

11th Grade English Language and Composition Summer 2010 Assignment

Purchase a copy of the following text:

Into the Wild, Jon Krakauer

Additional texts included in the assignment, pages 2-3.

Allegory of the Cave, Plato

Excerpt from *Walden, Where I Lived, and What I Lived For*, Henry David Thoreau

Read both Plato and Thoreau before beginning *Into the Wild*. Using the journaling format, cited in the appendix, page 4 of this summer assignment, journal entries for the following topics:

Every journal entry must be accompanied with full commentary. The journal is a map of your thoughts; therefore, incomplete commentary depicts incomplete thought.

Section One: Attend to the order. The journal entries should be as follows.

1. Ten entries for McCandless' attitude toward a flawed society: Note "attitude," McCandless' thoughts concerning society as a whole. Do not include family.
2. Six entries for McCandless' attitude toward two family members, father and sister. Three entries for each.
3. Five entries for society's attitude toward McCandless. Do not include the author Krakauer.
4. Five entries for Krakauer's attitude toward McCandless.

Section Two:

Chris McCandless' philosophy on life can be best described as "living an authentic life." Using Plato and Thoreau in your commentary, accomplish the following in journal format.

Compile ten entries which reflect McCandless' attitude toward his life, and how it should be lived. Reflect on his "place" in society and society's good attributes and ills.

The Journal is due the first day of class, 2010-2011 school year. It must be typed in columns, double spaced, page numbers, and your name at top of page one.

Section Three:

Bring the text, *Into the Wild*, on the first day. It must be annotated and available for a Socratic Seminar.

Allegory of the Cave

And now look again, and see what will naturally follow if the prisoners are released and disabused of their error. At first, when any of them is liberated and compelled suddenly to stand up and turn his neck round and walk and look towards the light, he will suffer sharp pains; the glare will distress him, and he will be unable to see the realities of which in his former state he had seen the shadows; and then conceive some one saying to him, that what he saw before was an illusion, but that now, when he is approaching nearer to being and his eye is turned towards more real existence, he has a clearer vision,--what will be his reply? And you may further imagine that his instructor is pointing to the objects as they pass and requiring him to name them,--will he not be perplexed? Will he not fancy that the shadows which he formerly saw are truer than the objects which are now shown to him?

He will require to grow accustomed to the sight of the upper world. And first he will see the shadows best, next the reflections of men and other objects in the water, and then the objects themselves; then he will gaze upon the light of the moon and the stars and the spangled heaven; and he will see the sky and the stars by night better than the sun or the light of the sun by day?

This entire allegory, I said, you may now append, dear Glaucon, to the previous argument; the prison-house is the world of sight, the light of the fire is the sun, and you will not misapprehend me if you interpret the journey upwards to be the ascent of the soul into the intellectual world according to my poor belief, which, at your desire, I have expressed--whether rightly or wrongly God knows. But whether true or false, my opinion is that in the world of knowledge the idea of good appears last of all, and is seen only with an effort; and, when seen, is also inferred to be the universal author of all things beautiful and right, parent of light and of the lord of light in this visible world, Here Plato describes his notion of God in a way that was influence profoundly Christian theologians. and the immediate source of reason and truth in the intellectual; and that this is the power upon which he would act rationally either in public or private life must have his eye fixed.

Any one who has common sense will remember that the bewilderments of the eyes are of two kinds, and arise from two causes, either from coming out of the light or from going into the light, which is true of the mind's eye; and he who remembers this when he sees any one whose vision is perplexed and weak, will not be too ready to laugh; he will first ask whether that soul of man has come out of the brighter life, and is unable to see because unaccustomed to the dark, or having turned from darkness to the day is dazzled

by excess of light. And he will count the one happy in his condition and state of being, and he will pity the other; or, if he have a mind to laugh at the soul which comes from below into the light, there will be more reason in this than in the laugh which greets him who returns from above out of the light into the den

Except from *Walden*

[1] I went to the woods because I wished to live deliberately, to front only the essential facts of life, and see if I could not learn what it had to teach, and not, when I came to die, discover that I had not lived. I did not wish to live what was not life, living is so dear; nor did I wish to practice resignation, unless it was quite necessary. I wanted to live deep and suck out all the marrow of life, to live so sturdily and Spartan-like¹ as to put to rout all that was not life, to cut a broad swath and shave close, to drive life into a corner, and reduce it to its lowest terms, and, if it proved to be mean, why then to get the whole and genuine meanness of it, and publish its meanness to the world; or if it were sublime, to know it by experience, and be able to give a true account of it in my next excursion. For most men, it appears to me, are in a strange uncertainty about it, whether it is of the devil or of God, and have somewhat hastily concluded that it is the chief end of man here to "glorify God and enjoy him forever."²

