


CLOSE READING IN SMALL GROUPS:



DEVELOPING INDEPENDENCE, DEEP THINKING, & SKILL IN THE INTERMEDIATE GRADES

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The Problem: Part 1

Do an online search for close reading materials and you will discover that for many teachers, close reading means students reading short passages on their own, and then writing answers to text dependent questions.

What is the result?

Bored students who groan at the thought of another close reading worksheet.
This may be *practicing* close reading, but it is not TEACHING close reading.

There is very little currently on the market that meets high standards for close reading *instruction*.

The Problem: Part 2

Students need small group instruction to meet social-emotional needs

- Some students are reluctant to participate in a large group
- More opportunities for student interaction
- Better monitoring and accountability by the teacher

Students need small group instruction to meet academic needs

- Meaningful differentiation
- Vary the instructional scaffolding more than the text
- Not enough quality materials available for small groups—and not enough time to locate materials

What is Close Reading?

Close, analytic reading stresses examining meaning thoroughly and methodically, encouraging students to read and reread deliberately. Directing student attention on the text itself empowers students to understand the central ideas and key supporting details. It also enables students to reflect on the meanings of individual words and sentences; the order in which sentences unfold; and the development of ideas over the course of the text, which ultimately leads students to arrive at an understanding of the text as a whole.

~PARCC Framework

Links to Close Reading Best Practices

- Short complex texts
- Independent close reading
- Text dependent questions
- Comprehension skill instruction
- Standards
- Depth of Knowledge
- Conversation
- Text-to-text connections
- Formative assessment

Close Reading Best Practices Unwrapped

Use short, complex texts, both literary and informational

- Literary: classic children's literature, classic poetry, folklore
- Informational: Expository format; other genres; science, history, and culture

Build strategies for independent close reading

- Teach these strategies with 4 mini-lessons; explain with graphic organizers to support students

Ask text-dependent questions that tap ALL standards and include deeper Depths of Knowledge

- Be sure to include standards related to *what* the author is saying; *how the* author is saying it; Synthesizing information
- Higher level thinking; lots of DOK 3

Reread to refine a comprehension skill: lots of support; some support; no support

- Apply the gradual release model
- Incorporate multiple skills per grade level (addressing different standards)
- Each lesson should include a skill TARGET (explains HOW to find the best evidence)
- Each lesson should include an Answer Frame, which provides a framework for organizing and elaborating on a high-quality response

Address all standards

- Evident in text-dependent questions—with a big emphasis on Standards 4, 5, 6: Craft & Structure
- Evident in text-to-Text lessons—which focus on Standard 9: Comparisons between texts
- Evident in skill lessons—which address various standards at every grade level

Address all Depths of Knowledge

- Independent close reading
 - Depths of Knowledge 1 & 2 (evidence and concepts)
- Text dependent questions
 - Depths of Knowledge 2 & 3 (concepts and logical reasoning)
- Skill lessons
 - Depths of Knowledge 2 & 3 (concepts, skills, and logical reasoning)
- Text-to-Text lessons
 - Depth of Knowledge 4 (extended thinking)

Make text-to-text connections

- This is key to Common Core success (matches expectation of performance tasks)
- There is a text-to-text lesson at the end of each student book integrating all three parts of the book

Assess to inform instruction

- Formative assessment of comprehension skills
- Informal assessment through oral response
- Measures standards
- Measures Depth of Knowledge
- Collect data with rubrics and checklists
 - Includes Depth of Knowledge checklist for students and rubric for teachers
 - Includes rubric for written response

SAMPLE CLOSE READING MINI LESSON: IDENTIFYING KEY WORDS

Purpose of this lesson

- Students will understand words important to a full text or passage from a text that will be useful for talking about the text
- Students will be able to identify key words by highlighting them in the text or jotting them on an annotation sheet.

Points to include in this lesson

- Key words are words that are important to the central idea of a text.
- Key words might be:
 - Individual words or a short phrase (such as *running a marathon*)
 - Words you might want to use in a summary
 - Words related to the topic
 - People's or characters' names
 - Names of places
 - Bolded words
 - Words the author repeats several times
 - Dates
 - Names of historical events (like Boston Tea Party)

When choosing a text to teach this lesson, look for:

- Informational passages with a few of the text features noted above as well as words related to the topic.
- Literary passages with characters' names, places, repeated words, and words related to the problem or solving the problem.

Teaching steps

1. Make a chart for "finding Key Words" from the suggested key words above, or add ideas of your own.
2. Discuss this list with students.
3. Provide a text that is easy for your students to read with clear examples of some possible key words.
4. Model the way you choose a key word in this passage, explaining your thinking to students.
5. Ask students to identify some additional key words from the passage by highlighting the words or using an Annotation Worksheet to record their word choices.
6. Discuss student annotations: why some choices are better than others based on their connection to the central idea of the text.

