

Close Reading of Informational/ Literary Nonfiction Texts

Learning Targets

- Cite textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.
- Determine a central idea of a text and how it is conveyed.
- Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text.
- Analyze how a particular sentence or paragraph fits into the overall structure of a text.
- Determine an author's point of view.
- Determine or clarify the meaning of unknown and multiple-meaning words and phrases based on grade 6 reading and content, choosing flexibly from a range of strategies.
- Interpret information presented in diverse media and formats (e.g., visually, quantitatively, orally) and explain how it contributes to a topic, text, or issue under study.
- Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions.

Close Reading for Meaning

What does learning to read closely mean? As readers, we cannot just ask an author questions about the text. We must read the author's words, looking at what some words say explicitly and what others may imply about the author's meaning.

Explicit information includes words the author uses to describe events or people in the text. For example, an author might describe a person as having black hair or a city as being in the Midwest. In contrast, many ideas in a text may be **implicit**; that is, the reader must analyze the words the author uses, as well as actions and dialogue, to determine the author's meaning. You may need to read a text multiple times to make inferences about meaning. For example, you might read a text first to identify the words you do not know. After learning what those words mean, you would read the text again using your new knowledge to help you understand what the writer is saying.

In this workshop, you will read three different texts and will practice close reading using strategies that will help you make meaning of the text. Your teacher will guide you through the first activity. In Activity 2, you will work in a collaborative group to read and respond to the text. For the third activity, you will work independently to apply close-reading strategies to determine meaning in a new text.

Introducing the Strategy: Diffusing

Diffusing is a strategy for close reading of text. Using this strategy, the reader uses context clues, dictionaries, and/or thesauri to discover the meaning of unfamiliar words. Writing notes about meaning or substituting synonyms for unfamiliar words helps the reader increase comprehension of the text.

LEARNING STRATEGIES

Diffusing, Close Reading, Marking the Text, Rereading, Summarizing, Paraphrasing

ACADEMIC VOCABULARY

Explicit text states ideas or information clearly, leaving no doubt about meaning. **Implicit** ideas are not clearly stated, leaving the reader to make inferences about the author's meaning.

PLAN

Pacing: Pacing: Each workshop has four activities. Allow about two days per activity. Pacing for this set of activities will be flexible based on the needs of your students and the demands of your schedule.

Materials: Lined paper, highlighters, pens or pencils for marking the text, access to dictionaries, overhead projector or Smartboard

ACTIVITY 1

Guided Practice

TEACH

1 Review the learning targets to help set a context for what students will be doing in this workshop.

2 This workshop is divided into a guided activity, a collaborative activity, and an activity that students complete independently. The fourth activity provides an assessment opportunity.

3 Before students read the first text, introduce **diffusing** as a vocabulary strategy. As students read independently, be sure they use the underlined, defined words to aid in comprehension. Students should practice **diffusing** vocabulary by replacing the new word with its definition/synonym. You may want to discuss this strategy before they read and ask students to write the definitions above the underlined words before they read.

4 First Reading: In Activity 1, students are to first focus on reading the text to themselves silently to gain a general understanding of what it means.

ACTIVITY 1 (continued)



Text Complexity

Overall: Complex

Lexile: 1240

Qualitative: Moderate Difficulty

Task: Moderate (Analyze)

Context: Published in 1869, *The Innocents Abroad* is a collection of “letters” Twain wrote to various newspapers detailing his trip with a group of tourists, whom he referred to as “pilgrims,” on an excursion to Europe and the Holy Lands. His lively sense of humor and his delight in detail are richly evident in this selection.

TEACHER TO TEACHER

The first two readings are intended to give students an opportunity to independently make meaning of the passage, then to give them intensive practice with in-text vocabulary study that leads to deep comprehension and the ability to interpret. To aid close reading practice, underlined words are glossed for students; bolded words indicate Tier 2 words that students should know and/or learn. The text is formatted with space between the lines so that students can write notes between the lines of text.

Differentiating Instruction

This text may be challenging not only because of 19th century sentence structure and vocabulary use, but also because of Twain’s understated sense of humor. To aid students, examine vocabulary and sentence structure with them and point out Twain’s humor as needed for students to understand.

5 After the first silent reading, you may want to diffuse the text with your students, working with the bolded Tier 2 words as well as the underlined words.

