

**Planning for Close Reading**

**Implementing the Process into the Classroom**

# **What is close reading?**



# **Five Simple Strategies on How to Read Complex Texts**

**1. Number the paragraphs**

The Common Core asks students to be able to cite and refer to the text. One simple way to do this is by numbering each paragraph, section, or stanza in the left hand margin. When students refer to the text, require them to state which paragraph they are referring to. The rest of the class will be able to quickly find the line being referenced.

**2. Chunk the text.**

When faced with a full page of text, reading it can quickly become overwhelming for students. Breaking up the text into smaller sections (or chunks) makes the page much more manageable for students. Students do this by drawing a horizontal line between paragraphs to divide the page into smaller sections.

At the beginning of the year, group the paragraphs into chunks before handing out the assignment. 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 you can justify why you grouped certain paragraphs together.

By the end of the year, let go of that responsibility and ask students to chunk the text on their own. They number the paragraphs then must make decisions about what paragraphs will be grouped together. Usually, most of the class is very similar in the way they chunked the text.

**3. Underline and circle… with a purpose.**

Telling students to simply underline “the important stuff” is too vague. “Stuff” is not a concrete thing that students can identify. Instead, direct students to underline and circle very specific things. Think about what information you want students to take from the text, and ask them to look for those elements. What you have students circle and underline may change depending on the text type.

For example, when studying an argument, ask students to underline “claims” - belief statements that the author is making. Students will quickly discover that the author makes multiple claims throughout the argument.

When studying poetry, students could underline the imagery they find throughout the poem.

Circling specific items is also an effective close reading strategy. Have students circle “Key terms” in the text. Define key terms as words that:

1. Are defined.

2. Are repeated throughout the text.

3. If you only circled five key terms in the entire text, you would have a pretty good idea about what the entire text is about.

Have students circle the names of sources, power verbs, or figurative language. Providing students with a specific thing you want them to underline or circle will focus their attention on that area much better than “underlining important information”.

**4. Left margin: What is the author SAYING?**

It isn’t enough to ask students to “write in the margins”. Be very specific and give students a game plan for what they will write. This is where the chunking comes into play.

Ask students to summarize each chunk. Demonstrate how to write summaries in 10-words or less. The chunking allows the students to look at the text in smaller segments, and summarize what the author is saying in just that small, specific chunk. 

**5. Right margin: Dig deeper into the text**

In the right-hand margin, direct students to complete a specific task for each chunk. This may require that students:

* Use a power verb to describe what the author is DOING. (For example: Describing, illustrating, arguing, etc.) Note: It isn’t enough for students to write “Comparing” and be done. What is the author comparing? A better answer might be: “Comparing the character of Montag to Captain Beatty”.
* Represent the information with a picture. This is a good way for students to be creative to visually represent the chunk with a drawing.
* Ask questions. When modeled, students can begin to learn how to ask questions that dig deeper into the text. Use these questions as the conversation driver.
* There are many other things students can write in the margins. Model and teach these strategies so that students will have an idea of what to write when they are on their own.

Adapted from *Five close reading strategies to support the Common Core.* Allam, C (2012, June 11). [*http://iteachicoachiblog.blogspot.com/2012/06/five-simple-close-reading-strategies.html*](http://iteachicoachiblog.blogspot.com/2012/06/five-simple-close-reading-strategies.html)

# **Sample Annotation Guide**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| ***Symbol*** | ***Meaning*** |
| *1, 2, 3 . . .* | *Number of the paragraph* |
| *\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_* | *Major points or key ideas* |
|  | *Key words or terms* |
| *?* | *Something that is confusing* |
| *!* | *Something you found surprising* |
| *E* | *Example supporting major points* |

# **Henry, Patrick. “Speech to the Second Virginia Convention.” (1775)**

# Mr. President: No man thinks more highly than I do of the patriotism, as well as abilities, of the very worthy gentlemen who have just addressed the House. But different men often see the same subject in different lights; and, therefore, I hope it will not be thought disrespectful to those gentlemen if, entertaining as I do, opinions of a character very opposite to theirs, I shall speak forth my sentiments freely, and without reserve. This is no time for ceremony. The question before the House is one of awful moment to this country. For my own part, I consider it as nothing less than a question of freedom or slavery; and in proportion to the magnitude of the subject ought to be the freedom of the debate. It is only in this way that we can hope to arrive at truth, and fulfill the great responsibility which we hold to God and our country. Should I keep back my opinions at such a time, through fear of giving offence, I should consider myself as guilty of treason towards my country, and of an act of disloyalty toward the majesty of heaven, which I revere above all earthly kings.

