

6: The Close Commentary Format

Extent of the Close Commentary

A page.

Aim of a Close Commentary

Answer the question **What's going on here?**

1. Outwardly
2. More subtly

1: Outward Elements

Concisely describe:

- ▶ Form (prose/verse; genre)
- ▶ Context
- ▶ Action
- ▶ Evident themes

2: Subtler Elements

How does the author use diction, word-fields, sound, figures of speech, relationships between characters, biblical echoes and the like to make a point, effect a mood, or invoke certain themes?

Approaches

A commentary to a **prose** text is more likely to focus on assumptions, intertextual connections, and argumentative structure.

A commentary to a **poem** is more likely to discuss formal features and associations evoked by word-fields, sound effects, and subtle hints.

Since nearly all Old English poetry is anonymous, you may use clues in the text to speculate about the author's profession or situation, and about their intended audience. With the prose, even when we don't know the author we often know the author of a Latin source; such connections may be stated briefly and are less speculative.

Example Commentary

See **handout**.