Advanced Placement

Language & Composition

Development of

CLOSE READING SKILLS

Edited and compiled by Jeffrey Norton

Critical Reading Strategies
Levels of Questions

A challenge all students face is how to make sense out of new material. Without a dependable method for dissecting the text, students may lose confidence in their ability to understand it. Therefore, it is important that they develop certain habits of mind that they can readily apply. For instance, they must learn to ask themselves questions about, and then draw inferences from, the material at hand.

The skill of asking questions is fundamentally different from the skill of answering them. When students wait for questions to be asked of them, either by the textbook or the teacher, they assume an essentially passive role. They read the piece of literature or the passage from history, and then they are "off the hook," mentally speaking, until the question is posed.

However, when students themselves ask questions, their relationship with the material is profoundly different: they assume an active role, the material is important to them at that moment, and they want to know the answer. Moreover, the questions asked by students frequently serve to illuminate a text in ways the teacher had not envisioned. It is a rare discussion in which some student does not pose an idea that is, in some way, different from what the teacher had previously considered.

It has long been recognized in the sciences that the formulation of questions contributes enormously to problem solving. Einstein put it well when he said, "The mere formulation of a problem is often far more essential than its solution, which is often merely a matter of mathematical or experimental skill. To raise new questions, new possibilities, to regard old problems from a new angle requires creative imagination and marks real advances in science."

In literature and the social sciences, too, learning to pose questions is a critical element of investigating a discipline. Through posing interesting questions under the direction of a teacher, and through hearing the questions of others, students gradually come to appreciate the questions that are worth asking and answering. They learn the outstanding issues in a discipline and the kinds of questions that yield discussions of value.

For example, when students ask why Hamlet and Laërtes use different methods to solve the same kind of problem they are considering personalities and responses. When they question the inconsistencies in the historical report that Richard III killed his nephews, they are examining the nature of "fact."

Similarly, drawing inferences is a critical skill within the disciplines. When students draw inferences, they go beyond the stated text and formulate hypotheses about history or literature that are based on, but not directly stated in, the text.

Inferences must, of course, be supported by accepted data. That is, an inference is not a proposition drawn out of thin air but a conclusion based on ideas presented in a text or by a teacher. However, students will almost certainly have gone beyond the face value of the text. They may, for example, have made connections between several different sections in a document.

Whatever the techniques used by students to draw inferences, they will certainly have had to be mentally engaged in their reading. They cannot be passive. ***THEY MUST BE THINKING ABOUT WHAT THEY ARE READING*** (emphasis added) and relating it to other things they know – other things they understand about the topic at hand. They must also draw on their own experience in terms of human emotion and motivation.

For instance, students recognize the intricate complication of Hester Prynne's moral dilemmas: the collision between an unhappy marriage and an adulterous love; the conflict between social

pressures and personal ethics. A class discovers that *West Side Story* and the forces that drive the civil rights movement reflect the same refusal to accept prejudice. When these discussions occur, we can see that students have made connections between the text and their own lives.

When teachers encourage their students to ask questions and draw inferences, they also help them to develop the prerequisite skills of observation and imagination. A student reports that Jerry Cruncher, a character in *A Tale of Two Cities*, has rust on his fingers. Other students respond, "So what?" or "I didn't notice that." Such comments indicate that some students are satisfied with a cursory reading and are not attending to details.

Indeed, in any piece of writing there are generally more details than can be accommodated at any one time. Students must therefore acquire the skill of recognizing which details are important. Not all rust is significant, but that on Jerry's fingers is. Students will choose and derive meaning from those details which are significant when they work in a classroom that encourages them to consider and explore the implications.

Similarly, students need to exercise their imagination when they are asking questions and drawing inferences. They must learn to explore many possible meanings of the details they have identified. The editors of *Thinking Historically* note that historian Tom Hold "begins student learning with 'unlearning.' He teaches them that to do history is not to memorize but to question and imagine."[1]

Students, of course, have rich imaginations. Young children love creating tall tales, even after their parents and teachers tire of the activity. It is not, therefore, generally necessary to teach students how to use their imaginations. Instead, the teacher's efforts must be directed at creating a classroom atmosphere where students "read between the lines and ….remember that a document was created and shaped by human minds. Behind its phrases are doubts, fear, visions, and belief. Reading it historically also means imagining what was not said, what and how it might have been otherwise."[2]

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Level One Questions: These questions can be answered **EXPLICITLY** by facts contained in the text or information accessible in other resources.

