



Freshdog and Prof. Cat Art and Language Lecture

Close “Reading” of a Painting



Why choose the topic?

“I like it very much.”

“It is very beautiful and moving.”

“This is a story about love.”

“After reading it, I learn that...”

—From freshmen’s reading responses

What?

What?

What?

What?



Why choose the topic?

Why do I like it?

Why is it beautiful and moving?

How did the writer tell the story?

How did the writer express such feelings and thoughts?

Why?
&
How?



Why choose the topic?

Pay attention to textual details!

Read between lines!

Have an eye for words!



Why choose the topic?

- Close reading as the essential skills for language learning
- Difficult to help the students master the skills
- Flexible and comprehensive
- Read slowly and “experience” the text

Learning Objectives

- Name and explain some formal features of world-famous paintings
- Describe and explain the elements of painting in a piece of writing
- Shift the emphasis from “what” to “how” in close reading of a text
- **Sharpen the students’ eyes for textual details**

Flipped classroom (20 minutes)

- **Class size: 24 students**
- **English major**
- **211 University**
- **The second semester of the first year**

Flipped classroom (20 minutes)

Part I: Review (5 minutes)

Part II: Group discussion (15 minutes)

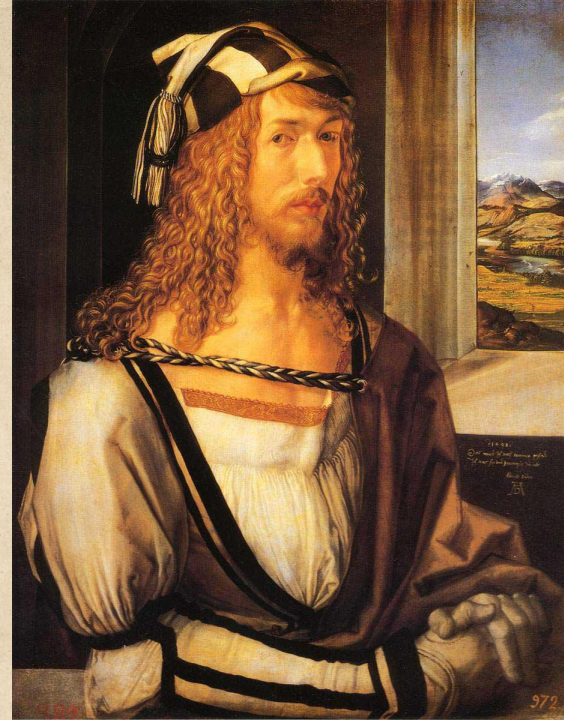
Vincent van
Gogh

1853-1890



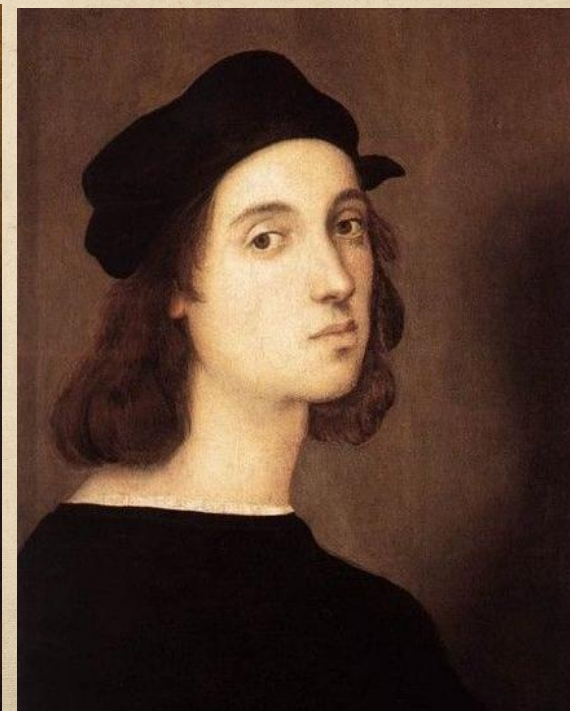
Albrecht
Dürer

1471—1528



Raphael

1483-1520



Rembrandt

1606-1669





Part I. Review (5 minutes)

- Look at the painting for 30 seconds
- Describe one element of the painting
- One point, one sentence each student
- Do not repeat the points
- Emphasis on formal features

Part I. Review (5 minutes)

Purpose

- Warming up
- Refresh the memory

Part II. Group Discussion (15 minutes)

24 students →

6 groups

(4 in each group)



