**Department of Secondary English Language Arts & Literacy**

*McDougal Littell, Close Read, Grade 8, Unit 7, from Dreams from My Father*

**Standard RI 8.1:** Cite textual evidence that most strongly supports an analysis of the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.

**Standard RI 8.4:** Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including figurative, connotative, and technical meanings...

**Standard W 9:** Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.

**Close Read Day One Overview** (1-4 days)

(1. Before Day One) **Teach annotating.** Teacher introduces the passage with minimal commentary; students read it entirely and annotate it.

1. (On Day One) Teacher introduces focus section of the passage (5 minutes)
2. Teacher reads the passage out loud to the class as students follow along and add to their original annotations (10 minutes)
3. In **guided practice,** students reread, discuss, and answer text-based questions about the passage (25 minutes)
4. In **collaborative practice,** class discusses answers to text-based questions (10 minutes)
5. **Independently,** students answer text-based questions about the passage (15 minutes)
6. In **collaborative practice,** class discusses answers to text-based questions (10 minutes)

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| *McDougal Littell, Close Read, Grade 8, Unit 7, from Dreams from My Father,* pp. 832-842 | **1. Introduce the focus section of the passage.**

Teacher sets the purpose for reading and gives minimal commentary about the text at the onset. This close reading approach forces students to rely on the text instead of privileging background knowledge and provides equal access for all students as they seek to comprehend the text. Students read closely to determine what the text explicitly states and to make logical inferences. It is critical to cultivating independence and creating a culture of close reading that students initially grapple with rich texts without the aid of prefatory material, extensive notes, or even teacher explanations.

Example of minimal commentary:
*This is an excerpt from the autobiography of our 44th president. An autobiography is the true story of a person's life, told by that person.*

**2. Read the passage out loud to the class as students follow along and add to their original annotations.**

Speaking clearly and carefully will allow students to follow the author's narrative, and reading out loud with students following along improves fluency while offering all students access to this complex text. Accurate and skillful modeling of the reading provides students who may be dysfluent with accurate pronunciations and syntactic patterns of English.*

For additional information contact Oneida Fox Roye, Senior Program Director, Secondary English Language Arts & Literacy at ofoxroye@boston.k12.ma.us
### Text Passage under Discussion

**McDougal Littell, Close Read, Grade 8, Unit 7, from Dreams from My Father, pp. 832-843**

*Focus section pp. 832-836*

### Directions for Teachers/Text-Based Questions for Students

3. In guided practice students reread, discuss, and answer text-based questions about the passage. As students move through these questions and reread the text, be sure to **check for and reinforce their understanding of academic vocabulary in the corresponding text**. At times, the questions themselves may focus on academic vocabulary. Students cite specific textual evidence to support conclusions drawn from the text. Teacher **checks for understanding by asking students for evidence from the text.**

(Where did you find that in the text?)

(Q1) **Why was the author restless at the start of school?** (p. 832)

Students may not be aware of the use of restless in this section of the text. The answer begins to explore family dynamics. The author’s concern was fitting in (p. 832, line 2).

(Q2) **What does the author mean when he states, For my grandparents, admission into Punahou Academy heralded the start of something grand... What do we learn about the author and his family?** (p. 832)

His admission was an elevation in the family status, (the school was) an incubator for island elites. We learn that social status is important to his grandparents and the community; they care about reputation and education.

(Q3) **Why does the author spend his first day at school in a daze?** (p. 834)

The other students made fun of him. They:
- laughed at his name and the name of the tribe
- wanted to touch his hair
- questioned whether his father was a cannibal

...my sense that I didn’t belong continued to grow (p. 834, line 61).

(Q4) **What is the significance of the author being called Barry? Why would the author want to draw attention to that detail?** (p. 834)

Possibly to share how well meaning, yet possibly misguided the adults of his childhood were. *This here’s Barry. I’m Barry’s grandfather.... When she read my full name. I heard titters ... Frederick leaned over to me. I thought your name was Barry ...* (p. 834, lines 29-44).

