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Connecting to Place: A City as Text™ Assignment Sequence

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Educators need to ‘begin again,’ to put aside old assumptions and look at themselves and their world with new eyes. They need to achieve the freedom to redefine civic opportunities and responsibilities. City as Text provides a preparation, format, and philosophy for accomplishing this exciting and formidable task.

—Gladys Palma de Schrynemakers, 2014

INTRODUCTION

If, as Gladys Palma de Schrynemakers asserts, City as Text™ (CAT) has the power to “redefine civic opportunities and responsibilities” (99), then the heart of that work lies in CAT pedagogy’s carefully crafted link between site-specific observations and written reflections. Schrynemakers goes on to claim that civic engagement “can be reached if students are encouraged to become active learners and are immersed in an environment where they reflect on their experiences and analyze who they have become as a result of

understanding the lives they live” (95). CAT’s sequence of assignments, which are used in honors semesters, winterims, and Faculty Institutes, does just this: sending students into the local environment as explorers, followed by prompted written reflections on those experiences (Braid). The three-assignment sequence includes 1) The Walkabout and Initial Impressions Writing Assignment; 2) The Exploration and Observation Essay Assignment; and 3) The Extended Exploration and Turning Point Essay Assignment. Each pair, along with the sequence as a whole, builds students’ ability to conduct site-specific observations that increase their understanding of the places in which they find themselves as well as, in Schrynemakers’s words, “the lives they live” (95).

While pairing and sequencing create the power in CAT pedagogy, the written reflections provide students the richest opportunity to deepen and transform their relationship to their surroundings. City as Text founder Bernice Braid writes:

The power of raw experience, caught and conveyed in writing almost simultaneous with an experience, is that authenticity becomes a standard of judgment. Students must invent a vocabulary to express what they have observed, felt, and now see about situated knowledge. They also have a record available for review and comparison as they engage further with a new environment. The recursiveness of the exercise has an impact on consciousness because the chain of experiences recorded reveals nuanced shifts in viewpoint occurring through time. (11)

Putting it another way, honors semester alumnus John Major suggests that CAT “writing is premised on the notion that the stories themselves are artifacts through which students engage in civic conversation. The stories are the medium through which they claim their voice” (16).

The City as Text sequence of local assignments provides key strategies for each site-based exploration and the accompanying written reflection that can be used in any setting, from new student orientation programs to full-semester honors courses. While the

sequence grounds students in site-based learning strategies critical to CAT—including Mapping, Listening, Observing, and Reflecting (Machonis)—a new element entitled “Personal Connection to Place” is introduced in the written assignments. This prompt aims to deepen students’ investment in local spaces by inviting them to write about aspects of their explorations that captured their attention and that they want to know more about, perhaps research in greater depth. Samples of all these assignments provide models for faculty who want to integrate City as Text into their own courses and programming.

THE ASSIGNMENTS

Assignment #1— Walkabout and Initial Impressions Writing Assignment

The Walkabout

The first City as Text assignment is a Walkabout of the college or university campus followed by an Initial Impressions writing assignment. The focus on the college campus is purposeful in that it asks students to look intentionally at spaces they routinely walk through and live in. As a shared community, the college or university is a distinct place, and inviting students to view it as such is a first step in their developing understanding of their own space and the complexities within that environment. The Walkabout is completed during class and can take as little as thirty minutes as long as there is time left for a whole group debrief and a review of the written Initial Impressions assignment. As with all CAT explorations, students are sent out in small teams of three or four students to different destinations that, for this assignment, can include specific buildings, green spaces, or parts of larger spaces such as the campus bookstore, eateries, or study spaces. Students are given maps of the campus along with a copy of the Walkabout assignment and the verbal request that they talk with at least one person during their exploration. The campus Walkabout can be especially impactful for new students during their first semester; however,

even upperclassmen inevitably see and interact with their campus in new ways when asked to use CAT strategies of mapping, observing, listening, and reflecting (Machonis). During this first time that students encounter City as Text, they often feel hesitant and unsure about what it means to read a place, especially one with which they are somewhat familiar. The sample assignment below is very detailed in order to guide students in a structured way through this first experience. The subsequent group debriefing is an important part of the Walkabout. Each team should share some of what they observed, introducing others in the class to that location. In this way, a collective mental map begins to develop, divergent perspectives on the same spaces often surface, and student engagement with and understanding of the site increase.

