



Read • Discuss

Aldo Leopold

“Thinking Like a Mountain” Discussion Guide

THE ALDO
LEOPOLD
FOUNDATION

Provided by the Aldo Leopold Foundation
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OPENING EXERCISE:

- Have participants find a secluded spot to sit quietly for 10 minutes and make an inventory of all the different sounds they hear. Pair share: What did you hear during the sound observation? What thoughts or emotions did it bring to mind?

CLARIFICATION:

- What are some of the sounds Leopold equates to wildness?
- Who are all the different characters in this piece, and how do they perceive wildness?

INTERPRETATION:

- What do you think “the deeper meaning” known only to the mountain itself is? Is that universal?
- In the paragraph that starts “we reached the old wolf in time to watch a fierce green fire dying in her eyes,” what do you think changed what Leopold saw? What was “new” to him?
- What do you think about the things Leopold says we “strive” for in the last paragraph?
- What do you think he means by “too much safety yields only danger in the long run?” Why? Is this a lesson for us?

APPLICATION:

- Leopold says the cowman is taking over the wolf’s job of trimming the herd. What other obligations are humans taking over?
- Leopold talks about the various ways of striving—how do you strive?
- What keeps us from thinking like mountains?
- What does it mean for an individual to think like a mountain?
- How do personal and societal ethics change? Can we be agents of that change?

CLOSING EXERCISE:

- Think back—have you ever had a green fire moment? How did it change you? If you haven’t had one, how would you know one was coming?

NOTES