Chapter 2

Writing about Form: Developing the Foundations of Close Reading

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. Understand the theory of New Criticism as the foundation for close reading.
2. Apply the New Critical methodology to works of literature.
3. Engage in the writing process of a peer writer, including peer review.
4. Review and evaluate a variety of New Critical papers by peer writers.
5. Draft and revise a New Critical paper on a literary work.

2.1 Literary Snapshot: *Through the Looking-Glass*

Lewis Carroll is most famous for two books: *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (1865)Lewis Carroll, *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland. With Forty-Two Illustrations by John Tenniel* (New York: D. Appleton, 1927; University of Virginia Library Electronic Text Center, 1998), http://etext.virginia.edu/toc/modeng/public/CarAlic.html. and *Through the Looking-Glass* (1872).Lewis Carroll, *Through the Looking Glass and What Alice Found There* (New York: Macmillan, 1899; University of Virginia Library Electronic Text Center, 1993), http://etext.lib.virginia.edu/toc/modeng/public/CarGlas.html. These books follow the adventures of seven-year-old Alice, who tumbles down a rabbit hole (*Wonderland*) and enters a magic mirror (*Looking-Glass*), both of which lead her to a nonsensical world of the imagination. If you have not already read these classic books—or wish to reread them—you can access them at the following links:

http://etext.virginia.edu/toc/modeng/public/CarAlic.html

http://etext.lib.virginia.edu/toc/modeng/public/CarGlas.html

Alice finds herself challenged to make sense of a world inhabited by odd creatures—some human, some not—who exist in a world that seems like nonsense. Throughout her adventures, Alice attempts to apply logic to her experiences; in other words, Alice tries to interpret and find meaning in Wonderland and Looking-Glass Land.

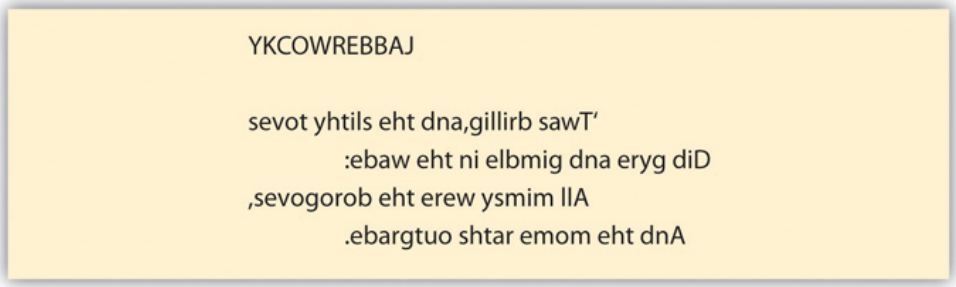
Alice acts like a literary critic.

One scene in *Through the Looking-Glass* will be the keynote of this chapter, as we see Alice encountering Humpty Dumpty, who proceeds to interpret a poem that Alice stumbled on earlier in her journey.

Carroll sets the scene:

There was a book lying near Alice on the table, and while she sat watching the White King (for she was still a little anxious about him, and had the ink all ready to throw over him, in case he fainted again), she turned over the leaves, to find some part that she could read, "—for it's all in some language I don't know," she said to herself.

It was like this.

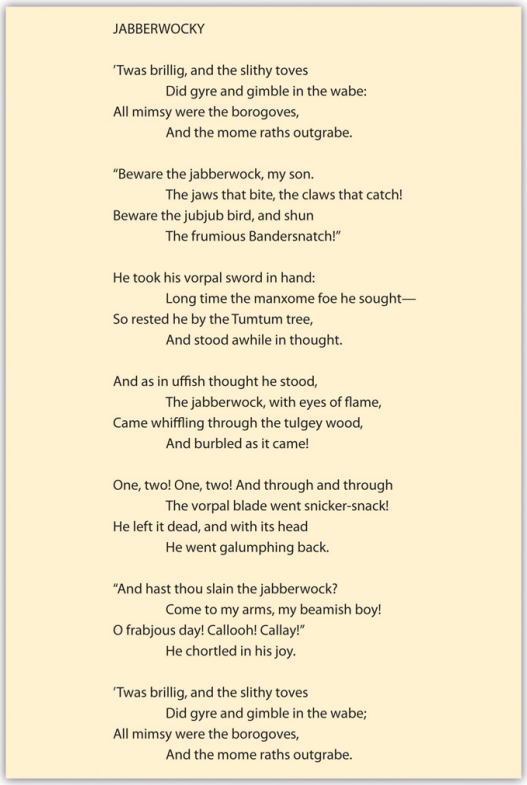


YKCOWREBBAJ

sevot yhtils eht dna,gillirb sawT'
:ebaw eht ni elbmig dna eryg diD
,sevogorob eht erew ysmim llA
.ebargtuo shtar emom eht dnA

She puzzled over this for some time, but at last a bright thought struck her. "Why, it's a Looking-glass book, of course! And if I hold it up to a glass, the words will all go the right way again."

This was the poem that Alice read.



JABBERWOCKY

'Twas brillig, and the slithy toves
Did gyre and gimble in the wabe:
All mimsy were the borogoves,
And the mome raths outgrabe.

"Beware the jabberwock, my son.
The jaws that bite, the claws that catch!
Beware the jubjub bird, and shun
The frumious Bandersnatch!"

He took his vorpal sword in hand:
Long time the manxome foe he sought—
So rested he by the Tumtum tree,
And stood awhile in thought.

And as in uffish thought he stood,
The jabberwock, with eyes of flame,
Came whiffling through the tulgey wood,
And burbled as it came!

One, two! One, two! And through and through
The vorpal blade went snicker-snack!
He left it dead, and with its head
He went galumphing back.

"And hast thou slain the jabberwock?
Come to my arms, my beamish boy!
O frabjous day! Callooh! Callay!"
He chortled in his joy.

'Twas brillig, and the slithy toves
Did gyre and gimble in the wabe;
All mimsy were the borogoves,
And the mome raths outgrabe.

"It seems very pretty," she said when she had finished it, "but it's *rather* hard to understand!" (You see she didn't like to confess, ever to herself, that she couldn't

make it out at all.) "Somehow it seems to fill my head with ideas—only I don't exactly know what they are! However, *somebody* killed *something*: that's clear, at any rate—"Lewis Carroll, *Through the Looking Glass and What Alice Found There* (New York: Macmillan, 1899; University of Virginia Library Electronic Text Center, 1993), chap. 1, http://etext.lib.virginia.edu/toc/modeng/public/CarGlas.html.

Illustration by Sir John Tenniel for Lewis Carroll's Through the LookingGlass and What Alice Found There (1872).