The Initial Impressions Writing Assignment

The Initial Impressions writing assignment is not a formal paper but rather an opportunity for students to begin processing and documenting their observations in writing. The sample assignment includes an invitation to share images from the walkabout as part of the writing assignment, adding another level of reflection and engagement for students who are used to taking photos to document their personal experiences. The emphasis of the Initial Impressions assignment, however, is on the writing rather than the images.

Personal Connection to Place

To encourage students to locate themselves—through their interests—in the spaces they explore, a Personal Connection to Place prompt is included in each writing assignment. When students are asked to observe their campus intentionally, even in an informal way as they do in the Walkabout assignment, they are being asked to see the space differently from their day-to-day trek between buildings. The Personal Connection to Place prompt leads them to observe and reflect but also to put down in writing questions that arose for them during their exploration. This budding

inquisitiveness—this personal awareness that spaces are multidimensional, contain history, reflect values, and encourage feelings—is an initial step toward the civic engagement at the heart of CAT. In their Personal Connection to Place responses, students share questions about their campus that had not occurred to them before they were sent to investigate its spaces. A visit to the chapel, for instance, might lead a student to wonder about the kinds of events hosted there beyond religious services or to investigate whether there is a religious history to the college’s founding. Students become curious about why some spaces are named after certain people, noticing building names and commemorative plaques, which they walked by previously without seeing, and inquisitive about who those people are in relation to the college. Still others want to know more about the history of the buildings or the traffic flow in areas that serve food. Such questions elicit Braid’s “nuanced shifts in viewpoint” (11) as the students newly locate themselves in the campus community and the community in themselves.

Assignment #2— Exploration Assignment and Observation Essay

The Exploration

The Exploration assignment takes place after the Walkabout and moves students beyond the immediate world of the college or university campus to the town in which that institution is located or a nearby area that connects to the community beyond the campus. Although the Exploration assignment follows the same organization of students in small teams of three or four (different from the teams assigned during the Walkabout) who are sent to different parts of the site, the time spent on the exploration is lengthier and more in-depth. Teams can be asked to do the Exploration as homework between classes, spending an afternoon or part of a weekend at the site. If possible, students should get to the site on their own—by foot or public transportation is best—and are again provided with maps of the area through which they will move. When planning the Exploration, sending teams to contrasting parts of the site will

ASSIGNMENT #1

Walkabout Assignment—Campus as Text

In your teams, you have one hour to explore your assigned area on campus (see list of destinations and preassigned teams). You should each take notes and photos of what you see (only take photos of people if you ask permission). Talk to people you encounter in each place. Stay in your group; explore only your assigned area; discuss your findings as you go; point out what you notice/consider important to members of your team. Do not mingle with any of the other small groups should you see them, but do have fun while you explore and learn about what makes your areas work.

As a team, you are to look for patterns (mapping), notice all kinds of details from signage to design (observing), and discover why people go to, go through, or work there (listening). See *City as Text™* described below.

Destinations

Various buildings and green spaces on campus.

General Questions to Consider while You Explore

What is the nature of the building and how does it fit into the campus as a whole? What function does the building, including the space around it, hold in relationship to the buildings around it? To the campus as a whole? What does the building say about Endicott that other buildings may not? Who uses the building? What makes you think so? How is the building organized both inside and outside? Talk to people who are using the space. What are they doing there?

As you walk between each building, including as you leave the Academic Center, use the same attention to detail that you use when exploring your assigned buildings. How do you get between the buildings? Is there only one way? Many? What makes you decide which way to go? How is the space between buildings designed? Do those designs change? How do they work? Not work? Who is using them?

