Reading Strategies 1: Close Reading
A Writing Guide Presentation in collaboration with the Office of Disability Services

Kirkwood Adams
Maria Baker
CK Kirch
Michele McGrath
What’s on the menu?

- Intro to close-reading
- Strategies for close-reading
- What to do with all your discoveries!
Introduction to Close-Reading
What do you know about your lens as you approach a source?
What informs your perspective?
  - What is the field?
  - What are themes of the class? Themes of class discussions? Topics of related discourse?
  - What are the project instructions? (if applicable)
What do you find out about your lens as you get acquainted with your sources?
We are not responsible for your lost or stolen relatives. We cannot guarantee your safety if you disobey our instructions. We do not endorse the causes or claims of people begging for handouts. We reserve the right to refuse service to anyone. Your ticket does not guarantee that we will honor your reservations. In order to facilitate our procedures, please limit your carrying on. Before taking off, please extinguish all smoldering resentments. If you cannot understand English, you will be moved out of the way. In the event of a loss, you’d better look out for
Reading/Looking for:

DETAILS
that reveal a gap in understanding

FOCUS
on details that reveal a gap in understanding

INTERPRET
the details to FILL a gap in understanding

CONNECT
interpretation to your larger project

[from How Scholars Write, by Aaron Ritzenberg and Sue Mendelsohn, Oxford Univ. Press 2020]
Jesus Constantino, “Harlem in Furs: Race and Fashion in the Photography of Gordon Parks” (LENS: fashion)

FOCUS: Two buttonholes lay unused over her left breast; the two overlaying pieces of fabric have been sewn together instead. One of the unused buttons for an unseen third buttonhole has been folded inward at her neck to form a more comfortable v-line. At her waist, two buttons have been added to take in (albeit unevenly) what had once likely been a larger waistline. A single tear in the fabric just to the left of the lower of the two buttons testifies to the age and imperfection of the alteration.

INTERPRET: [Parks] directly challenges the tactics of fashion photography itself. The image frustrates desire. The dress appears as though it could be used and reused forever through an endless series of minor alterations, standing defiantly outside the circulation of commodities. (794-95)

[from How Scholars Write, by Aaron Ritzenberg and Sue Mendelsohn, Oxford Univ. Press 2020]

FOCUS: Entitled “American Gothic” because it recasts the famous Grant Wood painting of the farm couple, Park's image depicts Watson, who worked as a night-time cleaner in the Federal building that housed the FSA, where Parks was intern on a fellowship, standing in front of an American flag with broom and mop, the tools of manual labor...

INTERPRET: The tone of “American Gothic” is defined by Watson’s conscious participation in the photographic act. She gazes straight into the camera, collaborating in the ironic subversion of the patriotism symbolized by the flag draped behind her. Her eyes pierce the photographic plane; her gaze is serious, steady and straightforward, almost confrontational. The directness of her look and the solidity of her stance lend her an aura of strength and determination that belie her menial occupation. The frontality of Watson's pose and the eye level position from which the photograph is taken establish equality between Watson and the viewer.

[from How Scholars Write, by Aaron Ritzenberg and Sue Mendelsohn, Oxford Univ. Press 2020]
Strategies for Close Reading
We are not responsible for your lost or stolen relatives. We cannot guarantee your safety if you disobey our instructions. We do not endorse the causes or claims of people begging for handouts. We reserve the right to refuse service to anyone. Your ticket does not guarantee that we will honor your reservations. In order to facilitate our procedures, please limit your carrying on. Before taking off, please extinguish all smoldering resentments. If you cannot understand English, you will be moved out of the way. In the event of a loss, you’d better look out for yourself. Your insurance was cancelled because we can no longer handle your frightful claims. Our handlers lost your luggage and we are unable to find the key to your legal case. You were detained for interrogation because you fit the profile. You are not presumed to be innocent if the police have reason to suspect you are carrying a concealed wallet. It’s not our fault you were born wearing a gang color. It is not our obligation to inform you of your rights. Step aside, please, while our officer inspects your bad attitude. You have no rights that we are bound to respect. Please remain calm, or we can’t be held responsible for what happens to you.
Three Strategies

- Annotate Text Directly
- Text-to-Speech / Listen
- Lean / Recursive Notes

A poem: Harryette Mullen, We Are Not Responsible

We are not responsible for your lost or stolen relatives. We cannot guarantee your safety if you disobey our instructions. We do not endorse the causes or claims of people begging for handouts. We reserve the right to refuse service to anyone. Your ticket does not guarantee that we will honor your reservations. In order to facilitate our procedures, please limit your carrying on. Before taking off, please extinguish all smoldering resentments. If you cannot understand English, you will be moved out of the way. In the event of a loss, you’d better look out for yourself. Your insurance was cancelled because we can no longer handle your frightful claims. Our handlers lost your luggage and we are unable to find the key to your legal case. You were detained for interrogation because you fit the profile. You are not presumed to be innocent if the police have reason to suspect you are carrying a concealed wallet. It’s not our fault you were born wearing a gang color. It is not our obligation to inform you of your rights. Step aside, please, while our officer inspects your bad attitude. You have no rights that we are bound to respect. Please remain calm, or we can’t be held responsible for what happens to you.

