

Joint Biology-English III Journaling Project
Inspired by Henry David Thoreau

Life-long writer, thinker, philosopher, naturalist, and Transcendentalist Henry David Thoreau began keeping a journal in 1837 and did not cease until April 11, 1861, a year before he died of tuberculosis. In his journal Thoreau combined his observations of the natural world around him with reflections on the connections not only among life forms and ecosystems, but also between nature and humanity, between nature and himself (<http://naturewriting.com/ideas-detail.php?recordID=2>). As he himself wrote in a September 13, 1850 journal entry, his primary desire was to *see*: "I must walk more with free senses. . . I must let my senses wander as my thoughts, my eyes see without looking."



It's not what you
look at that matters,
it's what you see.

—Henry David Thoreau

For this joint Biology and English III project, you will keep a journal of daily outdoor observations. This journal should be kept in Book Creator.

**The journal will be due Friday,
December 11, by 4 p.m.**

During the course of the fall semester, you will complete a minimum of **12 observations**, 1 observation a week, each lasting at least 20 minutes. **Six** of these entries will focus solely on an outdoors space within the Chatham

Hall campus that you think of as **your** sanctuary. **One** other entry will focus on **the pond** and its environs in the meadow behind the stables. The remaining **five entries** will focus on five different outdoor campus areas that your peregrinations take you.

For one of these entries, try to sum up the above information creatively in a *gatha*. *
For another of these entries, try to sum up the spirit of the above information creatively in a *tanka*. **

See the links below for definitions and examples of *gathas* and *tankas*.

*<http://naturewriting.com/ideas-detail.php?recordID=4>

**<http://naturewriting.com/ideas-detail.php?recordID=5>

Journal Content: During these observations, you will sit quietly in a place of your own choosing. During this quiet time, you will record the following information in your journal much as Thoreau did in his.

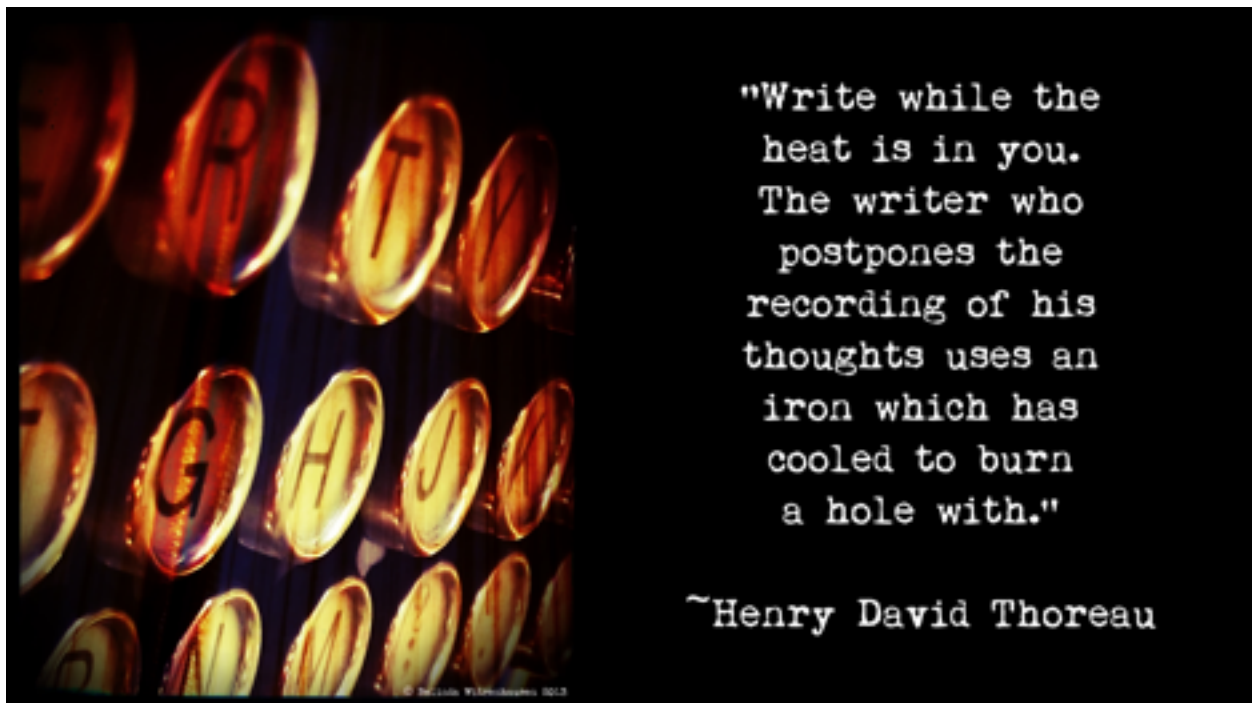
- Date, season, time of Day (morning, afternoon, evening, night)
- Your location on campus
- The weather and the “feeling” in the air
- How do you feel? What do you hear? What do you smell?

- What you see as you sit or stand with "free senses." More than likely, you will want to record what you see when you look up at the sky and down at the earth. If you see any birds, animals, fish, insects--*fauna!*--or *flora* (plant life, including such things as trees, leaves, grasses, flowers, lichens, etc.), actively involved in living (or dying) say so! Describe them and any activity they are engaged in!

- Take a picture or two of what you see

- Has anybody else has been in your location that day? That is, can you tell if the environment you are seeing has been disturbed, or are you the day's pioneer observer?

- **Finally, and most Thoreau-like**, what **connections and/or interactions** do you see between the flora and the fauna within the landscape you observe? Do you yourself feel part of--*at one with*--the scene? If so, how? If not, why not? Channel your inner Thoreau. Be.

