

His head bent down, he began to walk, following the crescent-shaped line of dunes that surrounded the village like a rampart and towered above it. He paid almost no attention to the distant landscape. An entomologist must concentrate his whole attention within a radius of about three yards around his feet. And it is one of the fundamental rules that he should not have the sun at his back. If the sun should get behind him, he would frighten the insects with his own shadow. As a result; a collector's forehead and nose are always sunburned.

— *Woman in the Dunes* Kōbō Abe

ASSIGNMENT #2

FALL 1, 2023

TOPICS IN LITERATURE

DUE: Thursday, October 12th, 11:59 PM

WORTH: 15% of Course Grade

**YOU MUST SUBMIT ASSIGNMENT #1 BEFORE YOU CAN SUBMIT ASSIGNMENT #2.
(IF YOU HAVE NOT SUBMITTED ASSIGNMENT #1, THEN YOU CANNOT SUBMIT
ASSIGNMENT #2.)**

For your first assignment, you were asked to practice a version of the behavior that is described in the above quotation. I asked you to go outside and concentrate *your* whole attention within a radius of about three yards around *your* feet.

For your **second assignment**, I'm asking you to complete the following **five parts**:

PART ONE /5:

- 1) **Implement the changes that I suggested on Assignment #1.** (For some of you, this may mean re-doing the assignment. In other words, for some of you, I suggest that you pick any location—so long as the location is outside—and you spend **at least ten minutes** studying that area (that area that is about three yards around your feet) and making field notes.)
- 2) **Prioritize specificity and details.** Some of you may want to return to your location and try to watch, listen, and smell *again*. (Record your sensory experiences.) Fill in the details to try and establish *the sharpest, clearest sensory world* for the reader. Remember, as I said in the instructions for Assignment #1: it is through a vivid description of our world that we convince the reader that the setting is real (even if the world is fictional).
- 3) **Think about organization.** How will you order your field notes to make them the most coherent? Where will you include paragraph breaks? (You might want to watch the Week 3 video covering field notes!)

PART TWO /5:

- 4) Focus on one sentence from Assignment #1 and rewrite that sentence in three different ways:

Sentence you choose from Assignment #1: _____

Revision #1: _____

Revision #2: _____

Revision #3: _____

Which of the sentences above do you like best? Why? (Two- to three-sentence response.)

What can you learn from studying a sentence so closely? How does studying a sentence so closely relate to studying your world so closely (in other words, how does it relate to the task of concentrating your whole attention within a radius of about three yards around *your* feet)? (Two- to three-sentence response.)

PART THREE /3

- 5) **Answer the following questions (in two to three sentences each):**

- A) What was the experience of studying the natural world in such close detail like for you?
- B) Did you learn about writing or reading from this experience? If so, how? What did you learn? If not, why not?
- C) Is anything sacrificed by studying the natural world so closely? In other words, does our perspective of the environment suffer in any way when we concentrate our “whole attention within a radius of about three yards around [our] feet?”
- D) Speaking of perspective, how do you think the protagonist (the missing man) of *Woman in the Dunes* sees the world? Is his perspective of the world, his environment, problematic? If yes, why? If not, why not?

E) How can close awareness of the natural environment benefit you as a student, as a citizen, as a professional, and / or as a writer?

F) Is there anything else about the experience of taking field notes that you would like to share?

PART FOUR /2

Include a photo (image) of the outdoor area that you focused on (will focus on). (It is okay if the image does not totally match your description! The world is not static! Things change!)

PART FIVE — COMPLETE THE SURVEY BELOW (Please note: your participation in the survey is voluntary. There is no penalty if you choose not to participate.)

Complete the survey below!

<https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSdqIlehcvSD-hfy5nzaZhlGnK99cytZLWx7T-rsMqV5GOAPow/viewform>

HOW TO SUBMIT:

+ Please submit as a **Google doc or Word doc. IF YOU SUBMIT AS A GOOGLE DOC, PLEASE ALLOW ME TO EDIT THE DOCUMENT. GIVE ME PERMISSION.**

Either upload the assignment to Blackboard by midnight Thursday, October 12th OR email me a copy (zachary.davidson@guttman.cuny.edu).

What are field notes?

Well, please check out this link from USC for some helpful tips on how to write field notes and watch the video from Week 3 in which I go over field notes!

<https://libguides.usc.edu/writingguide/assignments/fieldnotes>

Due date: Midnight Thursday, October 12th

Worth: 15% of course grade

If you have any questions, please let me know! Good luck!