

Chemistry 312 Homework exercise 2 Deadline: Monday February 12th 2007

The role of writing in the science curriculum: writing to learn or learning to write?

1. Tell me a little about yourself as a writer. Place yourself on a scale from “highly competent” to “have major problems creating concise, grammatically correct prose” Is English your first language? If not, give me some relevant information about your background (what *is* your first language, and how long have you been using English?). Have you taken a junior-year writing class? If so, briefly describe the experience (did it make you a better writer, for example). If you have not taken a junior-year writing class, when will you do that?

Now for some critical responses to material in *Zodiac*.

2. On page 2 of *Zodiac*, the principal character (Sangamon Taylor) give examples what he calls “Sangamon’s Principle”, namely “The simpler the molecule the better the drug.” Explain what might be the reasoning behind the articulation of this “Principle”. Based on examples of chemical substances commonly encountered, present a counter argument to “Sangamon’s Principle”.

3. On page 10 we learn something of Mr. Taylor’s past employment at Mass Anal and, in particular, of an episode when he was presented with a sample of soil taken from what turns out to be a contaminated site. Mr. Taylor recounts his interaction with a potential “client” of Mass Anal. He even asks one or two questions. He then examines the sample and pronounces that “this yellow clump here . . . gotta be cadmium”. Critically evaluate this analysis. Cadmium is a silver-gray metal, so what does he have in mind when he pronounces that a yellow material is “cadmium”? Look for independent evidence that cadmium was once tested as a poison gas in World War 1, as claimed by Mr. Taylor. What did you do and what did you find out? Cite your sources.

Please word-process your responses to the questions. Double space the text and use a 10 or 12 point font. The maximum length for the responses to questions 2 and 3 is 500 words in total. This piece of writing is to be viewed as a mid-process (not a rough) draft, i.e. it is the very best that you can do without the critical input of an editor or reviewer. It should be technically flawless (i.e. free from spelling, word-processing and grammatical errors).

Start your response to question 2 on a separate page, as I will be keeping your responses to the first question. Don’t forget to put you name on both pieces of writing.