

Zines and Water: How Zines Can Help Students Understand Water Issues

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Abstract

This water stimulus packet was developed to model College Board's Advanced Placement Seminar Performance Task Two stimulus packet. The intention to offer students opportunities to practice skills and strategies needed to work through a text set and successfully then conduct further water-issue research. In particular, this text set aimed to give junior students a varied base of knowledge about water issues, both locally and globally, while identifying thematic connections and using it to launch their own research. This specific lesson centered around AP Seminar students individually reading a book chapter and organizing their key takeaways and summarized text in the form of a pocket zine.

Keywords

multimodal text, zine, Advance Placement, youth activism

I designed and taught this water stimulus packet to one section of an Advanced Placement (AP) Seminar class with a mix of both sophomore and junior students in the spring semester of 2023 at an urban high school in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. I was inspired to design this unit around the theme of water after a graduate course allowed

me to experience various climate literacies and undergraduate students' enthusiasm about zines. That experience encouraged my own teaching practices—particularly to use water as the central theme of a text set. AP Seminar students would use this text set to practice some reading strategies, including close reading annotations, connecting text to class, pulling main ideas and key details, and generating possible questions that arise while reading the water text set. To help students generate reading notes, they were encouraged to note a “golden line” per page: a line, a number, a fact, or an expert opinion that drew them in. They were then tasked to display that “golden line” either in a direct quote, a paraphrase, or an image on their zine. This approach followed the AP Seminar QUEST framework, in which students work on questioning and exploration, as well as understanding and analyzing arguments. These very skills are necessary for AP Seminar students' success with future performance tasks.

This specific lesson focuses on the text *A World Without Fish* by Mark Kurlansky. The book focuses on key perspectives on fish and water. This was immediately relevant for my students, most of whom live in a city nestled right next to Lake Michigan, and many of these water issues hit close to home with toxic runoff, lead contamination, and other water pollution. The AP Seminar class did not have ample time to read the whole text, so it was divided into chapter reads. Two students were required to thoroughly read one chapter and display their findings in an eight-page zine. Zine-making also served as a note-taking strategy that offered a new and creative way for students to display their learning after reading. Students had to make critical decisions on what information was key and worthy, as they only had eight small pages to convey their reading notes. Students then were put into small groups, with one student representing each chapter and sharing their pocket zines. This small group collaboration allowed students to discuss key findings and share knowledge gained about water issues.

Narrative Framing

A World Without Fish is a unique nonfiction text written by author and former fisherman Mark Kurlansky. This text examines at the critical issue from multiple perspectives, leads the reader through possible solutions, and, ultimately, suggests the

best solution moving forward. This text layout is very similar to how AP Seminar students will have to explore a topic in the future, so *Fish* was an excellent mentor text. The text is specifically made for young readers as it is full of amazing illustrations by Frank Stockton, a small graphic novel, and visually appealing statistics. The eleven chapters in *A World Without Fish* can be read as standalone text, which make reading complex issues more manageable in chapter chunks, or assigned via individual chapters.

At a Glance

Title	Zines and Water
Unit Time	3-4 weeks Schedule: 8 class periods, 90-minute class
Grade Level(s)	10th and 11th AP Seminar class
Core Text of lesson	Students read a chapter of <i>A World Without Fish</i> , by Mark Kurlansky, to complete this activity.
Supporting Texts within Unit	Water Stimulus Packet also includes the following texts: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>A Long Walk to Water</i> by Linda Sue Park • <i>We Are Water Protectors</i> by Carole Lindstrom • <i>Down to Earth with Zac Efron</i>, Season 1, Episode 2 "France" • Mari Copeny, "Water for Flint", Rebel Girl Podcast (11:21) • Websites: Lead in Milwaukee Drinking Water and EPA's Environmental Justice Screening and Mapping
Climate Literacy Terms (from Climate Lit Glossary)	Individual Action Interconnectedness Youth Activism
Objectives for lesson	Students will create a zine to document and reflect on key points, main ideas and golden lines from a specific chapter, enhancing their comprehension and engagement with the non-fiction text through creative expression.

	Students will present their chapter zines in small groups, practicing collaborative learning and critical discussion as they share zine insights, provide feedback, and deepen their understanding of the water text through peer interaction.
Materials and Resources	Teacher Theme Tracker

Going Forward

The students voiced they felt more confident and less pressure in reading one chapter, rather than the whole text. With that confidence, each excelled at displaying their text understanding and note-taking skills via a zine. Zines were a new concept for many students—a fresh multimodal writing task that was not seen as a writing obstacle. While in small groups, students were able to share their zines and collectively compile their learning from *A World Without Fish*. This particular text lent itself very well to this task and I will be looking for more texts for my English Nine classes to explore zine note-taking as well.

