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Close Reading Organizer - Section 3 **Sample Answers**

Directions: Read each summary entry and think about which themes listed in the Themes Key apply to it, then color in those themes in the Theme Tracker. Next, write a few sentences of Analysis to explain how the themes you chose apply to each summary section.

Note: There is not always a definitive set of “correct” answers for which themes should appear in the Theme Tracker. Answers that differ from the ones we propose below should therefore not automatically be treated as incorrect, and in fact can serve as great discussion starters.

Themes Key

1	Privacy, Loneliness, and Communication
2	Social Criticism
3	Time
4	Psychology and Perception
5	Death

Summary	Theme Tracker					Your Analysis
Clarissa returns home, and as she enters her house she feels like a nun who is returning to the familiar devotions of the convent. Clarissa does not believe in God, but she still feels thankful for precious moments (which are like “buds on the tree of life”) and feels the need to somehow repay them.	1	2	3	4	5	Clarissa is comforted by her “nunlike” lifestyle, but it is a similar comfort to the invisibility she now has as Richard’s wife – she has become subsumed into society’s expectations for a middle-aged housewife.
Clarissa learns that Richard has been invited to lunch at Lady Bruton’s house without her, and she is offended by this. Lucy , the servant, takes Clarissa’s parasol as if it were the weapon of a	1	2	3	4	5	Our brief glimpse at Lucy’s mind shows that she idolizes Clarissa and finds even her morning stroll with a parasol important, a contrast to Clarissa’s view of herself. Lady Bruton is representative of a more

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goddess. Clarissa thinks of "time itself" as it appears in Lady Bruton's old age, and she immediately starts thinking of death again, quoting <i>Cymbeline</i> once more. She goes upstairs to her attic bedroom, still musing on mortality and her snubbing by Lady Bruton.						patriotic, traditional era, and so it is significant that she is one of the older characters and that Clarissa thinks of "time itself" written on her face.
Clarissa takes off her hat and feels a sudden "emptiness about the heart of life." She and Richard have slept in separate rooms since Clarissa's illness, but she is happy to be alone. She thinks vaguely of how she still has a kind of "virginity" and "cold spirit" about her, as she does not feel passion for Richard.	1	2	3	4	5	This might be Woolf writing vaguely that Clarissa has never had an orgasm, or it might just be a way of saying that she has never experienced real passion for a man. Clarissa is comforted by the privacy of the soul, by having a "room of one's own," but she also misses romantic passion.
Clarissa does sometimes feel attracted to women more than to men, and then she can experience more passion. She remembers her old friend Sally Seton , who spent a summer at Bourton, and Clarissa feels that she was truly in love with Sally.	1	2	3	4	5	There was no real option of "coming out" in Woolf's time, so what the world perceives as Clarissa's "coldness" might actually just be that she is more naturally attracted to women and must try to repress these feelings.
Clarissa describes Sally in detail - in their younger days Sally was dark-haired, wild, and poor. She smoked cigarettes, read socialist writers, and once ran naked through the country house when she was bathing and forgot her sponge. Sally gave Clarissa	1	2	3	4	5	Bourton keeps reappearing to enrich and complicate Clarissa's present, haunting her just like Evans haunts Septimus. We now see how radical and passionate Clarissa was when she was young, highlighting just how conventional she has become with Richard. Aunt

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<p>radical things to read and together they planned to change the world. Clarissa's old Aunt Helena found Sally shocking and improper, even her habit of cutting the heads off of flowers and floating them in water.</p>						<p>Helena is another representative of an older, more conservative time, and she finds Sally shocking – especially Sally's treatment of flowers, a traditional feminine symbol. Sally deals with the flowers (femininity) in a different way than the norm. Sally snipping off the heads of flowers can also be seen as symbolizing her allure to other women, Clarissa in particular.</p>
<p>Clarissa remembers the "purity, the integrity" of her love for Sally, and she remembers being overcome at entering a house, thinking that Sally "is beneath this roof!" Clarissa also remembers going downstairs in a white dress to meet Sally and thinking of a line from Shakespeare's <i>Othello</i> – "if it were now to die 'twere now to be most happy." There were other people there that day too, Peter Walsh and her own father, but Clarissa had eyes only for Sally.</p>	1	2	3	4	5	<p>Shakespeare appears often as a representation of English greatness (the kind of great art used to inspire patriotism) but also as a source of piercing, passionate quotes about death. This quote points to Septimus's future suicide, but also shows the intensity of Clarissa's passion for Sally. Once again Clarissa associates great joy as being very close to death, a kind of fragile, dramatic thing.</p>
<p>One night Clarissa, Sally, Peter, and another friend were out walking. Clarissa and Sally fell behind, and "Sally stopped; picked a flower; kissed her on the lips." Clarissa feels that this was the "most exquisite moment of her whole life," and was like a religious experience.</p>	1	2	3	4	5	<p>Even as Big Ben keeps tolling the forward movement of time, past moments like this continue circling back within characters' minds. Clarissa shares a brief moment of true communication and intimacy with Sally, but this experience is interrupted by Peter. Even so, she has</p>

