



Falling in Love with Close Reading Study Guide

Written for you and your team
by Christopher Lehman and Kate Roberts

The best professional development is conversation; educators talking with other educators to problem solve, celebrate, and dream into the future for their students. We are delighted our book, [*Falling in Love with Close Reading: Lessons for Analyzing Texts—and Life*](#), will be one part of your conversation this year.

Using This Study Guide

This study guide is written to support an active study of your students and your instruction. We find that the best collaborative work involves a few special ingredients: it is inspirational, full of conversation, and involves some hands-on work that everyone can bring directly back to their classrooms.

In each section of this guide you will find four main parts:

Before you meet:

- ◆ “Please Bring” suggestions for ideas or artifacts to bring to that day’s conversation.

During a meeting:

- ◆ “An Activity” for engaging with a key idea from the chapter(s).
- ◆ “A Discussion” set of questions to engage reflection and conversation.
- ◆ “A Planning Session” which suggests items to create or plans to develop to begin implementing the ideas discussed in the chapter(s).

Doing this work in full will take anywhere from one 40-minute period to a bit longer, depending on your timing, focus, and availability. We have listed suggested *minimum* times during each section; if you have more time certainly adjust.

While we believe all parts are essential to an engaging discussion, we offer this guide as one possible path for conversation between the chapters of [*Falling in Love with Close Reading*](#) and your classrooms, and believe the best conversations are ones tailored to your needs. We encourage you to revise as you see fit. You might, for instance, only choose two areas from each section, perhaps leading an activity and then a discussion.

Whatever your plan, have fun, enjoy learning together, and keep focused on the strengths and next steps of your students.

While you move ahead, we hope you will share your ideas, questions, and inspiration with us!



Connect with us on Twitter ([@iChrisLehman](#), [@teachkate](#))

or at our blogs ([ChristopherLehman.com](#), [KateAndMaggie.com](#)), or leave comments at our “Close Reading Blog-a-thon” at [bit.ly/17e6iMd](#) (case sensitive).



- ▶ *You can also use or follow the Twitter hashtag #FILWCloseReading to connect with other educators studying with our book.*

Enjoy your journey!

1

After Reading Chapter 1

Please Bring

Suggestions in this “Please Bring” section list items to invite your colleague to bring (be sure that whatever they bring, you use!). These could include student work, texts you and your colleagues will be using with students, existing plans, or evidence of experiences.

- ◆ Come having read Chapter 1.
- ◆ Bring a photo of someone, something, or someplace you love (photo on your phone is okay).

An Activity: 5–10 Minutes

You might reread all or a part of the first four paragraphs of Chapter 1 and then invite your colleagues to share the photos they brought and talk about the “close” details they know well of those people, things, and places they love. Do this in pairs to save time, or as a whole group to connect more deeply with one another.

While the group talks, take notes on the tone, facial expressions, body language, and phrases each person uses.

At the end of the conversation, share with the group your observations. We will often raise the question: “Do our classrooms feel this same way during our close reading instruction?”

A Discussion: 15–20 Minutes

Here are suggested points of conversation, written as if you are talking with colleagues. These are intentionally written in a broad manner to yield the largest span of conversation and perhaps even debate. Feel free to revise these to best meet your needs, including adding additional time if you have it:

- ◆ This chapter aims to describe the history of close reading and then define it in terms of instruction with students today. Let’s look at Figures 1.1 and 1.2.
 - ▶ What do you agree with in these lists?
 - ▶ Is there anything you would add, remove, or revise?
 - ▶ Do we have some consensus in our group on our core beliefs about instruction? (Chart these so you can reference them in future conversations.)
- ◆ What are we currently doing in our close reading instruction?
 - ▶ Do our current practices align to our beliefs?
 - ▶ What of our current practices would need to be added, removed, or revised to align more closely to our core beliefs?

