To Cindy:

Imagine me.
Sitting here.
Back pain.
Eyes out of focus. One more color to try. Downloading one more architectural graphic. I'm addicted. I can't stop. I actually cut my own hair the other day because I haven't been able to get away from this thing long enough to make a hair appointment. (I only had time to cut the top. It looks really weird.)

Like cigarettes, the first few attempts were nauseating. With HTML coding there was no hope for habit. It was enough to simply watch other people tour jette through the cybergdance of webweaving. Anne, with one quick flick of the keyboard, transforms text, imports and edits graphics, blends colors. . .

Puff puff. NOT Evie. I clunked. I clattered. Fell off my chair a few times. Even spat scornful insults at my labmates. Not that I expected to perform the dance, but at least I could fake it--but no! Puff, but not inhale.

Well, like cigarettes, I gave it up as a rotten trick devised by Technology to get me hooked. I was determined not to be Determined. But then Cindy said, "tut tut my dear, you really don't have to show your web site to the other students. We older folks often struggle to learn new skills. It's okay, dear, you've already had a long and productive life. No need to prove yourself...we'll understand."

So HA! I'm BACK! And I'm not done YET! In fact, I can face the possibility that I'll have to scrap the whole thing and start over and that doesn't phase me one tiny bit. Cause now I'm havin' FUN.

So, take a look, Cindy. This thing is going GLOBAL!!!

Here's the serious side (I think). How to evaluate a web site. I'm concerned about purpose and functions. At first I thought, "what the heck is this thing for? Nobody's gonna see this. Who cares about Evie Johnson's teaching portfolio." After all, I landed a teaching job in Ohio without a website. I just figured websites were a passing fad. Just imagine if everybody in the world had a website. Boring. I don't look at websites very often, so I didn't think mine would be of much interest to me or anybody else.

Now, that may well be true, but this being a post-modern world, as I almost forgot, we must consider the process. So that's where the interesting stuff is happening. I've been thinking about the process of teaching as well as producing web pages. There's not time or space here to do a careful analysis of that process (although, if I had been keeping a learning journal, there would be).
I think the web page is a terrific teacher of page design issues, for instance. And isn't it amazing how different producing a paper page is from producing an electronic page? Reader expectations, purposes, and repertoires are harder to tackle when you're an on-line rhetorician. That's why my page got out of control. I was putting stuff in for prospective employers, for my own use, for teachers, students... for my teachers. And maybe that's okay, but I feel like I could—should—go back and define my project much more carefully now that I've defined my process for doing this type of work.

Right now my web site is a little behind my awareness of what makes a website "good." So, like writing, the process is knowledge-generating, but the product reflects an unsatisfying representation of what this writer-composer has come to know. This is the essence of reflection, it occurs to me. I have always thought of reflection as looking back on a piece and discussing that piece with the insight that was born of the process of creating it. The web site-making process helped me understand recursive reflection more fully.

What makes my website good? The first page is organized and useable. I can use my lesson plans, project them for students, easily revise them. I like the way stuff is connected, and I like some of the cute stuff like the bug. What will I change? I'll simplify the first page, and I'll make it easy to add more instructional units. I want to make the design of the pages sleek and consistent. I want them to have common features so viewers feel connected. I want the pages to be as useful in hard copy as they are on the screen. And I want to add more levels. Let me know if you have any ideas. I found Aubrey's comments very constructive.

I started this web site process as if it were an 'exercise'. The pieces were not real. Now they are. I think I've sometimes written pieces for other classes that were somehow distanced from reality. Students do this, I think. They work for the criteria of the class; they work for the teacher's evaluation, and that can limit their thinking to considering their process as an exercise. As always, the job of the teacher is to lead students to the place where they bridge the gap and know that their work is actual, not virtual. So that happened for me with the web page.

I'm going to try to respond to the others' sites. The problem is, I don't know if web sites are a media, or a storage system. (For that matter, isn't all text both genre and storage system? A document with recognizable surface and content features plus a receptacle for information, plus a platform where new knowledge can be made.) When web sites are contemplated as a storage system, then they should function as a systematizer of information access and acquisition. When considered as a genre, there must be some features that identify them as web pages. Well, I'm still arguing with myself on these issues. There are some interesting tensions set up that weren't apparent to me earlier.

Thanks for allowing me to work with your class. It was a great experience for me. I learned a lot, and am looking forward to next fall. The students were an eclectic crew—I learned a lot from them. I wonder what the next bunch will be like. I'm sorry you won't be here to talk to, but I'll be eager to hear about your new experiences. See ya!
Evie.