



# From Draft to Finish!

## Improved Reading and Writing in the Adult Education Classroom

*In this hands-on workshop, participants identify common needs of adult learners and learn research-proven strategies for enriching reading and writing instruction. Participants analyze samples of student work and apply recommended strategies to their own writing.*

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# Close Reading, A Love Story

*The unexamined life is not worth living.*

—Socrates

**T**hink of what you love most in the world: your children, spouse, family, and friends. Your home or a memento from a vacation. Your cat. That old sweater you have had forever. Now consider how well, how intimately, you know those things. How when your partner has a certain look on her face, you know she is feeling sweet on you. How, on lucky occasions, you can preempt your child's tantrum. How every thread on that sweater is as familiar as the fingers on your hands. Think of the first person you fell in love with. Think of the last.

We know, in our bones, that loving something or someone involves knowing that thing or person very well. Returning to it repeatedly, gazing at it for hours, considering each angle, each word, and thinking about its meaning.

Our connection to the written word can be as deep as a love affair. Think of those books, the ones you memorized every line of when you were young, like “In the light of the moon a little egg lay on a leaf,” you said over and over as a hungry caterpillar was just about to hatch, or “Goodnight stars, goodnight air, goodnight noises everywhere” filled your thoughts as a busy room, a moon, and *you* lay down for sleep (Carle 1979; Brown 1947). Think of the young-adult novel you came to know so well that you wanted to rewrite the ending. The songs you listened to as a teenager that played on repeat in your head. The first movie you memorized every line of. The television drama you feel you nearly inhabit.

Love brings us in close, leads us to study the details of a thing, and asks us to return again and again. These are the motivations and ideas that built this book. In it, we argue that teaching readers to look at texts closely—by showing them how one word, one scene, or one idea matters—is an opportunity to extend a love affair with reading. It is also a chance to carry close reading habits beyond the page, to remind students that their lives are rich with significance, ready to be examined, reflected upon, and appreciated.

## What Close Reading Was, Is, and Can Be

Close reading developed from exactly this same place of deep love and study. It brings to mind ancient images of monks and scholars pouring over religious writings to try to divine an understanding of life’s mysteries. The term *close reading* draws its roots from a passion for talking and writing about texts.

As university students of literary criticism in the 1940s aimed to develop ways of studying texts and engaging in thoughtful conversations, professors took to studying and detailing methods of teaching these analytical skills. This all ignited an academic debate, as so often happens. Scholars began to discuss the *best* approaches for talking about the literature they studied. One style that emerged, “New Criticism,” argued that if you were going to talk about text, the conversation should be *only* about the text, not the time period, the author, or the reader’s own experiences or points of view (Ransom 1941; Wimsatt and Beardsley 1946, 1949; Wimsatt 1954). Reading closely, then, was the process of trying to tune out everything else while looking at the style, words, meter, structure, and so on, of a piece of writing—letting the text itself shine through.

Other styles of literary critique developed alongside, from, and sometimes in opposition to, New Criticism. Several prominent approaches suggested that reading is an interaction between a particular reader and how that person sees the text—that it is impossible to remove experience from understanding. Others believed that considering the time period, or what was known of the author, were beneficial when discussing written works (Rosenblatt 1938,

1978; Fish 1970; Veese 1989). In the late 1950s, the New Criticism style largely fell out of vogue at universities. Each approach, though varied in procedure and focus, involved reading closely and centered around the reader connecting deeply, intellectually, and passionately with making meaning from literature.

