

Characters on the Trail: How Appalachian Trail Thru-hikers express their experiences through the language of art and the language of words

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Abstract

This thesis is grounded in narrative technique, Gestalt theory, and existentialism. It studies the Appalachian Trail, its history, and the thru-hiking community. It aims to provide thru-hikers with an innovative way of expressing and sharing their Trail experiences and Trail stories. This study presents and discusses the writing and artwork of eight participants who have thru-hiked the Appalachian Trail. It explores several relationships between their writing and artwork, and addresses possibilities for future research. It also provides discussion regarding limitations and implications. As this study is largely exploratory in design, its intent is to generate interest in this topic and hypotheses that may inspire future studies. This investigation emphasizes giving voice to individuals and bringing meaning and passion to research.