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Exploring the Relationship Between People and the Environment in the English Classroom

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Exploring the Relationship Between People and the Environment in the English Classroom

The world is an intricately constructed environment, and people have begun to permanently alter its balance. The activities and creations of humans are moving both young people and the environment into a destructive climate. The pressures of modern society weigh heavily on the development of teenagers, and the pollution and devastation of our natural world calls out for people to realize the consequences of their actions and beliefs. The world is not immune and our teenagers are the future but neither is being allowed to grow and develop naturally. Instead of flourishing, they languish in our fast-paced, materialistic society.

The power of literature may help bring the status of the environment into the minds of readers while providing the basis for people to find ways to heal themselves and their world. The English classroom can integrate critical thinking skills with nature literature to help the teenagers learn decision-making techniques and construct their own values and attitudes toward the environment.

David Elkind believes many of today's teenagers have a "premature adulthood thrust upon them" instead of having the teenage years as a transition period (3-4). They do not find adult guidance or direction, instead they are expected to fulfill a seemingly endless list of responsibilities (Elkind 3-4). The greater society does not permit teenagers
to "construct a personal identity" and the lack of this "impairs the formation of that all-important self-definition" (Elkind 5). This inadequate self-definition leaves the teenagers without an inner source for their individual values and ideas which should guide them in the future (Elkind 5). Without a strong, gradual period to form this self-identity, the teenagers may lose their "most important defenses against stress" (Elkind 5). Facing compounding stress in society, teenagers are "more vulnerable and less competent to meet the challenges that are inevitable in life" (Elkind 5). According to Elkind, one of the necessary elements of teenagers today is "a clearly defined value system against which to test other values and discover their own" (9). Students are bombarded with expectations and are required to make quick decisions. People with well-developed, strong self-identities have formed them through a long, complex process of "integration" (Elkind 15). Although it is a long process, its results are deep and well-defined. Unfortunately, many people today are growing in a quicker yet weaker method, "substitution" (Elkind 16). This substituting process in personal identity formation leads to "a patchwork self . . . not in touch with the deeper core of his or her being" (Elkind 17). They are swayed easily and do not have a stable individual identity.

One place that can help teenagers find the time and space to develop an individual identity and value system is in their classrooms. "Teachers are important role models"
for many of today's youth (Elkind 153). A teacher-student relationship can be a natural place for values to be presented, investigated, and explored. In a supportive classroom setting, students will be free to question and search for the values that will lead them through their lives. Elkind discusses how teachers who initiate homework as a means for "close, personal, and private interaction between student and teacher... [provide] precisely the kind of interaction [teenagers] are seeking in their efforts at self-definition" (155). Worthwhile homework can be the medium which connects each student to his or her teacher and also be a "useful arena for social learning" (Elkind 156).

A beneficial way for students to discover and confront values is through the power of literature. The transactional theory, states "readers constantly reformulate their own personal value and identity systems as they encounter and transform literary works," and this encourages students to internalize the text personally (Hynds 241). The reader-response criticism method supports the idea that there are a "variety of meanings from a literary text" (Hynds 241). This format, discussed by Louise Rosenblatt in Literature as Exploration stresses the importance of allowing the students' individual experiences to shape their reading of the text. Rosenblatt believes the reader is the "source of meaning in reading" (Hynds 241). By acknowledging the reader's importance, he or she is free to transact with the literature and find the ideas that are
relevant to his or her life. This approach to reading leads readers to "'social competence' [which] involves not only understanding, but also identification with others, as a part of the 'reciprocal process' of personal, textual, and social understanding that Rosenblatt describes" (Hynds 253). Reading may become a "way of understanding people in the social world" (Hynds 252). Reading many views and opinions of different social values on a specific issue through reader-response activities, the students are free to connect personally with the characters and themes of the text. They will analyze the information and incorporate it into their personal lives. Transaction with literature can be a "powerful influence on human thought and behavior" (Hynds 256). A classroom should encourage readers' transaction with the text. Hynds states "[i]n bringing unique experiences and world visions to literary texts, readers both transform and are transformed by their literary experiences" (Hynds 256). Values and self-identity formation are nurtured through the literature and reader in this setting.

