

What do I believe?



A ROAD IN BELMONT, CIRCA 1905

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Abstract

This 13-day unit, as the first unit of a yearlong English 11H course, is designed to introduce students to American guiding values, key concepts, and the course's essential questions that will be explored throughout the entire year – all of which are focused on the American individual in society. Since course readings are read chronologically, we begin the year with some American writers who set the foundation for the United States: Thomas Jefferson, Benjamin Franklin, and Jean de Crevecoeur. A Transcendentalist unit follows this one, reading Emerson's *Self-Reliance, American Scholar, Nature*; and Thoreau's *Walden, Civil Disobedience, and Life without Principle*.

In this first unit, individual writing assignments are designed to connect Thoreau and Emerson's ideas to the unit's early American writers. By reading Thoreau and Emerson epigraphs in conjunction with early American texts, students will be exposed to transcendental ideas and texts prior to the Transcendentalist unit and students will thus be better acquainted with the ideas and writing styles of Thoreau and Emerson.

Notes: Like Janet Burne's unit, this unit is, in a way, a string of pre-reading assignments to prepare students for reading Thoreau and Emerson's full works. Italics in lessons plans indicate teacher "script." Text in textboxes indicate writing that is on the chalkboard or overhead.

Extension of Abstract

During this unit, students will learn and be able to:

- Observation through Nature: By examining a plant in nature, students will gain a stronger sense of observation and place and will explain the early sentiments of Americans. Students will explore their own ideas about the natural world, self, and society through reflective journaling
- Observation through Art: By examining works of art, students will examine and compare ideas in multiple works and apply the same level of close examination to difficult texts (e.g. Emerson's *Self Reliance*).
- A Foundation of American Virtues: Students will be able to identify and explain the fundamental virtues of the American spirit and compare them to their own fundamental virtues.
- Place based: After students identify one value or idea that they truly believe in, they complete (or start a) community service project that in some way connects to their belief. Students will write a 350-500 word personal essay and visual which explain a personal philosophy or something truly believed, connected to the community service project, through anecdote and reflection. Students will record themselves reading their essays [i.e. podcast]; a class **compilation** CD of all podcasts will be created by the teacher. Since this is the final assessment, the teacher may decide to read personal essays from *This I Believe* daily or weekly to serve as models for their own writing.

Massachusetts Standards for English Language Arts

During this unit, students will:

- use agreed-upon rules for informal and formal discussions in small and large groups. (Standard 1)
- pose questions, list to the ideas of others, and contribute their own information or ideas in group discussions or interviews to acquire new knowledge. (Standard 2)
- give formal and informal talks to various audiences and for various purposes using appropriate level of formality and rhetorical devices. (Standard 3.14)
- analyze effective speeches made for a variety of purposes and prepare and deliver a speech containing some of these features. (Standard 3.15)
- deepen their understanding of a literary or non-literary work by relating it to its contemporary context or historical background. (Standard 7)
- use effective rhetorical techniques and demonstrate understanding of purpose, speaker, audience, and form when completing expressive, persuasive, or literary writing assignments. (Standard 20.6)
- develop and use appropriate rhetorical, logical, and stylistic criteria for assessing final versions of their compositions or research projects before presenting them to varied audiences. (Standard 25)
- create media productions that synthesize information from several sources.

Unit Rationale

Thoreau did not blink transcendentalism into existence. As with most all historical events and changes of ideals, it was a reaction to the times - just as the European Renaissance was a resurgence of classical learning, much of what developed from the time was new, tweaked. The founding philosophies of Jefferson, Franklin, and Crèvecoeur characterize the American individual in a way that is reminiscent when reading *Walden*: All write about man removing himself from a former society in search of something novel and full of possibility; all use their personal beliefs to make social change. Students may see how today's world is not so different and that just maybe these philosophies resonant in today's world now more than ever, setting students down their own vital course of action to make the change they wish to see in the world.

Since this is designed to begin the year, setting the tone and establishing routine are important to me (Thoreau would discourage this, I know; though I must listen to my own intuition here). My expectations of learning conduct that I wish to communicate to students:

- Education is recursive, homework and journal assignments are not pristine nor are they finished; students should add to their journal

entries. Here, “consistency is the hobgoblin of little minds” (*Self-Reliance*) and “in every work of genius we recognize our own rejected thoughts; they come back to us with a sort of alienated majesty” (*Self-Reliance*). I want students to recognize their genius.

- Class has routine (Do Now, lesson, Closure) to nurture a safe and comfortable environment for learning to happen. Every moment of it counts.
- Also, it has been my experience that some incoming junior honors students are reticent in class discussions – yet discussion is a major part of my English class. By fusing history, art, and literature, I hope to empower students of multifarious disciplines to participate in class discussions.

Texts

Visual Arts

- Thomas Cole’s “View from Mount Holyoke, Northampton, MA after a Thunderstorm (The Oxbow)”
- Asher B. Durand’s “Progress” and “Kindred Spirits”
- Peter Weir’s film *The Truman Show*
- Annenberg “Spirit of Nationalism” documentary from the series *American Passages*

Readings

- Thomas Jefferson’s *Declaration of Independence*
- Benjamin Franklin *To Those Who Would Remove to America* (essay)
- Benjamin Franklin’s *Autobiography* (excerpt)
- Henry David Thoreau’s *Civil Disobedience*, *Walden* (“Reading,” “Economy,” “Sounds”) (epigraphs)
- R. Waldo Emerson’s *Self-Reliance* and *Intellect* (epigraphs)
- Crèvecoeur’s “American Farmer” (Chapter III)
- Belmont and Boston newspaper clippings
- Bennett Kravits’ *Reinventing the World and Reinventing the Self in Huck Finn* Journal article; *Papers on Language & Literature*, Vol. 40, 2004 (citation)
- R.W. Lewis’ *American Adam* (excerpt)
- Jefferson’s *Notes on the State of Virginia* (excerpt)
- Bill Bryson’s *A Walk in the Woods* (excerpt)

Supplemental Readings

- Adrienne Rich’s “Prospective Immigrant” (poem)
- Robert Frost’s “The Gift Outright” (poem)
- Workman’s “Dominant American Values” (excerpt from an article)
- Cole’s “Opening of the Wilderness” (painting)
- NPR: Yasir Baloo’s “Right to be Fully American,” Colin Powell’s “The America I Believe in,” John from Amherst’s “Thought is Not Enough,”

Jennifer from Milwaukee's "A Grass Stain is a Badge of Honor"
(personal essays) found on the *This I Believe* website.

- Personal Essays from *This I Believe*
- Asher Brown Durand's engraving of *Declaration of Independence, 1823*
- Annie Dillard's "Seeing" from *Pilgrim at Tinker Creek*

Materials

- Worksheets: What Would Crevecoeur Say?, Community Service Project, *Declaration of Independence* for Truman Burbank
- Journal Assignment handouts, Personal Essay handout
- Local Newspaper Clippings
- Clear transparencies and Vis-à-vis pens
- Index Cards

Unit Outline

Lesson	Days	Readings/Activities
<p><u>Lesson 1: Progress (Observation, Virtue, and Progress)</u></p> <p>Essential question:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ What does it mean to have “steady intention” to something? ▪ What is progress? ▪ Has the meaning of progress changed in the past two centuries? ▪ What virtues and values emerged as foundational to the American character? 	3	<p>Texts:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Art (of) Observation: Thoreau’s “Reading” epigraph, Cole’s “View from Mount Holyoke, Northampton, MA after a Thunderstorm (The Oxbow)” ▪ Durand - “Progress” ▪ Thoreau’s “Reading” and “Economy” excerpts ▪ Franklin’s <i>Autobiography</i> <p>Activities:</p> <p>Day 1 – Art Study #1 of Cole’s work Day 2 – Town News, <i>Biography</i> Day 3 – Art Study #2 of Durand’s work, memory drawing, bumper sticker</p> <p>Supplemental Reading:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Workman’s “Dominant American Values” ▪ Cole’s “Opening of the Wilderness” ▪ “Thought is Not Enough” by John from Amherst, MA (NPR’s <i>This I Believe</i>)
<p><u>Lesson 2: Breaking the Law: Agent of Change</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ When is civil disobedience necessary in order to make social progress? ▪ Where do you see room for progress? 	4	<p>Texts:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Jefferson’s <i>Declaration of Independence</i> ▪ Weir’s <i>Truman Show</i> ▪ Thoreau’s <i>Civil Disobedience</i> excerpt ▪ Emerson’s “Intellect” excerpt <p>Activities:</p> <p>Day 4 – Discussion, read aloud with deliberate observations Day 5 – Brainstorm community service opportunities, Introduce Community Service Project, Begin <i>Truman show</i> with silent dialogue Day 6 – Continue watching <i>Truman show</i> with silent dialogue Day 7 – Finish <i>Truman show</i> with silent dialogue, discuss film’s connections to unit, CSP proposals due</p> <p>Supplemental Readings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Durand’s engraving <i>Declaration of Independence</i>

<p><u>Lesson 3: Forming an American Identity: What, then, is an American?</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ What is Auto-American-Biography? ▪ What did Franklin and Crèvecoeur want American to be? ▪ What does success look like to the new American? ▪ What is reinvention? 	3	<p>Texts:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Franklin's <i>Information to Those Who Would Remove to America</i> ▪ Crèvecoeur's <i>American Farmer</i> Chapter III ▪ Annenberg's "Spirit of Nationalism" documentary from the series <i>American Passages</i> <p>Activities:</p> <p>Day 8 - Discussion, documentary, close and deliberate reading Day 9 - In class reading and class discussion Day 10 - "What Would Crèvecoeur Say?" group work</p> <p>Supplemental Readings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Yasir Baloo's "Right to be Fully American" (NPR's <i>This I Believe</i>) ▪ Colin Powell's "The America I Believe in" (NPR's <i>This I Believe</i>)
<p><u>Lesson 4: Looking Forward: Progress in Beauty, Beauty in Progress</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ What can nature do for me? What can I do for it? ▪ What beliefs or issues are worth venturing into undiscovered country for? 	3	<p>Texts:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Thoreau's "Sounds" and "Journal" excerpt ▪ R.W. Lewis's "American Adam" excerpt ▪ Jefferson's <i>Notes on the State of Virginia</i> excerpt ▪ Durand - "Kindred Spirits" (1849) ▪ Bryson's <i>A Walk in the Woods</i> excerpt <p>Activities:</p> <p>Day 10 - Quotation analysis, Discussion, Outdoor Observation Day 11 - Class Poem, Read aloud, Art Study #3 Durand's "Kindred Spirits" and journaling</p> <p>Supplemental Readings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ "A Grass Stain is a Badge of Honor" by Jennifer of Milwaukee, WI (NPR's <i>This I Believe</i>) <p>"Seeing" from <i>Pilgrim at Tinker Creek</i> by Annie Dillard</p>

~ Lesson 1: Progress ~

Guiding Questions for Lesson 1:

- What does it mean to have “steady intention” to something?
- What is progress?
- Has the meaning of progress changed in the past two centuries?
- What virtues and values emerged as foundational to the American character?