Level Two Questions: These questions are textually **IMPLICIT**, requiring analysis and interpretation of specific parts of the text.

Level Three Questions: These questions are much more **OPEN-ENDED** and go beyond the text. They are intended to provoke a discussion of an *abstract* idea or issue.

Critical Reading Strategies
SOAPSS

What is the **SUBJECT**?

The general topic, content, and ideas contained in the text. Students should be able to state the main subjects in a few words.

What is the **OCCASION**?

The time, place, context, or current situation of the piece. It is particularly important that students understand the context that encouraged the writing to happen, but don't confuse occasion with purpose. Also think of it as the "genesis" or "exigence" of the writing, or what possibly got it started.

Who is the **AUDIENCE**?

The group of readers to whom this piece is directed. The audience may be one person, a small group, or a large group. Try to be as specific as possible in your description. Authors do not just write and hope someone will read; they write for a specific audience and hope for a possibly broader audience than intended. Imagine the author having a conversation. Across from whom is he sitting?

What is the **PURPOSE?**

The reason behind the text. This is especially important for examining rhetoric. You can not examine the logic or argument of a piece until you know the reason for the piece, or what the author is trying to tell you.

Who is the **SPEAKER?**

-What is his **ATTITUDE**?
- What is his **TONE**?

The voice which tells the story. When students approach a piece of fiction, they often believe that the author and the speaker of the piece are one and the same. They fail to realize that in fiction the author may choose to tell the story from any number of different points of view, or through different methods of narration and characterization. Students also need to be able to differentiate between the author and the narrator, understanding that what the narrator believes may not be true for the author. In nonfiction it is important that the student not just identify the author, but also analyze the author's attitude toward the subject and audience and the "tone of voice" that is used in the selection.

What is the author's **STYLE?**

The individuality of the author. Given the choice of many different options in regards to diction, syntax, figurative language, rhetorical strategies, etc. which does the author choose to use and what effect does the author's selections have on the piece?

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SOAPSS **Title of Assignment**

SUBJECT	
OCCASION	
AUDIENCE	
PURPOSE	
SPEAKER: -attitude -tone	
STYLE	

SOAPSS
Views on Indian Policy

Below are statements reflecting different viewpoints concerning the Indian policy in the United States during the nineteenth century. After reading them, answer the questions that follow.

When you first came we were very many, and you were few; now you are many, and we are getting very few, and we are poor. You are here told that we are traders and thieves, and it is not so. We have given you nearly all our lands, and if we had any more land to give we would be very glad to give it....

At the mouth of Horse Creek, in 1852, the Great Father made a treaty with us by which we agreed to let all that country open for fifty-five years for the transit of those who were going through. We kept this treaty; we never treated any man wrong: we never committed any murder or depredation until after the troops were sent into that country, and the troops killed our people and ill-treated them, and thus war and trouble arose...

I have sent a great many words to the Great Father, but I don't know that they ever reach the Great Father. The words would never come to him, so I thought I would come and tell you myself.

(from speech of Chief Red Cloud in New York on July 16, 1870)

If they – the Indians – stand up against the progress of civilization and industry, they must be relentlessly crushed. The westward course of population is neither to be denied nor delayed for the sake of all the Indians that ever called this country their home. They must yield or perish...

Whenever the time shall come that the roving tribes are reduced to a condition of complete dependence and submission, the plan to be adopted in dealing with them must be substantially that which is not being pursued in the case of the more tractable and friendly Indians.

(Adapted from *Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs,* Washington, 1873, pp. 391-401)

To recognize the Indian ownership of the limitless prairies and forests of this continent – that is, to consider the dozen squalid savages who hunted at long intervals over a territory of 1000 square miles as owning it outright – necessarily implies a similar recognition of the claims of every white hunter, squatter, horse thief, or wandering cattleman...

In fact, the mere statement of the case is sufficient to show the absurdity of asserting that the land really belonged to the Indians. The different tribes have always been utterly unable to define their own boundaries.... Their claims all conflicted with one another...They were always willing to sell land to which they have merely the vaguest title.

(Theodore Roosevelt, *The Winning of the West,* Vol 1, New York, 1910, Appendix A)

Compare these three views on Indian Policy. Be as specific with your answers as possible.

	Red Cloud	Commissioner	T. Roosevelt
Subject			
Occasion			
Audience			
Purpose			
Speaker			

If each author were asked to state his point of view in the "Indian Question," what would it be?

