

Dear Mr. Leopold,

It is 2009. I'm sitting in a damp field, simply waiting; the ominous belches of thunder seem to indicate that the sky will soon be crying. As you once said, the mountains hold secrets deep within, do the skies as well? Can the skies feel what we, the human race, is doing to possibly destroy every inch of the versatile beauty it possesses?

The natural world, a world outside of our familiar day to day, wants to be heard and seems to radiate with knowledge. This is a world some will see but will never experience. This is the path less traveled, where roads don't lead the way but where you do. Where street signs aren't indicators of direction but where the North Star is. Where home isn't temperature regulated and your work isn't done for you but where you can't escape the weather and the only way to do something is to do it yourself. You are no longer surrounded by tall buildings and the faint smell of gasoline but a raw beauty, no words or pictures can depict accurately. Higher and farther you must go to be able to see clearly not only the panorama of rugged mountains, graceful hills, and endless skies but also the affect your life has on another world right outside your backyard.

Mr. Leopold, although what you wrote so many years ago seems ancient to the modern generation, the message holds a deeper meaning today, as we battle ourselves in trying to preserve a world where things are less trivial and where a gust of wind may be telling us more than we know. We live in a world where we have sought to deprive our surroundings and give little back in return. This is the time to educate humanity on the positivity of preservation, not for us but so that our children's children can have the opportunity to see perfection in something that is not man-made. I want to say thank you, you have forewarned us of our power, and now it is our choice as to whether we use this power for good or for bad.

Sincerely,

Sierra Smith

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First Place Award: Grade 10-12 Category