

# Popular Press Biology Readings: Assignments Beyond the Summary

Alysa Remsburg

Center for Biodiversity, Unity College, 90 Quaker Hill Rd, Unity ME 04988 USA  
([aremsburg@unity.edu](mailto:aremsburg@unity.edu))

A wide variety of biology-focused news articles and popular books bring alive the relevance of challenging biology concepts. As a result of their writing style, students are much more interested and willing to read these biology explanations than their textbook. A supplemental mass-media reading assignment that includes much student choice can foster learning from a diverse student body. The accompanying think-piece writing assignments require that students practice critical thinking, rather than simply summarizing articles. A survey assessing disposition suggests that the assignment sparked many students' interest to learn more about biology topics and helped some students improve writing skills. The written reflections can also prepare students for discussions during class, although timing and student choice of articles pose challenges. Accompanying this poster are lists of suggested articles and excerpts from the popular press for the think-piece assignments in introductory biology and conservation biology courses.

**Link to Original Poster:** [www.ableweb.org/volumes/vol-32/poster?art=70](http://www.ableweb.org/volumes/vol-32/poster?art=70)

**Link to Other Supplemental Files:** [www.ableweb.org/volumes/vol-32/remsburg/supplement.htm](http://www.ableweb.org/volumes/vol-32/remsburg/supplement.htm)

## Mission, Review Process & Disclaimer

The Association for Biology Laboratory Education (ABLE) was founded in 1979 to promote information exchange among university and college educators actively concerned with teaching biology in a laboratory setting. The focus of ABLE is to improve the undergraduate biology laboratory experience by promoting the development and dissemination of interesting, innovative, and reliable laboratory exercises. For more information about ABLE, please visit <http://www.ableweb.org/>.

Papers published in *Tested Studies for Laboratory Teaching: Peer-Reviewed Proceedings of the Conference of the Association for Biology Laboratory Education* are evaluated and selected by a committee prior to presentation at the conference, peer-reviewed by participants at the conference, and edited by members of the ABLE Editorial Board.

## Citing This Article

Rensburg A. 2011. Popular press biology readings: assignments beyond the summary. Article 70 In: McMahon K, editor. *Tested studies for laboratory teaching*. Volume 32. Proceedings of the 32<sup>nd</sup> Conference of the Association for Biology Laboratory Education (ABLE). <http://www.ableweb.org/volumes/vol-32/?art=70>  
Compilation © 2011 by the Association for Biology Laboratory Education, ISBN 1-890444-17-0. All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, or otherwise, without the prior written permission of the copyright owner.

ABLE strongly encourages individuals to use the exercises in this proceedings volume in their teaching program. If this exercise is used solely at one's own institution with no intent for profit, it is excluded from the preceding copyright restriction, unless otherwise noted on the copyright notice of the individual chapter in this volume. Proper credit to this publication must be included in your laboratory outline for each use; a sample citation is given above.