Day 1

1. Do Now:

DO NOW

“It requires a training such as the athletes underwent, the steady intention almost of the whole life to this object.”

1. Copy the above quotation into your journal.
2. On your own, read this quotation several times over, each time focusing on a different word or phrase’s meaning and connection to the whole quotation. Consider the following words to focus on: it, training, steady intention, the whole life, object.
3. (Re)write quotation into your own words (paraphrase). Consider your above focus words.

2. Cooperative Learning: [After Do-Now] *In groups of three, share your paraphrases. Identify any discrepancies of meaning and agree on a common paraphrase of the quotation. Then, brainstorm what the “it” from the quotation might be. Right now, there is no wrong answer.*

3. Whole Class: Ask students to share ideas of what “it” might be; write ideas on the chalkboard. What “it” is to the author will be revealed at a later date.

3. Art Study. *Today, we are going to attempt to have that kind of “steady intention” and engagement on a particular object – that object, today, is a painting by Thomas Cole. First, I want you to look at this painting and, as you did with the quotation, “read” it several times over, each time focusing on a different object or part of the painting and its connection to the whole painting.*



4. Facilitate a conversation about the artwork: *What do you notice? Where is the light? Where is the dark? What time of day is it? What's the weather like? Who lives here? Why? Who doesn't live here? Why not? How did Cole paint this? What place does this remind you of? What would you title this painting? Why? One student will eventually point out that the Connecticut River is in the shape of a question mark. This is not realistic; it is part of the artist's message. Why is it a question mark? This painting is titled "View from Mount Holyoke, Northampton, MA after a Thunderstorm (The Oxbow)" If this painting suggests a value or virtue – what is it – and what makes you say so?*

5. Introduce Journal Assignment sheet (Appendix A)
Homework: Assignment #1

Day 2

1. Do Now:

DO NOW

Please take out your homework and put it on your desk. I will be around to “check” your homework.

1. On an index card, write the value you wrote about last night for homework. I will collect this index card when I go around checking your homework.
2. Each of you has an excerpt from recent newspapers. Take a few minutes to read it and think about what virtue or value it reveals about the town and/or writer.

2. Cooperative Learning: *In groups of 5, I want each of you to read your excerpt aloud and discuss which value or values each excerpt reveals. Our goal is to construct a list of values or virtues of our neighborhood. As students are working, write students' values on the left side of a transparency.*

3. Whole Class: *On the same transparency, in the right column, list the values found in the article excerpts. Who realized that all of these article clippings are from local newspapers? Do any articles or values in those articles surprise you? Let's compare the two lists – what do they have in common? What contrasts are there? Which do you think are most representational of your town? Of yourself? Of our high school? What is missing from our values list?*

4. Individual Work: *Under Assignment #1 in your journal, list the 13 values that are most important to you. You may finish this at home if you don't in class.*

5. Whole Class: *We are now going to read aloud an excerpt from Benjamin Franklin's Autobiography. Discuss what “autobiography” means. In this excerpt, Franklin tells us that the key to success is through self-discipline and attempting moral perfection. Your homework tonight is Assignment #2; before we begin reading aloud, take a moment now to review this assignment to help you focus your reading.*

Homework: Assignment #2

Day 3

1. Do Now:

DO NOW

Please take out your homework and put it on your desk. I will be around to “check” your homework.

Under Assignment #2, answer the following question as #5:

If you were to ask Franklin, “what is progress to you?” what would be his response?

2. *Cooperative Learning: In the same group of five which you worked with yesterday, please review the homework. First assign each student a number 1-5. Student “1” should lead a brief discussion for homework question #1. And so on. Add to your homework as you find necessary.*

2. *Whole Class Discussion: We are going to look at another painting today, this one is by Asher B. Durand painted in 1853. As we did a couple days ago, I want us to “read” this painting several times over, each time focusing on a different object or part of the painting and its connection to the whole painting. I am going to ask you to draw it from memory. Read this painting several times: What does the scene remind you of? Notice how objects are connected, where the light hits it, what and where the focal point is.*



3. Turn off projector. *Okay, you have three minutes to reproduce the painting by drawing it. After you are done, title your work. Discuss possible titles for this painting.*

4. Turn on projector. *Compare your reproduction to the actual painting. What was overlooked? What was retained? How does this activity (memory drawing) inform us about ourselves as observers and writers? What helped you to remember? Write a few lines of reflection below your reproduction. To be successful in this class, one does not need to memorize information, rather, learning happens by closely observing and recording insights and ideas; write to learn.*

5. *Whole Class Discussion.* Both Cole and Durand are often grouped together as the Hudson River School painters. Over the next two months, we'll study their paintings in connection to the literature we are reading. The Durand painting is titled "Progress." What assumptions are made by Durand about progress? Fifty years before Durand, what did Franklin think of progress?

6. *Closure.* To wrap up today's class, create a bumper sticker that Durand or Franklin would have created, or liked, that illustrates the very essence progress – to him. The bumper sticker should be a short saying, a single word, and/or a drawing that illustrates Durand or Franklin's ideas about progress. I will collect them on your way out. This is an exit slip.

Homework: Assignment #3

~ Lesson 2: Breaking Laws: Agent of Change ~

Guiding Questions for Lesson 2:

- When is civil disobedience necessary in order to make social progress?
- Where do you see room for progress?
- How is true progress initiated?

Day 4

1. Do Now:

DO NOW

“All our progress is an unfolding, like a vegetable bud. You have first an instinct, then an opinion, then a knowledge as the plant has root, bud, and fruit. Trust the instinct to the end, though you can render no reason” (Emerson’s *Intellect*).

Prepare to Write: Last night you explored the notion of progress one last time: I hope you noticed it to be more complicated. Also, you researched what about Cole, Durand, and Franklin’s times shaped their understandings of progress. **How does *your* environment shape what you think progress is? What progress needs to happen?**

Write: In your environment (both private and/or public), what progress or change needs to happen? List these ideas of improvement. Note: I’m going to collect these and use them ~ anonymously ~ in tomorrow’s class. Please write your list on a separate piece of paper.

2. Whole Class: *Franklin and Durand were both reacting to their times: Franklin wrote as a reaction to the birth of a nation and its influx of European emigrants, Durand and Cole painted as a reaction to westward expansion. Can anyone add to what I’ve said?* [Discuss findings from last night’s research; write student ideas on the board.]

3. Introduce in-Class Reading: *Thomas Jefferson drafted The Declaration of Independence as a reaction – or an act of defiance – to the King of England’s hold on America. In it, Jefferson lists grievances to the King of England: injustices or issues he felt could (and would) be improved after the separation from England. On a smaller scale, you’ve listed grievances – those things that you think should be improved.*

4. *Before we begin to read an excerpt from The Declaration of Independence, review assignment #4 to give you a focus for our reading.*

5. Read the passage aloud. Stop deliberately to discuss sections of the text. Encourage students to stop the class reading to ask questions as well. [Append. B]

6. Closure: Students should turn in their Do-Now before the end of class.

Homework: Assignment #4

Day 5

1. Do Now:

<p>DO NOW</p> <p>Read through our class' student-generated list of "progress or change that needs to happen" in Belmont. Copy this list into your journal.</p> <p><i>[insert student-generated list here]</i></p>

2. Whole Class: Discuss the list. Then, brainstorm community service projects that might be take on to make progress. See school's website for sample ideas. [<http://www.belmont.k12.ma.us/bhs/community/>]

3. Introduce Community Service Project and Proposal [Appendix C]

4. Begin watching Peter Weir's film *The Truman Show* and engage in a "silent dialogue" during the film. A film silent dialogue is done on a chalkboard, overhead, or Smartboard. During the film, students are invited to write or post their ideas, questions, or comments related to the film on the board. This will fuel a class discussion later.

Homework: Assignment #5

Day 6

Continue watching film with film silent dialogue.

Homework: Work on your Community Service Proposal.

Day 7

1. Finish watching film with film silent dialogue.

2. Use film silent dialogue to initiate conversation. Possible discussion questions:

- First discuss hidden meanings of character names and places.
- In what ways is Seahaven an "Edenic" or utopian world? What made it that way?
- In what ways is it flawed?
- Why does Truman leave the idyllic, idealistic Seahaven? Would you?
- Westward Expansion, *Declaration of Independence*, paintings from Lesson 1.

3. In groups of three, students write a *Declaration of Independence* for Truman

Burbank, written by Sylvia and/or the Free Truman organization. Include at least five grievances and explain why they are grievances.

4. Closure (exit slip): On a slip of paper, answer the following question:

To Truman Burbank, what does it mean to be a True Man?