We have all felt like Alice. What is that creature I'm battling? Sometimes poetry is the Jabberwock. Have you ever read Wallace Stevens's "The Emperor of Ice-Cream"? Let's do so now:

The Emperor of Ice-Cream

Call the roller of big cigars,

The muscular one, and bid him whip

In kitchen cups concupiscent curds.

Let the wenches dawdle in such dress

As they are used to wear, and let the boys

Bring flowers in last month's newspapers.

Let be be finale of seem.

The only emperor is the emperor of ice-cream.

Take from the dresser of deal,

Lacking the three glass knobs, that sheet

On which she embroidered fantails once

And spread it so as to cover her face.

If her horny feet protrude, they come

To show how cold she is, and dumb.

Let the lamp affix its beam.

The only emperor is the emperor of ice-cream.Wallace Stevens, "The Emperor of Ice-Cream," Poets.org, http://www.poets.org/viewmedia.php/prmMID/15744.

Some may find Stevens's poem as confusing as "Jabberwocky." And like Alice, we desire to understand, to find meaning in order to appreciate the literary work. This

is where a close reading, which focuses on form, becomes the foundation of all literary analysis.

CLASS PROCESS

1. Read "The Emperor of Ice-Cream" aloud in class at least three times.
2. Break up students into groups of three or four. If in an online class, set up a method for students to share ideas in a similar group and then a way to discuss the results with the entire class.
3. Have the students discuss the poem, eventually making a claim about what the poem means.
4. List the student-group interpretations on the blackboard, whiteboard, or other high- or low-tech medium.
5. Guide the students through potential interpretations of the poem.
6. Compare the class's interpretations with those of literary critics, which are summarized at http://www.english.illinois.edu/maps/poets/s_z/stevens/emperor.htm.
7. Discuss differences in the interpretation.

Return of the Jabberwock

See, you did feel like Alice. She states that "*somebody* killed *something*" after her initial reading, but she realizes that her interpretation is not yet adequate. She needs to dig deeper in the text to extract more meaning. And here is where she meets Humpty Dumpty, who professes to be an excellent literary critic.

Let's listen in again. If you wish, you can hear an audio recording of this encounter at http://ia600209.us.archive.org/8/items/looking-glass_librivox/lookingglass_06_carroll_64kb.mp3.

"You seem very clever at explaining words, Sir," said Alice. "Would you kindly tell me the meaning of the poem called 'Jabberwocky'?"

"Let's hear it," said Humpty Dumpty. "I can explain all the poems that were ever invented—and a good many that haven't been invented just yet."

This sounded very hopeful, so Alice repeated the first verse:

"'Twas brillig, and the slithy toves

Did gyre and gimble in the wabe;

All mimsy were the borogoves,

And the mome raths outgrabe."

"That's enough to begin with," Humpty Dumpty interrupted: "there are plenty of hard words there. '*Brillig*' means four o'clock in the afternoon—the time when you begin *broiling* things for dinner."

"That'll do very well," said Alice: "and '*slithy*'?"

"Well, '*slithy*' means 'lithe and slimy.' 'Lithe' is the same as 'active.' You see it's like a portmanteau—there are two meanings packed up into one word."

"I see it now," Alice remarked thoughtfully: "and what are '*toves*'?"

"Well, '*toves*' are something like badgers—they're something like lizards—and they're something like corkscrews."

"They must be very curious looking creatures."

"They are that," said Humpty Dumpty: "also they make their nests under sun-dials—also they live on cheese."

"And what's the '*gyre*' and to '*gymble*'?"

"To '*gyre*' is to go round and round like a gyroscope. To '*gimble*' is to make holes like a gimlet."

"And '*the wabe*' is the grass-plot round a sun-dial, I suppose?" said Alice, surprised at her own ingenuity.

"Of course it is. It's called '*wabe*,' you know, because it goes a long way before it, and a long way behind it—"

"And a long way beyond it on each side," Alice added.

"Exactly so. Well, then, '*mimsy*' is 'flimsy and miserable' (there's another portmanteau for you). And a '*borogove*' is a thin shabby-looking bird with its feathers sticking out all round—something like a live mop."

"And then '*mome raths*'?' said Alice. "I'm afraid I'm giving you a great deal of trouble."

"Well, a '*rath*' is a sort of green pig: but '*mome*' I'm not certain about. I think it's short for 'from home'—meaning that they'd lost their way, you know."

"And what does '*outgrabe*' mean?"

"Well, '*outgrabing*' is something between bellowing and whistling, with a kind of sneeze in the middle: however, you'll hear it done, maybe—down in the wood yonder—and when you've once heard it you'll be *quite* content. Who's been repeating all that hard stuff to you?"

"I read it in a book," said Alice.Lewis Carroll, *Through the Looking Glass and What Alice Found There* (New York: Macmillan, 1899; University of Virginia Library Electronic Text Center, 1993), chap. 6, http://etext.lib.virginia.edu/toc/modeng/public/CarGlas.html.

Carroll, of course, is parodying the literary critic, for Humpty Dumpty's interpretation is even more nonsensical than the poem itself! Yet we must give the egg some credit: he attempts to interpret a difficult poem—he performs as a literary critic by providing an interpretation of "Jabberwocky."

This chapter will be your guide as you interpret a piece of literature and formulate a critical analysis around that interpretation. Let's hope that your reading is a bit more on target than our silly friend's!

YOUR PROCESS

1. Do you remember a literary work you read that seemed difficult to understand? What was the work? Why did—or do—you have trouble interpreting the work?
2. Would you be up to a challenge—to take that work and venture a close reading of it? If not, choose a literary work that you find interesting to write a paper on.

2.2 The Foundations of New Criticism: An Overview

John Donne (1572–1631), the great metaphysical poet, provides a metaphor that is useful for close reading. In "The Canonization" (1633) he writes:

> We'll build sonnets pretty rooms;
>
> As well a well-wrought urn becomes
>
> The greatest ashes, as half-acre tombs,
>
> And by these hymns, all shall approve
>
> Us canonized for Love.John Donne, "The Canonization," Poetry Foundation, http://www.poetryfoundation.org/poem/173353.

Another poet returns to the same metaphor 118 years later. Thomas Gray, in "Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard" (1751), writes:

> Can storied urn or animated bust
>
> Back to its mansion call the fleeting breath?Thomas Gray, "Elegy Written in a Country Courtyard," Poetry Foundation, http://www.poetryfoundation.org/poem/173564.

