

Disobedient Civilians: Thoreau's Writings in Chris McCandless's Life and Death

We live in a world where just very few things last. A ruthless and powerful force called Time will deteriorate and eventually destroy all the material objects or beings. Unlike persons or rocks, ideas are not made of atoms but of a more ethereal substance. That is the reason why ideas are one of those very few things that practically last forever. More than a century ago the American writer Henry David Thoreau (1817-1862) wrote in a very passionately way about what he believed. He despised government and its human-made laws; he advocated for higher laws and for personal ethics based on conscience. He fought for freedom and called for a return to the purity of Nature. Thoreau's ideas are still alive and echoing in the mind of new generations. Fewer than ten years ago, a young man just graduated from college loaded his backpack with his belongings and went into the wild, looking for freedom and a more spiritual life that would satiate his hunger for purpose. He was Chris McCandless (1968-1992). Thoreau's ideas had come to life again in Chris' mind, providing him with guidance and inspiration for his difficult and transcendental journey toward Truth and Freedom, a journey that would prove fatal at the end. **Chris McCandless's life was very strongly influenced by the writings of Henry David Thoreau, and many of McCandless's actions were dictated by the ideas of that writer, especially by Thoreau's essay "Civil Disobedience," which advocated for the search of ultimate freedom and for the love of Nature, as well as for a life lived according to one's personal ideals.**

Notice how this introductory paragraph builds a context by presenting Thoreau and a few of his ideas. It accomplishes this in a V-shape or funnel method. The opening sentences begin with a general idea and gradually bring the reader to the subject matter of the essay and ultimately to the thesis statement at the end.

The bold-face sentence illustrates the thesis, and the colored text conveys the philosophical ideas of Thoreau that influenced Chris McCandless. Note the underlined prepositional phrases that precede each element of the thesis statement. They cause this part of the thesis to have a *parallel* structure to it.