Homework: Complete Community Service Proposal; due tomorrow.

~ Lesson 3: Forming an American Identity: “What, then, is an American?” ~

Guiding Questions for Lesson 3

- What is Auto-American-Biography?
- What did Franklin and Crèvecoeur want America to be? What do you want it to be?
- What does success look like to the new America?
- What is reinvention?

Day 8

1. Do Now:

DO NOW

Please take out your homework and put it on your desk. I will be around to collect them as you write about the below:

1. What do you think it means to be a True Man in today’s world?
2. Who do you consider to be a True Man? Why?
3. How does one re-invent him/herself? Why would one want to self-reinvent?
4. What is Auto-American-Biography?

2. Whole Class: *After Truman’s emancipation, we can imagine how much of his life he had to reinvent. Do you think his life was fiction or reality? Was he living life truly even though his life was totally fabricated? After breaking through the canvas of clouds, he had to become a new Truman – he had to become a True Man. Why do you think that is? Like Truman, much of the American identity we read – and will read – is about reinvention of self.*

3. *Today we are going to be watching a documentary that will introduce you to some of the authors we will be reading in the next few weeks – including Thomas Jefferson, Crèvecoeur, and Emerson. As we watch, I want you to add to your Do Now.*

4. After film, recap Do Now questions.¹

¹ “In Bercovitch’s cultural analysis there exists a continuity, from the Great Awakening through the American Renaissance, Edwards through Emerson, that has contributed to the genre of auto-American-biography: “the celebration of the representative self as America, and of the American self as the embodiment of a prophetic universal design” (137)” (Kravits 15).

Day 9

1. Do Now:

DO NOW

Please take out your copy of *Information to Those Who Would Remove to America*. Take a few minutes to flip through the reading.

In your journal, write your observations about text format, organization, and language. This close and deliberate observation of text is similar to your initial observations of the paintings.

2. Whole Class: Share initial observations.

3. Ask students to silently read the first paragraph to identify main argument of text. [Appendix D]

4. Read essay aloud as a class, stopping often to ask comprehension and inference questions. Students should take notes on the discussions between readings; remind them that it was difficult to draw “Progress” without looking at notes. Below are sample reading questions:

- What are the “wild imaginations” mentioned at the end of paragraph 2?
- Cite examples of what the “Truth” is, to Franklin.
- What kind of person does Franklin consider to be a “natural Genius”?
- Who are the “Strangers” (mentioned in the first paragraph and mid-third)?
- What is a “Man of Quality”? (forth paragraph)
- Answer Franklin’s questions: Who then are the kinds of people to whom an Emigration to America may be “advantageous”? And what are the “advantages they may reasonably expect”?

Homework: Assignment #6 [Appendix E]

Day 10

1. Do Now:

DO NOW

Please take out your homework and put it on your desk. I will be around to “check” your homework.

1. On an index card, write your best reading question for “American Farmer.” I will collect it when I am around to check your homework.
2. According to Franklin and Crèvecoeur, why move to America? What should one expect?
3. What does Crèvecoeur say about the relationship between Man and Nature?

2. Whole Class. *Today we are going to compare Franklin and Crèvecoeur’s ideas about coming to the United States. I know the past two texts have been challenging reads; that is why we are devoting a full class period to them. We’ll begin with the worksheet What Would Crèvecoeur Say?*

3. Cooperative Learning: Complete “What Would Crèvecoeur Say?” worksheet. [Appendix F]

4. Whole Class. Review worksheet and then discuss texts and Do Now; use teacher and student generated questions to fuel discussion.

5. Closure (exit slip): Distribute index card so that the card-owner does not get his/her card. Ask students to answer the question and turn it in on their way out the door.

Homework: Assignment #7

~ Lesson 4: Looking Forward: Progress in Beauty, Beauty in Progress ~

Guiding Questions for Lesson 4

- What can nature do for me? What can I do for it?
- What beliefs or issues are worth venturing into undiscovered country for?

Day 11

1. Do Now:

DO NOW

Read the following quotation a few times. If you like it, copy it into your journal. Be prepared to share your definitions of *alert*, *reader*, *student*, and *seer*.

“No method nor discipline can supersede the necessity of being forever on the alert. What is a course of history, or philosophy, or poetry, no matter how well selected, or the best society, or the most admirable routine of life, compared with the discipline of looking always at what is to be seen? Will you be a reader, a student merely, or a seer?”
[Walden “Sounds”]

2. Whole Class. Discuss the quotation and words *student*, *seer*, and *alert*.

- *Why is the word “merely” attached to student? What assumptions are made about the definition or purpose of “student”?*
- *What does this writer suggest we become instead of students? (Ans: seers)*
Discuss what it means to be a seer and how one becomes more like a seer. *When are you a seer? When are you a student? Which do you prefer – and why?*
- *What does it mean to be “alert”? What distracts us from being wholly alert? (Answers will vary. Some may be electronic devices, busy work, etc.)*

3. Outdoor Observation. Take students on a stroll around the pond. Instruct students to walk alertly and deliberately – as they have read deliberately. Observe as if they would be asked to draw everything that they had seen. Halfway along the walk, ask students to find a blade of grass (or weed, flower, etc.) growing between the cracks in the concrete.² When they have found one, give them each an index card with the following instructions:

² During Unit 2 (Transcendentalism), students will return to this blade of grass several times to observe its changes.

“The question is not what you look at, but what you see” [Thoreau’s Journal 5 August 1851].

Prepare to Write: What is the difference between “what you look at” and “what you see” in front of you? With what, or how, do you look? See? Do you spend most of your time looking or seeing?

Write: This is *your* blade of grass. First, write down what you are looking at: record date, location, time, weather, characteristics of the blade of grass, relationship to environment, and human impact on blade of grass. Then, compose what you see. Composing may be done in words, in music, as a letter, in drawings, in colors. Have a bit of prose somewhere on the page. Get comfortable; you will do this for ten minutes. Please follow class policies: no electronic devices (including cells, iPods, etc.). Please abstain from talking to anyone. In fact, avoid eye contact too.

4. Back in the classroom. Encourage students to share their observations about looking versus seeing. How were they affected by seeing one object for ten minutes? Do you feel different from before going outside? What changed? Why?

5. Closure (exit slip): *Write your favorite line or phrase that you wrote during your outdoor observation. You will turn this in on your way out today.*

Homework: Assignment #8

Day 12

1. Do Now:

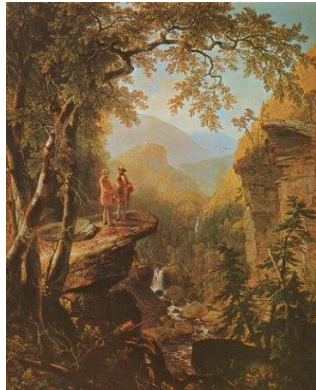
DO NOW

After our class yesterday, I arranged your favorite line from the outdoor observation (yesterday's exit slips) into a poem (similar to a "found poem"). Please take a minute now to read through our class poem.

Think: How is the language in this poem unique? What themes or messages do you think the poem as a whole delivers?

2. Whole Class. Discuss language of seeing used. Then, read excerpt from Jefferson's *Notes on the State of Virginia*. Discuss his close observation and use of the words *beautiful*, *violent*, *involuntary*, and *sublime*. [Appendix G]

3. Art Study. *Today we are going to study Durand's "Kindred Spirits," painted in 1849. As before, take a few minutes to read the painting.*



4. Cooperative Learning. *In pairs, I want you to write a brief description of this painting. The description should be at the level of close and deliberate detail as Jefferson has done to describe the natural bridge. However, use your subjectivity – your writing should convey your reaction to the art, not Jefferson's. Afterwards, we are going to present and I'm going to present one of my favorite descriptions of this painting too.*

5. Whole Class. Ask volunteers to share their descriptions. Read excerpt from Bill Bryson's *A Walk in the Woods* that describes this painting. [Appendix H] Discuss the notion of these men as heroic explorers: Is it heroic or idiotic for man (or woman) to venture (Note: this word *venture* means "risk" or "hazard") into unknown territories? For what is it heroic? When is it marked as heroic? Is it heroic only if they succeed? If so, then what is marked as success?

Homework: Assignment #9

The next three weeks, students will be studying the Transcendentalists writers in a Unit of study of Emerson and Thoreau. As they read and continue to journal, students will be drafting their Personal Essays [Appendix I]. Overlap is intentional.

I recommend that Day 13 in class, students return to their blade of grass. Take 15 minutes to record what they now see: record date, location, time, weather, characteristics of the blade of grass, relationship to environment, and human impact on blade of grass. Return to the classroom to read "Where I Lived and What I Lived for" ... and begin the transcendentalist unit!

Appendix

Appendix A



Unit 1 Journal Guidelines



Purpose: The *Journal* section of your English binder is a place for in-class and homework writing assignments. Journaling is an opportunity for you to **think**, **write**, and **interact** personally with ideas in the texts we are reading, a chance to deepen your understandings of yourself and literature.

Method: Throughout the year, you will be asked to “journal” on class readings. I would like you to **type** all journal entries in blue or black ink, double-spaced and keep them in the *Journal* section of your English binder. Please print assignments as you complete them; it is expected that you come to class with last night’s journal entry every day. Organize them chronologically. You should also keep loose-leaf paper in your *Journal* section for in-class writing.

I assign a number of *dialectic* and *personal* journal entries – those that ask you to respond to a particular passage or recall and reflect on ideas raised in class discussion or a previous reading (dialectic) and those that ask you to describe a personal experience (personal). If you are responding to a passage or an epigraph in the journal assignment, please copy it into your journal with citation. This is an opportunity for authentic, honest reflection without – I hope – the usual confines of formal writing assignments.