Part II. Group Discussion (15 minutes)

Each group draws a topic:

- A raining morning on campus (scenery)
- A girl reading in the library (person)
- Birthday party in a restaurant (crowd)
- Your desktop in the dormitory (still life)
- Wandering thoughts in a literature course (thoughts)
- A dream about the final exam (subconsciousness)

Part II. Group Discussion (15 minutes)

Task:



- Paint a picture with words according to the topic
- Focus on formal details
- With the help of a list of guiding questions

Guiding Questions

1. What kind of **impression** do you want to convey? Order or chaos? Tranquility or noise? Ecstasy, joy, boredom, excitement, confusion, horror, tension, mystery...
2. What **style** will you adopt? Will your painting be realistic, impressionistic or abstract? Which painter is in your mind?
3. What kinds of **lines** will you use? Distinct or blurred? Straight or curved? Thin or thick? Vertical, horizontal or diagonal? What kind of movement or rhythm can they provide? How will they lead the eye through the image?
4. What **colors** will you use? Warm or cool? Bright or gentle? To achieve unity or contrast? Which color will stand out? What kind of blue, red, yellow or white?

5. What about the **tone**? Light or dark? Wide or narrow tonal range? Smooth transition or abrupt changes? To create mood, drama or emphasis?
6. What about the **texture**? Is it how the painting actually feels when touched or the visual effect it gives? Rough or smooth? How does each object feel in the painting? Can it help to create diversity, to focus interest, or impose a unity?
7. What **shapes** will you adopt? Circles, triangles, rectangles, ovals, or squares? Do they vary in size? Are they arranged close together or placed far apart? What sensations do they evoke?
8. Will the **space** include foreground, middle ground and background? Will the painting have spatial depth or be flat? Will there be large area of blank between or around objects or is the painting filled up with things?

Part II. Group Discussion (15 minutes)

Task:



- Paint a picture with words according to the topic
- Focus on formal details
- With the help of a list of guiding questions
- Question and comment on each other's "paintings"

Part II. Group Discussion (15 minutes)

Task:



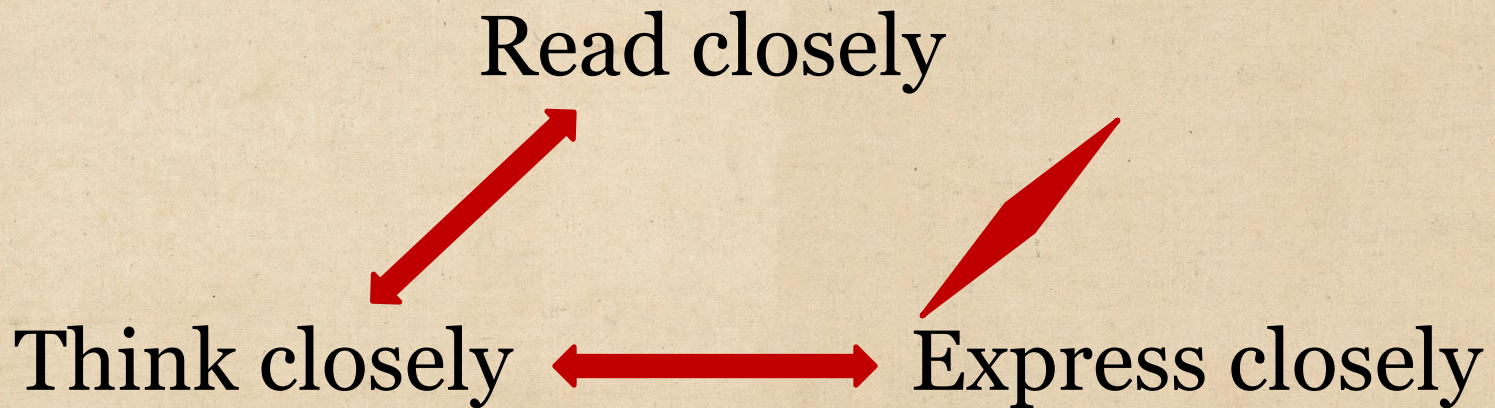
- Paint a picture with words according to the topic
- Focus on formal details
- With the help of a list of guiding questions
- Question and comment on each other's "paintings"



Part II. Group Discussion (15 minutes)

Rationale for the design:

- The best way to understand a text is to create one (in one's mind).



