

## **(Sample Comparative Essay 2)**

Sample Student

April 6, 2011

English 101A

Comparative Essay Assignment

In *Rereading America* excerpts by John (Fire) Lane Deer entitled "Talking to the Owls and Butterflies," and Joy Williams "Save the Whales, Screw the Shrimp," both writers reach out to readers in efforts to express their dislike on how people have been destroying Mother Nature for their own personal benefits. In doing so they are trying to educate people on the destructive and manipulative acts that are occurring to animals and the environment, while threatening human's very existence both physically and spiritually. Both excerpts discuss the current ways that animals are viewed as food and how their status in the wild has been altered. Both authors offer up valid examples and unique viewpoints towards their overall beliefs on how this destructive behavior has become the norm in modern times. They generate different rationale and philosophies on the subject matter, while still reaching the same conclusions that government entities are as much to blame. Williams offers up a lot of factual based information that is not based on cultural beliefs or geographical issues, and Lane Deer comes from a cultural argumentative side that touches on spirituality to communicate his view points. "Talking to the Owls and Butterflies" and "Save the Whales, Screw the Shrimp" will give the readers a lot to think about when it comes to cause and effects towards nature, even though their personal philosophies may differ a bit and their writings are approached from different angles.

Joy Williams focuses her writing as if she is talking directly to modern day people who are obsessed with the human consumption of goods and services utilizing personification and hyperbole to get her points across. But her writing style is directed

as if she is speaking to individuals with little interest in what she has to say about the environment. Williams strategy is to show technological developments that benefit human progression for consumption and resources that are being removed rapidly from the environment. "Hidden from immediate view in the butterfly-bright meadow...are the surveyors' stakes, for someone wants to build a mall exactly there-some gas stations and supermarkets, some pizza and video shops, a health club, maybe a bulimia treatment center" (704). She continues her writing in an argumentative fashion that constructively belittles the individuals she addresses with a writing approach that makes them appear ignorant to what is happening in the world. Her writing provides disclosures of hidden agendas that the readers may observe in their daily lives. Williams critique of how people are becoming oblivious and destructive towards Mother Nature may seem ill-mannered to some, but it does provide interesting information.

Williams shows how organizations and government programs try to advertise positive examples from their actions and efforts towards the environment and animals, but in reality they are just covering up what really happens. To get her point across she mentions how the word "environment" is being used by professionals such as: Urban Planners, economists, and developers to further their objectives towards projects related to human greed that has essentially nothing to do with helping the environment. Arguing her point further she discusses one aspect behind the Agriculture Department's "Wildlife Services" and how it may sound good in theory, but most of what they do is upsetting the eco-system, all for the benefit of farmland and ranchers. "Wildlife Services poisons, shoots, and traps thousands of animals each year" (706). Williams continues to explain her point of view on environmental manipulation when she discusses how people are being informed about projects from developers that project an illusion of good will towards the environment. They label projects with titles like "Master Planned Community" that advertise on billboards about developments that may seem like they are working in conjunction with wildlife and nature all around, but to the contrary, they actually destroy it by changing the natural order of things. Williams delivers a strong message that is backed up by information allowing the

readers to not only decide on what they want to believe, but also what is the true purpose behind these so-called “environmentalist” agencies and organizations.

“Save the Whales, Screw the Shrimp,” works well in describing how humans have changed the natural order of the environment. Williams points out the depletion of resources that have been directly caused by human greed. She offers several insights to back up her argument. She brings up how vast amounts of shrimp that fill the ocean waters are being depleted, because humans consume so much shrimp in their daily lives. Additionally, fisherman will place large nets out to catch shrimp and that results in the unfortunate deaths of dolphins and turtles. She shows the self-indulgence of people when discussing a device known as “TED” which could deter turtles and dolphins from getting caught in the nets, “but shrimpers are loath to use TEDs, as they argue it would cut the size of their shrimp catch” (706). The use of advanced equipment to catch food in the ocean is just one way humans have been ruining the environment. The hyperboles of how humans desire mass amounts of seafood give Williams an opportunity to demonstrate the abuse that happens in the ocean to sea life.

Touching on the human use of chemicals and other products that cause harm to the environment Williams utilizes this information to show how land is being harmed as well. “Acid Rain” is still relevant today, but treated as if it does not really exist in the minds of most people. Cutting down forests for people to accumulate more land is causing “greenhouse gas” in the atmosphere. “The Forest Service, which now manages our forests by cutting them down, might be called upon to evolve in its thinking and allow these trees to grow” (710). Williams strategy to address well known environmental issues that are scientifically proven to cause global and geographical dilemmas directly related to human involvement provides a strong argument for getting her point across.

