

**The School of Environmental Studies Writing Process:
From Journaling to Assessments**

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A Model for the Reading and Writing Process

This document is used as a guide for the interdisciplinary curriculum at the School of Environmental Studies. It highlights the following beliefs that are congruent with the latest literacy trends noted in the National Council of Teachers of English: "NCTE Beliefs about the Teaching of Writing." See: <http://www.ncte.org/about/over/positions/category/write/118876.htm>). Similarly, it reinforces the 2010 English Language Arts Standards focused on Literacy in Science standards.

Journals-Working Portfolios-Assessments-SES Portfolio (p. 3)

1. Journaling

An example of a text-based journal assignment is provided. A series of both observation-based (field notes) and text-based journaling occurs at SES. (p. 4)

As noted in the new standards, the following skills are emphasized while reading and journaling at SES:

- Gathering quotes.
- Citing sources.
- Recording and analyzing evidence.
- Analyzing structure.
- Drawing conclusions based on cited evidence.

Grading Strategy: Periodically (1-2 weeks) journals are evaluated using a rubric like the one provided. Most journals are holistically graded—are the entries present and to what degree are entries thoughtful and accurate. Marks on the rubric are translated into letter grades, and then entered as percentages. (p. 5)

2. Working Portfolios

At SES students write working portfolios 1-2 times a week. The purpose is to draw conclusions from two or more journal entries.

A checklist is used to evaluate working portfolios—they must be brief and to the point for easy grading (see **Study of Water** checklist—most are driven by a question—what question would the writer be answering?). (p. 6)

Grading Strategies: At some point during the year, students may be evaluating their own WPs, one another's, making selections as to which WP should be graded, turning in 3 and only 1 or 2 would actually be graded. These are all strategies to involve students in the evaluation process and ease up the grading for teachers.

Working Portfolios are to be written and not to be feared. Writing does not have to be scary, but it can be when the necessary thinking is confused. Hence, it is a very accurate way for teachers to evaluate students' understanding of material and tweak curriculum accordingly.

On occasion, Working Portfolios can encourage dramatic synthesis. See **Pond/Lake Readings: Check for Understanding.** Note the checklist on the front, and the four questions and diagram on the back. (p. 7)

3. Assessments

The Rubric used for our formal essays is applied fairly universally. In our pond study, it can be applied to our technical report with some minor revisions (ie emphasizing a technical writing style). It is used for essays on Biological Evolution as well as Environmental Ethics. Sometimes we put it in the form of a checklist to focus on certain skills and content. (p. 8)

4. SES Portfolio

At the end of each trimester, students are asked to look back at the learning and evaluate the journaling, working portfolios, and assessments. Their purpose is to evaluate some of their best and worst items while providing evidence for why it was better or worse.

The goal is not only to evaluate their writing, but to make the higher level connections between the trimester's learning.

A MODEL FOR THE READING & WRITING PROCESS AT SES

JOURNAL→	WORKING PORTFOLIO.....→	ASSESSMENT→	SES PORTFOLIO
Gathering data to create a "personal textbook"	"Studying" your personal textbook Developing some preliminary understanding	"Taking the test," showing what you know," offering an answer to the question... The synthesis of the work in the journal & working portfolio	Tracing your growth, exercising metacognition, sharing your work. An archive of your learning.
Brainstorming...delving...seeing... exploring...recording...examining note-taking...comprehending... analyzing...responding...recreating creating...collecting...reflecting	Processing...shaping...practicing... drafting...formulating...molding... blending...sharing...analyzing... evaluating...some synthesizing... checking for understanding	Synthesizing...polishing...editing... displaying understanding...perfecting performing...producing...presenting ...	Selecting...reflecting...celebrating publishing...archiving...displaying
Informal Raw...rough...free...forget about conventions, wording, structure Take risks...mistakes expected	Moving toward formal Start thinking about style & structure; play with diction & syntax. More carefully considered, still in the development phase. Raw...rough...free...forget about conventions, wording, structure Take risks...mistakes expected	Formal Think a lot about style & structure; strive for perfection. Very carefully considered and complete.	Formal assembly Focus on reflection, metacognition
Daily tasks Less prescribed... Feedback through conferences & periodic checks. Generally holistic grading, with a "sorting" grade like +√.	Periodic tasks & checks Somewhat prescribed... sometimes a rubric or checklist is provided Evaluation through a combination of holistic and specific grading	At the end of each investigation Generally prescribed with a rubric or checklist as the basis for grading. Include paper trail, discussion of process, or metacognitive activity	Midterm and end of trimester Some guidance, but mostly self-selected
Annotations... questions on readings... field notes... sketches... writing to prompts... class notes... responses to readings... lab data... prep for discussions... charts... maps... freewriting... research notes	Drafts... in-class essays poems... webs/maps/graphic organizers... dialogues... sketches or artwork... research summaries... outlines... paragraphs... practice AP questions... storyboards... peer reviews...	Essays... presentations... web pages... displays... projects... scored discussions... seminars... teaching lessons... performances... creative writings... research papers... technical reports... texts...	Ring binder with selected works and reflections... video or multimedia collection... electronic archive? Shared with colleagues, teachers, parents, college recruiters...
What do I need to know? What is it? What does it mean? How can I find out? Why do I need to know?	Am I getting it? Here's what makes sense so far...and what I still need to figure out.	I've got it!	Look at what I have done!
<i>Metaphorically:</i> Collecting many various types of rocks from a variety of places in a variety of ways.	Sorting, organizing, cleaning, tumbling the rocks	Polishing the rocks	Choosing the best rocks for a display

