Module 1, Unit 3, Lesson 1:

Montgomery Improvement Association (MIA)

Close Reading Analysis

A close reading is a short essay that offers an examination of a primary text. There are many ways to perform a close reading; however, historians usually consider the following:

- Text – this is the primary source you're examining. You'll need to analyze and summarize the author's line of reasoning (argument, supporting claims, evidence used)
- Context – this mode of thinking places the text in its historical place. Ask: what else was happening at the time this document was written? How did that/those events factor into the text?
- Subtext – this considers other meanings and interpretations, or things that may have been left out. When thinking about subtext, focus on (a) what isn't said, and (b) what is the author's purpose/objective.

How do you perform a close reading?

1. Read, reread, and analyze small chunks of the text. You should pace yourself word for word, sentence by sentence, and line by line.
2. This methodical approach will help you develop a comprehensive understanding of the text.
3. As you read, you must:
    - Look up and define unknown words
    - Summarize ideas
    - Analyze for course concepts
    - Identify the main argument (thesis) and any claims made to support the main argument
    - Underline or highlight words or phrases that support the main idea
    - Generate unanswered questions

Prompt to Answer:

- Working in pairs, analyze the Montgomery Improvement Association's instructions to boycotters. Click here.