



# The Three Levels of Reading

## Foundation Lesson

### Skill Focus

Close Reading

Levels of Thinking				
Remember	Understand	Apply	Analyze	Create
Close Reading		Grammar		Composition
<b>Reading Strategies</b> Inference <b>Literary Elements</b> Character Diction connotation denotation Imagery Theme				<b>Types (modes)</b> Expository analytical <b>The Process of Composition</b> Prewriting generation of ideas <b>Structural Elements</b> Introduction thesis Body use of evidence

### Materials and Resources

- Any short fiction, nonfiction, drama, or poetry selection
- 12” x 18” paper (Manila paper works well.)
- Colored pencils, crayons, markers, water colors, etc.
- If desired, bring in “templates” for circles, or students may draw them freehand.

### Lesson Introduction

Close reading is a special kind of analytical reading. When readers look at a text this way, they slow down their reading in order to assess the importance of each word, detail, or image, and they make guesses about the meaning of the text as they read. Close readers look beyond the plot for deeper layers of meaning.

Readers who use Pre-AP strategies will discover the three levels of reading as they slow down to notice each aspect of the text. The three levels of reading are

- reading on the line,
- reading between the lines,
- reading beyond the lines.

At the first level, students find meaning directly in the text. As they read, they are mentally answering the questions “Who?” “What?” “When?” and “Where?”

At the second level, students interpret what is in the text. As they read, their key concerns are the following: What does a passage represent, suggest, or personify? What does a certain allusion or metaphor mean? They are also analyzing what they read: interpreting, classifying, comparing, contrasting, and finding patterns.

At the third level, students move beyond the text to connect to universal meaning. As they read, they are asking mental questions like “How does this text connect with my life? With life in a larger sense, for all human beings? With my ideas about morality or values? What kind of perceptions about life in general is the author communicating to me? What do I think of those perceptions?” They move from the “What?” of the text to the “So what?” At this level, they connect literature with their own experiences and with universal meaning.

This assignment works best in the middle of or at the end of the study of a work.

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Complete the following activities on the paper provided.

1. Across the top of the paper, write the title of the work and the author's name.
2. Draw three large concentric circles on the paper (one circle inside another circle inside a larger circle).
3. For the innermost circle, concentrate on the concrete level of meaning—*reading on the lines*.
  - a. Write the most significant word from the part of the work assigned.
  - b. Quote the entire sentence in which the word appears—or enough of the sentence to reveal the word's use in context. Document the source of the quotation in parentheses.
  - c. Write multiple dictionary definitions of the word (denotation).
  - d. Explain why the word is important to the meaning of the work by placing it in the context of the narrative.
4. In the middle circle, concentrate on the abstract level of meaning—*reading between the lines*.
  - a. Referring to the text, draw four images from the assigned part of the reading.
  - b. Write an explanation of the link between each image and the word you have written in the innermost circle.
5. In the outer circle, concentrate on the thematic level of meaning—*reading beyond the lines*. Write two thematic statements drawn from the significant word you wrote in the innermost circle and the images you drew in the middle circle. Tie everything to the work as a whole.
6. Select one of your thematic statements to use as the thesis statement for an essay. On the reverse side of your paper, compose a short essay analyzing meaning in the assigned part of the work.

## The Three Levels of Reading Foundation Lesson

### First Level of Reading

**Innermost Circle:** Concentrate on the concrete level of meaning—*reading on the lines*.

- Write the **most significant word** from the part of the work assigned.
- **Quote the sentence in which the word appears**, or enough of the sentence to reveal the word's use in context. **Document** the source of the quotation in parentheses.
- Write multiple **dictionary definitions** of the word (denotation).
- Explain why the word is important to the meaning of the work by placing it **in the context of the narrative**.

