# Rereading Project Writeup

How can instructors engaged in professional rereading help to ensure that students are also benefiting from the practice as much as the instructors are? In other words, how can teacher-scholars ensure that professional rereading happens *for* students and not just *to* them?  How can professional rereading be made to matter for students in a way that is actually meaningful?

Reading and analysis of literature texts tends to be the backbone of English classrooms throughout high schools and colleges. Rereading is one of the most crucial yet underappreciated aspects of reading and analysis, necessary to foster deeper, more complete understanding of a particular piece of work. It comes in many different forms, ranging from returning to recreationally read a favorite novel from childhood, to the intensely focused, professional rereading that instructors and students engage in to get the most out of the work they are studying. Yet it is often difficult for instructors to push the students to reread at the level of rigor needed for a better understanding, without the students becoming frustrated at having to read the same thing over and over again. Such frustration tends to lead to boredom and unproductivity, as the students begin to lose interest in the piece and stop looking for any new insights.

Overcoming this problem is an important step toward encouraging students in the classroom to make meaningful discoveries. The dullness of rereading can be mitigated by using guiding questions to direct a reader to notice different details on the next read, thus holding their interest and curiosity about a text as they see that there is still more to uncover. The overall aim of our Reading Redux project was to design a tool well-suited to this kind of guidance, one that can adapt to both the instructor and the student. The project breaks up the text into segments, each of which must be read through before the instructor-chosen questions appear and the student is encouraged to reread the segment in light of the questions posed. The students are directed to reflect on parallels, symbols, opposites or other features that they may have missed upon the first read, and then find the corresponding textual evidence of the features to focus on. At the end of the segments, the text is presented in its entirety, allowing the student to take it in as a whole and put the accumulated ideas together. When presented in this format, it becomes much easier for the student to be more mindful and reflective with their rereading, as well as for the teacher to customize for their own vision of the text, and receive input about the students’ understanding, both directly from their question responses, and also from the background data collection. We have centered this project on the work Recitatif by Toni Morrison, as a demonstration of the format. This short story, with its themes of race and prejudice, attention to contrasts, and intentional ambiguity, is particularly apt for this purpose, since multiple readings are required for a complete understanding. It is hopeful that the Reading Redux project will be highly useful for aiding English teachers and their students on this and other such works.