## Strategy 1: Annotate text directly

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strategy</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Works great with...</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Annotate text directly</td>
<td>Mark and annotate directly on document</td>
<td>printed reading or online document you can edit and write on</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### How to annotate:

1. Read the text with pen/pencil in hand
2. As you read, make observations: look for patterns, repetitions, contradictions, similarities, etc. (remember your lens!)
3. Annotate the text (make marginal notes, underline/highlight, circle, draw connecting lines, etc.) to record your observations
4. Ask questions about what you’ve observed, esp. how/why
5. Repeat!
A poem: Harryette Mullen, We Are Not Responsible

We are not responsible for your lost or stolen relatives. We cannot guarantee your safety if you disobey our instructions. We do not endorse the causes or claims of people begging for handouts. We reserve the right to refuse service to anyone. Your ticket does not guarantee that we will honor your reservations. In order to facilitate our procedures, please limit your carrying on. Before taking off, please extinguish all smoldering resentments. If you cannot understand English, you will be moved out of the way. In the event of a loss, you’d better look out for yourself. Your insurance was cancelled because we can no longer handle your frightful claims. Our handlers lost your luggage and we are unable to find the key to your legal case. You were detained for interrogation because you fit the profile. You are not presumed to be innocent if the police have reason to suspect you are carrying a concealed wallet. It’s not our fault you were born wearing a gang color. It is not our obligation to inform you of your rights. Step aside, please, while our officer inspects your bad attitude. You have no rights that we are bound to respect. Please remain calm, or we can’t be held responsible for what happens to you.


What to LOOK for (visual cues)

● Spacing/Structure/Organization
  ○ Paragraphs
  ○ Line breaks
  ○ Layout
  ○ Title, subtitle, headings
● Sentence structure:
  ○ Short/Long
  ○ Repetitive
  ○ Fragmented
● Punctuation: Are there a lot of...
  ○ Question marks (?)   Exclamation points (!)
  ○ Periods/Full stops (.)  Commas (,)
  ○ Dashes (—)     Others?
● Parts of speech:
  ○ Nouns               Pronouns
  ○ Adjectives         Adverbs
  ○ Verbs                 Conjunctions (and, but, etc.)
We are not responsible for your lost or stolen relatives. We cannot guarantee your safety if you disobey our instructions. We do not endorse the causes or claims of people begging for handouts. We reserve the right to refuse service to anyone. Your ticket does not guarantee that we will honor your reservations. In order to facilitate our procedures, please limit your carrying on. Before taking off, please extinguish all smoldering resentments. If you cannot understand English, you will be moved out of the way. In the event of a loss, you’d better look out for yourself. Your insurance was cancelled because we can no longer handle your frightful claims. Our handlers lost your luggage and we are unable to find the key to your legal case. You were detained for interrogation because you fit the profile. You are not presumed to be innocent if the police have reason to suspect you are carrying a concealed wallet. It’s not our fault, you were born wearing a gang color. It is not our obligation to inform you of your rights. Step aside, please, while our officer inspects your bad attitude. You have no rights that we are bound to respect. Please remain calm, or we can’t be held responsible for what happens to you.

"We" holds all the power and no responsibility - "you" is suspicious and is asked to comply

Is this about travel? More? Immigration? Border crossing? Would that explain the oddities? Relooking at the places where it departs from travel. Why the use of please then?
Strategy 1: Annotate text directly

Some tips for annotations:

- Goal: record observations (doesn’t have to be perfect!)
- Not sure what to annotate? Read through once without annotating and then return to annotate
  - Give yourself an annotation prompt
- Color-code your observations
  - Based on type/category/question/etc.
  - Categorization itself can be an annotation prompt!
- Think like a data analyst: no such thing as “good” or “bad” data – we’re just recording and making sense of it
## Strategy 2: Listen & take notes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strategy</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Works great with...</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Text-to-speech program</td>
<td>Use to listen to the text. Listen multiple times (at least twice!) to note patterns. Take notes how you see fit: online or in notebook. Can combine with other strategies, ie. read first, then listen.</td>
<td>Accessible document that can be read by a text-to-speech program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Natural Reader or Speechify)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### How to use this strategy:

1. Listen (or read aloud)
2. As you listen, make observations
3. Record your observations in your notes
4. Ask questions
5. Repeat!

