

## Loren Eiseley Essay

Loren Eiseley was born in Lincoln, Nebraska on September 3, 1907. His father was a car salesman and an aspiring actor on the side, his mother was an artist. He has credited his parents with his interest in writing and the arts. However, as a child, Loren had some very difficult times. His mother was also deaf and somewhat paranoid and her condition created some stress on his family. He often kept to himself and only seemed to be able to talk with his father and uncle, Buck. It was Loren Eiseley's experiences as a child and growing up that led him to his passion for science and the passing of time. Eiseley used time as an escape in his writing and life. He was very interested in the theory of evolution, especially of the early man. Many of Eiseley's first essays focused on evolution and its effects in the past, present, and future. The two essays that I have read by Eiseley are, *The Star Thrower*, and, *The Innocent Fox*. In both of these essays, Eiseley uses the element of time to tell his story and make a point.

Many reviewers of Eiseley's writing have commented on his style. It has been described as having an, "established tone, and masking the purely scientific with the engaging and personal." He takes his own personal experiences and uses them as literary references to combine them with scientific fact. In both essays that I read, Eiseley introduces the reader to a memory, not just a fact. He allows the reader to better understand his literature by giving them something to relate to. This is a main example of Eiseley's way of using time in his essays. Throughout the essays, Eiseley recalls many other fond memories with a life lesson at the end. In, *The Star Thrower*, Eiseley introduces you to his visits to the beach in Costabel, introducing the read to *The Star Thrower*. *The Star Thrower* is a man who caught his attention, at first with just an action. After Eiseley spoke to him, he kept his attention with what he said. When Eiseley asked the *Star Thrower* what he was doing, he simply replied

that the star

was still alive and would have a chance at life if he threw it well enough.

The Star Thrower is more than just a memory about a man saving washed up starfish. It is a realization. In the beginning of the essay, Eiseley talks about a "revolving eye." The essay is Eiseley's realization of what this eye is. What Eiseley discovered is that the revolving eye has power, or force. This unexplainable force is what put mankind on earth. Then, it gave mankind purpose. He explains that this force knew that, "man cannot exist spiritually without life." This is Eiseley's evidence that the force put mankind here, on Earth, for a purpose. Eiseley concludes that mankind's purpose on earth is to preserve life in all of its forms. Eiseley finishes the essay saying that he would walk remembering the forgotten words, "for the uses of life and the knowledge of the discontinuities of the unexpected universe."

Loren Eiseley was more than just a moving and theoretical writer; he was also a poet, anthropologist, sociologist, and humanist. He has been compared with many other humanist writers in the past such as Ralph Waldo Emerson and Henry David Thoreau, stressing, "contemplative rather than factual," writing. This means that in his writing, Eiseley is very thought provoking, challenging the reader to think deeply about his theories. It is an attitude where you ask questions and find answers for yourself, because the answer for you might not be the same as for someone else.

In, The Innocent Fox, Eiseley describes his fascination with science and nature from a young age. He states, "Since boyhood I have been charmed by the unexpected and beautiful." This was Eiseley's foundation for his fascination of the unknown. He understood that there would always be that element out there, but knew there was nothing wrong with trying to become better acquainted with it. The Innocent Fox is about Eiseley's chance meeting with a young fox pup. The fox has been left while its parents are out hunting and somehow Eiseley finds himself entertaining it. It is at the moment that he is there amongst the leaves and grass that he realizes that a small part of the Earth's wonder and awe is its playfulness. The Earth offers an

abundance of opportunities to enjoy oneself with activity. It is almost as if there is a scavenger hunt set up for each being to discover and learn about the world and the environment from the beginning of life until death.

The young fox helped Eiseley to better understand this journey, and the dying man at the hospital helped him complete it. He describes the moment, when he had an old chicken bone in his mouth entertaining a baby fox, as his miracle of life. He had, "been permitted to correct time's arrow." This just happens to be another reference to time. In this essay, Eiseley is awed by the young fox's ability to take Eiseley back to a childhood that he very well never got to experience; an opportunity for one to learn and enjoy the smallest things that life has to offer because it could be gone the very next second.

Loren Eiseley made many contributions to the worlds of science and literature. He was an extremely intellectual man who always looked for a deeper meaning in everything he experienced. There are many writers and philosophers who have tried to do this before Eiseley's time, as well as after, but few have succeeded. Because of Eiseley's wonder and awe at the Earth and its ever powerful, unexplainable force that it has to offer mankind, Mr. Eiseley managed to find an understanding and happiness in his life that he may not have found otherwise.

#### Sources

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