Today, the Common Core State Standards have brought the idea of close reading back into the educational landscape. As Lucy Calkins, Mary Ehrenworth, and Christopher Lehman describe in *Pathways to the Common Core* (2012), the Common Core State Standards' writers began with their vision of university reading and developed grade-level-specific expectations from there, meaning that the Standards across all grades inherently value "objective, close, analytical reading" and aim to move students in that direction. This careful meditation on texts is repeated throughout the language of the Standards:

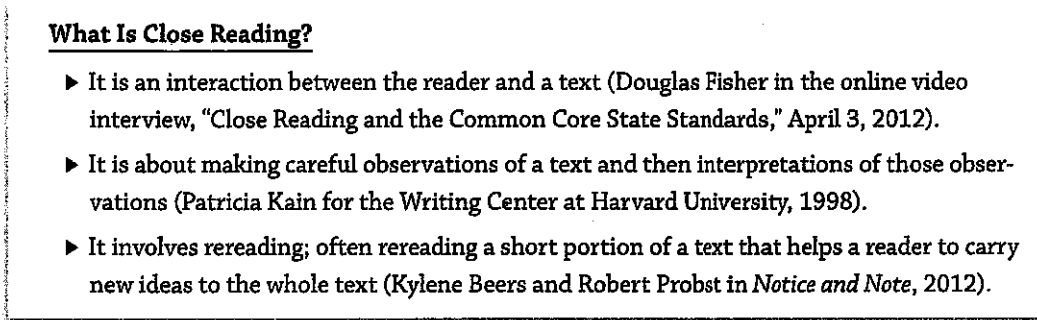
- ◆ "read closely" and "cite specific textual evidence" (R.1)
- ◆ "analyze how . . . ideas develop and interact" (R.3)
- ◆ "interpret words and phrases" and "analyze how specific word choices shape meaning" (R.4)
- ◆ "analyze the structure of texts" (R.5)
- ◆ "assess how point of view" "shapes" a text (R.6)
- ◆ "analyze" "two or more texts" to build knowledge (R.9).

The CCSS even begins its introduction with a vision for students' potential at graduation, imagining that "students who meet the Standards readily undertake the close, attentive reading that is at the heart of understanding and enjoying complex works of literature" (p. 3).

Recently, the debate over New Criticism has been thrust back into the educational conversation after the adoption of the CCSS. Most likely this renewed focus came from the "Revised Publishers' Criteria" (2012), written by two of the lead writers of the standards, David Coleman and Susan Pimentel, after the Standards' adoption. In that document, and in various other commentaries, they suggest that students must make ideas *only* from within "the four corners of the text" and that prior knowledge should not be brought into discussions of text. The latter point, Timothy Shanahan noted, was removed from a revised version of their *Criteria* due to pushback from the educational research community (2013). Though the lead writers argue this as the way to meet the Standards, as many educators have found, if you remove the student from the process of reading, the reading goes, too. As Kylene Beers tweeted, "The Publishers' Criteria of the CCSS has assumed authority, not assessed. Don't do what you know isn't right" (@KyleneBeers April 21, 2013).

Instead of seeing this as a debate between two opposing sides, we believe there is a way to achieve both goals—to teach students to read more analytically, while also valuing their lives and experience. In fact, in this book we argue that by learning to read more closely, our lives and experience grow richer as well.

As we researched close reading practices, we looked for a way to define the approach that takes from the best of what is available. Figure 1.1 shows a vision for close reading that we have come to find effective for developing students' habits.



**Fig. 1.1** What Is Close Reading?

Given these definitions, we set out to design a vision for close reading instruction that matches both the academic demands of the approach with the engagement needs of our students. As Staff Developers with the Reading and Writing Project at Teachers College, Columbia University, we have been lucky to work within schools across the country and around the world, and we've seen how educators like you pour your love and attention into developing students who share the same passion for reading as you have. From these experiences, we've identified some central tenets that we have come to believe must be true for any instruction to be effective and that should apply equally to teaching close reading practices (see Figure 1.2).

Put directly, close reading is something we should teach students *to do*, rather than something we just *do to* them. Douglas Fisher and Nancy Frey suggest a similar caution, that "close reading doesn't mean that you simply distribute a complex reading and then exhort [students] to read it again and again until they understand it" (Fisher and Frey 2012, 8). We agree and believe that close reading takes clear, engaging, transferable, and responsive instruction. Close reading instruction must lead to students' own thoughtful reading.