TEACHER TO TEACHER

When Twain remarks that the “pilgrims would have had it [the tree],” Twain is making fun of his fellow travelers’ penchant for taking things as mementos of their travels. In this case he thinks they might have taken the tree or at least bits of the tree if it had still been there.

Close Reading of Informational/Literary Nonfiction Texts (continued)

ACTIVITY 1

Guided Practice

You will read the text in this activity at least three times, focusing on a different purpose for each reading.

First Reading: First Impressions

Read the following passage silently. Your focus for this first reading is on understanding the meaning of the passage. As you read, practice diffusing the words you may not know by replacing unfamiliar words with synonyms or definitions for the underlined words. Use the definitions and synonyms to the right of the paragraphs to help your understanding.

Short Story

From

The Innocents Abroad

by Mark Twain
from Chapter LVIII

lateen: triangular

prophecy: predict with authority
famine: food shortage

sojourned: visited briefly

turbid: murky, cloudy, opaque

filmy: hazy, gauzy

1 Arrived at Old Cairo the camp-followers took up the donkeys and tumbled them bodily aboard a small boat with a lateen sail, and we followed and got under way. The deck was closely packed with donkeys and men; the two sailors had to climb over and under and through the **wedged** mass to work the sails, and the **steersman** had to crowd four or five donkeys out of the way when he wished to swing his **tiller** and put his **helm** hard-down. But what were their troubles to us? We had nothing to do; nothing to do but enjoy the trip; nothing to do but shove the donkeys off our corns and look at the charming scenery of the Nile.

2 On the island at our right was the machine they call the Nilometer, a stone-column whose business it is to mark the rise of the river and prophecy whether it will reach only thirty-two feet and produce a famine, or whether it will properly flood the land at forty and produce **plenty**, or whether it will rise to forty-three and bring death and destruction to flocks and crops—but how it does all this they could not explain to us so that we could understand. On the same island is still shown the spot where **Pharaoh’s** daughter found Moses in the bulrushes. Near the spot we sailed from, the Holy Family dwelt when they sojourned in Egypt till Herod should complete his **slaughter** of the innocents. The same tree they rested under when they first arrived was there a short time ago, but the Viceroy of Egypt sent it to the Empress Eugenie lately. He was just in time, otherwise our **pilgrims** would have had it.

3 The Nile at this point is muddy, swift and turbid, and does not lack a great deal of being as wide as the Mississippi.

4 We scrambled up the steep bank at the **shabby** town of Ghizeh, **mounted** the donkeys again, and scampered away... At the distance of a few miles the Pyramids rising above the palms looked very clean-cut, very grand and **imposing**, and very soft and filmy, as well.

Second Reading: Vocabulary in Context

Now that you have read the passage silently, listen and follow along as your teacher reads the passage aloud. As you read along with your teacher, circle words and/or phrases (other than the underlined words) that you do not know or that you feel are important to the meaning of the passage. Diffuse these words/phrases for comprehension.

Check Your Understanding

1. Pair with another student and choose six words from the words you have circled. Using context clues and reference resources, try to determine the meaning of the words. As needed, reread the sentences using your understanding of the words to confirm what the passage means.
2. Choose two or three of the words you have examined that you think are significant to understanding the passage. Use the words in sentences as part of a summary explaining the central ideas in the passage and explaining how these words contribute to your understanding of the passage.

Third Reading: Text-Dependent Questioning

Now read the passage again, this time with the focus of reading to respond to the Key Ideas and Details interpretive questions. As your class discusses the text, write your responses to each question and highlight or underline the textual evidence that supports your answer. During discussions, you may also want to annotate the text to record a new or different meaning of the text.

Background Information: This passage is an excerpt from the book *The Innocents Abroad*, which was published in 1869. The book is assembled mostly from newspaper columns that Twain wrote and sent back for publication during his 1867 journey with a group of American tourists through Europe and the Holy Land.

From
The Innocents Abroad

by Mark Twain

1 Arrived at Old Cairo the camp-followers took up the donkeys and tumbled them bodily aboard a small boat with a lateen sail, and we followed and got under way. The deck was closely packed with donkeys and men; the two sailors had to climb over and under and through the **wedged** mass to work the sails, and the **steersman** had to crowd four or five donkeys out of the way when he wished to swing his **tiller** and put his **helm** hard-down. But what were their troubles to us? We had nothing to do; nothing to do but enjoy the trip; nothing to do but shove the donkeys off our corns and look at the charming scenery of the Nile.

