

CLOSE READING

I. First Impressions

- What is the first thing you notice about the passage? What is the second?
- Do the two things you noticed complement each other? Contradict each other?
- What mood does the passage create? Why?

II. Vocabulary and Diction (Diction = Word Choice)

- Which words do you notice first? Why? What is noteworthy about this diction?
- How do the important words relate to one another?
- Do any words seem oddly used to you? Why?
- Do any words have double meanings? Do they have extra connotations?
- Can you define “connotation”? If not then you have no business reading me until until you look up the word in a dictionary. We can still be friends, though.
- Look up words in the Oxford English Dictionary: <https://voyager.ship.edu/rpas/ezproxy.cgi?institution=12&url=http://www.oed.com> ... this is the only dictionary you should be using.

III. Discerning Patterns

- Does an image here remind you of an image elsewhere in the text? Where? What is the connection?
- How might this image fit into the pattern of the book as a whole?
- Could this passage symbolize the entire work? Could this passage serve as a microcosm—a little picture—of what is taking place in the whole work?
- What is the sentence rhythm like? Short/choppy? Long/flowing? Does it build on itself or stay at an even pace?
- Look at the punctuation. Is there anything unusual about it?
- Is there any repetition within the passage? What is the effect of that repetition?
- How many types of writing are in the passage? (For example, narration, description, argument, dialogue, rhymed or alliterative poetry, etc)
- Can you identify paradoxes in the author’s thought or subject? We’ll learn more about paradoxes later.
- What is left out or kept silent?

IV. Point of View and Characterization

- How does the passage make us react to or think about any characters or events within the narrative?
- Are there colors, sounds, physical description that appeals to the senses? Does this imagery form a pattern? Why might the author have chosen that color, sound or physical description?
- Who speaks in the passage? To whom does he or she speak? Does the narrator have a limited or partial point of view? Or does the narrator appear to be omniscient, and s/he knows things the characters couldn’t possibly know (future historical events, things taking place off stage, the feelings of multiple characters, etc)

V. Symbolism

- Are there metaphors? What kinds?
- Is there one controlling metaphor? If not, how many different metaphors are there, and in what order do they occur? How might that be significant?
- How might objects represent something else?
- Do any of the objects, colors, animals, or plants appearing in the passage have traditional connotations or meanings? What about religious or biblical significance?