[naturalreaders.com/online/](naturalreaders.com/online/)
[speechify.com](speechify.com)
A poem: Harryette Mullen, We Are Not Responsible

We are not responsible for your lost or stolen relatives. We cannot guarantee your safety if you disobey our instructions. We do not endorse the causes or claims of people begging for handouts. We reserve the right to refuse service to anyone. Your ticket does not guarantee that we will honor your reservations. In order to facilitate our procedures, please limit your carrying on. Before taking off, please extinguish all smoldering resentments. If you cannot understand English, you will be moved out of the way. In the event of a loss, you’d better look out for yourself. Your insurance was cancelled because we can no longer handle your frightful claims. Our handlers lost your luggage and we are unable to find the key to your legal case. You were detained for interrogation because you fit the profile. You are not presumed to be innocent if the police have reason to suspect you are carrying a concealed wallet. It’s not our fault you were born wearing a gang color. It is not our obligation to inform you of your rights. Step aside, please, while our officer inspects your bad attitude. You have no rights that we are bound to respect. Please remain calm, or we can’t be held responsible for what happens to you.

Read aloud
- Yourself
- Have someone else read
- Use software

What to LISTEN for (audio cues)
- What do you hear?
- Rhythm? Did it carry you?
- Did it break/Did you have to push?
- Who is the speaker? Who is addressed? (Hint: Pronouns!)
- Associations?

Write down what you notice
A poem: Harryette Mullen, We Are Not Responsible

We are not responsible for your lost or stolen relatives. We cannot guarantee your safety if you disobey our instructions. We do not endorse the causes or claims of people begging for handouts. We reserve the right to refuse service to anyone. Your ticket does not guarantee that we will honor your reservations. In order to facilitate our procedures, please limit your carrying on. Before taking off, please extinguish all smoldering resentments. If you cannot understand English, you will be moved out of the way. In the event of a loss, you’d better look out for yourself. Your insurance was cancelled because we can no longer handle your frightful claims. Our handlers lost your luggage and we are unable to find the key to your legal case. You were detained for interrogation because you fit the profile. You are not presumed to be innocent if the police have reason to suspect you are carrying a concealed wallet. It’s not our fault you were born wearing a gang color. It is not our obligation to inform you of your rights. Step aside, please, while our officer inspects your bad attitude. You have no rights that we are bound to respect. Please remain calm, or we can’t be held responsible for what happens to you.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strategy</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Works great with...</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lean/Recursive</td>
<td>Skim first quickly and take light/lean notes in one color. Then read more in depth and add to your notes in a different color.</td>
<td>reading in any format; you can write in a notebook or type on a computer</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**How to use lean/recursive strategy:**

1. Skim the text *first* and take light notes *in one color*
2. As you read the *second* time, add to your notes *in another color* to record more/deeper observations, expanding your notes from #1
3. Repeat #2 as many times as you need!
A poem: Harryette Mullen, We Are Not Responsible

We are not responsible for your lost or stolen relatives. We cannot guarantee your safety if you disobey our instructions. We do not endorse the causes or claims of people begging for handouts. We reserve the right to refuse service to anyone. Your ticket does not guarantee that we will honor your reservations. In order to facilitate our procedures, please limit your carrying on. Before taking off, please extinguish all smoldering resentments. If you cannot understand English, you will be moved out of the way. In the event of a loss, you’d better look out for yourself. Your insurance was cancelled because we can no longer handle your frightful claims. Our handlers lost your luggage and we are unable to find the key to your legal case. You were detained for interrogation because you fit the profile. You are not presumed to be innocent if the police have reason to suspect you are carrying a concealed wallet. It’s not our fault you were born wearing a gang color. It is not our obligation to inform you of your rights. Step aside, please, while our officer inspects your bad attitude. You have no rights that we are bound to respect. Please remain calm, or we can’t be held responsible for what happens to you.

Strategy 3: Lean/recursive notes

A poem: Harryette Mullen, We Are Not Responsible

We are not responsible for your lost or stolen relatives. We cannot guarantee your safety if you disobey our instructions. We do not endorse the causes or claims of people begging for handouts. We reserve the right to refuse service to anyone. Your ticket does not guarantee that we will honor your reservations. In order to facilitate our procedures, please limit your carrying on. Before taking off, please extinguish all smoldering resentments. If you cannot understand English, you will be moved out of the way. In the event of a loss, you’d better look out for yourself. Your insurance was cancelled because we can no longer handle your frightful claims. Our handlers lost your luggage and we are unable to find the key to your legal case. You were detained for interrogation because you fit the profile. You are not presumed to be innocent if the police have reason to suspect you are carrying a concealed wallet. It’s not our fault you were born wearing a gang color. It is not our obligation to inform you of your rights. Step aside, please, while our officer inspects your bad attitude. You have no rights that we are bound to respect. Please remain calm, or we can’t be held responsible for what happens to you.