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Immediately afterward her rapture was interrupted by Peter Walsh asking if she was “stargazing,” and she felt his jealousy and criticism.						never again felt such true communion with anyone else, so Clarissa considers this kiss the highlight of her life.
Clarissa now thinks more of Peter , and how she owes much of her intellectual life to conversations with him. She and Peter have often quarreled, as she always wants his good opinion and he has high, stubborn standards. Clarissa wonders what Peter will think of her when he returns from India.	1	2	3	4	5	Clarissa has had a different kind of intimacy with Peter, and she is closer intellectually to him than she was to Sally. Clarissa’s memories are almost all of Peter and Sally, and rarely, if ever, of Richard.
Clarissa looks at herself in the mirror. She thinks of herself as a person who brings people together, which is why she throws parties. She finds the green dress she will wear that night and starts to mend a tear in it. She is always sensitive to her servants’ workloads, and so sometimes she does tasks like this herself.	1	2	3	4	5	Clarissa uses Peter’s criticisms as a vehicle for trying to reconcile her internal self with her external self. She has a rich, intelligent inner life, but on the surface seems like a shallow society housewife. By justifying herself to Peter she is able to give greater meaning to her actions.
Lucy comes in, thinking how wonderful Mrs. Dalloway is, and she offers to help Clarissa with the dress. Clarissa refuses but thanks her. She is thankful that her servants like her and allow her to be generous. Clarissa sits quietly sewing the dress, thinking of life as a series of never-ending waves.	1	2	3	4	5	Clarissa takes comfort in mending the dress just as she did among the flowers. The rip in her dress is another “opening” in a series of windows and doors in the novel, objects of both communication and division.

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The front doorbell rings, breaking Clarissa's reverie. She is surprised to hear that it is Peter Walsh , who has just returned from India. They greet each other and Peter kisses Clarissa's hands, but then he is immediately embarrassed. He takes out his pocketknife and plays with the blade as he always used to do.	1	2	3	4	5	Peter is critical and wary of any kind of sentimentality, and so he is immediately ashamed when he gives into passionate feelings during his reunion with Clarissa. This fear of sincere emotion makes Peter another character unable to truly communicate.
The two make small talk and Peter feels irritated with Clarissa for her society lifestyle and for choosing to marry the Conservative Richard . He notes that she is mending a dress, which seems very indicative of her new role as a "perfect hostess." Clarissa talks about Bourton, trying to reminisce with Peter, but Peter doesn't want to revisit the painful past "when she had tortured him so infernally."	1	2	3	4	5	Peter immediately reacts as Clarissa had expected him to, noting that she has fulfilled his insult of "perfect hostess" and has conformed to conventionality with Richard (even though her reasons for mending the dress are not the conservative ones Peter believes them to be). Peter felt the same passion for Clarissa that Clarissa felt for Sally, but as a man he had the social freedom to express this passion.
Peter feels a judgment in Clarissa's wealth and happiness, as if he has been a failure, and he reassures himself that he is not old yet. Meanwhile Clarissa feels that Peter's habit of playing with his knife makes anything she says seem frivolous and silly. She asks Peter about his life, and he gathers his strength and tells her that he is in love with a woman in India named Daisy .	1	2	3	4	5	Though Peter and Clarissa exchange few words, and it is mostly small talk, we also see how their past relations and inner dialogues give weight to the meeting. Clarissa is mending a dress (holding scissors), while Peter plays with his knife, and so the two are armed as if for a battle, critical of each other's failures and conscious of their own.

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<p>Clarissa is disappointed that Peter has succumbed to falling in love again, but she asks Peter about it. He says Daisy is a younger woman who is married to a Major in the Indian Army. She has two young children, but she wants to leave her husband for Peter. Peter has supposedly returned to England to ask his lawyers about getting a divorce for her. Clarissa pities him, as he has often wasted his life pursuing women.</p>	1	2	3	4	5	<p>Clarissa has lived a mostly passionless life (except for her feelings for Sally), while Peter has thrown his passion at many women. India was a colony of England at this time, and so Daisy and her Major husband are English emigrants.</p>
<p>Peter is suddenly overcome by his memories and his perceived struggle against Clarissa, and he bursts into tears. Clarissa takes his hand and kisses him, and she briefly wonders if she should have married Peter instead of Richard. Peter masters himself and goes to the window. He wonders how Clarissa can still make him think of Bourton, and he asks her if she is happy with Richard. Before she can answer, Elizabeth enters the room and Big Ben strikes eleven-thirty. Peter leaves abruptly, and as he goes out Clarissa reminds him of her party that night.</p>	1	2	3	4	5	<p>Peter is critical of other people's sentimentality, but he himself is victim to strong waves of emotion. Peter and Clarissa almost have a moment of intimate communication but they are interrupted by Elizabeth, just as Clarissa and Sally were interrupted by Peter. Clarissa then reminds Peter of her party, using the party as an attempt to replace or amend this ruptured moment.</p>