“Talking to the Owls and Butterflies,” by Lame Deer, touches on the same types of problems that are occurring in the environment in regards to people’s greed over land, government takeover, and how animals are being treated solely for human’s gratification. However, Lame Deer being a Native American and accustomed to the

Sioux culture approaches his points of view from a spiritual aspect using metaphors and similes to engage his audience as if they are sitting around a camp fire, while he tells stories that serve inner purpose and teach valuable lessons. He focuses his positive accounts with nature and the fulfillment it has with the human soul. He explains, “talk to the rivers, to the lakes, to the winds as to our relatives” (687). Lame Deer expresses his displeasure with referring to the destructive people as the “white man.” Through his writing he talks of all the harm and destruction that has been caused by the men who entered his sacred land and rather than shared it, they conquered it and continue to do so.

Lame Deer applies his philosophy on the readers as compelling arguments that view the environment as a nexus to self-fulfillment, oneness with nature, and entertainment. Lame Deer states, “Let’s have the grass for a mattress, experiencing its sharpness and its softness...Let us be animals, think and feel like animals” (687). While displaying his spiritual approach to nature he discusses the difficulty that occurs to continue the positive experiences that nature has to offer because of saturation of people claiming the land. Furthering his points he talks about how land has been obliterated to service ranges used for bombing, and earth’s minerals and rocks have been destroyed because of selfish actions by the “white man” and the government they represent. These examples bring truth to Lame Deer’s beliefs on how his native land has been overridden with no intent on sharing its valuable resources, but rather to knowingly annihilate it with no remorse by governments. Lame Deer’s writing provides for a spiritual viewpoint of how the governments in cooperation with technological advances have collided with nature, thus creating devastation to the environment and creatures within it.

Sioux culture has a strong foundation for how their people have a general understanding of the importance of animals and the mutual respect they deserve. Placing emphases on how man has changed the natural elements of animals and how they relate to each other is an approach Lame Deer works on his audience. “You have not only altered, declawed, and malformed your winged and four-legged cousins; you

have done it to yourselves. You have changed men into chairmen of boards...women into housewives, truly fearful creatures" (688). He talks about how chickens are forced to spend their entire lives being raised in cages, coyotes being slaughtered by men in airplanes; while all of this destroys the natural order of life it only furthers the "white man's" greed and vanity in the world. Selfish actions by people who have formed nations, has led to animals being treated as expendable resources that are being extinct over gluttony.

Lame Deer's approach is not just based on showing the harm that mistreating the environment and its creatures in it, but he also conveys the spiritual connection and inner peace respecting nature's creatures can give to a person. By establishing this theory he suggests that the common understanding with nature and humans should be that killing animal's to enable people to eat is acceptable, provided that greed and unnecessary actions are avoided. Lame Deer stated, "When we killed a buffalo...We apologized to his spirit, tried to make him understand why he did it, honoring with a prayer" (689). Continuing to express how he feels animal's roles have been completely manipulated by man, Lame Deer talks about how man can not even fathom the process that goes into the meat they eat. He describes how meat now comes in packages already butchered and cleaned up for a nice display, concealing the images of the slaying. His way of describing how food was once hunted, and in contrast is now prepared gives an analogy that demonstrates the mutual respect people should have with the environment, rather than just depleting it. Lame Deer gives descriptive information on how animals are being treated to formulate his values and make the comparison that in order to advance as a people; one must respect all aspects of the environment.

Williams and Lame Deer both have a common purpose in their writings. They are speaking out to educate the public in their own creative ways on the damage that has occurred to the environment. They both talk about man-kinds greed and obsession with consuming resources, even though their writing comes across differently. While Williams relies on programs and governmental propaganda to influence her readers,

Lame Deer reaches out with cultural and spiritual examples of the impressions the Sioux natives had on his life to show how governments have changed that for him. Both arguments are compelling and do good jobs of giving the reader information that can make one think about the modern world and what has been sacrificed to bring us where they are today. When reading Joy Williams and Lame Deer it becomes quite clear of their common intentions, views towards nature, and sympathy for animals. Both excerpts provide a clear analysis of both similar and different environmental issues that are generating problems for man-kinds present and future existence with nature.

## List of Works Cited

- Erdoes, Richard. and Lame Deer, John (Fire). "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. 703-713.