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| <b>Professor Huffer's Guidelines for Close Reading</b> |
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**GETTING READY:****1. Read through the entire text at a normal pace.**

As you do so, **make a checkmark in the margin whenever something strikes you.** (Are there parts of the reading that startle, upset, calm, agitate, excite you? Are there parts of the passage that you just don't get? Parts that are intriguing? obscure? enchanting? disturbing? poetic? stupid? Are there noticeable repetitions? What sorts of images jump out at you? Are there any footnotes? Italics? Odd sentence structures?)

**2. Read through the entire text again, this time more slowly.**

As you read through a second time, pay special attention to the places that you checked in your first reading. After you complete your second reading, determine the major claim, thesis, or theme of the entire text.

**3. Select your passage** (very short!) that you will close read. As you select your passage, think about its relation to the major theme you figured out in #2.

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**ZOOMING OUT**

**Establish a context for the passage:**

**1. When** was it published?

**2. What** general problem is the passage engaging?

**3. How does the passage fit into the author's larger corpus?** Is it an elaboration, a contestation, a departure, a conclusion, an interlude, a parenthesis? Is it predictable or surprising? How does it fit into standard interpretations of the author's trajectory?

## ZOOMING IN

This is the heart of your close reading.

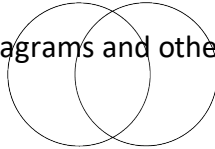
**Read through the passage again AT LEAST three times.** I recommend spending serious time with the passage. You might want to retype it in large font, print it out, and tack it on the wall. Stare at it. Come back to it. Sit with it. Close your eyes for a while. Open them again. Then return to the passage with a writing tool, stickers, whatever you like. You might also try making a collage with your passage to help you look at it through different lenses. As you begin to work/play with the passage:

**Underline** or **circle** key terms or phrases. Use different colors. Use stickers. Bits of paper.

Draw arrows 

Map the passage through the use of diagrams and other shapes

Scribble, doodle, draw as you go.



Some things to keep in mind:

1. **What grabs you?** (makes your heart beat faster, furrows your brow, incites your curiosity. These reactions might be pleasant or unpleasant or neither. Pay attention to yourself as a reader, the one receiving the passage.)
2. **USE YOUR TOOLS**
  - the humble dictionary. *OED* online via Emory: <https://languages-oup-com.proxy.library.emory.edu/> or for French language *Le Grand Robert* via Emory: <https://grandrobert-lerobert-com.proxy.library.emory.edu/robert.asp>
  - online etymology dictionary <https://www.etymonline.com/>
  - Laplanche and Pontalis *Language of Psychoanalysis* (via PEP database <http://www.pep-web.org.proxy.library.emory.edu/>) for key psychoanalytic terms <http://www.pep-web.org.proxy.library.emory.edu/document.php?id=ipl.094.0001a&type=hitlist&num=1&query=zone1%2Cparagraphs%7Czone2%2Cparagraphs%7Cauthor%2Claplanche+and+pontalis%7Cviewperiod%2Cweek%7Csort%2Cauthor%2Ca#p0243>
  - philosophy encyclopedias (for example, *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, <https://plato.stanford.edu/>)
  - Glossary of rhetorical terms [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Glossary\\_of\\_rhetorical\\_terms#C](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Glossary_of_rhetorical_terms#C)
  - Talk to me if there are things in the passage that are unclear or if you just want to run some ideas by me.
3. Look up all the words that you're not sure about or that seem strange/arcane/loaded.

Write the **definition** in the margin.

Look up the **etymology** of the words you're exploring.

Etymologies can hold interesting surprises.

4. Look up the **proper names** that appear in the passage.  
What is their relevance to the larger theme and its historical, cultural, political context?
5. Are any of the words in the passage **italicized**? Why?
6. Look at the **sentence structures** in the passage.  
Are the sentences long, short, varied? Simple or complex? Complete or incomplete?  
Propositional, declarative, interrogative? Are there sentence fragments? Run-on sentences? What's the effect of sentence structure?
7. Look at **syntax** (word order), **verb tense** (past, present, future) and **mood** (conditional, subjunctive).
8. What about **punctuation**? (commas, colons, semi-colons, question marks, ellipses, dashes)
9. **Who is speaking** in the passage? (narrator/narrative voice).  
Is there an "I" in this text? If so, what is its effect? Or is the narrator invisible?  
Omniscient? Is the text creating ambiguity with regard to the narrative voice?
10. **Who is being addressed** by the passage? (addressee/interlocutor)  
Is there a "you" in this text? If so, what is its effect?
11. Track through the passage again, this time **checking for repetition**.  
Does the passage have a rhythm? Read the passage aloud. Is there repetition of sounds?
12. Read the passage again for **imagery** and **other poetic devices**.
13. Here are some terms for what you might find (but consult the Glossary above for a more complete list of rhetorical terms):
  - **metaphors**: figures of speech that make an *implicit* comparison: eg. "my love is a red red rose"
  - **similes**: figures of speech that make an *explicit* comparison: eg. "my love is *like* a red red rose"
  - **hyperbole**: exaggeration: eg. "I'm so hungry I could eat a horse"
  - **litotes**: understatements: eg. "not bad" to mean "good"
  - **alliteration**: repetition of beginning consonants: eg. "Peter Piper picked a peck of pickle peppers"

- **assonance**: repetition of vowels to create internal rhyme: eg. “on a **proud round cloud** in white high night” (from e.e. cummings)
- **chiasmus**: two clauses related to each other through reversal of structure to form an X: eg. “do you live to eat or eat to live?” (this kind of structure is called “chiastic”)
- **cataphoresis**: abuse of trope, use of a figural term, or metaphor, for which there is no literal term: eg. “the face of a mountain”
- **personification** or **anthropomorphism**: giving human characteristics to non-human entities: eg. “mother nature” or the dragon Smaug in *The Hobbit*.
- **tone**: is the passage melancholy, comic, celebratory, nostalgic, wistful, sarcastic, ironic?
- **parallelism** or **opposition** of ideas or themes?
- Is there a **general pattern** that emerges from the passage? If so, what is its significance?

14. What is the **theoretical or philosophical significance** of these details? Does close reading the passage do work for theory that a more conceptual reading would not?

### **ZOOMING BACK OUT**

#### **STEP BACK AND LOOK AT WHAT YOU’VE FOUND**

1. How do the **details** relate to **big picture** questions? (This question invites you to reflect on what YOUR big picture questions are, and how these are connected to the passage you chose).
2. What is the **primary effect** of the passage?
3. How do the **imagery** and other poetic and grammatical elements reinforce or complicate the **larger claim** or **impression** of the passage?
4. **Does your close reading change how you think** about the passage and its context? If so, how?
5. What **philosophical conclusions** can you draw from your close reading?