Close reading instruction is most effective as a powerful piece of a large, robust, and responsive literacy curriculum. As Donalyn Miller describes in *The Book Whisperer*, "No matter how long students spend engaged in direct reading instruction, without time to apply what they learn in the context of real reading events, students will never build capacity as

# College and Career Readiness Anchor Standards for Reading

## Key Ideas and Details

- 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.
- Determine central ideas or themes of a text and analyze their development; summarize the key supporting details and ideas.
- Analyze how and why individuals, events, or ideas develop and interact over the course of a text.

## Craft and Structure

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

## Integration of Knowledge and Ideas

- Integrate and evaluate content presented in diverse media and formats, including visually and quantitatively, as well as in words.<sup>1</sup>
- 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.
- Analyze how two or more texts address similar themes or topics in order to build knowledge or to compare the approaches the authors take.

## Range of Reading and Level of Text Complexity

- Read and comprehend complex literary and informational texts independently and proficiently.

**Note on range and content of student reading** To build a foundation for college and career readiness, students must read widely and deeply from among a broad range of high-quality, increasingly challenging literary and informational texts. Through extensive reading of stories, dramas, poems, and myths from diverse cultures and different time periods, students gain literary and cultural knowledge as well as familiarity with various text structures and elements. By reading texts in history/social studies, science, and other disciplines, students build a foundation of knowledge in these fields that will also give them the background to be better readers in all content areas. Students can only gain this foundation when the curriculum is intentionally and coherently structured to develop rich content knowledge within and across grades. Students also acquire the habits of reading independently and closely, which are essential to their future success.<sup>1</sup> Please see "Research to Build and Present Knowledge" in Writing and "Comprehension and Collaboration" in Speaking and Listening for additional standards relevant to gathering, assessing, and applying information from print and digital sources.

# **COLLEGE AND CAREER ANCHOR STANDARDS FOR WRITING**

## **Text Types and Purposes**

1. Write arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or texts, using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence.
2. Write informative/explanatory texts to examine and convey complex ideas and information clearly and accurately through the effective selection, organization, and analysis of content.
3. Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, well-chosen details, and well-structured event sequences.

## **Production and Distribution of Writing**

4. Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.
5. Develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, editing, rewriting, or trying a new approach.
6. Use technology, including the Internet, to produce and publish writing and to interact and collaborate with others.

## **Research to Build and Present Knowledge**

7. Conduct short as well as more sustained research projects based on focused questions, demonstrating understanding of the subject under investigation.
8. Gather relevant information from multiple print and digital sources, assess the credibility and accuracy of each source, and integrate the information while avoiding plagiarism.
9. Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.

## **Range of Writing**

10. Write routinely over extended time frames (time for research, reflection, and revision) and shorter time frames (a single sitting or a day or two) for a range of tasks, purposes, and audiences.

# Making Ends Meet

Cassandra Wilson

**BEFORE YOU READ:** Think about the idiom, "making ends meet." What does it mean? Try using it in a sentence or two. What is a dish that you cook when you are trying to make ends meet?

My mother had seven children, and she worked very hard to feed and educate us without any of our fathers by her side. Many times, we went to school with our shoes torn and without lunch. In Jamaica, they don't give free lunch at school like

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**She did not buy expensive foods, just foods to fill our stomachs.**

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they do here, so my mother used to get up early and make us cornmeal porridge to fill our stomachs. She hoped that would

hold us for the whole day. When we came home from school, our dinner would be waiting for us.

To earn money, my mother washed people's clothes. She scrubbed the clothes with her hands and a scrub brush and then hung the clothes in the sun to dry. The next day, she went back to iron and fold them. After all that hard labor using up her strength, she went to do the grocery shopping. But she never could buy enough. She did not buy expensive foods, just foods to fill our stomachs. We used to be well satisfied, because we all knew what our mom was going through.

## What about You?

The writers on this page and p. 1 write about a meal they will never forget. Write about a meal that you will never forget.

