

Prose close-reading questions

- ✓ 1. What is happening?
 - What are the key events, interactions, or conflicts?
 - What is the main idea of the passage?
- ✓ 2. Who matters most here?
 - Which character(s) are the focus?
 - What emotions, motivations, or relationships are being revealed?
- ✓ 3. What changes?
 - Does the character, mood, relationship, perspective, or situation shift?
 - Where does that shift occur?
- ✓ 4. What details seem important?
 - Which images, descriptions, objects, or repeated ideas stand out?
 - How do they support the main idea?
- ✓ 5. What is the author's purpose?
 - What does the passage reveal about the character, setting, conflict, or theme?
 - Why does this passage matter in the larger work?

Poetry close-reading questions

- ✓ 1. What is the poem saying in plain terms?
 - What is happening (literally or emotionally)?
 - If I had to paraphrase it simply, what would it be?
- ✓ 2. Who is speaking, and what is their state of mind?
 - What kind of speaker is this (tone, attitude, emotion)?
 - Are they stable, shifting, confused, intense, reflective?
- ✓ 3. Who or what is the speaker addressing?
 - A person, object, idea, the reader, themselves?
 - How does that "audience" shape tone or meaning?
- ✓ 4. What images, comparisons, or words stand out?
 - Any strong metaphors, symbols, or repeated ideas?
 - What emotional effect do those words or images create?
- ✓ 5. Where does something change?
 - Is there a turn in tone, idea, or emotion?
 - What shifts between beginning and end?

Diagnose the question

- ✓ What is the College Board asking me to do?
 - Character
 - Setting
 - Structure
 - Narrator/speaker
 - Figurative language
 - Purpose/effect
 - Whole passage
 - Inference

Process of elimination

- ✓ Cross out answers that are:
 - Too extreme
 - Too vague
 - Unsupported
 - True, but don't answer the question
 - Wrong tone
 - Outside the passage

If two answers look right

- ✓ Choose the one that is:
 - More specific
 - Better supported
 - Less exaggerated

Prove it

- ✓ Before selecting an answer, ask: "Where is the evidence?"
If you can't point to the passage, it's probably wrong.

Trust the author

- ✓ When stuck, ask:
 - Why this word?
 - Why this image?
 - Why this shift?
 - Why here?

Manage your time

- ✓ Don't get stuck
- ✓ Make your best choice
- ✓ Flag and move on
- ✓ Never leave a question blank