Both Donne and Gray use the image of the urn in their poetry. An *urn*, according to the *Oxford English Dictionary* (*OED*), is "an earthenware or metal vessel or vase of a rounded or ovaloid form and with a circular base, used by various peoples especially in former times...to preserve the ashes of the dead. Hence vaguely used (esp. *poet*.) for 'a tomb or sepulchre, the grave.'"*Oxford English Dictionary*, s.v. "urn." Donne and Gray use the urn poetically, or metaphorically, for the urn is an image, a container to hold poetic meaning. To Donne, the poet can "build sonnets pretty rooms; / As well a well-wrought urn becomes"; to Gray the urn becomes "storied"

or an "animated bust" capable of containing stories and meaning. As an image, then, the urn becomes symbolic: poets argue that a poem is like an urn, a container for artistic meaning.

Let's add one final component to our *urn* image. Jump ahead another sixty-nine years from Gray's poem and read John Keats's "Ode on a Grecian Urn" (1820). At the end of this poem, Keats writes:

> When old age shall this generation waste,
>
> Thou shalt remain, in midst of other woe
>
> Than ours, a friend to man, to whom thou say'st,
>
> 'Beauty is truth, truth beauty,—that is all
>
> Ye know on earth, and all ye need to know.'John Keats, "Ode on a Grecian Urn," in *The Oxford Book of English Verse*, ed. Sir Arthur Thomas Quiller-Couch (Oxford: Clarendon, 1919; Bartleby.com, 1999), http://www.bartleby.com/101/625.html.

Donne's "**well-wrought urn**[1]" became the title of a book by Cleanth Brooks—*The Well-Wrought Urn: Studies in the Structure of Poetry* (1947)Cleanth Brooks, *The Well-Wrought Urn: Studies in the Structure of Poetry* (San Diego: Harcourt Brace, 1956).—a central manifesto of the New Criticism. New Criticism is synonymous with close reading, so the urn becomes an important symbol for the New Critics: the urn as artistic container of beauty and meaning represents the New Critical enterprise. A poem, a play, a novel, a short story is like a "storied urn" or "well-wrought urn," capable of conveying poetic beauty and truth. Even if the poem is "Jabberwocky"!

In all likelihood, you have already practiced **New Criticism**[2], the close reading of a poem, short story, or longer narrative that focuses on the unity of that work. When you examine a short story for its character development, a drama for its plot construction, or a poem for its imagery, you are reading as a New Critic, looking at the literary work through the lens of close reading. In a sense, New Critical close reading is at the heart of every form of literary analysis you do, regardless of the theoretical approach taken. Thus it becomes essential that you become proficient in close readings of texts, for this skill is the foundation of all forms of literary

1. An image that reflects the central tenet of New Critical close reading—to focus solely on the literary work as a self-contained artistic object.
2. The name for the literary theory movement that developed in the 1940s that demands that a critic concentrate on the literary work itself to find the harmony and unity of the work that reflects an ultimate truth.

criticism. If you cannot read a text closely and analyze it, you will have difficulty reading from any critical perspective.

YOUR PROCESS

1. List the papers, if any, you have written in high school or college using the close reading approach.
2. Describe your experience writing such papers.
3. What challenges or questions do you remember having as you were working on these papers?
4. On which literary work have you decided to write your paper?
5. What are the fundamental questions you have about this work?

Focus on New Critical Strategies

The New Critics, as we discussed, regard a literary work as an *urn*—a well-wrought, storied urn, or a Grecian urn. As Keats writes, this urn contains not only beauty but also truth: a work of literature has some objective meaning that is integral to its artistic design. In other words, literature is the art of conveying truth about the world. Thus the New Critics view the study of literature as an inherently valuable enterprise; literary criticism, it follows, is fruitful because it clarifies art by assigning a truth value to this art. To quote the nineteenth-century poet and critic Matthew Arnold, as he writes in *The Function of Criticism at the Present Time* (1865), literature reflects "the best that is known and thought in the world."Matthew Arnold, *Function of Criticism in the Present Time* (Whitefish, MT: Kessinger, 2010) . To the New Critics, as you can see, literature—in particular the analysis of it—was a profound activity.

A central concern of the New Critics is to understand how meaning and form interweave into a total artistic effect, the well-wrought urn. A New Critical reading assumes that the literary work has an organic structure that leads to unity or harmony in the work. An important concern for New Critics, consequently, is to show how meaning is achieved or dependent on the organic structure—the form—of the work. A New Critical reading, then, focuses on the various elements of literature that complement and create the theme.

Basic Philosophy of Close Reading

A New Critic's toolbox will hold those elements of literature that allow for the discussion of form and technique as it applies to meaning. Since New Critics perform a close reading of the text to illustrate how structure and theme are

inseparable, they are eager to tell us both how to read and how *not* to read. They identify various fallacies of reading that must be avoided:

The Intentional Fallacy

The **intentional fallacy**[3] occurs when readers claim to understand an author's intended meaning for a work of literature. The New Critics believed that a literary work belongs to the readers, to the public, which suggests that we should read the work isolated from what the author may have said about the work. In other words, the critic never knows specifically what the author intended. Indeed, an author may have conveyed meanings he or she did not intend at all, but those meanings are still present in their work. The literary critic, then, must concentrate solely on the extrinsic formal qualities of the poem, play, short story, or novel.

The Biographical Fallacy

Related to the intentional fallacy is the **biographical fallacy**[4], which, as you might suspect, is committed when you use an author's life as a frame of reference to interpret a work of art. The New Critics took painstaking measures to keep the focus on the work of art itself.

The Affective Fallacy

The **affective fallacy**[5] is produced when the critic brings in his or her personal feelings about how a literary work moves them. While New Critics were aware that many readers found meaning in the emotional impact of literature, they were careful to distinguish between subjective emotional responses and objective critical statements about a literary work. Critics, then, should stick closely to the work of art, eliminating the author's intention from consideration, and they should also eliminate their emotional involvement in the reading experience. We discover later in our study that many critical theories—psychoanalytic and reader-response theories, in particular—are diametrically opposed to New Criticism: both psychoanalytic and reader-response theories highlight the way a literary work affects a reader's emotional and intellectual responses.

The Heresy of Paraphrase

Finally, the New Critics warned against the **heresy of paraphrase**[6], which happens when readers artificially separate meaning from structure or form. You have probably fallen into this trap once or twice when you concentrated on summarizing a work's plot rather than analyzing its meaning. New Criticism teaches us not to assign a meaning to a literary work *unless* that meaning can be supported by a close examination of the artistic elements of the text. To say that Keats's "Ode on a

3. Fallacy committed when readers equate meaning with the author's intended meaning. New Critics argue that since a literary work belongs to the readers, to the public, the work must be isolated from what the author may have intended in the work.
4. Interpretation error committed when a critic uses an author's life as a frame of reference to interpret a work of literature.
5. A reading fallacy produced when a critic brings in his or her personal feelings about how a literary work moves them. Reader-response theory, covered in Chapter 6 "Writing about Readers: Applying Reader-Response Theory" of this book, is a direct challenge to this tenet of New Criticism.
6. An interpretive error that happens when readers artificially separate meaning from the structure or form of the literary work.

