

Short Close Reading Paper



This course is designed in part to strengthen your skills in close reading. That is, you should be able to scrutinize a passage *very* closely, as if you're looking at each word and punctuation mark in a sentence under a magnifying glass. Close reading involves not only thinking critically about each word in a sentence, the sentence's grammatical structure, etc., but to put these textual elements into conversation with the larger text in order to understand *why* the author has arranged the text in that specific way.

At one point in the semester to be determined by a sign-up sheet, you will submit a 500-word short response paper in which you **perform a close reading of a passage** from that night's reading assignment. Your paper will focus on how elements of the text—its form, narration, diction, literary devices, etc.—contribute to one of the work's larger themes.

Because this is a very short response, please **avoid summary completely**. I am deeply familiar with every class text and do not need a recap. Use the entirety of your space to show me your close reading skills and to make a brief argument about the passage you chose. You might argue that the passage illuminates a moment of character development, that it shifts the tone of the text, that it helps the work perform societal critique, etc.

In addition to the close reading analysis, you will also be responsible for coming up with **three discussion questions** based on your analysis/the reading for that class. Your questions should not be simple fact-checking questions, but should instead be open to multiple responses. For example, instead of asking, "What is Victor Frankenstein's reaction to giving life to his creation?" you might ask, "What does Victor Frankenstein's initial reaction to his creation say about his understanding of parental responsibility? How does his role as a father figure differ from the more traditional paternal roles seen in the rest of the novel?" You should be ready to share your discussion questions with the class if asked, so take them seriously!

DETAILS

Your short response should perform a close reading of a passage from the night's reading in order to make a *clear and insightful* argument about the text. Here are some requirements and tips:

- At the top of the page, copy the passage you will close read. The passage should be long enough to give you enough material to analyze in ~500 words, but short enough that you can do a *thorough* job in the small space allotted. A sentence or two will often work best. A paragraph is likely too long.
- Because this is a short response, the *entire* paper should consist of your analysis. There's no need for an introduction or conclusion; jump right in!
- The analysis should be ~500 words; this does not include the quote at the top of the paper or the discussion questions.
- Your response should be clearly written, free from errors, and composed in a professional tone.
- The document should be double-spaced and use 12 pt. Times New Roman font (or comparable), with 1-inch margins on all sides. Please submit only a .doc or .docx file.
- The assignment is worth 5% of your total course grade and will be graded based on both the close reading analysis and the quality of your discussion questions.