

Figure 9.1

Ten Steps to Implementing Close Reading

- 1. Identify a text you *think* will be suitably complex and engaging for close reading**
 - Could be a picture book, poem, nonfiction article, short story (fable fairy tale, myth, legend, etc.)
 - Consider: Do students have sufficient background knowledge to read the text meaningfully?
 - If not, identify now another text to *build* background knowledge.
- 2. Analyze the text for complexity.**
 - If you can, find the Lexile.
 - If not, get another readability measure.
 - Consider qualitative measures of complexity.
 - There should be some “very complex” qualitative features—but *all* features should not be complex for any one text.
- 3. Determine what you want students to learn from a first close reading.**
 - Be realistic—but a bit aggressive.
 - First reading will probably focus on story parts, factual information, and observations about content and words.
 - You might not get to examine a lot of writer’s craft or deep inferences on a first close reading.
- 4. Decide how you will approach your text—and chunk it.**
 - How big should the chunks be? Why?
 - Will it be useful to read the entire text first, or will you go chunk by chunk? Why?
 - How will you help students prepare themselves for close reading?
- 5. Create text-dependent questions for each chunk—but aim for INDEPENDENCE.**
 - Remember that those text-dependent questions will be your backup plan.
 - Teach students to ask the four “good reader” questions themselves.
 - Be prepared with specific questions in case you need them.
 - Think about the standards in relation to each question—and be sure you’re working toward all relevant standards.
- 6. Embed your close reading lesson within a week of shared reading instruction.**
 - About 30 minutes per lesson in the intermediate grades
 - What related lessons will follow for depth and breadth?
 - What kind of writing task and text connection can be included?
- 7. Identify your (shared) lesson content for the rest of the week**
 - Identify your objective.
 - Also think about lesson length, materials, and procedures.
- 8. Consider implications for small-group instruction.**
 - “Close reading” is one priority for small-group instruction, but some lessons should also reinforce skills that students need.
 - Use instructional-level materials—but more complex than past practice.
 - Focus on acceleration—not just remediation.
- 9. Consider implications for independent reading.**
 - Must be a consistent part of the literacy block (for stamina, application, enjoyment).
 - Hold students accountable to “close reading” criteria.
 - Try to balance literary and informational text—and many genres.
- 10. Embed a week of close reading into a unit of 20–30 days.**
 - This is actually the easy part!
 - Consider developing units and text sets that are both theme and standards based.
 - (Get good at close reading lessons first.)