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Essay 1: My Photo Essay

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Great Delaware Water Gap Adventure



“Mountain struggle” “Angel Earth descend” “Sleeping Earth”

This is a tale No, an adventure, of how my friends and I went up Delaware Water Gap Mountain. According to Summitpost, the mountain is 1463 ft / 446 m which is 5 Statues of Liberty on top of each other. The hike was not an easy one. It took a lot of water, supplies, and breaks to get to the top where “Angel Earth Descend” was taken. The photos I took would be considered Documentary Photos, each capturing a moment of our journey up the mountain. Throughout the journey, all my photos were part of my journey and not expected. In Perfect and Unrehearsed, Cole discusses the power of photography to capture everyday and brief moments that feel unscripted. My photo “Mountain Struggle” shows our pure hike struggles and nothing else but

just taken now, a spontaneous capture of a real. Just as Cole argues that life's moments are unscripted but hold deep meaning, my photos reflect the raw, untouched truth of my adventure.

Just like any hike, we started from the bottom of the mountain. The bottom, surprisingly, was the hardest part. You might ask, how? It's just the beginning, but the incline made climbing difficult. In the photo "Mountain Struggle," you can see two of my friends trying to get over the two logs. The composition of the photo focuses on their effort, with the green trees, with the logs forming a natural barrier in the foreground. The trail itself was guided, but the terrain was unpredictable. Each step taken in my photo, shows us trying to find a steady footing while being surrounded by uneven ground. The water from nearby created wet, slippery rocks below our feet, adding to our problems. My photo shows the reality effect of the hike—nothing is staged from the roots of the gray trees to rocks on the floor, which naturally form makeshift stairs, also adding texture. My photo focuses on the struggle of the climb, using natural elements like tree roots to support the idea of both physical and visual ascent. The trees, which acted as natural sunblock from the sun, played with light and shadow, making us look down at the terrain we had. We dealt with this hellish terrain for an hour and a half before we took our first break. After our ten-minute break, we embarked on our journey again for the next two hours with some occasional stops, hiking up the mountain trail. The trees seem to be angled as a cannon in a way going higher with every step we see all kinds of things: brown deer, and small green frogs that blend into their natural habitat. Once you take your eyes off them it'll be hard to find them again because of their green with brown exterior. After another hour we reached our second checkpoint where "Sleeping Earth" was taken. At this point, we are about five minutes from the top. "Sleeping Earth" and "Angel Earth Descend" are the same, just from different angles. While "Angel Earth Descend" may look more appealing I like "Sleeping Earth" better because of the angle of the picture. The landscape with never ending hills extending into the horizon. The

vantage point, situated atop rocky terrain, from the photo I took you can clearly see the height and distance I was at, which shows the natural surroundings. The foreground features jagged rocks, creating a strong composition that guides the eye toward the background of the mountains. "Sleeping Earth" use of lines and shapes—from the curving mountain ridges to the angular rocks in the foreground—creates a balance that makes the dominant impression seen more and tranquility. If you ever watch Moana it looks like Te Fiti the moving island at the end of the movie.

After finally reaching the top of the mountain our journey comes to an end. At the top of the mountain after about four hours of hiking up "Angel Earth descend" was taken.

With the name "Angel Earth Descend", the sun takes on a divine presence, shining its radiant beams that look like the wings or aura of biblical angels. The brightness of the sun creates this contrast to the darker landscape below, which gives off an angel descending from the sky. The starburst effect of the sun's rays gives the sun its amazing domain impression, lending the scene a sense of spiritual angel. Teju Cole's observation in "Perfect and Unrehearsed," where he writes, "Photography, like divinity, fixes the ephemeral." The sun, frozen in that moment, the powerful presence of an angel is shown. Similarly, Susan Sontag, in "On Photography," speaks to photography's ability to "record the world, but also make it available in ways that go beyond simple copies." The sun in this image doesn't just illuminate the sky; it changes the scenery around it and not just itself. The impact it had made it looked like it was edited when it wasn't. Compared to the first photograph, which draws the attention of the view towards the ground of the rocky landscape, this image gives me more spiritual connection. The intense light dominates, casting an aura over the entire composition. It reflects John Berger's idea from "Understanding a Photograph," where he notes that a photo can "free the elements in

it from the usual burden of meaning." Here, the sun is a biblical angel, radiating with power and grace. Which is how it got its name.

In conclusion, my essay captures the journey up Delaware Water Gap Mountain, challenges faced along the way. Through spontaneous and raw documentary photography, each image tells a part of my story, reflecting the unscripted and imperfect nature of my hike. As Teju Cole noted, photography has the power to capture moments as they happen, giving them meaning even when they seem fleeting. My photos offer persistence and discovery. The sun's radiant beams in "Angel Earth Descend" reflect not only nature but also a spiritual connection, transforming the scene. As Susan Sontag writes, photography can go beyond mere reproduction, capturing moments that seem both real and surreal.