Et Cetera

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**Abstract**

In my essay, I take a stance based on preservation. It is my belief that the wilderness should be protected, not for the sole sake of nature, but for the sake of protecting the untouched areas on earth so that those, like me, may enjoy such places. I express this in areas of my essay, like where I say, “There is no one way up a mountain, and the mountains aren’t littered with steps with the sole purpose to get you to the top in the fastest, most convenient way,” I have lived in Durango for the majority of my life, and have come to love the surrounding landscape that I know as home. Whenever I leave Durango, I always feel out of place, often uncomfortable. Throughout my essay, I describe my love for this land, and my wishes to preserve it.

Everything feels better at the top. There is no worry, the air seems fresher, and damn, that sense of victory. That sense of accomplishment. That hiker’s high. The top of any mountain is the best place in the world until you look across the range, and you see a peak that’s just above the one you’re on. But does it defeat you? No. You eat some gorp and take on that peak.

So, why do we climb mountains? In the end, we just come back down. I guess you can get some exercise in the process, but then what are treadmills, elliptical machines, or step climbers for? I mean, they don’t provide the best view, nor do you catch any fresh air, but they still get you your exercise in. I can tell you why I don’t like treadmills, or those other machines I’ve listed previously. I can describe to you the reasons I prefer mountains to a gym. And it’s not just for the fresh air, let alone the views. It’s because I don’t get a sense of repetition while climbing a mountain.

While I hike, I become more in touch with myself, adding to the contribution of my love for the very wondrous landscapes and mountain ranges, because they are my cloud nine, having taken me away from the routine of every day, the way my life has always been. Wake up, go to school, go home, do homework, go to sleep, wake up, and spend my weekend doing the same thing I did last weekend. I guess it’s in human nature, to develop routine. The sun sets, the sun rises. It sets, it rises, et cetera. Et cetera? What is the origin of that simple, 3-syllable phrase? Et cetera is used under condition that the reader/listener already knows how a list is going to end. Et cetera may be used at any point where enough examples of a very broad subject have already been listed, and any more would be useless, or redundant, to list. Or, et cetera may be used as code to repeat the pattern already used in the list at hand.

I hate et cetera. Et cetera is just another routine. Another easy way of doing things. That’s why I feel like I want to break out of routine. It’s boring, redundant, and useless from my perspective on my deathbed. But how am I to take part in society without caving in to become yet another customer to routine? That’s truly the only way to make money in this country, and as sad and morbid as the reality may be, everyone needs money. Everyone. We are slaves to routine, and routine will not lead us to an end we may be proud of.

That’s why I climb the mountains. To get away from society, money, routine, et cetera. There is no one way up a mountain, and the mountains aren’t littered with steps with the sole purpose to get you to the top in the fastest, most convenient way. There is, actually, a beautiful mountain just behind my house. In fact, it is safe to say my house is built on the base of the mountain. Staring up on the mountain in the fall, I see a barrage of scrub oak; an array of colors naturally organized in such a way that makes you believe, if only for a split second, that there is a being that spends its days organizing the vegetation. Along the way up, pine trees occasionally dot the side, nearly mistakable for bears or other wildlife, while a mountain lion stalking along the base of a tree simply appears to be nothing more than a yellow bush. But the top of the mountain is another story entirely.

Occasionally I’ll look up at that mountain that makes up my backyard, and I’ll see the beast that haunts its peak. It often stands in obvious view, staring down on my neighborhood, almost as if it is a guardian for the houses that peacefully sit along the base of the mountain. But we all know that’s not why it’s there. We may look up between the hours of 8pm and 12pm, and still see the beast despite the darkness that otherwise engulfs the landscape. Oh, I wish I could say that the beast is a living thing. I wish it had a pair of lungs, perhaps a beautiful mane, complete with a tail. Because it is much easier to lay eyes upon any form of life than it is to look up at the tormenting, ugly, god-knows-how-many-walled adobe household from which it seems as though the owner has not emerged in years.

I do not know who the owner of the house is, nor do I believe I have ever seen him/her, but do I ever know the paved driveway that winds up and around the mountainside, cutting its way through the scrub oak and natural rock formations, stopping at nothing to reach that dastardly house which shines its light down upon mine from the peak of the mountain, making it close to impossible to sleep at night. I have not only thought about, but have dreamt, thoroughly and, frankly, in detail about hiking up to that godforsaken foundation, and throwing a rock or two at the lights that may only be described as spotlights that keep me from getting my sleep. But who am I to speak out against the house at the peak of such a beautiful, small mountain? Because I remember moving into my own house at the base of this mountain, years ago to the point I can’t even remember the date of my own arrival, and looking up at the mountain during the first night and seeing, for the first time, the lights cast into the shadows from the adobe beast that crouched itself on the peak of such a beautiful mountain. It had been casting its light long before I had lived there, and I guess I didn’t mind its presence much, but over time, that changed greatly, as I developed a love for that mountain.