4. In collaborative practice, class discusses answers to text-based questions. Teacher facilitates a **group discussion to check for understanding** of previously assigned text-based questions.
### Text Passage under Discussion

**McDougal Littell, Close Read, Grade 8, Unit 7, from Dreams from My Father, pp. 830-842**

*Focus section pp. 832-836*

### Directions for Teachers/Text-Based Questions for Students

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<td><strong>Q5</strong></td>
<td>Why does the author make a point of saying, <em>I was no worse off than the other children who were relegated to the category of misfits</em>? (p. 835, line 70-71) The author was not alone, but rather part of an undesirable peer group, outside of the popular clique of students. Students who were different in any way were grouped together; this is the group to which the author belonged.</td>
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<td><strong>Q6</strong></td>
<td>What evidence does the author use to support <em>A ten-year-old’s nightmare</em>? (p. 835 line 69) The author could be referencing anyone of the following... <em>misfits—the girls who were too tall or too shy... She was a plump and dark and didn’t have any friends</em> (835, lines 69-76)</td>
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<td><strong>Q7</strong></td>
<td>What does the author mean by, <em>I knew only that it was too late for explanations, that somehow I’d been tested and found wanting</em>...? (p. 835, lines 101-102) His peers teased him during a game of tag with Coretta. During this episode of bulling he was accused of being Coretta's boyfriend. He reacted by shunning Coretta and felt bad about it (lines 96-104).</td>
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<td><strong>Q8</strong></td>
<td>What does it mean when Gramps states, <em>Should be one heck of a Christmas</em>? (p. 836, line 135) The author’s grandparents receive a telegram telling them that his mother and father are coming two weeks apart, and staying through the New Year. This tells the reader that the author lives with his grandparents, and that the mother and father live separately, which requires troubleshooting to determine living arrangement for their visit. It also begins to inform us of the family structure (lines 129-133).</td>
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**Note [considered] as academic vocabulary** (p. 833, line 9).

**Note (category and explain) as academic vocabulary** (p. 835, lines 70; 99).

**Note [explained] as academic vocabulary** (p. 835, line 136).

| **6.** | In collaborative practice, class discusses answers to text-based questions. Teacher facilitates a group discussion to check for understanding. |
**McDougal Littell, Close Read, Grade 8, Unit 7, from Dreams from My Father**

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**Standard W 9:** Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.

**Close Read Day Two Overview** (1-4 days)

1. (On Day Two) Teacher reads the focus section of the passage out loud as students follow along and add to their original annotations (10 minutes)
2. In **guided practice** students reread, discuss, and answer text-based questions about the passage (25 minutes)
3. In **collaborative practice**, class discusses answers to text-based questions (10 minutes)
4. **Independently**, students answer text-based questions about the passage (15 minutes)
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<td><strong>Focus section pp. 837-842</strong></td>
<td>2. In <strong>guided practice</strong> students reread, discuss, and answer text-based questions about the passage As students move through these questions and reread the text, be sure to check for and reinforce their understanding of academic vocabulary in the corresponding text. At times, the questions themselves may focus on academic vocabulary. Students cite specific textual evidence to support conclusions drawn from the text. Teacher checks for understanding by asking students for evidence from the text.</td>
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| **McDougal Littell, Close Read, Grade 8, Unit 7, from Dreams from My Father, pp. 830-842**<br>Focus section pp. 837-842 | **(Q9)** What is the tone the author is creating by choosing volatile and threatening? Why does the author create this tone?  
The peaceful tone of the text (when the author describes himself as nestled in the soft, forgiving bosom of America’s consumer culture, I felt safe (p. 836, lines 122-3) is disrupted. The words volatile and threatening suggest a disruption in the tone of the text and a shift in the author’s life prior to the arrival of his father.  

