

## Connecting Themes Between CommonLit Texts and My Letter

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“Fifty years - ha! It had happened in five” In a short story “Quiet Town” by Jason Gurley, Bev’s small town has been flooded by rising sea levels. Her shoes surrounded by a thin sheet of water, she recalls when scientists had warned that their houses would be under the ocean in fifty years... but it had started to flood in only five. This is one of several texts we have read over the course of this project to educate ourselves on some environmental issues and to learn to find themes in texts. For this project, titled “People and the Environment,” I wrote a letter to the B.C. Minister of Forests, Natural Lands and Resources, Katrine Conroy, to ask that she immediately stop logging the old growth forests of the Fairy Creek Watershed on Vancouver Island. The themes and texts in this unit support the ideas and themes discussed in my letter because they contained ideas such as mass extraction of Earth’s resources without fully considering how long term consequences will severely undermine our wellbeing.

In my letter I wrote about the need to preserve the long term benefits of old growth forest ecosystem functions over the short term economic value of timber. This theme of short term vs. long term is supported in two texts: *He-y, Come On Ou-t!* and *The Sea Also Rises*. In the story *He-y, Come On Ou-t!* a mysterious hole appears in a small village after a typhoon. The villagers soon discovered that the hole seems to have no end. They then decide to use it to dispose of all the materials they no-longer want, like classified government documents, old love letters, sewage and nuclear waste. One day however, a construction worker was taking a break when all the items that were put into the hole began emptying out of the sky. This supports the idea that not considering or caring about long term consequences can have a negative impact on our lives in the future. When a concessionaire requested to have the hole to dispose of waste “The people of the village were a bit worried about this, but they consented when it was explained that there would be absolutely no above ground contamination for several thousand years and that they would share in the profits.” This quote helps to back up the statement that people tend to care more about the short term profits than long term ecosystem damage. In texts *The Sea Also Rises* and *Quiet Town* villagers are warned about rising sea levels and in both texts they don’t do anything about it or think about the long term consequences. In *The Sea Also Rises* several people from Maryland are interviewed about the rising sea levels in their secluded island community. One of these people was a woman named Erin Pruitt who worked at a local bakery. Customers sometimes ask her “Do you think when you have kids and grandchildren that Smith Island will still be here?” After a moment she replies “I hope so.” In the interview after talking about the pre-stated question she says “But the truth is, and the reason it takes me a while to answer that question,” she continues, “is that I don’t want to think about it. That’s the harsh reality.” This supports the idea of not wanting to think about long term consequences. Similarly, in *Quiet Town*, Bev and the other characters were warned by scientists that their homes would be flooded. The townsfolk that thought that it was all fake and ignored the warnings are now living with the consequence of a flooding town and uncertainty of future survival. Many people have difficulties wrapping their heads around climate change consequences that they themselves have yet to experience.

Where will we be once we log the last remaining 3% of B.C.’s productive old growth and lose the ecosystem functions that it contains? Without its large capacity for carbon sequestration, fire resistance or temperature regulation? The people in the texts ignored or didn’t consider the possible long term consequences and are now living with the severe life-altering effects. We need to learn from these texts so the same doesn’t happen to us in fifty, or perhaps just five, years. Logging our old growth forests for the short term economic benefits will have lasting negative long term effects on the land, climate and people.