

Short Paper 2.2: Close Reading of Dibbell

engl 111 / sec. Q / fall quarter 2006-07 / chang



The practice of close reading is and will remain a central part of your academic, intellectual, political, and cultural life. Remember that close reading means analyzing a text, noticing its rhetorical strategies, distilling its main ideas, and then drawing conclusions or making decisions based on your analysis. Again, keep in mind the following rubric for active, close reading:

- 1) Annotate the text. This is sometimes called “active reading.” Annotating involves underlining important words, writing notes or questions in the margins, highlighting, bracketing important passages, taking reading notes, and so on.
- 2) Look up difficult terms or concepts or names and keep a running list. Also try to discover the meaning of key words and concepts from the reading. Some terms have specialized definitions that you will learn only from context. Two good places to

look online are: <www.dictionary.com> and <www.wikipedia.com>.

- 3) Consider the historical and cultural context of the text. For whom was it written? By whom? Why? Has it been well received? Maybe look up the author’s biographical information to help situate the text.
- 4) Read a difficult passage several times. Read out loud, slowly, deliberately. Difficult parts will be easier the second or third time through.
- 5) Decide how a difficult passage fits into the larger text. What theme(s) does the passage develop?
- 6) Remember the big picture. Why is the text or passage or statement important? What are its overall claims?
- 7) Finally, as mentioned above, actively take specific notes on the reading. Write down key ideas, pages to return to, terms, and quotes that may be helpful in your own understanding and argument. Make note of any recurring words, phrases, themes, threads, and arguments.

For this assignment, you will do a close reading of Julian Dibbell’s essay “A Rape in Cyberspace” (see e-reserves). Read actively. Annotate and underline rather than just highlight. Make notes of key ideas and questions you may have about the text. Do not just read for content. Read through the text more than once. While you are reading, pay special attention to the following points of inquiry, concern, and opportunity for definition and discussion:

- “virtual reality” vs. “real life”
- disembodiment vs. embodiment
- “rape”
- “toading”
- inclusion and exclusion
- governance and control
- civil society
- sex and gender

Then, write a 2 to 3 page distillation of the text’s main ideas. Your short paper should **not** be a simple summary. **Read carefully, read conscientiously, and read closely.** Keep in mind our work on thesis, argument, claim, and evidence. Then **identify three main ideas or arguments** made by the reading connected to one or more of the above ideas and **support each with one or two direct quotes** from the text itself. Your claim in this response paper then is what you believe to be the reading’s most important ideas. Be prepared to discuss your findings in class as well.

Targeted outcomes: _____

Turn in: 2-3 pages, typed, no title page, double-spaced, stapled

Due: Tuesday, November 7