Guide to Responding

Reading Quiz for Donald Worster’s “Attitudes Toward Water”

The answer guide below includes some thoughts on ways of responding to the quiz questions.

Directions: Award yourself the number of points beside each suggested answer. If you mention an idea that is not in this list, give yourself points based on how important you think it is. Write out why you think it is important. Point values are assessed based on whether the keyword or concept is central to understanding the author’s main point as stated in the summary below or is a supporting detail. Supporting details and examples are worth fewer points each. Also, the overall value of each question is assessed based on its centrality to author’s thesis and its overall importance in the essay. In self-grading, if you list a detail not included here, follow the scoring key for the relevant question: details for 10-point questions are worth 1 point and are worth 2 points for weightier questions. Main ideas or complex thoughts are worth 2 and 4 points, respectively.

Scoring: Your score will be out of 100, so it should be expressed as a percentage. If you get 85 points, your grade is 85 percent. You must score at least 65 percent to pass. The grading scale is as follows:

A 90 percent+
B 80–89 percent
C 70–79 percent
D 65–69 percent
F <64 percent

Main Point Summary: “Attitudes Toward Water” is a written version of a lecture given by Donald Worster. A second essay in your readings, found in subunit 5.3.4, comes from another of Worster’s lectures and is related to this one. The key element that links these two essays is the (at the time radical) idea that culture alone can have an impact on nature. So, although Worster is nominally talking about attitudes to water, he is really using water as an example of a wider philosophical issue. The essay is an example of thinking about how two competing ideas about nature, “instrumentalism” and “the intrinsic tradition,” are products of social values and individual perceptions, and how they form two sides in a “culture war.”

Related Readings: The related essay, “Agrarianism and Nature,” similarly discusses how ideas and culture fundamentally determine how one treats nature. The true importance of this perspective is that conservation is impossible without cultural change. Furthermore, Kate Sampsell-Willmann’s review essay, “Broken Land: The Dust Bowl as Moral Failing” (also in subunit 5.3.4), examines Brad Lookingbill’s 2001 book Dust Bowl U.S.A.: Depression America and the Ecological Imagination, 1929–1941 as part of the environmental literature related to Worster’s ideas about the cultural assumptions that guide human interaction.
with nature. Sampsell-Willmann and Lookingbill assess the impact of cultural assumptions (especially of religion and science) in the U.S. of the 1930s and the environmental disaster known as the Dust Bowl.

1. Your answer should include the following concepts and key words:
   - Continental penetration (1 point)
   - Water route to Asia (1 point)
   - Colonization (1 point)
   - Settlement (1 point)
   - Economic development (2 points)
   - Fur trade (1 point)
   - Slave trade (1 point)
   - Transportation
   - Manufacturing (1 point)
   - Textiles (1 point)
   - Energy production (1 point)

2. Your answer should include the following concepts and key words:
   - Rivers as machines of production (2 points)
   - A way of thinking (4 points)
   - Assumes ends are justified because means are justified (where “ends” refers to profit, wealth, money, and “means” refers to nature as a tool for gratifying human needs) (5 points)
   - Nature is an instrument to furnish whatever people want (2 points)
   - Nature has no value outside of how it can be exploited (4 points)
   - Efficiency (2 points)
   - Conquest (2 points)
   - Domination (2 points)
   - Economic Growth (2 points)
   - “Technological rationality” (2 points)
   - Unexamined ends (2 points)

3. Your answer should include the following concepts and key words:
   - Civil War veteran, 1834–1902 (1 point)
   - Major figure in the U.S. conservation movement (2 points)
   - Colorado River exploration (1 point)
   - Unified explanation of environment of the U.S. West (2 points)
   - The American West is arid (1 point)
   - Europeans are used to wet climates (1 point)
   - Cultural difference will have dire consequences (2 points)
   - Small-scale, self-financing irrigation communities (1 point)

4. Your answer should include the following concepts and key words:
• Water empire (1 point)
• Ideology of conquest (1 point)
• Controlling water for society’s benefit (2 points)
• Dam building (1 point)
• Large-scale irrigation (1 point)
• Despotism (1 point)
• Centralized government (1 point)
• Arrogance (1 point)
• Elaborate technical elites (1 point)
• Political power from controlling water (1 point)

5. Your answer should include the following concepts and key words:
   • Alternative set of attitudes (2 points)
   • Nature has its own purposes (4 points)
   • Respect (2 points)
   • Henry David Thoreau (2 points)
   • Humans must use nature (2 points)
   • Nature has a purpose that goes beyond human need (4 points)
   • Nature has a purpose that goes beyond human religion (2 points)
   • Charles Darwin (2 points)
   • Humans are not the center of creation (2 points)
   • Things evolved apart from human needs (2 points)
   • John Muir (2 points)
   • Nature writing and the right of nature to exist (2 points)
   • Aldo Leopold (2 points)
   • Ecological systems are complex and people are part of them (4 points)
   • Humans have obligations because of that membership (2 points)
   • Nature has a personhood (2 points)
   • Moral and scientific strands (2 points)
   • Politics and EarthFirst! (2 points)

6. Your answer should include the following concepts and key words:
   • Walden Pond (2 points)
   • Hermit (1 point)
   • A new set of attitudes entered American consciousness (2 points)
   • Uses nature but leaves it how he encountered it (2 points)
   • An experiment in human economy (1 point)
   • Thoreau simplified his wants and satisfied them with his own labor (1 point)
   • Thoreau acknowledged an existence independent of his needs (2 points)

7. Your answer should include the following concepts and key words:
   • Wars of ideas (2 points)
• Values (2 points)
• Perceptions (2 points)
• Divisive issues within communities (1 point)
• School prayer, immigration, government regulation (1 point)
• Environmental preservation is the subject of a community-based war of ideas (1 point)
• Slavery was a culture war before it was a fighting war (2 points)
• Roughly one side employs instrumental thinking, the other intrinsic (1 point)
• Resolved by who has the greater economic and political power (1 point)
• Ideas are part of the problem and the solution (1 point)