Red Cloud:

Commissioner:

T. Roosevelt:

Dialectical Journal

Reading is too often a passive experience for many students. They sit down with a book or article, pass their eyes over the words, and say that they have done the reading assignment hoping that the most difficult post-reading task they'll encounter will be a short quiz primarily composed of recall questions. One way to get them involved is through the use of the dialectical journal. The term indicates the tension between reader and text that occurs when students struggle to derive meaning from a difficult or unfamiliar work.

What is it?	The journal is a double-entry, note-taking process done while reading any genre of literature. It is an attempt to transfer a reader's interior monologue on paper by providing two columns which are in dialogue with one another, not only developing a method of critical reading but also encouraging habits of reflective questioning/thinking.
Why is it important?	In the right-hand column, the reader "owns" or "comments" on important text that has been identified. The dialectical journal helps readers critically think about the text they are reading. By keeping a dialectical journal, students are brought to think "for themselves" about a text and offer their own interpretations.
How is it done?	Draw a line down the middle of a piece of notebook paper, thereby making two columns. The left column, labeled "text" or "note taking" is used for traditional not forms of direct quotations and citations or summaries. Thus, when they finish they have a summary of the material they have read. The right column is used for commenting on the left-column notes. Here students record their questions, comments, and ideas next to the text that has piqued their interest. As students take notes, regularly re-read previous pages of notes and comments, drawing any new connections in a right column summary before starting another page of note-taking/note-making. The top 1′ margin of the page is reserved for biographical information, teacher directed comments, or any pre-reading information that might help the reader better understand and appreciate the text.

Note Taking	Note Making
Reading notes, direct quotes summaries, lists, images, with page numbers included	notes about your left column: summaries, evaluations, judgments comparisons, contrasts, analyses
citation .....(page #)	Why did I copy this note? Why is it important to me? Is there connection to other information? What can I infer?
citation....(page #)	commentary
citation....(page #)	questions, meaning
citation....(page#)	inferences

What are the advantages?

1. Engage students as they read helping them to concentrate on their assigned reading.
2. Students see that writing can be used as a tool-for-learning rather than as a product to be judged.
3. By sharing these journals students can appreciate others' points of view as they often see that there are varied interpretations on the same quotes which are selected.
4. Regular practice with the journal promotes higher critical thinking as students develop confidence with their individual and group consensus interpretations.
5. The journal facilitates real learning in the sense that students find and discover their own meaningful connections which take and last longer than the next exam. In taking charge of their learning, students learn that the teacher is facilitator, not an authoritarian dispenser of "right" answers.
6. The practice of the dialectical journal simulates the real life college experience of taking notes in a text book.

The Deadliest Storm

In a gripping new book, Erik Larson recounts the fury and folly around the turn-of-the-century hurricane that destroyed Galveston.

1 It has been awfully quiet in the deep salt – until now. Hurricane season officially started on June 1, but till last week, the Atlantic produced only one tropical storm – a humble one named Arlene. Last weekend, however, the hurricane named Bret appeared on the Gulf of Mexico, and the tropical storm called Cindy gained intensity in the eastern Atlantic, off the Cape Verde Islands, where many storms are seeded. The dangerous Cape Verde season is now under way, and from here on the odds of hurricanes forming will increase daily until Sept. 9, historically the day of greatest hurricane activity. As in past years, most of us will watch the approach of these storms snug in the belief that satellites, reconnaissance aircraft and computers have so defanged hurricanes that none can ever again cause large-scale death.

2 Ninety-nine years ago, a weatherman named Isaac Monroe Cline, the chief meteorologist in Galveston, Texas, espoused a similar view regarding the threat hurricanes posed to Galveston, which in his day was a lovely, gleaming city that seemed destined to become the New York of the Gulf. Cline, the lead character in *Isaac's Storm*, a new book by TIME contributor Erick Larson, embodied the hubris of the past turning of the century. A pioneering weatherman, he thought he knew all there was to know about the behavior of storms. In an article in the Galveston *News*, he told readers no hurricane could ever seriously harm the city. To believe otherwise, he wrote, was to entertain "an absurd delusion." Early on the morning of Saturday, Sept. 8, 1900, Cline had a change of heart. He stood on the Galveston beach timing the arrival of deep-ocean swells larger than anything he had seen before. He did not fully understand their meaning, just that something extraordinary seemed about to occur. He was correct.

