

## **(Sample Comparative Essay 1)**

Sample Student

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English 101A

Comparative Analysis Essay

### Indians vs. Floridians

In the excerpt, "Talking to the Owls and Butterflies" by John (Fire) Lame Deer and Richard Erdoes and the short story, "Save the Whales, Screw the Shrimp" by Joy Williams the authors share examples of how people are destroying the environment and not taking care of the land they live on. In "Talking to the Owls and Butterflies" Lame Deer and Erdoes explain how the Indians live at peace with nature and how white men have violated the land and are always trying to take more and more from it. Lame Deer and Erdoes explain how white men treat the land and animals differently than Indians do. They give examples of how the white men alter the animals they eat instead of eating them in their natural state and how they are trying to get rid of everything natural, including body odor. Lame Deer and Erdoes take a peaceful approach to explain to the reader how the Indians look at nature and how it is different than how North American's look at nature. Lame Deer and Erdoes try to politely convince readers that they should change how they treat the world they live in or it will be destroyed. In "Save the Whales, Screw the Shrimp" Williams takes a sarcastic approach to tell readers that they are not taking care of the land they live on. Williams critiques how North American people view nature and then she sarcastically makes fun of the choices they make;

choices like eating shrimp instead of cows. Williams talks about farmers and how they produce too much food and the reader's de-sensitivity to the words acid rain. "Talking to the Owls and Butterflies" and "Save the Whales, Screw the Shrimp" are both effective in convincing readers to change how they view and treat the land they live on, but the writings take very different approaches to convince readers. Both writings have a strong introduction and conclusion and both writings express frustration with North Americans, but the authors express their frustration in different ways. Lame Deer and Erdoes use the passion for Indian culture to express their anger, fear and frustration, while, Williams uses sarcasm and criticism to express hers.

"Talking to the Owls and Butterflies" opens with Lame Deer inviting the reader to, "sit down here, all of us, on the open prairie, where we can't see a highway or a fence. Let's have no blankets to sit on, but feel the ground with our bodies, the earth, the yielding shrubs" (687). Lame Deer invites the reader into his world, a world that is built around taking care of and respecting the land and its animals. The reader feels compelled to follow along on the journey and Lame Deer's invitation builds a relationship with the reader before he starts criticizing how the reader treats the land. Lame Deer continues his opening telling the reader that he or she needs to feel and talk to the land (687). "Save the Whales, Screw the Shrimp" starts with Williams criticizing the reader. This approach immediately puts the reader on the defensive, but it also draws the reader in. Williams calls the reader selfish and says, "Your greed and vanities and quest for self-fulfillment have catered to far too much" and "your eyes glaze as you travel life's highway past all the crushed animals and Big Gulp cups" (704). Williams' criticizing approach is off putting to some readers, but it also pushes them to continue reading. Readers

continue reading because they find the criticism compelling, because being criticized keeps the people's attention and to find something wrong with the writing, something that is not worth being criticized. Although the two introductions are distinctly different they are both very effective in keeping the reader's attention and pushing the reader to continue reading.

"Talking to the Owls and Butterflies" and "Save the Whales, Screw the Shrimp" are written in completely different tones. "Talking to the Owls and Butterflies" takes a gentle, persuading approach. Lame Deer talks about his life as an Indian and how he treated the land and the animals. He criticized the white man's way of altering animals: "You have altered, declawed and malformed your winged and four-legged cousins; you have done it to yourself" (688). He talks about how white people are afraid of the land they have created and he explains why the land is not good. Even though Lame Deer is critiquing the white man his tone clearly states that his criticism is meant to be constructive. The reader wants to change and to take better care of the land because of the gentle tone that Lame Deer uses. Lame Deer talks about a vision he has where "the machine stops and [the white people] are helpless because they have forgotten how to make do without the machines" (691). Lame Deer's sadness for what will happen to the white people if the machines stop can be felt in his writing. The compassion pushes the reader to want to make a change. Lame Deer also plays on the reader's emotions by talking about what he saw when his mother died. He uses the emotion of sadness to convince the reader to want to be more in touch with nature.

"Save the Whales, Screw the Shrimp" takes a much less peaceful approach to convince readers to change how they treat nature. Williams opens with an insult and she continually uses insults and sarcasm to tell her story. Williams talks about a "Master Planned Community"

and how it is meant to look natural, but really it is anything but natural (707). She says, “The ultimate lawn is the golf course, which you’ve been told has ‘some ecological value.’ You believe this! Not that it really matters – you just like to play golf” (707). Williams is insulting golfers and saying they do not care about the environment. It is not true that all golfers do not care about the environment, but this insulting comment pushes the issue that planting grass for golf courses does not make a community natural. Williams is using an extreme to make her point and to make the reader see that something has to change if the environment is going to be preserved. Williams’ continued use of sarcasm and insults forces the reader to acknowledge that there is a problem even if it does not compel him or her to make a change.

The authors of the two pieces of work both use surprising and strong conclusions. Lane Deer talks about being a friend with nature in the conclusion of “Talking to the Owls and Butterflies.” He talks about a vision he had after his mom’s death. In the vision the animals are interacting with him and talking to him. He is one with nature and he says, “All of nature is in me, and a bit of myself is in all of nature” (693). In the vision Lane Deer sees a peaceful world where he lives at peace with the environment. His conclusion is trying to persuade the reader to do the same, to live at peace with nature, instead of trying to change it. Williams’ conclusion in “Save the Whales, Screw the Shrimp” is once again insulting, but also very compelling. She states that, “fundamental attitudes toward the earth have become twisted” (712). Williams also states that her piece is a “moral *issue*” and she says that the reader’s response is, “*I admit someone’s to blame and something should be done. But I’ve got to go. It’s getting late, Take care of yourself*” (712). Williams is saying the reader does not really care about the issue and

will not do anything about it. This pushes the reader to care about the issues of the environment even more and to want to make real changes.

Although Lane Deer and Erdoes' "Talking to the Owls and Butterflies" is written much differently than Williams' "Save the Whales, Screw the Shrimp" both pieces are very influential and can convince the reader to want to treat the land they live on better. A reader cannot read these works without feeling convicted of not taking care of nature. Whether it is the peaceful, persuasive approach of Lane Deer and Erdoes or the harsh, insulting attitude of Williams the reader want to change and make a difference for the better of the environment.

## Works Cited

- Lame Deer (Fire), John, and Richard Erdoes. "Talking to the Owls and Butterflies." Rereading America: Cultural Contexts for Critical Thinking and Writing. Ed. Gary Colombo, Robert Cullen, Bonnie Lisle. 8<sup>th</sup> ed. Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2010. 686-693
- Williams, Joy. "Save the Whales, Screw the Shrimp." Rereading America: Cultural Contexts for Critical Thinking and Writing. Ed. Gary Colombo, Robert Cullen, Bonnie Lisle. 8<sup>th</sup> ed. Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2010. 703-712