



### There's A Hair in My Dirt: ANALYSIS

Have you ever romanticized a part of nature because you thought it was cute or picturesque only to find out you didn't have the whole story? If so, provide an example.

Think about your favorite plants and animals. Why do you like them? Think about the plants and animals you don't like. What is it that bothers you? Where do we get these different attitudes towards living things? Having read the story do you remain confident that your feelings are warranted?

Harriet didn't just observe nature; she meddled with it. What are some of the things that Harriet tried to "fix"?

Are Harriet's attempts to "fix" nature the same as efforts by natural resource managers to "fix" nature (when they set hunting seasons, conduct prescribed burns, harvest trees, and control invasive species). If not, how do they differ?

At times, it seems Harriet thought nature was simply there for her enjoyment. How can me-centered views of nature influence decisions about the environment? Can you think of any examples within your own community and experience? How might decisions made from the heart be different from decisions made from the head? Is one way of reaching decisions better than the other way? Is there any common ground?

People brought many [invasive species](#) to North America for emotional (me-centered) reasons, without considering ecological consequences. For example, Eugene Schieffelin introduced starlings into New York's Central Park because he liked Shakespeare. He wanted the birds that Shakespeare wrote about to live in North America. Starlings often take the best nesting sites and leave native birds with less desirable homes. Now that people have introduced starlings, do we have a responsibility to manage their populations and minimize their impacts on native species? Can you think of [other examples](#)?

Which of the following do you think best represents the moral of Larson's story?

- *Nature is part of us and we are part of nature.*
- *The web of life is built entirely on mutual exploitation*
- *Nature is to be loved and admired, but above all, understood*

**STEP OUTSIDE:** With pen and paper in hand, go out into your yard or visit a local green space. Construct an ecological web that includes an earthworm and connects it to the plants and animals you see and don't see (but know are present). Does your web reflect one or more of the morals mentioned above?