

# 1

Katherine Spencer  
Nature Writing #1  
February 25, 2001

The air is cold. I am cold. The wind is soft, but bitter, as it toys with branches and bites my fingers when I write. The wind may blow, but these trees are solid, and give only a little. Except for the aspen. It quakes and shivers, stripped of its leaves. The clouds are coming in over the mountains and frozen lake; maybe they bring snow, more snow to add to the ground. It's ugly snow. It has melted and then been frozen again and again. It's full of dirt, and doesn't even cover the ground like it should. There are open patches scattered miscellaneously, where the dirt and dead grass show through. I hate this time of year. Everyone is ready for it to be spring, but it's not, and it won't be for a while yet. But I suppose that maybe we wouldn't appreciate spring to its fullest if we didn't have this horrible ugly winter before it. I can see my breath; it curls out of my mouth the same way that the wind blows through the trees. Every time I open my mouth, the wind freezes my teeth like I am biting into an ice cream cone. I REALLY don't like that. But it makes me feel alive. Something about the sound of the wind, and the silhouette of the tallest tree against the darkening sky, and the chill in the air, makes me feel alive. But by now, my fingers refuse to hold the pen correctly; they are too cold. It's time to go back inside.

#2

Katherine Spencer  
Nature Writing #2  
March 17, 2001

When I am sitting out here, the first thing I realize is that it's not nearly as cold as it was last time. I am barefoot and in a T-shirt, and I am just fine. Well, no hypothermia yet, anyway. Every once in a while I hear the awkward squawk of a goose heading back north, and it reminds me that spring is so close. It's too bad that those little Polaroids didn't turn out better because it's really a nice view today, and my hand can't capture the real beauty of it. Oh, I see a bluebird! He's sitting on this wire that runs down from my house to the shop, clinging to it with his sharp little feet, just looking around, and he is SO BLUE! He is blue, and the rest of the world, comparatively, is gray. It's still gray and icky. Spring is indeed close, but she is not here. When she is, I can smell it in the air, and today, all I smell is cold, the cold that's deep in the earth. When I look to my right, I can see the sun poking out from between rolls of clouds and shining brilliantly as it prepares to set. It's about six or six-thirty, I think.

There's hardly any snow left on the ground around me. I can tell by sight obviously, but I can also feel it with my skin. The aura of chill that snow has is absent today, and I'm glad. I want it to be green green green! I guess the pine trees are green. But they never change much, do they? The only time they're really different is when the pine cones bloom. Well that's what I call it anyway. They turn red, or orange, or some other color. But that's not for a while yet. Nothing's really for a while yet. I guess I'll just have to wait.

Katherine Spencer  
Nature Writing #3

#3

I see thee, Life  
In all that surrounds me  
In the eye of the deer  
So docile and graceful,  
In the quiver of the muscle in her flank  
As she leaps,  
And even in the dead rattle  
Of quaking aspens  
Tossed in the wind.  
I see thee, Life  
In the breath of the bird  
The feathers on his chest rising and sinking  
With the motion of air through his lungs,  
In the sunflower seed he cracks with his  
Sharp, pointed beak.  
I see thee, Life  
In the rocks  
The wind  
The clouds  
The sun,  
In the taste of the air  
As it flows across my tongue  
Hinting at green to grow,  
In the noises that the great quiet makes  
Out here.  
I see thee, Life  
In all that surrounds me.  
And I am wiser for it.

# #4

Katherine Spencer  
Nature Writing #4  
May 6, 2001

It's the perfect time of day. The sun shines just right on everything. It's that hour just before sunset, and the angle of the light is so that it seems to make everything glow. It looks so warm out, but actually I can still feel a little chill in the air. It's still only spring, not summer. At least it is actually spring now, and it feels like it. I just wish the wind wouldn't blow. It makes my hair get all in my face and makes me cold. I bet it would smell like springtime, too, if I could smell. But my nose is too stuffed up. It's nice here, to just sit on the grass. The puppy is running all over the place and commands more attention than I should give her right now. Maybe she should have stayed home. Oh well she's enjoying herself, and that's part of springtime, too. I can hear birds everywhere. This time of year all different kinds seem to show up, all different sizes too. There are some really big black birds up in the sky now, just floating in the wind. It's like they're playing a game, seeing who can stay up in the air the longest without flapping their wings. I wonder what it would be like to do that, to be up there above the world just flying on the breeze. I wonder if birds even appreciate it. I bet they do, judging by the way they play up there. I guess I'll just have to live vicariously through them.

#5

Katherine Spencer  
Nature Writing #5  
May 28, 2001

The clouds are rolling in. It's good, because we need the rain. I would hate to see all this green burst into flame again, like last summer. It's a funny thing about fire, how it's almost alive. But it consumes everything that really is alive. In any case, it's not as alive as all this. It's so green here now. I never seem to want to go inside anymore, and I look for any excuse to be out here. Like now, just to watch the storm come in. The clouds are dark and menacing; they look angry to me. But I'm never really afraid of storms. I love them. I can see lightning dancing through the bulbous underbelly of cumulus, flashing fast, and I find my senses waiting in anticipation for thunder to follow.

I love to lay on the grass and look up at this one tree in particular. The leaves are bright green and the way that the sun shines through them when I'm underneath lets me watch for a long time without getting bored. Then when the wind just lifts them a little, the leaves all hit one another and sound just like rain. There's just something about the shadows and the light and color all playing off one another that's so...undefinable I guess. And right here in this spot I feel like a part of it. Everything. The tree. The grass. I can see them, feel them; they're separate from me, but they're part of me, too. Maybe that's the real reason I like this tree. It feels like a part of me.

Katherine Spencer  
Nature Writing Conclusion

Perhaps what I've noticed most about nature in doing these writings is its changes and cycles. The landscape changes so dramatically as to seem unstable, when really these changes are some of the most dependable things on earth. One can always count on winter turning into spring, spring into summer, and on and on. Maybe I've just learned to appreciate the seasons more, for their differences from each other, and their similarities to human life. The analogy has been made several times before, I'm sure. Spring is like youth, gradually aging into summer and fall and finally winter, like death. It's a comforting cycle to me, and it assures me that the cycle of life is natural and inevitable.

I think I've also come to understand our place as humans in nature, or at least my own place. I suppose that 'understand' is too big a word to use, because it implies knowing, and I don't pretend to know things like this. I only have ideas. And my idea is that nature is larger than anyone, and that we are all a part of it. Often humans assume that they are the largest, the most important, the most powerful group of living things. But when I am just laying on the grass, I don't feel large, or important, or powerful. I feel exactly the opposite, and I am sometimes even ashamed of being so bigheaded as a human.

My personal connection to nature is a strong one, a deep one. I am overwhelmed by nature, and enveloped by it. I am an infinitely small piece of the puzzle, but I am still significant and unique. Every leaf, every blade of grass, every molecule of dust is different and important. From seeing this in nature, I know that I am the same way. Sometimes the beauty and weight of understanding nature and its lessons is so overwhelming I feel that I can't take it. But I am grateful, always, for the privilege.

Katherine