



The People and Philosophy Behind Our National Parks: A Biographical Curriculum Unit

Curriculum Unit 90.03.03

by Deborah E. Hare

Our National Parks cover approximately 80 million acres. This system began with the establishment of Yellowstone National Park in 1872 and is still expanding. We have many people to thank for their vision and their fight to save areas for all time. My curriculum unit will focus on some of these people whose writing, philosophies and other contributions helped save vast areas of land. This humanizes the subject, and as an English teacher I have found this an effective way to reach my students. This plan will also show the natural respect and admiration for our earth that led to the development of the National Park Service. I am particularly interested in the following individuals: Ralph Waldo Emerson, Henry David Thoreau, John Muir, Theodore Roosevelt, Gifford Pinchot, Aldo Leopold, and Edward Abbey. In addition to shaping our thoughts on wilderness, and the concepts of utilitarianism, conservation and preservation, these people shaped American politics and literature, thereby fitting into any high school history and American literature curriculum. This unit could also be team taught with a Science and English teacher, and could then include the geology and plant life of the areas.

It is my firm belief that environmental education is crucial to an understanding of how our planet works, and the necessity of conserving our natural resources and wilderness areas.

The purpose of this unit will be to:

- a. Discover the interaction of American Literature, politics and the environmental movement.
- b. Explore the changing concept and philosophy of wilderness.
- c. Explain the development of The National Park System.
- d. Define "The Wilderness Act", and the terms utilitarianism, conservation and preservation.
- e. Identify the key people and their philosophies.

An Anglo-Saxon dictionary defines the word Wild-deer as . . . “n. A wild animal, wild beast.” The etymology of the word is, “wild-deer-ness, the place of wild beasts.” Roderick Nash, in his book *Wilderness and the American Mind* writes that, “the idea of a habitat of wild beast implied the absence of men, and the wilderness was conceived as a region where a person was likely to get into a disordered, confused, or ‘wild’ condition.” Therefore, the early ideas about wilderness were frightening and negative. Wilderness was considered an area to be conquered in the name of progress and civilization.

Nash’s research shows that this concept began to change in America during the late 1800’s, and of that change he says, “Today’s appreciation of wilderness represents one of the most remarkable intellectual revolutions in the history of human thought about land.” This revolution culminated in the Wilderness Act passed by Congress in 1964. This act saved thousands of acres of remote forests, mountains and canyons. The nature of wilderness, as defined by Congress in the enactment of the act, is land untrammelled by man, who is only a visitor and does not remain. It is land without permanent improvements visited upon it, affected only by the forces of nature, and able to afford one “outstanding” opportunities for solitude, and primitive and unconfined types of recreation. Also the area of land must be at least 5,000 acres or of sufficient size as to make practical its consideration as wilderness land.

One of the people responsible for this revolution in the way people think about land was Ralph Waldo Emerson. Emerson was born in Boston, Massachusetts in 1803. His father was a minister who died young and left his family destitute. In spite of this Emerson was able to attend Harvard. After graduation he taught for a few years, briefly attended Harvard Divinity School and in 1829 became the pastor of the Unitarian Second Church in Boston. He resigned in 1832 calling the profession “antiquated.” He reached this conclusion, in part, from his travels to Europe where he discovered German Transcendentalism. He was greatly impressed with these ideas, and brought them home with him to America.

In 1835 he moved to Concord, Massachusetts where he spent the rest of his life reading, writing and giving lectures. He influenced many people, such as Thoreau, Margaret Fuller and Bronson Alcott, with his views on life and transcendentalism. These people were inspired to take up many social causes including abolitionism, the women’s movement, labor and educational reforms. They also started the first experiment in communal living at Brook Farm.

