

Benjamin Davidson

October 27, 2008

Section C- Blue

Assabet River Bank

Toward the south, the land is covered by dense, covering trees, and toward the north, an eddy in the Assabet River twists, turns, and swirls. Above the south bank, a lightning-struck tree hangs in balance on top of another tree. Even though it is moderately cold, the sun shines between two distant cumulus clouds. The slow moving river and the stagnant wind can barely be heard through the trees. A diverse collection of small plants is found in every direction. Closer to the ground, the multi-colored leaves are wet from rainfall, and the soil is damp and cold. In addition, several small spiders and insects roam on the soil. Close to the bank, humans have made paths and even rope bridges in the past. Due to a very large presence of beavers, felled trees litter the ground. Along the Assabet River Bank, it is evident that there are signs of animal and plant activities such as parasitism, life cycles, and human impact.

On the banks of the Assabet River, evidence of parasitism, a form of symbiosis in which one organism harms another for its own benefit, is present. One instance is the relationship between the pine trees and the beavers in the area. Approximately twenty-five large pine trees and numerous small trees have been razed. The relationship is parasitic because the beaver maintains its incisors and gains material

for a dam or lodge while the tree dies. Another parasitic relationship present along the banks of the Assabet River is the relationship between plants and invasive vines (*Smilax sp.*). The vine uses the plant as a means to grow, while the plant often dies, receives less sunlight, or is not able to be pollinated. Such relationships indicate a strong parasitic relationship between the organisms of the Assabet River.

It is also evident that there are signs of organism life cycles and recycling near the Assabet River. Alongside the river, there are thousands of dead leaves on the ground. Every year, leaves fall from trees as part of the life cycle of the tree. It is clear that some of these leaves have started to dry and decompose. Another sign of a life cycle is the absence of birds. Due to the colder weather, birds have migrated south, so they are not seen near the river. Another aspect of the area that is ongoing recycling is the water of the river. As the water flows, both the water and the soil are recycled. Aspects of the Assabet River show clear signs of life cycles and recycling.

However, as a result of human impact, the banks of the Assabet River are littered with man-made material. The area was once the site of tree climbing equipment, including ladders, wires, and bridges. Hence, there are several long, metal wires and large tires suspended from the trees. In addition, to provide accessibility to climbing equipment, man-made paths have been created. Consequently, numerous small organisms, such as insects and birds, have been displaced, and numerous forms of verdurous vegetation have been eliminated. Such results leave irrefutable effects of human impact.

Along the Assabet River, evidence of organic activity, such as parasitism, life cycles, and human impact, can be found everywhere. These factors suggest that the bank of the Assabet River is a place of constant growth, death, and change. It is unmistakable that humans have caused negative effects to the area. Even with the presence of humans, the organisms of the bank continue their life cycles.