KEY IDEAS AND DETAILS
What line in paragraph 1 suggests Twain's attitude to the problems of his traveling in Egypt? Explain why it reflects his attitude.

Close Reading Workshop 1 • Close Reading of Informational/Literary Nonfiction Texts 3

6 Second Reading: Students will now read along as you read the text aloud as an “expert” reader. This read-aloud gives students an opportunity to hear a text read with careful consideration of meaning. During this reading, students should continue vocabulary study by circling unfamiliar and/or important vocabulary. Stop occasionally to monitor and clarify students’ understanding of words in context.

7 With selected vocabulary, conduct a **think-aloud** of **rereading** and **diffusing** vocabulary with definitions/synonyms. Help students work toward comprehension of both the explicit and implicit meaning of not just the words, but also how diffusing helps the understanding of words within the sentence context.

8 Check Your Understanding Have students work in pairs to choose a certain number of words to examine more deeply. You may want to have students create an organizer to record their vocabulary choices. This is an opportunity for students to synthesize their understanding of the passage and of significant vocabulary by using new vocabulary to summarize their understanding of Twain’s narrative. You may want to allow students to think through their ideas in pairs or small groups before they write.

9 Third Reading: The Key Ideas and Details questions lead students into textual analysis by posing interpretive questions about the passage. Students should answer by annotating and noting textual evidence with underlining or highlighting.

Key Ideas and Details “We had nothing to do but enjoy the trip; nothing to do but shove the donkeys off our corns and look at the charming scenery of the Nile.” This sentence suggests that despite the crowded and difficult conditions of the travel, Twain was enjoying himself.

ACTIVITY 1 (continued)

Key Ideas and Details The role of the Nilometer is to predict whether the river would have enough water to ensure plentiful crops, and thus the well-being of the Egyptian people is suggested.

Key Ideas and Details Twain connects the tree under which the Holy Family rested to the tree that was sent as a gift to Napoleon's wife, the Empress Eugenie. He seems to suggest that this was not right, as he also alludes to a penchant of his fellow travelers ("pilgrims") for taking things (like the tree) as mementos of their travels.

10 Check Your Understanding

Use the language of narration to help students think about their explanation of a sentence that helps them understand the structure of the passage. With your students, choose any of the sentences and discuss how the sentence furthers or illustrates the narrative structure of the passage.

Each of the topic sentences, such as "Arrived at Old Cairo," show this passage to be a narrative since they pinpoint particular incidents at points in time.

11 Question 2 provides an opportunity to discuss Twain's understated humor. His mention of the donkeys crowded on board the sailing ship, his implications that the "pilgrims" would try to take the tree, and his comment that the tree was given as a gift to the Empress all represent his humor.

Close Reading of Informational/Literary Nonfiction Texts (continued)

KEY IDEAS AND DETAILS
What is suggested about the importance of the Nilometer to the life of Egyptians?

KEY IDEAS AND DETAILS
What is the connection between the story of the Holy Family's resting spot with the story of sending the tree to an empress?

2 On the island at our right was the machine they call the Nilometer, a stone-column whose business it is to mark the rise of the river and prophesy whether it will reach only thirty-two feet and produce a famine, or whether it will properly flood the land at forty and produce **plenty**, or whether it will rise to forty-three and bring death and destruction to flocks and crops—but how it does all this they could not explain to us so that we could understand. On the same island is still shown the spot where **Pharaoh's** daughter found Moses in the bulrushes. Near the spot we sailed from, the Holy Family dwelt when they sojourned in Egypt till Herod should complete his **slaughter** of the innocents. The same tree they rested under when they first arrived was there a short time ago, but the Viceroy of Egypt sent it to the Empress Eugenie lately. He was just in time, otherwise our **pilgrims** would have had it.

3 The Nile at this point is muddy, swift and turbid, and does not lack a great deal of being as wide as the Mississippi.

We scrambled up the steep bank at the **shabby** town of Ghizeh, **mounted** the donkeys again, and scampered away... At the distance of a few miles the Pyramids rising above the palms looked very clean-cut, very grand and **imposing**, and very soft and filmy, as well.