The American Transcendental movement can best be described as a philosophy that “upheld the goodness of humanity, the glories of nature, and the importance of free individual expression.”¹ Believing in the integrity of the individual, and that everyone is inherently good and worthy of respect, Transcendentalism maintained that individuals should act according to their innermost personal beliefs and convictions, rather than just blindly follow the rules of society. Emerson expressed this view in the following excerpt from his essay entitled *Self-Reliance*. “Whoso would be a man, must be a nonconformist. He who would gather immortal palms must not be hindered by the name of goodness, but must explore if it be goodness. Nothing is at last sacred but the integrity of your own mind. Absolve you to yourself, and you shall have the suffrage of the world.” The philosophy further espoused the idea that organized religion was sterile and had lost the profound sense of mystery that is found in nature. But, by communing with nature, and respecting what is natural rather than material, individuals can “transcend” this world to the world of God and ideal life.

The most famous of Emerson’s followers was Henry David Thoreau. Thoreau exemplified the individual who acts according to his own dictates rather than those of society. He helped runaway slaves escape to Canada. He spoke in defense of John Brown, and he refused to pay his poll tax which would have helped to support the Mexican War, choosing instead to go to jail.

Henry David Thoreau was born in Concord, Massachusetts in 1817 and graduated from Harvard in 1837. He once walked eighteen miles to hear Emerson deliver his famous “The American Scholar” speech, and at one point lived with Emerson’s family as a tutor and handyman. In 1839 he and his brother took a canoe trip. Thoreau recorded the journey in a book entitled *A Week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers*. In this book Thoreau describes a night on Mount Greylock, located in western Massachusetts. He fell asleep on the summit and in the morning awoke to find a heavy cloud cover. John Hanson Mitchell is a writer from Massachusetts who also decided to take a break from civilization. He built his own cabin near Walden Pond, came to love his woods and the glow of the fluorescent lights from the nearby Digital plant. He read all of Thoreau’s books and journals. Hanson wrote of his own experiment in his book *Living At The End of Time*. In this book he describes Thoreau’s experience in this way; “When he woke, he found himself in another world, as if he had died in the night and come alive again. Clouds had moved in and had settled over the valley and the lower peaks around him. He imagined that his coffin-like shelter was a boat, floating aloft about the clouds. The known world had disappeared, and as the light increased, the splendor of this higher country revealed itself. It is perhaps difficult for us, in an age when flight above the clouds cover is an ordinary experience, to appreciate the awe he must have felt at finding himself above the clouds. Getting to a high spot above the common ground of the everyday world was an event in itself; rising about the very clouds of the sky must have been a transcendent experience even for the prosaic, and Henry was hardly prosaic.” Mitchell feels that Thoreau experienced a rebirth on Greylock, because within a year he would move to Walden Pond. “Henry’s move to Walden Pond on July 4, 1845, marked the beginning of his career. It also marked the foundation of a philosophy.”² Thoreau went to Walden Pond because he wanted to strip life to its essentials, or in his own words, “I went to the woods because I wished to live deliberately, to front on 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.”

He lived there for twenty-six months, in a cabin that he built, and he grew his own vegetables. Later he would use his experiences and thoughts about that period in his life to write his best known work— *Walden*.

Thoreau died from tuberculosis when he was forty-four. A few hours before he died an aunt asked him if he had made his peace with God. Thoreau replied, “I have never quarreled with Him.”

It was Thoreau who first called for wilderness preservation. Concerned with the growth and development he witnessed in Massachusetts, he became concerned about the lack of wild places and the prospect of a completely civilized America. He came to the conclusion that as a nation, America must formally preserve nature. In 1859 he stated that each township in Massachusetts should have a park, or a primitive forest, of five hundred or a thousand acres. “The public should own such places and make them sacrosanct.”³ It was from this philosophy that the first large-scale wilderness preservation took place. On March 1, 1872 President Ulysses S. Grant designated two million acres in Wyoming as Yellowstone National Park. Although it was primarily preserved to prevent private ownership rather than to preserve wilderness, it was a powerful beginning.

