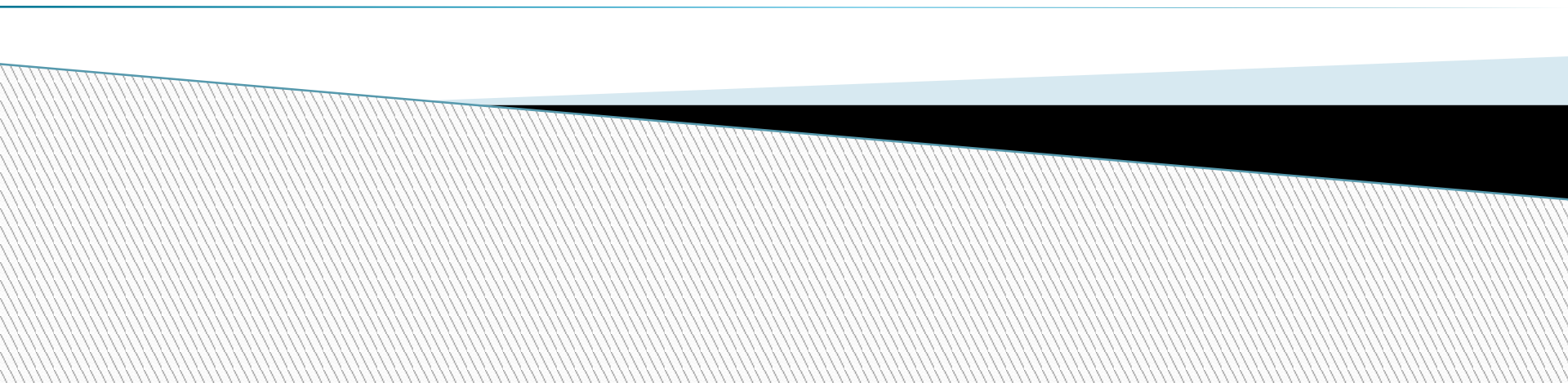
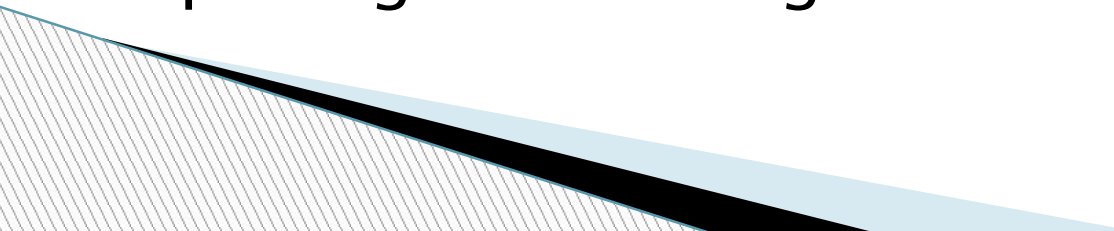


Strategies for doing a close reading



Getting Started

- ▶ Choose a passage that is important to the text as a whole
 - ▶ Treat the passage as if it were complete in itself
 - ▶ Read the passage several times, at least once out loud
 - ▶ Determine what the passage is about and try to paraphrase it in your own words
 - ▶ Make sure you have a general sense of the passage's meaning before continuing
- 

Word Meaning

- ▶ Determine the meaning of words and references
 - Look up any words you do not know or are used in unfamiliar ways
- ▶ Are there allusions to other texts?
 - ▶ Classical, biblical or historical allusions?
 - ▶ How do they work and what purpose do they serve?

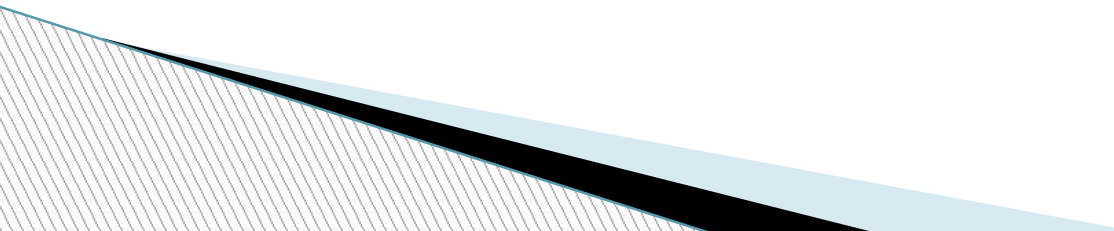
Structure

- ▶ Examine the structure of the passage
 - How does it develop its themes and ideas?
 - How is the passage organized?
 - Are there climaxes and turning points?
- ▶ In other words, take notes about what the passages does (its form) rather than what it says (its content)

Sound and Rhythm

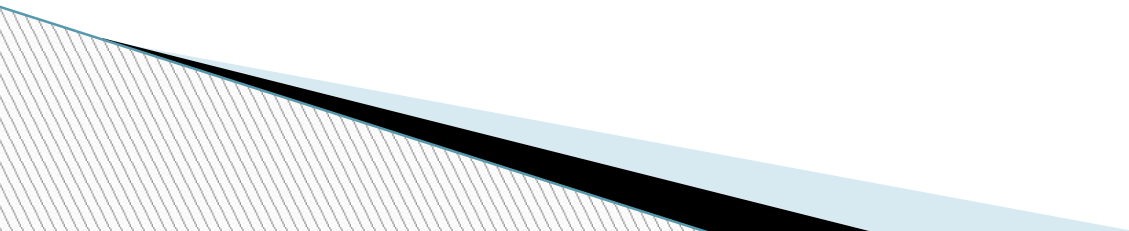
- ▶ Acquire a feel for the sound, meter, and rhythm of the passage
 - How is the punctuation important?
 - Are devices such as alliteration, assonance, rhyme, consonance, euphony, cacophony, and onomatopoeia present?
- ▶ These elements are particularly crucial if you are doing a close reading of poetry

Syntax

- ▶ Examine the arrangement of words in the sentences
 - Are the sentences simple or complex?
 - Are there interesting parallels, oppositions, or repetitions?
 - Does the syntax allow for ambiguity or double meanings?
- 

Textual Context

- ▶ Where does the passage appear?
 - What role does the passage play in the overall movement/moment of the text?



Tone and Narrative Voice

- ▶ What is the tone of the passage?
- ▶ Who is the narrator?
 - Is he/she different from the author?
- ▶ What is the narrator's attitude toward his or her subject?

Imagery

- ▶ What sort of imagery does the passage invoke?
 - How do the images work in the particular passage?
 - How do the images relate to those in the rest of the text?
 - Does the passage noticeably lack imagery?
 - If so, why?
 - What effect does this have on the passage?

Themes

- ▶ How can the details you have examined so far be related to possible themes that are evoked by the passage?
 - How do the themes in the particular passage relate to themes in the text as a whole?