**Scream:** to cry out loudly and shrilly as from pain or fear; a long, loud, piercing cry.

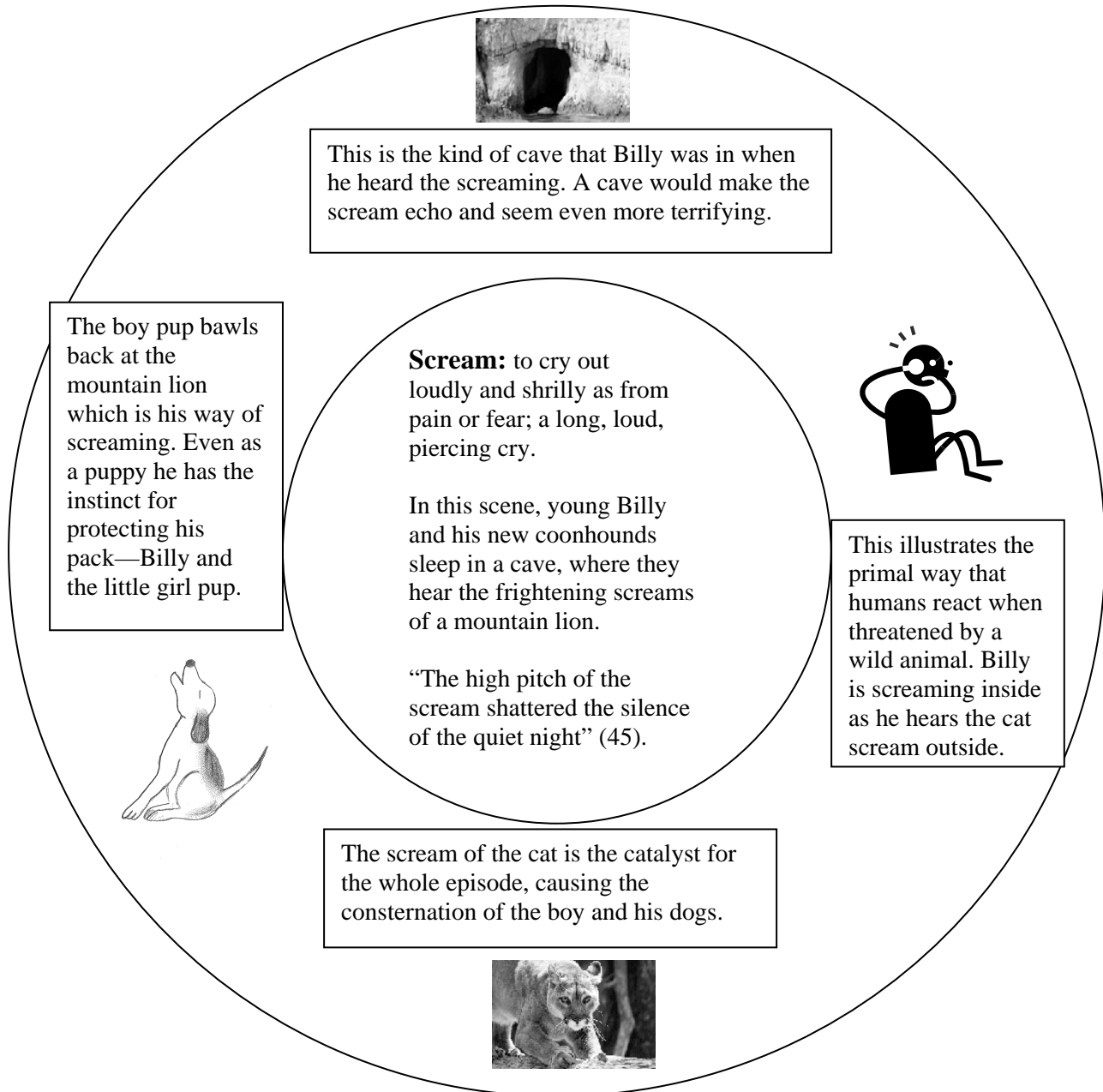
*In this scene, young Billy and his new coonhounds sleep in a cave, where they hear the frightening screams of a mountain lion.*

*“The high pitch of the scream shattered the silence of the quiet night....It screamed its way into the cave and rang like a blacksmith’s anvil against the rock walls”(45).*

## Second Level of Reading

**Middle Circle:** Concentrate on the abstract level of meaning—*reading between the lines*.

- Referring to the text, **draw four images** inspired by the assigned part of the reading.
- Write an explanation of the link between each image and the word you have written in the innermost circle.



### Third Level of Reading

**Outer Circle:** Concentrate on the thematic level of meaning—*reading beyond the lines*.

Write two thematic statements drawn from the significant word you wrote in the innermost circle and the images you drew in the middle circle. Tie everything to the work as a whole.

#### *Where the Red Fern Grows*

by Wilson Rawls

**Human beings can overcome their fear  
and act courageously, even when  
threatened by extreme danger.**

This is the kind. . . .



The boy pup  
bawls . . .

**Scream:** to cry out...

In this scene...

“The high pitch..”



This  
illustrates...



The scream of...

**Emotions such as fear reveal the  
primitive, animalistic side of  
human beings.**

### ***Write an Essay***

Select one of your thematic statements to use as the thesis statement of an essay. On the reverse side of your paper, compose a short essay analyzing meaning in the assigned part of the work.

**Example** of introduction to an essay using one of the themes as a thesis statement:

*Fear can cause the strongest among us to act irrationally, even hysterically. When Billy, the young protagonist of Wilson Rawls's **Where the Red Fern Grows**, hears the unearthly-sounding scream of a mountain lion, terror threatens to overcome his good sense. But with his beloved new coonhound pups in mind, he calms himself, showing that **human beings can overcome fear and act courageously, even when threatened by extreme danger.***