Part II. Group Discussion (15 minutes)

Rationale for the design:

Reversal

Micro-lecture  **Flipped classroom**

How to “read” a
painting

How to “paint” a new
picture with words

Close “reading” of a painting

 **One aspect of close reading**

- **Micro-lecture**
- **Flipped classroom**

Part I: Review

Part II: Group discussion



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Example:

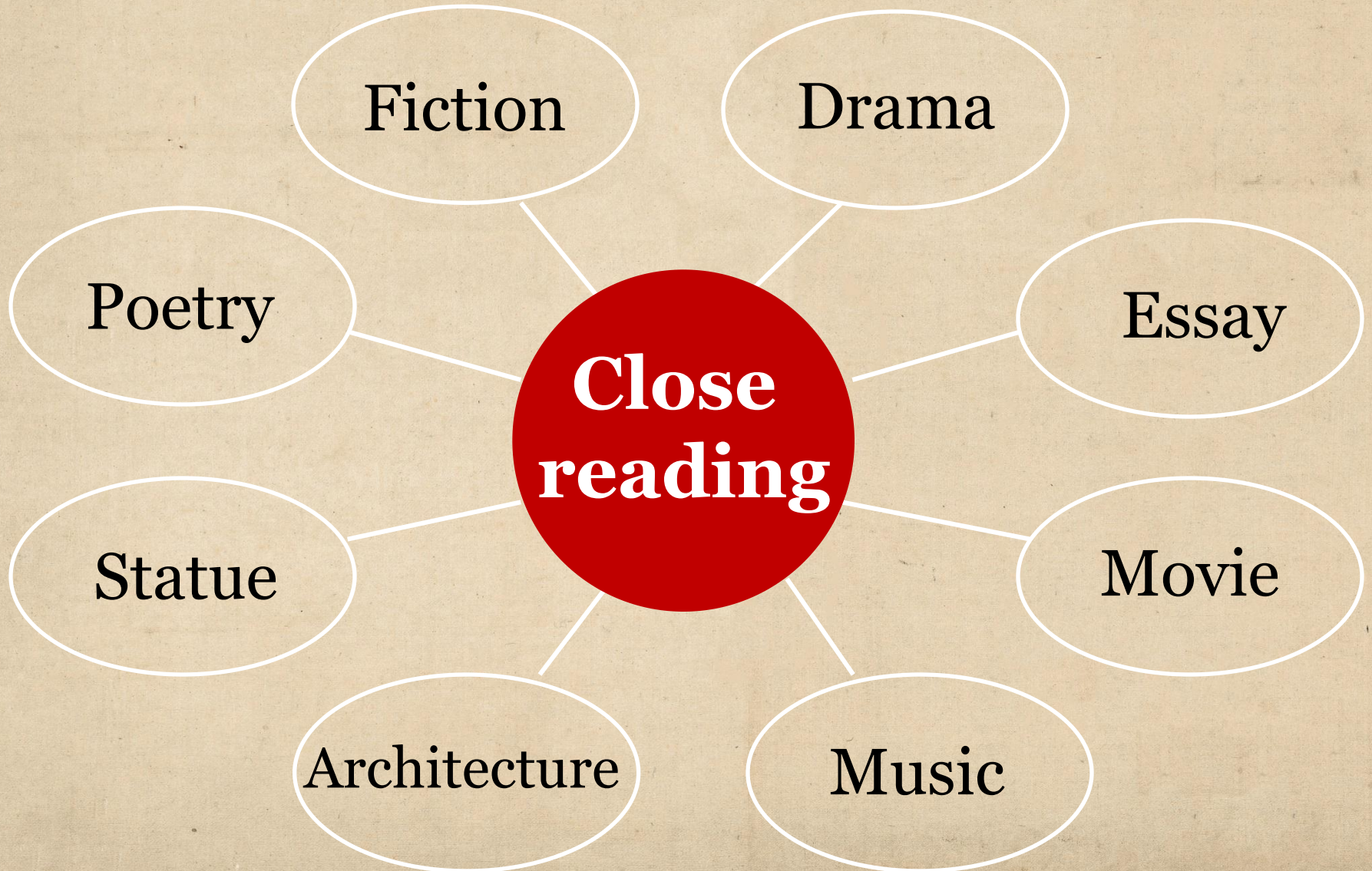
Elements of Poetry

Rhythm and Rhyme
Tone and Speaker
Diction
Figures of speech
Image
Symbol
...

Simile
Metaphor
Personification
Metonymy
Synecdoche
Hyperbole
Understatement
Pun
...



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Thank you!
Enjoy reading.