Follow-up independent task for applying the skill or concept

- Provide students with a similar passage and ask them to identify the key words independently as part of their seat work.
- Discuss responses when students return to the group for the next lesson.

ANNOTATION WORKSHEET

Key Words



What key words will you want to remember from this passage? Why is each word important?

Summary



Summarize the important details in this passage using key words as needed.

Central Ideas



What are the central ideas in this passage that the author may be *showing* but not *telling*? Explain.

Author's Crafts and Text Features



Which author's crafts and text features in this passage add to the meaning? Explain.

EXCERPT FROM THE DIARY OF SALLIE HESTER

Sallie Hester was 14 years old when she and her family made the dangerous journey west to California in a covered wagon. Sallie wrote in her diary about her experiences on the trail, and the hardships endured by pioneer families.

May 21

Camped on the beautiful Blue River, 215 miles from St. Joe, with plenty of wood and water and good grazing for our cattle. Our family all in good health. When we left St. Joe my mother had to be lifted in and out of our wagons; now she walks a mile or two without stopping, and gets in and out of the wagons as spry as a young girl. She is perfectly well. We had two deaths in our train within the past week of **cholera**—

young men going West to **seek their fortunes**. We buried them on the banks of the Blue River, far from home and friends. This is a beautiful spot. The Plains are covered with flowers.

1. -----

PAUSE AND THINK
Words to clarify?
Details to notice?

We are in the **Pawnee Nation**, a dangerous and hostile tribe. We are **obliged** to watch them closely and double our guards at night. They never make their appearance during the day, but skulk around at night, steal cattle and do all the mischief they can.

2. -----

PAUSE AND THINK
Words to clarify?
Details to notice?

When we camp at night, we form a **corral** with our wagons and pitch our tents on the outside, and inside of this corral we drive our cattle, with guards stationed on the outside of tents. We have a cooking stove made of sheet iron, a portable table, tin plates and cups, cheap knives and forks (best ones packed away), camp stools, etc. We sleep in our wagons on feather beds; the men who drive for us sleep in the tent.

3. -----

PAUSE AND THINK
Words to clarify?
Details to notice?

In the mid-1800s, more than 2,000 Pawnee families lived in what are now Nebraska and Wyoming. Many wagon-train travelers feared the Pawnee because they were known as fierce warriors. But the Pawnee were one of the most helpful tribes to pioneers. They helped the United States stop other American Indians from attacking settlers.

4. -----

PAUSE AND THINK
Words to clarify?
Details to notice?

TEXT DEPENDENT QUESTIONS FOR SALLIE HESTER PASSAGE

Question	Standard	Depth of Knowledge
1. In what ways was the covered wagon journey a good experience for Sallie's family and companions? In what ways was it a bad experience? [Hint: Think about what would make something a good or bad experience.]		
2. How do you think Sallie feels about the camp based on the words she uses to describe it? How can you tell? [Hint: Look for really great descriptive words. Do these words create a happy, positive tone or a sad, negative tone?]		
3. How does Section 3 connect to Section 2 in this passage? [Hint: What is Sallie talking about in each section?]		
4. Why is the information in the text box about the Pawnees important to your understanding of this passage? Why do you think the author included the information in this text box? [Hint: Think about what you would have thought about the Pawnees if you had read <i>only</i> Sallie's account.]		

Close Reading Links for Small Group Instruction: Program Components

- Six student books per grade: 3 literary; 3 informational
- Each book is divided into 3 parts
 - Independent close reading
 - Rereading for deeper thinking with text-dependent questions
 - Skill introduction, reinforcement, or application
- There could be two to three weeks of instruction per book to complete all three parts (for a total of 11 lessons)
 - Launching lesson for the unit (1 lesson)
 - 3 lessons for each part of the book (9 close reading lessons)
 - A text-to-text lesson (1 lesson)
- For the Launching lesson, see Teacher Resource Guide (TRG) p. 21
 - Note that components of the launching lesson are: Introduce the Unit; Introduce the Book, Read and Discuss the Introduction
- Three lessons for each part of the text (TRG pp. 52-54)
 - Lesson 1: Independent Close Reading
 - Lesson 2: Rereading to dig deeper through text dependent questions
 - Lesson 3: Comprehension Skill Lesson
- Lesson for Text Connections (TRG p. 55)
- Extensive TRG specific to each grade level
 - All lesson plans clearly laid out for every lesson
 - 4 Mini-lessons for developing skills of independent close reading
 - Lots of classroom-ready reproducibles
 - Rubrics
 - Suggestions for differentiation