Think about the work we have done this semester around semiotics and ideology (political, gender, socioeconomic class, race and representations). What elements of the campus can you read through one or more of these lenses?

Return to our classroom at the assigned time.

Whole Group Debrief

Each small group will have 3–4 minutes for their report. You must be concise and detailed. Begin your report by telling the group which two spaces your team visited and where they are on campus; share adjectives you would use to describe each area and the details you observed that support your selection of those adjectives; highlight anything unusual observed or heard. Do not say: “We went here, then there.” Instead, describe, categorize, interpret what you observed.

Initial Impressions Writing Assignment

Before midnight on Thursday, in a multi-media format such as a blog, PowerPoint, Prezi, etc., develop and upload your individual answer to the following question: What were your initial impressions of the areas you explored? This is not a formal essay but a compendium of your impressions, questions, and thoughts. There should be text (between 200–250 words) and images (collected during your walkabout). It is appropriate to use first person; be sure the writing is error-free.

Somewhere in the visual essay include a section labeled *Personal Connection to Place* in which you 1) note one thing you observed today that you want to know more about; 2) note one element of the campus you read through the lens of semiotics or ideology; and 3) 2–3 questions you would want to look into if you had more time. Some ways to think about your **personal connection**: Was there a building whose history you became curious about? Did you hear something that you wanted to know more about? Or, consider your academic major as a lens for the campus. How would a nurse, scientist, accountant, engineer, or English major see the places you visited today? This is the first of a series of Personal Connection notes you will make during our City as Text™ unit.

City as Text™ Strategies: Mapping, Observing, Listening, Reflecting

1. **Mapping:** You will want to be able to construct, during and after your explorations, the primary kinds of buildings, points of interest, centers of activity, and transportation routes (by foot, vehicle, or other means). You will want to look for patterns of housing, traffic flow, and social activity that may not be apparent on any traditional map. Where do people go, how do they get there, and what do they do when they get there?

2. **Observing:** You will want to look carefully for the unexpected as well as the expected, for the familiar as well as the new. You will want to notice details of architecture, landscaping, social gathering, clothing, possessions, decoration, signage, and advertising.
3. **Listening:** You will want to talk to as many people as you can and to find out from them what matters to them in their daily lives, what they need, what they enjoy, what bothers them, and what they appreciate. Strike up conversations everywhere you go. Ask about such matters as how expensive it is to live there (dropping by a real estate agency could be enlightening), where to find a cheap meal (or a good one or an expensive one), what the local politics are (try to find a local newspaper), and what the history of the place is, what the population is like (age, race, class, profession), what people do to have a good time. In other words, imagine that you are moving to that location and try to find out everything you would need to learn to flourish there.
4. **Reflecting:** Throughout your explorations, keep in mind that the people you meet, the buildings in which they live and work, the forms of their recreation, their modes of transportation—everything that they are and do—are important components of the environment. They are part of an ecological niche. You want to discover their particular roles in this ecology: how they use it, contribute to it, damage or improve it, and change it. You want to discover not only how but why they do what they do. Do not settle for easy answers. Do not assume you know the answers without doing serious research. Like all good researchers, make sure you are conscious of your own biases and that you investigate them as thoroughly as you investigate the culture you are studying.

From: Machonis, Peter A., editor. *Shatter the Glassy Stare: Implementing Experiential Learning in Higher Education*. National Collegiate Honors Council, 2008. NCHC Monograph Series.

help surface contrasts within the town or location being explored, as noted in the sample below by the two different streets that teams explored—Cabot and Rantoul—in the town of Beverly, MA.

