

The Wild Parks and Forest Reservations of the West

by John Muir *from Our National Parks*

John Muir wrote a series of essays on the U.S. national parks. A noted naturalist, his essays were published in 1901. Muir was the founder of the Sierra Club which organized in 1892. He would come to be known as "the Father of the National Parks." The Muir Woods near San Francisco is among the many natural places named for him.

The tendency nowadays to wander in wildernesses is delightful to see. Thousands of tired, nerve-shaken, over-civilized people are beginning to find out that going to the mountains is going home; that wildness is a necessity; and that mountain parks and reservations are useful not only as fountains of timber and irrigating rivers, but as fountains of life. Awakening from the stupefying effects of the vice of over-industry and the deadly apathy of luxury, they are trying as best they can to mix and enrich their own little ongoings with those of Nature, and to get rid of rust and disease. Briskly venturing and roaming, some are washing off sins and cobweb cares of the devil's spinning in all-day storms on mountains; sauntering in rosiny pinewoods or in gentian meadows, brushing through chaparral, bending down and parting sweet, flowery sprays; tracing rivers to their sources, getting in touch with the nerves of Mother Earth; jumping from rock to rock, feeling the life of them, learning the songs of them, panting in whole-souled exercise, and rejoicing in deep, long-drawn breaths of pure wildness. This is fine and natural and full of promise. So also is the growing interest in the care and preservation of forests and wild places in general, and in the half wild parks and gardens of towns. Even the scenery habit in its most artificial forms, mixed with spectacles, silliness, and kodaks; its devotees arrayed more gorgeously than scarlet tanagers, frightening the wild game with red umbrellas, --even this is encouraging, and may well be regarded as a hopeful sign of the times.

Questions

1. Briefly summarize the main idea of this passage.
2. What does “ the deadly apathy of luxury” mean?
3. What form of figurative language is the phrase “the nerves of Mother Earth”?
4. What does “reservation” mean in the context of this passage?

Vocabulary List

Each of the vocabulary words below are used in the reading passage. As you read the passage, pay attention to context clues that suggest the word's meaning.

1. Necessity
2. Stupefying
3. Briskly
4. Sauntering
5. Preservation
6. Artificial

Context Clues

Using context clues from the sentences in the passage, underline the correct meaning of the word in boldface.

1. "...that wildness is a **necessity**; and that mountain parks and reservations are useful not only as fountains of timber and irrigating rivers, but as fountains of life."
a. commodity b. requirement c. useful d. fun

2. "Awakening from the **stupefying** effects of the vice of over-industry and the deadly apathy of luxury..."
a. astonishing b. numbing c. stupid d. three-dimensional

3. "**Briskly** venturing and roaming, some are washing off sins and cobweb cares of the devil's spinning in all-day storms on mountains..."
a. slowly b. quickly c. strategically d. cautiously

4. "... **sauntering** in rosinny pinewoods or in gentian meadows..."
a. walking b. running c. dancing d. hiking

5. "So also is the growing interest in the care and **preservation** of forests and wild places in general, and in the half wild parks and gardens of towns."
a. pressing b. chopping c. honoring d. saving

6. "Even the scenery habit in its most **artificial** forms, mixed with spectacles, silliness, and kodaks..."
a. plastic-like b. concrete c. fake d. real