The classroom is a forum for reviving the next generation's understanding and interest in numerous personal and social topics. An English nature literature unit would allow students to read and question literature concerning people's place in and with the environment. Students need time to focus on this issue. Many of today's students are not taking the time to consider the consequences of their
actions, and a course or unit on the role of the environment in their lives gives them the opportunity to explore their ideas and experiences.

Rachel Carson in *Silent Spring* wrote:

> [t]he balance of nature is not a status quo; it is fluid, ever shifting, in a constant state of adjustment. Man, too, is part of this balance. Sometimes the balance is in his favor; sometimes—and all too often through his own activities—it is shifted to his disadvantage. (246)

We breathe, grow, and exist in the natural world, and we take it for granted. We use and abuse it without a second thought. "It is now all too easy to regard the earth as a collection of 'resources' having an intrinsic value no larger than their usefulness at the moment," Al Gore states in *Earth in the Balance* (1). Many people are caught up in their immediate needs and desires and have lost the feeling that they are part of the environment. Instead of living with nature and learning from its natural rhythm, people try to exert human control over the natural world. Carson states that "'control of nature' is a phrase conceived in arrogance, born of the Neanderthal age of biology and philosophy, when it was supposed that nature exists for the convenience of man" (297). Our abuse and destruction of the environment continues; the warning lights are flashing because "civilization is now capable of destroying itself" (Gore 8).
Current and future generations need to rediscover their role in the environment. We are beginning to realize the impact our daily actions have on the state of the environment. The world is not an everlasting entity. Gore recalls the words of one of his professors, "nature is not immune to our presence, and that we could actually change the makeup of the entire earth's atmosphere in a fundamental way" (Gore 6). There needs to be a place for discussion and discovery of the individual's role within the environment.

The environment's survival depends on people respecting its vital importance and power. Environmental literature addresses the "need for increased awareness of the world around us and in the value, for problem solving, of learning to look outside a narrow focus" (Clark 6). The classroom use of environmental or nature literature will open the students to the vast array of stances people through the centuries have taken toward nature. Over the years, the natural world has been revered and regulated. Gore expresses the idea that:

our willingness to ignore the consequences of our actions has combined with our belief that we are separate from nature to produce a genuine crisis in the way we relate to the world around us. We seem to sense something of our jeopardy; we seem to share a restlessness of spirit that rises out of the lost connection to our world and our future. (2)
Society is at a critical point; we must decide how to preserve the environment for the future generations. The students are the future. They should develop a view of where the natural world fits into their life. There needs to be a supportive atmosphere where teenagers can "assess [their] own relationship to the natural world and renew, at the deepest level of personal integrity, a connection to it" (Gore 366). A value within many nature books is the theme that people should "record, not alter; understand, not possess; leave alone, not replace . . ." the natural world (Lillard 37). Respect for the environment instead of destruction. Learning from nature instead of altering and tampering with it. The future depends on our actions today. The rising generations must help define the relationship between people and the environment. Gore believes hope lies in "balance--balance between contemplation and action, individual concerns and commitment to the community, love for the natural world and love for our wondrous civilization" (367). Transacting with environmental literature will help teenagers balance their life with nature.

A great variety of literature exists about the environment. There are fictional accounts of people existing with the environment, people fighting against the environment, people unconcerned with the impact of their actions on the environment, personal accounts of the experiences with nature, factual accounts of human actions
impacting the environment, poetry celebrating the beauty of the environment, works reporting the rate of destruction of resources. By using combinations of these literary mediums, students may discover and explore the relationship between people and the environment.
Bibliography


Literature and the Environment Lessons

The following lessons will be incorporated more into an English classroom perhaps an environment literature unit. I want to weave fiction/short stories, nonfiction/personal essay, magazine articles, movies, and songs/poetry to inspire the students and myself to delve into the theme of people and the environment. The lessons are samples of the types of material I will use and how I will present each medium to the students. The variety of sources should spark the students into further investigation and thought on their individual place in the environment. I will provide further resources of related works at the end of each lesson.
Personal Essay Segment

Purpose:
The short essay, "Progress, the G.N.P. and the Naming of Things" by Sting looks at the rainforest from two different perspectives.
Students will express their attitudes about the destruction of the rainforest.
The discussion may lead students to express their own ideas about the contrasting forces acting in Sting's short story.