Grecian Urn" is about the death of a migrant worker fails to acknowledge that the poem does not support such a reading. Humpty Dumpty, in fact, could be accused of the heresy of paraphrase, as Amy Chisnell explores in her student paper later in the chapter.

In review, a close reading, as defined by the New Critics, focuses narrowly on the literary work as a well-wrought urn. All we need for our interpretation is the literary work itself, where we examine how the artistry of the work leads to a larger theme that reflects the truth value of the work. Easy to state, more difficult to do! So let's now turn to see how a close reading can be connected to the writing process itself.

YOUR PROCESS

1. How do you react to such rules that define the philosophy of New Critical close reading?
2. What do you see as the strengths to such an approach?
3. What do you see as some of the limits to this approach?

The Writing Process and the Protocols of Close Reading

If New Critics provide us with so many strategies for *not* reading a text, they should present us with strategies *for* reading texts. And they do. They suggest protocols of reading that are the heart of traditional close readings of texts. In a nutshell, a close reading exposes a problem or issue that needs examination to bring unity to the work; a close reading demonstrates how a literary work's meaning is unified, balanced, and harmonized by its aesthetic—or literary—structure. Your close reading, then, often identifies a **tension**[7] or **ambiguity**[8]—the issue or problem—that can be resolved by showing that the literary work achieves unity even in the apparent tension or ambiguity. Consequently, the critic can often examine how language creates tension through **paradox**[9] or **irony**[10]. Paradox (when something appears contradictory or discordant, but finally proves to be actually true) and irony (when a perceived meaning or intention is eventually found not to be accurate) are a result of a writer's use of language in a *metaphorical* way.

7. An opposition or conflict within a work of literature that seems to disrupt its unity—what some might see as a potential flaw in the "well-wrought urn," but New Critics argue is part of its complex design. A New Critic strives to find unity or harmony by relieving any perceived tension or unresolved issue that challenges the integrity of a literary work.
8. The uncertainty over meaning when a literary work seems unclear—or contradictory—about a literary element of theme. New Critics desire to harmonize any ambiguity.
9. A statement of perceived meaning that seems to contradict itself but after close analysis may actually not be contradictory. A New Critic finds in paradox a strategy for demonstrating the unity of the literary work that harmonizes the apparent contradiction.
10. Irony happens when a reader recognizes a reality different from the appearance. For the New Critics, irony was a sophisticated literary technique that helped a writer bring complexity—and unity and harmony—to the work.

YOUR PROCESS

1. Read Keats's "Ode on a Grecian Urn" (http://www.bartleby.com/101/625.html).
2. Examine the last two lines of the poem (49–50).
3. Do you think the urn is speaking the lines at the end? Does it matter?
4. Read Cleanth Brooks's interpretation of the ending lines (http://www.mrbauld.com/keatsurn.html).
5. Then read the following overview.

There is no more famous example of a professional critical reading than Cleanth Brooks's "Keats's Sylvan Historian: History without Footnotes."Cleanth Brooks, "Keats's Sylvan Historian: History without Footnotes," Mr. Bauld's English, http://www.mrbauld.com/keatsurn.html. You can access the essay at http://www.mrbauld.com/keatsurn.html.

Brooks's reading of Keats's "Ode on a Grecian Urn" begins by disagreeing with T. S. Eliot, who believed the concluding lines of the poem—"Beauty is truth, truth beauty"—constituted a major flaw in the poem, for, as Brooks relates, "the troubling assertion is apparently an intrusion upon the poem—does not grow out of it—is not dramatically accommodated to it."Cleanth Brooks, "Keats's Sylvan Historian: History without Footnotes," Mr. Bauld's English, http://www.mrbauld.com/keatsurn.html. Eliot feels the urn's speech doesn't make much sense—and that the statement simply isn't true. Brooks sets out to counter Eliot and prove that the poem is unified around the central paradox of the poem: "What is the relation of the beauty (the goodness, the perfection) of a poem to the truth or falsity of what it seems to assert?"

Brooks contends that the poem is "a parable on the nature of poetry, and of art in general" and that the concluding lines must be taken in the "total context of the poem."Cleanth Brooks, "Keats's Sylvan Historian: History without Footnotes," Mr. Bauld's English, http://www.mrbauld.com/keatsurn.html. When read in this manner, the urn's speech was "'in character,' was dramatically appropriate, [and] was properly prepared for."Cleanth Brooks, "Keats's Sylvan Historian: History without Footnotes," Mr. Bauld's English, http://www.mrbauld.com/keatsurn.html. To support his contention, Brooks provides a stanza-by-stanza close reading in which he suggests that the paradox of the speaking urn is naturally part of each stanza and related to a key thematic concept: the poem highlights the tension between bustling life depicted on the urn and the frozen vignettes of the "Cold Pastoral." Brooks concludes, "If the urn has been properly dramatized, if we have followed the development of the metaphors, if we have been alive to the paradoxes

which work throughout the poem, perhaps then, we shall be prepared for the enigmatic, final paradox which the 'silent form' utters.'"Cleanth Brooks, "Keats's Sylvan Historian: History without Footnotes," Mr. Bauld's English, http://www.mrbauld.com/keatsurn.html. In concluding his essay, Brooks warns readers not to fall into the trap of paraphrase, for we must ultimately focus on "the world-view, or 'philosophy,' or 'truth' of the *poem as a whole* in terms of its dramatic wholeness" (Brooks's emphasis).Cleanth Brooks, "Keats's Sylvan Historian: History without Footnotes," Mr. Bauld's English, http://www.mrbauld.com/keatsurn.html.

Brooks's reading of Keats's ode is an exemplar of New Critical reading. Remember, a close reading will examine a literary work and find some objective meaning (a theme) that is harmonized with structure, thus balancing theme and form.

Implementing the Reading Protocols: A Strategy

To perform a close reading, use the following strategy:

1. Identify a tension or ambiguity in the literary work, the "problem" that needs to be solved by a close reading. In other words, your interpretation will highlight a theme or meaning that resides in the work.
2. Demonstrate how the work sustains or achieves this meaning through its artistic "principle of composition," which might include an examination of the following:
    - imagery
    - character
    - plot
    - symbol
    - setting
    - point of view
    - language use (i.e., denotation, connotation, metaphor, simile, personification, rhythm)

    Of course, the principle of composition is determined by the literary genre you are analyzing (i.e., short story, poetry, drama, novel). By showing that #1 is dependent on #2, you present a New Critical interpretation reflecting how meaning is integral to theme.

