

## Close Reading: *Night*

Close reading means paying especially close attention to what is printed on the page. It means not only reading and understanding the meanings of the individual printed words; it also involves making yourself sensitive to all the nuances and connotations of language as it is used by skilled writers. In essence, close reading means not only understanding *what* is written, but *how* it is written, and *how* the writer's stylistic techniques contribute to the meaning and purpose of the work as a whole.

**Directions:** Perform a close reading analysis for each of the following passages. Use the chart provided to guide you in analyzing all of the passage's important elements.

### EXAMPLE:

#### EXAMPLE PASSAGE (pg. 10):

##### THE EIGHT DAYS of Passover.

The weather was sublime. My mother was busy in the kitchen. The synagogues were no longer open. People gathered in private homes: no need to provoke the Germans.

Almost every rabbi's home became a house of prayer.

We drank, we ate, we sang. The Bible commands us to rejoice during the eight days of celebration, but our hearts were not in it. We wished the holiday would end so as not to have to pretend.

On the seventh day of Passover, the curtain finally rose: the Germans arrested the leaders of the Jewish community.

From that moment on, everything happened very quickly. The race toward death had begun.

#### EXAMPLE ANALYSIS:

| Elements of Style:  | Identification and Analysis:  |
|---|---|
| <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Diction</b></p> <p>Carefully examine the language of the passage. Pay attention to the author's diction (word choice), including vocabulary and words with strong or weak connotative meanings.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Identification:</b><br/>"commands"</li> <br/> <li>• <b>Analysis:</b> Wiesel uses the <b>forceful</b> word "commands" in place of a milder word such as "asks" or "requests." It points to the power of the Bible for the Jews and suggests that, at this point, they were continuing their traditions more out of obligation than out of desire.</li> </ul> |

### YOUR TURN:

#### Passage #1 (pg. 85)

An icy wind was blowing violently. But we marched without faltering.

The SS made us increase our pace. "Faster, you tramps, you flea-ridden dogs!" Why not? Moving fast made us a little warmer. The blood flowed more readily in our veins. WE had the feeling of being alive...

"Faster, you filthy dogs!" We were no longer marching, we were running. Like automatons. The SS were running as well, weapons in hand. We looked as though we were running from them.

The night was pitch-black. From time to time, a shot exploded in the darkness. They had orders to shoot anyone who could not sustain the pace. Their fingers on the triggers, they did not deprive themselves of the pleasure. If one of us stopped for a second, a quick shot eliminated the filthy dog.

| Element of Style:   | Identification and Analysis:  |
|---|---|
| <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Diction</b></p> <p>Carefully examine the language of the passage. Pay attention to the author's diction (word choice), including vocabulary and words with strong or weak connotative meanings.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Identification:</b> An icy wind was blowing violently.</li> <br/> <li>• <b>Analysis:</b> The word "icy" is used instead of "cold" to emphasize the extreme nature of the weather that the prisoners were forced to endure. The same is true of the word "violently", used to describe the full force of the wind &amp; how viscous the conditions felt to the prisoners.</li> </ul> |

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|---|--|
| <p><b>Imagery</b></p> <p>Identify key figures of speech (figurative language) that appeal to sensory experiences such as, simile, metaphor, personification, symbol and hyperbole. Comment on their effect on the passage as a whole. Think about how the sensory experience helps to create the author's tone.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identification: "... the filthy dog".</li> <li>• Analysis: The metaphor used by Elie when referring to his fellow Jewish prisoners emphasizes how the SS officers treated them. This contributes to the tone of the passage because it shows how Elie felt at being treated so callously by the SS. He referred to his own people as "filthy dogs" because that's how they were treated.</li> </ul>   |
| <p><b>Details</b></p> <p>Facts that are included or omitted. What details does the author choose to include? What do they imply? What does the author choose to exclude? Details are most commonly the facts given by the author or speaker as support for the attitude or tone.</p>                                | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identification: "We looked as if we were running from them".</li> <li>• Analysis: Were the prisoners not essentially running from the guards? Elie implies that they were simply following orders, not running from the guards, but they actually were running from being shot by the SS. Elie's attitude is evidenced by his almost sarcastic comment here implying his feeling of bitterness towards the SS &amp; the whole situation.</li> </ul> |
| <p><b>Syntax</b></p> <p>How are words arranged in the passage? Does the author use simple or complex sentences? Are there unique uses of fragments or run-ons? What about structural devices such as anaphora, asyndeton and polysyndeton?</p>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identification: "Like automatons".</li> <li>• Analysis: This sentence fragment lends to the reader's understanding of how the prisoners were simply surviving. They were automatically doing what they had to do to survive without really thinking. Elie's tone here is cynical, showing contempt for the actions of the SS.</li> </ul>  |
| <p><b>Tone</b></p> <p>What is the speaker's attitude in the passage? What aspect(s) of the text suggest this?</p>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identification: The last sentence, especially.</li> <li>• Analysis: The author's attitude was resentful, spiteful, and bitter throughout this passage. All of the diction, imagery, details, and syntax show how Elie felt at being forced to not only endure such excruciating circumstances, but also at having to witness the suffering of others.</li> </ul>  |