

**Classical Studies Academy**

**Parent University**

**Session 2: What is Close Reading?**

**What Is Close Reading?**

**“**It’s a careful and purposeful **rereading** of a text. It’s an encounter with the text where students really focus on what the author had to say, what the author’s purpose was, what the words mean, and what the structure of the text tells us. Close reading requires that students actually think and understand what they are reading.”

Close reading is a thoughtful breakdown of a text that focuses on important details or patterns in order to develop a deep, clear understanding. It is a key requirement of the Common Core State Standards and directs the reader’s attention to the text itself.

Close reading includes:

* Using short passages and excerpts
* Diving right into the text with limited pre-reading activities
* Focusing on the text itself
* Rereading deliberately
* Reading with a pencil
* Noticing things that are confusing
* Discussing the text with others
* Think-Pair Share or Turn and Talk frequently
* Small groups and whole class
* Responding to text-dependent questions

**Selecting a Text**

Not every text is appropriate for students to read closely. For example, while students enjoy reading *Diary of a Wimpy Kid* books, these novels offer simple story lines and vocabulary that are easily understandable. When you are done reading them, they don’t leave you pondering deep ideas. Close reading should leave you considering thought-provoking messages that go beyond the text.

Close read-worthy texts include enough complex ideas worthy of exploring and discussing to sustain one or more days of instruction. You want students to read a text that offers rich enough vocabulary, ideas, and information to read, examine, and discuss.

**Questioning the Author**

Students have to think beyond the words and consider the author’s intent.

* This is not trying to encourage students to challenge the writer, but rather encourage them to return to the text to find evidence.
* Students can analyze author’s intent, craft, clarity, or organization.
* What is the author trying to tell you?
* Why is the author telling you that?
* Does the author say it clearly?
* How could the author have said things more clearly?
* What would you say instead?

**Asking Text-Dependent Questions**

Text-dependent questions help to prompt students to go back to the text.

* Text-dependent questions can only be answered with evidence from the text. 80% portion of reading CCSS in most grades.
* They don’t have to only be limited to the literal meaning, but also the deeper meaning that students have to make inferences about. (Mood, tone, author’s purpose, choice of words, etc.)
* Don’t ask questions that take them away from the text.
* By redirecting them to the text this will help struggling readers’ stamina and skills.

**Classical Studies Academy** strives to have our students “read like a detective, write like a reporter.”



Close Reading Passage

Credo: Author Unknown

1- I would rather burn to ashes, Than to live my days too long,  
2- And I'd like to be remembered, For the glory of my song,  
3- I would rather be a meteor, Just to streak across the sky,  
4- So I'll fill my days with doing, I must live before I die!

5- There's a world out there to conquer, There's a mountain still to climb,  
6- There's another chapter left to write, So I've got to use my time,  
7- For a man is meant for living, Not to sit and slowly rust,  
8- And it's better to be ashes, Than to vanish into dust!

9- I won't be a sleepy planet, Just to lengthen out my days,  
10- For my soul must be on fire, In a brilliant, golden blaze,  
11- I would rather be a comet, Burning with a fiery glow,  
12- Than to smolder through the ages, It's a better way to go!

13- There's a world out there to conquer, There's another hill to climb,  
14- There's a barren desert yet to cross, So I've got to use my time,  
15- For a man is meant for living, Not to crumble into rust,  
16- And it's better to be ashes, Than to vanish into dust!

17- I would rather that my spark should burn, With a bright and dancing flame,  
18- Than to live in quiet solitude, Where no one knows my name,  
19- And it's better to have tried and failed, Than never risk at all,  
20- For you never know what makes you go, Till your back's against the wall!

21- There's a world out there to conquer, There's a mile or two to go,  
22- There's another song for singing, There's another friend to know,  
23- For a man is meant for living, Not to crumble into rust,  
24- And it's better to be ashes, Than to vanish into dust!

**Close Reading Questions for Credo**

Name three things this poet would rather be. Do these three things have something in common? If so, why do you think the poet chose these three things?

List at least three things that the poet does not want to do with his life. Why do you think he has decided that this is not the way he wants to live his life?

What do you think this poet enjoys doing the most? What evidence can you find to support your conclusion?

Write one sentence to summarize the main idea of this poem.

What does each of the following verses mean:

* I must live before I die! (LINE 4)
* ...its better to have tried and failed,   
  Than never risk at all (LINE 19)
* For you never know what makes you go, Til your backs against the wall! (LINE 20)
* What does the author mean “write another chapter” (LINE 6)