Sample Journal Entry

Pond Ecology Assignment

Remember that by the end of this study, each of you should have a solid answer to each of these questions. Begin by reading the following:

Dennis, *Bird in the Waterfall* ch. 13, pp. 167-174 and middle of 180-187

Then answer the following questions in your journal, using BITW ch. 13 and other suggested pages in P & B (Caduto)

- What are the characteristics of lentic freshwater ecosystems, including ponds, lakes, and wetlands?
 - What is a pond? (Caduto 54-56)
 - What is a lake? (Caduto 115)
 - What are the major zones of a pond/lake? (Caduto 118-121)
 - What is succession in a pond/lake (think trophic states)? (Caduto 79 and 115-116)
- What are the characteristics of water quality?
 - How does water chemistry affect water quality? (Caduto 21-44 and 134-137)
- What are the principle flora and fauna and other biological organisms of lentic freshwater systems and what are their adaptations?
 - What major animals live in the different zones of a lake? (Caduto 125-134)
 - What major plants live in the different zones of a lake? (Caduto 121-125)
 - What major animals live in ponds? (Caduto 81-105)
 - What are major plants live in ponds? (Caduto 62-79)
 - What are the major decomposers in ponds? (Caduto 61-62)
 - Construct a food web as you would expect to find it in a local lake or pond (include all components such as producers, primary, secondary & tertiary consumers, decomposers)? (Caduto ch. 2, 3, 4)
- What is the geologic and human history of a given water body?
 - How are lakes formed? (Caduto 116-118)

You should have these questions completed in your journal by Monday, Sept. 29.

Overall Quality:

1. Please tape this grading sheet into your journal as today's first entry.

2. Please flag with a post-it your Specialist Reading Notes.

3. Leave this in place as part of your journal history

A Exemplary Exceeds Expectations	B Proficient Meets Expectations	C Adequate Minimally Meets Expectations	D Substandard Expectations Not Quite Met	F Not Adequate Expectations Not Met
Nearly all entries have been completed.	Most entries have been completed.	Some entries have been completed.	Some entries have been completed.	Few or no entries have been completed.
Work is accurate, detailed, & indicates meticulous effort and sustained thought.	Work is accurate, detailed, and shows evidence of thought. Most items are of high quality.	Work is accurate, detailed, and sincere effort is shown. Work is of inconsistent quality.	Work is not accurate or detailed. Thought and effort appear minimal.	Work is inconsistent or shoddy. Little evidence of thought or effort.

Notes on Specialist Readings: (This was not graded on this journal check, but will be next week.)

Good notes contain most of the following:

- a. Your source (book, article or speaker) is listed at the top with page #'s.
- b. Specific quotations are cited with the page on which they were found.
- c. The question or prompt is rewritten or is embedded in the answer for later reference.
- d. There is detail enough to thoroughly answer a question or prompt.
- e. Main ideas are highlighted and provide the frame for your notes.
- f. Explanation/illustration/examples clarify main ideas.
- g. Diagrams or sketches may be used, especially for scientific concepts/information.
- h. Notes follow an outline style or are otherwise broken up for easy accessibility. (Large blocks of text can be hard to access later.)
- i. Note-taker includes questions or question marks about material that need clarification.

Rose Journal Check

Study of Water

Name _____

Summary Essay due 9/20/02

You have completed several readings and journal entries about the nutrient cycles and trophic states of lakes:

- Minnesota's Natural Heritage (197-202)
- Chemical Structure of Lakes
- Pond and Brook (28-35)
- Lake Classification: Trophic Status

Task

- Review all of the above-mentioned readings and journal entries.
- Explain in a short essay (roughly 1 page, word processed) where, when and why the process of eutrophication occurs.

A High Quality Essay Includes:	+	√	-
Definition of eutrophication			
Understanding of why eutrophication occurs			
Understanding of what happens within eutrophic lakes			
Where eutrophication occurs in MN			
Quotations and examples, in SES format from readings to support your hypothesis			
Well-developed paragraphs			
An effective whole with introduction, body paragraphs and conclusion			

Name: _____ Name: _____

Pond/Lake Readings: Check for Understanding

Working Portfolio
Oct. 4, 2007

Introduction

After reading and annotating chapters and excerpts from various readings on ponds and lakes, we need to be able to transfer our understanding from the text, to the real world. Ideally our reports will help city water officials to care and maintain these local environments.

Please draw on the text book knowledge you have of the following pond and lake readings in order to answer the prompt below:

- ◆ "Understanding Lake Data" authors: Shaw, Mechenich, and Klessig
- ◆ 10/2 Lake Ecology II Class Notes (with marginalia)

What information is needed in order to understand and evaluate the water quality of a pond or lake?

<i>Criteria</i>	+	/	-	0
Student names and pods are on the upper left corner.				
Attached graphic is well developed; the four questions are answered.				
Content: Selected information displays a keen understanding of the readings' content.				
Connections: Students articulate connections between the questions (at minimum 4).				
Evidence/Sources: Information is drawn from all three sources.				
Citations: Information is cited correctly, whether a direct quote or a paraphrased citation: For example: (Tester 116).				

Steps to Take

1. Study the graphic to see what you are trying to answer.
2. Organize your notes and identify(highlight) items that you want to include.
3. Start entering information (with correct quotes and authors) into the graphic.