Close Reading: Introduction

Fourth Grade  |  Reading  |  50 minutes

Standards: RL.4.1, RL.4.2, RL.4.3

by Melissa Schwartz  |  March 24, 2015

Help your students absorb the details of a text and make inferences about what they read with the strategy of close reading. By reading closely, students will become better able to understand complex themes and nuances in a text.

Learning Objectives

Students will understand that good readers read the text “closely” and can read across a text to make their own theories.

Materials and Preparation

- Interactive whiteboard or projector
- Notebooks (one per student)
- 15-20 images of professional soccer players

Key Terms:

- close reading

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Lesson

Introduction (2 minutes)

1. Start the lesson by telling the class that today, they will be learning about close reading.
2. To help the class understand the concept, activate their prior knowledge by asking students to think of a time they were doing something they did frequently, but weren’t really paying attention. For example: Ask them to imagine they are riding in a car with other people. What are those people doing? Are they playing on their phones, watching television, or falling asleep?
3. Explain that when people don’t pay attention to the details around them, they often miss out on small things. For example, if people in the car paid attention to scenery around them, they’d learn things about their destination, the road, and the world around them.
4. Tell students that finding enjoyment in everyday things often comes from looking at the details—and this applies to reading.
5. Tell your class that when the best readers read, they don’t do it on autopilot. Instead, they read carefully, and absorb all of the small details that the author has to offer. These readers are close readers.
6. By becoming close readers, tell students they’ll be able to pay attention to details in the book, and pick up as much information as possible from the text.

Explicit Instruction/Teacher Modeling (3 minutes)

- Tell the class that they will be learning about the close reading strategy today.
- Explain the strategy to the class. Describe close reading as a strategy used by readers, to help them view a text through a certain lens, which is used to find patterns in the text. Students can use these patterns to develop a deeper understanding of the texts they read.
- Pull up a collection of 15-20 images of professional soccer players. These images should have a lot of variety; choose players who display intense emotion, either excited or devastated.
- Tell students that you’d like them to “read” the images closely, and focus on the emotion each player portrays.
Guided Practice/Interactive Modeling *(15 minutes)*

- On the first image, describe the emotion you see portrayed, and the clues that tip you off, including facial expressions and body language.
- Ask students about the emotions they see in the other images. Sample questions include: What emotions does this player have? How can you determine these emotions? What facial expressions does he have? What do you notice about his body? What tells you if he is sad? Angry? Upset? Happy? Excited?
- Create a t-chart on the board or using a projector. List “Emotions” on one side of the chart, and “Picture Clues” on the other.
- Go through two images and discuss as a class what emotions you see, and what picture clues give each emotion away.

Independent Working Time *(20 minutes)*

- Cycle through the rest of the images, staying on each one for a few minutes.
- Ask students to create their own version of the t-chart in their notebooks.
- Tell the class to study each picture, and fill in the emotions and picture clues for each image.
- Encourage them to think about why each player may be feeling the way he appears to. For example, try asking: How do the players act when they score a goal? How does the player feel? How do you know?
- Assist the students with their observations.

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Extend

Differentiation

- **Enrichment**: Give students who need more of a challenge a second t-chart. This will allow them to expand on their notes and create theories about the soccer players’ emotions.
- **Support**: Arrange students who need extra help in a small group to work on their t-charts.

Related Books and/or Media

*Falling in Love with Close Reading* by Chris Lehman and Kate Roberts

Review

Assessment *(5 minutes)*

- When the soccer image presentation finishes, ask the students the emotions they have noticed and what made them determine those emotions. Remind the class that this is an example reading through the “lens” of character emotion.
- Ask students what patterns they observed in the pictures.
- Some great assessment questions include: What facial expressions and body language did you notice when a player was happy? Disappointed? Excited?
- Explain that as close readers, students can read through the “emotion lens” of characters. Discussion questions include: What do you notice a character looks like when he or she is happy? Disappointed? Excited? What causes these things?

Review and Closing *(5 minutes)*

- Remind your class that good readers read closely, through different lenses. Encourage them to continue practicing reading through "character emotion" by questioning how different characters look, act, and what emotions you can learn more about with these clues.

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