

**PAPER #1:  
Assessment Guide**

**As I read your paper, I will be looking for the following:**

**1. THESIS: A clear opening argument**

A thesis is the central **argument** or **claim** that your paper is making. Create a thesis that emphasizes the central **interpretation or realization** generated by your close reading. Your close reading should “add up to” a larger interpretation; ask yourself: “What do these text-based ideas, details, and structures that I’ve noticed add up to?” Turn your best ideas into your thesis, the overarching argument of your paper.

*Tip:* You want to make sure that your thesis appears in the first paragraph of your paper, as it will guide the reader’s understanding of all of your following ideas.

**2. CONCEPTUAL THINKING: An emphasis on the ideas—the concepts—you see being explored in the short story**

The whole point of a paper is that it should “show off” your best thinking—prove that you can **define and develop ideas**, pushing them to become deeper and more complex. Highlight **insights** triggered by your close reading. Create categories of ideas that support your thesis argument; these categories then become sub-points that organize your paper.

*Tip:* As you draft your paper, avoid two common pitfalls: do not turn to plot summary or overly-general ideas. Similarly, do not try to create analytical ideas by making very general pronouncements about life, humanity, art, or culture (“all people must die, so death is a big concern of literature”); create your ideas by working with the specific information of your specific literary text.

**3. CLOSE READINGS WITH EVIDENCE: A close, slow, detailed analysis of specific words, phrases, literary elements and structures.**

A close reading paper roots its ideas in the literary text. You want to show your reader how you are **working with the text** to create your **interpretation**: how you are selecting its most interesting passages, how you can think through the details of a passage, and how you can interpret the passage and explain what you think the passage means. You need to prove that your interpretation is a good interpretation by showing how it comes from specific details (getting down to the level of the word—and even its placement in a sentence) within the text.

*Tip:* Your paper should have lots of quotations, specifically short quotations that are worked into your own sentences. You want to show me that you are digesting the text, breaking it down and locating its most meaningful words and phrases. A long block quote does NOT show your thinking.