

CHAPTER
5

Supporting Readers *During Close Reading*



Instructional Shift	
Before the Common Core	With the Common Core
<p>Scaffolding during reading: During reading, students mostly retrieved evidence from the text in support of the lesson objective (finding details about character traits, theme, etc.).</p>	<p>Scaffolding during reading: During close reading, students observe and analyze as much as they can about the text to understand how all text elements work together.</p>

The Instructional Shift

What happens during reading is the heart of close reading. This is when we provide the guidance and hold students accountable to all the deep understanding we've been building toward—deep understanding of the whole text, that is, not just evidence that supports one element of the text. That is the shift, and it's a big one. But an even bigger shift is HOW: *How* will we guide students toward this full range of meaning in a text?

Begin With Text-Dependent Questions



Text-dependent questions are directly related to the text. This does not mean just literal-level questions.

One effective and efficient place to start is with text-dependent questions. If we ask questions grounded firmly in the text, students will need to respond with answers grounded in textual evidence. As teachers, we ask *lots* of questions, so we think we're already pretty good at this. But the Common Core has something more in mind that will hold us to an even higher standard in our questioning practices.

It seems simple enough: Text-dependent questions are *directly* related to the text. This does *not* mean just literal-level questions, however. It *does* mean that we need to stop asking questions that students can answer without reading. The question may, in fact, be a great question. But if it doesn't require evidence from the text, it is not a good *reading* comprehension question.

For example, after reading a story about Japanese internment camps following World War II, we ask, "What were some of the hardships faced by Japanese-Americans in these camps?" That question, though literal, is text dependent because the details for answering it come right from the reading. We ask, "Do you think Japanese-Americans in internment camps were treated fairly?" Although this question requires inference, the text supplies the evidence on which the inference can be based, so this question too is text dependent.

We ask, "Do you think internment camps would ever be used in our country today as a means of containing people?" This is a thoughtful question and could be interesting for students to debate. But it is not really text dependent. Answering this question would require lots of world knowledge beyond what was available in this text, most likely demanding some additional research. In the absence of that, students would likely fall back on their gut feeling with hardly a thought toward any kind of textual evidence. We need to remind ourselves about this distinction between *good* questions and good questions that are also *text dependent*. Using that same question—Do you think internment camps would ever be used in our country today as a means of containing people?—might work well *after* an initial close reading and perhaps in the context of another, short text about detainment centers today so that students can ground their thinking in text based on their own research.

Linking Text-Dependent Questions to Standards

There is another important reminder to heed, too. Remember that this is the Age of the Common Core. If we want our students to meet these standards through close reading—and for students to grasp a full range of meaning from the texts they read—we need to pose text-dependent questions linked to a full range of Common Core comprehension standards.

This requires a basic understanding of the standards. But *which* standards? There are a lot of Common Core English Language Arts standards. Which ones will be the most powerful for close reading?

What we would look at in the Standards document and call *comprehension* has been labeled "College and Career Readiness Standards for Reading" (sending a clear

message about how the Common Core defines “ready for college”). Regardless, it is this set of standards we need for our text-dependent questions.

The College and Career Readiness (CCR) Anchor Standards Made Simple

There are ten College and Career Readiness (comprehension) “anchor” standards that apply across grade levels K–12, with a benchmark for each grade. These same standards apply to both literary and informational text. They are neatly divided into groups of three under three headings:

- Key Ideas and Details
- Craft and Structure
- Integration of Knowledge and Ideas

One lone standard in a category of its own at the end addresses text complexity:

- Range of Reading and Level of Text Complexity

When you assess students’ proficiency in achieving the Common Core, you want to pay attention to the grade-level benchmarks for each anchor standard. But for instructional purposes, what is most important are the “big ideas” in the anchor standards themselves. Table 5.1, with information taken directly from the Common Core State Standards official website, identifies these College and Career Readiness Anchor Standards for Reading.

