

Composing the *Into the Wild* Essay

1. Start first with a philosophical idea from one of Thoreau's essays. Copy that onto a sheet of paper, then paraphrase it by stating it in your own words, being sure to understand the intent of what Thoreau is trying to say.
2. Next, once you are sure you understand what Thoreau means, start thinking of ways that Chris McCandless actually lives out this particular ideal of Thoreau. Be sure to find the page numbers of all the events you can think of in McCandless' life that illustrate Thoreau's philosophical ideal.
3. The next step is to write a topic sentence out of the paraphrase you just wrote.
4. The next sentence in the paragraph should be the quote from Thoreau.
5. Then add a sentence indicating that McCandless lives out this ideal in several ways.
6. Next start with your first example of how Chris lives out this ideal.
7. Then explain it if need be.
8. Then use your second example from Chris' life to illustrate your topic sentence.
9. Repeat this with at least 3 solid examples from Chris' life.
10. Finally add a concluding sentence that wraps up that paragraph.

This is the **model** to follow for writing all of the main body paragraphs in your essay. Just remember that each topic sentence should have 4 ingredients. It should include these 3 words: Thoreau, McCandless, influence; plus it should state the paraphrase of the Thoreauvian philosophy you are illustrating. Here's an example of the entire paragraph:

Sample Main Body Paragraph for *Into the Wild* Essay

One of Thoreau's most obvious influences upon McCandless is Thoreau's notion that the government should have the least amount of interaction as possible in an individual's life. In fact Thoreau writes "That government is best which governs least" (Thoreau, "Civil Disobedience" 1). Without a doubt, McCandless believes in Thoreau's statement, and acts upon it several times throughout his post-college odyssey. The fact that McCandless drives with an expired license plate (Krakauer 28) illustrates that he does not want the government to regulate his life. To him, renewing the car's registration with the DMV is just an inconvenience. It is clear that McCandless has no respect for the government because he deliberately burns a wad of money during his stay in Detrital Wash. He is so arrogant about this act that he documents it in his journal and photographs the smoldering bills of US currency (Krakauer 29). Early in *Into the Wild*, Jim Gallien confirms McCandless' nonchalant attitude toward the US government when he summarizes McCandless' feelings about hunting in Alaska without a license. " 'How I feed myself is none of the government's business. Fuck their stupid rules' " (Krakauer 6). This instance possibly reveals McCandless' most genuine feelings about how much control the government should have over his life, but the incident in Carthage, South Dakota is McCandless' most blatant attempt to thumb his nose at the federal government. When he fills out his W-4 form while working with Wayne Westerberg, he writes "Iris Fucyu" for his name (Krakauer 101), a slightly veiled way of flipping off the IRS with his metaphorical middle finger. All of these examples illustrate varying degrees of McCandless' attitude of what role the government should play in an individual's life and the extent to which McCandless took seriously Thoreau's opinions about the U.S. government.