

THE LEOPOLD WRITING PROGRAM

2020 ALDO LEOPOLD WRITING CONTEST AWARD WINNER

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HONORABLE MENTION, GRADES 6-7

Re-connecting the meaning between ecology and economy

Every day we breathe air, we eat food, and drink water, but do we acknowledge it? Do we ever really think about how we coexist with our environment? Ask yourself if you've ever thought about it, and you'll probably say no. Aldo Leopold said, "We abuse land because we see it as a commodity belonging to us. When we see land as a community to which we belong, we may begin to use it with love and respect." When we think about the words: ecology (a branch of biology dealing with the relations between organisms), and economy (the wealth of a country or region in terms of production and consumption), these two words have become separated in meaning despite coming from the same root word; eco.

Eco by definition means habitat or environment. If so, why is eco in the word economy? During the 1660's economy meant the "frugality, judicious use of resources". Our modern definition of the word has instead turned into the definition of wealth and resources, no longer explaining the use of these resources. But the stability of an economy and the ecological health of an environment is based upon the judicious use of resources. An economy is destined to fail if it continues along a self-destructive policy of depleting all its' resources, which is neither self-sustaining nor beneficial to the environment. This is like slowly eating away at some guacamole, which you know will run out eventually.

By reconnecting the definitions of both ecology and economy we could strengthen the importance of coexisting with the environment and maintaining sustainable resources. As humans, we shouldn't place ourselves at the top of the food chain. Our supposed dominance over animals has led to our exploitation of the Earth's resources. Leopold said that instead of simply being conquerors of the land we should only be citizens of it. If we could do this we would have a greater awareness of our surroundings, so that instead when we breathe air, eat food, and drink water we would stop and think. When we fill up our cars we can stop and think. If we could just stop and think for more than a second how truly fragile the world is, we would realize we are only members of our beautiful planet Earth.



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