

Figure 5.2

Close Reading Questions Aligned to Common Core's College and Career Readiness Anchor Standards for Reading

Standard	Potential Questions For Literary Text	Potential Questions For InFormational Text
1. Finding evidence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What clues to meaning do you find on the cover (illustration, title, information about the author) that prepare you to read this story? Who is the narrator? • What does the author mean by __? • Identify the characters, setting, problem, outcome. • What do you think are the most important details in this part of the text? Why? • What do you know about the character(s)/ problem/setting from this part of the text? • What do you know about the character(s)/ problem/setting that you didn't know before? • What did the author want us to know here? How do you know? • What is the first thing that jumps out at you? Why? • What is the next thing that jumps out at you? Why? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What kind of clues to meaning do you find on the cover (illustration, title, information about the author) that prepare you to read this text? What does the author mean by __? • Who is providing this information? • Identify the topic and main points. • What facts/details really stand out to you? Why? • What do you know about this person/ situation/place from this part of the text? • What do you know about this person/ situation/place that you didn't know before? • What did the author want you to know here? How do you know? • What is the first thing that jumps out at you? Why? • What is the next thing that jumps out at you? Why?
2. Theme, main idea, summary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explain what is happening here in your own words (paraphrase). • What is this story starting to be about? • What is the author's message? • What is the big idea? • What lesson does __ learn? • What is the author's message, and how does the author show this throughout the story? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explain what the author is saying in your own words (paraphrase). • What is this [article] starting to be about? • What did you learn in this part of the text? • What is the main idea? • What is the main idea, and how does the author show this in the text?
3. Story parts, facts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How does the setting (time and place) make a difference to the story? • How does [character] change throughout the story? • What character trait/feeling is present here? • Why does the author choose these particular details to include? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How does [person] contribute to this situation/problem (or the solution of the problem)? • How does one event/step lead to the next (cause/effect)? • What are the most important facts/details? • Why does the author choose these particular details to include?

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4. Vocabulary/ words*	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What tone or mood does the author create? What words contribute to that tone? • What does this word mean based on other words in the sentence? • What is the meaning of this simile/ personification/idiom/metaphor, and why did the author choose it? • What are the most important words to talk about this text? • What words paint a picture in your mind? • What word did the author choose to add meaning? How do these choices display craft?* 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Why did the author choose this word? • What tone or mood does the author create? What words contribute to that tone? • What does this word mean based on other words in the sentence? • What is the meaning of this simile/ personification/idiom/metaphor, and why did the author choose it? • What are the most important words to talk about this text? • What words paint a picture in your mind? • What word did the author choose to add meaning? How do these choices display craft?*
5. Structure, genre, Syntax*	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How does this text “look” on the page (stanzas, illustration, etc.)? How will this support your reading? • What is the structure of this story (or part of the story)? • What is the genre? What genre characteristics do you find? • Are the sentences easy or hard to understand? Why? • Why do you think the author chose this genre or format (like picture book, poem, etc.)? • How does this passage/paragraph fit into the text as a whole? • How does the author craft the organization of this story to add to meaning? • Where does the author want us to use different thinking strategies (picturing, wondering, etc.)? What makes you say this? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How does this text “look” on the page (columns, numbered paragraphs, etc.)? How will this support your reading? • What is the structure of this text (or part of the text)? • What is the genre? What genre characteristics do you find? • Are the sentences easy or hard to understand? Why? • Why do you think the author chose this genre or format (like picture book, poem, etc.)? • How does this passage/paragraph fit into the text as a whole? • How does the author craft the organization of this [article] to add to meaning? • Where does the author want us to use different thinking strategies (picturing, wondering, etc.)? What makes you say this?
6. Point of view*	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Who is speaking in this passage? • Whom does the narrator seem to be speaking to? • What is the narrator’s/character’s point of view (what does he or she think about ___)? • What does the narrator/character care about? • Are there particular words that the author chose to show strong feelings? • Do different characters have different points of view about ___? • How do you know? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Who is the author of this article/book? • Whom does the author seem to be speaking to? • What is the author’s point of view about ___? • What does the author care about? • Why did the author write this? • Do you think the author is openly trying to convince you of something? What makes you say this? • Does this information change your point of view about ___?

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7. Different kinds of texts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How do the illustrations add to the meaning? • How is the [live version, video, etc.] the same or different from the print version? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How do the graphics [charts, maps, photographs, etc.] add to or clarify the message? • How does the [video, interview, etc.] add to or change your understanding of this subject? • How do you read this like a scientist/historian?
8. Critiquing text	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This standard is not applied to literary text. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Did the author provide sufficient evidence on the subject to support his or her claim? • Did the author present the subject fairly, explaining all sides of the situation without bias? • Did the author provide sufficient evidence on the subject? • Did the author leave out information that should have been included? • Is the author knowledgeable on the subject with current information? • Is there anything the author could have explained more thoroughly for greater clarification? What?
9. Text-to-text	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How is [Character 1] the same as or different from [Character 2]? • How is [first story] different from [second story]? • How is the message/theme of [Story 1] the same or different from the message/theme of [Story 2]? • [For stories by the same author] Is there anything about the way [Story 2] was written that reminds you of the craft in [Story 1]? Explain. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does the information from [Text 1] express the same or different point of view from Text 2]? • What new information did you get from [Text 2] that was not included in [Text 1]? • Is there anything in [Text 2] that contradicts the information in [Text 1]? What is the contradiction? How could you decide which source is more accurate?