Check Your Understanding

1. Find a sentence that you think shows that the structure of this text is narrative writing. Explain how the sentence fits within the overall structure of the text.

Each of the topic sentences, such as "Arrived at Old Cairo . . ." and "The Nile at this point is muddy . . ." and "We scrambled up the steep bank . . ." as well as transitions such as "Near the spot we sailed from," indicate the passage of time or new action.

2. Now that you have read closely and worked to understand challenging portions of this passage, choose a sentence that you think is important to understanding Twain's thinking. Explain in your own words what the sentence means and why it is important to understanding the passage.

"We had nothing to do. Nothing to do but enjoy the trip." This sentence reveals Twain's position as a tourist on this trip. He is carried by boat and donkey to the Pyramids and doesn't have to do any work himself.

12 Synthesizing Your

Understanding: These questions provide an opportunity for students to bring together all their thinking about the passage. Review the **subject**, **purpose**, and **tone** directions with students.

13 Lead the class in a whole-group discussion that answers the follow-up questions about subject, purpose, and tone. You might ask students to write the answers independently or in pairs, first, and then share as a whole class.

ASSESS

The writing prompt gives students an opportunity to focus on characterizing the tone of the passage. Note that this prompt requires summarizing and explaining textual evidence. You may want to conduct this as a coconstruction of a paragraph, being sure to discuss and respond to the requirements of the prompt.

ADAPT

Consider asking students to go beyond circling, underlining, and highlighting the sample text by having them write annotations in the margins. Students could work with paragraphs as chunks of text and define the purpose of each paragraph, or they could summarize the main idea of each paragraph. This additional strategy will help students examine the organization more explicitly.

Synthesizing Your Understanding

Now that you have read the passage three times and studied its vocabulary and sentences, synthesize your understanding by thinking about the **subject**, the **purpose** of the passage, and the author's **tone** or attitude. Respond to the following questions as a way of bringing all your knowledge together.

1. What is the subject or topic of the passage? What is this passage about? Be as specific as you can in identifying and summarizing the subject of the passage.

The passage recounts Twain's travel to Cairo and then on the Nile River on his way to the Pyramids of Egypt. Twain mentions difficult aspects of the traveling, the small boat being "closely packed with donkeys and men," and having to "shove the donkeys off our corns." He also mentions interesting facts such as the Nilometer and the "grand and imposing" vision of the Pyramids.

2. What is the purpose of the passage? Now that you have identified the subject of the passage, explain Twain's reasons for writing these paragraphs. What does he hope to communicate to the audience about his subject?

Twain's purpose is to present a narrative and descriptive article that will be interesting to a wide audience. He wants to show how strange and exotic is his travel (riding donkeys, sailing ships with lateen sails) and to give interesting details that will satisfy his readers' curiosity and appeal to their expectations about such grand and imposing wonders as the Pyramids.

3. What is the author's attitude toward the subject of the passage? Tone describes the attitude of the author about the subject being discussed. Now that you have identified the subject and the purpose, explain how Twain feels about this subject.

Twain sees the humor and the grandeur in his travel to the ancient land of Egypt. He sees humor in the difficult aspects of his travel, realizing that he simply must shove the donkeys off his corns and enjoy the "charming scenery" of the Nile and the "grand and imposing" vision of the Pyramids. He is also impressed by the Nile River (almost as wide as the Mississippi) and its Nilometer. Furthermore, he cannot help but include an ironic comment about the Egyptian viceroy sending the tree that the Holy Family rested under as a gift to the French empress.

Writing Prompt: Based on your current understanding of the passage, summarize Twain's attitude about travel. Write a paragraph that explains your interpretation of his perspective on this topic. Be sure to

- Identify the subject, purpose, and tone of the passage in a topic sentence.
- Provide one piece of textual evidence that supports your statement.
- Explain how the evidence supports your topic sentence.

ACTIVITY 2

Collaborative Practice

PLAN

This activity provides an opportunity for students to practice analyzing visual texts and comparing them to written texts using collaborative strategies. It is important to understand that this activity is part of a flexible suite of close-reading activities, so depending on your students and their needs, this could be a teacher-guided activity that further prepares students to succeed on the last independent activity.

TEACH

1 Review the introduction to the photo with the class. Direct students' attention to the three follow-up questions to consider as they view the photo.

