

Desert solitaire: a season in the wilderness

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The author of the book *Desert Solitaire*, Edward Abbey, talked frequently throughout the book about the beauty of nature and ways that human beings are destroying the natural beauty of the world we live in. The way Abbey views nature is in a way that is best experienced by actually being out in nature, taking a hike, horseback riding, or bicycling. He believes that people who use the luxury of their cars on camping trip will not get to experience everything that nature has to offer. Abbey sees the beauty of the natural world in a way that most human beings are unable to because they do not spend time exploring nature.

From the very beginning of the book Abbey shows his love for nature and all his creatures when he befriends and gopher snake. Or when he was is in awe of the old moon-eyed horse's wild manner, independence, and beauty. To stand by his love for nature he says " I prefer not to kill animals. I'm a humanist; I'd rather kill a man than a snake. " (pg. 20) Abbey believes that humans are destroying the beauty and wonder of nature and he is upset when he finds out they are planning to build a major road through Arches National Park.

Abbey believes industrial tourism is becoming a bigger problem to all national parks. In Abbey's opinion he thinks motor vehicles should be prohibited on the grounds of any national monument. " we have agreed not to drive our automobiles into cathedrals, to concert halls, art museums...we should treat our national parks with the same deference, for they, too, are holy places" (pg. 65). Abbey believes that the only way to truly experience the beauty of nature is to walk through, bike ride through, or horseback ride through.

As said before abbey is a humanist and has not sympathy for the elderly who travel to national parks for vacations, he says they “ had the opportunity to see the country when it was still relatively unspoiled” (pg. 67). He also has no sympathy for children who are “ too small to ride bicycles and too heavy to be borne on their parents’ backs. ” (pg. 67) Abbey is able to see nature in a way that most people cannot. Most humans tend to overlook the little things, but abbey will see the beauty in it.

Many people think rocks are dirty and ugly but abbey finds beauty in just their names, “ the very names lovely - chalcedony, carnelian, jasper...” (pg. 74). While looking at the Delicate Arch most people would see it as just a big arch made out of rocks. But to abbey it is so much more than that. He compares it to “ eroded remnant of a sandstone fin, a giant engagement ring cemented in rock, a bow legged pair of petrified cowboy chaps...” (pg. 44). Some people who view the Delicate Arch will find God while exploring, others will “...see only Lyell and the uniformity of nature” (pg. 5). To abbey the Delicate Arch and other objects of nature “ remind us that out there is a different world, older and greater and deeper by far than ours...” (pg. 45) Even though nature is beautiful, calm, and serene it also has another side that is harsh, violent, and cruel. Abbey experiences this side of nature with blazing heat, sand storms, and a flash flood.

When he find a dead tourist underneath a tree, which shows just how cruel the desert can be. But according to abbey the man was fortunate to have died the way he did, he envies him. To die in the open under the sky...before this desert vastness opening like a window onto eternity - surely that was an overwhelming stroke of rare good luck” (pg. 267). For abbey to envy the

man for dying that way is another example of his love for nature. Most people would look at that situation as sad and unfortunate, but abbey sees the beauty and peace in it. Abbey also experiences the cruelty of nature when he himself is forced to spend the night alone in Havasu. Mother Nature can be a very cruel and evil woman who does not have sympathy for anyone.

If a person is unfortunate enough to see this side of Mother Nature it can only lead to a sad ending. " Fatal. Death by starvation, slow and tedious. " (pg. 253) While most people have come to enjoy the luxury and comfort of an industrialized society, Abbey has chosen to live the life opposite of luxurious and easy. He would rather rough it out in the desert than big in an air conditioned office. Abbey has experienced nature in a way most people will never have the opportunity to. He sees the world for what it was meant to be, all nature, nothing else.