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Close-Reading Lessons



8

Picture It: Seventh Graders Study a Multimodal History Text

"We've been studying the Great Migration and so far, we've only been reading about it from our social studies textbook. Today, I'm going to introduce you to a piece from The History Channel's website that combines text and video to explore the topic with a bit more detail and nuance. We're going to read it together because it's a complex text—but I know you have the skills and knowledge to read and understand it, as long as we take it slow and read with care."

In addition to literary analysis in reading, you can also utilize close reading to help students make sense of challenging, content-area texts.

Ms. Tan starts the close-reading lesson with her seventh-grade students gathered in the meeting area, near enough that they can all easily see the digital text projected on the smartboard. "What makes this text a bit more challenging is that it doesn't offer a simple chronology. It presents multiple causes (*why*) and effects (*what happens*) and phases of the Great Migration to consider, and our job is to try to understand how the information fits together. Let's start with the short video embedded in the article, which gives a nice foundation for what we'll be reading about in the rest of the text."

The slow and careful pace of close reading sets it apart from different kinds of reading in the other lesson structures.

After playing the video, Ms. Tan invites the students to turn and explain what they heard, thinking about causes and effects and waves of the Migration. As they talk, she listens in for confusions and understandings, misconceptions, and questions. "OK, it sounds like we have a sense of some of the causes that Professor Williams talks about in the video—that there were unfair labor practices in

Setting a clear purpose for reading slowly and carefully is key.

You will remind students of their purpose for reading often in the lesson.

Rereading—or in this case, rewatching—to notice and think more about the topic is an important part of the structure of close reading.

While you will plan to take notes during close reading and you can anticipate much of the content of those notes, you won't know exactly what you'll note until you're teaching. Students will sometimes surprise you!

With close reading, if students have their own copies of the text, they can make notes as they read. But you can also use a shared, projected text for the reading.

As with other lesson structures, close reading offers many opportunities to think aloud and show students what readers think about as they move through a text.

You can combine different ways of reading in a single close-reading lesson.

the South at that time. Some of you mentioned an effect—there was a ‘flowering’ of intellectual and artistic expression known as the Harlem Renaissance. I also heard someone talk about factories, but they weren't sure what they had to do with causes or effects. I'm going to play the video once more; see if there are some additional details you can pick up on about causes, effects, or waves.” After the second listen, the students are able to talk about causes and effects with more detail, and Ms. Tan captures some of their thinking in notes on the board.

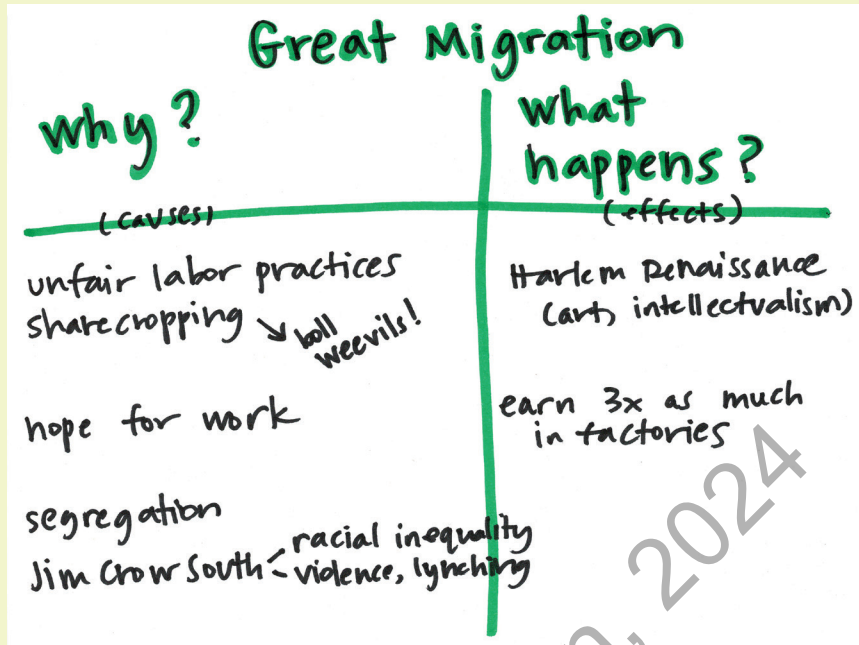
“Now let's look at the article. In a multimodal text, each portion usually contributes different, complimentary information to make up a whole. As we read, we're going to pause and think, ‘How does this add to our understanding of the causes and/or effects and the different waves of the Great Migration?’”