What I have noticed as I’ve traveled to districts talking about the Common Core is that teachers are not as familiar with these standards as they could be. If I asked you to identify Standard 4 or Standard 6 or any of these standards, would you, without hesitation, be able to do it without referencing the chart? Until we have a working knowledge of these standards, it will be difficult for us to use them easily to support and guide our close reading. I can help you remember them more easily by offering a key word or phrase for each one (see Figure 5.1). (You might want to find your pen at this point to jot these words and phrases on Table 5.1.)

Standard 1: Finding evidence

Standard 2: Theme, main idea, summary

Standard 3: Story parts, facts, details

Standard 4: Vocabulary (word choice)

Standard 5: Structure, genre, syntax

Standard 6: Point of view, purpose

Standard 7: Different kinds of texts

Standard 8: Critiquing text

Standard 9: Text-to-text connections

Standard 10: Text complexity

Table 5.1

College and Career Readiness Standards for Reading

Key Ideas and Details	
1	Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and to make logical inferences from it; cite specific textual evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions drawn from the text.
2	Determine central ideas or themes of a text and analyze their development; summarize the key supporting details and ideas.
3	Analyze how and why individuals, events, and ideas develop and interact over the course of a text.
Craft and Structure	
4	Interpret words and phrases as they are used in a text, including determining technical, connotative, and figurative meanings, and analyze how specific word choices shape meaning or tone.
5	Analyze the structure of texts, including how specific sentences, paragraphs, and larger portions of the text (e.g., a section, chapter, scene, or stanza) relate to each other and the whole.
6	Assess how point of view or purpose shapes the content and style of a text.
Integration of Knowledge and Ideas	
7	Integrate and evaluate content presented in diverse media and formats, including visually and quantitatively, as well as in words.
8	Delineate and evaluate the argument and specific claims in a text, including the validity of the reasoning as well as the relevance and sufficiency of the evidence.
9	Analyze how two or more texts address similar themes or topics in order to build knowledge or to compare the approaches the authors take.
Range of Reading and Level of Text Complexity	
10	Read and comprehend complex literary and informational texts independently and proficiently.

Source: *English Language Arts Standards, Anchor Standards, College and Career Readiness Anchor Standards for Reading* (2010c). Copyright © 2010 National Governors Association Center for Best Practices and Council of Chief State School Officers. All rights reserved.

Figure 5.1

A Quick Way to Remember The Common Core Anchor Standards

1. Standards 1 through 3 (Key Ideas and Details) revolve around this:

WHAT is the author saying?

All these standards relate to the essential *meaning* in the text.

2. Standards 4 through 6 ask students to examine this:

HOW is the author saying it?

These standards all deal with how the author is *delivering* the message.

3. And Standards 7 through 9 speak to the following:

WHY is the author saying it?

That is, now that you understand the content, why is it important? What will you *do* with the information?

Understanding the Implications of the CCR Standards for Close Reading

To understand the implications of these standards for close reading, we need to probe a little deeper. What is the focus of the Common Core in each of these areas? Let's look at them one at a time.

Standard 1: Evidence. This is the standard through which students monitor their understanding. Throughout close reading, there should be repeated opportunities for “checking in” with questions such as the following:

- What do you know now that you didn't know before?
- What is the first thing that jumps out at you and why?

Questions about basic meaning should also lead to inferences:

- What do you think are the most *important* details in this part of the text? Why?
- What details surprised you? Why?

You will probably notice once you begin creating text-dependent questions aligned to standards that many of them address Standard 1. This worries some teachers because it seems that the thinking for Standard 1 is fairly low level and literal compared to that which students need for Standards 2 through 9. This really is



What you really want is a sequence of questions where one question leads to the next and each question leads students a bit deeper into the text.

OK—as a place to begin. It’s good to check for basic understanding. But if you have a question that addresses Standard 1, think about a possible follow-up question you could ask that would take students deeper into the text and hence into the more analytical thinking called for in other standards. Rather than asking lots of text-dependent questions that jump from topic to topic, what you really want is a *sequence* of questions where one question leads to the next and each question leads students a bit deeper into the text.

Standard 2: Summary/Theme/Main Idea. The tricky thing about meeting this standard is that now students are expected to produce summaries that incorporate the theme or main idea, showing its development over the course of a text. A sample question might look like this:

- What is the author’s message in this story, and how does the author show this through the events that took place?

