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Professor Frank
Capstone Draft

How Rising Temperatures in Maine Affect Coastal Communities Represented in 21st Century Creative Nonfiction

- What are the changes happening
- How are they impacting the community
 - What's the tone and perception through sources
 - Are there workarounds or adaptations
- How can we get the most out of these pieces
 - consider our own role in rising temperatures

After living in Maine for the past three years, I've grown to adore this state and all the characteristics that define this environment. From the economic aspect of the lobstering and clamming industry to the community members who hold this land close to their hearts, there is no shortage of artistic expression regarding these coastal communities. However, in recent years, this delicate balance between community and environment has been threatened by the changing climate of the 21st century. This paper will analyze creative nonfiction from Maine voices and discuss what's changing, how coastal residents are impacted, and the tone surrounding the role humans play in this sensitive time. So please, take a step back, let go of societal biases, and begin to rethink what we value in this world.

The Gulf of Maine is witnessing a change in our environment at first hand. Its warming rate is 99% faster than any other ocean, which brings fluctuating weather, jeopardizing the livelihood of these coastal communities (Sterling). Lobster and clams are historically important sources of food and livelihood for Maine residents, but their abundance is declining. A prose titled *Womb of Ice: The Main Woods in Winter* discussed the alarming trend of water temperatures. "Scientific analysis shows trends towards warmer winters and earlier springs, consistent over the course of the 20th century. Averaging air temperature in Maine for the month

of December through February increased approximately by 3° F...” As the waters warm, aquatic animals struggle to conserve energy and are more susceptible to disease.

To add fuel to the flame, nonprofit organization Down to Earth Storytelling produces a range of media that document environmental justice stories with the goal of “changing hearts and inspiring action”. Their 2019 short film, *Maine Roadtrip to the Future*, covers individuals and businesses from varying backgrounds and ages to look at how these communities are adapting in the face of change. “Mainers are thinking about diversifying their businesses away from just lobstering because of climate change and ocean acidification... a risky business strategy to have all your eggs in one basket... thinking about more about kelp aquaculture, shellfish aquaculture however, they are also aware of ocean acidification. Carbon dioxide in the atmosphere is absorbed and turned into carbonic acid in the ocean. This Oceanic uptake of CO₂ can make it hard for lobsters, oysters, and muscles to develop properly. Shell farming organisms represent 85% of the value of Maine's Fisheries” (Burt). As coastal waters grow more acidic, the shells of our beloved sea bugs weaken, in turn threatening the economies of communities that rely on fisheries. This affects the environment and the communities that benefit from fisheries.

This industry is a way of life for many coastal Mainers and is a key aspect of their cultural identity. Many authors within these written pieces reflect fear that their children may not experience the same environment that they did growing up. So what can be done about it? In the prose, *Witching Hour*, “the first step is taking accountability... Western lifestyle is not sustainable; if the entire population of the globe lived like Americans do, we would need four Earths.” (Sterling) Take a moment, let that sink in. A poem titled *Nobody Looks Back: A Cautionary Tale* questions from a future perspective why we didn't act when we could, that we'll cry when it's too late, squandering whatever future we have.

Despite this daunting topic, it's important to remember that if we act now, we can maintain and heal the damage that's been done. It starts with one person changing their values and perspective, but it takes a village to care for the things we already have, our giving environment. This crisis will take more than just fixing, but healing the human relationship with the earth. when we shift our values....

So please remember to leave the planet better than you found it.

References:

Burt, A. (2019, January 26). *Maine Roadtrip to the Future*. Vimeo.

<https://vimeo.com/313537593?fl=pl&fe=vl> (Timestamp 7:15)

Sterling, M., & Sullivan, K. (2019). *A Dangerous New World: Maine Voices on the Climate Crisis*. Littoral Books.

Potential relevant information:

Endure a managed retreat . According to a study published by Nature Communications, 60 years from now, Portland will become Baltimore due to rising sea levels, Reaching up to 9 ft 240 is the projected year to prevent a carbon buildup in our atmosphere from going over 2 degrees Celsius. the course we are on now will have us reaching a four degrees Celsius increase by 2100.