

**Making Initial Observations toward Writing**  
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**Due Dates: Variable – check wordpress**

Pre-Draft Writing Assignments (if using the Virtual Conference Model; if using the in-class model, this could be modified as homework):

**Lesson objective:** Identifying valuable evidence; making initial observations.

**Total estimated time:** 55 min

**Additional outcomes:** Students begin to think about functions particular sources will serve in their essays.

**Assignment sequence underway:** Conference presentation.

**Before Class:**

- Students should bring their *Darwin Reader* to class. Each student should already have read the section of Darwin they will be asked to give a paper about.
- Professor should have picked a selection from Darwin that appealed to him/her and done some thinking about why the passage was interesting in the context of a Darwin essay the class has read and/or other Darwin discussions that have occurred in the class. Professor should be prepared to do a close reading of the passage. Ideally, this should be from a Darwin selection not assigned to any student conference.

**In Class:**

Step 1: Professor ask students to look at the passage he/she has prepared. Professor should lead a discussion in which he/she has students perform a close reading of passage together, modeling good habits of analysis and demonstrating to students how they might perform fruitful readings of their own passages (20 minutes).

Step 2:

Each student should find their Darwin selection and spend some time with a particular moment or set of moments (no more than 3) that interests them. Focusing in on these small bits of text (a word, a sentence, a paragraph), they should think about exactly what drew them do the moment (total 5 min). And do the following:

- Rewrite the idea of the text selection in their own words.
- If a sentence to a paragraph, begin circling words they think are particularly important to the paragraph and/or language they find interesting (word choice, syntax).

- 5 min free write: What exactly drew you to this text selection and what do you see going?
- 5 min free write (#2): How does this selection of text relate to the rest of what you know about Darwin – either from this class or from other prior knowledge?

(15 min)

**Step 3:**

Lead a discussion in which the students talk about how they came to their passages and what kinds of thoughts they had about what made the passages interesting, how they related to other discussions of Darwin, etc. The discussion should end with a discussion about how they might turn these observations and analyses into a successful conference paper (20 minutes).