2.3 Close Reading Strategies: A Process Approach

To review, New Criticism provides us with concrete strategies to use when we read and interpret works of literature. Such reading and interpreting, however, never happens after just a first reading; in fact, all critics—New Critics and the others we examine later in this text—reread works multiple times before venturing an interpretation. You can see, then, the connection between reading and writing: as Chapter 1 "Introduction: What Is Literary Theory and Why Should I Care?" indicates, writers create multiple drafts before settling for a finished product (writing is never adequately "finished"); the writing process, in turn, is dependent on the multiple rereadings the writer has performed to gather evidence for the paper. It's important that you integrate the reading and writing process together. As a model, use the following ten-step plan as you write using New Critical theory:

1. Carefully *read the work* you will analyze.
2. *Formulate a general question* after your initial reading that identifies a problem—a tension—that is fruitful for discussion.
3. *Reread the work*, paying particular attention to the question you posed. *Take notes*, which should be focused on your central question. *Write an exploratory journal entry* or *blog post* that allows you to play with ideas.
4. *Construct a working thesis* that makes a claim about the work and accounts for the following:
    1. What does the work mean?
    2. How does the work artistically demonstrate the theme you've identified?
    3. "So what" is significant about the work? That is, why is it important for you to write about this work? What will readers learn from reading your interpretation?
5. *Reread the text to gather textual evidence* for support. What literary devices are used to achieve theme?
6. *Construct an informal outline* that demonstrates how you will support your interpretation.
7. *Write a first draft.*
8. *Receive feedback* from peers and your instructor via *peer review* and *conferencing* with your instructor (if possible).
9. *Revise the paper*, which will include revising your original thesis statement and restructuring your paper to best support the thesis. Note: You probably will revise many times, so it is important to receive feedback at every draft stage if possible.
10. *Edit and proofread* for correctness, clarity, and style.

We recommend that you follow this process for every paper that you write from this textbook. Of course, these steps can be modified to fit your writing process, but the plan does ensure that you will engage in a thorough reading of the text as you work through the writing process, which demands that you allow plenty of time for reading, reflecting, writing, reviewing, and revising.

Peer Reviewing

A central stage in the writing process is the feedback stage, in which you receive revision suggestions from classmates and your instructor. By receiving feedback on your paper, you will be able to make more intelligent revision decisions. Furthermore, by reading and responding to your peers' papers, you become a more astute reader, which will help when you revise your own papers. In Chapter 10 "Appendix A: Peer Review Sheets", you will find peer-review sheets for each chapter.

YOUR PROCESS

1. Have you partaken in peer review before? Describe this experience.
2. Do you regularly get feedback from others on your writing (no matter for which class)? Why or why not?

2.4 Student Writer at Work: Kelly Ann Wolslegel's Close Reading of Edna St. Vincent Millay's "Love Is Not All"

The New Critics are particularly fond of poetry, especially poetry that is complex and ambiguous. The New Critics feel that poetry, in its reliance on all the nuances of language for effect, best reflects the concept that literature is a unified organism. Thus New Critics are able to find unity in the well-wrought poem.

Kelly's paper analyzes a love poem by Edna St. Vincent Millay (1892–1950). Please read the poem before examining Kelly's paper.

Love Is Not All

Love is not all: it is not meat nor drink

Nor slumber nor a roof against the rain;

Nor yet a floating spar to men that sink

And rise and sink and rise and sink again;

Love can not fill the thickened lung with breath,

Nor clean the blood, nor set the fractured bone;

Yet many a man is making friends with death

Even as I speak, for lack of love alone.

It well may be that in a difficult hour,

Pinned down by pain and moaning for release,

Or nagged by want past resolution's power,

> I might be driven to sell your love for peace,
>
> Or trade the memory of this night for food.
>
> It well may be. I do not think I would.Edna St. Vincent Millay, "Love Is Not All," PoemHunter.com, http://www.poemhunter.com/poem/love-is-not-all.

Watch Kelly's writing process as she moves from exploring ideas informally, to outlining, and to producing a final product. Kelly wrote numerous drafts and received feedback from peers (using the peer-review sheets) to accomplish her writing task—to perform a New Critical close reading of a piece of literature.

KELLY'S PROCESS

Exploratory Journal Entry

I have chosen to write my essay on Edna St. Vincent Millay's poem "Love Is Not All." I read this poem the first time during my sophomore year of high school. I like it so much I put it in a Forensics reading and made it all the way to state! So I hope my luck holds!

The poem seems to set up a tension about love. It starts by pointing out the things that love cannot do. It ends with the notion that some may die from a lack of love. I think the key to this poem lies in how the reader interprets the last line. It can be read with doubt or with affirmation. I guess the poem works on ambiguity and paradox. Love cannot feed us or shelter us from the elements. However, love can break hearts and put people in a state of depression. Lack of food can kill someone, but the misery of a heart-break can have the same effect. Don't I know that!! Love cannot quench, but it has the power to fulfill one's emotional needs. Love has a power of its own, but it is not all-powerful.

The realist in me is telling me that Millay is ending this poem with a hint of questioning. However, the romantic in me is telling me that she says the last line with affirmation—indirectly stating that there is no replacement for love. I don't know yet how to say this in my paper and get my point across effectively. But then again, maybe the "title" gives it away—love is not "meat nor drink." Ok, I guess after writing this little bit that she would not sell love for food, even though people can live physically without love, but not food. Love seems very ironic to Millay, yet she seems to say that one can have both love and basic necessities. This poem seemed so simple, but now it is so complex. I think I'll see if our library has any helpful sources.

Working Thesis

The poem “Love Is Not All” by Edna St. Vincent Millay is an ironic poem that suggests that even though love is not needed for survival, it is still necessary for human existence.

Working Outline of Ideas

Love Is Not:

- meat
- drink
- slumber
- roof (against the rain)
- mast (spar to men that sink and rise)
- breath
- blood
- bone

Irony: love is so powerful, but it is not physically essential

However:

Some would kill themselves b/c of a “lack of love”

But:

Maybe some would surpass love for food—trade it or sell it

Question:

Narrator—would I give love away for essential: food, etc.?

Affirmation:

Love is more valuable that food, etc. Love is irreplaceable because there is no other emotion like it.

Ending tension:

"I do not think I would." Seems uncertain, thus reaffirming the ambiguity and tension of the poem.

Revised Thesis

Edna St. Vincent Millay's poem "Love Is Not All" is centered around a paradox: love is not needed for physical survival but seems needed for emotional survival. The poem displays this by paradox and tension.

