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*Loren Eiseley Memorial Scholarship*

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As I read “The Slit” and “The Flow of the River” I was amazed as I felt myself wondering and questioning the world around me. When I first saw the book that I had to read I was disheartened, but as I read I found myself reading on, past what was required of me. I was fascinated by the mind and soul of Loren Eiseley, and his compassion for living things.

I was amazed at how one man’s thoughts and words could open up my mind to new ideas and theories. It is very easy to take for granted what is around me, but through his words, Eiseley quietly and gently reminded me to look at my surroundings and question their origin. After I read his essays my brain started working and I began to ponder the origins of things around me.

Each essay had a similar message, that we as humans are equal to all living things. We need to put ourselves at the level of all life and treat the creatures and animals of the world as we would our human friends. This is what Eiseley did; no matter if it was a frozen cat fish, grasshopper, cricket, or even a seed in his sock. He lived with them and caused them no harm. His actions showed great compassion by respecting nature’s place in life. He believed that we are here to live with nature, not above it.

In his line, “I am not nearly so interested in what monkey man was derived from, as I am in what kind of monkey he is to become,” he illuminates the fact that he was a self proclaimed pessimist when it came to the future of mankind, but when Eiseley begins to see the bleak side of life, he always seems to come back around to the positive when talking about the simplistic beauty of nature. He sees all life as interdependent, one organism relies on another, which relies on another, which relies on another, and this cycle goes on forever.

Loren Eiseley has such an open mind. Many people believe that man is far too superior to all other creatures to think of evolving from lower creatures. Eiseley had no thoughts like these, he was open to the fact that man could have developed from ooze on the ocean floor, and this was no insult. He expressed this when he wrote, “In reality every living thing is writhing from one shape into another in the way that we might witness the growth of a tropical forest in a speeded up motion picture. Our long-assumed stability is only the illusion produced by the tempo at which we live.” This is why I believe he thinks man belongs on an equal level with nature, because of the fact that it could be our origin. The world is like a tower, and each block shapes the form and placement of the next. He is a scientist, and science is a huge part of his life and beliefs, but when it can’t answer all questions, he understands. He understands that there are just some things that are unknown, and may remain unknown.

I enjoyed reading his essays because they seemed so informative. I didn’t feel like he was telling me I had to believe as he did. He was just expressing his findings and beliefs for all to read and consider. He wasn’t saying his way was the only way, which I greatly appreciated. His stories are examples to the world. They tell of his compassion and empathy, and they walk us through his beliefs and feelings, so we can see the world in a different light.

After reading Eiseley’s words, “Man is always marveling at what he has blown apart, never what the universe has put together, and this is his limitation,” I began to realize that I have been ignoring the universe’s creations. I am a part of nature so it is not possible for me to be above nature, or better than any other living organism. I began to feel compassion for the nature around me, and not just because that’s what Eiseley did. I learned the history and development of many different things that I did not know. I found a new respect for nature.

Right away I was able to understand and comprehend the main message Eiseley wanted to express. I am supposed to respect and love nature. It is my duty as a human to put myself on the level of nature. My life is no greater than that of a bird, flower, or grasshopper. If at all possible, the life of all the creatures of the earth should be spared. For, if any living thing is lost, that in turn will have an impact of the rest of nature.