A Civil Society Teaching Primer

A Civil Society Teaching Primer:

Seeing Through Water

By

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In memory of
Blanche Brown, Rebekah Snyder, Madlyn Blum, Agnes Guy, and Anna Gery,
my elementary school teachers in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania,
Thomas Husser, Jr.,
my high school basketball teammate in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania,
and
John “Jack” Sullivan, my water mentor in Claremont, California,
and
In remembrance of my first newspaper,
The *Bethlehem Globe-Times* of Bethlehem, Pennsylvania.

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PREFACE

How can I arrange a purposeful civilian life as I move through an unfamiliar place? From what place and to what place does water flow through my place of residence? I situate this book at the convergence of these two seemingly unrelated questions. *At this convergence, I present a plan for teaching college-age learners to practice thoughtful, continual inquiry about their place in American civil society.*

This book is a novel venture in two respects named in the book title. First, I focus on civilian life in American civil society per se. Second, I portray civilian life in American civil society as an experience shaped through the organized movement of water. Such civilian residence in a *hydraulic civil society* is the novel focus.

Civil society is the vast space where we civilians endeavor purposefully to claim a place as our own. The adjective *civi*l serves to sustain attention to civilian life that we activate through our civil liberties. *Civil* is also an indicator that we civilians can find it challenging to search for an enduring place to claim as our own. Attention to *civil* thus sets the stage for attention to encountering instances of incivility. In these ways, the adjective *civil* does double duty throughout the book.

This is a book written for college teachers. The book contains a composite plan for teaching college learners to make disciplined connections among American civil society, civilian life in recognizable places, and organized water services. *The experience of a civilian's place in civil society is the connective device*. *Place* comes into view in these teaching plans with photographs, print newspaper bibliographies, mapping exercises, literary tours, and cumulative writing assignments.

This book is a primer about civilian life in a civil society shaped through organized water services. A primer introduces disciplined thinking on a subject. A primer is a device with which learners refine their habits of disciplined thinking. *Literacy* is a name for habits of disciplined thinking and learning about the world. Accordingly, *civil society literacy* is served by the primer that is this book.

An impetus for this book is a curious omission in American higher education: absence of attention to civil society per se in the four years of study that chronologically precede the day when college graduates move into wider civil society. I demonstrate with an eight (8)-proposition teaching

framework that college teachers can do more than simply assume that four years of collegiate study prepares a civilian for a thoughtful adulthood in American civil society. I write this book to encourage and assist college teachers to move beyond such nonchalance. Such encouragement can be summarized in this expression of a teacher's optimism: *When we see civilian life through water and human-engineered access to water, we civilians, learners and teachers, each prepare to claim expansive places in the fascinating joining of civilians that is American civil society*.

The logic of this book about civil society literacy flows in ten steps.

1. Teaching college students to practice civil society literacy is the subject of this book.

2. This book contains plans for teaching civil society literacy where civilian life and water intersect

3. Civil society literacy in these teaching plans entails disciplined application of learning goals.

4. These teaching plans culminate in assignments to assess proficiency in civil society literacy.

5. These teaching plans are addressed to learners moving to new places in American civil society.

6. This is a teacher's book, a product of teaching college students to practice disciplined inquiry.

7. Civil society literacy includes reading print newspapers with a purposeful eye on water.

8. *Embrace a new place thoughtfully* is a learning destination for civil society literacy.

9. *Embrace a new place iteratively* is a second learning destination for civil society literacy.

10. This book contains a glimpse of a different way to think and to teach about organizations.

This book demonstrates one way to incorporate civil society literacy into General Education across American higher education. The teaching plans presented in this primer enable college teachers to make accessible and tangible the hopes for lifelong learning that college administrators routinely espouse. By mapping an extensive linkage between undergraduate study and an evolving civilian adulthood, I invite college deans, presidents, trustees, and higher education accreditation officials to join college teachers in conversations about making undergraduate college a distinctive learning endeavor about civilian life in American civil society.

The convergence of water and civilian life in American civil society is depicted in Figure P-1. It is here that the two guiding questions for this book come into view. Prominent in the figure is the frontal diagram

that meteorologists customarily use to indicate what happens when weather systems converge along a boundary. This book is a primer that I locate along a boundary between water and American civil society. In so doing, I locate this book along a boundary between undergraduate college education and civilian adulthood in American civil society. In the wake of the frontal passage depicted in Figure P-1, a General Education primer about civilian life in American civil society becomes plausible.

