

Culminating Writing Task Exemplar Student Response

How does Roosevelt make connections between conservation and the progress, patriotism, and morality of the American people?

In his speech, Conservation as a National Duty, Theodore Roosevelt asserts his passion of conservation and preservation onto a group of governors, statesmen, and conservationists. Throughout his message, he details several reasons for the nation to stop wasting natural resources and begin conserving them. He also states that the question of the conservation and use of the great fundamental sources of wealth of this nation is second only to the question of morality. Conservation was indeed a priority for Theodore Roosevelt. In order to make connections between conservation and the progress, patriotism and morality of the American people, Roosevelt links conservation to modern day civilization, urges the nation to consider future generations, and asks Americans to consider resources that are not capable of renewal.

In order to support his claims, Roosevelt stressed that conservation was necessary by linking conservation to modern day civilization. He painted the picture that people had lost realization of the “demands” they made upon nature because they were no longer close to nature. Everyday life, in their minds, was seemingly removed from natural resources. However, Roosevelt made it clear that the advancement and growth that the nation experienced was dependent on the use of coal, iron, wood, and other resources from the earth. He said, “Every step of the progress of man is marked by the discovery and use of natural resources previously unused. Without such progressive knowledge and utilization of natural resources population could not grow nor industries multiply nor the hidden wealth of the earth be developed for the benefit of mankind” (Roosevelt 3). This fact drove Roosevelt to call the conference. He believed that the nation’s resources were threatened due to the “reckless and wasteful” use of them. He stressed that action and conservation needed to begin before the resources were exhausted.

Adding to the link of conservation and civilization, Roosevelt linked the need for conservation by urging the the nation to use its resources wisely for the benefit of generations to come. If the country did not exercise foresight, he determined that “dark will be the future” for the nation (Roosevelt 8). He compared foresight for the nation to a man conserving and wisely using the property which contains the assurance of well being for himself and his children. According to Roosevelt, the nation “can not do any of these things without foresight, and we can not, when the nation becomes fully civilized and very rich, continue to be civilized and rich unless the nation shows more foresight than we are showing at this moment as a nation” (Roosevelt 2). He simply believed that people should use what they had wisely and leave it better for future generations.

Furthermore, Roosevelt explained that natural resources could be divided into two classes, those capable and those not capable of renewal. For those resources that cannot be renewed, he simply said that they should be used wisely because exhaustion of those resources was certain. He added that in time means and methods to replace those resources would be developed. For those that are capable of being renewed, the renewal could happen in “such manner as to leave them undiminished for our children, but can actually be improved by wise use” (Roosevelt 9). Roosevelt, several times, likened the farmer to the nation, driving the thought that the nation had to begin believing

that they had to begin using natural resources more wisely in order to “fashion ourselves for the next generation” (Roosevelt 8).

In his speech, Roosevelt tied the ideals of progress, patriotism, and morality to conservation in order to spark a call to action among the American people. Roosevelt uses the ideas of modern day civilization, future generations, and resources that are not capable of renewal to make these connections. After planting seeds for the need of conservation, Roosevelt pointed to the legislation that different states had adopted in an effort to protect national resources. He ended by alerting the conference that more than conservation, the nation must be mindful of the future so that the quality of the nation will always be assured.