Goals:
The students will discuss the role of urban progress on the environment.
The students will explore their own ideas about reasons for teaching and learning.

Procedure:
The class begins with the question "What does 'progress' mean to you?" The students will share their ideas of "progress".
The students will read an essay from Don Henley's Heaven is Under Our Feet, "Progress, the G.N.P. and the Naming of Things" by Sting. The short essay then will be open to classroom discussion. Some potential discussion questions will be written on the board for students to respond to in writing while the rest of the class finishes the readings. (approximately 10-15 minutes)

Questions:
1. What does "progress" mean in the short essay?
2. Describe the "modern man" in the short essay. Should the "modern man" spread his ideas around the world?
3. What did you think of the healer's reasons for teaching his son the names and uses of the "things" in the forest? Why do you think this knowledge is or isn't important?
4. React to the "modern man's" statement: "One day, this unproductive and unruly chaos will be replaced by a modern forest, orderly, efficient, economic, one that looks good from the air with lots of straight lines. You can't stop progress."
5. What do you think of the ending? What do you believe Sting's attitude is toward the "progress" in the forests? Can people conquer nature?

These questions would start the discussion but the discussion could go in many directions depending on the interests of the students. In the short essay, the healer is passing knowledge on to his son, and the modern world is passing their language and "progress" on to the people and the forest.
Nonfiction

Purpose:
The two chapters from Rachel Carson’s *Silent Spring* provide the opportunity for students to read about pesticide contamination in the 1960s. This book was an alert to the human and environmental dangers.

Goals:
The students will read a semi-fictional account that then includes factual information in expressing an environmental situation.

The students will be asked to find examples of opinion and factual information in the chapters.

The students will discuss how things have and have not changed since this book was written.

Procedure:
I will use the first two chapters of Rachel Carson’s *Silent Spring*. The first chapter, "A Fable for Tomorrow" is a hypothetical American community that endures human induced chemical contamination. This allows that students to see Carson’s viewpoint and beliefs. Additionally, the selection raises some danger signals. The second chapter, "The Obligation to Endure" contains Carson’s perceptions and research on the condition of the natural world. She looks to the future of chemical pesticide use. She calls readers to consider the future condition of the earth.

I would ask students to read the selections and give me their personal reactions. Some possible prompts for discussion could be:

1. What do you know of pesticide use today?
2. Are you disturbed by any of the information Carson refers to in the chapters?
3. Is there much difference between the 1960s and the 1990s in regards to people’s outlook on the natural world?
Further Reading of Personal Essay and Nonfiction

The author describes her experiences raising an orphaned lion cub that does return to the wild African jungle. The novel demonstrates that wild creatures can coexist with people but that animals do need to be free.

The author looks into seashore biology through her own personal research and opinions.

In this novel, the author looks at oceanography and the effects of the modern world on the ocean.

The author looks into the pesticide contamination of the environment. It raised the awareness of the dangers of contamination to people and the environment. She does provide her opinions of how to respect the environment and learn from it.

A description of the ocean’s intricate ecosystem.
The collection of essays addresses the author’s personal insights into her life while traveling around the world visiting a variety of wilderness areas.

The book describes the author’s life along Tinker Creek. She takes the readers on a mystical excursion into the natural world.

An autobiographical account of the author’s life on a coffee farm in Kenya. Her struggle to survive in the country and its people. She faces many natural and political challenges to her coffee farm.

The collection of essays discusses issues of ecological values, technology, science, and conservation. There are a variety of authors taking different approaches to these environmental issues.

The author’s account of her study and experiences with gorillas while researching in Africa. She becomes
closely attached to the animals and challenges the
gorilla poachers. Some people and nature’s creatures
coexist peacefully but others see the animals as a
product that can be sold on the black market.

Gore, Senator Al. *Earth in the Balance: Ecology and the
The book explores the critical state of the environment
today. It provides a plan for protecting and reviving
the environment. It is an emotional plea to people to
respect the environment.

Henley, Don and Dave Marsh, eds. *Heaven is Under Our Feet.*
The editors collected short essays from famous people
about their personal experiences and concerns about the
state of the environment today. The editors have
published the book to raise money to protect Walden
Pond from commercial developers.

