Fall 2012

CTips, Issue 2: Close Reading Template

Carolyn G. Hartz
St. Cloud State University, cghartz@stcloudstate.edu

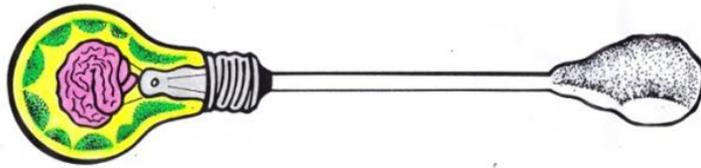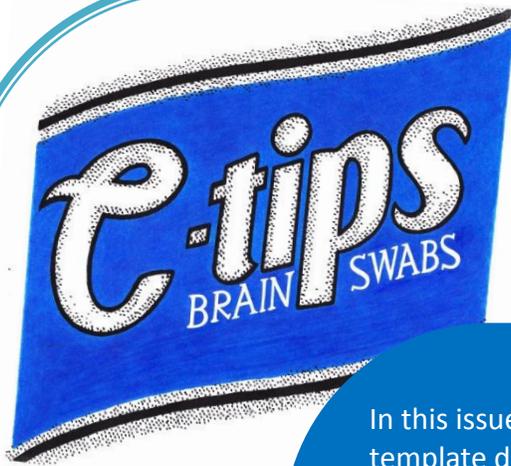In this issue, we present a "close reading template", based on a template developed by Emily Schultz (Sociology and Anthropology). This version has been adapted by Kevin Sharpe (Philosophy) for the purpose of focusing students' attention on the reasoning in the material they are reading. This exercise can be useful for courses at any level, and students benefit from consistently working through the template for different texts throughout the semester so that looking for and thinking about these points becomes automatic.

Close Reading Template

This template models the kinds of notes you ought to take as you carry out a close reading of any text. To use this template:

1. Look the template over to familiarize yourself with the kinds of information it asks for.
2. Read each assignment "with a pencil in hand," using the template to guide the marginal notes you make in the text. This makes it easier for you to find key passages later.
3. Use your marginal notes in the text to organize your close-reading notes, based on the template.

Practical advice: read through the text one time to get the "big picture" (the main issue/s under discussion, the main arguments being discussed, basic organization of the reading, etc) and then read the text a second time paying close attention to the details (precise statement of the author's thesis, how exactly the author supports the thesis, careful statement of the arguments under discussion, objections that the author considers and how – exactly – s/he responds to them). With practice, you will probably consult the template less frequently as you read, for you will automatically be making marginal notes that identifying the thesis, the main arguments, key terms, and so forth. Eventually, you should be able to read closely without the template to guide you.

Close Reading Template

Name of article:
Author(s) of article:
Number of subsections in this text:

1. State the author's thesis. If you quote the author, give page number(s) in article. If you summarize the author, provide textual support for the adequacy of your summary of the author's thesis.

2. Summarize the main argument of the text in one solid paragraph.

3. List <u>and</u> define all key terms and phrases that are central to the author's argument (or explanation of a view). Give page numbers in the text where these terms can be found.

4. Summarize any objections that the author considers and how s/he replies to those objections

5. Identify the most problematic claim or weakest argument in the text. Explain why the claim is problematic or the argument is weak.

Subsection Title/Number	One substantial paragraph summary of subsection	Page numbers

If the text is not divided into numbered subsections but the author presents their discussion in several steps, summarize each step in separate row. Use as many rows as you need.