

Sample Text Dependent Questions to Support Close Reading
 "Gift of the Magi" by O. Henry (first section of story only)

<p>One dollar and eighty-seven cents. That was all. And sixty cents of it was in pennies. Pennies saved one and two at a time by bulldozing the grocer and the vegetable man and the butcher until one's cheeks burned with the silent imputation of parsimony that such close dealing implied. Three times Della counted it. One dollar and eighty- seven cents. And the next day would be Christmas.</p> <p>There was clearly nothing to do but flop down on the shabby little couch and howl. So Della did it. Which instigates the moral reflection that life is made up of sobs, sniffles, and smiles, with sniffles predominating.</p>	<p>Question for first reading:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How did Della get the money, and how does she feel about it? <p>Questions for second reading:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What's the effect of starting the story with three short fragments? • If I tell you that "imputation" means "subtle accusation," talk about the effect of the words "bulldozing," "burned," and "parsimony" on your understanding of Della's character. • Why might the author have waited until the last word of paragraph 1 to mention Christmas? <p>Question for third reading</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How does the last sentence of paragraph 2 help establish theme, or big ideas, of the story?
<p>While the mistress of the home is gradually subsiding from the first stage to the second, take a look at the home. A furnished flat at \$8 per week. It did not exactly beggar description, but it certainly had that word on the lookout for the mendicancy squad.</p> <p>In the vestibule below was a letter-box into which no letter would go, and an electric button from which no mortal finger could coax a ring. Also appertaining thereunto was a card bearing the name "Mr. James Dillingham Young."</p> <p>The "Dillingham" had been flung to the breeze during a former period of prosperity when its possessor was being paid \$30 per week. Now, when the income was shrunk to \$20, though, they were thinking seriously of contracting to a modest and unassuming D. But whenever Mr. James Dillingham Young came home and reached</p>	<p>Question for first reading:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How is their home described? How does the description reinforce what you understood from the opening paragraphs? • What has happened to Della and her husband? <p>Questions for second reading:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Using a dictionary, look up the dual meanings of the word "beggar" and then look up "mendicancy." How does O. Henry's wordplay reinforce the description of the apartment? • Why might it be significant that the change in their income is discussed in terms of the use of a full name or an initial? <p>Question for third reading</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How does their class/financial situation contribute to the story's plot

<p>his flat above he was called "Jim" and greatly hugged by Mrs. James Dillingham Young, already introduced to you as Della. Which is all very good.</p>	<p>and themes?</p>
<p>Della finished her cry and attended to her cheeks with the powder rag. She stood by the window and looked out dully at a gray cat walking a gray fence in a gray backyard. Tomorrow would be Christmas Day, and she had only \$1.87 with which to buy Jim a present. She had been saving every penny she could for months, with this result. Twenty dollars a week doesn't go far. Expenses had been greater than she had calculated. They always are. Only \$1.87 to buy a present for Jim. Her Jim. Many a happy hour she had spent planning for something nice for him. Something fine and rare and sterling—something just a little bit near to being worthy of the honor of being owned by Jim.</p> <p>There was a pier-glass between the windows of the room. Perhaps you have seen a pierglass in an \$8 flat. A very thin and very agile person may, by observing his reflection in a rapid sequence of longitudinal strips, obtain a fairly accurate conception of his looks. Della, being slender, had mastered the art.</p> <p>Suddenly she whirled from the window and stood before the glass. Her eyes were shining brilliantly, but her face had lost its color within twenty seconds. Rapidly she pulled down her hair and let it fall to its full length.</p> <p>Now, there were two possessions of the James Dillingham Youngs in which they both took a mighty pride. One was Jim's gold watch that had been his father's and his grandfather's. The other was Della's hair. Had the queen of Sheba lived in the flat across the airshaft, Della would have</p>	<p>Question for first reading:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Why does buying the right present for Jim seem important to Della? • What does Della realize when she sees herself in the mirror? • What possessions do they value? <p>Questions for second reading:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How does the repetition of "gray" enhance the mood of this section? • What's the effect of comparing their valued possessions to The Queen of Sheba and King Solomon? <p>Question for third reading</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Knowing what you know about the story's conclusion, what do the details in this section contribute to the narrator's view of the couple as both foolish and wise?

let her hair hang out the window some day to dry just to depreciate Her Majesty's jewels and gifts. Had King Solomon been the janitor, with all his treasures piled up in the basement, Jim would have pulled out his watch every time he passed, just to see him pluck at his beard from envy.

Sample Text Dependent Questions to Support Close Reading

"The Latin Deli: An Ars Poetica" by Judith Ortiz Cofer (first section of story only)

"The Latin Deli: An Ars Poetica" available at <http://ccat.sas.upenn.edu/romance/spanish/219/13eeuu/cofer.html> and Common Core Standards Appendix B

Question for first reading:

- What does the woman sell in her store?
- How are her customers labeled or categorized?
- What do the customers think of her products? What do they like, and what do they complain about?

Questions for second reading:

- What is the effect of words like "presiding" (1), "ancient" (3), "heady" (4), "votive" (6)?
- Why is the owner referred to as the "Patroness of Exiles?" (7)?
- How do your answers to these questions relate to the "formica counter" (1), "Plastic" (2) figures, and "canned memories" (9)?
- What's the effect of the comparison of the store owner's face to a "family portrait" (19)?
- How does the comparison of her customer's hearts to "closed ports she must trade with" (37) help you understand the significance of her deli?

Question for third reading

- Who are the woman's customers and what do they

get by shopping at her deli?

- Based on what you know of her customers, what are the likely “dreams and disillusion” (23) they might have?
- What role does this storeowner play in the community?
- How does this poem generate meaning around the tension and overlap between commerce and religion?