I like using this question along the way:

- What is this text starting to be about?

This alerts students early on in their reading that they should be thinking about the text’s theme or main idea. Too often with theme and main idea, we sort of “spring it” on kids at the end of a text, which is a little late in the game for gathering evidence to support their thinking.

Also noteworthy within this standard is the expectation for paraphrasing. This is a very good thing! When students can put meaning into their own words, we can be more confident that they truly understand what they have read.

Standard 3: Story Parts, Facts, Details. The Common Core emphasizes the *relationship* among elements in a text:

- How does the setting impact the problem?
- How does one event lead to another?
- How do the main character’s motivations affect her interaction with other characters?

This raises the bar in an aspect of text study, which has been relatively straightforward in the past.

Standard 4: Vocabulary. The Common Core is more concerned with the *important* words than the *hard* words. This is a very different way of looking at vocabulary: vocabulary as *craft*. Students will now be expected to think about the following:

- **Tone.** The author’s choice of particular words and how they shape the tone of the text. For instance, the author might write, “The little boy got off the bus with his report card and trudged home.” The tone would be very different if instead the author had written, “The little boy got off the bus with his report card and skipped home.”

- **Figurative language.** Students will also be asked to explain the use of figurative language and its impact on meaning: *idioms, similes, metaphors, and personification*.
- **Multiple meanings.** Words with multiple meanings require students to determine their meaning from context.

In short: How does the author play with words—in a variety of ways—to add meaning?

Standard 5: Structure, Genre, Syntax. Some aspects of this standard are what we would typically expect, whereas others are more subtle. I’ve made the case earlier in this book for placing a stronger emphasis on text structure and genre. With or without the Common Core, structure and genre will serve us well in enhancing students’ comprehension. But there’s more. Remember that this standard falls within the Craft and Structure band. Examining structure as *craft* is a different kind of challenge:

- How has the author crafted the introduction of the text to get readers’ attention?
- Why did the author place this word first in the sentence instead of last, and what effect does that have?
- How does the first stanza of this poem connect to the second stanza?
- Does this passage include description, narration, or argument?
- How does the author vary sentence length and why?

The list goes on. These are also ways that an author plays with language.

Standard 6: Point of View/Purpose. The challenge here, as indicated earlier, is helping students, even young children, understand point of view or purpose—even with informational text. This means examining multiple accounts of the same basic story or situation and seeing how the author’s point of view influences the way the story is told or situation is explained. Here are some text selection tips:

- Use primary-source documents. These will be especially useful because they are *informational* in intent—although the format is generally *narrative*. This is different from many informational sources that are organized around main ideas and details with headings, bolded words, and other nonfiction text features.
- For literary text, choose a lot of stories with a first-person narrator. With a first-person narrator, it’s obvious whose side of the story you are getting.
- Use the numerous fairy tales that have alternate versions, told from different points of view—children really enjoy these.
- Use nonfiction texts that present flip sides of the same issue. Publishers are beginning to release books that support teaching about opposing points of view based on topics to which intermediate-grade children can relate: Should children play video games? Should children be required to wear school uniforms? Other resources have a “choose your own ending” format where readers make decisions about important historical issues depending on *their* point of view: What should they do next? Then they get to watch how the situation plays out based on the choice they made. (Children *love* these books!)



Examining structure as craft is a different kind of challenge.

- Look for literary texts where the story is told by various characters within the story, where different chapters or pages have different narrators. A picture book set up this way is *Voices in the Park* by Anthony Browne. A chapter book with multiple narrators, which children just love, is *Because of Mr. Terupt* by Rob Buyea.

Standard 7: Different Kinds of Texts. The Common Core broadens our definition of *text* beyond words printed on a piece of paper: Internet sites, video, photographs, art prints and illustrations, live performances, even conversations are acknowledged as text. We will see all these text types featured in text-to-text connections in Standard 9. But in order to make connections that are meaningful, students first need to learn to use these sources knowledgeably. That means we have a lot of teaching to do.