2 Place students in small groups of mixed ability and varied strengths to work through the text.

3 For the first reading of the visual, students will list only what they **see** explicitly in the photo (textual evidence). Ask students to describe what they notice first. What more do they see with a closer look? Have them look at such things as placement and arrangement of subjects, angles of objects/people in the photo, framing (how people/objects positioned), clothing, etc.

Close Reading of Informational/Literary Nonfiction Texts (continued)

ACTIVITY 2

Collaborative Practice

Look carefully at the photograph that follows. It was taken somewhere between 1890 and 1940 in Egypt, showing two tourists riding camels led by their Egyptian guides. They stand before the Sphinx of Giza, with the Great Pyramids of Egypt visible in the background. (Much of the Sphinx was not yet excavated when this photo was taken; more modern pictures reveal that the body of the Sphinx has since been completely unearthed.)

First Reading: What do you see?

As you look at the photo, what catches your eye? What details do you notice? How would you describe the details in this photo to someone who could not see it? To answer this question, keep your responses *only* on what you can see in the photo.

The Sphinx is in the center with the pyramids in the distance. Two men are riding on camels, wearing Western-looking clothing. Two men are standing in front of the camels, wearing long robes. All the men have their heads covered. There is nothing but sand covering the ground. Long shadows are cast by the men and the Sphinx.



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Second Reading: What does it mean?

Now that you have examined the photo carefully, what inferences can you make? How do you interpret what you see? In other words, what might you say about the people or scenery that goes beyond what is explicitly shown in the photograph?

This is a photo of two visitors to Egypt and their guides. The photo is a memento of their journey, showcasing the impressive landmarks they are visiting as well as the striking environment. The relationship between the visitors and the guides is clear in their placement in the picture. The men on the camels are enjoying this experience as recreation, while the men on foot seem to be at work.

Third Reading: How do you know?

Explain the connection between the details you notice and your interpretation of these details. How might you use the details in the photo as textual evidence to support the ideas or inferences you have made?

Possible responses might include the following:

- Highlights of an Egyptian trip (Sphinx, Pyramids) and the men posed (facing the camera)
- Tourists (as shown by Western clothing) on camels as a novel experience; local men as guides (as shown by long robes); guides are holding the camels, not the tourists (leading to conclusion of posed scene)
- Landscape is somewhat barren with all the sand; sun is bright, casting long shadows; all are wearing coats or heavy clothing, suggesting the colder months in Egypt

Writing Prompt: Now that you have carefully examined the content of this photo and come to conclusions about what it shows explicitly and what inferences you can make about the meaning, make a connection between this photograph and the passage written by Twain about his travels to Egypt. Be sure to

- Write a topic sentence that connects the two texts.
- Include textual details and explain how they support the connection you made.
- Write a conclusion that follows from your explanations.

ACTIVITY 2 (continued)

4 For the **Second Reading**, have groups discuss what these explicit details **mean**. What is implied by the details of the photo? What inferences can be made about the details? How would they interpret what they see?

5 For the **Third Reading**, be sure to have students explain the connection between what they **see** and what it **means**. In other words, how do they support their interpretations with the concrete evidence they have noted in the photo?

ELL Support

For students who need additional support with writing topic sentences, you may want to provide a sentence starter for the writing prompt: “Both Mark Twain’s travel narrative and the photo of Egypt show that...”

ASSESS

For the writing prompt, check that students have shown their understanding by making a connection between the details in a visual text and the inferences that can be made from those details. Students should also connect the visual text with some of the details in Twain’s travel narrative.

ADAPT

You may want to assess by asking students to discuss connections to the Twain piece and then having them write only a paragraph of summary about the visual text.

ACTIVITY 3

Independent Practice

PLAN

Now that students have practiced close-reading strategies for written and visual texts, they will independently apply what they have learned to another written text.

TEACH



Text Complexity

Overall: Complex

Lexile: 970

Qualitative: Moderate Difficulty

Task: Moderate (Analyze)

Context: These paragraphs are the first in John Steinbeck's *Travels with Charley: In Search of America*. This travel narrative goes on to document Steinbeck's 1960 journey across more than 10,000 miles of American roadways. This introductory material sets up the notion that his travels are the result of an innate and compulsive restlessness that drives him to embark on his journey.

