

The Peace of Wild Things

Sample Essay

In *Walden*, Henry David Thoreau writes, “I went to the woods because I wished to live deliberately, to front only the essential facts of life, and see if I could not learn what it had to teach, and not, when I came to die, discover that I had not lived.” Thoreau went to live at Walden Pond because he wanted to learn from nature. There are others who also believe that nature can teach us important lessons about ourselves and our world. Nature has taught Gary Paulsen, Don Welch, and I that we are all a part of a world that is much larger than ourselves.

The writer opens with a quotation as a hook. This is a relevant quote that leads naturally into the thesis.

The writer funnels into a clear thesis, a direct response to the writing prompt. It provides a “map” for the rest of the essay by identifying Paulsen, Welch, and herself as the 3 examples she will use to illustrate what nature has taught them all.

In his book, *Hatchet*, Gary Paulsen explores what it means to a part of the natural world. In this book, Brian Robeson, 13 years old, has to survive in the wilderness after a plane crash. He is alone and doesn’t know where he is or if he will survive. For many days, he eats what he can find and makes his own tools and weapons. Eventually, he finds the survival pack from the airplane. In it, he discovers a rifle. Paulsen writes, “It was a strange feeling, holding the rifle. It somehow removed him from everything around him. Without the rifle he had to fit in, to be part of it all, to understand it and use it - the woods, all of it.” From his experiences, Brian has learned that how important it is to be a part of the wilderness and to “fit in”. He sees that he is just a small part of a big universe. His 54 days in nature have taught him how important it is to see himself as a part of the whole natural world.

The topic sentence identifies the 1st example (Paulsen) and the lesson he learned

The writer supports the topic sentence with a strong, relevant quoted example.

The writer follows the quoted example with explanation. She makes her thinking visible here when she writes “Brian has learned how important. . .” Readers don’t have to guess how this example supports the topic sentence and thesis. She comes right out and tells them. Finally, she finishes by restating the topic sentence.

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Like Paulsen, Don Welch writes about what nature has taught him about his place in the world. A good example of this is in his poem, "To Find Me":

To find me
go to the park
with a bag of popcorn.

I'll be one of the pigeons.

The writer quotes Welch's poem, "To Find Me" as her supporting text evidence. Notice that she indents 10 spaces from the left and copies the poem exactly how it is originally written. Teachers may have to help students format their quotation who quote more than 1 line of poetry as evidence.

The writer transitions with "Like Paulsen" and identifies her 2nd example, Don Welch, in her topic sentence.

Here, Welch says that if you want to find him, you should look for him among the pigeons in the park. Just like Brian Robeson, he wants to fit in and be a part of the natural world around him. In this poem, he helps readers see that his experiences with nature have taught him that he and the park pigeons are the same.

The writer follows the text evidence with explanation, again making it clear how Welch sees himself as a part of a bigger world.

While camping with my family, I have learned more about my place in the world. One of our favorite things to do is to have campfires at night. I remember one night last summer when we were camping in the Rocky Mountains. I leaned back in my camp chair and looked up at the sky full of stars. I felt really small, like I was just a speck in the universe. That's when I realized that I am a part of something so much bigger than myself.

In the last topic sentence, the writer identifies her own experiences as the final example of a lesson that nature can teach us.

The example she provides is a personal experience. She recalls one particular camping experience during which she was looking up at the stars in the night sky. She explains how she realized that she felt small and just a part of something much larger: the universe.

Nature has been a great teacher for Gary Paulsen, Don Welch, and me. Our experiences taught us that people are just another part of a big world. Sometimes we forget our place and take advantage of nature. We clear forests, so we can make money from the trees. We pollute rivers and lakes. It's a good idea to read and learn that we should work harder to fit into nature rather than destroy it.

The writer restates her original thesis statement to open her conclusion.

She finishes her essay by offering her readers something to valuable and relevant to consider: we should think more about fitting into nature, being a natural part of it, rather than destroying it.