# Mr. President, it is natural to man to indulge in the illusions of hope. We are apt to shut our eyes against a painful truth, and listen to the song of that siren till she transforms us into beasts. Is this the part of wise men, engaged in a great and arduous struggle for liberty? Are we disposed to be of the number of those who, having eyes, see not, and, having ears, hear not, the things which so nearly concern their temporal salvation? For my part, whatever anguish of spirit it may cost, I am willing to know the whole truth; to know the worst, and to provide for it.

# <http://www.corestandards.org/assets/Appendix_B.pdf>

# **Franklin D. Roosevelt: First Inaugural Address, March 4, 1933**

I am certain that my fellow Americans expect that on my induction into the Presidency I will address them with a candor and a decision which the present situation of our Nation impels. This is preeminently the time to speak the truth, the whole truth, frankly and boldly. Nor need we shrink from honestly facing conditions in our country today. This great Nation will endure as it has endured, will revive and will prosper. So, first of all, let me assert my firm belief that the only thing we have to fear is fear itself – nameless, unreasoning, unjustified terror which paralyzes needed efforts to convert retreat into advance. In every dark hour of our national life a leadership of frankness and vigor has met with that understanding and support of the people themselves which is essential to victory. I am convinced that you will again give that support to leadership in these critical days.

In such a spirit on my part and on yours we face our common difficulties. They concern, thank God, only material things. Values have shrunken to fantastic levels; taxes have risen; our ability to pay has fallen; government of all kinds is faced by serious curtailment of income; the means of exchange are frozen in the currents of trade; the withered leaves of industrial enterprise lie on every side; farmers find no markets for their produce; the savings of many years in thousands of families are gone.

More important, a host of unemployed citizens face the grim problem of existence, and an equally great number toil with little return. Only a foolish optimist can deny the dark realities of the moment.

Yet our distress comes from no failure of substance. We are stricken by no plague of locusts. Compared with perils which our forefathers conquered because they believed and were not afraid, we have still much to be thankful for. Nature still offers her bounty and human efforts have multiplied it. Plenty is at our doorstep, but generous use of it languishes in the very sight of the supply. Primarily this is because rulers of the exchange of mankind’s goods have failed through their own stubbornness and their own incompetence, have admitted their failure, and have abdicated. Practices of the unscrupulous money changers stand indicted in the court of public opinion, rejected by the hearts and minds of men.

The excerpt from Franklin D. Roosevelt’s First Inaugural Address is available in an online collection of public government works through the American Presidency Project. Source: <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=14473>

# **Chunking the Text**

# **Franklin D. Roosevelt: First Inaugural Address, March 4, 1933**

The following passage is an excerpt from the speech and has been chunked for instructional purposes.

I am certain that my fellow Americans expect that on my induction into the Presidency I will address them with a candor and a decision which the present situation of our Nation impels. This is preeminently the time to speak the truth, the whole truth, frankly and boldly. Nor need we shrink from honestly facing conditions in our country today. This great Nation will endure as it has endured, will revive and will prosper.

Divided paragraph 1 into two chunks

1

So, first of all, let me assert my firm belief that the only thing we have to fear is fear itself – nameless, unreasoning, unjustified terror which paralyzes needed efforts to convert retreat into advance. In every dark hour of our national life a leadership of frankness and vigor has met with that understanding and support of the people themselves which is essential to victory. I am convinced that you will again give that support to leadership in these critical days.

2

In such a spirit on my part and on yours we face our common difficulties. They concern, thank God, only material things. Values have shrunken to fantastic levels; taxes have risen; our ability to pay has fallen; government of all kinds is faced by serious curtailment of income; the means of exchange are frozen in the currents of trade; the withered leaves of industrial enterprise lie on every side; farmers find no markets for their produce; the savings of many years in thousands of families are gone.

3

More important, a host of unemployed citizens face the grim problem of existence, and an equally great number toil with little return. Only a foolish optimist can deny the dark realities of the moment.

Divided paragraph 4 into two chunks

4

Yet our distress comes from no failure of substance. We are stricken by no plague of locusts. Compared with perils which our forefathers conquered because they believed and were not afraid, we have still much to be thankful for.

5

Nature still offers her bounty and human efforts have multiplied it. Plenty is at our doorstep, but generous use of it languishes in the very sight of the supply. Primarily this is because rulers of the exchange of mankind’s goods have failed through their own stubbornness and their own incompetence, have admitted their failure, and have abdicated. Practices of the unscrupulous money changers stand indicted in the court of public opinion, rejected by the hearts and minds of men.

6

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# **Annotating the Text**

Purpose – show understanding of the problem and hope for the future

# **Franklin D. Roosevelt: First Inaugural Address, March 4, 1933**

Sample annotations

E – Evidence or Examples

? – Questions

Major Points

! - Surprise

Words or phrases not understood

I am certain that my fellow Americans expect that on my induction into the Presidency I will address them with a candor and a decision which the present situation of our Nation impels. This is preeminently the time to speak the truth, the whole truth, frankly and boldly. Nor need we shrink from honestly facing conditions in our country today. This great Nation will endure as it has endured, will revive and will prosper.