For video, students will need to address points such as these:

- How did different images capture your attention?
- What individuals are most often represented in the media, and what individuals (e.g., gender, culture, age) are absent?

For photographs, we may want students to consider questions such as these:

- Based on what you have observed in the photograph, what might you infer or conclude from this image?
- What questions does this image raise in your mind?

I provide lots of additional guidance for supporting multiple text types in Chapter 6 in the section with follow-up tasks for after reading.

Standard 8: Critiquing the Text. Keep in mind that *this applies to informational text only*. Ultimately, we are being asked to teach students to assess a text's validity and reliability by teaching them to ask question such as these:

- Is the information current?
- Does the author present the topic fairly, respecting varying points of view?
- Has information been omitted, leading to bias?

This kind of deep critical appraisal is more the expectation for middle school than elementary school children, but you need to lay the groundwork for future expectations. In Grades 3 through 5, the emphasis is more on verifying that the author is supporting his or her claims with sufficient evidence:

- Which points support which claims?

Notice that work on this standard aligns well with Writing Standard 1: Argument and Opinion Writing.

Standard 9: Text-to-Text Connections. For reasons already discussed, this is the only kind of connection mentioned in the Common Core. In the sample assessments I've seen, students will frequently be asked to synthesize information from multiple sources (three or four or five) as they respond to questions. This is a triple whammy. What will students need to know and be able to do to achieve this?

- They will have to be proficient at reading multiple texts closely, gathering all the necessary meaning from each one.

- They will need to know how to synthesize information and evidence gathered from multiple texts, incorporating useful pieces from each one as needed to respond to whatever questions they are asked.
- And they will need to cite the particular source from which they retrieved each specific piece of information.

With this in mind, our close reading agenda should *always* include at least two texts with a logical connecting point. Think outside the box: An informational piece may work well with a poem. An art print or photograph could support just about any text. Consider connecting themes and big ideas, two versions of the same story, texts on the same topic each with a different focus, and so on. The connection will need to be based on a *significant* textual element, however, not a detail that has little impact on meaning.

Standard 10: Text Complexity. Chapter 2 of this book is devoted to text complexity, so we don't need to discuss the details again here. One final point is that text complexity as a *standard* "works" differently than do all the others. With Standards 1 through 9, we have specific grade-level benchmarks against which to measure students' proficiency with the standard. But Standard 10 mostly defines for us the kind of text students must read in order to address the other standards. It's like apples and oranges, probably the reason it stands alone in its very own "standards band": Range of Reading and Level of Text Complexity.



Our close reading agenda should always include at least two texts with a logical connecting point.

Putting the Standards to Work For Close Reading

I know this seems like a lot of information to absorb—and use. If you are feeling a little overwhelmed here, know that you have plenty of company. Most of us would say we have not received the kind of guidance for Common Core implementation that inspires confidence. But when you see how naturally we are able to meet many of these goals through the text-dependent questions we ask, you may feel that you can actually breathe again.

The following charts will help you. Figure 5.2, *Close Reading Questions Aligned to Common Core's College and Career Readiness Anchor Standards for Reading*, provides you with questions aligned to each standard. You will see that there are two columns here, one for literary text and the other for informational sources. These questions are intended to show you the *kinds* of questions that would align to different standards.

For an even more extensive list of questions for each standard, check out Leslie Blauman's (2014) *The Common Core Companion: The Standards Decoded, Grades 3–5: What They Say, What They Mean, How to Teach Them*. This spiral-bound resource includes standards-aligned questions by individual grade level, not just for the reading standards but also for writing, speaking and listening, and language. A version with this same title for Grades K–2 teachers by Sharon Taberski (2014) is also available, as are versions for middle and high school teachers by series originator Jim Burke (2103a, 2013b).

The Common Core does not really support "framing questions," those "stock," generic questions we might pose for *any* text as an isolated lesson focus: What is

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?

Standard	Potential Questions For Literary Text	Potential Questions For InFormational Text
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 ___?

(Continued)

(Continued)

Standard	Potential Questions For Literary Text	Potential Questions For InFormational Text
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)



When OUR DURING-READING INSTRUCTION Goes Off Track

Three during-reading issues concern me. The first relates to the use of the standards. The second has to do with the use of questions. The third focuses on when we ask our questions.

