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ENGL 112-06

Understanding Sustainability via Momaday's *Way to Rainy Mountain*

Many cultures differ in their practices of land use and land protection. In America today, many people pride themselves on their increased awareness of environmental issues and pat themselves on the back when they take out their recycling each week. However, some cultures have not come so late to environmental conscientiousness. It is widely known that Native American communities throughout North America have long traditions of respect and reciprocity when it comes to the land on which they live. One well known writer, N. Scott Momaday (Kiowa), wrote about Native communities' attachments to their homelands, famously in his 1969 novel *The Way to Rainy Mountain*. What Momaday presents at the outset of the novel is a picture of a community detached from its cultural heritage as a result of colonialism. What he reflects on is this culture's history and its ideals. These are that Native communities emerge from specific geographic locations and are obligated to protect both culture and land. Today, it seems that Euro-Americans too feel that it is important to protect land, but a question remains about the preservation of cultures. Since Momaday's era, America has become increasingly environmentally aware. While there is still a lot of ground to cover in this movement, America is now a culture that presents itself as a nation that prizes environmental responsibility, suggesting that finally Americans – Euro-Americans, specifically – have come to see the wisdom of the cultural world-views that Momaday offered in his 1969 novel.

Paragraph 2.

Since the late-1960s, many Native communities have become increasingly strong in regard to their own efforts to celebrate their ties to their land as a central part of their cultural identity. Parallel to this is the growth of the environmental movement in the United States; many members and leaders in this movement have celebrated Native ideas about land as worthy of emulation by Euro-Americans. Many academics today have noticed that the classroom is a worthwhile site for the inculcation of environmental values, many of which conform to those presented by Momaday in the opening of his novel. High school and university instructors throughout the United States teach Momaday directly. One example is professor Greg Garrard. In his article “Ecocriticism and Education for Sustainability,” he writes that, “. . . .” (359).

Continue with discussion of Garrard’s quote. Tie to the broader issue of Americans’ growing awareness that Native models and ideas about land-use are worthy of emulation. Describe how this adaptation of Euro-American attitudes about land use has enabled America to become – as the definition thesis states – a nation “that prizes environmental responsibility.”

Paragraph 3.

Offer evidence in this paragraph that America does prize environmental responsibility today. Include another research source that shows that Americans now see themselves as dependent on preserving land. Quote from Momaday on this issue too. Tie the two together in a discussion.

Paragraph 4.

Offer and overview of the reasons for certain attitude changes since the 1960s. Offer some counterpoints to the thesis.

Paragraph 5.

Conclusion. Reiteration and strengthened version of thesis.

On new page: Works Cited.