For homework assignments, sometimes I will ask you a more specific question about the reading. In these instances, please give **specific ideas** and **concrete examples** from the text to support your thinking, even if your ideas remain speculative and open-ended. Remember to be meticulous about citing specific examples so that your journal may be a great resource to you in preparing for essays and exams.

Requirements: I will collect your journal monthly, without notice. I do this to reinforce the importance of staying on top of your journal and bringing it to class every day. On the day I collect them, I will ask you to select several entries (number of entries will differ and will be announced the day of collection); I will read and respond to these selected entries. This self-selection is called a “Journal Audit” and allows you to highlight your best, or favorite, work for me to read. I will spot check the other pages to confirm that all assignments are completed but will only respond to the ideas in your selected entries.

Please bring your journal to class each day for it will be of help to you in class discussions and occasionally you will be allowed to use it for pop quizzes on readings. Use your journal during class as a place to take notes, complete “Do Nows” and jot down ideas. I will evaluate your journals based on the thoughtfulness and depth of the entries; see the below criteria for details. Your journal will be marked down one letter grade for each day it is late. Your journal will be evaluated based on the following criteria:

Journal Rubric

	"Exceeds"	"Meets"	"Not Yet"
Depth of Entries: - Throughout explores and answers given questions - Identifies what remains perplexing to you by discussing possible ideas and posing new questions - Explores various perspectives in answering questions - Consistently detailed with multiple quotations and examples from texts and/or life that are discussed in full			
Making Connections: - Between texts, yourself, and the world around you through the develop of your own thinking - Revisions to journal entries and Do Nows are evident to show recursive thinking			
Writing Style: - Shows passion and honesty in what you're writing and thinking - Eloquent in style, clear in meaning - Clear and noticeable effective effort in writing			
Tangible Requirements: - All assignments are completed - Each assignment is at least one page, typed - Each entry begins on a new page with the date and assignment number (or title) at the top - Class notes are included			

**[Exceeds Expectations = A;
 Meets Expectations (expectations are articulated in left column) = B;
 Not Yet = C/D]**

Journal Assignments

Assignment #1

Prepare to Write: Think of a thing or task that “requires” your “steady intention” to the thing or task’s entire life or being. Is it something that you have decided on your own to do – or is it an inherited or required thing or task? Do you like it? Why do you put such effort into this thing? How do you put such effort into this thing?

Write: Identify a thing or task that you put “steady intention” into. Then, describe how and why you put such effort into it. What do you gain from giving such “steady intention” to it? Does it change you? What does this thing or task reveal about who you are, about your identity? Cole’s “steady intention” was, presumably, his paintings – and they revealed quite a bit about his values (e.g. discovery, curiosity, exploration, settlement). What does your “steady intention” reveal about you – what do you value? You will anonymously share this value tomorrow; be prepared.

Assignment #2

Read and re-read Benjamin Franklin’s Autobiography excerpt. Then, answer the following questions. Remember to leave room between each answer; tomorrow’s class may provoke you to add to your answer.

1. Compare Franklin’s list with your own list. What is the same? What is different?
2. What virtue on Franklin’s list strikes you as being the most important? The most American? What does Franklin’s concern with moral virtue reveal about the period in which he lived? Of these virtues, what are the shortcomings of each? For example, what is the downside to, say, philanthropy?
3. According to this text, what efforts does Franklin make to become more orderly? Is he successful? Explain. What aspect of his attempt to become more orderly is illustrated by the anecdote of the man with the “speckled ax”?
4. In what ways can analyzing one’s own behavior contribute to personal growth? To decline?

Assignment #3

“Our inventions are wont to be pretty toys, which distract our attention from serious things. They are but improved means to an unimproved end, an end which it was already but too easy to arrive at; as railroads lead to Boston or New York. We are in great haste to construct a magnetic telegraph from Maine to Texas; but Maine and Texas, it may be, have nothing important to communicate” (“Economy” from *Walden*).

Prepare to Write: This quotation was written in the 1840s, when the railroad was still a new invention. What does this writer think of such inventions? Why do you think so? What shapes Franklin’s notion of progress? What shapes Durand’s notion of progress? Use outside sources (your history textbook, credible Internet sources). [Note: You will be using this information in the next class so have it readily available!] Consider the multi-faceted idea of “progress” – spiritual, educational, ecological, economical, technological, emotional, and physical – of today, Franklin’s time, and Durand’s time. Identify an invention that has improved some facet of your (or Franklin’s) life temporarily but “to an unimproved end.” Imagine what life would be like without that invention – would you achieve true progress? How?

Write: Write a journal entry which includes a brief description of the invention that inevitably leads “to an unimproved end.” What do you gain from such inventions? What is lost? To what extent is walking down the “unimproved end” avoidable? Unavoidable? Many believe that we must be better off than we were ten years ago. Do you agree that progress is intrinsically good? Do you believe that we are continually progressing? Consider all facets of progress.

Assignments #4

After reading the excerpt from *The Declaration of Independence*, answer the following questions:

1. What prompted the writing of the Declaration of Independence? Use your history textbook as a preliminary source.
2. At “every stage of these oppressions” what has happened, according to Jefferson?
3. Identify phrases that seem recycled in today’s political and cultural media. In other words, which are quoted often and why do you think they are?

Assignment #5

“If the injustice is part of the necessary friction of the machine of government, let it go... perchance it will wear smooth – certainly the machine will wear out... If it is of such a nature that it requires you to be the agent of injustice to another, then, break the law. Let your life be a counter friction to stop the machine” (Civil Disobedience).

Prepare to Write: Friction is inevitable, even with the best-oiled machinery. Friction agitates – and eventually either is smoothed to submission or becomes its own machine. Identify a time in your life when your “friction” eventually smoothed down to the general opinion. What made you “wear smooth”? Identify a time when this friction caused you to rebel – or separate – from the general opinion. What made you defend your perspective over the crowd?

Write: What causes this “friction” to become rebellion rather than smooth down into its machine? Under what circumstances should your conscience eclipse law? What should the consequences be? Explain a time that you have, or would, break the law to abide by a higher or more personal law. What was the circumstance and consequence? Was it worth it? Did you learn something valuable from this disobedience? What is the risk in choosing to rebel? What is the risk of wearing smooth?

Assignment #6

Read Crèvecoeur’s “American Farmer”. Write five observation questions that are directly related to the text and attempt to answer them. Some topics for questions: natural objections, Crèvecoeur’s natural imagery, invisible power, and American law.

Assignment #7

“Most men appear never to have considered what a house is, and are actually though needlessly poor all their lives because they think that they must have such a one as their neighbors have. [...] Shall we always study to obtain more of these things, and not sometimes to be content with less? [...] Men have become the tools of their tools. The man who independently plucked the fruits when he was hungry is become a farmer; and he who stood under a tree for shelter, a housekeeper.” (“Economy” from Walden).

Prepare to Write: What makes a man or woman successful? In a century that “keeping up with the Joneses” is a reality to many of us, how do we know we are successful? Identify a possession or experience that has indicated to you that you are “successful”. What made you realize it was a success?

Write: Both Franklin's Information to Those... and Crèvecoeur's American Farmer are reactions to the onset of European emigration to the America. Whether a warning or an invitation, both discuss the idea of success in America. Explain your definition of success: what makes success and how is it recognized.

Assignment #8

In class we have discussed the differences between looking at something versus seeing and have come to the conclusion that seeing is more intense, more subjective, more patient, more critical, and closer. By now you should be working on your community service project.

Observe the environment of your Community Service, as you did with the blade of grass, for at least 15 minutes. Practice seeing, not only people and their environment, but how they react in it. If you are having trouble, first try to list all the things that you are looking at in one column. Then in the other column, list what you see. Ask questions – what do you want to know more about? Make connections to our discussions, readings, and unit questions.

Assignment #9

Read R.W. Lewis's "American Adam" excerpt.

Prepare to Write: After reading and re-reading the "American Adam" excerpt, consider those "hero[es] of the new adventure" in today's times – consider figures in politics, the sciences, education, and philanthropy. Are they as Lewis describes them to be? Is there progress universal and is it helping everyone?

Write: Do you agree that the "New American... the hero of the new adventure... [is] an individual emancipated from history, happily bereft of ancestry"? Why or why not? When is it marked as heroic? Is it heroic only if they succeed? What is marked as success?

Appendix B

Declaration of Independence

IN CONGRESS, July 4, 1776

The unanimous Declaration of the thirteen united States of America

When in the Course of human events, it becomes necessary for one people to dissolve the political bands which have connected them with another, and to assume among the powers of the earth, the separate and equal station to which the Laws of Nature and of Nature's God entitle them, a decent respect to the opinions of mankind requires that they should declare the causes which impel them to the separation.

We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.— That to secure these rights, Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed, --That whenever any Form of Government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the Right of the People to alter or to abolish it, and to institute new Government, laying its foundation on such principles and organizing its powers in such form, as to them shall seem most likely to effect their Safety and Happiness. Prudence, indeed, will dictate that Governments long established should not be changed for light and transient causes; and accordingly all experience hath shewn, that mankind are more disposed to suffer, while evils are sufferable, than to right themselves by abolishing the forms to which they are accustomed. But when a long train of abuses and usurpations, pursuing invariably the same Object evinces a design to reduce them under absolute Despotism, it is their right, it is their duty, to throw off such Government, and to provide new Guards for their future security.—Such has been the patient sufferance of these Colonies; and such is now the necessity which constrains them to alter their former Systems of Government. The history of the present King of Great Britain is a history of repeated injuries and usurpations, all having in direct object the establishment of an absolute Tyranny over these States. To prove this, let Facts be submitted to a candid world.

He has refused his Assent to Laws, the most wholesome and necessary for the public good.

He has forbidden his Governors to pass Laws of immediate and pressing importance, unless suspended in their operation till his Assent should be obtained; and when so suspended, he has utterly neglected to attend to them.

