

## Ms. Letourneau's Example

**Date:** Feb. 28<sup>th</sup>, 2017

**Source:** "So many people live within unhappy circumstances and yet will not take the initiative to change their situation because they are conditioned to a life of security, conformity, and conservatism, all of which may appear to give one peace of mind, but in reality nothing is more damaging to the adventurous spirit within a man than a secure future. The very basic core of a man's living spirit is his passion for adventure. The joy of life comes from our encounters with new experiences and hence there is no greater joy than to have an endlessly changing horizon, for each day to have a new and different sun." – Christopher McCandless

**Connection:** When I was in high school, my dream was to become a teacher and then travel the world working in different countries to educate people and to experience other cultures, beliefs, and ways of life. I achieved the first part of that dream, but have been too afraid of leaving the comfort of my life to do the second half. I met my husband while I was going to school and we have a nice house in a nice neighbourhood now. We have many friends in the area, and both our families live within the Lower Mainland. We both have good jobs, money in the bank, and retirement plans. We have exactly what Chris refers to as the most damaging thing one can have for their spirit: a secure future. I have only "first-world" problems. I should count my blessings that I go to bed each night feeling safe enough to fall asleep, not worrying about how I'm going to pay my bills, and having a full stomach. But, there's a part of me that feels like I've let myself down for being too cowardly to give up all that I have in order to live a life of uncertainty and without creature comforts. When I was in Africa, I was the happiest I've been in a very long time, and the only personal items I had were ones I could fit into the side bags on my motorbike. It was hard for me to come back and see the excess that we North Americans live in. I saw fast food and garbage everywhere, and my closet had more clothes than I'd ever need for the next ten years. Being in the middle of the desert, with little belongings was far more enriching and memorable than the entire last year of my life. The people I met, the animals and landscapes I saw, and the experiences I had were far more beautiful than anything I had met, seen, or experienced in my whole life.

*Note: (I chose to make a personal connection (text-to-self), but other connections I could make to this quote and expand on would be connections to the movie Fight Club or the documentary Minimalism as both also tackle the idea of having stuff own you and that media perpetuates this idea that we need things to be happy instead of having experiences that free us). These would be considered text-to-text connections.*

**Essential Question:** In what ways can living a safe, comfortable life be limiting for an individual?

**Insightful Discussion:** I watched the movie *Into the Wild* before I read the book, and fell in love with Chris McCandless's ideas and beliefs about what is important in life. So many people live unhappy lives because society and mainstream media have perpetuated this idea that we need to get an education, get married, have children, own a home, have a nice car, and have the newest and the best of everything. We have been conditioned to live the life of consumers. If one toys with the idea of straying from this life, it can be quite scary. How will I retire? Where will I live? Will I be safe? How will I earn enough money to meet my basic needs? In reality, these are questions people who live outside of the realm of privilege ask themselves every day. So, this makes me feel spoiled and selfish to complain about being unhappy, when I have so much to be grateful for. However, on the other hand, I feel like I'm being a coward for not living my dream because I'm scared of what I'll lose or have to give up in order to pursue it. There are so many people who would give anything for a secure future, and here I am complaining about having one because it's holding me back from doing what I've always wanted to do. I think the reason most people don't pursue their dreams is because of fear. One big fear I have (and I'm sure others do as well) is leaving my family and friends to pursue this, but realistically, how often do I really spend time with my family and friends on a weekly basis? I would still be able to communicate with them in most of the ways I still do. So, I have to go back to this fear of not having the security of money, shelter, food, and safety that I'm used to as being the reason why I haven't pursued my dream. There was a study done where dying people were interviewed about their regrets they had in life. Overwhelmingly, the same response was given: "I wish I'd had the courage to live a life true to myself, not the life others expected." So, it makes me wonder which would actually be more damaging to me in the future: A future that is full of insecurity and the unknown, or a secure one?