In May, 1834, Warren Ferris, a clerk for American Fur Company, traveled through yellowstone with two Indian guides to see the hot springs, geysers and feel the vibrations of the area that he had heard so much about. He describes his first morning in yellowstone in the following way; “Clouds of vapor seemed like a dense fog to overhang the springs, from which frequent reports or explosions of different loudness, constantly assailed our ears. I immediately proceeded to inspect them, and might have exclaimed with the Queen of Sheba, when their full reality of dimensions and novelty burst upon my view, “ ‘The half was not told me.’ ” From the surface of a rocky plain or table, burst forth columns of water, of various dimensions, projected high in the air, accompanied by loud explosions, and sulphurous vapors . . . The largest of these wonderful fountains, projects

a column of boiling water several feet in diameter, to the height of more than one hundred and fifty feet accompanied with a tremendous noise . . . I ventured near enough to put my hand into the water of its basin, but withdrew it instantly, for the heat of the water in this immense cauldron, was altogether too great for comfort, and the agitation of the water..and the hollow unearthly rumbling under the rock on which I stood, so ill accorded with my notions of personal safety, that I retreated back precipitately to a respectful distance.”⁴ The fact that Yellowstone had so many unusual features, foreign to ordinary experience was a factor in its designation as a preserve.

Because no money was appropriated for administering or maintaining roads Yellowstone remained inaccessible to all but the hardiest travelers. For many years there was debate over the issue of who should maintain the park, and where the money should come from. In fact it took fifty years to develop a practical approach and discover what a national park should be. The Secretary of the Interior appointed Nathaniel P. Langford as Park Superintendent in May, 1872. Referring to Yellowstone Langford made the statement that “our government, having adopted it, should foster it and render it accessible to the people of all lands, who in future time will come in crowds to visit it.”⁵ By 1816 it was agreed that a national park needed a group of trained professionals to cater to its special needs. The National Park service gave the parks a force of trained men who were ordered by Congress “to conserve the scenery and the natural and historic objects and the wild life therein and to provide for the enjoyment of the same in such manner and by such means as will leave them unimpaired for the enjoyment of future generations.”⁶ In 1918 a park service ranger force, including some Army veterans, took responsibility for Yellowstone. Naturalists were also hired for nature walks and study. But, as the author David Clary in a history of Yellowstone writes, “the greatest contribution of the Park Service was a sense of mission that viewed a national park as an entity valuable for its own sake.”

This preservation mentality begun in Yellowstone spread. Many people jumped on the bandwagon of “preserving wild spaces,” but none with the fervor of John Muir. As Roderick Nash points out in *Wilderness and The American Mind*, wilderness preservation happened almost accidentally. Wild country needed a champion and found one in Muir. John Muir was born in Scotland and, when he was eleven, his family moved to America, settling in Wisconsin. “When I was a boy in Scotland, I was fond of everything that was wild, and all my life I’ve been growing fonder and fonder of wild places and wild creatures.”⁷ Even though John helped clear the land for his family farm thereby “civilizing” it, he still preferred wild nature where he felt liberated and happier. He left the farm for the University of Wisconsin where he studied geology and botany. It was through this study that he “began to look at land with a new awareness of order and pattern.”⁸ He left the University, however, after two and a half years with the statement that, “ I was only leaving one University for another, the Wisconsin University for the University of the Wilderness.”

The first project he undertook on his own was simply wandering south in the wilderness. He eventually ended up hiking 1,000 miles from Indiana to the Gulf of Mexico. Later he discovered the beauty of northern California, arriving in San Francisco in March of 1868. He walked around the Bay, into the San Joaquin Valley and on into the Sierras.

As it was for Thoreau at Walden Pond so it was for Muir in the Sierras. Here Muir was to do his best thinking and best writing. It was also here that he read the complete works of Emerson and Thoreau. The philosophy of Transcendentalism became essential to him for interpreting the value of wilderness. He believed, as they did, that insight and intuition were the path toward a higher spiritual plane. And he agreed with Emerson’s quote from his essay *Nature*; “You blend with the landscape, and become part and parcel of nature.” Muir extended this idea by saying, “the clearest way into the Universe is through a forest wilderness.” “Primitive forests were

“temples.”⁹ Everything in the Sierra wilderness for Muir seemed “equally divine—one smooth, pure, wild glow of Heaven’s love.”

