

Hiking During Climate Crisis

Final

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16 years old

My piece portrays the relationship between the climate crisis and how it affects human lives as people interact with nature. As a hiker myself, this issue is of personal significance. In different areas of the world, the warming of the climate has created an unstable environment of extreme fluctuations in weather patterns which cause extreme droughts and flooding. The environment plays a big role in what a hiker needs to prepare for; from packing more layers to the amount of water carried. Since hiking requires the most basic of human needs and subjects one to elemental exposure, it is a necessity to have the proper warmth, food, and water to survive. Droughts are one of the biggest ways climate change affects long-distance hiking. As the climate warms, the seasonal flow of streams and springs hikers rely on are increasingly unpredictable as maps may show water sources that no longer exist. If a climber were to run out of water, there wouldn't be a backup supply, creating a dangerous, life threatening situation. When there is flooding in the mountains, it is equally as dangerous. Many hikers have to navigate quickly shifting conditions from freeze-thaw cycles, the increase of unexpected storms and in some places, avalanches.

Having accomplished 21 of New Hampshire's 4,000 footers, I have experienced sudden fluctuations in weather in the mountains. Although they are not the biggest mountains in the country or world, they can experience extreme winds and weather that has taken many lives in the past. On one particular excursion of mine, after several cold days there was a sudden temperature fluctuation that caused the snow on top of the mountain to melt and flow into the streams and rivers. The rivers I had to cross from the summit rose and became rapid which made it difficult to cross. Luckily, this was at the bottom of the trail so if I had fallen in, I was only minutes from my car. However, if I was out in the wilderness and had fallen in, I could be at risk for hypothermia. My painting is a snapshot of my view of the rising river on that day.

Climate change is not always something we can see with a human eye. In my painting the climate warming is represented through the warm tones and highlights in the trees and clouds. In the center of my painting there is a rapid river from the melting ice on top of the mountain. I added warm streaks through the flow of water, connecting with the trees' warm highlights. On the rocks there are also bits of snow and ice that are melting into the river.

Living in Maine, we don't aren't impacted by climate change like other areas where they experience strong and frequent hurricanes. However, it is important that we realize climate change affects us too, even if we can't see it.

Sources

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- Cappucci, M. (2022, October 12). Study finds climate change is bringing more intense rains to U.S. Retrieved December 5, 2022, from <https://www.washingtonpost.com/climate-environment/2022/10/11/rain-increasing-climate-change-us/>