In this talk, we will present the results of an exploration of the common learning experiences across many different sections of the same mathematics course. Our findings are based on students’ journal reflections kept during a full semester and collected over the last four years. Upon reading the students’ writings we were surprised to find that regardless of the particular semester (fall or spring) and the particular course section, a cycle emerged on the students’ academic lives. Our analysis rendered a break down of the semester into four distinct periods affecting the students’ learning experience. In this presentation we will share descriptions of the different periods in the students’ own words, as well as offer suggestions for teaching practices aimed at improving student-learning outcomes based on our findings. (Received September 22, 2009)