To keep teams from running into each other in smaller sites, they can be directed to enter the site at different points and head in different directions. Once again, students are asked to talk to at least one person: a shop owner, for instance, or someone on the street. No whole group debrief in the sample Exploration assignment is included here, primarily because of the course structure in which the assignment was completed. When possible, however, large group reports deepen collective understanding of the place explored and increase dialogue and interpretation, including disparate perspectives on the site. Unlike the Walkabout assignment's open-ended nature, the Exploration assignment has specific prompts, including one that asks students to look for examples of the private use of public space. This prompt also invites students to consider the interconnectedness of place and people, of public and private, of individual and community, all key to developing their sense of themselves not just as individuals but as members of a larger community. Finally, brief readings are included that should be completed as pre-work. These are not lengthy—a short history of the town, perhaps, or a recent article about changes or challenges the community is facing—and begin to provide some context for what the teams might observe during exploration, grounding them in the broader context of the town that may inform or challenge their own perceptions.

The Observation Essay

This essay is more formal than the Initial Impressions writing assignment. Rather than students sharing whatever they want about their exploration as they did in the Initial Impressions assignment, here students are asked to unpack a scene they encountered during their exploration. While students can write the essay in whatever format they wish, their focus on the scene should address the prompts to describe, interpret, analyze, and reflect listed in Part 1. In Part 2, students capture and reflect on the private use of public

space and consider what that observation tells them about the site. Finally, they are asked to construct a second Personal Connection to Place.

Personal Connection to Place

The second time students complete this Personal Connection to Place prompt they have also engaged in a more in-depth observation and writing reflection about their explorations. In addition, they have completed one Personal Connection to Place reflection in the Initial Impressions writing assignment and are familiar with the prompt. This second reflection often reveals students' increased awareness of self in relation to, or as part of, the larger community. For instance, in exploring the town in which their college is located, students may notice that some churches display bright rainbow flags signifying that they are LGBTQ friendly while others do not, leading them to wonder about diverse forms of worship in the community and who attends which services. Students may observe gentrification in parts of the downtown area and want to learn more about how community members' feel about these changes, homing in on tensions between history and change. Still others may notice disparities in the size and repair of homes and buildings in different sections of the town and wonder about disparities in crime, income, homelessness, and services among those sections. These areas of inquiry register a deepening understanding of the town as a complex community serving diverse populations that may or may not be at odds with one another. Such awareness stands in stark contrast to how students often view their college town as a series of restaurants, coffee shops, and other amenities that are transactional places where goods are sold and purchased.

Exploration assignments can be repeated in different locations multiple times. Whereas the Walkabout/Initial Impressions assignment and the Extended Exploration/Turning Point assignment act as bookends to the assignment sequence, the Exploration/Observation Essay assignment is a useful tool for creating a longer CAT experience within, for instance, a semester-long course or an international experience.

ASSIGNMENT #2

Exploration Assignment—The Town of Beverly as Text

The purpose of your Beverly exploration is twofold: 1) To explore the town of Beverly and 2) To practice “reading” places.

The Exploration

Downtown Beverly has two main streets that parallel one another: Cabot Street and Rantoul Street. For this outing, your team will select a day/time to head to downtown Beverly to explore both of these streets. The entire walk-about should take you approximately an hour. You should be walking slowly, observing, listening, talking to people.

Destinations

Cabot and Rantoul Streets, Beverly, MA

Before You Start

For the assignment, you will want to take photos of buildings, signs, and public spaces you see along Cabot and Rantoul Streets. The photos should capture aspects of downtown Beverly that are especially interesting to you and your group. However, please do not take identifiable photos of ANYONE during this exploration, especially children. Also, do not record ANYONE during your exploration, including during conversations with people you encounter during the walkabout. Instead, record your thoughts, impressions, summaries of what people say or do.

Questions to Consider during Your Exploration of Downtown Beverly

As you walk the length of both streets (Cabot and Rantoul), observe, consider, and take note of the following:

1. What kinds of buildings do you see? Are they businesses or residences? Are they old or new? Are there any buildings that seem to be especially important, for instance historic landmarks or high traffic areas? How do you know these are important places?
2. What kinds of spaces do you see? Are there spaces intended for public use (e.g., parks, benches)? What are they? How are these being used? Are any spaces designated as private? How do you know? Do you observe any people making private use of public space? How do they do this?
3. What are the people on your street doing? Stand in one place and observe for a few minutes. What do you learn?

