

I had built a little cabin in Yosemite, and for convenience in getting water, and for the sake of music and society, I led a small stream from Yosemite Creek into it. Running along the side of the wall it was not in the way, and it had just fall enough to ripple and sing in low, sweet tones, making delightful company, especially at night when I was lying awake. Then a few frogs came in and made merry with the stream,--and one snake, I suppose to catch the frogs.

Returning from my long walks, I usually brought home a large handful of plants, partly for study, partly for ornament, and set them in a corner of the cabin, with their stems in the stream to keep them fresh. One day, when I picked up a handful that had begun to fade, I uncovered a large coiled rattler that had been hiding behind the flowers. Thus suddenly brought to light face to face with the rightful owner of the place, the poor reptile was desperately embarrassed, evidently realizing that he had no right in the cabin. It was not only fear that he showed, but a good deal of downright bashfulness and embarrassment, like that of a more than half honest person caught under suspicious circumstances behind a door. Instead of striking or threatening to strike, though coiled and ready, he slowly drew his head down as far as he could, with awkward, confused kinks in his neck and a shamefaced expression, as if wishing the ground would open and hide him. I have looked into the eyes of so many wild animals that I feel sure I did not mistake the feelings of this unfortunate snake. I did not want to kill him, but I had many visitors, some of them children, and I oftentimes came in late at night; so I judged he must die.

Muir, J. (1901). Among the Animals of the Yosemite. In *Our National Parks*. Retrieved from http://vault.sierraclub.org/john_muir_exhibit/writings/our_national_parks/

John Muir also known as "John of the Mountains," was a Scottish-American naturalist, author, environmental philosopher and early advocate of preservation of wilderness in the United States.

Massachusetts believes it has a mandate to return rattlesnakes (*Crotalus horridus*) to its forests. The state has several colonies of rattlesnakes within its borders. One wonders why more are needed. Officials plan to put the rattlesnakes on an island in the Quabbin Reservoir where they will be protected from humans. If they can breed there, the colony can be used to create other rattlesnake colonies throughout Massachusetts. The rattlesnakes will, of course, leave the island by swimming the short distance to the forested mainland and spread throughout southern New England and join us in Rhode Island. Then they will be with us, a venomous snake that has not been part of New England since colonial days. Massachusetts officials say the Endangered Species Act mandates the introduction of a venomous reptile, the rattlesnake, to populated regions of the state. Well, it doesn't! There is choice! The rattlesnake will encounter humans — and it will strike, bite and poison those who encounter it. Further, the known presence of rattlesnake will diminish the desire of people to enjoy woodlands as they do now, without the threat of being bitten by a rattlesnake. It is not an inspiring experience to come upon a rattlesnake while enjoying a walk in the woodlands. In my career as a wildlife ecologist, I observed a wildlife experiment at the University of Massachusetts where the fisher (sometimes called the fisher cat) was released onto an island in Quabbin Reservoir. It was postulated that the fishers would control the overpopulation of the island by porcupines. The fishers killed all the porcupines, all right, but then they left the island. They reached the mainland by traveling over the ice or by swimming. They established populations throughout Massachusetts, Rhode Island and Connecticut. Now, they kill our family cats, eat our dogs and attack us in our backyards. They kill our chickens, ducks and farm geese in the name of a complete New England fauna. It is dangerous to tinker with the introduction of wildlife species long gone from regional fauna. The Canada goose was welcomed until it overtook our golf courses and the wild turkey was admired until it began to attack children and the elderly. The white-tail deer was put on Block Island by choice. Now Block Islanders would like to see the deer gone. There comes a time in our society where the wishes of the few must be called into question. I feel certain that 99 percent of the New Englanders who use our forests would vote against the addition of a venomous snake to our forests and parklands.

Opinion of John Kupa. (2016, March 12). Retrieved August 18, 2016, from

<https://wildlifequabbinvalley.wordpress.com/2016/03/12/opinion-of-john-kupa/>

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- Years before the bald eagle became America's national icon, the Timber Rattlesnake was the animal that held that title. (1)
- State documents show that the last known human fatality from a Timber Rattlesnake bite in Massachusetts was in 1791, 225 years ago. (2)
- Adult Timber Rattlesnakes range from 30-60" though have been known to reach up to 72." (3)
- Ecological status of "Least Concerned" in south eastern states. (3)
- Threatened in New York, Connecticut, Illinois, and Texas. (3)
- Endangered in Massachusetts, Vermont, New Jersey, New Hampshire, Virginia, Indiana and Ohio. (3)
- Extinct in Rhode Island and Maine. (3)
- Timber Rattlesnakes often perform extended periods of rattling and feiting before striking. (4)
- Variation in effects of venom include causing muscle spasms, internal hemorrhaging, break down of proteins in the body. (4)

(1) <https://allthingsliberty.com/2015/01/the-rattlesnake-tells-the-story/>

(2) <http://wwlp.com/investigative-story/the-real-costs-of-a-timber-rattlesnake-colony-at-the-quabbin/>

(3) <http://srelherp.uga.edu/snakes/crohor.htm>

(4) Norris R. 2004. Venom Poisoning in North American Reptiles. In Campbell JA, Lamar WW. 2004. *The Venomous Reptiles of the Western Hemisphere*. Comstock Publishing Associates. Ithaca and London. 870 pp. 1500 plates.


Name: _____ Date: _____

Timber Rattlesnakes and the effects of Different Texts

How did the **written texts** provided impact your opinion of the issue of reintroducing rattlesnakes to the Quabbin Watershed?:

How did the **visual texts** provided impact your opinion of the issues of reintroducing rattlesnakes to the Quabbin Watershed?:

Which media was more powerful in swaying/reaffirming your opinion?:



What kinds of media would you generate/use to sway the public's opinion on this issue (i.e. drawings, posters, images from internet, videos)? Why would you choose these media?

