

Feeder 3.1: Close Reading Worksheet

Directions: Please complete the following worksheet. In your final draft, you can include the questions or simply provide clearly numbered/labeled answers to each question. There are eight questions total; don't overlook the subsequent pages of this document. As always, remember to refer to the specific instructions and grading rubric in the Unit 3 Assignment Prompt (Canvas>Files>Unit 3).

- 1. Provide basic information about your selected short story.**
 - a. Title of the story:
 - b. Full name of the author:
 - c. Year of the author's birth and death:
 - d. Year(s) of the story's composition (approximate if necessary):
 - e. Year of the story's original publication:
 - f. Larger work in which the story was originally published (In addition to the title of this larger work, please clarify what type of work it is, such as a magazine, newspaper, or short story collection, etc.):
 - g. The setting of the story (time and place):
 - h. Your initial thoughts/assumptions/expectations about the story:
 - i. Why you've chosen this story:
- 2. Provide a full bibliographic citation (in MLA 9th edition format) for your selected short story.**
- 3. Summarize your selected short story.**
 - a. Summarize it in five sentences:
 - b. Summarize it in three sentences:
 - c. Summarize it in a single sentence:
- 4. Complete this sentence with as few words as possible: "This story is about ____."**

(Note: This question isn't about summarizing the text; this is about trying to identify and articulate the main idea/concept/theme you see apparent in this story. Try to use only one or a few words to fill in the blank.) **Then explain your answer in a few follow-up sentences.**
- 5. Choose two passages** from your selected story that interest you or strike you as strange/confusing/worthy of interrogation. To clarify, a passage should probably be around 1-3 paragraphs in length. (In choosing your passages, go beyond the content like "This was a cool moment," or "This surprised me." Instead, look for passages in which the author's use of language interests you.) Copy and paste the passages here and accompany them with appropriate in-text/parenthetical citations, including page numbers (or paragraph numbers if your text is online). **For each passage, write a sentence or two about what interests you about each passage.**
- 6. Choose one of the passages from Question 5 and dissect it.** Copy and paste the passage here and accompany it with an appropriate in-text/parenthetical citation, including page numbers (or paragraph numbers if your text is online). Then dissect the passage. Look closely at every word, phrase, line, and punctuation mark. Your notes don't have to focus on any specific theme yet; include everything that seems interesting. Your answer here doesn't

need to be polished or even in complete sentences. You're not necessarily drawing any definitive conclusions; you're noting things that seem worthy of further exploration, and you're starting to ask questions or make very tentative guesses. Organize your notes here in a way that works best for you, but make sure that your notes are at least comprehensible to outside readers. Remember to cite specific moments with quotes or page/paragraph numbers.

For instance, your answer can be a list of things you notice and brief comments or inferences. Here's one example of how to do this:

- “Lots of eye imagery [note the location of each by quoting specific phrases or sentences along with page or paragraph numbers] - eyesight or looking is important?”
- “Many super specific references to food, which seems strange, but maybe significant? [note the location of each by quoting specific phrases or sentences along with page or paragraph numbers]”
- Etc.

Work your way closely through all of the elements of the passage a few times. You will want to answer the following kinds of questions (these are suggestions or guides, not specific requirements):

- Think carefully about the diction/word choice in this passage. What words strike you as intriguing or potentially important? Consider looking up their definition/etymology/history in the *Oxford English Dictionary* (<https://www-oed-com.libproxy.lib.unc.edu/>; you might need to access this resource through the UNC Libraries and then log in using your ONYEN).
- What's going on with the syntax/sentence structure in this passage?
- What about the author's use of punctuation?
- What about particular imagery or figurative language?
- How does this moment fit into the plot of the story?
- How does this moment fit into the theme of the story?
- How does this element connect to some larger theme that you think might be important, or how does it connect to your initial interest in this story?

Note: Question 6 isn't about making a coherent argument yet; it's about getting you to practice just dissecting a passage. It's okay if various elements you notice suggest contrasting issues. I want you to pull your passage apart and start guessing about individual elements. Scan the passage with a microscope and note EVERYTHING that MIGHT be worth investigating. Remember to cite page (or paragraph) numbers for any specific elements you reference.

7. **Look at your notes from Question 6.** Look for patterns that stand out to you, especially as they somehow connect to concepts of some larger theme or themes. Are there a few elements you can tie together? **Citing some of these elements (include page or paragraph numbers), explain the significance of this passage in relation to the story as a whole in one or two solid paragraphs.** (A solid paragraph is at least five sentences.)

Maybe it's the word choice (diction) or sentence structure (syntax). Maybe it's the author's use of metaphor, imagery, or other figurative language. Maybe it's the presence of a recurring theme or motif. Can you relate these elements back to the rest of the text AND the text's treatment of some larger theme(s)?

- For instance, perhaps the syntax in this passage caught your attention because it's the only instance in which the author breaks from their usual sentence structure. How does that connect to the way this passage functions in the story as a whole?
- Or maybe this is the turning point of the story, and the passage is filled with imagery of _____. How does that imagery relate back to the rest of the story?
- **Is there some combination of the above? Your interpretation doesn't have to rely on just one single observation or element. Your interpretation might rely on a combination of a passage's unique syntax, diction, imagery, etc. (In fact, your overall argument should be structured thematically, probably not just based on one single element.)**
- There are many options; these are just suggestions.

Basically, look at the stylistic/linguistic choices made in your passage and ask how such choices function in the text. How does this passage affect the text and the way you interpret this story overall? How does this passage reveal the way the story as a whole grapples with concepts of X, Y, or Z? (Hopefully, this will provide you with the groundwork for Question 8, and for the rest of your work moving forward on this project.)

8. Think about the concepts, themes, and literary devices in this story and your work thus far, especially your notes from Question #7. If you were to write an essay analyzing and interpreting this story, what would be your thesis, arguing for your own interpretation of this story? **Write a tentative thesis that will serve as the starting point for the essay you will eventually write for Feeder 3.2.** With this story, the author is doing...something; they are most likely making some kind of larger statement about something beyond just the realm of this specific story. (Remember, a single story can have multiple interpretations, so there is no single "correct" interpretation/argument/thesis to be made. It's all about how you interpret the text and eventually support that interpretation with evidence from the text itself.)

We will discuss thesis statements in more detail soon. You're not expected to compose a perfect thesis yet, but give this your best effort as a starting point. You might also find the following resources from the UNC Writing Center helpful:

- Argument: <https://writingcenter.unc.edu/tips-and-tools/argument/>.
- Thesis Statements: <https://writingcenter.unc.edu/tips-and-tools/thesis-statements/>
- Reading and Discussing Literature: <https://writingcenter.unc.edu/tips-and-tools/literature-fiction/>

You might also want to refer to the handouts on how to close read a text at Canvas>Files>Unit 3.

Remember, your answer here is a tentative thesis, a starting point for your process of research, reflection, and composition. Do your best here, but know that you are not "stuck" with your answer. All thesis statements are malleable and will be adjusted during your subsequent writing process.