

Prologue: A First-Year Writing Journal

Volume 1

Article 7

2009

Commentary on "Feeling Transcends Language In Hemingway's 'Big Two-Hearted River'"

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Recommended Citation

Lewallen, Brynn (2009) "Commentary on "Feeling Transcends Language In Hemingway's 'Big Two-Hearted River'"," *Prologue: A First-Year Writing Journal*: Vol. 1, Article 7. Available at: http://digitalcommons.denison.edu/prologue/vol1/iss1/7

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Commentary by Brynn Lewallen '09, Music Performance and English

This paper contains mature writing for a first-year student. It reads easily and the ideas flow well together. Ryder Lamb's use of quotes is very effective, and the leading in to and out of the quotes is clear and concise. Take the second sentence in the fourth paragraph, for example, where he describes the "heathery sweet fern" and "sooty black" grasshoppers. Lamb integrates a few short phrases from the text into his own explanation, providing a vivid example that smoothly fits within his explanation. Paragraph four, where the writer really reaches his stride, has the best clarity in the essay.

The conclusion is strong as well. It begins with a sentence about Nick, the main character of "Big Two-Hearted River," and broadens to a discussion of the Modernists. Next, Lamb returns to Hemingway and relates him to other Modernists. One reason this closing is so effective is that it returns to mentioning James Joyce and Virginia Woolf as other Modernists, and another reason is that it begins with the specific idea of the paper and gradually expands to a more universal discussion. This is exactly what a conclusion should do. The topic of the paper is something that could easily be expanded in the future for another paper, perhaps for an additional study of Modernist writers. I would be intrigued to read more about Joyce and Woolf along with a further discussion of Hemingway.