3 Before the next dawn, a monumental hurricane would kill 8,000 people in Galveston alone, and become the nation's deadliest natural disaster, its death toll far greater than the combined tolls of the Johnstown flood and the 1906 San Francisco earthquake. Yet, incredibly, the storm would fall from national recollection and take up residence mainly in the nightmares of hurricane experts, many of who believe that someday, maybe next month, maybe next year, an intense hurricane will again kill in a grand scale. The Galveston hurricane, the experts agree, is a storm to remember.

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4 It began as a platte of tortured air slipping from West Africa. Scores of such "easterly waves" exit the continent every summer. Most fail to intensify, but a few become carousels of "deep convection," huge thunderstorms, rotating counterclockwise over the sea.

5 For the first week of its existence, the hurricane was barely a tropical storm. A few ship captains spotted it as it moved along a shallow arc just below the Tropic of Cancer, but none saw it as terribly ominous. In the absence of radio or wireless telegraphy, captains knew only the weather in their immediate vicinity. None could know that just a few hundred miles away, thee wind was blowing in exactly the opposite direction, a juxtaposition that any captain today would recognize as the early dance of a tropical cyclone.

6 The seas were hot. The land was hot. Throughout much of the U.S., temperatures had risen into the 90s and often broke 100. Heat suffused a vast swath of country from the Gulf of Mexico to Canada, territory that in that time encompassed most of American's population. There was no air conditioning. Everyone suffered. Suits were black wool. Carriages had black canvas tops, black-enameled bodies. Trains were ovens. Passengers roasted. In New York City, three children died when they fell from fire escapes where they had hoped to find a breeze. A strange migration of crickets

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TIME, AUGUST 30, 1999

overwhelmed Waco, Texas, and halted its trolleys. Lightning struck more people than ever before. So far that year there had been no hurricanes to cool the surface by roiling the seas and raising cold water from below. The steaming Gulf was like a pool of gasoline waiting for a meteorological match.

7 In Washington Officials of the U.S. Weather Bureau suffered too, as they continued their struggle to build credibility and overcome past errors and scandals. The bureau was just emerging from 20 years of trouble and ridicule. It had miscalled two deadly blizzards. Its chief financial manger had embezzled a fortune. Its weather observers had been implicated in sex scandals, grave robbing and other sordid matters. To prevent further embarrassment, the bureau had banned the word tornado, for fear that if used in forecasts, it would cause too much panic. In the belief that centralized control of forecasts reduced the risk of error, the bureau insisted that all storm warnings come only from headquarters. Any observer who broke the rule risked his career.

8 To help predict hurricanes, the bureau had strung a necklace of weather stations throughout the Caribbean, but the network's imperious officers seemed more intent on alienating the people of Cuba and the West Indies than in watching for signs of danger. They treated Cuban weathermen as if they were aboriginal witch doctors, even though Cuban scientists had pioneered the art of hurricane prediction and were revered by the citizenry. Deep down, the U.S. observers feared the Cubans and their skill, and in the summer of 1900 engineered a ban within Cuba of any telegram that so much as mentioned the weather, unless it came from the bureau – this during hurricane season, when all of Cuba looked to its homegrown weathermen for advice and comfort.

9 It dumped biblical amounts of rain on Cuba but brought only moderate winds. The U.S. observers, technocrats of a brilliant new age, saw nothing to be concerned about. The Cubans, however, were suspicious. Poets of the air, they watched the sky as the storm left the island and saw in its red lights and wispy clouds the spore of disaster. Father Lorenzo Gangoite, a leading Cuban meteorologist, called these atmospherics "clear indications that the storm had much more intensity and was better defined than when it crossed this island."

10 Tweaking the U.S. observers, he wrote, "Who is right?"

11 Soon after leaving Cuba, the storm underwent an explosive intensification: one moment a nondescript tropical storm, the next, a hurricane of an intensity no American alive had ever experienced. Sea captains were the first to experience its new incarnation. On the morning of Wednesday, Sept. 5, the steamer *Louisiana* left New Orleans under bright skies. By the next afternoon, its captain was fighting winds of 150 m.p.h. Horizontal rain clattered against the bridge with the sound of bullets against armor. Wherever the wind gained entry, it spoke, moaning among the cabins and corridors like Marley's ghost. The hull flexed. Beams twisted. The captain watched his barometer fall to levels he had never seen. The master of another ship, the *Pensacola*, summoned a passenger to his barometer. "Look at the glass," he said. "Twenty-eight point fifty-five. I have never seen it that low. You never have, and will in all probability never see it again." It continued to fall.