Ms. Tan reads aloud and students join her, reading chorally. She begins with the section titled “What Caused the Great Migration” and thinks aloud, “I think we'll be able to add to some of the causes here, right?” After the first two paragraphs, they add *segregation*, *racial inequality in the Jim Crow South*, and *boll weevil infestation* to their notes about the sharecropping cause they learned from the video. After the third paragraph, Ms. Tan invites students to turn and talk and they add other causes to their notes—violence and lynching. Next, they encounter a callout titled “Did You Know?” with a fact about northern factory wages being three times the typical earnings a Black person could make working the land in the South. Ms. Tan asks, “Is this a cause? An effect? Where should we add this information to our notes?”

They continue on through the text at this slow and careful pace—pausing often to think “What have we learned in this part? How does it fit with the causes and effects we are reading for?” In the next section, Ms. Tan invites the students to read silently, then turn and discuss, reread the section chorally, and finally suggest what to add to their notes (see Figure 8.1).

Figure 8.1 Shared Notes Based on the Multimodal Text

The students contributed to organized notes scribed by Ms. Tan during their close-reading lesson.



“Readers, now that we’ve read the entire text, I’m going to invite you to synthesize—put together—the information in a way that makes the most sense to you. Using our notes to help, can you please turn to your partner and summarize the article and video?”

Because you will consider so many details in a close-reading lesson (analysis), it makes sense to synthesize those details into some meaningful take-aways at the end of the lesson.

Ms. Tan circulates as students talk, coaching them to look back at the notes, reminding them of a detail they left out, praising them for putting relevant information together, asking questions, and inviting them to share what they are still curious about. “Readers, any time you approach a challenging text, if you start with a purpose, take it slow and steady, and check in with that purpose along the way—maybe even talk to a friend—you’ll be on your way to understanding it just as you did here today.”

Embed academic vocabulary in your prompts. Instead of *turn and talk*, you can direct students to *turn and summarize* or *turn and explain*, for example.

Close-Reading Lesson: A Planning Template

Literacy Goals:

- Reading a complex text connected to social studies textbook
- Engaging with a multimodal (video + article) text
- Synthesizing multiple causes and effects, summarizing
- Note-taking

Knowledge/ Vocabulary Goals:

- Causes and effects of the Great Migration

Teacher Materials:

- History channel video and article (History.com Editors, 2010)
- Laptop, smartboard
- Note-taking forms

Student Materials:

- None

Establish a Focus (1 minute):

- Connect content to social studies text
- Introduce multimodal text type: video + written article
- Frontload structure—not narrative, multiple causes and effects

Read and Teach (8–13 minutes):

Which Pages or Lines?	What Will Students Do?	What Will You Say?
After playing the video	Turn and talk	Explain what you heard, thinking about causes and effects and waves of the Migration.
After replaying the video the second time	Turn and talk	What additional details did you pick up on during the second watch?
	Observe	[model note-taking on board]
Before reading text	Listen to think aloud	How does the article add to our understanding of causes and effects?
First two paragraphs	Choral reading Think aloud	Let's add to our notes based on what we read.
After third paragraph	Turn and talk	How can we add more to our notes from this paragraph?
After "Did You Know?" box	Turn and talk	Is this a cause or effect? Where will we add this to our notes?
Remainder of the article	Read silently	Read this next part to yourself.
Last portion of text	Read chorally	Now let's reread that same section out loud.
Whole text	Turn and talk	Summarize what we read using notes.

Clarify the Takeaways (1 minute):

Remind students to approach challenging texts with a purpose, to read slowly and deliberately, and to check understanding along the way.