

Module 3
Wild Muir
Worksheet
(Chs 1-5)
("Scootchers," Drowning," "Well," "Blind," "Fever")

Instructions:

1. Record and respond to a quote that resonates with you.

"Scootchers": (Choose One)

1. Free write of a favorite childhood playground, a risky misadventure (or both), the natural scenery of your childhood home, or a combination of these.
2. Compile a list of all the aspects/traits of his later career, foreshadowed by the first chapter ("Scootchers")
3. Muir writes of his playmates' superstitious fear of ghosts (4-5). Free write on a superstition of yours?
4. How did his childhood physically condition him for his future career?
5. What does Muir's use of specific place-names and local idioms add to his narrative?
6. What traits that characterize his later career, can you trace to these childhood chapters?
7. Find and record an example of his use of metaphor.
8. Record a quote and explain how it foreshadows his career?
9. How might the setting of his Scotland childhood have influenced his career? Support with a quote.
10. What do these first five chapters have in common?
11. What elements, experiences in them foreshadow his career?

“Drowning” (Choose One)

1. How might his father have influenced Muir religiously?
2. Can you find a cause-effect connection between his relationship to his father and his later life?
3. What traits, if any, might Muir have inherited from his father?
4. Record something your father or mother taught you to do as a child?
5. Record an example of metaphor?
6. Free-write about a traumatic event, injury, or accident from your childhood.
7. What does the manner in which Muir responds to his near-drowning reveal about him?

“Well”: (Choose one)

1. *Free write* about a time when you felt your life was endangered?
2. *Free write* about the effects and feelings of *working as a child and/or teenager*? Describe your relation to household chores?
3. *Free write*: Muir’s experience might be summed up as a flight from the patriarch into mother nature. Expand upon this:
4. *Free write*: Origins of the creative impulse, of the urge to write: Viewed from a Freudian perspective (the “talking cure” of a childhood trauma”) how might Muir’s career as a writer have had a therapeutic effect on him? How might it be viewed as the inevitable and necessary effect of a series of childhood traumas? What is the relation, if any, between his *childhood wounds* and his *adult words*?
5. Record several quotes that document the *positive effects of nature* on Muir and the *negative effects of civilization*.
6. How might this experience have *influenced his later career*, including his attitude about work, and manual labor in particular?
7. How might it have affected his relationship with his *father*?
8. What does Muir’s *going back down* into the well after he’s recovered *reveal* about him?

9. How did the digging of the well mirror *his life in general* at his father's farm?
10. As a parent, is there a difference between instilling a *strong work ethic* in a child and *using* them for your own purposes, as a cheap labor source? What might be some positive and negative effects of "work" on the development of a child?
11. What *positive traits* might the well digging experience have reinforced?
12. Develop (*explicate*) the meaning of the following quote: "Constant dropping [of water] wear away stone. So does constant chipping, while at the same time wearing away the chipper."
13. How is his *critique of civilization* informed by his own childhood experiences (18), and in particular by the experience of work, as narrated in "Wells" and "Blind." Find a quote that supports this view.
14. Develop this quote, by relating it to the experience of the "well." "I know that our bodies were made to thrive only in pure air, and the scenes in which pure air is found" (18).
15. How does he use the near death experiences of drowning and asphyxiation as metaphors to inform his writing, and his critique of civilization in particular.
16. What other *contemporary writers* might have influenced Muir's views of civilization and nature?
17. Situate Muir's *critique of civilization* within its *historical context*, particularly as it relates to the Industrial Revolution.

"Blind" (Choose One)

1. Free write about a *difficulty of work* (physical, emotional, mental).
2. Free write on a *turning point* in your life.
3. What role might his *inventions* and ingenuity have played in his childhood. How did this gift relate to his later career? Is there a relation between suffering and invention?
4. How does his inventiveness come into play in his factory job in Indiana? Find evidence of the "*Edison*" side of Muir's personality, in the form of a quote.
5. Find evidence of the "*Darwin*" side to his personality, in the form of a quote.

6. How was this experience a *turning point* in his career?
7. How might the *injury* have directly influenced his choice of a *career*?
8. Find evidence in Muir's choice of words that nature is a source of *religious spirituality* to him?
9. How does this chapter relate to the previous chapters? What is the common theme running through them or linking some of them?

“Fever”:

1. Free write on an *intense experience* you had in *nature* or a *longing* for such an experience/ adventure. What form did the experience or your longing take?
2. Free write on a time you were *seriously ill or injured*, describing the effects?
3. What does his *1000 mile walk* to Tampa, Fl reveal about him?
4. How might it be related to his childhood and youth, as both a *reaction against* and a *continuation* of his experience?
5. How does this “fever” experience relate to the previous chapters?
6. Find further evidence of The Edison in Muir, in the form of a quote (w/ page #)?
7. Find further evidence of the Darwin in Muir, in the form of a quote?
8. Find evidence of his wood-craft in a life-threatening situation?
9. When the fever strikes, what do his reactions to it reveal about him?
10. What tv shows might this make a suitable episode for?
11. Muir's childhood and youth evidence the *influence of trauma* on his development?
Expand.