

One Page Concept Review: Approaching a Cold Read

ALWAYS OR
NEARLY
ALWAYS
RELEVANT

1. Tone: ironic or straight?

X

If ironic: humor or satire?

If humorous or satirical: target?

Red Flags for Irony

*Hyperbolic diction, descriptions, reactions?
Understated diction, descriptions, reactions?
Situational ironies?
Absurdities that are treated as normal?*

2. Larger purpose: character, nature of a conflict, tone/mood, theme

X

If know/understand less: character, conflict, tone/mood

If know/understand more: theme

Guiding Questions

*What is the nature of the character/speaker?
What is the nature of the conflict?
How do words/images/details establish tone or mood?
What is the argument about the nature of the world?*

3. Speaker/Character: growth?

X

If dynamic: what is the change?

If static: **should** the character/speaker be changing/learning?

Guiding Questions

*What does the character/speaker learn?
What does the character/speaker come to understand?
Am I supposed to sympathize with the character/speaker?*

4. Conflict/Resolution: implication?

X

What are the internal external conflicts?

Is their resolution/non-resolution good or bad?

Guiding Questions

*What is the **most important** conflict?
To what degree do I sympathize with the character/speaker?
What does the resolution/non-resolution tell me about the nature of the world?*

5. Relevance of setting?

Time/Place/Society?

If pre-20th century: do class or gender help me to understand character interactions or conflict?

6. Diction/Imagery?

X

What are the key words or images? Identify 3-5.

Are there 1-2 patterns of words or images where the connotations have something in common?

If "yes," consider using this fact to organize your essay.



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7. Symbolism/Metaphor
Metonymy?

Think conceptually:
could characters
or details be standing
in for larger ideas?

What are the connotations of
individual metaphors or
metonyms?

8. Paradox?

If the text is
organized around
contradictory ideas:
use the qualification
essay structure.

Possible meanings for
paradoxical texts: life is
absurd/ unfair; God's or fate's
ways are beyond human
understanding; something is
ineffable (beyond description
or understanding); life is funny

9. Choose a structure

X

Alternatively, you may have to narrow because you're clueless. If this is the case, write about what you do understand and connect to either the nature of a conflict (without taking a position on it) or else to tone/mood.

If you understand
what's going on:
narrow your focus.
Identify this focus
in your thesis.

Narrowing forces you to engage
an aspect of the text in a deeper
way. This improves your score
above a 5.

Chunk the Text

Thesis: Change/contrast in something shows ____.

Topic Sentence: The first part is defined by ____.

Topic Sentence: The second part is defined by ____.

Critical skill: Identify the turning point or tone shift.

Advantage: It's easy (so it saves time)

Note: Most of the time this should be a specific variant of the other structures.

Cause/Effect

Thesis: Change in something shows ____.

Topic Sentence: The nature of ____ is defined by ____.

Topic Sentence: This causes _____. This is important.

Critical skill: Identify the turning point when it functions as a stimulus.

Note: Use this when there is clearly defined growth or change that is not easily chunked.

Contrast

Thesis: Contrast in something shows ____.

Topic Sentence: Something is defined by ____.

Topic Sentence: This is different in an important way from ____.

Note: Use this when there is a clearly defined contrast that is not easily chunked.

Examples: contrasting characters, choices, patterns of diction/imagery, ideas.

Qualification

Thesis: Two things are true

Topic Sentence: Something is defined by ____.

Topic Sentence: It is also defined by _____. There is tension with the first characteristic.

Advantage: You seem smart.

Note: Use this structure when encountering a text organized by paradox, when writing about the mixed feelings of the text (ambiguity), or when writing about complicated ideas/characters. You can also explicate an irony with the expectation/reality variant of this structure.

10. **After** you've summed
up what you've proved:
transition to discussion
of bigger picture:
character, nature of
conflict, tone/mood,
theme

X

DO NOT write a two reason essay or an essay organized around two different literary devices (e.g., one about diction and one about imagery).

The **ONLY** exceptions to this are when 1) you've severely mishandled time and need to crank out something in less than twenty five minutes, or 2) your understanding is so incredibly weak that you have nothing to say about even an aspect of the text.