1. That educators will try to reduce close reading to a formula. I'm beginning to hear from teachers about a means of approaching close reading that I consider ill-advised. Their sources tout an organizational scheme that looks like this: Read a text three times. In the first close reading, address Standards 1 through 3. In the second round, focus on Standards 4 through 6. The third time through a text, examine Standards 7 through 9. This is appealing to teachers because it appears to simplify the process. But it is arbitrary and prescriptive, and it often doesn't work. Don't drink this Kool-Aid.

It is true that in an initial close reading you may focus heavily on Standards 1 through 3. But there will also be many opportunities to apply Standards 4 through 6 that support students' basic construction of meaning. The lesson included in this chapter is a good example of why this system doesn't work: Students will not fully appreciate this text unless you work with vocabulary right away (Standard 4). The fine points of the way the piece is structured (Standard 5) lead students to comprehension, right along with the words themselves. On the other hand, there is no real attention here to Standard 2 (theme) because I've decided that would be too much to cover in this first read-through. Please, please do not try to reduce close reading to a formula. It should *address* the standards, but it should not be *dictated* by the standards; it should be guided by the text.

2. That text-dependent questions will be misused. My second concern relates to a possible misuse of questions. A potential hazard is the danger that our wonderful text-dependent questions could find their way into "packets"—page after page of questions that teachers distribute for students to answer in writing. Used in this manner, our questions will no longer be so wonderful. ***The power of close reading is achieved through the lively interconnection between the teacher and the students and the complex text.*** Once we remove the teacher from the equation, we reduce close reading to a lonely, frustrating exercise. There is a place for responding to close reading in writing, but this should never take the place of the lesson itself.

3. That we won't ask questions until after reading. My final concern stems from viewing a "close reading" lesson recently on a website reputed to post only resources vetted for their superior quality. This lesson (following a number of prereading transgressions) instructed teachers during reading to "read the text to the class or engage in 'popcorn' reading with different students reading different portions of the text aloud." That was it, all the support students were to receive during the reading itself. Six or seven questions were then listed for ***after reading***—many of which were barely text dependent. Question quality aside, we can't wait to ask questions until ***after*** reading. For "close reading" we need to ask many questions as we move through the text so we can help students tease out bits and pieces of meaning as the author offers them to us. All you really get afterward are questions about the big ideas that tie the text together.



Considerations For Close Reading Instruction: During Reading

Now, let's develop the next stage of our lesson plan. In this section, I will show you the text-dependent questions I would use for each chunk of our text, as well as the standard that aligns with the question.

As I've said before, on a day-to-day basis I would not expect any of us to pick through our questions in this precise way to designate the matching standard. But it's a good exercise on occasion for examining the thoroughness of our questions. The biggest benefit is that it will show us very quickly not just the standards we've covered but which ones we are not addressing. This is the ghost that could haunt us. Congratulations to us for incorporating many good text-dependent questions into our close reading lessons. Some texts will surely be better suited to working toward some standards than others, so we can't expect we will work toward every standard in every lesson. However, if we routinely omit questions that will help students meet certain standards, we are limiting our students' close reading capacity.

Now we are ready to look at the during-reading portion of our lesson plan represented in Figure 5.4 (for a blank version, see Appendix I and the book's companion website at www.corwin.com/closerreading). This shows how those standards-based, text-dependent questions can guide students toward deep understanding, even in an initial close reading. Following the lesson plan, there is an explanation of this part of the lesson.