He has refused to pass other Laws for the accommodation of large districts of people, unless those people would relinquish the right of Representation in the Legislature, a right inestimable to them and formidable to tyrants only.

He has called together legislative bodies at places unusual, uncomfortable, and distant from the depository of their public Records, for the sole purpose of fatiguing them into compliance with his measures.

He has dissolved Representative Houses repeatedly, for opposing with manly firmness his invasions on the rights of the people.

He has refused for a long time, after such dissolutions, to cause others to be elected; whereby the Legislative powers, incapable of Annihilation, have returned to the People at large for their exercise; the State remaining in the mean time exposed to all the dangers of invasion from without, and convulsions within.

He has endeavoured to prevent the population of these States; for that purpose obstructing the Laws for Naturalization of Foreigners; refusing to pass others to encourage their migrations hither, and raising the conditions of new Appropriations of Lands.

He has obstructed the Administration of Justice, by refusing his Assent to Laws for establishing Judiciary powers.

He has made Judges dependent on his Will alone, for the tenure of their offices, and the amount and payment of their salaries.

He has erected a multitude of New Offices, and sent hither swarms of Officers to harass our people, and eat out their substance.

He has kept among us, in times of peace, Standing Armies without the Consent of our legislatures.

He has affected to render the Military independent of and superior to the Civil power.

He has combined with others to subject us to a jurisdiction foreign to our constitution, and unacknowledged by our laws; giving his Assent to their Acts of pretended Legislation:

For Quartering large bodies of armed troops among us:

For protecting them, by a mock Trial, from punishment for any Murders which they should commit on the Inhabitants of these States:

For cutting off our Trade with all parts of the world:

For imposing Taxes on us without our Consent:

For depriving us in many cases, of the benefits of Trial by Jury:

For transporting us beyond Seas to be tried for pretended offences:

For abolishing the free System of English Laws in a neighbouring Province, establishing therein an Arbitrary government, and enlarging its Boundaries so as to render it at once an example and fit instrument for introducing the same absolute rule into these Colonies:

For taking away our Charters, abolishing our most valuable Laws, and altering fundamentally the Forms of our Governments:

For suspending our own Legislatures, and declaring themselves invested with power to legislate for us in all cases whatsoever.

He has abdicated Government here, by declaring us out of his Protection and waging War against us.

He has plundered our seas, ravaged our Coasts, burnt our towns, and destroyed the lives of our people.

He is at this time transporting large Armies of foreign Mercenaries to compleat the works of death, desolation and tyranny, already begun with circumstances of Cruelty & perfidy scarcely paralleled in the most barbarous ages, and totally unworthy the Head of a civilized nation.

He has constrained our fellow Citizens taken Captive on the high Seas to bear Arms against their Country, to become the executioners of their friends and Brethren, or to fall themselves by their Hands.

He has excited domestic insurrections amongst us, and has endeavoured to bring on the inhabitants of our frontiers, the merciless Indian Savages, whose known rule of warfare, is an undistinguished destruction of all ages, sexes and conditions.

In every stage of these Oppressions We have Petitioned for Redress in the most humble terms: Our repeated Petitions have been answered only by repeated injury. A Prince whose character is thus marked by every act which may define a Tyrant, is unfit to be the ruler of a free people.

Nor have We been wanting in attentions to our British brethren. We have warned them from time to time of attempts by their legislature to extend an unwarrantable jurisdiction over us. We have reminded them of the circumstances of our emigration and settlement here. We have appealed to their native justice and magnanimity, and we have conjured them by the ties of our common kindred to disavow these usurpations, which, would inevitably interrupt our connections and correspondence. They too have been deaf to the voice of justice and of consanguinity. We must, therefore, acquiesce in the necessity, which denounces our Separation, and hold them, as we hold the rest of mankind, Enemies in War, in Peace Friends.

We, therefore, the Representatives of the united States of America, in General Congress, Assembled, appealing to the Supreme Judge of the world for the rectitude of our intentions, do, in the Name, and by Authority of the good People of these Colonies, solemnly publish and declare, That these United Colonies are, and of Right ought to be Free and Independent States; that they are Absolved from all Allegiance to the British Crown, and that all political connection between them and the State of Great Britain, is and ought to be totally dissolved; and that as Free and Independent States, they have full Power to levy War, conclude Peace, contract Alliances, establish Commerce, and to do all other Acts and Things which Independent States may of right do. And for the support of this Declaration, with a firm reliance on the protection of divine Providence, we mutually pledge to each other our Lives, our Fortunes and our sacred Honor.

Appendix C

Community Service Project



In our first unit of study, we not only reading “early American” texts, but also identifying key values they acted upon – and ones that we act upon today. In class, we’ve identified values of our community by examining newspaper articles. In journals and class discussions, we’ve explored values that are important to us, and ones that help us to shape our own identities.

The major writing assignment for this unit is a Personal Essay, in which you tell a brief story that illuminates a belief or value that is important to you.

First, identify a value or belief that you wish to write about. Then, decide on a community service (organized or individual). If your value is Nature to the Individual, you may decide to volunteer at Habitat Preservation, the Belmont Conservation Project, or commit to a recycling project at your home. If your value is Education, you may decide to volunteer as a peer tutor, a library assistant, or commit to tutoring a sibling or friend. See the BHS Community Service webpage* for more examples

Please fill out the Community Service Proposal (see sample on the reverse side). This proposal communicates to me your interests and your goals for your community service and thinking about your essay.

* (<http://www.belmont.k12.ma.us/bhs/community/>)

Sample Community Service Proposal

Student Name: Ms. Wayne (That's right! I'm doing this project too!)

Value or Belief: The Individual's Relationship to Nature

Community Service Idea: I am going to volunteer at the Fells for *clean up* and *site/trail restoration* every Saturday afternoon.

Description of Service Activity: Work with a team to restore trails ruined by litter and erosion due to water and foot-traffic.

In the space below, explain *why* you've selected this placement, *what* type of impact you hope your service will have, and *what* impact you hope it will have on you. Also, include any other activities you might do to extend your exploration of your belief.

I believe that a busy world needs nature. I believe that nature grounds me in who I am and should be. I believe that without it, I'd be a mass of tangled cords and cables without enough outlets, I'd be wired without a place to think about what it is I'm wiring into. As a child, I remember my favorite place was under an old white pine hidden between boulders and my house. It had a lush nature's carpet of years of needles for me to lay on. I would bend the tree's limbs to the ground and hold them there under cut tree stumps. It had a nature's cubby where I could keep my crayons and drawing pad, a hollow in the tree's trunk. And at night the sky was so dark that the stars were bright white. And I didn't feel alone. Years later, I remember moving to Boston and being terrified of the purple sky, the cold concrete, and opening my travel trunk to a mess of cords without outlets.

It wasn't for five years that I would find my place where I could walk barefoot without injury: the Fells. I believe in the natural preservation of our state parks. I am volunteering at the Fells for *clean up* and *site/trail restoration*. I hope to learn why a trail erodes and what steps I can take to deter this. I also hope to continue to learn how and why nature is important to me. In conjunction with this, I'm going to reread reading Bill Bryson's *A Walk in the Woods* and research the history of The Fells - how the trails formed, who used it, and the flora and fauna that thrives there.

Community Service Proposal

Student Name: _____

Value or Belief: _____

Community Service Idea: _____

Description of Service Activity: _____

In the space below, explain *why* you've selected this placement, *what* type of impact you hope your service will have, and *what* impact you hope it will have on you. Also, include any other activities you might do to extend your exploration of your belief.

Appendix D

Information to Those Who Would Remove to America

by Benjamin Franklin, September 1782

Many Persons in Europe, having directly or by Letters, express'd to the Writer of this, who is well acquainted with North America, their Desire of transporting and establishing themselves in that Country; but who appear to have formed, thro' Ignorance, mistaken Ideas and Expectations of what is to be obtained there; he thinks it may be useful, and prevent inconvenient, expensive, and fruitless Removals and Voyages of improper Persons, if he gives some clearer and truer Notions of that part of the World, than appear to have hitherto prevailed.

He finds it is imagined by Numbers, that the Inhabitants of North America are rich, capable of rewarding, and dispos'd to reward, all sorts of Ingenuity; that they are at the same time ignorant of all the Sciences, and, consequently, that Strangers, possessing Talents in the Belles-Lettres, fine Arts, &c., must be highly esteemed, and so well paid, as to become easily rich themselves; that there are also abundance of profitable Offices to be disposed of, which the Natives are not qualified to fill; and that, having few Persons of Family among them, Strangers of Birth must be greatly respected, and of course easily obtain the best of those Offices, which will make all their Fortunes; that the Governments too, to encourage Emigrations from Europe, not only pay the Expence of personal Transportation, but give Lands gratis to Strangers, with Negroes to work for them, Utensils of Husbandry, and Stocks of Cattle. These are all wild Imaginations; and those who go to America with Expectations founded upon them will surely find themselves disappointed.