But I guess, now, that’s what I speak for. The mountain. For I know I would be more than appreciative to see the beast defeated and banished from its long-lasted perch on the summit. And then to see the driveway that winds its way up to the ex-location of the beast to become overgrown with vegetation, eventually disappearing beneath the thick layer of weeds and scrub oak. In fact, that would definitely be my favorite part about the demolition of the beast.

I’ve hiked my way up to the top of the mountain many times, which somewhat ridges off from the peak, only housing a cell tower apart from the adobe abomination. I know several ways up the mountain, but my most preferred way is the longest, and the toughest, and I love to get my exercise and see the beauty of the mountain in going this way. But the selfish driveway cuts its way right through that route, rendering itself in a direction nearly impossible to make way around without treading through devastatingly thorny bushes and one or two anthills. So I have to take a moment to walk a good quarter mile up the driveway, which I could only wish was no longer there. I can look up and see a snowplow; the kind that hooks onto a small truck, rested on the outside of a bend in the driveway. I wonder why anyone would want to live up here.

I wish I were able, if only once, to hike that mountain without lying eyes on that manmade blockade. Of course, such a quest would not be impossible to overcome, but I fear that if I am to partake on such a quest, the face of that adobe structure may meet my own in an unpleasant way. For now, I will make my way around it. But it will forever serve as a mark signifying the end of my ascent. It will be just another symbol that tells me to tread on back home. Another reminder that humans have conquered nature.

In nature, you will almost inevitably find areas that have been untouched by man. Whether or not someone is appreciative of nature’s presence, any area untouched by man is one of a kind; like no other. It will always be something new, no matter how many times you’ve looked at what seem like near replicas of those trees towering before you. But that’s where I find beauty in nature; that’s where I find love for the town I know. Because nature will always be different, no matter how many times you’ve seen it. In the time it takes you to turn your back on any region inhabited by nature, it will already have changed in beautiful, dare I say poetic ways. Whether it’s the dew of morning falling from the very tip of a blade of grass, or the subsonic screech of a caterpillar’s spiky hide creeping its way up the side of a swaying evergreen, in nature there is no et cetera. There is peace; not in the essence of tranquility, but translated through the feeling of knowing oneself, and having an understanding of oneself and an awareness of oneself in such a beautifully chaotic world.

RUBRIC ON NEXT PAGE

**Rubric**

TOTAL: \_\_\_\_\_/140

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **10**  Complete execution of the standard | **9**  Strong execution with some room to improve | **8**  Meets the standard | **7**  Approaching the standard | **5**  Below the standard | **0**  Standard is not present in the paper |

# Content Sense of Place \_\_\_\_/10x 3.5\_\_\_\_35

**Formatting Guidelines** (Must be met for me to accept your draft!)

**Title:** Give your essay a creative title! Center it at the top of your essay.

**Abstract:** Include this beneath the title

**Artist Statement**: If you write a poem or short story.

**Name:** Write your name underneath the title.

**Font:** Size 12

**Word Length: 1,5**00-3,00 words

\_\_\_\_\_\_ Do you show a clear definition of the sense of place that most resonates with you?

\_\_\_\_\_\_ Did you communicate which category of sense of place (*relationship* and/or *attachment)* best represents your sense of place?

# Environmental Ethic\_\_\_\_/10 x3.5 \_\_\_\_\_/35

\_\_\_\_\_\_ Do you express a clear understanding of your emerging environmental ethic? This means that you reveal which environmental ethic(s) is/are most important to you. You may be torn between different ethics, but you must express how you are grappling with that conflict or   
how you resolve it.

# Cohesiveness/Integration\_\_\_\_\_/10x 2.5\_\_\_\_\_\_/25

\_\_\_\_\_\_ Do you integrate your sense of place, environmental ethic and/or understanding of our energy needs to shape and express your perspective?

\_\_\_\_\_\_ Are you making connections between your ideas for your reader?

\_\_\_\_\_\_ Do your ideas and paragraphs logically flow in a way that makes sense?

# Descriptive Language & Elements of Nature Writing\_\_\_\_\_\_/10 x2.5 \_\_\_ /25

\_\_\_\_\_\_Do you use elements of the “Grand Style” to SHOW your place to the reader?

(at least two of the following are present: metaphor, simile, analogy, alliteration, assonance, onomatopoeia, sensory images like sight, taste, touch, sound, smell)

# Writing Mechanics Sentence Craft \_\_\_/10

\_\_\_\_\_\_ Are you writing sentences that are grammatically correct?

\_\_\_\_\_\_ Is the meaning of your sentences clear and easy to follow?

\_\_\_\_\_\_ Do you use simple and complex sentences for a varied effect?

\_\_\_\_\_\_ Did you streamline your writing to be concise and descriptive? (avoid non-descriptive word choice like, “the tree is ***extremely*** tall, I ***really*** love ice cream)

# Proofreading\_\_\_\_\_/10

\_\_\_\_\_\_ Are there errors in your paper that spellcheck could catch?

\_\_\_\_\_\_ Did you carefully read through your paper for proofreading errors?