

COM 7 – Literature of Fantasy and the Supernatural

Argument 1 Assignment Guidelines: Close Reading

For your first assignment you will need to offer a close reading of a passage from *The Fellowship of the Ring*. Below, you will find (1) a prompt to help you frame your close reading, (2) guidelines about what constitutes a good close reading, (3) general guidelines for this specific assignment, and (4) a rubric for how your close reading assignment will be graded.

(1) Argument 1 Prompt: How does *The Fellowship of the Ring* go about constructing an alternate reality and in what ways might that reality be limited or constrained? (Hint: your reading does not need to “answer” this prompt – the prompt is just here to help guide you as you look for possible passages to select, providing a range of concepts to consider as you hunt for problems, conflicts, or tensions in the text.)

(2) Guidelines for How to Approach a Close Reading:

- a. Find a passage where the text is conceptually complicated or difficult – a passage that raises questions and that will require interpretative analysis to make sense. (Choose only one passage to focus on, and make sure it is a rich passage, one with multiple components to analyze.)
- b. Now, pick that passage apart analytically – analyze it.
 - i. Analysis here means working step-by-step through multiple components.
 - ii. Look at how the different parts of the passage relate to one another so as to clarify what they mean.
- c. Now, think about how other parts of the text might relate to the different components of the passage you are analyzing, and use those relations to add further depth and more clarity by contextualizing the passage.
- d. Finally, drawing on all these steps, write out your close reading. A good close reading will:
 - i. Identify a rich, complex, and problematic passage in the text.
 - ii. Make an interpretative claim about that passage (argue for an interpretation of what it means or how it functions).
 - iii. Use textual evidence to substantiate that interpretative claim.
 - iv. Articulate the steps in your reasoning – how you get from the evidence on the page to the interpretation you make. Remember that you should write as if your reader is likely to be resistant to your perspective. You have to convince your reader, which means you have to walk your reader through the logical steps that lead from the evidence you cite to the conclusions you draw from that evidence.
 - v. Specify why the interpretative claim should be interesting or significant to your reader.

(3) Practical Logistics for Assignment:

- a. Your close reading should be ~1 page long (about 300 or so words), written in a standard font (ie. Times New Roman, Calibri), and double spaced.
- b. Submit on Canvas as a word document or a pdf by the assigned due date.
- c. Include citations for all quotations and a bibliography for all works cited.

(4) Rubric for Close Reading Assignment:

	(F-D)	(C)	(B)	(A)
Interpretative Claim and Contextualization	Does not engage with specific textual passage (i.e., doesn't fulfill definition of "close reading"). Could be a general claim about the text as a whole, for example.	Identifies a passage and says something about it, but the passage lacks nuance, or the claim does not make a specific interpretation or offer the author's own insight in an original way. No real link to broader text.	Identifies an interesting textual passage and makes a claim about it, but the claim seems overly reductive or lacks multiple components or the claim doesn't do conceptual work that draws this passage together with the broader text.	Identifies an interesting passage, makes an original interpretative claim with multiple conceptual components, and relates these components beyond the individual passage in a way that offers insight into the broader text.
Analysis/Close Reading (use of evidence and reasoning)	Lacks textual evidence and articulation of reasoning (ie just asserts opinions with no grounding, or seems to make irrelevant, scattered points, etc.).	Uses evidence and reasoning, but simply rephrases or summarizes chosen text without adding any analysis or interpretation or skips steps in reasoning or key pieces of evidence or both.	Uses evidence and reasoning to take a distinct angle on chosen passage, but is perhaps not deeply reflective or comprehensive, or perhaps presents a familiar analysis or interpretation (from class or general knowledge); substantiates the claim without being fully convincing.	Uses evidence and reasoning to make insightful and nuanced interpretations of the passage in a way that not only supports the claim but also could convince a reader who is skeptical of the interpretation.
Coherent essay Structure/unity	Reading shows incoherent or illogical development.	May contain some details or observations irrelevant to close reading. May present one or two instances of incoherent development of essay or paragraphs.	Essay and paragraph development generally coherent & logical. May contain one or two examples of generalizations or unneeded paraphrase.	Essay and paragraph development are coherent, logical & rhetorically effective. All paragraphs relate to the argumentative point of the close reading.
Clarity/polish/correctness/mechanics	So many mistakes in standard prose style (e.g., diction, grammar, syntax, punctuation, spelling) that reader can't understand individual sentences or paragraphs. Does not cite sources.	Exhibits immature style: e.g., inept or imprecise phrasing. Word choice often problematic. Multiple and significant syntactical, grammatical and punctuation errors and/or multiple citation errors.	Generally clearly written, but sentence structure unvaried and simple. Style may be wordy/repetitive. Diction, grammar, syntax, punctuation, and spelling mostly correct, may contain minor mistakes. References (parenthetical or notes) identify evidence but may not follow correct or consistent form.	Exhibits a mature and, ideally, graceful style with varying sentence structure. Clear throughout. Diction, grammar, syntax, punctuation, & spelling are essentially correct. Consistent references (parenthetical or notes) identify evidence.