The Truth is, that though there are in that Country few People so miserable as the Poor of Europe, there are also very few that in Europe would be called rich; it is rather a general happy Mediocrity that prevails. There are few great Proprietors of the Soil, and few Tenants; most People cultivate their own Lands, or follow some Handicraft or Merchandise; very few rich enough to live idly upon their Rents or Incomes, or to pay the high Prices given in Europe for Paintings, Statues, Architecture, and the other Works of Art, that are more curious than useful. Hence the natural Geniuses, that have arisen in America with such Talents, have uniformly quitted that Country for Europe, where they can be more suitably rewarded. It is true, that Letters and Mathematical Knowledge are in Esteem there, but they are at the same time more common than is apprehended; there being already existing nine Colleges or Universities, viz. four in New England, and one in each of the Provinces of New York, New Jersey, Pensilvania, Maryland, and Virginia, all furnish'd with learned Professors; besides a number of smaller Academies; these educate many of their Youth in the Languages, and those Sciences that qualify men for the Professions of Divinity,

Law, or Physick. Strangers indeed are by no means excluded from exercising those Professions; and the quick Increase of Inhabitants everywhere gives them a Chance of Employ, which they have in common with the Natives. Of civil Offices, or Employments, there are few; no superfluous Ones, as in Europe; and it is a Rule establish'd in some of the States, that no Office should be so profitable as to make it desirable. The 36th Article of the Constitution of Pennsylvania, runs expressly in these Words; "As every Freeman, to preserve his Independence, (if he has not a sufficient Estate) ought to have some Profession, Calling, Trade, or Farm, whereby he may honestly subsist, there can be no Necessity for, nor Use in, establishing Offices of Profit; the usual Effects of which are Dependance and Servility, unbecoming Freemen, in the Possessors and Expectants; Faction, Contention, Corruption, and Disorder among the People. Wherefore, whenever an Office, thro' Increase of Fees or otherwise, becomes so profitable, as to occasion many to apply for it, the Profits ought to be lessened by the Lagislature."

These Ideas prevailing more or less in all the United States, it cannot be worth any Man's while, who has a means of Living at home, to expatriate himself, in hopes of obtaining a profitable civil Office in America; and, as to military Offices, they are at an End with the War, the Armies being disbanded. Much less is it adviseable for a Person to go thither, who has no other Quality to recommend him but his Birth. In Europe it has indeed its Value; but it is a Commodity that cannot be carried to a worse Market than that of America, where people do not inquire concerning a Stranger, *What is he?* but, *What can he do?* If he has any useful Art, he is welcome; and if he exercises it, and behaves well, he will be respected by all that know him; but a mere Man of Quality, who, on that Account, wants to live upon the Public, by some Office or Salary, will be despis'd and disregarded. The Husbandman is in honor there, and even the Mechanic, because their Employments are useful. The People have a saying, that God Almighty is himself a Mechanic, the greatest in the Univers; and he is respected and admired more for the Variety, Ingenuity, and Utility of his Handyworks, than for the Antiquity of his Family. They are pleas'd with the Observation of a Negro, and frequently mention it, that *Boccarorra* (meaning the White men) *make de black man workee, make de Horse workee, make de Ox workee, make ebery ting workee; only de Hog. He, de hog, no workee; he eat, he drink, he walk about, he go to sleep when he please, he libb like a Gentleman.* According to these Opinions of the Americans, one of them would think himself more oblig'd to a Genealogist, who could prove for him that his Ancestors and Relations for ten Generations had been Ploughmen, Smiths, Carpenters, Turners, Weavers, Tanners, or even Shoemakers, and consequently that they were useful Members of Society; than if he could only prove that they were Gentlemen, doing nothing of Value, but living idly on the Labour of others, mere *fruges consumere nati*,¹ and otherwise *good for nothing*, till by their Death their Estates, like the Carcass of the Negro's Gentleman-Hog, come to be *cut up*.

With regard to Encouragements for Strangers from Government, they are really only what are derived from good Laws and Liberty. Strangers are welcome, because there is room enough for them all, and therefore the old Inhabitants are not jealous of them; the Laws protect them sufficiently, so that they have no need of the Patronage of Great Men; and every one will enjoy securely the Profits of his Industry. But, if he does not bring a Fortune with him, he must work and be industrious to live. One or two Years' residence gives him all the Rights of a Citizen; but the government does not at present, whatever it may have done in former times, hire People to become Settlers, by Paying their Passages, giving Land, Negroes, Utensils, Stock, or any other kind of Emolument whatsoever. In short, America is the Land of Labour, and by no means what the English call *Lubberland*, and the French *Pays de Coccagne*, where the streets are said to be pav'd with half-peck Loaves, the Houses til'd with Pancakes, and where the Fowls fly about ready roasted, crying, *Come eat me!*

Who then are the kind of Persons to whom an Emigration to America may be advantageous? And what are the Advantages they may reasonably expect?

Land being cheap in that Country, from the vast Forests still void of Inhabitants, and not likely to be occupied in an Age to come, insomuch that the Propriety of an hundred Acres of fertile Soil full of Wood may be obtained near the Frontiers, in many Places, for Eight or Ten Guineas, hearty young Labouring Men, who understand the Husbandry of Corn and Cattle, which is nearly the same in that Country as in Europe, may easily establish themselves there. A little Money sav'd of the good Wages they receive there, while they work for others, enables them to buy the Land and begin their Plantation, in which they are assisted by the Good-Will of their Neighbours, and some Credit. Multitudes of poor People from England, Ireland, Scotland, and Germany, have by this means in a few years become wealthy Farmers, who, in their own Countries, where all the Lands are fully occupied, and the Wages of Labour low, could never have emerged from the poor Condition wherein they were born.

From the salubrity of the Air, the healthiness of the Climate, the plenty of good Provisions, and the Encouragement to early Marriages by the certainty of Subsistence in cultivating the Earth, the Increase of Inhabitants by natural Generation is very rapid in America, and becomes still more so by the Accession of Strangers; hence there is a continual Demand for more Artisans of all the necessary and useful kinds, to supply those Cultivators of the Earth with Houses, and with Furniture and Utensils of the grosser sorts, which cannot so well be brought from Europe. Tolerably good Workmen in any of those mechanic Arts are sure to find Employ, and to be well paid for their Work, there being no Restraints preventing Strangers from exercising any Art they understand, nor any Permission necessary. If they are poor, they begin first as Servants or Journeymen; and if they are sober, industrious, and frugal, they soon become Masters, establish themselves in Business, marry, raise Families, and become respectable Citizens.

Also, Persons of moderate Fortunes and Capitals, who, having a Number of Children to provide for, are desirous of bringing them up to Industry, and to secure Estates for their Posterity, have Opportunities of doing it in America, which Europe does not afford. There they may be taught and practise profitable mechanic Arts, without incurring Disgrace on that Account, but on the contrary acquiring Respect by such Abilities. There small Capitals laid out in Lands, which daily become more valuable by the Increase of People, afford a solid Prospect of ample Fortunes thereafter for those Children. The Writer of this has known several Instances of large Tracts of Land, bought, on what was then the Frontier of Pensilvania, for Ten Pounds per hundred Acres, which after 20 years, when the Settlements had been extended far beyond them, sold readily, without any Improvement made upon them, for three Pounds per Acre. The Acre in America is the same with the English Acre, or the Acre of Normandy.

Those, who desire to understand the State of Government in America, would do well to read the Constitutions of the several States, and the Articles of Confederation that bind the whole together for general Purposes, under the Direction of one Assembly, called the Congress. These Constitutions have been printed, by order of Congress, in America; two Editions of them have also been printed in London; and a good Translation of them into French has lately been published at Paris.

Several of the Princes of Europe having of late years, from an Opinion of Advantage to arise by producing all Commodities and Manufactures within their own Dominions, so as to diminish or render useless their Importations, have endeavoured to entice Workmen from other Countries by high Salaries, Privileges, &c. Many Persons, pretending to be skilled in various great Manufactures, imagining that America must be in Want of them, and that the Congress would probably be dispos'd to imitate the Princes above mentioned, have proposed to go over, on Condition of having their Passages paid, Lands given, Salaries appointed, exclusive Privileges for Terms of years, &c. Such Persons, on reading the Articles of Confederation, will find, that the Congress have no Power committed to them, or Money put into their Hands, for such purposes; and that if any such Encouragement is given, it must be by the Government of some separate State. This, however, has rarely been done in America; and, when it has been done, it has rarely succeeded, so as to establish a Manufacture, which the Country was not yet so ripe for as to encourage private Persons to set it up; Labour being generally too dear there, and Hands difficult to be kept together, every one desiring to be a Master, and the Cheapness of Lands inclining many to leave Trades for Agriculture. Some indeed have met with Success, and are carried on to Advantage; but they are generally such as require only a few Hands, or wherein great Part of the Work is performed by Machines. Things that are bulky, and of so small Value as not well to bear the Expence of Freight, may often be made cheaper in the Country than they can be imported; and the Manufacture of such Things will be profitable wherever there is a

sufficient Demand. The Farmers in America produce indeed a good deal of Wool and Flax; and none is exported, it is all work'd up; but it is in the Way of domestic Manufacture, for the Use of the Family. The buying up Quantities of Wool and Flax, with the Design to employ Spinners, Weavers, &c., and form great Establishments, producing Quantities of Linen and Woollen Goods for Sale, has been several times attempted in different Provinces; but those Projects have generally failed, goods of equal Value being imported cheaper. And when the Governments have been solicited to support such Schemes by Encouragements, in Money, or by imposing Duties on Importation of such Goods, it has been generally refused, on this Principle, that, if the Country is ripe for the Manufacture, it may be carried on by private Persons to Advantage; and if not, it is a Folly to think of forcing Nature. Great Establishments of Manufacture require great Numbers of Poor to do the Work for small Wages; these Poor are to be found in Europe, but will not be found in America, till the Lands are all taken up and cultivated, and the Excess of People, who cannot get Land, want Employment. The Manufacture of Silk, they say, is natural in France, as that of Cloth in England, because each Country produces in Plenty the first Material; but if England will have a Manufacture of Silk as well as that of Cloth, and France one of Cloth as well as that of Silk, these unnatural Operations must be supported by mutual Prohibitions, or high Duties on the Importation of each other's Goods; by which means the Workmen are enabled to tax the home Consumer by greater Prices, while the higher Wages they receive makes them neither happier nor richer, since they only drink more and work less. Therefore the Governments in America do nothing to encourage such Projects. The People, by this Means, are not impos'd on, either by the Merchant or Mechanic. If the Merchant demands too much Profit on imported Shoes, they buy of the Shoemaker; and if he asks too high a Price, they take them of the Merchant; thus the two Professions are checks on each other. The Shoemaker, however, has, on the whole, a considerable Profit upon his Labour in America, beyond what he had in Europe, as he can add to his Price a Sum nearly equal to all the Expences of Freight and Commission, Risque or Insurance, &c., necessarily charged by the Merchant. And the Case is the same with the Workmen in every other Mechanic Art. Hence it is, that Artisans generally live better and more easily in America than in Europe; and such as are good Oeconomists make a comfortable Provision for Age, and for their Children. Such may, therefore, remove with Advantage to America.