1 Remind students to refer to the work they completed for the first two activities as models for completing this activity.

2 For the **First Reading**, students read the passage silently and independently.

Differentiating Instruction

Depending on your students' readiness for this task, you may want to put students in pairs or in small groups for the second and third readings if they are not ready to do a close reading independently.

Close Reading of Informational/Literary Nonfiction Texts (continued)

ACTIVITY 3

Independent Practice

The text passage that follows is from the opening pages of a book called *Travels with Charley*, written by well-known American author John Steinbeck. In 1960, Steinbeck traveled over 10,000 miles across the United States in a camper, accompanied only by his French poodle named Charley. *Travels with Charley* tells the story of that journey.

First Reading: First Impressions

Read the passage silently to yourself. As you read, think about the meanings of the **underlined** words. Look at the definitions in the right margin, and also use your knowledge of the words and context clues to help you make meaning of the text.

Autobiography

From

Travels with Charley

by John Steinbeck

1 When I was very young and the urge to be someplace else was on me, I was assured by mature people that **maturity** would cure this itch. When years described me as mature, the **remedy prescribed** was middle age. In middle age I was assured that greater age would calm my fever and now that I am fifty-eight perhaps senility will do the job.

senility: physical or mental weakness that comes with old age

Nothing has worked. Four hoarse blasts of a ship's whistle still raise the hair on my neck and set my feet to tapping. The sound of a jet, an engine warming up, even the clopping of **shod** hooves on pavement brings on the ancient shudder, the dry mouth and vacant eye, the hot palms and the churn of stomach high up under the rib cage. In other words, I don't improve; in further words, once a bum always a bum. I fear the **disease** is incurable. I set this matter down not to **instruct** others but to inform myself.

bum: a tramp, vagabond, hobo

2 When the virus of **restlessness** begins to take possession of a **wayward** man, and the road away from Here seems broad and straight and sweet, the victim must first find himself a good and sufficient reason for going. This to the practical bum is not difficult. He has a built-in garden of reasons to choose from. Next he must plan his trip in time and space, choose a direction and a destination. And last he must implement the journey. How to go, what to take, how long to stay. This part of the process is **invariable** and **immortal**. I set it down only so that newcomers to bumdom, like teen-agers in new-hatched sin, will not think they invented it.

implement: to carry out or put into effect

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ACTIVITY 3 (continued)

3 Second Reading: It is still important for students to hear a text read well, so read the passage aloud, instructing students to diffuse and circle vocabulary at intervals as they did with Twain’s piece.

4 Monitor progress. Students should be highlighting, underlining, and annotating the text as evidence of close reading.

5 For the Check Your Understanding questions, review the directions for the vocabulary work and remind students of similar work they did with the passage from *The Innocents Abroad*. You may want to require a certain number of words for students to select and define. You may also want to have students create a graphic organizer for the words.

6 Question 2 points students to structural aspects of this narrative and asks them to summarize the stages in Steinbeck’s journey. Use this opportunity to discuss transitions. They should include text evidence to support their reading of the stages.

3 Once a journey is designed, equipped, and put in process; a new **factor** enters and takes over. A trip, a safari, an exploration, is an entity, different from all other journeys. It has personality, **temperament**, individuality, uniqueness. A journey is a person in itself; no two are alike. And all plans, **safeguards**, policing, and **coercion** are fruitless. We find after years of struggle that we do not take a trip; a trip takes us. Tour masters, schedules, reservations, brass-bound and inevitable, dash themselves to wreckage on the personality of the trip. Only when this is recognized can the blown-in-the-glass bum relax and go along with it. Only then do the frustrations fall away. In this a journey is like marriage. The certain way to be wrong is to think you can control it. I feel better now, having said this, although only those who have experienced it will understand it.

entity: something that has a separate and distinct identity

inevitable: unavoidable

Second Reading: Vocabulary in Context

After reading the passage to yourself, listen and follow along as the passage is read again aloud. Again, circle words that you don’t know or that you think are important to understanding the passage.

Check Your Understanding

1. Pair with another student, share your circled words, and discuss the meanings and effect of the words on your understanding of the entire passage. Choose two of the words you have examined that you think are significant to understanding the passage. Use the words in a sentence or two that explains why these words contribute to your understanding.