A Planning Session: 10–20 Minutes

The Planning Session offers an opportunity to take the work of your study group and apply it to classroom practice. It is written as if you are leading your group through these steps. Feel free to revise to best meet your needs, including adding additional time if you have it:

1. At the start of our journey through the book and our conversation, let’s make some big picture initial decisions:
 - ▶ Which dates will we meet? What is our reading plan (which chapters for which meetings)?
 - ▶ We will have some discussion topics as we go, but let’s list out some of the burning questions and ideas we have—things we would like to study over the course of these conversations.
 - ▶ Let’s keep students at the center of our work. Each meeting, plan to bring some teacher and/or student artifacts from your classroom to talk off of. Work that went really well and work that didn’t go as planned.
2. (Look ahead to materials and discussion points for next time): “Our next meeting will be . . . be sure to have read/tried . . . and please bring. . . .”

2

After Reading Chapter 2

Please Bring

- ◆ Come having read Chapter 2.
- ◆ Bring a copy of either a narrative or informational text you are currently using in your lessons.
- ◆ OPTIONAL: Bring song lyrics to a popular song (one you hear students singing!).

An Activity: 5–10 Minutes

(The OPTIONAL activity may add 10–15 more minutes.)

You could begin by rereading or summarizing the “Closely Reading Media” lesson from this chapter and trying it out with the group. The QR code in the book will take you directly to the audio which you can use with your group or come prepared with a different song.

As before, wrap up this activity by noting body language and facial expressions. Reminding everyone that our goal is not just to *teach* closely, but for students to engage and enjoy *reading* closely.

OPTIONAL: If you have extra time, invite your group to work in pairs, and try this same close reading work on the popular song lyrics they brought. You may want to have extra popular song lyrics on hand or even ask everyone to bring headphones to listen to songs online or on their devices.

A Discussion: 10–20 Minutes

(If you would like more time for the Planning Session, then select only a few topics to discuss.)

Feel free to revise these points of conversation to best meet your needs:

- ◆ This chapter offers ways to read closely for the text evidence in narrative and non-narrative texts. Let’s reread the short intro to text evidence on page 11 and then look at Figures 2.2, 2.7, or the Appendix chart for Chapter 2 as we talk.
 - ▶ How is “text evidence” similar and different from other types of details, like “word choice”?
 - ▶ How does this compare to your instruction now?
 - ▶ Is there anything we could add, remove, or revise in those charts? For instance, is there language that better matches the age of your particular students?
- ◆ After reading both lessons in the chapter, what are our thoughts about teaching close reading?
 - ▶ What do you notice about the amount of student talk in each lesson? How does this feel similar or different from the ways we have been approaching close reading instruction?
 - ▶ Chris and Kate say that the text selections are only suggestions. Keeping that in mind, what do you notice about the types of texts and media they are demonstrating with? What are your thoughts about those choices?
 - ▶ Other ideas or questions for the group?
- ◆ What are some of the predictable problems that might arise as we teach these lessons, and how might we plan ahead to address those understandable struggles?

A Planning Session: 15–25 Minutes

(If you would like more time for the Discussion, then keep this Planning Session shorter. For instance, do not ask the group to reread the lessons, simply to have the lessons open while planning.)

- 1.** Find a partner who brought a similar text type, either narrative or informational. Turn to the lesson from the chapter that corresponds to your text.
- 2.** Reread that lesson. With your partner, take one of your texts and try out the close reading ritual.
 - ▶ Have sticky notes on hand so you can mark up the text with your thinking.
 - ▶ For example, how will you “think aloud” your process for your students, perhaps: “Here is one detail I think I should write down . . . because . . .” or “As I look for patterns, I am thinking about. . .”
 - ▶ Use the tips in the chapter as well as the extensions starting on page 27 for ideas.
- 3.** Come back together as a group and talk about when, in the next few days, you will try out all or a part of this lesson.
 - ▶ Will it be in a minilesson? With a small group? With one student in a conference? (Refer to Chapter 7, page 124, for some suggestions about scheduling.)
 - ▶ Plan to bring back teacher and/or student artifacts from these first tries to the next conversation.
- 4.** Look ahead to materials and discussion points for next time: “Our next meeting will be . . . be sure to have read/tried . . . and please bring. . .”

3

After Reading Chapter 3

Please Bring

- ◆ Come having read Chapter 3.
- ◆ Bring a copy of either a narrative or informational text you are currently using in your lessons.
- ◆ OPTIONAL: Bring artifacts from your teaching after our last conversation, student work, charts, or notes you made.