In the long-settled Countries of Europe, all Arts, Trades, Professions, Farms, &c., are so full, that it is difficult for a poor Man, who has Children, to place them where they may gain, or learn to gain, a decent Livelihood. The Artisans, who fear creating future Rivals in Business, refuse to take Apprentices, but upon Conditions of Money, Maintenance, or the like, which the Parents are unable to comply with. Hence the Youth are dragg'd up in Ignorance of every gainful Art, and oblig'd to become Soldiers, or Servants, or Thieves, for a Subsistence. In America, the rapid Increase of Inhabitants takes away that Fear of Rivalship, and

Artisans willingly receive Apprentices from the hope of Profit by their Labour, during the Remainder of the Time stipulated, after they shall be instructed. Hence it is easy for poor Families to get their Children instructed; for the Artisans are so desirous of Apprentices, that many of them will even give Money to the Parents, to have Boys from Ten to Fifteen Years of Age bound Apprentices to them till the Age of Twenty-one; and many poor Parents have, by that means, on their Arrival in the Country, raised Money enough to buy Land sufficient to establish themselves, and to subsist the rest of their Family by Agriculture. These Contracts for Apprentices are made before a Magistrate, who regulates the Agreement according to Reason and Justice, and, having in view the Formation of a future useful Citizen, obliges the Master to engage by a written Indenture, not only that, during the time of Service stipulated, the Apprentice shall be duly provided with Meat, Drink, Apparel, washing, and Lodging, and, at its Expiration, with a compleat new Suit of Cloaths, but also that he shall be taught to read, write, and cast Accompts; and that he shall be well instructed in the Art or Profession of his Master, or some other, by which he may afterwards gain a Livelihood, and be able in his turn to raise a Family. A Copy of this Indenture is given to the Apprentice or his Friends, and the Magistrate keeps a Record of it, to which recourse may be had, in case of Failure by the Master in any Point of Performance. This desire among the Masters, to have more Hands employ'd in working for them, induces them to pay the Passages of young Persons, of both Sexes, who, on their Arrival, agree to serve them one, two, three, or four Years; those, who have already learnt a Trade, agreeing for a shorter Term, in proportion to their Skill, and the consequent immediate Value of their Service; and those, who have none, agreeing for a longer Term, in consideration of being taught an Art their Poverty would not permit them to acquire in their own Country.

The almost general Mediocrity of Fortune that prevails in America obliging its People to follow some Business for subsistence, those Vices, that arise usually from Idleness, are in a great measure prevented. Industry and constant Employment are great preservatives of the Morals and Virtue of a Nation. Hence bad Examples to Youth are more rare in America, which must be a comfortable Consideration to Parents. To this may be truly added, that serious Religion, under its various Denominations, is not only tolerated, but respected and practised. Atheism is unknown there; Infidelity rare and secret; so that persons may live to a great Age in that Country, without having their Piety shocked by meeting with either an Atheist or an Infidel. And the Divine Being seems to have manifested his Approbation of the mutual Forbearance and Kindness with which the different Sects treat each other, by the remarkable Prosperity with which He has been pleased to favour the whole Country.

1. "... born / Merely to eat up the corn."--Watts.

Appendix E

Letters from an American Farmer

by Jean de Crevecoeur

Chapter III: "What is an American?"

I wish I could be acquainted with the feelings and thoughts which must agitate the heart and present themselves to the mind of an enlightened Englishman, when he first lands on this continent. He must greatly rejoice that he lived at a time to see this fair country discovered and settled; he must necessarily feel a share of national pride, when he views the chain of settlements which embellishes these extended shores. When he says to himself, this is the work of my countrymen, who, when convulsed by factions, afflicted by a variety of miseries and wants, restless and impatient, took refuge here. They brought along with them their national genius, to which they principally owe what liberty they enjoy, and what substance they possess. Here he sees the industry of his native country displayed in a new manner, and traces in their works the embryos of all the arts, sciences, and ingenuity which flourish in Europe. Here he beholds fair cities, substantial villages, extensive fields, an immense country filled with decent houses, good roads, orchards, meadows, and bridges, where an hundred years ago all was wild, woody and uncultivated! What a train of pleasing ideas this fair spectacle must suggest; it is a prospect which must inspire a good citizen with the most heartfelt pleasure. The difficulty consists in the manner of viewing so extensive a scene. He is arrived on a new continent; a modern society offers itself to his contemplation, different from what he had hitherto seen. It is not composed, as in Europe, of great lords who possess every thing and of a herd of people who have nothing. Here are no aristocratical families, no courts, no kings, no bishops, no ecclesiastical dominion, no invisible power giving to a few a very visible one; no great manufacturers employing thousands, no great refinements of luxury. The rich and the poor are not so far removed from each other as they are in Europe. Some few towns excepted, we are all tillers of the earth, from Nova Scotia to West Florida. We are a people of cultivators, scattered over an immense territory communicating with each other by means of good roads and navigable rivers, united by the silken bands of mild government, all respecting the laws, without dreading their power, because they are equitable. We are all animated with the spirit of an industry which is unfettered and unrestrained, because each person works for himself. If he travels through our rural districts he views not the hostile castle, and the haughty mansion, contrasted with the clay-built hut and miserable cabin, where cattle and men help to keep each other warm, and dwell in meanness, smoke, and indigence. A pleasing uniformity of decent competence appears throughout our habitations. The meanest of our log-houses is a dry and comfortable habitation. Lawyer or merchant are the fairest titles our towns afford; that of a farmer is the only appellation of the rural inhabitants of

our country. It must take some time ere he can reconcile himself to our dictionary, which is but short in words of dignity, and names of honour. (There, on a Sunday, he sees a congregation of respectable farmers and their wives, all clad in neat homespun, well mounted, or riding in their own humble waggons. There is not among them an esquire, saving the unlettered magistrate. There he sees a parson as simple as his flock, a farmer who does not riot on the labour of others. We have no princes, for whom we toil, starve, and bleed: we are the most perfect society now existing in the world. Here man is free; as he ought to be; nor is this pleasing equality so transitory as many others are. Many ages will not see the shores of our great lakes replenished with inland nations, nor the unknown bounds of North America entirely peopled. Who can tell how far it extends? Who can tell the millions of men whom it will feed and contain? for no European foot has as yet travelled half the extent of this mighty continent!

The next wish of this traveller will be to know whence came all these people? they are mixture of English, Scotch, Irish, French, Dutch, Germans, and Swedes. From this promiscuous breed, that race now called Americans have arisen. The eastern provinces must indeed be excepted, as being the unmixed descendants of Englishmen. I have heard many wish that they had been more intermixed also: for my part, I am no wisher, and think it much better as it has happened. They exhibit a most conspicuous figure in this great and variegated picture; they too enter for a great share in the pleasing perspective displayed in these thirteen provinces. I know it is fashionable to reflect on them, but I respect them for what they have done; for the accuracy and wisdom with which they have settled their territory; for the decency of their manners; for their early love of letters; their ancient college, the first in this hemisphere; for their industry; which to me who am but a farmer, is the criterion of everything. There never was a people, situated as they are, who with so ungrateful a soil have done more in so short a time. Do you think that the monarchical ingredients which are more prevalent in other governments, have purged them from all foul stains? Their histories assert the contrary.

In this great American asylum, the poor of Europe have by some means met together, and in consequence of various causes; to what purpose should they ask one another what countrymen they are? Alas, two thirds of them had no country. Can a wretch who wanders about, who works and starves, whose life is a continual scene of sore affliction or pinching penury; can that man call England or any other kingdom his country? A country that had no bread for him, whose fields procured him no harvest, who met with nothing but the frowns of the rich, the severity of the laws, with jails and punishments; who owned not a single foot of the extensive surface of this planet? No! urged by a variety of motives, here they came. Every thing has tended to regenerate them; new laws, a new mode of living, a new social system; here they are become men: in Europe they were as so many useless plants, wanting vegetative mould, and refreshing showers; they withered, and were mowed down by want, hunger, and war; but now by the

power of transplantation, like all other plants they have taken root and flourished! Formerly they were not numbered in any civil lists of their country, except in those of the poor; here they rank as citizens. By what invisible power has this surprising metamorphosis been performed? By that of the laws and that of their industry. The laws, the indulgent laws, protect them as they arrive, stamping on them the symbol of adoption; they receive ample rewards for their labours; these accumulated rewards procure them lands; those lands confer on them the title of freemen, and to that title every benefit is affixed which men can possibly require. This is the great operation daily performed by our laws. From whence proceed these laws? From our government. Whence the government? It is derived from the original genius and strong desire of the people ratified and confirmed by the crown. This is the great chain which links us all, this is the picture which every province exhibits, Nova Scotia excepted. There the crown has done all; either there were no people who had genius, or it was not much attended to: the consequence is, that the province is very thinly inhabited indeed; the power of the crown in conjunction with the musketos has prevented men from settling there. Yet some parts of it flourished once, and it contained a mild harmless set of people. But for the fault of a few leaders, the whole were banished. The greatest political error the crown ever committed in America, was to cut off men from a country which wanted nothing but men!

