



Project Skills:

- Learners will consider the role of predators in the ecosystem.

Life Skills:

- Critical thinking

Methods:

- Discussion, Value Line

Grade Levels:

9-12

Time:

30 minutes

Supplies Needed:

- *A Sand County Almanac*, ISBN-13: 978-0345345059

Do Ahead:

- Prepare question cards.

Youth Leader Roles:

- Read the essay aloud to the group.
- Distribute cards and prompt the questions.

Sources:

- Created by Paula Rogers Huff, 4-H Youth Development Agent, UW-Extension, Oconto County. Huff has a M.S. degree in Wildlife Biology from Iowa State University.

Keywords:

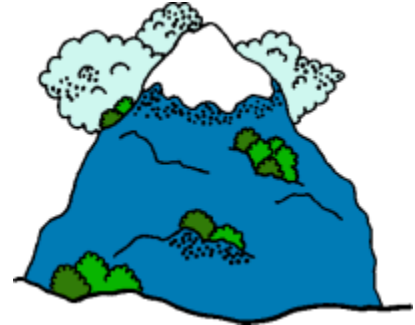
- Predator, prey, shooting sports, wildlife management, wolves

BACKGROUND

Aldo Leopold was the Wisconsin scientist credited with the development of the field of wildlife management. Leopold had a strong connection with the environment. His book called *A Sand County Almanac* has impacted generations of people who love the outdoors.

Leopold's growing understanding of the world around him caused him to reverse his views on predator eradication. In his later years, Leopold – once a proponent of the bounty system, which worked to eliminate predators from the Western range – saw the negative impacts of removing predators from the ecosystem. He wrote eloquently of that experience in "Thinking Like a Mountain," an essay from *A Sand County Almanac*.

This activity is intended for older 4-H members in a project meeting or club setting.



WHAT TO DO

Pre-reading Discussion

Ask the youth to give examples of times when they have changed their minds. You may want to ask further questions to get at what prompted the mind change.

Reading

Read out loud to the group, the essay "Thinking Like a Mountain" from *A Sand County Almanac*.

Post-reading Discussion

Hand out numbered question cards to a few of the youth. Beginning with number one, have the youth read his or her question, and use it for discussion. Move onto each number in turn. The questions are below and also attached to this lesson in card form.

1. What was Leopold's view toward wolves when he was young?
2. What changed Leopold's mind about fewer wolves meaning more deer?
3. What took Leopold so long to figure out that fewer wolves *didn't* mean more deer?
4. Why do you think Leopold chose to call his essay "Thinking Like a Mountain"? What does the mountain have to do with deer? With wolves?
5. How did you feel about this essay? Would you like to read more of the essays that Leopold has written?
6. How might reading this essay change readers' minds about predators and deer?

ENHANCE

Value Line

Note: Do this activity only if you know your 4-H'ers well and know that they will respect each other's opinions.

Instructions: How you feel about predators is a very personal decision, and as you heard in Leopold's essay, you can change your mind.

Today, after hearing Leopold's story, how do you feel about wolves? Tell us in the Value Line. Stand at 10 (point to a spot on a line that is 10, or make a placard beforehand) if you strongly agree with the mountain – and feel that wolves are an important part of the ecosystem.

Stand at 1 (point out) if you strongly disagree and feel the way that Leopold did when he was young – that fewer wolves mean more deer.

If you feel “in-between” choose the position that most accurately reflects how you feel in this situation.

Processing the Value Line:

- Those of you who strongly agree (8, 9, 10) – did any of you change your mind after hearing “Thinking Like a Mountain”? If so, what made you change your thinking?
- Those of you who strongly agree but weren’t influenced by the essay – what helped form your opinion of wolves?
- Those of you at the strongly-disagree portion of the line – what influenced you in making your decision? Did you hear anything in the essay that made you wonder about your stand on wolves?
- In the “middle” folks – why are you there? What would push you up the line, or down the line?
- If you are at position 5 and above – can you think of circumstances where predator control might be necessary?
- What makes issues like predator control so difficult?
- What might help us respect other’s opinions, even when we don’t agree with them?

HELPFUL HINTS:

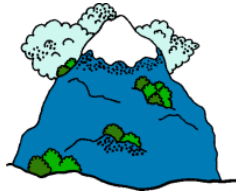
- Don’t skip the pre-reading discussion. It is an important part of preparing the youth for Leopold’s change of mind and allowing them to change their minds also.

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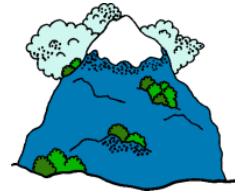
Question One

What was Leopold's view toward wolves when he was young?



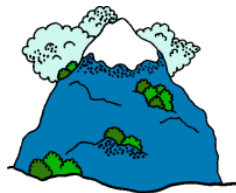
Question Two

What changed Leopold's mind about fewer wolves meaning more deer?



Question Three

What took Leopold so long to figure out that fewer wolves DIDN'T mean more deer?



Question Four

Why do you think Leopold chose to call his essay "Thinking Like a Mountain"?

What does the mountain have to do with deer?

With wolves?



Question Five

How did you feel about this essay?

Would you like to read more of the essays that Leopold has written?



Question Six

How might reading this essay change readers' minds about predators and deer?