In May of 1871 Muir heard that Emerson was coming for a visit to the Yosemite valley. He was very excited that his mentor and hero would finally be visiting the land Muir loved more than any other. He hoped that Emerson would hike the back country with him, but they almost did not meet because Muir had a hard time summoning the courage to introduce himself.¹⁰ Instead he wrote a letter inviting Emerson to join him “in a months worship with Nature in the high temples of the great Sierra Crown beyond our holy Yosemite. It will cost you nothing save the time & very little of that for you will be mostly in Eternity.”¹¹ Emerson, much older than Muir, opted instead for an inn. This greatly disappointed Muir who called the incident “a sad commentary on culture and transcendentalism.” The two, however, stayed in contact and Emerson later asked Muir to come to Massachusetts for a visit. Muir declined, feeling that only wilderness held any appeal for him. This enthusiasm for things and places wild was unequalled. Not even Thoreau could keep up with him, deciding that someplace between civilization and the wild was what was most comfortable for him. Not so for Muir. For Muir, “going to the woods is going home; for I suppose we came from the woods originally.”¹² He felt that the wilderness had the ability to restore ones soul, to rejuvenate and refresh, whereas civilization had distorted man’s sense of his relationship to other living things.¹³ With this philosophy Muir seems responsible for the earliest views on ecology (that we are all part of one system). He was adamant and extreme in his need for wilderness and in his desire to protect it. His desires nicely coincided with the a national concern over conserving land. Americans at that time were concerned about over development wiping out what they considered their greatest natural resource—wilderness, as had happened in Europe.

Muir began to notice more and more mountain sheep moving higher up the Sierra Valley to escape the encroachment of man. This observation coupled with his antagonistic views of private ownership of land, started his writing and lecture career. His first piece entitled *God’s First Temples: How Shall We Preserve Our Forests?* appeared in 1876 in a Sacramento newspaper. Five years later he asked Congress to create a national park in the southern Sierra’s using Yellowstone as a model. The first bill was defeated, but by continued writing and political pressure a bill passed Congress in September of 1890 creating Yosemite National Park. This was a great success for Muir, but he knew keeping the land protected would always be a struggle. In fact the greatest struggle of his life occurred a few years later in a controversy known as “Hetch Hetchy.”

Hetch Hetchy is a valley in Yosemite National Park, lying about 150 miles from San Francisco. The city, built on a dry, sandy peninsula had always faced a chronic water shortage, and the earthquake in 1906 made the water shortage even more serious. Putting a dam in the Hetch Hetchy valley seemed the easiest and quickest way to solve the problem. Muir acknowledged the need for San Francisco to have a water supply but felt that that supply could be found outside of Yosemite valley which had, by this time, already been designated a national preserve.

An argument, or a conflict of interests, developed between those people who viewed themselves as conservationists and those who viewed themselves as preservationists. This conflict can be seen quite clearly by comparing the views of John Muir with those of Gifford Pinchot, especially in the light of Yosemite National Park and the battle of Hetch Hetchy.

Gifford Pinchot, a Yale University graduate, who later started the Yale Forestry School, was the spokesman of his time for the foresters. He had studied forestry management in Europe and believed that the forests could be correctly managed to yield a constant supply of wood. He had decided on forestry as a career because he

loved the outdoors and had, in fact, spent some warm, pleasant times with John Muir backpacking and fishing. However, due to Pinchot's views of "conserving" land, versus Muir's views of "preserving" land a split developed. For Muir maintaining wilderness was not compatible with forest management. Interestingly, years later the Yale Forestry School came to the same conclusion and changed the name of the school to The Yale School of Forestry *and* Environmental Studies.

Pinchot saw the Hetch Hetchy issue as "whether the advantage of leaving this valley in a state of nature is greater than using it for the benefit of the city of San Francisco." He further declared that "the fundamental principle of the whole conservation policy is that of use, to take every part of the land and its resources and put it to that use in which it will serve the most people." ¹⁴ The other side argued that Hetchy Hetchy had spiritual significance and was a sanctuary and a temple. John Muir felt the area was of such a divine nature that he was doing the Lord's work. ¹⁵ A camper from the valley asked, "is it never ceasing; is there nothing to be held sacred by this nation; is it to be dollars only; are we to be cramped in soul and mind by the lust after filthy lucre only; shall we be left some of the more glorious places?"