4. Talk to at least one person to learn more about the downtown area in general and the street you are on in particular. Why do people come to this street? Who lives and works here? What role does the street play in the town?
5. Go into at least one store. What kind of store is it? What does it sell? Who seems to be shopping there? Note one unique thing you observe about the store.

Readings

Prior to class time be sure to read the following short articles about Beverly:

- Cahill, S. (2002). History of Downtown Beverly. *Primary Research*. Retrieved from <<http://www.primaryresearch.org/PRTHB/Neighborhoods/Downtown/index.php>>
- Conway, M. (2004). A study of the settlement of the city of Beverly from 1628 to 1920. *Primary Research*. Retrieved from <<http://www.primaryresearch.org/PRTHB/Neighborhoods/Downtown/index.php>>

Observation Essay

This essay has three parts and should take between 3–4 pages to complete.

Part 1: Follow the prompts below to analyze and reflect on a specific scene from your Exploration.

Description—Describe a scene or interaction that caught your attention (some interaction or small group event should be useful here) to focus your discussion and provide an “exemplary text” to interpret and analyze. This part is a literal recording, in brief, of what the event is, who took part in it (e.g., age, gender, possible relation of participants, setting), and where and when it occurred. This portion is ‘lab notes’ of a sort.

Interpretation—Interpret the scene: what do you think is happening here? How might it illustrate your thoughts about economics, recreation, or some other aspect of life in a social setting? This interpretation should aim at explaining the event to convey how it illustrates the topic for which you have chosen to record it.

Analysis—Analyze an interaction. Given the details you have provided, see which of them supports your interpretation and way of seeing the event or interaction. You are considering, in this segment, “what makes you think so,” which means you need to pinpoint elements of the whole that persuaded you of your insights and impressions while you were observing the incident.

Reflection—Think about your part in the scene: you were a bystander, looking at the interaction. Possibly you actually took part in it. How did you see yourself at that moment? Is this event like others you have experienced? If different, how so? Would you behave differently were you in a similar scene another time?

Note: Many explorers weave responses to Analysis and Reflection together in their writing. The breakdown is not meant to be a formula, only to clarify what the observation needs to include to present diverse elements of a whole scene and to get at how your own lens works when you are observing.

Part 2: Reflect on what you learned about the private use of public space in Beverly during your exploration. Describe one example you encountered of how people in Beverly use public spaces. Interpret what that example tells you about the city of Beverly and the ways in which places are adopted or adapted for personal use.

Part 3: In a final paragraph labeled *Personal Connection to Place*, make a note about two things you observed in your Beverly as Text exploration that you want to know more about, and develop 2–3 questions that you would want to pursue if you had more time. Some ways to think about your personal connection: Was there a building whose history you became curious about? Did you hear something that you wanted to know more about? Or, consider your academic major as a lens for the campus. How would a nurse, scientist, accountant, engineer, or English major see the places you visited today?

Assignment #3— Extended Exploration Assignment and Turning Point Essay

The Extended Exploration

The Extended Exploration employs the same strategies as the Exploration assignment with more time spent at the site and more focused questions to consider. Here again, it is useful to send small teams of students (these teams should be different from the ones in the previous explorations whenever possible) to differing locations, allowing the contrasts to reveal themselves for consideration. The sample assignment below illustrates how teams can visit the same (and even multiple) areas of a site without overlapping at the same place at the same time. In this Extended Exploration, students spend at least ten minutes doing a focused observation, the purpose of which is to slow their observations down and give them time and space to look deeply at some aspect of the place they are exploring. In addition, they complete another study of the private use of public space (providing a contrast with the preceding one they did) and are asked to do some pre-reading about the site, again at a general level to gain some context for their own observations.