The translated version of the reenactment of the
Norwegians crossing the Pacific Ocean to Polynesia.
The explorers do not have a smooth voyage and are
challenged by the ocean.

The explorers try to correct the misfortunes of their
initial reenactment of the Norwegians first voyage
across the Pacific Ocean. They refuse to allow the power of the ocean to defeat their voyage.

The book discusses the environmental crisis, focusing on such problems as overpopulation, the pollution of water, air, and land, ozone depletion, global warming, and disappearing wildlife. The book does not simply enumerate the multitude of environmental problems in the world but also includes suggestions for ways to improve life in the twenty-first century. It is written for a teenage audience which will inherit the many environmental dilemmas.

The novel chronicles the develop and destruction of the tallgrass prairies in North America. It provides information on how human development and technology have altered the natural prairies.

The novel follows the chronological development of the Mississippi River. It addresses the ways humans have attempted to alter and control the river as it cuts through North America.

The novel discusses humankind's influence on nature especially looking into the greenhouse effect. It also urges environmental protection action immediately.


The essays describe conservation versus development in wilderness area in the U.S. The author attempts to show both sides of the controversial decisions.


A medical doctor's essays which appeared in the New England Journal of Medicine are printed together. They touch on the ethics of biology and medical philosophy.


The collection of Thoreau's writing include his experiences living in the natural world. He has many insights about himself and people while spending his days in a simple cabin in the woods.
Poetry

Purpose:
The poem will show how people describe their feelings about nature in poetic form.

Goals:
The students will read a poem describing nature. The students will discuss the author’s choice of images.

Procedure:
The students will read the poem, "And My Heart Soars" by Chief Dan George from Voices on the Wind: Poems for All Seasons selected by David Booth.

And My Heart Soars

The beauty of the trees,
The softness of the air,
The fragrance of the grass,  
speaks to me.

The summit of the mountain,  
The thunder of the sky,  
The rhythm of the sea,  
    speaks to me.

The faintness of the stars,  
The freshness of the morning,  
The dew drop on the flower,  
    speaks to me.

The strength of fire,  
The taste of salmon,  
The trail of the sun,  
And the life that never goes away,  
    They speak to me.

And my heart soars.

Chief Dan George

Following the reading, the students would discuss their impressions and observations about the poem. They would be free to make their own interpretations based on the information in the text.
Further Reading in Poetry

A collection of haiku about nature illustrated with two related color photographs. Provides a good example of creating haiku.

An anthology of poems celebrating the sights and sounds of the four season. A good variety of authors and appropriate for young children.

The book includes historical and critical writings about 20th century American poetry.

A poem for each month by different authors. Good illustrations accompany each poem.

Provides a good selection of Frost’s poetry with illustrations. The poems celebrate the natural and spiritual worlds of the poet from rural New England.

A good anthology of nature poems grouped in such categories as "The Grass is Green," "He Praises the Trees," and "Bird-world, Leaf-life." Appropriate for young children.


This book provides history and criticism of 19th and 20th century English poetry, especially focusing on nature poetry. A good compilation of critical responses to nature poetry.


A collection of poems celebrating the natural world around us. Appropriate for young children.


Many haiku poems praising the joys of nature. Includes a great explanation of haiku.


The collection includes poems about animals, day and night, seasons, and woodland scenes. Appropriate for young children.
The collection of poems reflects the changes in the land, plants, and animals of the Shawangunk Mountains throughout the year. The poetry would be appropriate for young children.

The book includes a brief biographical sketch of William Wordsworth followed by a collection of his poetry. Many of his poems celebrate and describe the natural world and some include his personal relationship with the beauty of the natural world.

The collection includes criticism and interpretation of the nature poetry of the poets in the title. It provides an overall look at 20th century American poetry.

A collection of poems about nature and wildlife, spanning all the seasons of the year.

A good anthology of poems, each accompanied by a color photograph, divided into four categories: "Creatures Small," "Weathers and Seasons," "Colours," and "Sea and Shore." Appropriate for young children.


