

FYE 101 Introduction to Intellectual and Creative Inquiry  
Fall 2007  
C. Stretch

### ***My Freshman Year: Reading Questions for Preface and Chapter 1***

**Vocabulary:** The following are terms that you may not know. Please look each one up in your dictionary and write a brief definition in the book itself, either in the margin of the page where the word appears or in the front or back end pages. *You will be expected to be able to use these words in your own writing; they are fair game for quizzes.*

*From the preface:*

preface  
audit  
“transactional student identity”—try to figure this one out from context  
default (used as an adjective)  
precluded  
ethnography  
quandary  
appended

*From ch.1:*

locals (as a noun)  
penchant  
relativity  
impetus  
discourse  
mantra  
privy (as an adjective)  
sabbatical  
purview  
articulates (as a verb)  
immersion  
moot  
abyss  
acumen  
plethora  
bureaucratically  
caveat  
public v. private university (figure out the difference from context)

**Questions:** These questions are designed to help you focus not just on what the author is saying but on how she is saying it. In other words, many of these questions deal with the author's rhetoric. Please answer each one in writing in complete sentences. You do not need to copy the questions themselves; just number them clearly.

**This assignment will take you a long time.** Please don't give up. For future chapters, the questions will be less onerous, but for now, we're establishing a baseline understanding of the book's argument and its methods. If you don't get this part, lots of what follows won't be nearly as interesting.

*Preface:*

1. Rebekah Nathan (RN) alludes to studies of campus life in which researchers interact with members of the campus community "as professors," that is, as themselves. Why doesn't RN want to be seen as a professor during her own investigation?
2. In the second paragraph, RN explains that she could be taken for a student and see campus life through student eyes, but she *qualifies* those claims at least twice on p.ix What phrases does she use to "back off" or "limit" her claims? Explain how one of those phrases works in its sentence (what does it do for you as a reader?).
3. RN recognizes in the preface that her project and her methods raise a lot of questions. Which of the questions that she lists seems most interesting to you? Why?

*Chapter 1:*

4. Look at paragraph 1:  
What does a cultural anthropologist do?  
What is ethnography?  
How do you know?
5. If she used to be a "traditional" cultural anthropologist, what does that imply about what she does now?
6. When RN says she asks her students to "look at their own culture with an anthropologist's eye," what does she mean?
7. On p.2 RN says that one impetus for her research was that students had become "increasingly confusing" to her. Look at her lists of questions in that paragraph and further down the page. Explain in your own words what you think RN's "confusion" is really about.
8. This is a question about tone: What do you think RN's attitude toward "university administrators who speak like corporate managers" is? What leads you to that assessment?
9. When RN says that she "had gone through the looking glass," she is making an *allusion* to *Alice in Wonderland*. What layer of meaning does the allusion add to her statement? In other words, why drag *Alice in Wonderland* into this discussion?
10. In the first five pages of the first chapter, RN is basically describing what motivated her to take up this project and how she began to think about the research itself. Put that process in your own words: what are its key elements? (e.g. what did she begin with? what did she need to have or know or do in order to begin? etc.)

11. Why doesn't MFY focus on Greek life, dating and sexuality, parents and students, commuters, and athletics?
12. Unpack this statement: "I wanted to see how student culture articulates with the *institution* of the American university." In what sense is student culture separate from the university? Why is *institution* in italics?
13. What does RN mean when she says she decided to follow "the student script"? Why "script"?
14. Speculate: Why do you think it would be important for an anthropologist to "refrain from misrepresenting [herself]" to the people in the culture she's studying?
15. What do you make of the section title "Enter the Abyss"? In what ways does it seem apt? What kinds of expectations does it set up for you as a reader?
16. What does the anecdote about her "consciously casual" attire illustrate?
17. Last full paragraph on p.9: RN notices a "script" underlying many of the icebreakers and discussions during those first few days as a student. She cues us in to the fact that in the "script" she saw "themes" that would come into play throughout the entire project. At this point in the text, what do you make of RN's attitude towards the "curious sameness" she saw across the activities? What do you think she may have been hoping to see instead?
18. On p.10, RN ends the second full paragraph with this observation: "I had never quite anticipated how similar my entrance into college life would seem to my prior fieldwork in a remote village." How does this transition prepare you to read the next few paragraphs?
19. What does the anecdote about the beer in the residence hall illustrate? How do you know?
20. RN explains that playing sports helped her fit in. How so? In your experience at SCSU so far, have you found a similar means of establishing connections? Briefly describe one of them or an idea you have about what might work.
21. On p.15, RN offers an important caveat or warning to us as readers. Why do you think she goes out of her way to explain the limits of her project? Based on your own experiences so far, what do you think will likely be missing from her account?
22. How are AnyU and SCSU similar?
23. RN ends the chapter with some thoughts on the ways in which she will approach the "culture" of the university. In your own words, what does it mean to say that there is a "university culture"? Or, if you would rather, what does it mean to talk about SCSU's culture?
24. Look at the Endnotes for chapter 1 (they begin on p.169). Group the notes for the whole chapter into two categories. Give each group a descriptive title and then list the notes that "fit" that category. When you're deciding on categories, try to think about what "job" the notes seem to be doing. Are they all doing the same thing? {For instance, say the items to be categorized were 1) apple, 2) orange, 3) sneaker, 4) banana, 5) sock. My categories might be "Fruit: 1,2,4 and Footwear: 3, 5}