Turning Point Essay

The Turning Point essay is a critical element of the CAT assignment sequence in that it asks students to identify a moment that shifted their understanding. As Braid writes:

In the writing sequence for CAT, the pivotal role of Turning Point essays is their power to furnish instrumentality to explorers engaged in making sense of the radically new, unfiltered information that field experiences plunge them into. Recording their own evolution over time, identifying which specific event was a catalyst for what they see as a change in their ways of knowing . . . is, in Clifford Geertz's phrase, "eye-opening" . . . (10–11)

Braid goes on to quote Geertz as he explains what he means by "eye-opening":

it is from the far more difficult achievement of seeing ourselves amongst others, as a local example of the forms human life has locally taken, a case among cases, a world among worlds, that the largeness of mind, without which objectivity is self-congratulation and tolerance is a sham, comes. (qtd. in Braid 11)

The Turning Point essay challenges students to reflect on their cognitive shifts, the moment or moments during their explorations that moved them to see not just themselves but themselves “amongst others,” thus transforming their worldview from individual to community, from self to others. Perhaps more importantly, by identifying and recording that shift—for some the first shift of its kind in their personal experience—they capture a moment of personal growth that will stay with them and possibly shape their choice of majors and career. One student described her growth as “exercising a muscle” that she did not know she had but that she now uses daily.

Personal Connection to Place

The final Personal Connection to Place can be linked to research projects that have arisen from students’ explorations and identification of authentic areas of interest they want to research in more depth. Having engaged with the Personal Connection to Place prompt three times (more if the Exploration assignment is repeated), they have now built a running list of what they encountered during their explorations that piqued their interest and curiosity. While one objective of the Personal Connection to Place prompt is to deepen students’ connections among themselves and the places they explore, thereby encouraging them to see themselves as “amongst others,” the prompt has a secondary outcome as well: through a scaffolding process, the prompt helps students identify not just personal but scholarly interests that enhance their learning and hone their curiosity about the world around them. The sample assignment asks students to do preliminary research on one of their personal interests, but the assignment could easily be developed into a full-scale culminating research project.

ASSIGNMENT #3

Extended Observation: The Town of Salem as Text*Explore*

Meet at the Bewitched Statue at 3:30 p.m. Your mission during our hour and 15 minute walkabout is to experience—through observation and interaction—Salem-as-Text. You will be assigned 3 different destinations to explore. Starting with the first destination assigned to your group, follow the prompts below, taking notes on each prompt in your notebook or on your phone. Take photos to document your observations. This is meant to be an in-depth exploration, so spend a good amount of time in each area before moving on. You should go into shops; read plaques at public places; examine storefronts, restaurants, and museum windows; and slowly absorb your surroundings. Follow the focus questions listed below during your exploration of each site.

Locations

You have just over an hour to visit your three locations. If you are assigned to a museum, you do not have to go in if there is a fee. However, take some time to read about the museum and observe how the space around the museum is being used.

Group 1:

- Old Burying Point Cemetery
- Salem Maritime Historic District
- Salem Common

Group 2:

- Witch Dungeon Museum
- Downtown District
- Pickering Wharf

Group 3:

- Salem Common
- Pickering Wharf
- Downtown District

Group 4:

- Pickering Wharf
- Old Burying Point Cemetery
- Downtown District

Group 5:

- Downtown District
- Derby Square
- Salem Maritime Historic District

Exploration

Please follow these prompts for each of your destinations and in your general exploration of Salem:

GENERAL IMPRESSIONS:

1. Scan your area carefully to gather your first impressions. What do you notice? What kinds of buildings do you see? Are there businesses? If so, what types? What do the buildings look like? Are they old or new? What is it about the buildings that gives you this information? Stop at real estate agencies and examine what's available to rent or purchase. You might go inside and inquire as though you wanted to move in to find out what the official price range might be. Is there much turnover? How would you describe the state of the buildings? What sort of real estate do they occupy (land, no land, groomed, overgrown)? Is there evidence of construction? Renovation?
2. On the streets, you will be looking for indices of how this area 'works' for those who live and work in it: What services are readily available? Who seems to live here (group, economic level, dominant age range)? Are there people on the streets? What are they doing? Does the space feel busy? Quiet? Full? Empty? Are there tourists or locals? How do you know?
3. Look for schools, libraries, shopping areas—all kinds of services residents need in their neighborhood. Where do people shop for food? If you locate a food store, stop in and consider what's being sold, at what price range. What other kinds of services are visible? Do answers to these questions seem to support your initial impression about who lives here?