Figure 5.4

Planning for Close Reading

(Sample)

During Reading

*Reading anchor standards are identified in parentheses next to each question

Questions students should ask themselves for each chunk of text:
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• What is the author telling me?• Any hard or important words?• What does the author want me to understand?• How does the author play with language to add to meaning?
Follow-up: Text-dependent questions for the teacher to ask about each chunk of text:
First chunk: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>Who is telling this story? (granddaughter) (1)*</i>• <i>What do you know about this lady so far? (many details provided) (1)</i>• <i>What does the author want you to understand? (Grandma wasn't "cool," but this doesn't seem to be a bad thing.) (3)</i>• <i>What strategy do you think the author wants us to use here? Why? (picturing; lots of details to create picture in your mind) (5)</i>
Second chunk: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>What word does the author repeat in the first couple of sentences that stands out? Why do you think the author repeats these words? (plain; plain is a good word to describe Gram) (5)</i>• <i>What are the details in this section mostly about? (1) (doing the wash)</i>• <i>Doing the wash isn't very exciting. Why do you think the author spent so much time describing this? (Shows that Gram's life wasn't very exciting by most standards; helps us in understanding the time period) (3)</i>• <i>Does the author seem to be telling the story here from the point of view of a child or an adult? What makes you think this? (child's point of view; long-ago memories) (1)</i>• <i>What about the last line of this chunk? Are you beginning to understand what "that" means? (The author used a line from this chunk as the title; seeing that Gram is a simple and good lady) (5, 2)</i>• <i>What are you learning in this chunk about Gram's point of view on life? What makes you think this? (didn't need fancy things; liked her old ways) (6)</i>

Third chunk:

- What are you learning about Gram here? (worked in the family grocery store 43 years; gave granddaughter Popsicle) (1)
- What is the author trying to show us here? (Gram's generosity) (3)
- How many people in Gram's life have you met so far? (2—Pop and granddaughter) (1)
What does it mean to give someone "a hand"? (help them out) (4)

Fourth chunk:

- What is this chunk mostly about? (the food Gram made) (1)
- Why is the word *real* in quotes? (Some people don't consider staying home and cooking a "real" job.) (5)
- What senses does the author want us to use here? (picturing, smelling) (5) What words lead us to these senses? (peaches, roast beef, fried chicken, pickles) (4)
- Any words you don't understand here? (maybe *Victorian, succotash, pie face, chili sauce, lemon meringue*) (4)
- Are you beginning to get a more complete picture of this time and place? Describe it. (3)
- How does this chunk fit with the Chunk 3 above? (both about Gram's hard work and generosity) (5)
- Do you have anything to add for "that" kind of lady? (generosity, thoughtfulness) (3)

Fifth chunk:

- What is this section mostly about? (driving) (1)
- Does this change your thinking about Gram? How? (Gram liked to feel special, important; although she mostly fulfilled traditional female roles, she was strong, smart, independent.) (3)
- What words lead you to this new thinking? ("felt like a queen," Cadillac; perched; guided; didn't mind being alone) (4)

Sixth chunk:

- What is the author giving you information about in this chunk? (1) (Gram and her porch)
- The author uses hyperbole (exaggeration) in this chunk and also in the chunk above. What is getting exaggerated? Why is the author doing this? (longest fins in the world; every problem in the universe—makes the point that the fins were *really* big and there were *lots* of problems) (4)
- Does this part confirm anything you already know about "that lady"? Does it add anything new? (confirms generosity; adds friendliness) (3)

Seventh chunk:

- What details is the author sharing here? (rice pudding, smile) (1)
- What does it mean to "collect people"? (lots of friends) (4)
- Why do you think the author included this information? (She was kind to others, so they were kind to her) (6)

(Continued)

(Continued)

Eighth chunk:

- What is happening in this part of the text? (Gram is telling stories to her great granddaughter) (1)
- What interesting punctuation do you see at the beginning of this chunk? What are these called? What is the author trying to show here? (ellipses; showing the passing of time) (5)
- How can you tell time has passed? (little girl now was the great granddaughter) (1)
- Why does the author include these stories (more details about Grams' simple life; hardships; small details that were memorable to her; showed Gram's point of view—that she just accepted that life was like this, even the disappointing parts; she didn't complain) (6)

Ninth chunk:

- What are you finding out here? (granddaughter and family now lived with Gram) (1)
- Why does Gram call herself "the old gray mare"? What is she referring to when she says this? (This refers to the old song lyrics: "The old gray mare, she ain't what she used to be..." Just like the old gray mare, Gram feels old.) (9)
- Again the author repeats the line, "She was *that* kind of lady." What kind of lady is that? (many traits evident by now) (3)