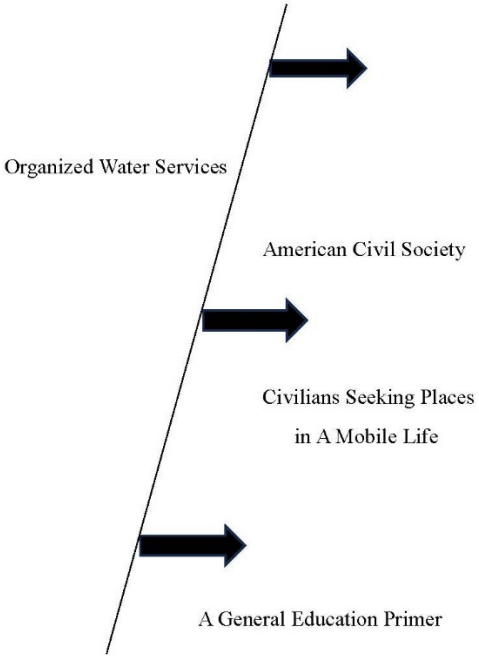

Figure P-1: A Primer Written along A Boundary

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This book is rooted in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, and Claremont, California. It was in these three places that I was party to conversations from which the ideas in this book took shape. I take pleasure now in acknowledging conversation partners and specific influences that they had on my thinking about teaching, about civilian life in civil society, about claiming a civilian place in civil society, and about how organized water services enable our joined civilian lives. In some cases, this acknowledgement is long overdue.

Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, is my hometown. Bethlehem was the place that I called home for twenty-four (24) years. I completed twelve years of schooling in the Bethlehem Area School District. It was in the first six of those years that my education commenced about civil society, civilian life, and a keen sense of place.

I wish to acknowledge my five elementary school teachers in this regard and to name them in the dedication for this book. Blanche Brown, Rebekah Snyder, Madlyn Blum, and Agnes Guy were my teachers at Monocacy Elementary School. Monocacy School was a four-room neighborhood school building. Anna Gery was my sixth-grader teacher at Hanover Elementary School. Hanover School was a rural school filled with us suburban newcomers. There were forty-two (42) of us pupils in that sixth-grade classroom.

From the outset, we grade schoolers were instructed about our residence in a place named Bethlehem, settled in 1741 by Moravians. I am reminded of this when I look at a newspaper photograph of a first-grade class project directed by Mrs. Brown. Our place in the universe was the focus of the project. A poster representing Bethlehem depicted the Central Moravian Church, not a blast furnace at the steel mill for which Bethlehem was widely known.

Our history and geography lessons unfolded in arcs from there: from Moravian Bethlehem to Northampton County and Lehigh County, to the Lehigh Valley, to Pennsylvania, to a United States of America that consisted of 48 states in that first year. Thanks to lessons taught by Mrs. Blum in the third and fourth grades, I can name and locate most of the sixty-seven (67) counties in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. I have resided in four of those counties and attended undergraduate college in a fifth one.

In time, Bethlehem in Pennsylvania became a touchstone for my thinking about familiar places becoming less familiar. Steelmaking and the steel company are long gone from Bethlehem. Their ruins are shown in photographs in Chapter 8 of this book.

I now see that we grade schoolers were already learning about unpredictability in civilian life. On the surface, the Bethlehem of those years was a safe, comfortable place to reside. Still, the prosperity of the steel company did not trickle down to everyone. The work stoppage at the steel mill in 1959 left numerous classmates strapped for milk money and deposits in the weekly banking program. The Monocacy School basement was designated as a fallout shelter. Boxes of emergency supplies were stacked there. Their presence became palpable during the Cuban Missile Crisis of 1962. In that same basement, we queued to receive two doses of the Sabin polio vaccine in sugar cubes. Polio was a daily reminder in the hallways of Monocacy School in those years.

Mrs. Brown, Mrs. Snyder, Mrs. Blum, Miss Guy, and Mrs. Gery guided us through the possibility that this place could change into something very different for us together, into something previously unrecognizable. This adds to my gratitude toward them.

I missed an opportunity long ago to thank my five elementary school teachers and the teachers with whom I studied at Nitschmann Junior High School and Freedom High School. All of them made Bethlehem what it was and is for me as my hometown place. I could have expressed gratitude to my teachers at the Freedom High School Commencement in June, 1970. I did not do so then. I regret that careless omission. Now, on these pages, I want to begin to rectify that.

Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, was also where I began to learn that civilian life was an experience of sustained vulnerability and discomfort for some of my peers. An influential, unexpected teacher in this regard was a Freedom High School basketball teammate, Thomas Husser, Jr. Tom and I grew up five geographic miles apart. Our upbringings were in very different worlds. Tom was a product of the Bethlehem South Side and the Hayes Street corridor that climbed South Mountain from the steel mill. I came to high school from the expanding Bethlehem suburbs. Our respective cohorts were brought together at Freedom through the boundaries drawn for our brand-new high school.

On the basketball roster, I was the sole non-South Sider in the starting lineup one year. I did not know the lingo, the neighborhood references, and the inside jokes that the South Siders shared. I also missed the coded references to what some in that cohort experienced in the way of deprivations. Tom Husser observed me on the outside of all this. He took it

upon himself to interpret what was happening in the lives of these teammates. I cannot thank him in person now for these lessons; Tom left us too soon. I include him in the roster of those in whose memory I dedicate this book.

I wish to acknowledge contributions that my three younger brothers have made to my thinking about Bethlehem, Pennsylvania. Michael, Karl, and Christopher Gilbert each knew a different Bethlehem, for reason of age and chosen pursuits. Conversations with them have had a pronounced influence on how I saw, then re-visited, and now interpret Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, as my hometown.

Gettysburg, Pennsylvania is where I reinvented myself as a college teacher. I arrived at Gettysburg College determined to make a fresh start. That venture was enabled by the generosity of David LeVan in funding a new professorship and then by LeVan, President Gordon Haaland, and Provost Daniel DeNicola honoring my expressed intent to fill that professorship as a veteran teacher who had just discarded 99% of his prior teaching notes.

It was at Gettysburg College that I acquired colleagues for life in the persons of librarians at Musselman Library. Library director (now Dean) Robin Wagner and her colleagues welcomed me to Musselman with their *Ask us anything* approach. Reference Librarians became partners in my writing assignments. They will likely recall earlier versions of assignments that appear throughout this book. I wish to thank, in chronological order, Katherine Furlong, Janelle Wertzberger, Kerri Odess-Harnish, Katherine Downton, Cinda Gibbon, Ronalee Ciocco, Meggan Smith, Clinton Baugess, and Mallory Jallas.

Also at Musselman Library, James Rutkowski helped me use digital photography in my teaching. Lisa McNamee assisted my twice-yearly accumulation of Reserve readings. Librarians in the Special Collections department hosted my classes in lessons about civilian lives in times past. Karen Drickamer and Christine Ameduri were my initial guides in this teaching endeavor. In time, Carolyn Sautter, Ronald Couchman, Catherine Perry, and Amy Lucadamo joined in these tutorials.

Across the Gettysburg College campus and academic program, I was fortunate to have found conversation partners about teaching. I wish to acknowledge and thank in this regard: Michael Birkner, Jack Ryan, Steve Gimbel, Lisa Portmess, Derrick Gondwe, Jean Potuchek, Randy Wilson, Charles Myers, Kathy Cain, and Bennett Bruce. In a wider circle of teaching conversations, I came to value the contributions of David Wright, Gail Sweezey, Regina Campo, and Daniel Konstalid as regular invited visitors to my classes as Guest Discussants.

It was also in Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, that I dipped my toe in new waters of adult education. I trained as a volunteer mediator and volunteer adult literacy tutor through the Gettysburg College Center for Public Service. From there, I joined other volunteers affiliated with Mediation Services of Adams County and the Lincoln Intermediate Unit in the Pennsylvania state system of educational services, respectively. I am grateful to Gettysburg College faculty colleague Janet Powers for encouraging my move into both areas. My first ventures into adult literacy tutoring were guided patiently by Robert Daniels, my supervisor at the Lincoln Intermediate Unit.

Claremont, California, became my new place of residence. It was next door (in Upland, California) that I found a new home as an adult literacy tutor. My education about civilian life in civil society moved to a higher plane as I affiliated with the adult literacy program conducted through the Upland Public Library. I wish to thank my supervisors Elizabeth Barbee, Erin Deards, and Joy Alvarez. In a concurrent, and unplanned opportunity to learn about civil society in southern California, I also volunteered as a children's literacy tutor in the Claremont After School Program (CLASP) in Claremont, California. I am grateful to Lissa Petersen, Jim Keith, and Cristina Moreno for this further opportunity to learn about civilian life and my new place in California civil society.