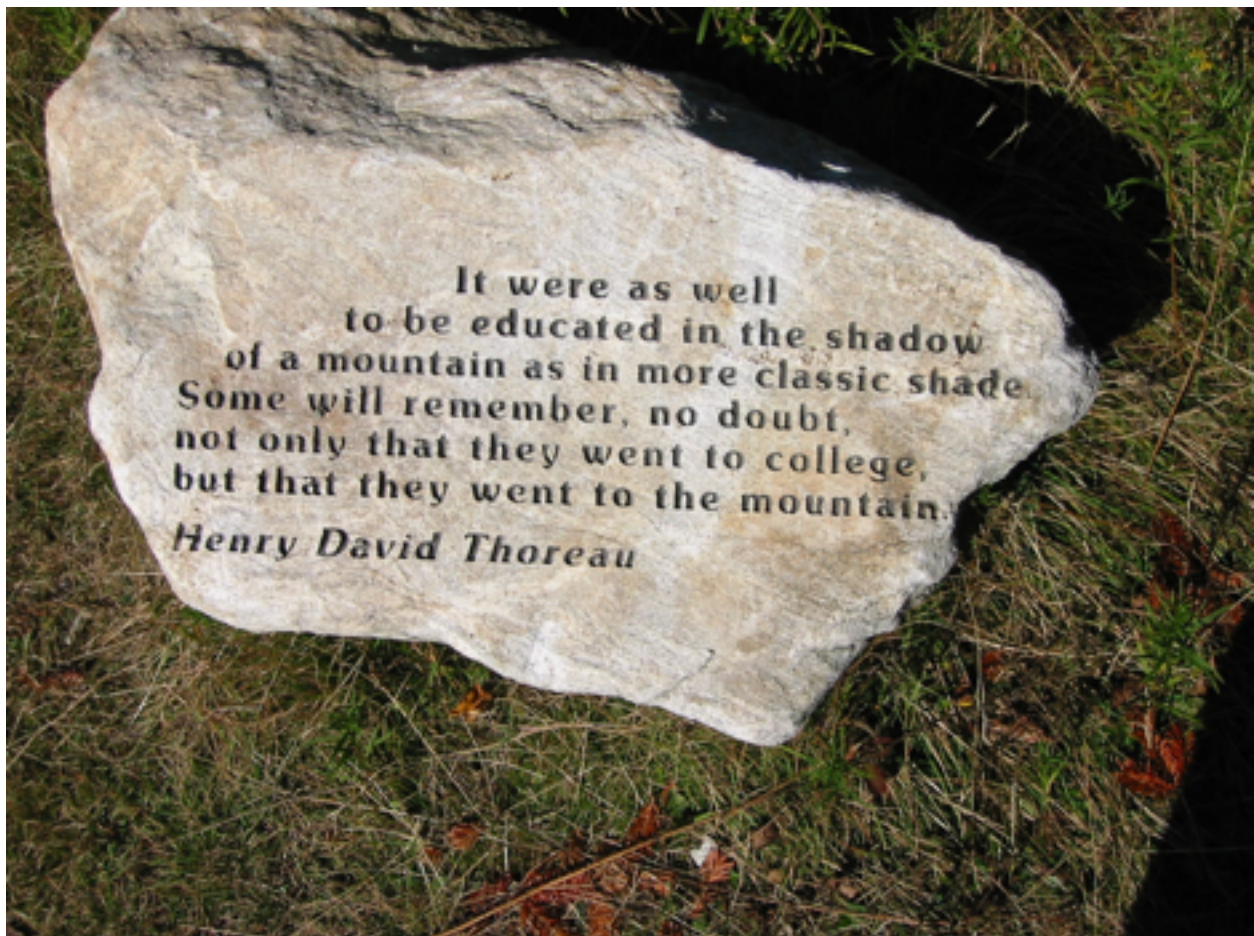


One Purpose of this assignment:

One of the many purposes of this project is to help you see not only how we humans connect with the natural world—and how the inhabitants of the natural world connect with each other—but also how disciplines such as Biology and English DO have an overlap! Biology and English may occur in different class rooms in different buildings, but commonalities exist. Thoreau himself in his journal writings and most famously in *Walden* embodies this overlap, and so does this assignment. This journal will count as a grade for both Biology as well as for English III. You will hand the same journal in to both teachers.

Grading Rubric: For those of you in both Bio and Eng 3, Ms. Davis and Dr. E. will read each of your journals independently, and then come together to discuss them and assign a grade. We shall be looking at the following:

<u>For Each of 12 Daily Outdoor Observations</u>	<u>Point Value</u>
Did you observe?	0 - 3
Required elements (the list of 8 above) recorded?	0 - 3
Thoughtfulness of completion	0 - 3
Total per observation	0 - 3
Number of possible points for assignment	36 points



Safety Considerations While in The Outdoors with your Journal:

STAY IN BOUNDS and follow all school rules while conducting your journal observations.

DO NOT use the Fitness Trail until Coach Allen and Maintenance let us know that it is safe to do so.

During daylight hours, if you are within shouting distance of people that will hear you, you can make your observations alone.

Outside of hollering distance, you ALWAYS need a buddy (horse trails, meadow, etc.) and you MUST sign out—even during classroom hours.

At night, you must stay within the loop. It IS permissible to go to the soccer field IF you are with a buddy, you sign out, AND your houseparent says that it is OK.

At night, you may NOT go to the meadow, into the woods, or on the trails. The soccer field is OK if the above parameters are met. Otherwise, stay in the loop.

Do NOT approach wild animals of any kind, especially dangerous ones like snakes, bears, rabid critters.

Do NOT eat or drink anything you find in the field. Do NOT touch poison oak or poison ivy.