E – This is evidence of hope for future.

1

So, first of all, let me assert my firm belief that the only thing we have to fear is fear itself – nameless, unreasoning, unjustified terror which paralyzes needed efforts to convert retreat into advance. In every dark hour of our national life a leadership of frankness and vigor has met with that understanding and support of the people themselves which is essential to victory. I am convinced that you will again give that support to leadership in these critical days.

E – This is evidence of the problem.

2

? – Are these personal values – like honesty or something else?

? – Had people stopped believing in leaders?

In such a spirit on my part and on yours we face our common difficulties. They concern, thank God, only material things. Values have shrunken to fantastic levels; taxes have risen; our ability to pay has fallen; government of all kinds is faced by serious curtailment of income; the means of exchange are frozen in the currents of trade; the withered leaves of industrial enterprise lie on every side; farmers find no markets for their produce; the savings of many years in thousands of families are gone.

3

More important, a host of unemployed citizens face the grim problem of existence, and an equally great number toil with little return. Only a foolish optimist can deny the dark realities of the moment.

4

! Wow, this is like workers today with low wages.

Yet our distress comes from no failure of substance. We are stricken by no plague of locusts. Compared with perils which our forefathers conquered because they believed and were not afraid, we have still much to be thankful for.

5

? – What perils did they face?

? – What does this mean?

Nature still offers her bounty and human efforts have multiplied it. Plenty is at our doorstep, but generous use of it languishes in the very sight of the supply. Primarily this is because rulers of the exchange of mankind’s goods have failed through their own stubbornness and their own incompetence, have admitted their failure, and have abdicated. Practices of the unscrupulous money changers stand indicted in the court of public opinion, rejected by the hearts and minds of men.

6

E – This is evidence of the problem.

? – Who is he talking about?

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# **Close Reading Questions**

After they have read the excerpt(s), can your students answer these questions?

* What is the author’s argument?
* What position does the author take (for or against)?
* What is one point that supports the author’s argument?
* What evidence does the author give to support this point?
* What is the point of view of the author?
* What is one point that refutes the author’s point of view?

# **Evaluating What You Have Read**

After reading the article, answer these questions to help you to reflect upon and analyze the article.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Question** | **Answer** |
| 1. What is the author’s main argument? Use your own words to rearticulate the main idea. |  |
| 1. List and explain the reasons the author provides for his/her main argument. |  |
| 1. What kind of evidence is presented to support the author’s argument? Is it fact or opinion or a different type of evidence? What is the source of the information? Does it come from an informed authority in the field? |  |
| 1. What is the purpose and tone of the article? |  |
| 1. Is the author objective or does he/she try to convince the reader to have a certain opinion? If so, what viewpoint does the author use to try and convince you of his/her position? |  |
| 1. Does the author’s argument assume that the reader thinks in a particular way or has a particular view? What are the major underlying assumptions that the author makes? Do you think they are reasonable and acceptable to most people? |  |
| 1. Does the author make inferences based on his/her evidence? Is the line of reasoning logical or illogical? Why? |  |
| 1. Does the author try to appeal to the reader’s emotions? Does the author use any “loaded” words in the headline or the article? List these words or phrases and explain their effect on the reader. |  |
| 1. Based on what you have read, how has the author persuaded or dissuaded you from his/her viewpoint? Why? |  |

# **Types of Evidence to Support an Argument**

Evidence isn't the same as [proof](http://grammar.about.com/od/pq/g/proofterm.htm). "Whereas evidence allows for professional judgment, proof is absolute and incontestable." (Denis Hayes, Learning and Teaching in Primary Schools, 2009)

**Definition of Evidence**

**Facts, documentation, or testimony used to strengthen a claim, support an argument, or reach a conclusion.**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Type of Evidence | Definition | Samples Supporting an Author’s Claim |
| Factual | Truthful statements that cannot be denied. Statements that the average person may know or which can be proven. |  |
| Statistics or Data | Numerical facts; can be presented in raw numbers, percentages, or fractions. |  |
| Examples or Anecdotes | Real-life situations, events, or experiences that illustrate a position; anecdotal stories that help explain an author’s claim. |  |
| Expert Testimony | The observations or conclusions of someone who is considered highly knowledgeable because he/she is an expert in a particular field of study or occupation; someone who has first-hand knowledge and experience. |  |
| Logical Reasoning | An explanation which draws conclusions that the reader can understand; a discussion which helps the reader understand or make sense out of facts or examples offered. |  |
| Emotional Appeal | Use of sympathy, fear, loyalty, etc. to persuade; manipulates the reader’s emotions – ethos, pathos, logos |  |