What attachment can a poor European emigrant have for a country where he had nothing? The knowledge of the language, the love of a few kindred as poor as himself, were the only cords that tied him: his country is now that which gives him land, bread, protection, and consequence: *Ubi panis ibi patria*, is the motto of all emigrants. What then is the American, this new man? He is either an European, or the descendant of an European, hence that strange mixture of blood, which you will find in no other country. I could point out to you a family whose grandfather was an Englishman, whose wife was Dutch, whose son married a French woman, and whose present four sons have now four wives of different nations. *He* is an American, who leaving behind him all his ancient prejudices and manners, receives new ones from the new mode of life he has embraced, the new government he obeys, and the new rank he holds. He becomes an American by being received in the broad lap of our great *Alma Mater*. Here individuals of all nations are melted into a new race of men, whose labours and posterity will one day cause great changes in the world. Americans are the western pilgrims, who are carrying along with them that great mass of arts, sciences, vigour, and industry which began long since in the east; they will finish the great circle. The Americans were once scattered all over Europe; here they are incorporated into one of the finest systems of population which has ever appeared, and which will hereafter become distinct by the power of the different climates they inhabit. The American ought therefore to love this country much better than that wherein either he or his forefathers were born. Here the rewards of his industry follow with equal steps the progress of his labour; his labour is founded on the basis of nature, *self-interest*; can it want a stronger allurements? Wives and children, who

before in vain demanded of him a morsel of bread, now, fat and frolicsome, gladly help their father to clear those fields whence exuberant crops are to arise to feed and to clothe them all; without any part being claimed, either by a despotic prince, a rich abbot, or a mighty lord. I lord religion demands but little of *him*; a small voluntary salary to the minister, and gratitude to God; can he refuse these? The American is a new man, who acts upon new principles; he must therefore entertain new ideas, and form new opinions. From involuntary idleness, servile dependence, penury, and useless labour, he has passed to toils of a very different nature, rewarded by ample subsistence. --This is an American.

Appendix F

“What Would Crèvecoeur Say?”

This is not a Quiz! Answer my questions with a quotation from Crèvecoeur’s “What is an American?” Write the question’s number next to the quotation.

Questions for Crèvecoeur:

- a. What qualities characterize an American to you, Crèvecoeur?
- b. To what natural object do you compare impoverished Europeans? What is suggested through this imagery about Europeans’ capacity to thrive in a new environment?
- c. How is America governed?
- d. Is activity and arduous work an American value?
- e. Are Americans materialistic?
- f. Are there class systems in place in America?
- g. Is America composed of individuals or one, unified race?
- h. Why have so many people abandoned their homelands for America?
- i. How will this new race of Americans *progress*?
- j. Why do these Americans work as hard as you say they do?

Crèvecoeur’s Answers:

1. _____ “No aristocratical families, no courts, no kings, no bishops, no ecclesiastical dominion, no invisible power giving to a few a very visible ones, no great manufacturers employing thousands, no great refinements of luxury, rich and poor not so far removed from each other”
2. _____ “The rewards of his industry follow with equal steps the progress of his labor, his labor is founded on the basis of nature, self interest. [...] From involuntary idleness, servile dependence, penury, and useless labor, he has passed to toils of a very different nature, rewarded by ample subsistence.”
3. _____ “They are a mixture of English, Scotch, Irish, French, Dutch, Germans, and Swedes. From this promiscuous breed, that race now called American have arisen... [yet they are] melted into a new race of man”
4. _____ “We are [...] communicating with each other by means of good roads and navigable rivers, united by the silken bands of mild government, all respecting the laws, without dreading their power, because they are equitable.”
5. _____ “Labors and posterity will one day cause great changes in the world [they] carry with them great mass of arts, sciences, vigor, and industry [which] began in the east”
6. _____ “We are all animated with the spirit of an industry which is unfettered and unrestrained, because each person works for himself [...] Women help the men in the

fields [...] the rewards of his industry follow with equal steps the progress of his labor, his labor is founded on the basis of nature, self interest”

7. _____ “Wanting vegetative mould and refreshing showers, they withered, and were mowed down by want, hunger, and war, but now by the power of transportation, like all other plants they have taken root and flourished!

8. _____ “the rich and the poor not so far removed from each other as they are in Europe”

9. _____ “What attachment can a poor European emigrant have for a country where he had nothing? [...] Unbi panis ibi patria [Where there is bread, there is a fatherland]”

10. _____ “[Americans are] clad in near homespun [...] riding in their own humble wagons”

Appendix G

Notes on the State of Virginia

by Thomas Jefferson, 1781

The *Natural bridge*, the most sublime of Nature's works, though not comprehended under the present head, must not be pretermitted. It is on the ascent of a hill, which seems to have been cloven through its length by some great convulsion. The fissure, just at the bridge, is, by some admeasurements, 270 feet deep, by others only 205. It is about 45 feet wide at the bottom, and 90 feet at the top; this of course determines the length of the bridge, and its height from the water. Its breadth in the middle, is about 60 feet, but more at the ends, and the thickness of the mass at the summit of the arch, about 40 feet. A part of this thickness is constituted by a coat of earth, which gives growth to many large trees. The residue, with the hill on both sides, is one solid rock of lime-stone. The arch approaches the Semi-elliptical form; but the larger axis of the ellipsis, which would be the cord of the arch, is many times longer than the transverse. Though the sides of this bridge are provided in some parts with a parapet of fixed rocks, yet few men have resolution to walk to them and look over into the abyss. You involuntarily fall on your hands and feet, creep to the parapet and peep over it. Looking down from this height about a minute, gave me a violent head ach. If the view from the top be painful and intolerable, that from below is delightful in an equal extreme. It is impossible for the emotions arising from the sublime, to be felt beyond what they are here: so beautiful an arch, so elevated, so light, and springing as it were up to heaven, the rapture of the spectator is really indescribable! The fissure continuing narrow, deep, and streight for a considerable distance above and below the bridge, opens a short but very pleasing view of the North mountain on one side, and Blue ridge on the other, at the distance each of them of about five miles. This bridge is in the county of Rock bridge, to which it has given name, and affords a public and commodious passage over a valley, which cannot be crossed elsewhere for a considerable distance.

Appendix H***A Walk in the Woods: Rediscovering American on the Appalachian Trail***

by Bill Bryson, 1998

I can't tell you how much I would like to step into that view. The scene is so manifestly untamed, so full of an impenetrable beyond, as to present a clearly foolhardy temptation. You would die out there for sure – shredded by a cougar or thudded with a tomahawk or just left to wander to a stumbling, confounded death. You can see that at a glance. But never mind. Already you are studying the foreground for a way down to the stream over the steep rocks and wondering if that notch ahead will get you through the neighboring valley. Farewell, my friends. Destiny calls. Don't wait supper.

Nothing like that view exists now, of course. Perhaps it never did. Who knows how much license these romantic Johnnies took with their stabbing paintbrushes? Who, after all, is going to struggle with an easel and campstool and box of paints to some difficult overlook, on a hot July afternoon, in a wilderness filled with danger, and not paint something exquisite and grand? (Bryson 116-17).

Appendix I

Personal Essay

What is a personal essay? An essay that discusses, in first person narration, a belief or value you have and hold close to you. The below criteria/guidelines are taken from NPR's *This I Believe*:

- **Authentic voice.** The writer must create a narrative persona (or stance) that the reader believes authentic, or else the text risks coming off as trite or condescending. Voice is a difficult feature to discuss in writing, but readers can describe the stance a writer is taking as they react to a given style, dialogue, and point of view; they must choose whether to believe or identify. Thus, writers must seek to reveal true experiences, moments of relevance, and believed lessons learned; else, write fiction accounts as if they believed them to be true.
- **Narrative coherence.** Most often covered in literary settings, the feature of narrative coherence regards the business of telling stories well: vivid description, controlled and appropriate pacing, subtle transitions, lively dialogue, and rich character development, for example. A personal essay generally relates a story and lessons learned [in our case, it is through community service]; thus, if the storytelling fails, the whole essay usually fails. The same elements of narration that we celebrate in studies of canonical literature can be studied and applied to student narratives.
- **Communal relevance.** At the end of the essay, the reader has the right to ask "So what?" and have it answered. A writer does not merely tell a story for personal reasons, but in order to communicate a larger truth to the reader; the story is the vehicle on which this truth, often metaphorically, rides. The personal essay argues, in a way, that the beauty associated with being a human can often best be expressed through the sharing of stories. Thus, there often appear two distinct sections of a personal essay: narrative and comment. Sometimes they are neatly divided, with an immediate lapsing into a story with brief comments at the end, but such segmenting is not always the case. Other writers will choose to comment along the way, interspersing authorial intrusions into the narrative to call attention to pertinent ideas. Whatever the format, the reader understands the reason and the importance of the story beyond its aesthetic appeal.
- **Brief.** Between 250 and 500 words.
- **Precise.** Name your belief.
- **Positive.**
- **Personal.**

A Final Note... I encourage you to publish your personal essay *outside of this classroom* by submitting your essay to Worldwide Walden and NPR's *This I Believe*.
See me for details!

Personal Essay Rubric

Expectations	Exceeds Expectations	Meets Expectations	Approaches Expectations	Does Not Approach Expectations
Purpose & message of the essay are clear and consistent				
Writing contains sophisticated & original style and voice				
Essay is consistently appropriate for the identified audience				
Content is compelling & reveals maturity & growth OR clear understanding of belief; ties community service to belief				
Essay shows belief through narration, rather than simply telling a story				
Content has a logical organization and is brief and concise (250-500 words)				
Writing is coherent (clear transitions within & between paragraphs)				
The essay is well developed using specific details and/or evidence				
Writing demonstrates a strong grasp of grammar usage & mechanics				

Personal Essay Podcast Criteria for Success

____/10 Speaker reads in a clear, deliberate voice

____/10 Enunciation and emphasis is clear and exact.

____/10 No interruptions or pauses unless noticeably on purpose and with reason

____/10 Sounds professional

____/10 Podcast CD cover neatly illustrates main idea, story, theme, or belief of speaker's podcast.

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