

**Close Reading Papers (2-3 typed pages each, 500-750 words)**

**Due Dates:**

- Paper 1 Due On or Before Oct 21
- Paper 2 Due On or Before Dec 14

Select two assigned readings (one from before the midterm and one after). One reaction paper must conduct a close reading of a poem and the other of a piece of prose (fiction or nonfiction).

Choose a paragraph or so from a prose selection or a stanza or so from a poem and craft a close reading that explains what this passage reveals about the text's historical, literary, or cultural context.

You may focus on explicating the passage's theme or its form or a combination of both. You may refer to other passages and/or key events in the text, but the focus of your argument should draw evidence from the paragraph/stanza or so you select.

To assist your argument about what your passage reveals about text's historical, literary, or cultural context, you may need to conduct research in peer-reviewed journals or books.

Helpful Resources that contain Peer-Reviewed Journals and Books on American Literature:

- Stockton's College Library
- MLA Database
- J-Store
- Project MUSE

Suggested Format:

- **Introduction:** Peak your reader's interest and focus your argument. You will probably need to describe briefly your selected passage (situate it within the larger context of the entire text). You may also consider focusing on some aspect of the historical, literary, or cultural context that your passage will illuminate.
  - **Thesis:** Place your thesis in the first or second paragraph.
    - **Focus!** This is a short paper—not a thesis. Be careful your thesis doesn't bite off more than a 2-3 page paper can reasonably argue.
    - **Interest!** Make sure your reader understands (implicitly or explicitly) what makes this argument worthwhile. What will the reader gain from reading your argument?
- **Body:** The paper's support (approximately pages 2-3). Start each paragraph with a clear topic sentence that connects the evidence with a portion of the thesis.
- **Conclusion:** Can be brief—one paragraph. Wrap up your argument. You might consider talking about other issues your argument raises—aspect your focus did not allow you cover, but would be important for a longer paper. Finally, double check to make sure your concluding remarks match your thesis statement. Have you shifted directions? Come to a more specific set of conclusions? If so, revise your thesis to reflect these changes.

Before passing in each paper I encourage you to drop by my office hours to chat about your paper, look over your thesis statement, etc. **No revisions will be allowed.** Put your very best effort into the final drafts.