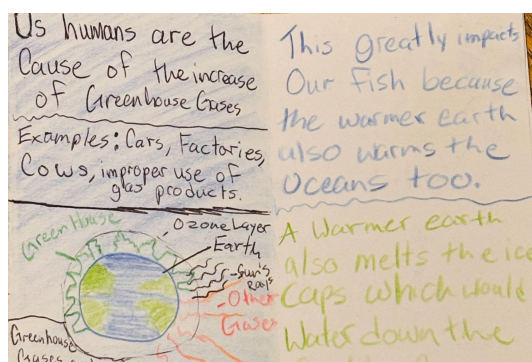


Figure 1: Martin R., 11th grade

The water stimulus packet allowed students to engage with the multitude of issues around water. Some students commented that they took access to drinking water for granted. Others were able to layer learning with the work they were doing in their Environmental Science class. I believe I will continue to use water as a central theme for a text set and will continually add new multimodal texts to the stimulus packet.

Work Cited

Kurlansky, M. (2011). *World without fish*. Workman Publishing.



Figure 1: Martin R., 11th grade



Figure 3: Malachi W., 11th grade

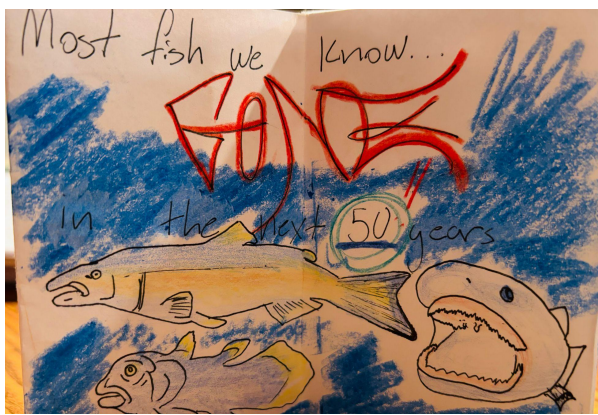


Figure 4: Riley H., 10th grade

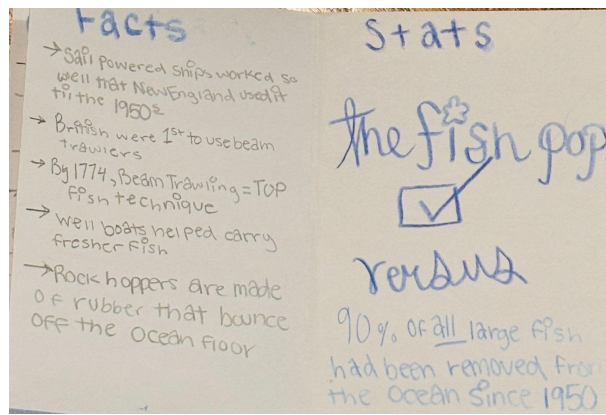


Figure 5: Ava T., 11th grade

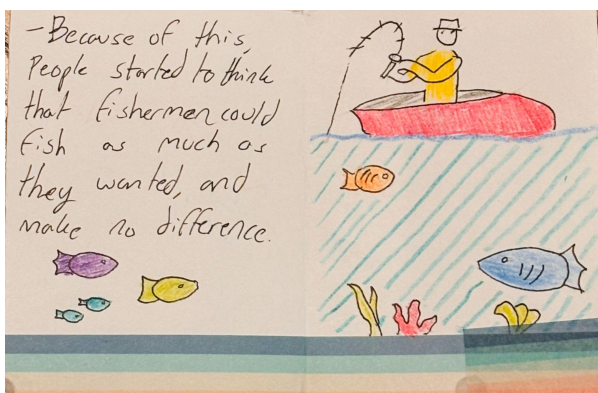


Figure 6: Jackson M., 11th grade

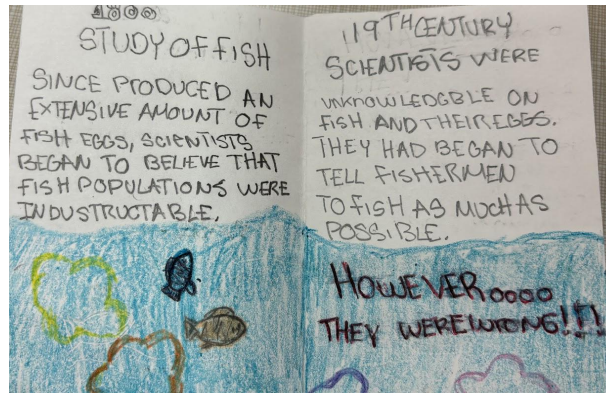


Figure 7: Farida Q., 11th grade