

Welcome! We are looking forward to your arrival on campus this fall. One of your first activities as a College of Charleston student will be **New Student Convocation on Monday, August 21st from 9:30-11:30am**. You have just received a copy of *The Big Thirst*, by Charles Fishman. This book will form the basis for your small group discussions with a faculty member and your peers at Convocation and again in your First Year Experience course (and perhaps other courses as well).

Preparing for Convocation After reading *The Big Thirst*, choose one of the options below. All three require that you prepare a one to two-page essay, but one provides an opportunity to add a creative visual. Consider each option carefully and select the one that most appeals to you. **You will need to bring a hard copy of your work with your name on it to Convocation and give it to the faculty member leading your discussion.** Take some care in completing this preparation as this will be the first evidence of the quality of your work as a college student. Make use of the Reading Guide on the other side and the resources available on The College Reads! website (collegereads.cofc.edu).

CHOOSE ONE:

Changing the Public's Perceptions about Water

In the first chapter, "The Revenge of Water," Fishman writes, "Politics, economics, and language are the tools we use to manage conflict and scarcity--and in the new era of scarcity we are entering we'll need all three to handle water" (p 23). Yet, at the same time, Fishman argues these tools fall short when it comes to water because we perceive it to be unlimited, safe, and free. After reading key chapters in *The Big Thirst*, craft a persuasive essay designed to change the public's view of water (hint: think of this as similar to a letter to the editor or a blog post). Your goal in this essay is to engage the public with the future of water in a way that calls them to action. Make the invisibility of water more visible by drawing on specific examples from the book. You might emphasize the need for conservation or the variable quality of water, or address issues of access or economics, among other concerns.

Visualizing Water Issues

Fishman fills his book with statistics and examples of water crises in order to help readers rethink their relationship with water. For some readers, however, all of this information can be overwhelming. One way to manage this material is to translate it into a visual form. Choose your favorite chapter and create a visual representation of a problem or a solution that Fishman describes in detail. Be sure to include specific information from the chapter. You could use a free online infographic tool like Canva, which is very user-friendly and offers lots of templates. Alternately, you could make a small poster. Choose your favorite materials (digital or art supplies) and get creative with the goal of helping the College of Charleston campus community better understand our relationship with water and why it matters. In addition to your graphic, please include a brief written statement that describes your intention in creating the visual. You can attach this to the back.

Identifying Solutions to Local Water Issues in Your Hometown

Charles Fishman contends that "all water problems are local, or regional, and their solutions must be local and regional." Fortunately, as Fishman notes, "water problems can be solved, but only by taking a hard look at reality." As an emerging scholar-citizen of voting age, you will be challenged to understand such complex issues and work towards solutions. Compose an analytical essay that accomplishes the following:

First, identify and describe an important local or regional water issue related to a stream, lake, river, or canal that is impacting your home town. Issues may relate to water quantity, pollution, and/or the politics surrounding its use. If you are unfamiliar with these issues, explore the "know your watershed" websites linked below, or conduct research using your local or state newspaper. Second, find a case in *The Big Thirst* that shares some features with the local issue you're working on. Describe the connections you see between the two situations. What kind of possible solution to this problem does the book describe or inspire? Finally, conclude by noting how you could contribute towards enacting the solution.

Resources:

Surf Your Watershed: <https://cfpub.epa.gov/surf/locate/index.cfm>

Drought Tracker: <https://water.usgs.gov/ogw/drought/>

Find a local non-profit, like Waterkeeper: <http://waterkeeper.org/waterkeepers/>