In this part of the text you get a more direct view of the granddaughter's (author's) feelings about her grandmother. What are those feelings and how are these feelings shown? (feels lots of love; moved in to care for her and her house) (2)



Available for download at www.corwin.com/closerreading

Copyright © 2014 by Corwin. All rights reserved. Reprinted from *Closer Reading, Grades 3–6: Better Prep, Smarter Lessons, Deeper Comprehension* by Nancy Boyles. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin, www.corwin.com. Reproduction authorized only for the local school site or nonprofit organization that has purchased this book.

Applying What We Know

Completing the *During-Reading* Part of Our Close Reading Plan

I will be honest and confess that completing this part of the planner does take time. Just writing all these questions eats up more than a few minutes. More than that, though, I get stuck in the story. Once I start drilling down and down and down, I find there is so much to uncover that it's hard to pull myself away. But this is not a bad thing. I see the questions I am creating in the faces of the students who will soon sit with me and respond to them. This is my very favorite part of close reading, and I know that if I plan thoughtfully, I will be rewarded many times over with all the satisfaction and appreciation we get when a lesson goes well.

And lots of that reward comes from teachers. The lessons I teach are always in someone else's classroom, with twenty or so students sitting cross-legged on a rug in front of me and maybe half that number of teachers crowded around watching. I know this should make me seriously nervous. But after about the first paragraph, we're somewhere deep inside the text, and the next time I look up, there's so much pride smiling back at me. "Those were **our** kids answering those questions," teachers remind me in the debriefing session afterward. Yes, I know. When you read really, really closely, there's no limit to what you can find in an author's words—even when you're only nine years old.

We can hold our own debriefing session for this part of the lesson right here. Rather than going chunk by chunk, it will be more effective to examine the questions in relation to each standard. You may want to review Figure 5.3 again before engaging in this analysis.

Depending on Standards for Our Text-Dependent Questions

Standard 1. In nearly every chunk, I led with a question or two aimed at checking for basic understanding. These became a springboard to follow-up questions that asked students to think more deeply.

Standard 2. This standard is not directly addressed in this lesson until the final question in the last chunk. This is intentional. I would not plan to delve into theme during the initial reading because you have to understand Gram as a person (a whole day's work in itself) before you can put these clues together to see the message—or multiple messages—about grandmother and granddaughter. I would make this the focus of a follow-up lesson.

Standard 3. There are an abundance of questions in this lesson that will help students meet Standard 3, understanding the interaction among text elements. This makes sense because this is a memoir, and memoirs focus heavily on people and places and the experiences that bring them together. The same evidence used in today's lesson for revealing character could be revisited subsequently for theme.

Standard 4. There are very few "hard" words in this text, the kind that would derail basic construction of meaning. But there are plenty of potentially unknown words and expressions that give you a better appreciation of Gram and appreciation of this time period. This lesson highlights era-specific words like *Victorian*, *Cadillac fins*, and *succotash*. It also focuses on figurative phrases like "give someone a hand" and "pie face."

Standard 5. There are many questions in this lesson related to the skills outlined in Standard 5. While I don't ask students about the overall structure of the text—though this could be useful to discuss in a follow-up lesson on genre—I do focus on small points that ask students to examine the author's craft. Many of these structural

(Continued)

(Continued)

elements are subtle: placement of quotation marks around a particular word, italicized words, repetition of lines, the use of punctuation (in this case ellipses) to convey meaning, places in the text crafted to inspire the use of various comprehension strategies. One reason to highlight these aspects of the writer's craft is to make the link to student writing: "Here's something you could try in your own writing, too."

Standard 6. When I first reviewed my lesson after writing it, I noticed I didn't have any questions that addressed Standard 6. This seemed odd because a memoir should reveal point of view. I went back to the text and looked for places where point of view should be apparent to students. I found two chunks where I would definitely want to insert such a question and added them to my plan. This is the benefit of being familiar with the standards; you will recognize what is present in your lesson and what you have omitted—intentionally or accidentally.

