

Arthur Carhart National Wilderness Training Center's
Wilderness Investigations
High School

Wilderness Hero #6
Terry Tempest-Williams



Terry in Arches National Park (Utah)
(from PBS; 2003)

“What do we wish? To be whole. To be complete. Wilderness reminds us what it means to be human, what we are connected to rather than what we are separate from.”
(Terry Tempest-Williams; Testimony in front of Senate Subcommittee; July 1995)

Common Core Standard Connections

Standards addressed will vary depending on how the teacher chooses to approach the lesson and/or activities.

Instructions for the teacher:

There are voices for wilderness that one *listens to* when they speak and there are other voices, these less common, who one *hears* as soon as they begin their wilderness message. Terry Tempest-Williams (writer, naturalist, activist, public speaker) is one of the latter. Terry has been one of the most respected voices for wilderness in modern times. Just 9 years old when the Wilderness Act became law, Terry has impacted and been impacted by wilderness all her life. Her writings have given voice to women and men around the world as she voices our human need for wilderness, the connection of humans to landscapes, and the importance of

using ones talents to speak out in support of the land. When Terry speaks, people listen. Her voice pulls audiences along into her mystical, deeply rooted, poetic, and positive view of the world. Terry believes in the power of words and the power of individual and group action. Terry is above all else passionate—about family, friends, art... and wilderness.

To help students get to know this wilderness hero, choose one or more of the following:

- Photocopy and hand out the *Wilderness Hero Sheet* to each student.
 - Based on the information found there, have students create art pieces (written, poetic, visual, etc.) that communicate the woman they discover.
- Using the *Wilderness Hero Student Research Sheet* (located in the Appendix), have students research and write a short biographical piece about Terry.
- Use the handout as the basis of a short mini-lesson about Terry Tempest-Williams and her connection to wilderness.
- Challenge students to visit their community library and bookstores to find books by Terry. These books can be difficult reads unless the readers are able to understand complex themes and some high-level vocabulary.
 - Encourage students to *step* their own writing up to a higher level after they experience something Terry wrote.
 - *An Unspoken Hunger* (essay collection) may be a good place for teachers to start when looking for accessible wilderness writing by Terry.
- Clearly, Terry writes with passion! Have students choose a topic they feel passionate about and then write about it.
 - If the topic chosen is not grounded in wilderness have them follow-up their first piece with another that does address a wilderness theme.
- Terry loves visual art. In fact, she wrote an entire book (*Leap*) based on her personal interactions and observations with a medieval art piece. Have students study art set in a wilderness place or that communicate, to them, a wilderness message or element. Have them describe the art piece and explain their reaction, feelings, emotions, etc.
 - Encourage students to create their own wilderness art. Remind them to draw on their own passion for wild things as they create.

- Create a *Wilderness Hero* classroom display or post on class website.
 - Have students create illustrations, maps, descriptive words, etc. that tell the story of Terry Tempest-Williams.
- Have students study and then place their copy of this *Wilderness Hero* sheet in their Wilderness Investigations Folder.



Terry's Beloved Teton Wilderness
(Photo by Steve Boutcher; Wilderness.net; Image #3223)

Wilderness Hero

Terry Tempest-Williams



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Introduction to a Hero

As a young girl Terry Tempest was always drawn to the natural world. She grew to have a special affinity for birds. Tutored by one of her grandmothers, Terry learned how to distinguish one species from another by paying attention to subtle details. Much to her delight, these bird watching forays took her to wild landscapes where she felt both in awe of and enveloped by the blustery wind, the scorching sun, the driving waves, and the cascading echoes of sound.

Terry was born September 8, 1955. She spent most of her childhood and adult years in Utah. Ties to the land were only equaled by her ties to family. In fact, she came to see land and culture as a closely tied relationship. As a teenager Terry found herself at the newly created Teton Science School in Grand Teton National Park. Here she and her husband, Brooke, married and worked as naturalists.

Terry graduated from the University of Utah, was a naturalist at Utah Museum of History and published her first books (*The Secret Language of Snow*—with Ted Major and *Pieces of White Shell: A Journey to Navajoland*) in 1984. Her writing—books, articles, essays—though focused on a range of topics always tied in some way to wild places; wilderness. She is considered by many to be one of the premiere spokespersons for wilderness. She continues to write, speak and teach and continues to

stand in awe of and enveloped by wild and natural landscapes. Her words and actions have inspired neighbors, friends, politicians and even adversaries to look with new eyes at our wilderness lands.

Learn more about *Wilderness Hero* Terry Tempest-Williams

- Has testified before Congress several times on behalf of wilderness preservation;
- Published ten books of non-fiction (some collections of essays) and innumerable articles for magazines. Many touch on some part of the relationship between humans and wilderness;
- Became a good friend and protégée of another wilderness hero Mardy Murie (see *Wilderness Hero #2*);
- Received many awards in recognition of her support for wilderness:
 - 1993: Conservation Award for Special Achievement (National Wildlife Federation)
 - 2006: Robert Marshall Award (The Wilderness Society)
 - 2008: Spirit of the Arctic Award (Alaska Wilderness League)
- Served on the governing boards of several wilderness organizations:
 - Governing Council of The Wilderness Society (1989 – 1993)
 - National Parks and Conservation Association (Advisory Board Member)
 - Round River Conservation Studies (Board Member)
 - Southern Utah Wilderness Alliance (Board Member; 1985–present)
- Tirelessly tours presenting lectures, readings, and inspiration on wilderness, politics, relationships, women’s health issues, etc.
- She and her husband live in the Castle Valley in Southern Utah where she continues to write about and partake of wilderness.

