

Close Reading of the first passage in The Road. This involves doing a close read and then writing one paragraph about it.

When he woke in the woods in the dark and cold of the night he'd reach out to touch the child sleeping beside him. Nights dark beyond dark and the days more gray each one than what had gone before. [Like the onset of some cold, glaucoma dimming away the world](#). His hand rose and fell softly with each precious breath. He pushed away the plastic tarpaulin and raised himself in the stinking robes and blankets and looked toward the east for any light but there was none. In the [dream from which he'd wakened](#) he had wandered in a cave where the child led him by the hand. Their light playing over the wet flowstone walls. Like [pilgrims in a fable](#) swallowed up and lost among the inward parts of some granitic beast. Deep stone flues where the water dripped and ran. Tolling in the silence the minutes of the earth and the hours and the days of it and the years without cease. Until they stood in a great stone room where lay a black and ancient lake. And on the far shore a creature that raised its dripping mouth from the rimstone pool and stared into the light with eyes dead white and sightless as the eggs of spiders. It swung its head low over the water as if to take the scent of what it could not see. Crouching there pale and naked and translucent, its alabaster bones cast up in shadow on the rocks behind it. Its bowels, its beating heart. The brain that pulsed in a dull glass bell. It swung its head from side to side and then gave out a low moan and turned and lurched away and loped soundlessly into the dark.

Comment: So we know that there are two of them together

Comment: Descriptors indicate that the situation was deteriorating.

Comment: The child is very important to him

Comment: From this we can see they are in hard circumstances -- for who would sleep in stinking robes and blankets?

Comment: Another indication of the time the cave has been there..

Comment: As with all good dreams there must be a monster ...and this one is fearsome ..dead white eyes, sightless, taking their scent, bowels, beating, not too smart -- as the brain pulses in a dull glass bell.

Comment: This beast is in pain. It leaves in an awkward way (lurches) and retreats to the dark. But I can also see that it has the ability to move quickly. It lopes, not scuttles, or limps...

Comment: So I interpret this..as this beast cannot bear what lies outside the cave -- that outside that the man and boy must return to.

Comment: The tone is bleak, frightened, but also resigned -- they don't hide from the beast, they are accepting of the horror that is their lives, there is no terror expressed as they meet the beast.

Comment: What is this narrative style? It is odd.. not first person, third, but so emotive of the character's feelings.

Writing about the close read: Your job is to illustrate the thesis of the paragraph. So, of course we need to identify the author's purpose:

Purpose: To draw the reader quickly and emotionally into the novel, by immersing us in the horror of their lives. Characters are introduced.

Theme: Cold, hard fear haunts these characters in their waking moments and their dreams.

Illustration of thesis: This deals with connecting the thesis/theme in the passage to a real or imagined life experience or to a concrete object. It's all about "LIKE" – what is the situation, the theme, the character LIKE? You are trying to express your understanding of the piece and your ability to evaluate it.

This is what you would write:

McCarthy draws us into the narrative and immerses us in that particular horror in which the man and the boy live. How they live is like I imagine being blind feels, being blind and set down in a strange, unfamiliar place; uncertainty dogs my steps, for who would know the extent of the dark, the solidity of the floor, does a cliff await? -- for it is dark beyond dark in the dream and in the actual night. I am led by an innocent – perhaps not capable of protecting me. The place is totally alien, there are no benchmarks for me to find my way, sounds come at me, drip, drip... As we reach the lake, my sight returns, only to be greeted by a horror that makes me wish that I were blind again. Certainly, McCarthy's imagery – dead white, dripping mouth – and his word choice – glaucoma, brain pulsing in a dull glass bowl, lurched—makes us fear for these two souls – the man and the precious child -- precariously living in such a place.

Comment: Here's the metaphor...or analogy. Note that I am writing in a way that reflects the feelings I would be experiencing as I entered that place. Thinking Skill: application

Comment: Evaluation this time, but this last sentence could be speculation or analysis. I've included some analysis of the way in which McCarthy does this.