

What Vermont Means To Me

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I adore Vermont. Vermont's environment is captivating, handsome. I look out my window in autumn, with leaves dancing across the bright blue sky, the trees tall and statuesque. The smell was aggravating when we first moved to this part of Vermont, but I've learned to love inhaling near farms, a statement that nearly paralyzed my city friends with fear.

I don't want my fresh air to run out, I don't want my soil to crumble like ash. The soil that gets beneath my fingernails, stains my fingers brown with fertile clumps. I don't want it to go away, the darling leaves in autumn, the puffy snow in winter, the bee's hum in summer. I don't want our farms to be replaced with factories, with no more cows I've named after driving the dirt road so many times. But this will all happen. My lovely and innocent Green Mountain State, turned to a trivial city. Becoming another lost cause in a museum.

I want to drive the dirt road again, not one last time but over and over. I don't care if I get carsick. I don't care if the road will never get paved because of its insignificance. It's important to me. Shouldn't I be able to keep home? Or will I have to watch as the glacier of oppression destroys Antarctica, moving toward my house, my cows, my trees? *Our*. A small voice in my head tells me that Vermont is everyone's, and no one's. But whose is it really? I suppose we all have different perceptions of our homes. Someone else may think that Vermont is theirs, but not the dirt roads past the named cows. Maybe for them, it's the sweet scent of sap trickling from the trees in spring. Maybe it's the dewy grass in the early morning, glinting under the magenta sunrise. So Vermont is everyone's in different ways, right? Then we have to fight to protect it.

Vermont is underappreciated. The population that does live here takes our environment for granted. On Earth Day, we go out to enjoy the wild. We pick up trash that we have contributed to at some point. We try to cover up our mistakes with volunteering and checking off things on the list of good deeds. Maybe we've missed the fine print at the bottom of the list. I imagine it reads, "You may do as many of these deeds as you wish. Talk yourself up. Plant trees. Go green. But you don't have to struggle to do these if your heart is pure and you care. If you care about your state, your world, you will fly through the list. There will be no looking back if your soul moves on, a soul doesn't have eyes or a head. It can't look back. Don't let your soul move along without you." The specifications in cursive at the bottom of the checking boxes would be somewhat of a waking up call. Shrill to the ears of the people that have just woken up, yet gentle to the ears of the people that have been up for hours.

I live near a woods. I used to use the sticks as wands, the raw, naked ones on the ground. I tried not to break limbs off the trees or pull anything from the ground, I thought it hurt them. When I did, I used to quietly apologize to the tree or ground or whatever it was. As I got older, I said it in my head, occasionally, I still do. Sometimes I apologize without doing anything unfavorable. The environment has seen enough abuse that you can express regret and ask for forgiveness anytime. In the moments between then and now, I thought it was silly. I still did it, but I thought it was embarrassing. Like when everyone's stopped playing with dolls, and you still do it. You tell everyone you don't, but your brain knows your brain and you can't peek behind a

curtain of deception if you know what's behind it. You'll end up just ripping it open, exposing the full truth. Even parts you didn't know.

I love Vermont. The sights, the sounds, the smells. I've lived here for my entire life. But being able to go kayaking with my mom, climb trees with my neighbor, do crafts with my best friend on our porch in summer, and hiking with the rest of my family makes me fortunate, and I know not to test luck. So, I'm going to do these things more, as a sort of Earth-Day resolution. I hope my essay has provided an acceptable point of view of a young citizen of Vermont and creates a profile of how I see the Green Mountain State. Thank You!