

Name: _____

A Speech by Chief Seattle (Skokomish) in 1854

The Great Chief in Washington sends word that he wishes to buy our land. How can you buy or sell the sky, the warmth of the land? The idea is strange to us. If we do not own the freshness of the air and the sparkle of the water, how can you buy them? Every part of this earth is sacred to my people. Every shining pine needle, every sandy shore, every mist in the dark woods, every clearing and humming insect is holy in the memory and experience of my people. The sap which courses through the trees carries the memories of the red man.

The white man's dead forget the country of their birth when they go to walk among the stars. Our dead never forget this beautiful earth, for it is the mother of the red man. We are part of the earth and it is part of us. The perfumed flowers are our sisters; the deer, the horse and the great eagle are our brothers. The rocky crests, the juices in the meadows, the body heat of the pony, and man- all belong to the same family. So when the Great Chief in Washington sends word that he wishes to buy the land, he asks much of us. This we know: The earth does not belong to man; man belongs to the earth. This we know. Whatever befalls the earth befalls the sons of the earth. Man did not weave the web of life; he is merely a strand in it. Whatever he does to the web he does to himself. Your destiny is a mystery to us, for we do not understand when the buffalo are all slaughtered, the wild horses tamed, the secret corners of the forest heavy with the scent of many men, and the view of the ripe hills blotted by talking wires. The end of living and the beginning of survival.

When the last red man is vanished from this earth, and his memory is only the shadow of a cloud moving across the prairie, the shores and forests will still hold the spirits of my people. For they love this earth as the newborn loves its mother's heartbeat. So if we sell you our land, love it as we've loved it. Care for it as we've cared for it. Hold in your mind the memory of the land as it is when you take it. And with all your strength, with all your mind, with all your heart, preserve it for your children, and love it... as the Great Spirit loves us all."

Answer each question in complete sentences, on a separate sheet.

1. Whom is Chief Seattle addressing in his speech?
2. Give examples from the speech that show how Chief Seattle and his people feel about the earth (nature).
3. What do you think Chief Seattle meant when he said, "The earth does not belong to man; man belongs to the earth."?
4. What does Chief Seattle want future generations to do?
5. Do you think we have been good stewards (caretakers) of the earth? Explain your answer with at least two specific examples to support your opinion.