

## Essay on Close Reading

A close reading essay is an in-depth paper that carefully studies a short work or a section of a longer one. Rather than treat the larger themes of the work alone, a close reading essay goes into details and substantiates observations with examples from the work being examined. You need to not only make observations about parts of the work that stand out, but back them up with examples from the text.

When you close read, you observe facts and details about the text. Your aim may be to notice all **striking** features of the text, including rhetorical features, structural elements, cultural references or allusions. A close reading should be more than a list of devices, though. The essay should move from observation of particular facts and details to a conclusion, or interpretation, based on those observations. What do these data add up to mean?

### What does a Close Reading Essay Usually Have?

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**A thesis that is an assertion about the meaning and function of the text (closed-form):** It must be something you can argue for and prove in your essay.

**Evidence from the text.** What specific words or phrases led you to have the ideas you express? Quote them.

**Analysis of that evidence.** Literally thousands of people have had thousands of different ideas about the words or details you mention. Explain how you arrived at your ideas.

### What do you need to do before you start writing?

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Do a close reading of the text completing the dialectical journal:

**Patterns:** Look for patterns in the things you've noticed about the text--repetitions, contradictions, similarities. Ask questions about the patterns you've noticed--especially how and why.

**Figurative language:** Examine the passage carefully for figurative language: similes, images, metaphors, and symbols. Identify any and all. List implications and suggested meanings as well as denotations.

Examine diction.

**Structure.** Divide the passage into the more obvious sections (stages of argument, discussion, or action). What is the interrelation of these units? How do they develop? Again, what can you postulate regarding a controlling design for the work at this point?

**Style.** Look for any significant aspects of style—parallel constructions, antithesis, etc. Look for patterns, polarities, and problems. Periodic sentences, clause structures?

**Tone.** What is the tone of the passage? Is there any change in tone? Why?

*You should assume that your readers have read the work you are analyzing, but do not have it in front of them. Therefore, you must quote any details you wish to discuss.*

*You do not — and indeed you cannot — talk about everything in the text. You will need to be extremely selective when quoting/selecting details for analysis.*

## STRUCTURE

### ***Introduction:***

Introduce the work/establish the speaker, the apparent audience, the basic method of presentation (monologue, narration, argument, etc.). Briefly describe the skeletal contents of the passage in a few sentences. Answer the journalist's questions (Who? What? When? Where? Why?) in order to establish the context for your analysis. State your thesis.

### ***Body:***

The body of the paper will be made up by your close reading. Here is where you need to analyze the text in detail, using quotations for support.

-Describe and evaluate the style of the passage. Always remember to consider the style in relationship to the circumstances of the work. Such conditions have an impact on the writing.

-Discuss multiple elements that stand out/ appear significant-interpret their significance.

*Use your dialectical journal for this part of the essay.*

### ***Conclusion:***

Summarize your analysis, evaluate the author's style/technique and its effectiveness.

### **You will receive scores in the following areas:**

*Quality of Interpretation:* how interesting and thorough your analysis is

*Use of Support:* how well you use quotations from the text to make your argument persuasive

*Organization and Structure:* both your overall organization and your paragraph-level organization

*Grammar, Style, Mechanics*

## A Close-Reading of "DAFFODILS" By William Wordsworth

The poem "Daffodils" by William Wordsworth reflects the inherent connection between man and nature, which is so commonly found in his poetry. Wordsworth uses a variety of figurative devices to communicate this idea, and the poetic motives behind his writing. Daffodils' is essentially a lyric poem which is expressive of the feelings of joy the poet encounters when seeing the multitude of daffodils.

In the preface to *The Lyrical Ballads*, Wordsworth writes that "poetry is the image of man and nature". Wordsworth uses a variety of figurative devices to communicate this idea: for example, in the first line of the poem he uses reverse personification in representing himself metaphorically "as a cloud". Wordsworth then proceeds to personify the daffodils as humans, "dancing" (line 6) and "tossing their heads" (line 12). He also personifies the daffodils as a "jocund company" (line 16), suggesting the flowers have feelings just as humans do. Again, there is the suggestion of unity between man and nature when Wordsworth describes himself as feeling "gay" in the company of the daffodils.

The fact Wordsworth shows himself and nature as interchangeable, signifies the close relationship there is between man and nature in the Wordsworthian world. The poetic diction Wordsworth uses depicts nature in a positive, almost heavenly light; for example, "a host" of daffodils, suggests perhaps a congregation of angels. The choice of the word "host" is, I think, deliberate - it has far more connotations than the word "crowd". Also its position at the start of the line helps to emphasize not only the sheer multitude of daffodils but also the immediacy of impact on the beholder. Such description creates a feeling of nature as a Utopia....