An Activity: 5–10 Minutes

You might reread the “Closely Reading Life” section of the chapter. Invite the group to share their reactions to these ways of studying word choice in life.

Then, invite the group to do some private journaling, looking back at the bullets and choosing one to write briefly about. Model this a bit for the group by perhaps choosing “study the words *we* choose” to write from. Think aloud and say, “I want to reflect on the words I use, in my mind, for people in my life. See what patterns are there. . . . Hmm . . . well, to be honest. . . .”

Be sure to model the transformational power of looking closely at words in this way. Invite your group to journal for a few minutes. They could share a bit with a partner or instead the group could reflect generally at the end.

A Discussion: 10–20 Minutes

Feel free to revise these to best meet your needs:

- ◆ OPTIONAL: Let's share the artifacts you brought with you, the work you have tried since our last conversation. Talk with a partner about what you tried and what you are reflecting on.
 - ▶ (Walk around the group as they talk. Chart some of the big takeaways you are overhearing. End by saying back to the group some of these.)
- ◆ Keep these reflections in mind as we look at Chapter 3. This chapter offers ways to read closely for the word choice in narrative and non-narrative texts.
 - ▶ Let's share some general ah-has, questions, and comments from anywhere in the chapter.
- ◆ Look at Figure 3.2 and the Appendix for Chapter 3.
 - ▶ How does this compare to your instruction now?
 - ▶ Is there anything we could add, remove, or revise in those charts?
- ◆ After reading both lessons in the chapter, what are our thoughts about teaching close reading? How does this connect or add to how we have taught students to read closely before?
- ◆ What are some of the predictable problems that might arise as we teach these lessons, and how might we address those understandable struggles?

A Planning Session: 10–20 Minutes

1. Find a partner (same from last conversation or new) who brought a similar text type, either narrative or informational.
2. Turn to Figure 3.6, “A Scaffold: Frames for Thinking About Word Choice.” Reread the portion of this lesson, beginning on page 42, which describes using sentence frames.
 - ▶ With your partner, try out some of these frames in your own text.
 - ▶ Brainstorm and record additional frames that meet the needs of your students.
 - ▶ Use the tips in the chapter as well as the extensions starting on page 46 for ideas.
3. Come back together as a group and talk about when, in the next few days, you will try out all or a part of this lesson.
 - ▶ Will it be in a minilesson? With a small group? With one student in a conference? (Refer to Chapter 7, page 124, for some suggestions about scheduling.)
 - ▶ Plan to bring back teacher and/or student artifacts from these first tries to the next conversation.
4. (Look ahead to materials and discussion points for next time): “Our next meeting will be . . . be sure to have read/tried . . . and please bring. . . .”

4

After Reading Chapter 4

Please Bring

- ◆ Come having read Chapter 4. Have reflections and ideas already marked.
- ◆ OPTIONAL: Bring artifacts from your teaching after our last conversation, student work, charts, or notes you made.

An Activity: 10–15 Minutes

(This Activity is longer than other days as it involves more discussion and group work.)

You could have three pieces of chart paper in areas of the room or distributed to groups. Reread “Describing Organizational Choices” on page 52, then divide into those three main types and have group members brainstorm and record examples. The Appendix for Chapter 4 provides some examples to help you get started.

As groups work, continue to help them consider each of these areas as ways of structuring texts. You might make suggestions such as:

- ◆ Would your students say this in the same way or could you reword some of these examples you brainstormed?
- ◆ Last chapter we talked about sentence frames. Could you think of some for this?
- ◆ If close reading is about paying attention to authors’ choices, let’s think about why someone would have chosen *this over that*.

Leave these charts up in the room as you continue with your discussion.

A Discussion: 10–20 Minutes

Feel free to revise these to best meet your needs:

- ◆ **OPTIONAL:** Let's share the artifacts you brought with you, the work you have tried since our last conversation. Talk with a partner about what you tried and what you are reflecting on.
 - ▶ (Walk around the group as they talk. Chart some of the big takeaways you are overhearing. End by saying back to the group some of these.)
- ◆ Keep these reflections in mind as we look at Chapter 4. This chapter offers ways to read closely for the structure of narrative and non-narrative texts.
 - ▶ Let's share some general ah-has, questions, and comments from anywhere in the chapter.
- ◆ Look at Figure 4.2 and the Appendix for Chapter 4.
 - ▶ How does this compare to your instruction now?
 - ▶ Is there anything we could add, remove, or revise in those charts?
- ◆ After reading both lessons in the chapter, what are our thoughts about teaching close reading? How does this connect or add to how we have taught students to read closely before?
- ◆ What are some of the predictable problems that might arise as we teach these lessons and how might we address those understandable struggles?

