my first lesson. I ask my students to finish writing letters to their pen pals in America for homework.</p>	<p>The teacher is teaching English. Because there is no electricity it will be hard for her to teach in the dark and in the cold. The lights do come on and the students write letters.</p>
<p>A Kyrgyz high school goes up to the 11th grade. After graduation, many students will get married. The brightest students will go to university for five years, however most of them will end up back in this village, raising families, taking care of livestock and farming beans and potatoes. A select few will work their way to a job in the capital city of Bishkek. The common dream, however, is to travel to America or Europe, which is only possible if they first learn English.</p>	<p>High school in Kyrgyzstan is much different than it is in the United States. Some students, but not many, get to go to college. Most students get married and work. They dream of going to America.</p>
<p>For now, they are still students and teenagers. They giggle and whisper to each other in my class. They write to their pen pals about Britney Spears and 50 Cent, who they like as much as popular Russian, Turkish, and Kyrgyz pop stars. They watch American action movies, dubbed in Russian, on TV.</p>	<p>The teenagers admire American, Russian, Turkish, and Kyrgyz rock stars. They do things American teens do, like watch TV.</p>
<p>A few kids have cell phones and collect clips of music to play for their friends. They do homework, take tests, play sports, and organize talent shows.</p>	<p>Teenagers in Kyrgyzstan like things that other teens like.</p>
<p>But being students is just one aspect of their lives. When they go home after school, the girls make soup and bread from scratch, haul water in buckets and basins, and take care of younger siblings. The boys tend cows and sheep, learn to repair cars, and work in the fields.</p>	<p>Teens in Kyrgyzstan are expected to do a lot. They work hard around the house and the farm.</p>

Step 6. Have Students Work in Pairs to Discuss the Article

Remember, this third reading is focused on the analysis of the text. The essential question asked in this pass through the text is “What does the text mean?” Before discussing a reading in a group, have students talk in pairs so that they can “practice” their thinking with a partner. This helps to engage more students in the big conversation you will lead because they can prepare their ideas with a partner before sharing with the whole group. Say:

“Now I want you to get with a partner and have a quick discussion about what you thought about the meaning of the text. Compare what you have noted with what your partner has noted. Make sure to, and help each other, have at least two ideas about the meaning of the text.”

Step 7. Go Through the Text as a Group and Discuss What the Text Means

During the third reading, students are digging to make meaning. The thinking in this round is focused on the analysis of the text, including identifying the author’s purpose and making conclusions about the concepts and implications of the text. You have already provided a structure for some meaning making: First the students read the text on their own, then they talked about it with a partner, and now it is time to discuss it as a group. To support them through the meaning making required for this step, make a chart with the information listed in *Author’s Purpose Thinking Points*, or project the text box in *Author’s Purpose Thinking Points* and discuss each bullet point. Say:

“Now, let’s talk about what we think the article means. We are going to think about what the article means by thinking about the author’s reasoning in writing this article. Look at the points in this chart. [*Show Author’s Purpose Thinking Points.*] Let’s start our discussion with the author’s purpose. What do you think the author’s purpose was, and why?” [*Go through a few of the bullet points in Author’s Purpose Thinking Points, having students share their thinking. Record the class’s thinking on a chart or projected image.*]

Step 8. You’re Done!

Your students just did a close reading with three passes through an article. First they thought about the literal meaning of the article; after the third reading, they asked and answered questions about text meaning; and they also evaluated the author’s reasoning.

Author’s Purpose Thinking Points

- The question the author is trying to answer
- The basic concept the author is portraying
- The author’s purpose in writing the article
- The author’s point of view
- Assumptions the author is making
- The implications of the author’s reasoning
- The information the author chooses to use, or to leave out