[2] Still we live meanly, like ants; though the fable tells us that we were long ago changed into men; like pygmies we fight with cranes³; it is error upon error, and clout upon clout, and our best virtue has for its occasion a superfluous and evitable⁴ wretchedness. Our life is frittered away by detail. An honest man has hardly needed to count more than his ten fingers, or in extreme cases he may add his ten toes, and lump the rest. Simplicity, simplicity, simplicity! I say, let your affairs be as two or three, and not a hundred or a thousand; instead of a million count half a dozen, and keep your accounts on your thumb-nail. In the midst of this chopping sea of civilized life, such are the clouds and storms and quicksands and thousand-and-one items to be allowed for, that a man has to live, if he would not founder and go to the bottom and not make his port at all, by dead reckoning, and he must be a great calculator indeed who succeeds. Simplify, simplify. Instead of three meals a day, if it be necessary eat but one; instead of a hundred dishes, five; and reduce other things in proportion. Our life is like a German Confederacy⁵, made up of petty states, with its boundary forever fluctuating, so that even a German cannot tell you how it is bounded at any moment. The nation itself, with all its so-called internal improvements, which, by the way are all external and superficial, is just such an unwieldy and overgrown establishment, cluttered with furniture and tripped up by its own

¹ Spartan-like: like the Spartans, the hardy, frugal, and highly disciplined citizens of the ancient Greek city-state Sparta.

² glory... forever: answer to the Westminster Catechism question "What is the chief end of man?"

³ The fable... cranes: In a Greek fable, Zeus changes ants into men. In the *Iliad*, Homer compares the Trojans to cranes fighting with pygmies.

⁴ Superfluous and evitable: unnecessary and avoidable

⁵ German Confederacy: group of European states, 1815-1866. At the time Thoreau wrote, Germany was not a unified nation.

traps, ruined by luxury and heedless expense, by want of calculation and a worthy aim, as the million households in the land; and the only cure for it, as for them, is in a rigid economy, a stern and more than Spartan simplicity of life and elevation of purpose. It lives too fast. Men think that it is essential that the Nation have commerce, and export ice, and talk through a telegraph, and ride thirty miles an hour, without a doubt, whether they do or not; but whether we should live like baboons or like men, is a little uncertain. If we do not get out sleepers⁶, and forge rails, and devote days and nights to the work, but go to tinkering upon our lives to improve them, who will build railroads? And if railroads are not built, how shall we get to heaven in season? But if we stay at home and mind our business, who will want railroads? We do not ride on the railroad; it rides upon us. Did you ever think what those sleepers are that underlie the railroad? Each one is a man, an Irishman, or a Yankee man. The rails are laid on them, and they are covered with sand, and the cars run smoothly over them. They are sound sleepers, I assure you. And every few years a new lot is laid down and run over; so that, if some have the pleasure of riding on a rail, others have the misfortune to be ridden upon. And when they run over a man that is walking in his sleep, a supernumerary⁷ sleeper in the wrong position, and wake him up, they suddenly stop the cars, and make a hue and cry about it, as if this were an exception. I am glad to know that it takes a gang of men for every five miles to keep the sleepers down and level in their beds as it is, for this is a sign that they may sometime get up again.

⁶ Sleepers: wooden railroad ties that support the rails

⁷ Supernumerary: additional; unnecessary

English 11 AP
Dialectical Journal

Reading is too often a passive experience for many students. They sit down with a book or article, pass their eyes over the words, and say that they have done the reading assignment hoping that the most difficult post-reading task they'll encounter will be a short quiz primarily composed of recall questions. One way to get students involved is through the use of the dialectical journal. The term indicates the tension between reader and text that occurs when students struggle to derive meaning from a difficult or unfamiliar work.

What is it?

The journal is a double-entry, note-taking process done while reading any genre of literature. It is an attempt to transfer a reader's interior monologue on paper by providing two columns which are in dialogue with one another, not only developing a method of critical reading but also encouraging habits of reflective questioning/thinking.

Why is it Important:

In the right-hand column, the reader "owns" or "comments" on important text that has been identified. The dialectical journal helps readers critically think about the text they are reading. By keeping a dialectical journal, students are brought to think "for themselves" about a text and offer their own interpretations.

How is it done?

Draw a line down the middle of a piece of notebook paper, thereby making two columns. The left column, labeled "text" or note taking" is used for traditional note forms of direct quotations and citations or summaries. Thus, when they finish they have a summary of the material they have read.

The right column is used for commenting on the left-column notes. Here students record their questions, comments, and ideas next to the text that has piqued their interest. As students take notes, regularly re-read previous pages of notes and comments, drawing any new connections in a right column summary before starting another page of note-taking/note-making. The top 1' margin of the page is reserved for biographical information, teacher directed comments, or any pre-reading information that might help the reader better understand and appreciate the text.

NOTE TAKING	NOTE MAKING
(also known as: text references or identification) your thoughts)	(commentary on the reference;
<i>reading notes, direct quotes, summaries, summaries lists, images, w/page numbers included comparisons,</i>	<i>notes about your left column: evaluations, judgments, contrasts, analysis</i>
citation... (pp) make this note? (if applicable, include column #) a connection	Why did I copy this passage or Why is it important to me? Is there

infer?

citation....(pp)

citation....(pp)

citation....(pp)

to other information? What can I

commentary

questions, meaning

inferences