

## Nature Journal Prompts

Some of these prompts are modified from those suggested by Kriesburg (1999). Please look at the grading rubric (posted on Oncourse) for each prompt so that you know how to craft your entry to get maximum points.

1) Describe the nature place you have selected. Indicate its physical location relative to streets and/or landmarks. Estimate its size. Characterize its boundaries. Describe its vegetation and trees, any physical structures or surfaces, and any fauna you observe. (You do not have to know the scientific names of the plant species or provide technical details; you can describe these components in layman's terms.) What are the place's most distinctive attributes? How do you think humans use this place? How do you think animals use it? Provide at least two digital photos of the location. (25 points)

2) Sketch the place you have selected. Draw each of the key features you identified in your first journal entry. Label the features so that the TA/instructor can tell what they are. Scan your sketch as a PDF, JPEG, or TIFF and post it. (15 points)

3) Edward Abbey (1968, 267), commenting on the wilderness of Utah, said "How difficult to imagine this place without a human presence; how necessary. I am almost prepared to believe that this sweet virginal primitive land will be grateful for my departure and [its flora and fauna]. . . will breathe metaphorically a collective sigh of relief—like a whisper of the wind—when we are all and finally gone and the place and its creations can return to their ancient procedures unobserved and undisturbed by the busy, anxious, brooding consciousness of man." What would your nature place have looked like had humans never touched it? (20 points)

4) Close your eyes. If you cannot rely on your eyesight, what would each of your other four senses tell you about your nature place? (15 points)

5) Pretend that you have seen the entire history of your nature place pass in front of you in five minutes. What would you have seen? This entry is different from the third one because now you are now being asked to imagine a timeline and to describe how the place might have looked at different points in history. (15 points)

6) Investigate the human history of your nature place. This may mean looking up information about the location in Indiana University historical documents, City of Bloomington resources, or histories of the state of Indiana; cite as appropriate. If there is a lack of official information about the place, speculate. Does it look like it was once used for agriculture? For waste disposal? Flood control, irrigation, recreation, construction, gardening, storage, or other purposes? Explain the evidence that forms the basis for your inference. Provide at least two digital photos or PDF/JPEG/TIFF sketches of the signs or evidence you use to infer past human uses. (25 points)

7) How is your nature place changing with the shift in seasons? Digitally photograph or sketch at least two of the new seasonal developments you identify. This entry is different than the eighth

(your next journal assignment) because the next prompt will ask you about signs or evidence of animal and human use, whereas this prompt asks you to describe changes at your nature place generally. (15 points)

8) Mary Austin (1903, 52) tells us “There is always more life abroad in the winter hills than one looks to find, and much more in evidence than in summer weather.” What signs of animal, plant, and human life do you see now that the weather is turning warmer? (Keep in mind that seeing signs of wildlife or human activity is different than actually seeing wildlife or humans. Signs could include animal tracks or droppings, nests, holes, caches of food, or human footprints.) How are these signs different from those that you saw when the weather was colder? Take at least two digital photos or create at least two PDF/JPEG/TIFF sketches of the signs you can identify now in warmer weather. Do you agree with Austin that there were more signs in the winter than now? Explain why you agree or disagree. (20 points)

9) Spend at least 15 minutes at your location sitting quietly. What animals do you observe? (Remember that insects are part of the Animal Kingdom.) Provide a digital photo or a PDF/JPEG/TIFF sketch of four animals. Look up the scientific (Latin) name of each and provide it. Choose one animal and briefly research its characteristics, behaviors, and habitat. Provide a write-up of your research with appropriate citations. If you did not see at least four animals, photograph/sketch, identify, and research those you did encounter. Then answer the following questions as well: What other animals might you have expected to find in this environment? Why would you expect this to be their habitat? Why do you think you did not observe them? (25 points)

10) Spend at least 15 minutes at your location sitting quietly. What are the dominant forms of vegetation at this place? Provide a digital photo or a PDF/JPEG/TIFF sketch of four plants, trees, shrubs, and/or flowers. Look up the scientific (Latin) name of each and provide it. Choose one plant and briefly research its characteristics and habitat. Provide a write-up of your research with appropriate citations. If you did not find four different forms of vegetation, photograph/sketch, identify, and research those you did encounter. Then answer the following questions as well: What other plants might you have expected to find in this environment? Why would you expect this to be their habitat? Why do you think you did not observe them? (25 points)

11) How would you improve this nature place? Keep in mind that “improve” can mean anything. You could say that you would pave it and put up a Wal-Mart if you like. You could suggest removing invasive species and planting natives, creating a community garden, building trails, fencing the area to keep out pests or people, etc. But whatever you propose, explain how and why your suggestion would be an improvement. Be explicit about your definition of “improve.” (25 points)

12) What challenges does the environment in your nature place face? What are the sources of the challenges? Based on that challenges you identify, what do you think the place will look like in five years? In 10? In 15? In 20? (25 points)