

Secession & Succession
Final Essay
Due December 15th
Dugan 207
3:00 p.m.

“Improve the Opportunities to Draw Analogies.”

H.G.O Blake, who corresponded with Thoreau a great deal from 1848 until 1861, once wrote to Henry for advice on how to write an essay based upon a personal journey that he took to Mount Washington. According to Jeffery S. Cramer, the curator of the Thoreau Institute, there is no better description of Thoreau’s writing process than what he describes in his response to Blake’s request:

“Let me suggest a theme for you: to state to yourself precisely and completely what that walk over the mountains amounted to for you, -- returning to this essay again and again, until you are satisfied that all that was important in your experience is in it. Give this good reason to yourself for having gone over the mountains, for mankind is ever going over a mountain.

Don't suppose that you can tell it precisely the first dozen times you try, but at 'em again, especially when, after a sufficient pause, you suspect that you are touching the heart or summit of the matter, reiterate your blows there, and account for the mountain to yourself. Not that the story need be long, but it will take a long while to make it short. It did not take very long to get over the mountain, you thought; but have you got over it indeed?

If you have been to the top of Mount Washington, let me ask, what did you find there? That is the way they prove witnesses, you know. Going up there and being blown on is nothing. We never do much climbing while we are there, but we eat our luncheon, etc., very much as at home. It is after we get home that we really go over the mountain, if ever. What did the mountain say? What did the mountain do?”

Writing Preparation:

Think about the above quote in light of the three stages of reading and composition that we have both studied and followed throughout this semester. Please go to the discussion thread as you work on this assignment in preparation for your final journal entry of the semester. In the thread that I have started, please use your powers of summary and paraphrase to understand what Thoreau is telling Blake about both personal experience and writing.

Final Journal Entry:

Imagine that you have received a letter from H.D Thoreau giving you advice concerning how best to write an essay about your first semester at UMass, Lowell. In this letter, imagine that Henry substitutes your analogous personal “journey” over the last fourteen weeks for Blake’s journey to Mount Washington. In response to his advice, please write a two to four page essay about your first semester at UMass, Lowell. Use your imagination, show confidence, and feel free to draw from all that we have done this semester as you move through each stage of your essay.