Read another story about making ends meet: "Pinching Pennies, Eating Well: A Journey" by Lena Burgio. Available on our website: <[changeagent.neirc.org](http://changeagent.neirc.org)>.

One Sunday she wanted to cook rice, peas, and fried chicken for our dinner, but she didn't have any cooking oil to fry the chicken. She seasoned the chicken hoping some friends or family members would pass by and give her the money she needed to buy the cooking oil. She was there waiting and waiting with no luck.

Finally, she came up with an idea to start boiling the chicken. You could smell the aroma coming

from the well-seasoned chicken. After she cooked the chicken, she added carrot, thyme, sweet pepper, and tomatoes. Then she decided to throw the rice in the pot with the chicken and let it all cook together in one pot. And that was our Sunday dinner. Even though that's not what my mother had planned to cook for our dinner, it turned out to be very tasty and we all enjoyed our Sunday dinner.

That is a dinner I will never forget. Even now that I am an adult, I cook that same dinner for my kids and called it my mom's signature dish. I will cherish that memory for the rest of my life. I love you, Mom.

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Cassandra Wilson is a student at the Brooklyn Adult Learning Center in NY. She was born in Jamaica, the second child out of 7 children. She is the mother of 3 children.





## No Indictment

After reviewing all the evidence, the 23 men and women on a Staten Island grand jury cleared Police Officer Daniel Pantaleo in the July 17 choking death of Eric Garner.

Our view here is similar to our take last week on a Missouri grand jury's decision not to indict the police officer who fatally shot Michael Brown.

Only the grand jurors have seen all the evidence, and, after they did, they apparently concluded Officer Pantaleo's actions showed no malice or intent to harm.

Instead, they saw an unnecessary death that stemmed from Eric Garner's decision to resist cops trying to arrest him for selling illegal cigarettes.

Had the 350-pound Garner not physically resisted, requiring Pantaleo and his fellow cops to take him to the ground, he would likely be alive today.

Obviously, the decision doesn't diminish the tragedy for Garner's family. But we were encouraged that Mayor de Blasio has noted that, while New York respects the right of the people to protest peacefully, "if we think public safety is compromised, police will act very assertively."

Commissioner Bill Bratton has likewise moved to prevent violence from breaking out — noting that his biggest problem is not New Yorkers but "outside agitators who come in for these events."

Neither the mayor nor the commissioner, who have just announced another drop in major crimes, wants a repeat of what happened in Ferguson after the grand jury's decision there.

Unfortunately, some who wanted an indictment are behaving as though the grand juries have confirmed we languish under a racist police system.

Now, there's always room for police to improve relations with those they serve. But too many players here — from Attorney General Eric Holder and Mayor de Blasio to the Rev. Al Sharpton — speak as though the grand juries have confirmed their call for a federal civil rights intervention.

But facts matter. And it's telling that the only people who have looked at all the facts in these two highly contentious cases reached conclusions that in truth undermine the case for civil rights violations.

# We Wear the Mask

Paul Laurence Dunbar

We wear the mask that grins and lies,

It hides our cheeks and shades our eyes,-

This debt we pay to human guile;

With torn and bleeding hearts we smile,

And mouth with myriad subtleties.

Why should the world be otherwise,

In counting all our tears and sighs?

Nay, let them only see us, while

We wear the mask.

We smile, but, O great Christ, our cries

To thee from tortured souls arise.

We sing, but oh the clay is vile

Beneath our feet, and long the mile;

But let the world dream otherwise,

We wear the mask!

# Flowchart: What I'm Trying to Say

How I'm going to say it:

What I'm Trying to Say

Lead

Notes to support my piece:

- 
- 
- 
- 
- 

Ending

Craft

Craft

Craft

### CRAFT STUDY

TEXT/ AUTHOR	EXAMPLE FROM MENTOR TEXT	HOW DOES THE WRITER DO IT? (STRUCTURE OF THE CRAFT)	WHY DOES THE WRITER DO IT?

	<p><b>Free Space!</b></p>	