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## **“The Monument & the Bungalow” by Pierce Lewis**

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In his essay "The Monument & the Bungalow," Pierce Lewis inspires his readers to revisit the world that surrounds them for example, the cities, the parks, the monuments, and the neighborhoods. All of these places are historical texts that are as important as the history lessons taught in school. The audience Pierce is directing his article to scholars of geography and related fields. Pierce describes that landscape is a piece in history that tells many stories about the people who created the landscape as well as the cultural context of the landscape. Landscape can be read by those who hold the vital skills and vocabulary.

Vernacular landscape is a very distinct kind of document. Vernacular landscape refers to the everyday places we encounter each day. Pierce states that the everyday landscape is the only record that was written by much of the earth's population who cannot write because they are unable to, or do not write because they are uncomfortable with using written language. Landscape that is made by unvarying people is the main historic record that has been left behind.

Pierce goes into what it means to read landscape and how we learn to accomplish that. Many geographers take the urge to read landscape for granted. Reading landscape is not taken for granted by the public. It is beyond the normal experience of most people in America. Pierce researched the subject of learning to read landscape and did not find a lot of information. One author on the subject felt that you either have the skill of reading landscape or you do not. Pierce disagrees with that author, he feels that some people have better visual skills than other; and that it might coincide with being left brain or right brained. Pierce knows from his experience with students that they can be taught to read landscape. He tried to remember what he had revealed in the process of teaching beginning students to make sense of the commonplace landscapes. He concluded that there are two things a student must learn.

The first requirement is “cultivating the habit of attention”. Students need to develop the habit of using their visual skills and asking nonjudgmental questions about familiar, commonplace things. In other words, students must get into the habit of “trusting the evidence of their eyes” and asking very elementary descriptive questions. The main questions to ask when looking at a landscape are: “What is that? How does it work? Why does it look the way it does? Why is it there?” It is important to not be judgmental about whether or not you like the landscape. Pierce feels that most new generation Americans are not using their eyes to look at the commonplace landscape that they live in. He blames this on the American education system. The educational system disheartens looking and thinking about what a student sees. Students are put down for investigating the landscape around them and it is not something that they normally do. Most school geography courses do not focus on vernacular landscape. Students must learn the habit of using their eyes to pay attention to the things around them that they rarely notice.

The second requirement is acquiring vocabulary. To look at parts of a landscape and describe them, students need to develop a vocabulary that allows them to describe things accurately. Pierce uses geomorphologists as an example. They can identify features that usually only

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people in their field can identify. The most significant vocabulary for students in the beginning stage of learning to read landscape is architectural history. This is the most important because the fundamental foundations in many human landscapes are buildings. Students need to acquire architectural vocabulary to describe the appearance of buildings. Pierce showed his students two things that they likely would not pay much attention to, a monument and a bungalow. By taking his students to these places, they found out that everyday human landscapes offer them an opportunity to look into an older world. Without the two requirements he spoke of earlier in the article, they would not be able to do that. The students had to learn a foundation of vocabulary that let them identify and give names to things in the landscape, so that they were able to connect those things with larger ideas.

Pierces final argument is that “we can teach students to read landscapes by getting them into the habit of looking and teaching them the vocabulary that allows them to identify and classify the recurrent significant forms.” If they learn that skill, they will have attained the skills to do something incredible. They can begin to learn from the landscape on their own to see a world they have not seen before.

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