

### The Rural Life

It's almost impossible to think about nature without thinking about time. In the country, time isn't the fourth dimension, it's the only dimension, and it tugs in an ancestral way that has nothing to do with clocks or calendars. Time in nature is both an axis and a cycle. But it's also a jumble, a collision, especially in the way it works on human feelings. As Milton says of geese, humans are "intelligent of season," and that's a perplexing condition to be in.

Last week, between New Lebanon, and Petersburg New York, Route 22 was an asphalt strip cut right through the natural year. On the highest hills, snow had fallen overnight, clinging to every branch. On the middle slopes, the trees that had begun to blossom looked like plumes of smoke, little different from the smoke that rose from burning leaf piles along the ditches. The Hoosic River had risen to near flooding. In the deepest stretches its waters were thoroughly soiled, but in the shallows they had turned a chalky aquamarine, the color of oxidized siding on a mobile home. In the cornfields, filled with last year's stubble, the first speculative tire tracks had been laid by tractors, which had then turned home because of the damp. Some fields were still covered with an autumnal thatch, while others had sprung so green I almost longed to be put out to pasture.

35 If the first iris spears and the purple tips of lilac buds still seemed tentative somehow, the birds did not. Robins bombed across the highway only a few feet above its surface. Cardinals took a higher, fluttering path. Turkeys hoping to cross the road collected by twos in the ditches and then departed with a flight that angled upward to end in a distant tree. Crows seemed to hop straight down from the sky to investigate some roadside carnage. From the marshes, I could hear the cackling of red-winged blackbirds. Down among the cattle and horses, which were shedding great strips of winter fur, the cowbirds had returned. The head of a male cowbird is matte chocolate brown, and its body is a deep, night-bright, iridescent black. Trying to stare at the place where those two colors meet evokes a memory that has no name.

Inevitably I search for defining moments at this time of year. Is it the coming of dandelions? The tribe of vultures that gathers in the updrafts? The molting of goldfinches? The hopeful plots of bare dirt—future gardens—newly cut into lawns? In this part of the world each day seems to bring a different, contradictory season. But everything points to the first rhubarb pie.

Adapted from Verlyn Klinkenborg, *The Rural Life*.  
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## Question

The author of "The Rural Life" uses vivid language to describe what he sees.

Give three examples of the author's use of vivid language to describe the landscape and animals he sees. Then, explain how this vivid language affects our understanding of the scene he depicts.

**In your short, well organized response, include evidence from the text, to fully answer the prompt.**

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

### Analytic Rubric

	<b>Content</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Language</b>
<b>4</b>	The response demonstrates a clear understanding of the task. Ideas are thoroughly explained.	Organization is unified and coherent, with a logical progression of ideas. The response includes a clear, engaging introduction and an effective conclusion.	The language of the response is clear and effectively conveys ideas. Although there may be a few minor errors in grammar, usage, and mechanics, meaning is clear throughout the response.
<b>3</b>	The response demonstrates an adequate understanding of the task. Ideas are adequately explained.	Organization is apparent, with ideas logically grouped. The response includes a clear, somewhat developed introduction and conclusion.	The language of the response is mostly clear and adequately conveys ideas. There may be some distracting errors in grammar, usage, and/or mechanics, but meaning is usually clear.
<b>2</b>	The response demonstrates a limited understanding of the task. Explanations of ideas are incomplete or unclear.	Organization is simple, with some ideas logically grouped. The response has a brief introduction and conclusion.	The language of the response is sometimes clear, but some ideas are difficult to comprehend. Errors in grammar, usage, and mechanics may be distracting and may sometimes impede understanding.
<b>1</b>	The response demonstrates little or no understanding of the task. The response lacks explanation of ideas.	Organization of ideas is not clear, with little evidence, if any, of the logical grouping of ideas. The response has a very brief introduction and lacks the required conclusion.	The language of the response is mostly unclear, and ideas are hard to comprehend. Errors in grammar, usage, and mechanics may frequently be distracting and may significantly impede understanding.

Total (4 points max): \_\_\_\_\_