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English 190

begins to read books about almost anything that sparks her interest (Dillard 107). Dillard's world expands rapidly as she begins to notice society as well. In her earliest of observations, she watches the people of her neighborhood with innocent wonder. After a big snow, Dillard watches her neighbor, Jo Ann Sheehy ice-skating and is surprised at the "beauty and strangeness" of the act (Dillard 23). Dillard is stunned by the sight because she is learning to disassociate Jo Ann from the behaviors of her rotten younger brother. In her teens Dillard's observations persist. She observes the individuals in church, noting how fake she perceives them to be, "I knew what they loved... knew what they hated... They didn't buy God" (Dillard 135). In both instances, with Jo Ann Sheehy and the people in church, Dillard observes that things are not always as they appear to be. Dillard is an observer of nature and society. Dillard's observations and curiosities about the world remained a persistent feature of her development.

Not only is Dillard an observer, she is a researcher. Dillard finds that she does not only want to learn about the world, she wants to understand it. After reading a book about field experiments in and around ponds and streams, Dillard begins to conduct experiments of her own. Dillard receives a microscope from her parents and sets off to find microscopic life in pond water. After spending day after day peering into her microscope for months, she finally finds the illusive amoeba that she read all about. She then expands her research to insects, and she observes them under her microscope. Dillard devises a do-it-yourself kit for killing insects and attempts to master the art of capturing butterflies unharmed. Despite the cigar boxes under her bed filled with giant beetles, Dillard distinctly dislikes insects. She struggles to touch her beetles and butterflies, though she never gives

of her life, Dillard is watched by the people around her. This fact illustrates Dillard as more than an observer of life and society, but a part of it.

Dillard's *An American Childhood* develops her as not only a spectator, but an investigator, and more than that, an object of other's regard. In her youth, Dillard witnesses the

Works Cited

Dillard, Annie. *An American Childhood*. 08092013 ed., Pymble, HarperCollins e-books, 2007. RedShelf, redshelf.com/book/351169/an-american-childhood-351169-9780061843136-annie-dillard. Accessed 22 Sept. 2020.