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Close Reading Organizer - Section 8 **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
Peter Walsh hears the ambulance rush by to pick up Septimus’s body, and he thinks of ambulances as a triumph of civilization. The English health system seems admirable to him after India, and he admires how all the cars and carriages stop to let the ambulance pass. Peter thinks of how easily the ambulance could be coming for him, and as he grows sentimental and morbid thinks that this is the “privilege of loneliness” – he can think whatever he wants in privacy.	1	2	3	4	5	The irony of this moment is brutal, as it is the very “civilized” health system of England that drove Septimus to suicide. Peter also muses on the privacy of the soul, but he prefers to use this privacy for imagining and fantasizing instead of delving beneath the surfaces of things.

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<p>Peter remembers how he and Clarissa used to ride the omnibus and explore London together. Clarissa had a theory then that to know someone, you also had to know all the people and places that “completed” that person. She thought that people existed beyond their single selves, and so might even survive beyond death through the attachments and memories of others.</p>	1	2	3	4	5	<p>Clarissa’s theory connects with the web of interconnection Woolf has created throughout the novel. Septimus is dead now, but he will live on in the soul of a seemingly random woman (Clarissa). Though this external “completion” of personhood seems to contradict the privacy of the soul, there is a kind of connection between characters in the novel, even if it is a connection founded on separation, on the confusions and failures of trying to communicate.</p>
<p>Peter reminisces about his thirty-year-long friendship with Clarissa. They have fought often, but overall Clarissa has influenced him more than anyone else. Peter returns to his hotel and reminisces about Bourton. He and Clarissa would walk in the woods, argue, and discuss people, poetry, and politics (Clarissa was a “Radical” then).</p>	1	2	3	4	5	<p>Peter’s thoughts continually return to Clarissa and their time at Bourton, undercutting his frequent reassurances that he doesn’t love her anymore. Peter and Clarissa once shared intimate communication in an intellectual way.</p>
<p>Peter goes to his room and finds a letter from Clarissa, saying how “heavenly” it was to see him that morning. He is upset by this and wishes she would have “let him be,” left him to remember the old days before she married Richard and lived “in perfect happiness.” Peter suddenly finds the</p>	1	2	3	4	5	<p>Peter is interrupted in his nostalgia by the “conventional” Clarissa of the present, the woman who rejected his marriage proposal and chose Richard instead. This frivolous note is a contrast to the old conversations Peter and Clarissa used to have.</p>

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hotel cold and impersonal.						
Peter imagines the moments after their meeting that afternoon – he pictures Clarissa regretting her refusal of Peter’s marriage proposal, wishing that she had changed the world with him instead of slipping into middle-aged conventionality with Richard . Peter imagines Clarissa weeping as she wrote him the note.	1	2	3	4	5	Clarissa’s note interrupted Peter’s fantasies, but he immediately returns to his imagination and pictures a reality in which Clarissa regrets rejecting him.
Peter has been successful with women recently, and the narrator muses about why this is – it may be that he is both respectable-looking and unsure about life, and can be easily ensnared by a young woman. Peter takes off his boots and looks at a photo of Daisy with a fox-terrier on her knee. She is dark and beautiful, and looks much more “natural” than Clarissa . Their relationship has also been very different, as Daisy caused Peter no torment and totally adores him.	1	2	3	4	5	Peter’s main experience of love has been with Clarissa, which was very different than his relationship with Daisy. Peter continues to criticize Clarissa as he tries to prove to himself that he loves Daisy more than Clarissa now.
Peter thinks about his situation and wonders if marrying Daisy would be a good idea. She would probably lose her two young children and the respect of society. Peter imagines himself as a man of the world, writing books, having left Daisy behind to	1	2	3	4	5	Peter feels the paradox of being an introverted, privacy-loving person and also desiring the company of others. This seems like an aspect of Woolf’s personality as well – she was a solitary writer, but she also loved the activity of London much more than

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idealize him from afar. Then Peter feels dissatisfied with himself, and wonders why he cannot keep out of social situations and women's company despite his love of privacy.						the quietness of the country.
Peter dislikes the idea of staying devoted to Daisy , but he knows he would be furious if she was with anyone else. He interrupts his musings to go down to dinner. The other hotel guests find Peter interesting and respectable based on his appearance and composure in dealing with the waiter, especially the way he orders "Bartlett pears." The guests want to talk to him, and eventually they make small talk.	1	2	3	4	5	At his hotel, where no one knows the "real" Peter, he is able to present himself at his best, or as the kind of man he wants to be – composed, dignified, and self-assured. His order of "Bartlett pears" is like Septimus's moment of lucidity, a brief reprieve from Peter's usual mood swings, fantasies, and self-doubt.
Peter makes up his mind to go to Clarissa's party. He tells himself that he wants to ask Richard about what the Conservatives are doing in India, and he wants to hear the latest gossip. Peter then thinks of the human soul as something swimming along deep underwater, suddenly needing to leap to the surface, brush against other souls, and gossip together.	1	2	3	4	5	Peter's image of the soul as a fish-like thing resonates with Woolf's other work, particularly the novel <i>The Waves</i> . It is also similar to her image of the soul as a tree, with much of it underground but its branches sometimes brushing against other trees.
Peter sits down in a wicker chair on the hotel steps and watches the city	1	2	3	4	5	Peter often assures himself that he isn't getting old, but he also enjoys watching

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<p>wake up for the evening. The night is lighter than he is used to, as daylight savings has been introduced to England while he was away. He watches the young people pass by on their way to the movies and admires their fashion. He remembers Clarissa's Aunt Helena, who pressed flowers, had a glass eye, and seemed to belong to a different era.</p>						<p>how English civilization has changed while he has been away. Aunt Helena is the woman who was shocked by Sally's actions at Bourton, and is a representative of an older, more traditional era.</p>
<p>Peter muses that the past and tradition can enrich experience, and then he sets off for Clarissa's with great expectations. As he walks he looks at the lighted windows of people's houses, each with a different kind of life behind it, and he admires the beauty and richness of life. When Peter comes to Clarissa's house he makes his soul "brave itself to endure," opens his pocketknife, and goes inside.</p>	1	2	3	4	5	<p>Peter has a similar revelation to Clarissa, looking into the window of each person's room and observing the individual souls residing within. However frivolous Clarissa's party seems to Peter, it is still a place with the potential for communication - something that frightens him - so he must steel himself before going in.</p>