

Name (print): \_\_\_\_\_ Period: \_\_\_\_\_

**Close Reading: "Who Killed Benny Paret?" by Norman Cousins**

**(1)** Sometime about 1935 or 1936 I had an interview with Mike Jacobs, the prizefight promoter. I was a fledgling newspaper reporter at that time; my beat was education, but during the vacation season I found myself on varied assignments, all the way from ship news to sports reporting. In this way I found myself sitting opposite the most powerful figure in the boxing world.

**Paragraph 1: What does Cousins tell the reader about himself and his interviewee?**

**(2)** There was nothing spectacular in Mr. Jacobs' manner or appearance; but when he spoke about prizefights, he was no longer a bland little man but a colossus who sounded the way Napoleon must have sounded when he reviewed a battle. You knew you were listening to Number One. His saying something made it true.

**Paragraph 2: What is Cousins emphasizing about Jacobs?**

**DIDLS Connection: In yellow, highlight the words that describe Jacobs before talking about boxing. In green, highlight the words that describe Jacobs while talking about boxing.**

**(3)** We discussed what to him was the only important element in successful promoting — how to please the crowd. So far as he was concerned, there was no mystery to it. You put killers in the ring and the people filled your arena. You hire boxing artists — men who are adroit at feinting, parrying, weaving, jabbing, and dancing, but who don't pack dynamite in their fists — and you wind up counting your empty seats. So you searched for the killers and slugers and maulers — fellows who could hit with the force of a baseball bat.

**(4)** I asked Mr. Jacobs if he was speaking literally when he said people came out to see the killer.

"They don't come out to see a tea party," he said evenly. "They come out to see the knockout. They come out to see a man hurt. If they think anything else, they're kidding themselves."

Name (print): \_\_\_\_\_ Period: \_\_\_\_\_

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**Paragraph 3 & 4: What does Jacobs suggest about a boxing audience?**

**DIDLS Connection: In green, highlight the words used to describe boxers who successfully fill the seats.**

**(5)** Recently a young man by the name of Benny Paret was killed in the ring. The killing was seen by millions; it was on television. In the twelfth round he was hit hard in the head several times, went down, was counted out, and never came out of the coma.

**Paragraph 5: What is the purpose of this paragraph?**

**DIDLS Connection: Which DIDLS device is most prominently used in this paragraph?**

**(6)** The Paret fight produced a flurry of investigations. Governor Rockefeller was shocked by what happened and appointed a committee to assess the responsibility. The New York State Boxing Commission decided to find out what was wrong. The District Attorney's office expressed its concern. One question that was solemnly studied in all three probes concerned the action of the referee. Did he act in time to stop the fight? Another question had to do with the role of the examining doctors who certified the physical fitness of the fighters before the bout. Still another question involved Mr. Paret's manager; did he rush his boy into the fight without adequate time to recuperate from the previous one?

**Paragraph 6: What is Cousins trying to call to the attention of the reader?**

**DIDLS Connection: Notice the two rhetorical questions in the paragraph.**

**(7)** In short, the investigators looked into every possible cause except the real one. Benny Paret was killed because the human fist delivers enough impact, when directed against the head, to produce a massive hemorrhage in the brain. The human brain is the most delicate and complex mechanism in all creation. It has a lacework of millions of highly fragile nerve connections. Nature attempts to protect this exquisitely intricate machinery by encasing it in a hard shell. Fortunately, the shell is thick enough to withstand a great deal of pounding. Nature, however, can protect man against everything except man himself. Not every blow to the head will kill a man —

Name (print): \_\_\_\_\_ Period: \_\_\_\_\_

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but there is always the risk of concussion and damage to the brain. A prizefighter may be able to survive even repeated brain concussions and go on fighting, but the damage to his brain may be permanent.

**Paragraph 7: Cousins appeals to the reader's sense of (A) emotion, (B) logic, (C) ethic? Choose one and explain.**

**DIDLS Connection: Notice the images used to describe the brain. Which of the five senses is most affected?**

**(8)** In any event, it is futile to investigate the referee's role and seek to determine whether he should have intervened to stop the fight earlier. This is not where the primary responsibility lies. The primary responsibility lies with the people who pay to see a man hurt. The referee who stops a fight too soon from the crowd's viewpoint can expect to be booed. The crowd wants the knockout; it wants to see a man stretched out on the canvas. This is the supreme moment in boxing. It is nonsense to talk about prizefighting as a test of boxing skills. No crowd was ever brought to its feet screaming and cheering at the sight of two men beautifully dodging and weaving out of each other's jabs. The time the crowd comes alive is when a man is hit hard over the heart or the head, when his mouthpiece flies out, when blood squirts out of his nose or eyes, when he wobbles under the attack and his pursuer continues to smash at him with poleax impact.

**Paragraph 8: What does the paragraph add to the reader's understanding of the boxing audience?**

**DIDLS Connection: Highlight meaningful diction in yellow. Highlight meaningful images in green.**

**(9)** Don't blame it on the referee. Don't even blame it on the fight managers. Put the blame where it belongs — on the prevailing mores that regard prize-fighting as a perfectly proper enterprise and vehicle of entertainment. No one doubts that many people enjoy prizefighting and will miss it if it should be thrown out. And that is precisely the point.

**Paragraph 9: What does Cousins want his readers to do after reading this article?**

Name (print) \_\_\_\_\_

Period \_\_\_\_\_

**DIDLS Analysis: "Who Killed Benny Paret?"**

**Directions:** Plan a chunk in response to the following essay prompt. Your chunk's thesis should be based on the thesis formula below.

Norman Cousin's 1962 essay "Who Killed Benny Paret?" focuses on a brutal boxing match at Madison Square Garden between Emile Griffith and Benny Paret – a fight that led to Paret's death after nine days in a coma. The fight, which was viewed by millions, went twelve rounds and ended with Griffith driving Paret onto the ropes and relentlessly beating him. Read the article carefully. Then, in a well organized essay, analyze the techniques Cousins uses to argue his point about boxing.

**Thesis Formula:** Purpose

Author, Ttitle, Type, and Time (ATTT) purpose verb "that"  
statement of the main idea "by employing" DIDLS element.

<b>Thesis</b>	
<b>Lead-in + Concrete Detail</b>	
<b>Commentary</b>	
<b>Commentary</b>	