12 In 1900 the Weather Bureau enciphered its observations before transmitting them over telegraph lines. It had a code word for winds of 150 m.p.h. – "Extreme" – but no one in the bureau seriously expected to use it. The bureau's forecasters, prisoners of the expected, believed tropical cyclones always curved toward the northeast to end up in the Atlantic off the eastern seaboard. The official forecast for Galveston for Saturday, Sept. 8, 1900, called for rain followed by clearing.

DEATH IN THE WATER

13 "The sky seemed to be made of Mother of Pearl," a visitor to Galveston said of that Saturday morning, "gloriously pink, yet containing a fish-scale effect which reflected all the colors of the rainbow. Never had I seen such a beautiful sky." But the great swells that morning made Isaac Cline uneasy. Ordinarily the Gulf was as placid as a lake, a quality that had seduced engineers into building great Victorian bathhouses on stilts well into the sea. A streetcar trestle snaked over the surf. Many years later Cline would write, "If we had known then what we know now of these swells, and the tides they create, we would have known earlier the terrors of the storm which these swells told us in unerring language was coming."

14 The hurricane had a forward speed of about 10 m.p.h., but its powerful winds were

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producing waves that moved 50 m.p.h. and reached the Texas coast long before the storm itself. They rose within the storm as jagged ship killers, but once beyond the storm's circle of influence, they settled into long, slow undulations of the kind that startled Columbus on his very first voyage to the Indies. Although they lost their jagged shape, they retained the energy originally transferred to them by the wind. As they met the gradual slope of the Texas coast, their leading edges slowed and the trailing water piled up, creating waves of incredible height.

15 Upon leaving the beach, Cline drove his sulky to his office at the center of town. He checked the station's instruments and found only a slight decline in barometric pressure. "0nly one-tenth of an inch lower," he wrote. The bureau's Central Office had at last sent orders to hoist a storm flag, but this telegram gave no cause for alarm. Such warnings in August were routine. There was nothing routine about the sea, however, or the ominous feel of the morning. Isaac drove his sulky back to the beach and again timed the swells. They were heavier now and pushed seawater well into the neighborhoods nearest the beach. He returned to his office and composed a telegram to Willis Moore, chief of the bureau in Washington. He ended the telegram: "Such high water with opposing winds never observed previously."

16 According to popular legend and his own memoirs, he raced to the beach and warned thousands to flee. There is evidence, however, that his response may have been more ambivalent. Saturday morning, for example, a sea captain, George B. Hix, stopped by the weather station to ask about the strange weather, and was told by one of Cline's colleagues "there was no cause for uneasiness." The storm was only a harmless "offspur" of a storm that had struck Florida a few days earlier. "Well, young man," Hix snorted, "it's going to be the damnedest offspur you ever saw."

17 The rest of the city did not share the captain's anxiety. Adults and children alike greeted the storm with delight and converged on the beach, some in bathing suits. The surf rocketing off the streetcar trestle was easily as good as a fireworks display. A great crowd gathered at the Midway, a 10-block stretch along the beach with cheap restaurants and souvenir stores. The sea began to climb into the city. "As we watched from the porch," one woman wrote, recalling her childhood experience, "we were amazed and delighted to see the water from the Gulf flowing down the street. 'Good,' we thought, 'there would be no need to walk the few blocks to play at the beach; it was right at our front gate.'" It was a wonderful spectacle, until the waves began tearing apart the bathhouses and the shops of the Midway. Suddenly, one mother recalled, "it wasn't fun anymore." A visiting businessman who had taken shelter in a train station wrote that he first realized the true extent of the disaster "when the body of a child floated into the station."

18 Telegraph lines fell. The city's telephones went dead. With all communications with the mainland cut off, Isaac went home. H walked to his house, a big frame structure on stilts five blocks from the beach. Despite his anxiety, he planned to ride out the storm at home with his pregnant wife Cora and his three young daughters. He believed the house capable of withstanding any storm the Gulf could deliver. Others apparently felt likewise, for when he arrived, he found 50 storm refugees had taken shelter inside. His brother Joseph soon arrived. He lived in the house and worked for Isaac as an assistant observer. Over the years a rivalry had developed between them. Now Joseph urged everyone to evacuate and head for the center of the city. Isaac, ever confident, insisted his house was the safest place – far safer, certainly, than venturing out into the accelerating winds.