Claremont, California, is also where I became a member of the Pitzer College community as a faculty spouse. Through my wife, Pitzer Professor Emerita Kate Rogers, I met Professor John "Jack" Sullivan. Jack became my mentor about California water systems and issues. It is also in Jack's memory that I dedicate this book.

Kate Rogers has been my treasured and knowing conversation partner throughout the decades in which this book has taken shape. Kate has patiently tolerated my jaunts to capture scenes of water courses and organized water systems. Mere words of gratitude to her are inadequate.

***

Seeking permission from organizations to cite copyrighted material has been an education and, at times, an adventure. Much has changed in this realm since publication of my prior books. This is particularly true in the American newspaper business. Third-party intermediaries are now part of the organizational landscape. My advice to fellow writers is to be patient, diligent, and flexible. It might prove necessary to resort to a Plan B regarding plans to incorporate some copyrighted material into your writing.

I gratefully acknowledge below the organizations that have granted me permission to use copyrighted works in this book. I am also grateful to news organizations whose representatives informed me that no formal permission is required for me to cite extensive bibliographies of copyrighted works. By *extensive*, I mean more than four (4) articles.

Acknowledgements of formal permission to use copyrighted materials are, listed alphabetically by copyright holder.

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I am most grateful to Adam Rummens and Amanda Millar at Cambridge Scholars Publishing for their patient, professional guidance throughout the publication process.

***

I close by acknowledging the *Bethlehem Globe-Times* afternoon newspaper published in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania. The *Globe-Times* was my first newspaper. I began reading the *Globe-Times* in 1959. I was delighted that the *Globe-Times* sports section contained results of games completed late in the previous evening.

I credit Publisher Rolland Adams, Editor John Strohmayer, and their reporters for the extensive portrayal of civilian life narrated in the *Globe-Times*. The newspaper was filled with news and photographs of Bethlehem residents and visitors (e.g., Christmas-season visitors) engaged in everyday civilian activity. We read of accomplishments, transitions, and tragedy in the *Globe-Times*. Many of us first saw our names publicly in print in the *Bethlehem Globe-Times*. I did.

The *Bethlehem Globe-Times* ceased publication under that name in 1991. Whenever I return to Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, I make time to visit the Bethlehem Public Library and scroll through *Globe-Times* issues on the library's microfilm machines. I am pleased to have the opportunity to include the *Bethlehem Globe-Times* on the dedication page of this book.

INTRODUCTION: CIVIL SOCIETY LITERACY, SEEING THROUGH WATER

Teaching college students to practice *civil society literacy* is the subject of this book. *Civil society* encompasses a vast space of human endeavor in one another's company. Civil society is the place where we each live a civilian life, at times gathered, at times alone, ever embedded in our connections with other civilians. Civil society is where we picnic with neighbors, sing in a choir, walk with a grandchild at sunset, read a book, pull weeds, kick off our shoes after a tumultuous week, write a letter to a relative, attend theater performances, and brew a cup of coffee. Civil society is also where we consult news sources, talk politics with a neighbor, and attend public hearings. Civic activities such as the latter three comprise one part of civilian life in civil society.[1]

An Expansive Vista on Civil Society

The conception of civil society applied in this book transcends the world of employment, even as it intersects our choices to work in the employ of someone else. When can I find time to visit relatives living in another state? How can I continue my favorite hobby? How comfortable am I riding public transportation in this region? These are civilian questions that can come with working at a job. In this conception of civil society, a job does not define and consume our civilian being. Rather, employment is one element in the continuing process of defining one's self as a civilian living in the company of other civilians.

Civil society also transcends commercial exchange in markets, even as it intersects our purchases of products and services—from baseball gloves to church hymnals to swing sets to health insurance—with which we civilians move in one another's company. We consume through commercial transactions, but we civilians live larger than consumers. As with jobs, purchases are means to an end, and nothing more, in this conception of civilian life in civil society.

Civilian Life Ever in Flux

Civil society is an experience of civilian relationships in flux. In one commonplace instance, civil society is where veteran residents meet newcomers who have recently arrived. The experience of civilian newcomer is a continuing theme in this book. Engagement among veterans and newcomers is particularly relevant for a college student. As a student moves to depart from formal schooling, civilian life as a newcomer is simultaneously imminent, urgent, and empowering.