A Planning Session: 10–15 Minutes

1. Find a partner (same from last conversation or new) who brought a similar text type, either narrative or informational.
2. Turn to page 71, “Next Steps: Extensions and Support.” With your partner, reread this section.
 - ▶ Talk together about ways you could differentiate the instruction in your classroom to support your range of readers. Would you modify one of the lessons from this chapter? Or use some of these next steps in small groups or conferences?
 - ▶ Make a specific plan, jot down the names of students who would benefit from different next steps.
 - ▶ See the Appendix for additional ideas.

- 3.** Come back together as a group and talk about when, in the next few days, you will try out all or a part of this lesson.
 - ▶ Will it be in a minilesson? With a small group? With one student in a conference? (Refer to Chapter 7, page 124 for some suggestions about scheduling.)
 - ▶ Plan to bring back teacher and/or student artifacts from these first tries to the next conversation.
- 4.** (Look ahead to materials and discussion points for next time): “Our next meeting will be . . . be sure to have read/tried . . . and please bring. . . .”

5 & 6

After Reading Chapters 5 and 6 (or read each separately)

As we discuss in Chapter 1, we see the early chapters of Falling in Love with Close Reading (2–4) as the nuts and bolts of close reading habits. Chapters 5 and 6 are then more advanced ways of putting together those basic tools to do more complex close reading.

For the purposes of this study guide, we have grouped these chapters together, as the content is different but the main structures are the same (a key feature of the book, as you have noticed!).

While you certainly can read both chapters before your next conversation, your group may also choose to handle each chapter at a time, in which case use this section of the guide as support for helping you plan more than one conversation.

Please Bring

- ◆ Come having read Chapters 5 and 6 (or you may separate these if you have more opportunities to meet).
- ◆ Bring two or more texts that could pair well together like those from these chapters.
- ◆ OPTIONAL: Bring artifacts from your teaching after our last conversation, student work, charts, or notes you made.

An Activity: 10–15 Minutes

First, together look at the Appendices for Chapter 5 and Chapter 6. Briefly talk together about the ways the close reading ritual has shifted and become a bit more complex. What did you notice? How do these revised versions build on the work of the previous chapters?

Then, do a bit of the informational text lesson from Chapter 6 together. Use the QR codes to have both the editorial and the news article with the embedded video ready to read and view together. This lesson, while presented in Chapter 6 on reading across texts, also contains powerful point of view work found in Chapter 5 and is perfect for talking across the chapters.

A Discussion: 15–20 Minutes

(If you would like more time for the Planning Session, then select only a few topics to discuss.)

Feel free to revise these to best meet your needs:

- ◆ OPTIONAL: As you look at your student artifacts, what signs of readiness are you seeing for these next steps?
 - ▶ What strengths do they have that you could build on when moving to these more complex ways of close reading?
 - ▶ What areas will they need further support?
- ◆ Keep these reflections in mind as we look at Chapters 5 and 6 (or 5, then 6 if you decide to break these into two conversations). These chapters offer ways to read closely for point of view or bias and for reading critically across texts.
 - ▶ Let's share some general ah-has, questions, and comments from anywhere in the chapter.
- ◆ One concept that continues to come up across the book is the importance of both choosing demonstration texts that match the needs of our students and providing lots of time for independent reading and practice.
 - ▶ Do we have the texts and media necessary in our classrooms now to do both?
 - ▶ What resources have you found useful? In which areas do we need to grow our collection?
- ◆ What are some of the predictable problems that might arise as we teach these lessons and how might we address those understandable struggles?

A Planning Session: 10–20 Minutes

(If you would like more time for the Discussion, then keep this Planning Session shorter. For instance, you may not come back together as a group to discuss next steps; instead partners may simply talk about this together.)