A Holocaust survivor recounts her liberation from a Nazi concentration camp, search for surviving family members, and long and difficult ordeal of trying to immigrate with her husband and two children to America. Other books on the author's struggle are *The Cage* and *The Holocaust Lady*.


The illustrated poem describes a mysterious animal that drinks up all the sound and leaves the earth frozen and cold when it dies. Then a hidden cricket ushers in the return of spring and life.


A good anthology of nature poems by English and American poets. Appropriate for young children.


A collection of poems about Native American experiences including some experiences and beliefs about the natural world.
Movie/Song

Purpose:
The song praises the world and this could help students realize what parts of the world they admire. The song juxtaposed in the movie scene from Good Morning, Vietnam, will show the irony of our world.

Goals:
The students will listen to a song that celebrates the world.
The students will use their responses to the song when they watch the movie scene using the song.
The students will discuss the destruction of the world.

Procedure:
The song "What a Wonderful World" by Louis B. Armstrong is a song in praise of the beauty of the world and its people. The simple lyrics are supported by the light melody line. The song is printed below:

I see trees of green, red roses, too.
I see them bloom, from me and you.
And I think to myself,
What a wonderful world.

I see skies of blue, clouds of white;
The bright blessed day, the dark say goodnight;
And I think to myself,
What a wonderful world.

The colors of the rainbow, so pretty in the sky,
Are also on the faces, of people going by;
I see friends shaking hands, say how do you do.
They’re really saying I love you.

I hear babies cry, I watch them grow;
They like much more, than I’ll ever know.
And I think to myself,
What a wonderful world.

Yes, I think to myself,
What a wonderful world.
Oh, yeah . . .

1. Describe your feelings as you listen to the song?
2. Do any images come to mind when you hear certain phrases?
3. Do you like the song?
4. What message might Armstrong be conveying to his listeners?
5. Do people think the world is "wonderful" today?
6. How would you describe the world?
7. Are the lyrics poetic?
Following "What a Wonderful World" and discussion using the above questions, I would then turn to the movie "Good Morning, Vietnam." This movie about a radio disc jockey for the Armed Forces Radio in Vietnam during the Vietnam War. There is a scene in the movie that uses the Armstrong song, "What a Wonderful World," as the background music.

The students would then watch the scene of the movie that includes the song. I would just open the class to general discussion following the movie scene. The scene does not show "wonderful" nature scenes, instead it portrays military conditions, bombings, displaced people, and destruction.
Additional Movies

The following list includes movies that address the people and the environment.

- The Bear
- The Call of the Wild
- Country
- The Emerald Forest
- The Gods Must Be Crazy
- Good Morning, Vietnam
- Gorillas in the Mist
- The Medicine Man
- The Mission
- Mosquito Coast
- Never Cry Wolf
- Out of Africa
- A River Runs Through It
- The River
- Silent Running
- Silkwood
- White Fang
Magazine Article

Purpose:
The Paul Rauber article, "The Last Refuge," in Sierra provides the perspective of the writer as he tours the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge (ANWR). The reader sees the ANWR's sights, wildlife, and challenges. It provides a glimpse into the "last fully intact arctic ecosystem in the United States" (Rauber 37). The article combines the author's opinion along with the political issues surrounding the potential oil exploration and drilling in the refuge.

Goals:
The students will read the an article in an environmental magazine and learn about a current environmental issue.
The students will be exposed to opinion writing and will discuss the ways to detect author bias and opinions versus the factual information in the article.

Procedure:
The students would read the Sierra article by Paul Rauber called "The Last Refuge" printed in the January/February 1992 issue. They would also receive a sheet with questions to guide their response to the article. After the students write answers to the questions, the class will discuss their ideas and reactions to the article.

Potential questions:
1. Before you read the article write down your impressions of the title and subtitle. What are your predictions about the subject of the article?
2. Do you like the author's style and structure of the article?
3. When did you feel impatient, amused, frustrated, irritated, angry, disbelieving, or moved, and why did you feel that way? Please use specific references to text.
4. Is there anything you doubt about the ANWR situation? Do you want to know more about any aspect or the current status of ANWR?
Additional Magazines

The following list are other magazines that address environmental issues.