Final Draft

Kelly Ann Wolslegel

Professor John Pennington

Introduction to Literature

April 25, 20–

The Ambiguity of Love: Millay's "Love Is Not All"

Edna St. Vincent Millay's poem "Love is not all: it is not meat nor drink," sonnet xxx in the sonnet sequence *Fatal Interview* (1931), affirms the fact that love cannot fulfill our basic human needs, yet it has an undefinable power. The speaker in the poem writes to her lover, it appears, after a night of passion and contemplates the ultimate power of love. Using the sonnet form, the traditional form for love poetry, the speaker points out that because there is no other emotion quite like the many-faceted emotion of love, it is utterly irreplaceable. However, the poem also claims that love cannot feed the hungry, provide shelter from the elements, or heal physical pain, for these basic needs must be met to maintain a happy human existence. Thus the poem is based on a tension or ambiguity about love: on the one hand, love is useless for physical survival; on the other hand, it is essential for emotional survival. Millay's poem is structured on such a paradox and provides a tentative resolution: though "Love is not all: it is not meat nor drink," the poem suggests that love is still an essential ingredient for happiness because it emotionally fulfills a need that is lacking in the physical world.

The poem can be broken into three parts or movements: the first movement (1–6) tells the reader what love is incapable of doing; the second (7–8) defines the paradoxical nature of love: "Yet many a man is making friends with death / Even as I speak, for lack of love alone." Finally, the third movement finds the speaker contemplating the necessity of love. All these parts are artistically integrated to build to the poem's climactic moment. As Allen Tate writes of Millay's sonnets, "From first to last every sonnet has it special rhythm and sharply defined imagery; they move like a smooth machine, but not machine-like, under the hand of a masterly technician" (64).

In the first movement, Millay personifies love and uses familiar images such as food and shelter to show the reader what love is incapable of doing; thus, she yokes the commonplace and abstract together. For example, she points out that love cannot "fill the thickened lung with breath" (5). Breathing is perhaps the single most important necessity for human existence; take away oxygen and we all die. Also, love cannot take the place of "meat nor drink" (1); it is unable to quench the physical desires of hunger or thirst. Furthermore, though the body may be fatigued, love cannot take the place of "slumber" or provide "a roof against the rain" (2). Obviously, love lacks the material necessities essential to survival. Our physical needs and desires cannot be quenched by love alone.

The narrator also points out that love is unable to protect or save us from physical dangers. Thus, love cannot rescue us from the powerful ocean tides by providing "a floating spar to men that sink / And rise and sink" (3–4). Love is also unable to "clean the blood" or "set the fractured bone" (6). It seems as though the hands of love are tied, preventing it from aiding us in any physical need. Throughout the first movement of the sonnet, Millay juxtaposes love with the concrete physical necessities needed for survival; love simply cannot save us from the physical dangers of the world. The poem's catalogue of images creates tension, for the poet exposes that love cannot protect or save us.

Such tension is further highlighted in the poem's second movement: "Yet many a man is making friends with death / Even as I speak, for lack of love alone" (7–8). If love cannot physically sustain us or save us from injury, then it seems absurd that the "lack of love alone" drives humans to death. The central paradox of the poem is defined: Why is love so essential for survival when it is not a physical necessity?

In the third movement, Millay's poem works toward resolution by questioning whether or not people should trade love for physical fulfillment. The speaker, addressing her lover directly, asks if "in a difficult hour" she would "sell your love for peace, / Or trade the memory of this night for food" (9, 12–13). Love's uselessness has been made concrete by negative comparisons: it cannot feed, clothe, provide shelter, or prevent physical pain from occurring. The speaker says, "I do not think I would" (14). If this line is interpreted as an affirmation, Millay's poem takes a romantic view of love, that love does conquer all. On the other hand, if the speaker presents this statement more as a question, then the speaker is indicating that she is wary of the power of love. Millay maintains this tension or hesitation throughout the third movement by repeating "It well may be" twice (in lines 9 and 14), and the speaker even admits: "I might be driven to

sell your love for peace" (12). Even the trademark rhyming couplet that should bring closure to the poem is absent, for *food* and *would* are only near rhymes, thus reinforcing the tension between blind faith in love and the reality of its limited physical power. The poem ends with uncertainty: the speaker is uncertain whether she would sacrifice the memory of love for physical wholeness. However, the poem appears to use understatement to resolve this ambiguity. Though we know what love is incapable of doing, we also know that the speaker does not "think [she] would" give up on love. Thus the hesitation on the speaker's voice ironically provides the answer—yes, indeed, love is powerful enough to cherish, but a commitment to it does require sacrifice.

Many romantics would like to think that "love can move mountains" or "conquer all." In the poem "Love is not all: it is not meat nor drink," Edna St. Vincent Millay asserts that love cannot serve as a replacement for our basic physical needs, yet it is essential for a person's emotional needs. Patricia A. Klemans suggests that *Fatal Interview* "offers something new expressed in the framework and terms of the old. It presents love from a woman's point of view, yet it treats love as an ageless and natural experience" (206). Thus, the poem plays with love's tension, showing that a commitment to love necessarily demands sacrifice, a sacrifice, it appears, well worth it.

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2.5 Student Sample Papers: Todd Goodwin's "Poe's 'Usher': A Mirror of the Fall of the House of Humanity" and Amy Chisnell's "Don't Listen to the Egg!: A Close Reading of Lewis Carroll's 'Jabberwocky'"

The following paper by Todd Goodwin is on Edgar Allan Poe's oft-read and discussed "The Fall of the House of Usher,"Edgar Allen Poe, "The Fall of the House of Usher," in *The Complete Works of Edgar Allan Poe*, ed. James A. Harrison (New York: AMS, 1979; University of Virginia Library Electronic Text Center, 1995), http://etext.virginia.edu/toc/modeng/public/PoeFall.html. which you can access at http://etext.virginia.edu/toc/modeng/public/PoeFall.html.

After reading the story, do the following:

1. List at least three topic areas that you could explore for a close reading of the story.
2. Read the following paper by Todd.
3. Compare your ideas with Todd's.
4. Discuss Todd's paper. Does he make a compelling argument? Why or why not?