As a newcomer to a place of residence, a civilian can expect to be asked "From where do you come?" and "What led you to settle here?" Civil society is where a newcomer can hope that such questions augur the prospect of two civilians becoming acquainted in a place that is familiar to one and new to the other.[2]

When acquaintance unfolds, civil society is partly *civilian*, partly *civic*, and partly *civil*. When acquaintance blooms as veteran and newcomer encounter one another, we can further see *civil* society as *civilized* and *civilizing*.[3] Civil society is where we are free to seek such connections. This is where civil liberties intersect civilian life in civil society.

Civil Society and Civil Liberties

Civil society is a place where we civilians can activate our civil liberties knowledgably. These civil liberties are granted to us constitutionally and culturally. Civil society is where we civilians assemble at a symphony concert. Civil society is where we civilians sing the national anthem at a sporting event, or remain mute. Civil society is where we choose to wear clothing in styles of our own choosing. Civil society is where we adults vote in elections, display political preferences with yard signs, and vote in private. Civil society is where we are empowered to protest when someone attempts to suppress our civil liberties as voters. Civil society is where we come and go on our own terms without needing to request permission from those who occupy positions of authority over our lives.[4] In civil society, we civilians exercise civil liberties through pursuits solo and accompanied, in settings informal and organized.

Mapping Civil Society

This expansive vista on *civil society* is shown in Figure I-1. Dashed lines indicate that employment and commercial consumption accompany a civilian life in civil society, but need not define it.

A Place of Aspirations and Limits

Civil society denotes the space where we can hope and aspire to activate our civil liberties in the civil company of one another.[5] Civil society is where we can choose one another as spouses. Civil society is where we paint our front doors in colors that we choose. Civil society is where we can speak our native language amongst friends.

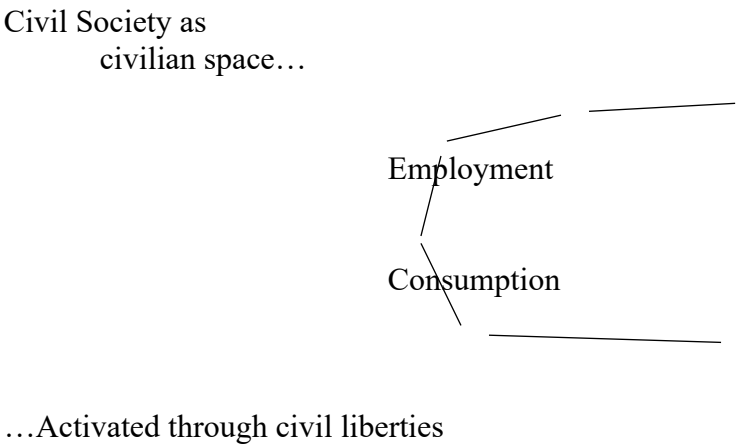

Figure I-1: Civil Society Conception in This Book

These particular exercises of civil liberty are not always welcomed by our literal and figurative neighbors. In such instances, civil society is where we can experience the limits of our discretion to construct a civilian self on our own terms.

Civil society is always a work in progress. The constitutional and cultural settings in which our civil liberties are embedded are unfolding processes. Civil liberties expand and contract.[6] Accordingly, we civilians have good reason to pursue knowledge about civil liberties available to us. The experience of civilian newcomers is instructive in this regard. Newcomers are particularly attuned to the workings of civil society, because so much is unfamiliar to them and because they and their neighbors are strangers. This is where literacy comes urgently into play in a civilian life.

Literacy and Inquiry

Literacy entails habits of acquiring knowledge and using knowledge to engage others Literacy is a proficiency that a civilian refines by practicing such habits. The *–ing* endings in the verbs *acquiring* and *using* are indicators that these are habits of ongoing learning. Literacy is a competence into which we grow, an accomplishment that is always underway, a goal that we never conclusively attain. We see this conception of literacy activated in the organization of education in the United States, a progression from elementary, into secondary, and then into higher education.

It is customary to assume that the ability to read and to write denotes the achievement of literacy by an individual civilian. I move through and beyond this baseline assumption to work with an enlarged practice of literacy. This enlarged practice entails two added learning habits.

First, beyond reading and writing, we can enlarge *literacy* to include growing competence (and confidence) in conversation with others. Literacy is a relational competence. Reading and writing are contributors to this larger accomplishment. We civilians put our literacy to the test each time we converse to some conclusion with others who work at different levels of literacy, such those who work as medical professionals, Certified Public Accountants, and horticulturalists. We can learn this enlarged literacy lesson through ongoing conversations with our teachers.[7]

Second, beyond reading and writing, we can enlarge the practice of literacy to include the practice of *inquiry*. Inquiry is the act of seeking knowledge for particular purposes. Inquiry is a habit that we can practice daily for a lifetime, ever in search of increased competence.