**(Q10)** What does the author mean when he describes his father as something unknown?  
Even though his father is physically present in the flesh (p. 837, line 151), the author preferred his more distant image, an image I could alter on a whim (p. 837, lines 151-2). The author does not understand his father or his own identity. His father remains a mystery.  

**Note [explained, approaching, & reflected] as academic vocabulary** (p. 837, line 159, p. 838, lines 166 and 195).  

**(Q11)** What does the author mean by ...all I can perceive is the worn-out shell? (p. 839, lines 222-223)  
The author in analyzing his father realizes that his connection to his father may only be biological--he does not know him (p. 839, 219-223).  

**Note [explaining, pattern, & explanation] as academic vocabulary** (p. 839, lines 217, 221, 222).  

**(Q12)** Compare and contrast the author’s perspective about his relationship with his father with his wife’s perspective? (p. 839, 2nd paragraph)  
The author feels distant from and conflicted about his father:  
...the seed of all sorts of tangled arguments that I carry on with myself (lines 220-1); ...the small interactions we might have had, they seem irretrievably lost (lines 218-219). The author often felt mute before him (his father) (line 224-225).  
In contrast, his wife believes that boys and their fathers don’t always have much to say to each other unless and until they trust... (223-5).  

**Note [direct] as academic vocabulary** (p. 839, line 232).  

3. **In collaborative practice, class discusses answers to text-based questions.**  
Teacher facilitates a group discussion to check for understanding of previously assigned text-based questions.
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<td>Focus section pp. 837-842</td>
<td>(Q13) What does the author mean by, <em>It was as if his (his father’s) presence had summoned the spirit of earlier times and allowed each of them to reprise his or her old role...</em> (p. 839) His father’s presence takes him back to a more hopeful time when <em>there was nothing to fear but fear itself</em> (lines 241-242), <em>as if Dr. King had never been shot, and the Kennedys continued to beckon the nation, and war and riot and famine were nothing more than temporary setbacks</em> (line 237-241).</td>
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<td>(Q14) After listening to the author’s father at school, why did Coretta’s face show only a look of simple satisfaction? Coretta feels validated that the speech by the author’s father made her feel proud, accepted, and cool. Coretta was <em>too intent to smile</em>, suggesting that her connection to the author's father was deep, powerful, and gratifying, not simply enjoyable.</td>
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<td>(Q15) Explain what the author means in the last line by, <em>As I follow my father into the sound, he lets out a quick shout, bright and high, a shout that leaves much behind and reaches out for more, a shout that cries for laughter.</em> The author connects to the essence of his past and his father’s legacy, and experiences a joy that inspires a yearning to strengthen the connection. The author and his father bond in this moment, which serves as a resolution to his father’s dream for him.</td>
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<td>(Q16) Why is it important to the author to figure out how I’d explain myself when my father walked into our class the next day? On page 836, the author tells his classmates about his family lineage, but he later expresses that <em>another part of me knew that what I was telling them was a lie, something I’d constructed from the scraps of information I’d picked up from my mother</em> (lines 148-50). When the author learns that his father is coming to visit, he becomes uncertain that what he told his classmates was accurate, and he fears losing the status that his story may have gained for him amongst his classmates.</td>
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**Standard W 9:** Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.

**Close Read Day Three Overview (1-4 days)**

1. (On Day Three) Teacher rereads the focus section of the passage out loud to the class as students follow along (5 minutes)
2. In **guided practice** students reread, discuss, and answer text-based questions about the passage (25 minutes)
3. **Independently,** students answer text-based questions about the passage (15 minutes)
4. In **collaborative practice,** discuss answers to text-based questions (10 minutes)
5. For homework, teacher introduces the Writing Prompt for Day Four, students gather textual evidence to respond to the prompt

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(Where did you find that in the text?)

(Q17) **What caused tension to build in the family a few weeks into the author’s father’s visit (pp. 839-841)?**

The author’s grandmother felt like a servant; his mother was stressed: *mouth pinched, her eyes avoiding her parents* (line 248). His father was opinionated: *I tell you, Barry, you do not work as hard as you should. Go now, before I get angry at you* (line 262-3). His father made himself too comfortable in the house: *Gramps complained that my father was sitting in his chair* (line 246).