The person who was in the position to make the final decision on this controversy was Theodore Roosevelt, then President of the United States. This was a particularly hard decision for Roosevelt to make because he was truly an outdoorsman who had enjoyed a long friendship with Muir and had traveled to Yosemite with him. He even remarked after sleeping out during a snowfall in Yosemite that it had been "the grandest day of my life." Roosevelt eventually sided with the engineers who argued that Hetchy Hetchy was the only practical solution to San Francisco's water problem. The case continued until President Wilson took office and in December, 1813 he signed a bill approving a dam in Hetch Hetchy. Although Muir was devastated he took some consolation in the knowledge that the controversy had awakened people to wilderness issues and that "the conscience of the whole country has been aroused from sleep." ¹⁶ According to Roderick Nash, "the most significant thing about the controversy over the valley was that it occurred at all. One hundred or even fifty years earlier a similar proposal to dam a wilderness river would not have occasioned the slightest ripple of public protest."

"Conservation is a state of harmony between men and land" wrote Aldo Leopold in his classic book *A Sand County Almanac*. This quote, I think, best shows the next phase of the wilderness preservation movement. Empowered by the teachings and writings of those before him Leopold entertained the notion that the land and the people are *connected*. He went beyond the view that wilderness should be protected for sentimental and romantic reasons. He believed it should also be preserved for scientific reasons, and with this view the science of ecology came of age. Leopold felt that man had only a small part in the intricate, complex pattern of life on earth. As he himself termed it, "we are only fellow-voyageurs with other creatures in the odyssey of evolution."

Aldo Leopold was born in Iowa in 1887. He was later educated at The Yale Forestry School and, like Gifford Pinchot, decided on a career in forestry. His first job was as a forest assistant in New Mexico and while there he became very interested in wildlife preservation, and the quality of American life in general. He founded the profession of game management and was one of the founders of the Wilderness Society. In 1924 he initiated the first Forest Wilderness Area in the United States, now known as the Gila National Forest. It was during his years working for the National Forest Service that he developed what he termed an "ecological conscience." ¹⁷ This conscience, according to Leopold, would be a genuine respect for all forms of life, and an understanding of the interdependence of all living things. He further explains this philosophy as "a science of relationships called ecology, but what we call it matters nothing. The question is, does the educated citizen know he is only a cog in an ecological mechanism? That if he will work with that mechanism his mental wealth and his

material wealth can expand indefinitely? But that if he refuses to work with it, it will ultimately grind him to dust? If education does not teach us these things, then what is education for?" ¹⁸

Aldo Leopold was concerned too that if we lost all the wilderness areas that there would be nothing left to counteract the effects of civilization which he believed was hurting man spiritually. In civilization's attempt to eradicate "fear" and make life "easy" by building supermarkets and adding air conditioning to buildings, modern man felt alienated and empty. "It must be a poor life," he said, after a night on a New Mexico mountaintop, "that achieves freedom from fear." Leopold also wanted to tear down the Christian ethic that man had dominion over all living things and replace it with the "land ethic." The land ethic "simply enlarges the boundaries of the community to include soils, waters, plants and animals, or collectively the land." ¹⁹ Leopold began to regret his early days as a hunter, helping to eliminate predators, thereby damaging the natural predator/prey relationships and upsetting the natural balance of life and death. His land ethic sought to preserve the integrity, stability and beauty of the land. He wanted to change the role of man from that of conqueror and destroyer to that of member. He knew this change would not happen fast. In 1948 he died while helping his neighbor fight a brush fire on his farm. He left behind the manuscript for what would become his most famous work, *A Sand County Almanac* , but did not live to see it in print.

Edward Abbey, who died in 1989, was a true iconoclast. He sprang to popularity in 1975 with the publication of *The Monkey Wrench Gang* , a novel about four people who drive around in a jeep trying their best to destroy any signs of industrial development in the Southwest. These people would later be thought of as environmental guerrillas or ecoterrorists. The book is an important one because it combines a narrative style, with action, adventure, humor and politics. One of the ecoterrorists, also known as "monkey wrenchers," is a Vietnam Vet who wonders what has happened to his country. Abbey had the unique ability to combine Leopold's philosophy of the land ethic with the radical politics of the 1960's.

