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Nature Reflection

 Most of my free time isn’t spent on reflecting the impact nature has had on me and my life. While I know nature is all around me, I haven’t ever really taken the time to look closely or appreciate it. Today’s society relies on natural resources for human consumption and our planet is now at risk. In order to love nature and be a part of it, rather than use it, we must perceive nature in a different way or this world will not inhabit humans for much longer. Two specific experiences in my life have helped me recognize the value of nature.

 Growing up I was never a girly girl, I never minded getting down in the dirt or picking up worms. The neighborhood boys and I would always be looking for the next best thing to do in our little community called Mallard Lakes. It wasn’t easy finding an adventure in a suburban neighborhood, where every blade of dewy green grass on every lawn was trimmed to perfection. The residents always spoke highly of the two man-made ponds that connected the east and west end of the cracker box houses. While it was fun to throw bread in the ponds for the loudly quacking ducks, you couldn’t swim in the ponds, and if you tried to go fishing you would catch the same little unidentified species of fish over and over again. The four of us set out on a mission one breezy spring afternoon. There was a dirt path parallel to the furthest house in the neighborhood. The path lead to a miniature forest that had trails wide enough for only our ten-year-old legs to wind through. We walked tentatively into the forest, mostly because we didn’t want to get ambushed by sticky spider webs. Once inside we left the realm of modern day suburbia and entered into a great forest where the tree branches hung high above our heads. Looking up only glimmers of the warm spring sun penetrated through to the dusky forest floor. I felt a sense of freedom, like I had escaped to a new world. I felt happy, and excited for the adventures the forest would bring us. We played tag and hide and go seek, running and chuckling as we ran kicking up dirt and leafs. The land of the forest was welcoming and had a free spirit. My young mind had such a vast imagination that I was not only in a small forest behind some houses, but in a new exciting world. Nature is an escape. Nature is a place to escape from all of the commotion and conformity of the modern day. As a child I felt as if I could escape from responsibility and feel independence and freedom in the forest. At the time, the forest was simply a place to have fun, but now I can reflect back and realize that I was beginning to learn about nature.

 More recently I experienced a different type of nature. The summer before my first term in college I went on a trip with my dad and brothers for a family reunion in Yellowstone National Park. It was my first visit to Yellowstone. I hadn’t experienced much nature after the age of thirteen when makeup and being girly became important. We arrived by van. Just five minutes into the park I looked through the handprint smeared glass of the window at the beautiful landscape before me. As far as the eye could see was grass and rolling hills. Buffalo spotted the land with life and color. The smell was similar to the smell of a zoo, but it was so refreshing because there were no bars or glass separating me from nature. Trees densely coated the land as we drove south towards our destination. It was clear that I had never seen something as beautiful as the landscape of Yellowstone before. Nature is beauty. Nature is often taken for granted. Many believe they must build and create beautiful things when it is already sitting right in from of them. Beauty is in the eye of the beholder and to me, while it may be smelly, natural occurring phenomenons are also beautiful to me. As we continued our drive through the park a harsh tingling entered my nostrils when we passed the sulfur pools. I watched as brown goo oozed and sloshed around in its pit. Steam rose into the air and seeped into the car; the smell of rotten eggs wasn’t very pleasant. Reflecting back I think to myself, why does something have to be bright and have a nice scent to be considered beautiful? The sulfur pits are nature, the sulfur pits are beauty. We soon reached our final resting place, a cabin, which was a newly re-opened due to bear activity. Out the window of the cabin I looked upon the highest lake in Yellowstone. The water was flat and calm; the only ripples came from a herd of buffalo dipping their dirty muzzles into the lake. It occurred to me that there is so much in this world that I do not know. Not only was I viewing nature but I was sleeping in nature and walking along paths that were shared with deer, buffalo and bears. The nature that surrounds us all is beautiful and not nearly as appreciated as it should be.

 Nature is an escape and nature is beauty. I believe these metaphors do not conflict but complement each other. I can escape to a beautiful place where no concrete will cloud my vision. Escaping to me means not running away from responsibility, but it is a breath of fresh air. Sometimes in order to put certain situations into perspective I must escape to nature. Nature is also beautiful, it shows that man is not all powerful because nature can shine through the modern world and still show its beauty. I understand that nature is more than an escape and beauty but I believe that broadly sums up the way I feel about it. While the natural world is not something that I experience on a day to day basis, the times I do get to connect with nature are even more rewarding.

 I have experienced nature in my own way. It has not always been a staple in my life but I can still appreciate what nature is. I hope the future brings me more eye-opening experiences through nature. I wish to have more time to escape from suburbia and surround myself with the beautiful natural world around me. Nature has impacted my life in different ways and degrees. Whether it is playing in the forest or going to one of the most well-known national parks in the United States, I can truthfully say that I am in some way connected to nature.