American Forests
The Conservationist
International Wildlife
Iowa Conservationist
National Parks
National Wildlife
Nature Conservancy
Outdoor Living
Sierra
Wilderness
Fiction

Purpose:
The Gary Paulsen novel, Hatchet, places a teenage boy in the wilderness with minimal supplies for over fifty days. The survival story includes the boy’s struggle with adapting to living alone in the wilderness. He faces the challenges of nature and learns about himself and the environment. The students will read this book and personal react to their reading through a response journal. They will discuss the role this boy has with nature.

Goals:
The students will read a contemporary young adult novel.
They will write responses to questions about the novel that address the role of nature with the boy’s survival.
The students will be asked to respond personally to the story of the teenage boy stranded in the wilderness.

Procedure:
The students will be given a packet of questions asking the students to create a response journal with their answers to the questions along with their personal comments and questions. The students will have some time to read in class but they will also need to spend some of their own time reading outside of class. Some of my sample questions are adapted from Response Journals by Les Parsons.
Sample questions:
1. As you read today, what feelings did you experience in response to events or characters, and why do you think you responded this way?
2. What surprised you about the section you read today? How do you hope the story will unfold?
3. What questions do you hope to have answered next day as you read more of this story?
4. Do you think you could be as successful at surviving as Brian is in the wilderness?
5. Have you ever camped or hiked in a wilderness area(s)? What were the circumstances of your experience(s)?
Short Story Segment

Purpose:
Through the lesson with Jack London's "To Build A Fire," the students will interact with literature on a personal level.
The students will use the literature to gain more information about the role of people in the environment.
The class will have small group and whole class discussion about the short story.

Goals:
The discussion will demonstrate that one text may be interpreted in different ways.
They will read a story by an American author.
The students will evaluate the story by finding one word that represents the main idea of the work.
The students will be personally involved in interpreting the actions of the main character.

Procedure:
"To Build A Fire"
(The students read the story before this class period.)
1. On a piece of paper, brainstorm words that describe the short story. (three minutes)
2. Now, choose one word which best describes the short story and write down at least three reasons why this is the best word. Refer to the story for support. (five minutes)
3. Break into groups of four and share the "best" words and explain why you chose your word. Evaluate the other students' reasoning for their words. (ten minutes)
4. Return to the large group and explain the words chosen by the five groups. (twenty-thirty minutes)
   -Why are there different words?
   -Is there textual support for all of the words?
Additional discussion ideas:
How does the title relate to the ideas in London's story?
How did you feel at the end of the story? When did you know the man was going to die?
Did nature conquer man?
Further Reading in Fiction


Chronicles the events and changes in a young boy’s life and in his environment, from babyhood to grownup, through wordless scenes observed from the window of his room. Open for student interpretation of the changes outside of the window.


The many different animals that live in a great kapok tree in the Brazilian rain forest try to convince a man with an ax of the importance of not cutting down their home.


An environmental history of the Nashua River, from its discovery by Indians through the polluting years of the Industrial Revolution to the ambitious clean-up that revitalized it. Appropriate for very young children.


The struggle between human morality in the freedom of the Belgian Congo. Formation or disintegration of values including those related to the preservation of wildlife and the natural order of the wilderness.
A young white adventurer befriends a Native American and they face the challenges of frontier exploration. The young explorer must decide to follow the values of the land or the settlements.

The continuing adventures of the young explorer in *The Deerslayer*. He defends the laws of the white settlement with the cunning of natural laws. The conflict between different Native American tribes and the white settlements.

The novel revolves around members of a Native American tribe who try to keep their land from being sold for logging. The destruction of the land and Native American people by modern development.

*The Bear* is the tale of a young boy’s coming of age story. He must learn the meaning of hunting: pride, courage, and humility. He learns this despite the destruction of the wilderness.
The story of a mountain man who clashes with nature. It describes the strengths and weaknesses of the men who wandered the wilderness in the last years before civilization destroyed it.

The story of young boys stranded on a deserted island. The boys create their own society as they try to survive on the limited resources and abilities of the boys. A struggle for control and the formation of society.

The *Call of the Wild* describes the struggle of a sled dog in the Alaskan frontier during the Gold Rush days. The dog hears the call to the wild and leaves behind the modern world's demands. The short stories deal with humans struggle with the harsh realities of the Alaskan weather and wilderness.