Todd Goodwin

Professor Stan Matyshak

Advanced Expository Writing

Sept. 17, 20—

Poe's "Usher": A Mirror of the Fall of the House of Humanity

Right from the outset of the grim story "The Fall of the House of Usher," Edgar Allan Poe enmeshes us in a dark, gloomy, hopeless world, alienating his characters and the reader from any sort of physical or psychological norm where such values as hope and happiness could possibly exist. He fatalistically tells the story of how a man (the narrator) comes from the outside world of hope, religion, and everyday society and tries to bring some kind of redeeming happiness to his boyhood friend, Roderick Usher, who not only has physically and psychologically wasted away, but is entrapped in a dilapidated house of ever-looming terror with an emaciated and deranged twin sister. Roderick Usher embodies the wasting away of what once was vibrant and alive, and his house of "insufferable gloom" (273), which contains his morbid sister, seems to mirror or reflect this fear of death and annihilation that he most horribly endures. A close reading of the story reveals that Poe uses mirror images, or reflections, to contribute to the fatalistic theme of "Usher": each reflection serves to intensify an already prevalent tone of hopelessness, darkness, and fatalism. It could be argued that the house of Roderick Usher is a "house of mirrors," whose unpleasant and grim reflections create a dark and hopeless setting. For example, the narrator first approaches "the melancholy house of Usher on a dark and soundless day," and finds a building which causes him a "sense of insufferable gloom" which "pervades his spirit and causes an iciness, a sinking, a sickening of the heart, an undiscerned dreariness of thought" (273). The narrator then optimistically states: "I reflected that a mere different arrangement of the scene, of the details of the picture, would be sufficient to modify, or perhaps annihilate its capacity for sorrowful impression" (274). But the narrator then sees the reflection of the house in the tarn and experiences a "shudder even more thrilling than before" (274). Thus the reader begins to realize that the narrator cannot change or stop the impending doom that will befall the house of Usher, and maybe humanity. The story cleverly plays with

the word *reflection*: the narrator sees a physical reflection that leads him to a mental reflection about Usher's surroundings.

The narrator's disillusionment by such grim reflection continues in the story. For example, he describes Roderick Usher's face as distinct with signs of old strength but lost vigor: the remains of what used to be. He describes the house as a once happy and vibrant place which, like Roderick, lost its vitality. Also, the narrator describes Usher's hair as growing wild on his rather obtrusive head, which directly mirrors the eerie moss and straw which cover the outside of the house. The narrator continually longs to see these bleak reflections as a dream, for he states: "Shaking off from my spirit what *must* have been a dream, I scanned more narrowly the real aspect of the building" (276, emphasis in original). He does not want to face the reality that Usher and his home are doomed to fall, regardless of what he does.

Although there are almost countless examples of these mirror images, two others stand out as important. First, Roderick and his sister, Madeline, are twins. The narrator aptly states just as he and Roderick are entombing Madeline that there is "a striking similitude between brother and sister" (288). Indeed, they are mirror images of each other. Madeline is fading away psychologically and physically, and Roderick is not too far behind! The reflection of "doom" that these two share helps intensify and symbolize the hopelessness of the entire situation; thus, they further develop the fatalistic theme. Second, in the climactic scene where Madeline has been mistakenly entombed alive, there is a pairing of images and sounds as the narrator tries to calm Roderick by reading him a romance story. Events in the story simultaneously unfold with events of the sister escaping her tomb. In the story, the hero breaks out of the coffin. Then in the story, the dragon's shriek as he is slain parallels Madeline's shriek. Finally, the story tells of the clangor of a shield, matched by the sister's clanging along a metal passageway. As the suspense reaches its climax, Roderick shrieks his last words to his "friend" the narrator: "Madman! I tell you that she now stands without the door" (296).

Roderick, who slowly falls into insanity, ironically calls the narrator the "Madman." We are left to reflect on what Poe means by this ironic twist. Poe's bleak and dark imagery, and his use of mirror reflections, seem only to intensify the hopelessness of "Usher." We can plausibly conclude that indeed the narrator is the "Madman," for he comes from everyday society, which is a place where hope and faith exist. Poe would probably argue that such a place is opposite to the world of Usher because a world where death is inevitable could

not possibly hold such positive values. Therefore, just as Roderick mirrors his sister, the reflection in the tarn mirrors the dilapidation of the house, and the story mirrors the final actions before the death of Usher. "The Fall of the House of Usher" reflects Poe's view that humanity is hopelessly doomed.

Work Cited

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Paper Model Two: A Return to the Looking-Glass

Read this paper in light of our discussion of close reading and Humpty Dumpty's interpretation of "Jabberwocky" that he performs for Alice.

Amy Chisnell

Professor Laura Neary

Writing and Literature

April, 20—

Don't Listen to the Egg!: A Close Reading of Lewis Carroll's "Jabberwocky"

"You seem very clever at explaining words, Sir," said Alice. "Would you kindly tell me the meaning of the poem called 'Jabberwocky'?"

"Let's hear it," said Humpty Dumpty. "I can explain all the poems that ever were invented—and a good many that haven't been invented just yet." (Carroll 164)

In Lewis Carroll's *Through the Looking-Glass*, Humpty Dumpty confidently translates (to a not so confident Alice) the complicated language of the poem "Jabberwocky." The words of the poem, though nonsense, aptly tell the story of the slaying of the Jabberwock. Upon finding "Jabberwocky" on a table in the looking-glass room, Alice is confused by the strange words. She is quite certain that "*somebody* killed *something*," but she does not understand much more than that. When later she encounters Humpty Dumpty, she seizes the opportunity at having the knowledgeable egg interpret—or translate—the poem. Since Humpty Dumpty professes to be able to "make a word work" for him, he is quick to agree. Thus he acts like a New Critic who interprets the poem by performing close reading of it. Through Humpty's interpretation of the first stanza, however, we see the poem's deeper comment concerning the practice of interpreting poetry and literature in general—that strict analytical translation destroys the beauty of a poem. In fact, Humpty Dumpty commits the "heresy of paraphrase," for he fails to understand that meaning cannot be separated from the form or structure of the literary work.

Of the 71 words found in "Jabberwocky," 43 have no known meaning. They are simply nonsense. Yet through this nonsensical language, the poem manages not only to tell a story, but also to give the reader a sense of setting and

characterization. One feels, rather than concretely knows, that the setting is dark, wooded, and frightening. The characters, such as the Jubjub bird, the Bandersnatch, and the doomed Jabberwock, also appear in the reader's head, even though they will not be found in the local zoo. Even though most of the words are not real, the reader is able to understand what goes on because he or she is given free license to imagine what the words denote and connote. Simply, the poem's nonsense words *are* the meaning.

When Humpty interprets "Jabberwocky" for Alice, then, he is not doing her any favors, for he actually misreads the poem. Although the poem in its original is constructed from nonsense words, by the time Humpty is done interpreting it, it truly does not make any sense. The first stanza of the original poem is as follows:

'Twas brillig, and the slithy toves

Did gyre and gimble in the wabe;

All mimsy were the borogroves,

An the mome raths outgrabe. (Carroll 164)

If we replace, however, the nonsense words of "Jabberwocky" with Humpty's translated words, the effect would be something like this:

'Twas four o'clock in the afternoon, and the lithe and slimy badger-lizard-corkscrew creatures

Did go round and round and make holes in the grass-plot round the sun-dial:

All flimsy and miserable were the shabby-looking birds

with mop feathers,

And the lost green pigs bellowed-sneezed-whistled.