2. What are the stages of the journey that Steinbeck outlines in paragraph 2? Summarize them and explain why you know these are stages in a process

The author uses transitional language to communicate the stages of the journey: “. . . first find himself a good and sufficient reason for going.”

“Next he must plan his trip in time and space . . .”

“An last, he must implement the journey.”

Third Reading: Text-Dependent Questioning

Reread the passage a third time and respond to the questions on the next page.

ACTIVITY 3 (continued)

7 Third Reading: Review the directions for responding to the Key Ideas and Details questions to ensure that students understand questioning the text as a close-reading strategy. Monitor reading and annotation as students respond to the questions.

Differentiating Instruction

You may want to place students in pairs or small groups to respond to the Key Ideas and Details questions if you think they are not quite ready for independent analysis and response.

Key Ideas and Details Vocabulary denoting illness includes the following words or phrases: *cure*, *remedy prescribed*, *fever*, *disease is incurable*, *virus*, *victim*. Steinbeck uses this imagery not to show his negative feelings about travel, but rather to create a sense that he is a victim who has no control over the urge to travel. He is excited and energized by the prospect of travel. This use of imagery underscores the difference between the explicit and implicit, as well as the literal versus figurative layers of meaning.

Key Ideas and Details “I fear the disease is incurable” summarizes Steinbeck’s feeling that he is the victim of something beyond his control and that the only cure is to give in to it.

Key Ideas and Details The words “invariable” and “immortal,” suggesting that planning a trip has stages that never change and never die, show that Steinbeck sees his plan to travel as part of a larger process with certain definite stages and rules that must be followed in order to make the journey successful.

Close Reading of Informational/Literary Nonfiction Texts (continued)

From
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Nothing has worked. Four hoarse blasts of a ship’s whistle still raise the hair on my neck and set my feet to tapping. The sound of a jet, an engine warming up, even the clapping of **shod** hooves on pavement brings on the ancient shudder, the dry mouth and vacant eye, the hot palms and the churn of stomach high up under the rib cage. In other words, I don’t improve; in further words, once a **bum** always a bum. I fear the **disease** is incurable. I set this matter down not to **instruct** others but to inform myself.

2 When the virus of **restlessness** begins to take possession of a **wayward** man, and the road away from Here seems broad and straight and sweet, the victim must first find himself a good and sufficient reason for going. This to the practical bum is not difficult. He has a built-in garden of reasons to choose from. Next he must plan his trip in time and space, choose a direction and a destination. And last he must **implement** the journey. How to go, what to take, how long to stay. This part of the process is **invariable** and **immortal**. I set it down only so that newcomers to bumdom, like teen-agers in new-hatched sin, will not think they invented it.

3 Once a journey is designed, equipped, and put in process; a new **factor** enters and takes over. A trip, a safari, an exploration, is an **entity**, different from all other journeys. It has personality, **temperament**, individuality, uniqueness. A journey is a person in itself; no two are alike. And all plans, **safeguards**, policing, and **coercion** are fruitless. We find after years of struggle that we do not take a trip; a trip takes us. Tour masters, schedules, reservations, brass-bound and **inevitable**, dash themselves to wreckage on the personality of the trip. Only when this is recognized can the blown-in-the-glass bum relax and go along with it. Only then do the frustrations fall away. In this a journey is like marriage. The certain way to be wrong is to think you can control it. I feel better now, having said this, although only those who have experienced it will understand it.

KEY IDEAS AND DETAILS

Notice words and phrases in the first two paragraphs that denote or have associations with sickness. Does this use of the imagery of illness mean that Steinbeck sees travel in a negative way? Explain how he uses this imagery.

KEY IDEAS AND DETAILS

In what way is the “disease” incurable?

KEY IDEAS AND DETAILS

What is the effect of using “invariable” and “immortal” to describe the process of implementing the journey described in this paragraph?

Check Your Understanding

Questioning the Text: Using the text-based questions as a model, ask a question about an idea in a sentence from the third paragraph. Begin your questions with *why* or *how*. Remember that you may not know the answer to the question, but you think the answer might be important to understanding the meaning of the passage.

How is it true that a journey is like a person?

How is a journey like a marriage?

Why is it wrong to think you can control a journey?

Why does Steinbeck use the image of “blown-in-the-glass bum”?