Abbey also wrote a brilliant essay entitled *The Damning of Glen Canyon* , which refers to the Glen Canyon dam in Utah and the result—Lake Powell. The Sierra Club has an excellent video that shows the region before and after the dam. It is heartbreaking when you actually see the loss and for Abbey, who had traveled there extensively, it was devastating. His most profound book is *Desert Solitaire—A Season in the Wilderness* , published in 1968. It is a philosophical, insightful look back at the months he spent as a park ranger in Arches National Park in Moab, Utah. *The New York Times Book Review* had this to say about *Desert Solitaire* ; "This book may well seem like a ride on a bucking bronco. It is rough, tough, combative. The author is a rebel and an eloquent loner. His is a passionately felt, deeply poetic book. It has philosophy. It has humor." Abbey himself gives the reader a warning in the introduction: "Do not jump into your automobile next June and rush out to the canyon country hoping to see some of that which I have attempted to evoke in these pages. In the first place you can't see anything from a car; you've got to get out of the goddamned contraption and walk, better yet crawl, on hands and knees, over the sandstone and through the thornbush and cactus. When traces of blood begin to mark your trail you'll see something, maybe. Probably not. In the second place most of what I write about in this book is already gone or going under fast. This is not a travel guide but an elegy. A memorial. You're holding a tombstone in your hands. A blood rock. Don't drop it on your foot—throw it at something big and glassy. What do you have to lose?" ²⁰

Abbey was an individualist who enjoyed breaking a few of society's rules. He was born on a farm in Pennsylvania but spent all of his adult life in the Southwest. He was married at least six times, and his ashes are scattered over an area in the Canyonlands National Park—an area he loved very much.

I have tried to show in this narrative a sampling of contributions from a variety of people, and the main forces

and ideas that have been at work in what is now called the environmental movement. It is my hope that students will discover new people, new ideas and new places that they will get excited about and want to share with the rest of the class. I hope this will give them some new heroes. The environmental movement at the present time is an active one. There are many, many issues that need immediate care and attention. It is my desire to see a new generation of environmental activists. After all it is their planet, their future and as Abbey would say . . . what do they have to lose?

Student Activities

1. Each student will receive a National Park Service map to explore and then pick a favorite geographical region, and a National Park to write about for a research paper. This activity must include a trip to the library.
2. We will read sections of Thoreau, Muir, Abbey and Emerson with a set of questions for the students to develop their own essays.
3. Students will discuss and then formulate their own version of the “wilderness act.”
4. Students will design their own parks, national or local.
5. Student debate on the Hetch Hetchy controversy and the Glen Canyon Dam.
6. Field trips to two New Haven Landmarks including the New Haven green.
7. Hike to the top of East Rock Park.
8. An overnite at Killam’s Point in Branford out of which will come a piece of reflective, philosophical writing by the student.
9. Students will discover and interview a local environmental hero.

Notes

1. James E. Miller, Jr., Carlota Cardenas de Dwyer Kerry M. Wood, *The United States in Literature* (Glenview, Illinois: Scott, Foresman and Company, 1985), p.158.
2. John Hanson Mitchell, *Living at the End of Time* (Boston, Mass.: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1990), p.34.
3. Roderick Nash, *Wilderness and The American Mind* (New Haven, Ct.: Yale University Press, 1967), p. 102.

4. David A. Clary, *The Place Where Hell Bubbled Up* (Washington, D.C.: Office of Publications, U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1972), p. 1.
5. Ibid., p. 38.
6. Ibid., p. 44.
7. Roderick Nash, *Wilderness and The American Mind* (New Haven, Ct: Yale University Press, 1967), p. 122.
8. Ibid., p.123.
9. Ibid., p.126.
10. David Harmon, ed., *Mirror of America , Literary Encounters with the National Parks* (Boulder, Colorado: Roberts Rinehart, Inc. Publishers, 1989) p. 1.
11. Ibid., p. 2.
12. Roderick Nash, *Wilderness and The American Mind* (New Haven, Ct: Yale University Press, 1967), p. 128.
13. Ibid., p. 128.
14. Ibid., p. 171.
15. Ibid., p. 167.
16. Ibid., p. 180.
17. Ibid., p. 192.
18. Aldo Leopold, *A Sand County Almanac* (New york: Ballantine Books, 1866), p. 210.
19. Roderick Nash, *Wilderness and The American Mind* (New Haven, Ct: Yale University Press, 1967), p. 197.
20. Edward Abbey, *Desert Solitaire* (New York, New York: Ballantine Books, 1968), p. xii, introduction.