*See separate chart on author's craft, Figure 5.3: Recognizing the Author's Craft During Close Reading.

the theme? What is the narrator’s point of view? What trait does this character demonstrate? So when you ask questions about these elements, be sure to customize them for the particular text you are reading, and make sure they are linked to the content of the text itself and to questions probing other standards rather than just to a skill you wish to reinforce with your students.

If you analyze your own questions for a close reading lesson you design, you will probably find that you’ve done a good job with questions for Standards 1 through 3: Key Ideas and Details. Although we may have to “tweak” our questions in this band a bit to meet all the challenges of the Common Core, we really are very practiced in asking about basic content: evidence, big ideas, and text elements.

But questions for the next band, Craft and Structure, may be spotty (beyond questions about basic word meaning for Standard 4). This is an area where many teachers don’t feel particularly strong—identifying the elements of author’s craft in text. You may want to advocate for yourself here by pushing for some professional development: What does it mean to “read like a writer?” And how do we bring this knowledge to the children we teach?

Since this is such a troubling area for many teachers, I’ve prepared a chart with questions to delve deeper into the author’s craft (supporting Standards 4, 5, and 6). See Figure 5.3, Recognizing the Author’s Craft During Close Reading.

It is likely that most of your questions that move students into the skills described in Standards 7 through 9, Integration of Knowledge and Ideas, will surface *after* an initial close reading, when you revisit your text to dig deeper. Students need a solid understanding of the content and craft before they can use this knowledge to integrate and synthesize. If you don’t see many opportunities for these in your initial lesson, try to find a way to integrate them in a follow-up lesson.



The power of close reading will be achieved through the lively interconnection between the teacher and the students and the complex text.

Figure 5.3

Recognizing the Author's Craft During Close Reading

Elements That Contribute to Craft	Possible Questions
<p>Identifying imagery, including comparisons:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Similes • Metaphors • Personification • Figurative language • Symbols 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What is being compared? 2. Why is the comparison effective? (typically, because of the clear/strong/unusual/striking/vivid, etc., connection between the two) 3. What symbols are present? Why did the author choose these symbols? 4. Are there lots of symbols? If so, could this be an <u>allegory</u>?
<p>Effective word choice</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What word(s) stand out? Why? (strong/contrasts to what you expect, vivid) 2. How do particular words get us to look at characters, events, setting, or other text elements in a particular way? 3. Are there any words that seem “old”—words or expressions that you don’t hear very much today? What does this show? 4. Did the author use nonstandard English or words from another language? Why? What is the effect? 5. Are there any words that could have more than one meaning? Why might the author have played with language in this way?
<p>Tone and voice</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What <u>one word</u> describes the tone? (will be something like <i>funny, serious, angry, lonely</i>) 2. Is the voice formal or informal? If it seems informal, how did the author make it that way? If it’s formal, what makes it formal? 3. Does the voice seem appropriate for the intent of the content?
<p>Structuring the beginning, middle, and end</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. How does the author craft the beginning of the story or informational piece to get readers’ attention? 2. How does the author build suspense during the text? 3. How does the author end the piece in a memorable way?
<p>Linking parts of the passage together:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Phrases • Sentences • Paragraphs/stanzas 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What words link thoughts together? (e.g., <i>and, but, however, therefore, in conclusion</i>) 2. What do these linking words show about the ideas in the text? 3. How does the author help you understand how the text is organized?

Elements That Contribute to Craft	Possible Questions
<p>Sentence structure:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Short sentence • Long sentences • Sentences where word order is important • Sentence fragments • Questions • Commands • Balanced sentences 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What stands out about the way this sentence is written? 2. Why did the author choose a short sentence here? (short: stands out from sentences around it; for emphasis) 3. Why did the author make this sentence really long? (long: may convey the “on and on” sense of the experience; to create rhythm) 4. Why did the author write a fragment instead of a complete sentence? (emphasis; often shows the internal thought of a character) 5. Based on the order of the words in this sentence, which one do you think is the most important? Why? What was the author trying to show by placing this word in this place? (Strong words at the beginning or end of a sentence are more powerful than if the same word is in the middle of the sentence.) 6. Why does the author use a question here? (Rhetorical questions are not really intended to be answered, but to make a point: “Why am I always the one who gets blamed?” Some questions set up the main idea of the paragraph: “Why do we care about endangered species?”) 7. What is the exclamation point/command all about? (high importance; bossy tone) 8. What sentences are balanced here? Which are intentionally <i>not</i> balanced? (Balance creates pleasing rhythm; intentionally out of balance creates a strong effect because you notice the change.) What punctuation does the author use to create balance? (might be a comma, semicolon)
<p>How many types of writing there are in the passage</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Example: Is there narration, exposition, argument, rhymed lines, description, etc.? 2. How do these different types of writing make the text more lively?
<p>Punctuation and print conventions</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Is there anything unusual or interesting about the punctuation or the way the author used punctuation? (parentheses to offer small asides; semicolons; etc.) 2. Did the author place print in an interesting way to reinforce meaning? 3. What about font and the size of print? Do these contribute to meaning? How?
<p>Repeated lines, words, or phrases</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Does the author repeat particular words, lines, or phrases? 2. How does this impact meaning? (provides emphasis)