

Dear Mr. Leopold,

I really enjoyed reading your essays. They go very deep and leave you thinking for hours afterwards. I believe that the theme of these essays and of *A Sand County Almanac* – ‘land ethic’ – is still very important. Land ethic makes me think first of connections – with animals and plants all around us, and each other. Connections like those are always important. Life today is pretty crazy – all hustle-bustle and rushing around. In all that chaos, we can sometimes forget to slow down and remember where it all comes from and remember other parts of the land around us. It is always important, no matter how high-tech and busy the age happens to be, to listen and watch for little things – like connections – like a howling wolf or a baby tree or the distant winds on the mountaintops.

As an example, say someone is building a house. It’s a still, warm desert evening and a dry wind rolls lazily across the butte. As the last worker puts down his shovel, the far-off yip of a coyote flies across the mesa. The worker’s head turns automatically towards the lonely sounds, and he isn’t thinking of the job or of dinner at home. His thoughts are with the coyote, and he is imagining its life on the dusty butte among the yucca and cactus, running under the hot sun and clear stars. And he looks down at the shovel in his hand and thinks, *what might that coyote think of this?*

That is land ethic to me – stopping to think about the other parts of your environment, to care for them and share life with them. We are part of a bigger picture of life, and disregarding the other parts is a huge mistake. Land ethic is about balance and respect, connection and vision. That is always important, whether it’s yesterday, today, tomorrow, or fifty years from next week.

Thank you for your wonderful ideas, and I look forward to finishing *A Sand County Almanac*.

Your Friend,

Zena Stevenson

Grade: 8

School: Eagle Nest Middle School

Teacher: Janet Martin

Hometown: Red River, NM

First Place Award: Grade 8-9 Category