Standards 7–9. The absence of questions addressing these standards is not an accident. There are no graphics that accompany this text, so we can't incorporate a picture or photograph. Although the Common Core includes memoir among its informational text types, a memoir doesn't work for assessing "validity and reliability"; memoir is *supposed* to present a personal perspective. There is one small text connection here (which most children will never recognize). I noted it mostly because of the inference about being an "old gray mare." (I also sang a few bars from the song when I taught this lesson; the kids looked at me as if I were from a different planet.) These kinds of questions would find their rightful place in follow-up lessons, as noted in the "Reasons for Revisiting This Text" discussed in depth in Chapter 8.

There Sure Are a Lot of Questions Here

There are indeed a lot of questions specified in this during-reading part of the lesson. "We're not going to ask *all* of these questions, are we?" teachers often want to know. You might not ask every one of *these* questions, but at the beginning of this close reading process, there will be a lot of questions, and you (the teacher) will be doing most of the asking. As time goes on, students will be doing much more of the questioning themselves, as we teach them to internalize these kinds of questions. We'll talk about that in our discussion in Chapter 7, *Moving Students Toward Independence in Close Reading*.

It just makes sense that if we want elementary-grade students to understand a text deeply, we will need to help guide them there. When the text is complex, there is a lot to discover about it—hence, so many questions. But maybe not these exact questions. I prefer not to distribute my lesson plan to teachers before I teach a close reading lesson to their students because I don't want them checking off the questions as I come to them. My lessons sometimes take a few unanticipated twists and turns because I follow the children. Their response to an initial question may set up a follow-up question that I didn't consider when I first wrote my plan. Remember, though, that "following the children" means into the text, not into the vagaries of their personal connections.

A final critical point to make about the during-reading part of a close reading lesson is that analyzing the text is not synonymous with having a "discussion" about the text. True, many of the questions included in this lesson are higher level and divergent. There will certainly be varying responses, and that is fine as long as students base their responses on evidence that comes from the text. Keep in mind, however, that your main goal in the initial close reading of any text is to uncover the *author's* meaning. This will keep your lesson on track. Once the author's meaning has been discerned, returning to specific points in the text for an academic discussion is a great focus for a follow-up lesson (and helps you meet Common Core criteria for the Listening and Speaking Standards, too.)

Now that you've had this up-close view of what happens in the during-reading part of your close reading lesson, take some time to reflect on the following questions—with your professional learning community, a colleague, or on your own—before moving forward to the next chapter on supporting readers *after* close reading.

Reflecting on What We Know

1. The way we approach a text during close reading is complicated by our need to be familiar with the College and Career Readiness Anchor Standards for Reading. What do you understand clearly about these standards now? What do you need to spend more time learning about?
2. Even though our state and district standards in the past have addressed many of the same literary terms and elements addressed by the Common Core (vocabulary, theme, connections, etc.), it would be fair to say that the Common Core's approach is quite different in some cases. What important differences do you see in this new approach to reading comprehension? Which standards do you regard as the most challenging—for you and for your students? Why?
3. To what extent are your current questions for the texts you teach “text dependent”? Reflect (honestly) on some of the questions that have accompanied texts you've read with your students. What questions might you eliminate based on this need for text dependence?
4. Look at the charts Close Reading Questions Aligned to Common Core College and Career Readiness Anchor Standards for Reading (Figure 5.2) on page 86 and Recognizing the Author's Craft During Close Reading (Figure 5.3) on page 90. Which questions that you may not be asking now might be good additions to your close reading instruction?
5. Look one more time at the text-dependent questions for “She Was *THAT* Kind of Lady.” Try to think of additional questions that are well matched to this text. Can you identify the standard aligned to each of your new questions?
6. Using the same text you used in Chapters 2, 3, and 4, now plan just the during-reading part of your lesson using the blank Planning for Close Reading template found in Appendix I and on the book's companion website at www.corwin.com/closerreading.
7. What was hard about doing this part of your lesson plan? What was easy? What questions do you have about designing this part of your lesson? If possible, share and discuss your work here with another colleague or colleagues who are also working on close reading.