By translating the poem in such a way, Humpty removes the charm or essence—and the beauty, grace, and rhythm—from the poem. The poetry is sacrificed for meaning. Humpty Dumpty commits the heresy of paraphrase. As Cleanth Brooks argues: "The structure of a poem resembles that of a ballet or musical composition. It is a pattern of resolutions and balances and harmonizations" (203). When the poem is left as nonsense, the reader can easily imagine what a "slithy tove" might be, but when Humpty tells us what it is, he takes that imaginative license away from the reader. The beauty (if that is the proper word) of "Jabberwocky" is in *not* knowing what the words mean. By translating the poem, Humpty takes that privilege from the reader. In addition, Humpty fails to recognize that meaning cannot be separated from the structure itself: the nonsense poem reflects this literally—it means "nothing" and achieves this meaning by using "nonsense" words.

Furthermore, the nonsense words Carroll chooses to use in "Jabberwocky" have a magical effect upon the reader; the shadowy sound of the words create the atmosphere, which may be described as a trance-like mood. When Alice first reads the poem, she says it seems to fill her head "with ideas." The strange sounding words in the original poem *do* give one ideas. Why is this? Even though the reader has never heard these words before, he or she is instantly aware of the murky, mysterious mood they set. In other words, diction operates not on the denotative level (the dictionary meaning) but on the connotative level (the emotion they evoke). Thus "Jabberwocky" creates a shadowy mood, and the nonsense words are instrumental in creating this mood. Carroll could not have simply used *any* nonsense words.

For example, let us change the "dark," "ominous" words of the first stanza to "lighter," more "comic" words:

'Twas mearly, and the churly pells

Did bimble and ringle in the tink;

All timpy were the brimbledimps,

And the bip plips outlink.

Shifting the sounds of the words from dark to light merely takes a shift in thought. To create a specific mood using nonsense words, one must create the new words from old words which convey the desired mood. In "Jabberwocky," Carroll mixes "slimy," a grim idea, "lithe," a pliable image, to get a new adjective: "slithy" (a portmanteau word). In my translation, brighter words were used to get a lighter effect. "Mearly" is a combination of "morning" and "early," and "ringle" is a blend of "ring" and dingle." The point is that "Jabberwocky's" nonsense words are created specifically to convey this shadowy or mysterious mood and are integral to the "meaning."

Consequently, Humpty's rendering of the poem leaves the reader with a completely different feeling than does the original poem, which provided us with a sense of ethereal mystery, of a dark and foreign land with exotic creatures and fantastic settings. The mysteriousness is destroyed by Humpty's literal paraphrase of the creatures and the setting; by doing so he has taken the beauty away from the poem in his attempt to understand it. He has committed the heresy of paraphrase: "If we allow ourselves to be misled by it [this heresy], we distort the relation of the poem to its 'truth' ... we split the poem between its 'form' and its 'content'" (Brooks 201). Humpty Dumpty's ultimate demise might be seen to symbolize the heretical split between form and content: as a literary creation Humpty Dumpty is an egg, a well-wrought urn of nonsense. His fall from the wall cracks him and separates the contents from the container, and not even all the King's men can put the scrambled egg back together again!

Through the odd characters of a little girl and a foolish egg, "Jabberwocky" suggests a bit of sage advice about reading poetry, advice that the New Critics built their theories on. The importance lies not solely within the strict analytical translation or interpretation, but in the overall effect of the imagery and word choice that evokes a meaning inseparable from those literary devices. As Archibald MacLeish so aptly writes: "A poem should not mean / But be." Sometimes it takes a little nonsense to show us the sense in something.

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2.6 End-of-Chapter Assessment

KEY TAKEAWAYS

In this chapter, we examined in depth the protocols for writing a paper on literature using the close reading technique. Such a technique reflects the literary theory known as New Criticism. The basic tenets of New Criticism, we learned, are the following:

- The critic focuses solely on the literary work and is not interested in bringing outside material to the work itself.
- The close reader wants to find a harmony of unity in the literary work and solve an issue or problem that readers may have about the work.
- By striving to find such harmony and unity, the critic shows that the artistic value of the literary work leads to a larger truth value, which reflects the importance of analyzing literature.
- You were given the opportunity to see the New Critical methodology practiced in three student papers.
- You learned about the importance of the writing process, including peer review and the strategies for conducting peer review. Many of you also participated in peer review for your close reading paper.
- You wrote a close reading analysis of a work of literature—and are now off on your way to the wonderland of critical theory and writing!

WRITING EXERCISES

1. Freewriting exercise. Choose a short poem (no more than fifteen lines) you've never read before. It's OK if you've never even heard of the author. Read through it several times. As you read the poem, jot down the words that seem most significant. Draw arrows between words that seem related to one another: either because they're similar or because they're very different. Then start writing. How do these keywords relate to one another? Are there any tensions that seem important? At first, don't look back at the poem—concentrate on the words themselves and what they mean.
2. Once you've spent a little time with individual words, turn your attention back to the poem itself. Read it again, thinking about the relationships you just brainstormed. Now start applying the insights you gained looking at the words alone back to the poem itself. How does a close attention to the poem's individual words and specific phrases help you better understand the larger meaning or message of the poem?

INSTRUCTOR SUPPLEMENT: CLASS PEER REVIEW

1. Have students conduct peer review on one of the sample papers using the organizational peer-review guide found in Chapter 10 "Appendix A: Peer Review Sheets", Section 10.1 "Chapter 2: Close Reading":

    a. Place students in groups of three to four and have them reread the paper for peer review and fill out the guide sheet. Peer review works equally well for online classes; modify the following suggestion according to the electronic classroom and equipment you are using.
    b. Have students discuss their feedback responses to the sample paper.
    c. Have students list the major feedback they discussed.
    d. Put the major issues on the blackboard or whiteboard.
    e. Discuss these responses. Make certain that you let students know that any paper can be improved.

2. Plan to have your students conduct peer review on the drafts of their papers that they are writing in your class. Use the peer-review guide from Chapter 10 "Appendix A: Peer Review Sheets", Section 10.1 "Chapter 2: Close Reading" and have them work in groups of three and do the following:

    a. Bring two hard copies of their paper so that each member can read the paper, OR work in a computer lab where students can share their papers online. You may want to use the educational software that your campus supports—for example, Blackboard or Moodle—or you can have students use Google Drive to set up their peer-review groups.
    b. Have two students focus on the first paper in the group. While these students are reading, have the other student read the other two student papers.
    c. The two students should quickly fill out the peer-review sheet and then have a brief conversation about the strengths of the paper and ways the paper could be improved.
    d. Move to the next student and follow the same process. Depending on the length of your class, you may have to reduce the peer-review groups to two students.

e. If time permits, ask the students to provide general comments—or ask questions—about the specific papers or the assignment overall.
f. You may want to use peer review for each paper in your class.

2.7 Suggestions for Further Reading

Sources on New Criticism

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