**Close reading of your text**

Reading your text is the first and one of the most important steps in writing an effective academic research paper. By reading closely, you actively involve yourself in the text and are better able to understand, remember and absorb the work. Close reading takes more time and mental effort than reading for plot but is also far more rewarding and will help tremendously when developing your focus question.  Remember, the task states, **“*Analyse the genre, structure and textual features of your chosen complex literary text/s to support valid interpretations*.”**  
**Options for close reading strategies include:**

1. **Reading a text multiple times:**

* Read first for basic comprehension and enjoyment, then again for analysis.
* In the second reading, focus on characters, relationships and settings. Are there noticeable gaps, silences or contradictions? Which characters are marginalized or negatively stereotyped? Which relationships involve unequal power relationships?
* Take notes on the genre, narrative structure and significant textual features to support valid interpretations.

1. **Annotating**

* In the margins, write down any questions that occur to you while reading.
* Use your own symbols in the margins to personalize your annotations and mark what you feel is important: characters, relationships, key moments, gaps, silences, contradictions.
* Flag key passages with post-its and, in notes/journal, write questions, key plot points and important facts and ideas about characters or settings.
* Also make note of specific literary devices, recurring images, symbols or themes.

**Literary Theory**: From your knowledge of literary theory, consider the following **broad questions** **as you read**:

* 1. **Typical feminist questions:**
* How is gender represented/ constructed in this text? What values does it reinforce?
* What are the text's assumptions regarding gender?
* What are the images of women/ men in the text (especially images of women in texts by men)?
* Do the images of women and men in the text seem to function as stereotypes, warnings, models, exceptions?
  1. **Typical Marxist questions**
* Which class does the text claim to represent? What values does it reinforce?
* What social classes do the characters represent? What differences in people's economic/class placement are assumed in the novel?
* How do characters from different classes interact or conflict?
  1. **Postcolonial questions**
* How does the literary text represent various aspects of colonial oppression?
* What person(s) or groups does the work identify as "other" or stranger? How are such persons/groups described and treated?
  1. **Psychoanalytical questions**
* How can characters' behavior be explained in terms of psychoanalytic concepts of any kind (for example, fear or fascination with death, sexuality as a primary indicator of psychological identity or the operations of ego-id-superego)?
* How does internal conflict within a main character reflect the relationship between the id, ego and superego (Freud) or the real, imaginary and symbolic orders (Lacan)?
  1. **New historicist questions**

**WHICH theory/s are most relevant to the analysis of my novel? How can I read my novel from a fresh perspective?**

* What language/characters/events present in the work reflect the current events of the author’s day?
* How does the work consider traditionally marginalized populations?

<https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/subject_specific_writing/writing_in_literature/literary_theory_and_schools_of_criticism/marxist_criticism.html>

<https://cla.purdue.edu/academic/english/theory/>

<https://www.writingaboutliterature.com/>