

"Daydream in the Desert"

Age 14, El Segundo High School, Class of 2025

The dry, dusty landscape enveloped the horizon, dotted with the occasional stray tumbleweed or forked cactus. Our cramped, tattered trailer was stationed in the lot we had been assigned to by the mustachioed gate sentry. (1) It was hot. Really hot. My parents always joked that I should be used to the warmth.

"We used to live in Miami after all," my father reasoned. Personally, I do not believe that analogy was relevant. After all, we had a pool there, and air conditioning. In our stuffy trailer, the only circulation came from an undersized wall fan that was undeniably reaching its final days.

The lone place we could catch some air happened to be the campsite's nature center. My mother, needing directions to the nearest trailhead, volunteered to chaperone my brother, Owen, and I. While six year olds don't necessarily care about the temperature, the nature center was a coveted adventure whenever our dad's tour took us to another campsite. With the cool air blasting, our curious eyes studied the stuffed snakes and coyotes that seemed to snarl back at us through the glass.

With the light fading, we left the solace of AC, and began to trudge back through the elements to our mobile home. Our mom passed us granola bars that we tore into like dogs. Still possessing the high amounts of energy that comes with youth, Owen and I raced on ahead looking for a creature that matched one we had just studied. Rounding a corner, we unexpectedly met our wish.

A mangy coyote stood not even six feet away from where we had stopped in our tracks, and this one was not just a stuffed model. Time froze. We locked eyes. He stared, we stared. The tension was nearly tangible, yet there was somewhat of a metaphysical connection between us children and the beast before us. The innumerable nature documentaries and countless books about wolves and coyotes I had seen could never prepare me for encountering one in person. Despite being warned that coyotes are dangerous, I did not think it possible that this rail thin mutt could hurt a human. (2)

"If you encounter one, make yourself larger and louder," the ranger had told us. But I didn't feel afraid. If anything the animal looked more startled than I did. I almost felt bad for the poor thing. Slowly, keeping his eyes on me, the coyote emitted a tentative growl from the back of its throat. (3) I knew I should call for help, I knew I should follow the ranger's instructions or protect my brother, but my mind was a swirling whirlwind of abstract emotions and ideas. I scarcely noticed the predator gradually inching towards the half-eaten granola bar that still remained enclosed in my fist. By the time I realized the danger, it had crept up to within inches of me. I snapped out of my trance long enough to toss the bar to my right, away from the path and into a dead clump of adjacent underbrush. The starved coyote darted after it without hesitation, and vanished into the shrubbery just as our mom rounded the bend.

"Hey boys, don't go so far ahead-," then she saw our terrified little faces. "You guys ok?"

"Never been better," I shakily replied.

The following nights I thought long and hard about that incident. Next thing I knew we were leaving. The mustachioed gatekeeper raised the bars, and we were off. However, driving out, far in the distance behind us, I heard a faint chorus of howls rising out of the desert.

A hunger had been satisfied.

Word Count: 599

Annotations

1. Why didn't the family want to get a cleaner or newer trailer?
2. What if the child and the brother did what the ranger told them to do, what would the outcome have been?
3. The coyote was uncertain about what was going to happen

Your Name: Theodore Bong

Title of Work: Daydream in the Desert

Author: Unknown

1. Provide a summary of the text.
 - a. Young children and their families stopped at the nature center at the campground they had driven into. After touring the nature center they left a nice air conditioner in the trailer. The kid and brother ran in front of the coyote on their way back to the trailer. They stared at the coyote as it approached the food. After the child threw the food, the mother chased them, heard the coyote howl and fled.
2. What did you like best about this text?
 - a. What I liked best about this text is the ending where the coyote howls with satisfaction. I loved how coyotes eat food and live another day.
3. Share a favorite quote from the text - why did this quote stand out to you?
 - a. My favorite saying was "But I wasn't afraid." This quote catches my eye because a child remembered telling the park ranger to get louder and speak louder when he encountered a coyote. But when he saw the coyote, I realized he was even more scared.
4. What feelings did this text evoke for you?
 - a. When the children and siblings met the coyote, nothing terrible happened, so the text evoked a joyful feeling. I was able to fulfill
5. If you got the chance to ask the author of this text one question, what would it be?
 - a. Would you like to ask the author if the child saw more coyotes or only coyotes? There were multiple howls at the end, so I ask this question, so will we see more coyotes during the rest of our stay? I was wondering.
6. What idea(s) was the author trying to get across OR what do you feel was the author's purpose in writing this text?
 - a. I feel like the idea the author was trying to convey was that we are not in danger all the time. No harm. They just want to live their lives without our intervention.

7. What aspect of this text did you most relate to?
 - a. The aspect of this text I was referring to was when kids revisit their moments with Coyote. When certain things happen, they revisit their memories just to get the same feeling.
8. What feedback would you give the author?
 - a. I would tell the writer that the article made it clear that both us and the animals are mutually scared of each other. I sense that the writer made a very good point that animals have emotions too and that they ought to be taken into consideration.