19 Throughout that Saturday morning, a north wind blowing along the storm's left flank had raised a storm surge along the 30-mile ellipse of Galveston Bay. The surge slowly overflowed the wharf along the north end of the city and began filling the streets of the business district with water. The same north wind, however, held another and far more dangerous surge out at sea. That afternoon, however, the wind shifted, as it must in a tropical cyclone. The Gulf sprang forward as if propelled by an uncoiling spring. A dome of water at least 20 ft. high surged ashore under rapidly escalating winds. The waters of the sea and the bay met over the city and turned rooftops into islands.

20 No one knows what velocity the wind reached. The bureau's anemometer blew away at 100 m.p.h. The wind neatly sliced off the top floor of a bank, leaving the rest of the building intact. It stripped slate shingles from houses and turned them into scimitars that disemboweled men where they stood.

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Atmospheric pressure fell so low, a visiting British cotton official was sucked from his apartment trailing a slipstream of screams from his wife. The storm surge drowned an entire train and demolished an orphanage, killing 90 children. Together, the wind and sea destroyed brand-new artillery emplacements built to withstand bombardment, and scoured whole neighborhoods from the face of the earth.

THE FIRE OF MOURNING

21 At 6:30 p.m., Isaac Cline, ever the observer, walked to the front door of his house to take a look outside. He opened the door upon a fantastic landscape. Where once there had been streets, there was open sea. He did not see any waves, however, for behind his house the storm surge had erected an escarpment of wreckage three stories tall and several miles long that acted as a kind of seawall. It contained carriages, furniture, the streetcar trestle and rooftops that floated like the hulls of dismasted ships. It also carried corpses, hundreds of them, perhaps thousands. The wind and sea now pushed this wall toward Isaac's house. If not for the thundering wind, Isaac would have heard it coming as a horrendous blend of screams and exploding wood.

22 But something else caught his attention, as it did the attention of nearly every other soul in Galveston. Suddenly, as he stood at his front door, the surface of the sea rose four feet in four seconds. This was not a wave, but the tide itself. And it continued rising.

23 For those inside Isaac's house, it was a moment of profound terror (although Joseph claimed to have been utterly calm). Four feet was taller than most of the children in the house. Throughout the city, parents rushed to their sons and daughters. They lifted them from the water and propped them on tables, dressers and pianos. People in single-story houses had nowhere to go. The sudden rise of the sea meant death. For Isaac and his wife, as for thousands of parents throughout Galveston, suddenly the prospect of watching their children die became very real.

24 The houses fell gracefully at first. One witness said houses collapsed into the Gulf "as gently as a mother would lay her infant in the cradle." It was when the current caught the structures and swept them away that the violence occurred, with bedrooms erupting in a tumult of flying glass and wood, rooftops soaring through the air like monstrous kites.

25 The barrier of wreckage pushed before it an immense segment of the streetcar, which struck Isaac's house with terrific force. Isaac was at the center of the room with his wife and his six-year-old daughter Esther Bellew, whom he always called his "baby." A wall came toward him. It propelled him backward into a large chimney. He entered the water. Something huge caught him and drove him to the bottom. Timbers held him. He lost consciousness.

26 He awoke to turmoil. Rain struck like shrapnel. He was afloat, his chest caught between two timbers. He coughed water. He sensed there was something he had to do. It was like waking to a child's cry in the night, then hearing only silence. He sensed absence.

On Sunday, the U.S. Weather Bureau in Washington telegraphed this question to the manager of the Western Union office in Houston: "Do you hear anything from Galveston?"

27 First came this ominous reply: "We have been absolutely unable to hear a word from Galveston since 4 p.m. yesterday…" And then this report: "First news from Galveston just received by train, which could get no closer to the bay shore than six miles, where prairie was strewn with debris and dead bodies. About two hundred corpses counted from train. Large steamship stranded two miles inland. Nothing could be seen of Galveston…"

28 Sunday morning, so many corpses littered the landscape that civilized burial was deemed impossible. Galveston's relief committee ordered the bodies dumped at sea. Crews loaded corpses by the hundred into a large barge, but by the time the barge reached its dumping ground 18 miles into the Gulf, darkness had fallen. The crew spent the night among arms and legs brought back to life by the gentle rocking of the sea. In the morning, they weighted the bodies and cast them into the water.