Strategy 3: Lean/recursive notes
Strategy 3: Lean/recursive notes

We are not responsible for your lost or stolen relatives. We cannot guarantee your safety if you disobey our instructions. We do not endorse the causes or claims of people begging for handouts. We reserve the right to refuse service to anyone. Your ticket does not guarantee that we will honor your reservations. In order to facilitate our procedures, please limit your carrying on. Before taking off, please extinguish all smoldering resentments. If you cannot understand English, you will be moved out of the way. In the event of a loss, you'd better look out for yourself. Your insurance was cancelled because we can no longer handle your frightful claims. Our handlers lost your luggage and we are unable to find the key to your legal case. You were detained for interrogation because you fit the profile. You are not presumed to be innocent if the police have reason to suspect you are carrying a concealed wallet. It's not our fault you were born wearing a gang color. It is not our obligation to inform you of your rights. Step aside, please, while our officer inspects your bad attitude. You have no rights that we are bound to respect. Please remain calm, or we can't be held responsible for what happens to you.

We are not responsible (poem)
by Harriet Mullen

We/our = is in charge; power + responsibility
You/your = has no power
Please = used when asking to change attitude or outlook
Rhythm = yes, shorter sentences (esp. @ beginning
1 paragraph, all. Read calmly + methodically.

topics: immigration (traveling/border -> interrogation/police)
BY THE WAY:
You can use any of these strategies for images, too!


IMAGE:

- **Impressions and associations:**
  What do you see first (what stands out)?
  What do you feel?
  What associations?

- **Perspectives:**
  From what vantage point?
  Who looks - who is looked at?

- **Elements/Composition: (Contrasts)**
  Foreground - background
  Center - margin
  Light - dark (color - b/w - contrast)
  Focus - blur
  Left - right
  Up - down

- **Context:**
  Title, caption, part of series, etc.
Based on your reading format and technology you are using, there are different strategies you can use for your annotations:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strategy</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Works great with...</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Annotate text directly</td>
<td>Mark and annotate directly on document.</td>
<td>printed reading or online document you can edit and write on</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Text-to-speech program</td>
<td>Use to listen to the text. Listen multiple times (at least twice!) to note patterns. Take notes how you see fit: online or in notebook.</td>
<td>Accessible document that can be read by a text-to-speech program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lean/Recursive notes</td>
<td>Skim first quickly and take light/lean notes in one color. Then read more in depth and add to your notes in a different color.</td>
<td>reading in any format; you can write in a notebook or type on a computer</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Now what?
We are not responsible for your lost or stolen relatives. We cannot guarantee your safety if you disobey our instructions. We do not endorse the causes or claims of people begging for handouts. We reserve the right to refuse service to anyone. Your ticket does not guarantee that we will honor your reservations. In order to facilitate our procedures, please limit your carrying on. Before taking off, please extinguish all smoldering resentments. If you cannot understand English, you will be moved out of the way. In the event of a loss, you’d better look out for yourself. Your insurance was cancelled because we can no longer handle your frightful claims. Our handlers lost your luggage and we are unable to find the key to your legal case. You were detained for interrogation because you fit the profile. You are not presumed to be innocent if the police have reason to suspect you are carrying a concealed weapon. It’s not our fault you were born wearing a gang color. It is not our obligation to inform you of your rights. Step aside, please, while our officers inspect your bad attitude. You have no rights that we are bound to respect. Please remain calm, or we can’t be held responsible for what happens to you.

"We" holds all the power and no responsibility - "you" is suspicious and is asked to comply


Would that explain the oddities? Relooking at the places where it departs from travel.

Why the use of please then?
Once you read and take notes/annotate the text with your observations, you need to do something with them!

**FOCUS**

on details that reveal a gap in understanding:
- Look for patterns, groupings, prevalences, in details you marked
- How does this align (or not) with the context/whole?
- Consider form vs function

**INTERPRET**

the details to FILL a gap in understanding
- Ask questions
- Look to details to find answers
- You may need to close-read again!

**CONNECT**

interpretation to your larger project

[from *How Scholars Write*, by Aaron Ritzenberg and Sue Mendelsohn, Oxford Univ. Press 2020]
Close-reading is recursive!

Enter/Re-Enter Text

Make Discoveries

Generate/Clarify Questions, Refine Lens
What is **one thing** you will take away from this workshop to apply to your next reading assignment?