STUDENT BIBLIOGRAPHY

Abbey, Edward. *The Monkey Wrench Gang* , New York, New York: Avon Books, 1975.

This novel is an adventure story with both politics and humor. “Monkey wrenching” is a term that refers to the antics of eco-terrorists who believe in destroying the machines and man made dams and bridges that they feel destroy the earth.

Callenbach, Ernest. *Ecotopia* , New York, New York: Bantam Books. 1975.

This work of science fiction first published in 1975 by the author is now becoming a best seller. It is a simple, yet provocative book about how we could live in an environmentally sound world, especially if the Pacific Northwest seceded from the union.

The Earthworks Group. *Fifty Simple Things You Can Do To Save The Earth* , Berkeley, California: Earthworks Press, 1989.

A clear, readable collection of simple ecologically sound ideas that students can incorporate into their own lives at school and at home. Everything from recycling newspapers to car pooling to home energy efficiency.

Harmon, David. *Mirror of America—Literary Encounters with the National Parks* , Boulder, Colorado: Roberts Rinehart, Inc., 1989.

This would be a terrific book for classroom use as it contains a collection of essays from many of the world’s greatest writers including Emerson, Henry James, Charles Dickens and Mark Twain. They are short, well-written and reflective.

MacLean, Norman. *A River Runs Through It*. Chicago, Illinois: University of Chicago Press, 1976.

This is a poignant, insightful novel about fly-fishing and childhood memories. There is advice for young folks and it is beautifully written.

McPhee, John. *Encounters with the Archdruid* , New York, New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1971.

John McPhee manages to show both sides of a variety of environmental concerns in this non-fiction book that deals with David Brower, then head of the Sierra Club and three of his enemies on a canoe trip. Excellent for debating issues and trying to understand the other side.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Abbey, Edward. *Desert Solitaire—A Season in the Wilderness* , New York, New York: Ballantine Books, 1968.

Clary, David A. *The Place Where Hell Bubbled Up: A History of the First National Park* , U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, 1972.

Harmon, David, ed. *Mirror of America—Literary Encounters with the National Parks* , Boulder, Colorado:

Roberts Rinehart, Inc. 1989.

Leopold, Aldo. *A Sand County Almanac* , New York, New York: Oxford University Press, 1966.

Miller, James E., de Dwyer, Carlota, Wood, Kerry M. *The United States in Literature* , Glenview, Illinois: Scott, Foresman and Company, 1985.

Mitchell, John Hanson. *Living At The End of Time* , Boston, Mass: Houghton, Mifflin & Co, 1990.

Nash, Roderick. *Wilderness and The American Mind* , New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 1967.

The National Parks: Index 1989 , Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of the Interior, 1989.

Project Learning Tree Activity Guide 7-12 , Washington, D.C. Western Regional Environmental Education Council and the American Forest Foundation, 1988.

Turner, Frederick. *Rediscovering America* , New York, New York: Viking, 1985.

Thoreau, Henry David. *Walden* , Salt Lake City, Utah, Gibbs M. Smith, Inc. 1981.

<https://teachersinstitute.yale.edu>

©2019 by the Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute, Yale University

For terms of use visit <https://teachersinstitute.yale.edu/terms>

Support Our Work. National Geographic Headquarters 1145 17th Street NW Washington, DC 20036. ABOUT. National Geographic Society. Throughout human history, most societies have sought to understand something about their place in the world, and the people and environments around them. Indeed, mapmaking probably came even before writing in many places. But ancient Greek geographers were particularly influential.