Civil Society Inquiry and Literacy

Inquiry is an apt focus in civil society where veteran residents and newcomers engage one another in their mutual uncertainty about where their interactions might lead them. Inquiry is a useful act by which veteran resident and newcomer can relish the civil liberty to ask questions, to answer questions, and to converse in ways that enlarge their respective civilian lives. For these reasons and with this hopeful projection, I make hundreds of references to *inquiry* in this book. Through inquiry, a *civil society literacy* comes into view.

Filling A Curious Curricular Gap

Attention to *civil society* literacy is curiously absent from American college curriculums. *Civil society* per se is not a subject that undergraduate college students can customarily study in the United States. This is a puzzling omission for four immediate reasons.

First, students depart their college years to claim places as newcomers somewhere in civil society. They will forge new and varied relationships as neighbors, activists, and voters. Concurrently, they will rework continuing relationships with family and friends. This fact of chronological progression is one reason (and reason enough) to create a place for *civil society literacy* in a college curriculum.

Second, an undergraduate college education is for many adults their final participation ever in an organized educational process. Much changes in civil society over the course of adulthood. This lasting and widening distance between formal college study and civilian adulthood is a good reason to create a place in a college curriculum for the unfolding practice of *civil society literacy*.

Third, it is customary for colleges to brand their undergraduate curriculums as preparation for a working career. *Career preparation* is a diminished projection of adulthood. This branding obscures such civilian challenges as caring for an aging parent, mediating a family dispute, assuming obligations, accepting the considered judgments of others, accepting loss, basking unexpectedly in the spotlight, and restarting a devastated civilian life.[8] Each of these challenges tests a civilian's knowledge and capacity to learn. Each of these challenges transcends employment and career. The complexity of civilian adulthood is one more good reason to create a place for *civil society literacy* in a college curriculum.

Fourth, civil society is common ground where we college teachers and our students move together, different as we are in age and experience. Through conversation, we teachers and students can see that challenges of civilian adulthood span conventional divisions among young, middle-aged, and elderly. The fact that we teachers and our students move side by side in civil society is a good (and practical) reason to create a place for *civil society literacy* in a college curriculum.

In sum, we can infer that American higher education operates on the assumption that four years of undergraduate college study necessarily paves the way into and through civilian adulthood. I defy such nonchalance. I do so by writing a book *about civil society* and about habits of *civil society literacy*. This is a book about a college teaching endeavor in which *Think*

like a civilian, in one another's continuing and intriguing company is the guiding imperative.[9]

A Book of Teaching Plans

This book contains plans for teaching civil society literacy where *civilian life and water* intersect. In these teaching plans, civil society is hydraulic, shaped through our organized access to water. *Hydraulics* pertains to the organized, engineered movement of fluids.[10] Civilian life in civil society is necessarily a hydraulic experience. A hydraulic civilian life entails ready access to water resources through organized water services. We civilians rely on hydraulics for potable water and for disposal of wastewater. The availability of such services is a hallmark of modern civilization.

Eight Propositions

These teaching plans are anchored in eight (8) propositions about civilian life in hydraulic civil society. These propositions are: Togetherness, Projects, Agreement, Locale, Dominion, Inheritance, Drama, and Fragility. These propositions comprise the civil society literacy framework that I present in this book. A full chapter is devoted to a teaching plan centered on one proposition. Table I-1 contains full expression of these propositions.

Working Purposefully with Propositions

A proposition is a statement created purposefully at the intersection of ideas and evidence. A proposition is purposeful in three respects. First, a proposition is intended to serve as a prelude to thoughtful action; a proposition is a considered proposal. Second, a proposition points in a direction in which action can proceed; a proposition is a proposed route for action.[11] Third, a proposition is communicated to another party; a proposition is a persuasive device.

These facets converge when college teachers encourage learners to adopt habits that sum into the act of inquiry.[12] Inquiry is what a literate civilian learns to do. Inquiry is the principal action encouraged in the eight teaching plans.

Each proposition name is a noun that pertains to some facet of civilian life in hydraulic civil society. Each proposition serves as guide for inquiry about civilian life in civil society. Implicit in each proposition is an imperative to inquiry attentively.