**Note [constantly & explain] as academic vocabulary** (p. 840, lines 256; 257).
Text Passage under Discussion

McDougal Littell, Close Read, Grade 8, Unit 7, from Dreams from My Father, pp. 830-842

Focus section pp. 837-842

Directions for Teachers/Guiding Questions For Students

3. Independently, students answer text-based questions about the passage.
   Students move through another set of text-based questions independently. Teacher monitors, facilitates, and checks for application.

(Q18) What does the author mean by, something had cracked open between all of us, goblins rushing out of some old, sealed-off lair? What is the something? What does the author mean by goblins (p. 841)?
The tension in the family bursts, in spite of everyone’s efforts to pretend everything is fine. For the time that the author’s father had been visiting, everyone was masquerading and playing a role. The author says, “I saw it for what it was: a lie” (lines 274-5). Goblins represent the ugly truth that his father disrupts what is “normal” (line 276) for the author.

Note [including & explain] as academic vocabulary (p. 841, lines 266; 301).

(Q19) On page 841, the author describes the reactions of Miss Hefty, Mr. Eldredge, Coretta, and his other classmates to his father’s visit to the class. What do these descriptions of others’ reactions suggest about the author’s own feelings about his father coming to class?
The author shares that everyone had a positive reaction to his father’s visit, but does not express any specific feelings of his own.
Reactions of others include:
   o You’ve got a pretty impressive father (line 327)
   o Your dad is pretty cool (lines 328-9)
   o Her face showed only a look of simple satisfaction (lines 331-2)
The author states in lines 311-13, He had been speaking for some time before I could finally bring myself back to the moment. The author’s silence suggests that he remains conflicted about his father’s presence in his life. In line 342, he states, He remains opaque to me, a present mass.

Note [describing, required, develop consider, & intent] as academic vocabulary (p. 842, line 313; 314; 322; 325; 331).

3. In collaborative practice, class discusses answers to text-based questions
Teacher facilitates a group discussion to check for understanding.

4. For homework, teacher introduces the Writing Prompt for Day Four, students gather textual evidence to respond to the prompt.

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**Standard RI 8.6:** Determine an author’s point of view or purpose in a text and analyze how the author acknowledges and responds to conflicting evidence or viewpoints.

### Culminating Text-Based Question

Student Prompt: Write an analysis using textual evidence from the excerpt of the author’s perspective and how it shapes his perception of himself and his family.

Independently, students review the narrative for textual evidence about the author's perspective and how it reflects his perception of himself and his family.

Students’ review their textual evidence and consider what the author’s writing reveals about his values, feelings, beliefs, and experiences. What is the impact of the author’s perspective?

Students might use a type of organizer (possible resources from the *Best Practices Toolkit*, Literary Analysis, Writing C32 or Informative Essay, Writing C31).

Students might use a prewriting strategy (possible resources from the *Best Practices Toolkit*, Mapping main ideas and details C6, C45).

Teacher explicitly models ways to structure the informative/explanatory summary. Teacher and student discuss the structure that makes sense given their evidence. Students are encouraged to share their ideas about how to structure of the informative/explanatory summary. Teacher and students create a class generated chart with criteria.

Teacher distributes a model of the informative/explanatory summary (possible resources from the *Best Practices Toolkit*, Literary Analysis Frame: Literary Nonfiction, D48-D51).

Students draft their essays (possible resources from the *Best Practices Toolkit*, Microtheme C13, C52). Students trade writing with partners and provide feedback (possible resources from the *Best Practices Toolkit* Peer Response Guide, Writing C14). Students revise their writing using peer feedback, class generated criteria chart, and grading criteria as guides (possible resources from the *Best Practices Toolkit*, Read-Around Groups, Writing C15).