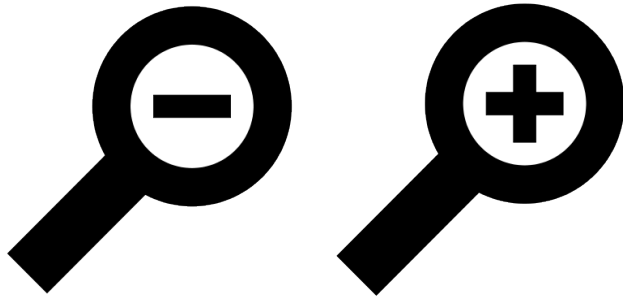


# Zoom In, Zoom Out

Essay #2



## Assignment Summary:

When I first started teaching literature, I thought that teaching the task of close reading would be easy and intuitive (I mean, you read close, right?). But, of course, I found it difficult to teach and confusing to explain. It's a term like "critical thinking": we talk about it, we practice it, but we have a hard time teaching it.

I started using the metaphor of zooming in and zooming out to address what I see as two necessary steps of close reading: first, attending to textual detail, and second, considering why those details matter in the context of the text at large. I designed this assignment as a way to invite students to practice both steps.

**Task:** In this approximately 4-5 page essay, you will practice your skills of close reading and analysis by articulating, developing, and supporting an interpretive argument about a poem. This can either be a poem we've read in class or another poem you've found or I've suggested to you. You need not consult with outside sources for this assignment, as you will support your argument with evidence from and analysis of the text.

## Important Dates and Deadlines:

**Wednesday, March 8<sup>th</sup> :** Working Thesis Due

**Monday, March 20<sup>th</sup>-Friday, March 31<sup>st</sup>:** Office Hour Meetings

**Monday, March 27<sup>th</sup>:** Rough Draft Due

**Monday, April 4<sup>th</sup>:** Final Paper Due to the ICON Dropbox at 10:00 pm

## Assignment Summary:

This assignment is called the "Zoom In, Zoom Out" essay because it asks you to practice two key tenets of literary interpretation: zooming in to examine and analyze the details of a text and then zooming out to discuss how those details provide evidence for your interpretation of the text as a whole.

**Zooming Out:** You will structure your essay around a thesis that makes a claim about *what* the poem is arguing (or critiquing, supporting, portraying, challenging, celebrating) and *how* the poem's form (diction, syntax, rhyme, meter, use of literary devices) contribute to making that argument.

**Zooming In:** Your body paragraphs will make a sub-claim, an argument stated in the first sentence of the paragraph (a "topic sentence"). The majority of each body paragraph will be made up of textual evidence that supports the claim, analysis of this evidence, and a clear articulation of how the evidence and analysis relate to your thesis, or overall argument.

#### Poem Selection:

You can pick a poem that we're not covering in class, but run your ideas by me first. I'll recommend some that relate, in some way, to your "Curiosity" Writing Exercise topic! If you pick one that we have discussed in class at length (e.g. Dickinson's "If You Were Coming in the Fall"), make sure you're approaching the poem very differently than we did in class. You can, if you'd like, compare/contrast two poems, perhaps discussing how the two poems use different formal qualities to make similar arguments. If you would like to take this approach, talk to me first. You want to make sure you still have time to talk about each poem in depth.

#### Assignment Requirements:

The paper...

##### *Content*

- Includes at the end of the introduction a clear, arguable, and unique **thesis** making an argument about *what* a poem argues/critiques/portrays/celebrates and *how* it accomplishes this.
- Uses sophisticatedly and accurately quoted **textual evidence** from the poem
- Provides **clear, in-depth, and rigorous analysis** of textual evidence
- Does not merely summarize "what the poem is about," but instead attends to how **form** (how the poem is constructed) informs **content** (what the poem is trying to say)

##### *Structure and Formatting*

The final paper is...

- Approximately 4 pages in length, Times New Roman font, 1-inch margins  
MLA format and citations
- **Polished and without typos or errors** in English language usage
- **Well-organized**, complete with a compelling introduction and conclusion, as well as clear, easy-to-follow, and logically-sequenced body paragraphs.

##### *Process and Participation*

The author demonstrates...

- Timely adherence to the deadlines listed in "Important Dates and Timeline"
- Preparation, attendance, and participation in assignment workshops.