29 But the bodies came back ashore. The relief committee now ordered that all corpses be burned upon recovery. The fires began almost at once, with the assistance of the city's fire department. Soon the nights were rimmed with the orange light of countless pyres. The air stank of death for weeks. Human ash sifted from the sky. Emma Beal, 10 at the time, watched one of the "dead gangs" burn bodies

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near her house. As one body entered the fire, an arm shot up as if pointing into the sky. Emma screamed, but kept watching, and paid for it with nightmares that left her writing in the dark.

30 Isaac survived Saturday night – although barely – and only after experiencing his own unbearable loss. He found his daughters alive in the waters, but his wife Cora had vanished in the storm surge. While the children prayed for their mother's return, he knew his wife had perished. Each evening he toured likely places where her body may have lain. But he would not find her till Sept. 30, when relief workers discovered a dress tangled in the debris of what they concluded was Isaac's house. Within the clothing were the remains of a woman. He recognized her only from a wedding ring and the diamond he had given her at their engagement.

31 For a time the message of the storm seemed to have been heeded. Galveston built a seawall, then raised the elevation of its streets and surviving buildings, even its cathedrals. But memory faded quickly. Today grand new houses rise on stilts on the island's West End beyond the protection of the seawall. The once barren sea-level prairie that stretches from Galveston through Houston is now home to about 3 million people. To hurricane experts, it is one of the most vulnerable regions in America, where even today an intense hurricane could cause megascale death. Today's meteorologists know a lot more about hurricanes than Isaac Cline did in 1900, but this knowledge, far from conjuring the hubris expressed by Cline, has led them to recognize that hurricanes remain inscrutable giants capable of tricks that can defy even satellites and computers – tricks like suddenly intensifying in the hot waters off Cuba and catching a city by surprise.

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Mrs. Pagani

♡

E. H.

Close Reading Passage

Title: *Angela's Ashes* by Frank McCourt, a memoir

Passage: Chapter 1

My Father and mother should have stayed in New York where they met and married and where I was born. Instead, they returned to Ireland when I was four, my brother, Malachy, three, the twins, Oliver and Eugene, barely one, and my sister, Margaret, dead and gone.

When I look back on my childhood I wonder how I survived at all. It was, of course, a miserable childhood: the happy childhood is hardly worth your while. Worse than the ordinary miserable childhood is the miserable Irish childhood, and worse yet is the miserable Irish Catholic childhood.

People everywhere brag and whimper about the woes of their early years, but nothing can compare with the Irish version: the poverty; the shiftless loquacious alcoholic father; the pious defeated mother moaning by the fire; pompous priests; bullying schoolmasters; the English and the terrible things they did to us for eight hundred long years.

Above all – we were wet.

Out in the Atlantic Ocean great sheets of rain gathered to drift slowly up the River Shannon and settle forever in Limerick. The rain dampened the city from the Feast of the Circumcision to New Year's Eve. It created a cacophony of hacking coughs, bronchial rattles, asthmatic wheezes, consumptive croaks. It turned noses into fountains, lungs into bacterial sponges. It provoked cures galore; to ease the catarrh you boiled onions in milk blackened with pepper; for the congested passages you made a paste of boiled flour and nettles, wrapped it in a rag, and slapped it, sizzling, on the chest.

From October to April the walls of Limerick glistened with the damp. Clothes never dried: tweed and woolen coats housed living things, sometimes sprouted mysterious vegetations. In pubs, steam rose from damp bodies and garments to be inhaled with cigarette and pipe smoke laced with the stale fumes of spilled stout and whiskey and tinged with the odor of piss wafting in from the outdoor jakes where many a man puked up his week's wages.

The rain drove us into the church – our refuge, our strength; our only dry place. At Mass, Benediction, novenas, we huddled in great damp clumps, dozing through priest drone, while steam rose again from our clothes to mingle with the sweetness of incense, flowers and candles.

Limerick gained a reputation for piety, but we knew it was only the rain.

1. Write a one sentence summary of the passage.

2. What is the central attitude of the speaker?

3. What is the central tone?

4. Write an analysis of this passage that reflects on those elements contributing to the attitude/tone, specifically the diction choices, syntactical arrangements, figurative language, images, details, symbols, structural arrangements, or other rhetorical strategies. You are encouraged to make notations and label your analysis on the above passage. Your analysis should be one to two paragraphs.