- 1.** Find a partner (same from last conversation or new). Briefly share the texts you have brought in and what ways they seem to pair together.
- 2.** Choose a lesson from either chapter that corresponds to the texts you have brought with you. With your partner, plan your demonstration.
 - ▶ Have sticky notes on hand so you can mark up the text with your thinking.
 - ▶ For example, how will you “think aloud” your process for your students, perhaps: “I am noticing something about the way the author wrote this section . . .” or “As I look for patterns, I am thinking about. . . .”
 - ▶ Use the Appendices for Chapter 5 and 6 for additional ideas.
- 3.** Come back together as a group and talk about when, in the next few days, you will try out all or a part of this lesson.
 - ▶ Will it be in a minilesson? With a small group? With one student in a conference? (Refer to Chapter 7, page 124, for some suggestions about scheduling.)
 - ▶ Plan to bring back teacher and/or student artifacts from these first tries to the next conversation.
- 4.** (Look ahead to materials and discussion points for next time): “Our next meeting will be . . . be sure to have read/tried . . . and please bring. . . .”



After Reading Chapter 7

Please Bring

- ◆ Come having read Chapter 7.
- ◆ Mark up any areas from the entire book you would like to revisit.
- ◆ OPTIONAL: Bring artifacts from your teaching after our last conversation, student work, charts, or notes you made.

An Activity: 10–15 Minutes

Provide participants with a very short text or poem and together recreate the experience with “Let Go of It” found on page 122. To prepare for this, you might repost some of your group’s charts from across your book study and have the book’s appendices open.

Just as in the chapter, read a text or poem once. Then, together go back through and as a group aim to draw on lenses from throughout *Falling in Love with Close Reading* as you read. Your task, as facilitator, can be to describe and record the types of work the group is doing: “Ah yes, word choice! That’s chapter 3! . . . I’m writing that down next to that line.” “Ah, you are making comparisons to another text we’ve read . . . now can you be more specific, what are you using the make that comparison . . . yes, chapter 6!”

A Discussion: 15–25 Minutes

Feel free to revise these to best meet your needs:

- ◆ Reread “Keeping the Love Alive: Preparing for Your Close Readers” which starts on page 123.
 - ▶ Which of these areas ring true to you? How are you already living within them or what reflections are you having now?
 - ▶ What advice can you share with the group? Or what challenges can we brainstorm together?
- ◆ What other areas of the book do you want to revisit?
 - ▶ What new ideas are you having from over the course of this conversation?
 - ▶ What questions still need answers?
 - ▶ What do you wish to study next?
- ◆ OPTIONAL: Share some of your student artifacts or your own. What strengths are developing in your classroom? What needs can we support one another with?

A Planning Session: 10–15 Minutes

Feel free to revise to best meet your needs:

- 1.** Talk together with a group (two partnerships together) about one of these areas. When possible, jot down some concrete plans:
 - ▶ Where will close reading live throughout the rest of your year?
 - ▶ What new artifacts do you believe would benefit your classroom? New charts? New sentence frames? Etc.? (Can we make some now?)
 - ▶ How have you tracked student growth? As you reflect now, what changes might you make to your system?
 - ▶ Have you focused your attention in just one area (only texts, or only media, or only life) and are now ready to explore the others with your students?
- 2.** Let’s talk together as one group and list out some of our individual and collective next steps. If someone says something that is also true for you let’s place a tally next to the comment.

We hope *Falling in Love with Close Reading: Lessons for Analyzing Texts—and Life* has offered you opportunities to think, reflect, and learn together. We also hope that you have jumped from the book into your own studies, made revisions based on your students, and discovered new ways of looking at your instruction and our world.

Whatever your plan, have fun, enjoy learning together, and keep focused on the strengths and next steps of your students. While you move ahead, we hope you will share your ideas, questions, and inspiration.



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or at our blogs ([ChristopherLehman.com](#), [KateAndMaggie.com](#)), or leave comments at our “Close Reading Blog-a-thon” at [bit.ly/17e6iMd](#) (case sensitive).



► *You can also use or follow the Twitter hashtag #FILWCloseReading to connect with other educators studying with our book.*

Thank you for all you do and all you give to this amazing profession of ours. Your students are lucky to have you.

—Chris and Kate