Understanding Speaker, Subject, and Purpose: Reread the passage and underline sentences that you believe express important ideas or opinions. Share and discuss these sentences as a class. Then, work with your teacher and your classmates to respond to the questions below about subject, purpose, and speaker.

1. What is the subject? What is this excerpt about? Be as specific as you can in identifying the subject of the passage.

This excerpt is about the desire to travel and how planning a trip must take into consideration that the trip will be different from what was planned.

2. What is the purpose? Now that you have identified the subject of the passage, explain Steinbeck’s reasons for writing these paragraphs. What does he hope to communicate to the audience about his subject?

Steinbeck wants to explain first that the desire to travel is a compulsion in some people and that the only way to satisfy it is to take a trip. He also wants to explain that “bums” will always find a reason to travel and will enjoy making plans right up to the day of departure. However, he also points out that the trip will often happen differently than was planned and that the traveler will enjoy the experience only if he can relax and accept the way the trip unfolds.

3. Who is the speaker?

The speaker is John Steinbeck, who describes himself as a bum, a traveler stricken by a travel bug, and a man who loves to travel and likes all aspects of traveling.

Writing Prompt: Using textual evidence to support your thinking, write a paragraph in which you discuss Steinbeck’s attitude to travel. Be sure to

- Write a topic sentence answering the prompt.
- Choose appropriate textual evidence.
- Explain the significance of your textual evidence.

ACTIVITY 3 (continued)

8 Check Your Understanding

Helping students learn to question the text is part of getting them ready to begin posing their own interpretive text-based questions. This part of the lesson might provide an introduction to the form and purpose of interpretive questioning. Students do not need to answer the questions, but they do need to think that the answers would lead to important understandings of the text.

9 Review the speaker, subject, and purpose directions with students. Remind students that it might be useful to read through the text aloud again, stopping occasionally to mark textual evidence.

ASSESS

Have students complete the writing prompt, which can be used as a formative assessment of each student’s ability to write a topic sentence, choose textual evidence, and explain its significance.

ADAPT

You may wish to put students in pairs or small groups if they are not ready to respond to the writing prompt independently. You may also consider asking students to paraphrase individual sentences from the excerpt, especially those that show unusual or imagistic diction.

ACTIVITY 4

Synthesis Questions

This activity is intended for whole-class involvement. The assessments can be used for homework, in-class timed writings, or multi-day presentations.

These prompts can be used as optional assessments to determine students' skills in synthesizing texts from the entire close reading workshop.

Each of these assessments builds on a unique skill: writing, debate/discussion, or using multimedia to present an idea or perspective. You can adjust these options to be individual or group assignments, allow students to choose, or assign specific prompts to individual students or to the whole class.

Reflection

Allow students time to reflect on both the topics and the close-reading strategies that best helped them learn to read and understand meaning in both written and visual texts.

Close Reading of Informational/Literary Nonfiction Texts (continued)

ACTIVITY 4

Synthesis Questions

Your teacher may choose or ask you to choose one of the following assessments as a way of showing your understanding of the texts you have read.

Writing Prompt: Review the differing perspectives on travel in the passages by Mark Twain and John Steinbeck. Revisit the work you have done with both texts, and consider how the photo relates to the works of these two authors. Which written text do you think makes stronger connections to the photo? Use evidence from both the passage and the photo to support your choice.

Debate/Discussion: Prepare to debate or discuss differing perspectives on travel. Choose either Steinbeck or Twain, and revisit his main points. Can you think of modern examples or situations that support his opinions about travel? Make notes of your ideas. Use your notes to participate in a class discussion about the potential of travel to change the traveler and the best ways to benefit from a travel experience.

Multimedia Presentation: You have been introduced to two written texts and one photo about travel. What other texts or media could be added to this collection? Locate a song, poem, photo, artwork, or another written text that presents a unique perspective on travel. Prepare to share the original text (including a brief introduction providing context) with your class. In addition, share your thoughts on how this new piece could contribute to the overall portrayal of the travel experience.

Reflection

Think about what you have learned from your close reading and analysis of the text passages you have read in this workshop.

1. How can a person be changed by the experience of travel? Under what circumstances will a traveler grow and change because of a journey?
2. In this workshop, you have learned how to make meaning of three different texts. How can you use what you have learned to help you as you encounter challenging texts in the future? What strategies best helped you as a learner during this workshop? When and why would you use these strategies in the future?