The story of a young gold rusher who finds his niche in the Alaskan frontier with his dog, White Fang. He values the natural world over the modern world.
The story discusses the family relationship between a father and his two sons. The river and flyfishing is a way that the three of them are able to connect although their lives take them in different directions.

A teenage girl despondent over the death of her beloved younger sister runs away from her overprotective and oppressive family. She goes to a remote island where she is the only human inhabitant. She learns to survive when her supplies deplete and she delves into her own psychological beliefs. She gains self-awareness and respect.

A research biologist studies the animals in a remote arctic area of Alaska. He studies wolf behavior specifically and comes to have a deep respect for the law of nature and does not believe humans have the right to interfere with the natural order of the environment.

A young native islander is the sole survivor of a raid on her village. Karana’s quiet courage, her Indian
self-reliance and acceptance of fate help her survive on the island alone. She transforms an ordeal into an uplifting experience.

---. The Serpent Never Sleeps: A Novel of Jamestown and Pocahontas. 227p. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1987. In the early 17th century, Serena Lynn, determined to be with the man she has loved since childhood, travels to the New World and comes to know the hardships of colonial life and the extraordinary Princess Pocahontas.


---. The River. 132p. New York: Delacorte Press, 1991. The success of surviving alone, the protagonist of Hatchet, returns to a similar experience to help scientists learn more about the psychology of survival. The boy again faces many natural challenges.

Provensen, Alice. Shaker Lane. 32p. New York: Viking Kestrel, 1987. When the town decides to build a reservoir on their land, the residents of Shaker Lane decide to move away rather than fight to keep their homes. Appropriate for very young children.

A 12 year-old boy returns from his school in Cairo to find his village torn by feud and fear. A corrupt official has ordered reduced opportunity to irrigate their field and the life of the village is threatened by the denial of water. A rebellion based on the need for water to feed the crops.


A simple story of simple people living in the scrub regions near the St. John River in Florida. The period is the decades after the Civil War. It is a book about a world in which the important happenings are part of a boy's life and have to be understood by him. The boy raises a young deer but realizes nature can not be tamed by humans all the time.


A white boy is kidnapped by a Native American tribe at a young age and assimilates the tribal culture but is brought back to his white family. The internal struggle between the modern world and the Native American tribal culture. The boy must decide where he fits in the world.

A Suquamish Indian chief describes his people’s respect and love for the earth and concern for its destruction. Appropriate for very young children.


When the freighter on which they are traveling is torpedoed by a German submarine during World War II, an adolescent white boy, blinded by a blow on the head, and an old black man are stranded on a tiny Caribbean island where the boy acquires a new kind of vision, courage, and love from his old companion.


The story of a family that moves to the Brazilian coast and attempts to survive in the environment.


The conflict between Native Americans and farmers on reservation land. An attempt to control pesticide contamination of land and to regain respect and tribal pride pits two friends against each other.


A group of young women are shipwrecked on an island with a semi-conscious man. Each girl reacts differently to her fate on the deserted island. The survival instincts and ideas are unique. The
psychological transformations of the girls are intriguing and brutal.


Relates Sally Jane's experience of changing times in rural America, as she lives through the drowning of the Swift River towns in western Massachusetts to form the Quabbin Reservoir.
Methodological Resources


Provides Atwell’s structure for collaborative learning in reading and writing in the English classroom. It has information of how adolescents themselves learn, what they believe and value, and how people can learn with them and about them.


Gives a framework for assessment and examples for assessing material in the English classroom.


A discussion on teenage stress, its sources, and its aftermath. It provides suggestions for helping teenagers cope with societal stress placed on today’s teenagers.


A discussion of the stress of young adolescents. Addresses the social pressures of hurrying the
education of the young in the hopes of creating "geniuses."

Addresses the social idea of the superkid. Urges parents to stop early education that appears to have few positive educational benefits but many negative factors.

The collection of articles provides an update of Rosenblatt's theory of transaction with literature.

The book provides reasons for using response journals with literature, how to structure response journals, and how to respond to the journals.

The report describes the study and teaching of literature. Rosenblatt believes students need to transact personally with the reading for it to remain meaningful and pleasurable.