FOCUSED OBSERVATION:

Take a few minutes (10 minutes, perhaps) to do a more focused observation on a single spot. What do you notice about the people? How do they interact? Use the space? Be specific.

PUBLIC USE OF PRIVATE SPACE:

What kinds of spaces do you see? Are there spaces intended for public use (e.g., parks, benches)? How are these being used? Do you observe any evidence of public space being used privately?

Readings

Prior to your extended exploration, be sure to read the following short articles about Salem:

- Adams, G. (2003). The specter of Salem in American culture. *OAH Magazine of History*. via Canvas
- Benham, B. (2003 October). The Salem witch project. *Travel and Leisure*. Retrieved from <<https://www.travelandleisure.com/articles/the-salem-witch-project>>
- Greenway, H.D.S. (2005 July). The city bewitched into kitsch. *The Boston Globe*. Retrieved from <http://archive.boston.com/news/globe/editorial_opinion/oped/articles/2005/07/01/a_city_bewitched_into_kitsch>

Turning Point Essay

The Turning Point essay has two parts and should take between 5–6 pages to complete.

Part 1: City as Text™ Reflection—The first part of this essay is a continuation of the reflective writing you have done for the Campus as Text and Beverly as Text explorations. Here, answer the following questions: What do you understand more or see differently about your campus and the town of Beverly and/or Salem as a result of this series of assignments and experiences? To what discussion or interaction do you attribute this shift? Why? In addition, what do you see differently about yourself as an explorer as a result of this series of assignments and experiences? To what discussion or interaction do you attribute this shift? Why? In a final paragraph, labeled *Personal Connection to Place*, make a note about two things you observed in your Salem as Text exploration and develop 2–3 questions that you would want to pursue if you had more time. Some ways to think about your personal connection: Was there a building whose history you became curious about? Did you hear something that you wanted to know more about? Or, consider your academic major as a lens for the campus.

How would a nurse, scientist, accountant, engineer, or English major see the places you visited today? This is the last of a series of Personal Connection notes you will make during our City as Text™ unit. This Turning Point essay should be 2–3 pages.

Part 2: Reading Places—Look back at your Personal Connection to Place notes for the Endicott campus and the cities of Beverly and Salem. Choose one element of your reflections that you are interested in researching more, including the questions you said you would want to pursue. Next, just as was modeled for you in the readings assigned for your Beverly and Salem explorations, locate three articles from reliable sources (journals, newspapers, magazines; not blogs, websites) that help you answer the questions you have about that topic. Then, in 2–3 pages:

1. Describe how your topic became of interest and what your questions are.
2. Read and summarize the three articles in a way that you could share it with others who are interested in the same topic.
3. Describe how the articles answered your question (or perhaps they didn't, in which case explain why not).
4. State what additional research you would do from this point to learn more about the topic or about another topic that caught your interest during the research process.
5. Cite your sources according to APA format in the body of the paper AND in a reference section at the end.

CONCLUSION

As Bernice Braid writes, the

power of probing any city, place, or region yields transformative results when students engage with place directly, see themselves as investigators, and reflect on their role in creating their sense not just of the place but of themselves as they interact with it. As students participate in this process, they change the way that they know places. (10)

Through a sequence of specific CAT assignments that link exploration with written reflection and ask students to find personal connections to the places they explore, City as Text pedagogy changes not just the way students “know places” but the way they know themselves and, more often than not, the way they know themselves as agents and actors in the civic spaces that they inhabit.

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