**Close Reading:** Today we are going to perform a close reading of the chapter, “New Year’s,” from First They Killed My Father. Each group will be assigned a lens through which to perform this read. Use the description and guiding questions to assist you in this process. Be prepared to explain your lens and share your findings with the class.

The Linguistic Lens:

Using the linguistic lens, we can examine the purposeful choices an author has made- choosing a word with incredible care, or choosing to tighten a sentence, or choosing to lengthen it. In this read, you will examine the language the author uses to convey meaning. Use the following questions to guide you as you read:

What is the figurative or connotative meaning of words used in the text?

What is the cumulative impact of specific word choices on meaning and tone?

How does the language evoke a sense of time and place?

What is the tone of this text?

What do we notice about word choice?

What imagery does the author develop? Why?

What does the length of sentences indicate about the author’s message?

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The Semantic Lens:

Semantics is the study of the meaning of linguistic expressions. To understand semantics is to grasp the meaning and the play between the language itself and the meaning on the page. Using the semantic lens will encourage you to bring the deeper message of the writing into focus. Use the following questions to guide you as you read:

What is the gist of this text?

Does the language in the text mean the same thing to you as it does to others? For example, does hunger mean the same thing to you as it does to Luong?

What are the fundamental concepts presented in this text?

Are there any words that mean something more to you than their denotation? Are there any words that have specific connotations for you?

What ideas are connected in this text?

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The Analytical Lens

Through this lens, you will combine what you already know about the historical context of the text, its meaning, and your own personal impressions to draw conclusions about its implications. This will require you to hold several ideas in your mind at once. Use the following questions to guide you as you read:

What patterns do you notice developing across the text?

What response does the text elicit?

Why was the text written?

What important conclusions or big ideas can you draw from this text?

How does the theme emerge during the course of this text? How is it shaped and refined by specific details?

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The Metaphoric Lens

The writer Octavio Paz said that metaphor is the greatest invention of mankind and what separates him from all other animal species. All humans are hardwired for metaphor. Read the text with a focus on examining what it means to have one thing stand in for another. Use the following questions to assist you as you read the text:

How is the author using metaphor?

What is the author using as a stand in for a big idea?

What images might mean something larger?

Are there small metaphors that illuminate a big idea?

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The Critical Lens

Having a critical lens is arguably the single most important skill you can learn. Your ability to sharpen your critical lens will assist you in managing what you see, hear, and read. You must ask, Is this true? Do I believe it? Do I even like it? What is my perspective? Use the following questions to assist you as you begin your critical reading of “New Year’s.”

How reliable is the narrator?

How does the author do well in supporting his or her theme?

How does the author help you connect with the characters?

What does this text have in common with other texts?

Do you like this text? Why or why not?

Do you trust the authenticity of this text?

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The Context Lens

The context lens helps us draw meaning from the historical, political, and social world in which a text was created. This lens helps us look at how and why a text was written, how it survived, and the impact it has on the world today. Reading in context changes the text. Use the following questions to assist you as you complete your close reading:

Who wrote this text? How does this knowledge inform your reading?

In what time period was this written?

What is included? What isn’t included?

What are the other points of view or perspectives on this topic?

What are the greater implications of the information presented in this text?

Why was this text written?

What does this text want us to do?

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