

# How to locate silver linings in our world, as explained by a field mouse

Peyton Britt, Opinion editor | January 29, 2021



This past year was a beast; to enumerate each of its ugly parts would be redundant and thus a waste of my time. If I may hold your attention for a short while, I entreat you to allow me to offer you some fodder for restful thinking — it is what you deserve.

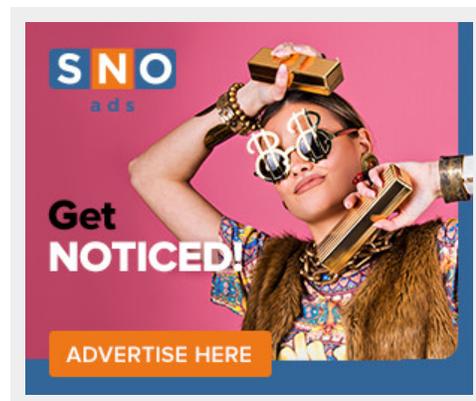
One of my favorite books of all time is Leo Lionni's "Frederick." Although it is a children's book, the tale of the eponymous little field mouse tugs at my adult heartstrings with euphonious finesse. The story is set at an abandoned farm, where field mice have made themselves a home in an old stone wall. As winter looms before the mice, they toil day and night to ensure that they will have sufficient food to carry them through to spring.

One mouse, however, contributes nothing to these efforts. When asked why he will not work, he answers that he is doing his own sort of work. Rather than gathering grain, nuts, corn and other foodstuffs, Frederick assumes a meditative state in which he gathers the autumn's fleeting sun rays, its colors and words he believes they will need when winter's monotony has sapped conversation from them.

Naturally, winter arrives, and in a matter of pages, the mice's stockpiles of food run barren. Recalling Frederick's supposed "supplies," the other mice look to the pensive little fellow for relief, and relieve them he does, by means of orating an artful compendium of those blessed elements of the warm, colorful seasons for which the forlorn mice so dearly yearn.

He speaks in verse, lauding each of the four seasons for their respective virtues, reminding his comrades that nature depends on a delicate balance of varied seasons. They cry out in joy, declaring our dear protagonist a poet.

I hope Mr. Lionni would feel my brief summary has done his book justice; I admire Frederick deeply, both the story and the mouse. Although in a real world context we might call Frederick pretentious and lazy, I often find myself wishing I, like Frederick, could acquire such adroit



control and mastery of language that my words could stand in for sustenance in extreme conditions.

Frederick's great wisdom, in my view, is rooted in his initial careful detachment of the Earth's evident and abundant beauty and majesty from the strife it creates. Although the injustices and cruelties abounding in today's current events are both real and deserving of serious attention, we need not furrow our brows in perpetual angst and lamentation. There exists great potential between any given set of ears, within those two vast hemispheres of meaty piping comprising the brain — the sheer constitution of the human mind alone affords us all a great deal of leeway in thinking about far, far more than solely that which creates stress.

The macrocosmic, eclectic stew of a heavenly body we call Earth contains a great number of wonders, both those so vast they escape our perception and those so minute that we have forgotten that they are wonders at all.

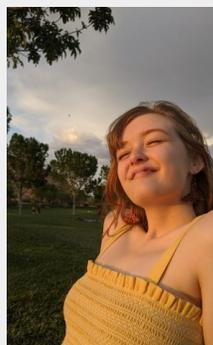
For each injustice in the world, there are equally many tiny, fizzy hairs in the queer, tubular bodies of caterpillars the color of spring's first leaves. There are a million lichen-adorned trees whose crowns embrace the lilac sky with fractal fingers, and whose limbs are home to dozens of songbirds who want nothing more than to serenade you every dewy dawn.

There are billions of strangers walking about, unaware of how deeply they will one day love another, or how warmly their future children will someday tuck their tiny chins under the parent's, drifting into sweet sleep with soft sighs. On a myriad of faces lies smatterings of freckles that need only wait to be adored and multiplied by the sun's maternal caress.

Everyone you meet has a birthday and a zodiac sign, several hundred stories to tell that you have never heard, several thousand favorite things and pet peeves and so on ad infinitum.

No matter what occurs in this common container, our shared home planet, absolutely nothing can negate its inherent and plentiful splendor and divinity. I invite you to welcome optimism and gratitude into your mental life — even if they must coexist in forcible symbiosis with justified pessimism and discontent.

## About the Writer



### **Peyton Britt, Opinion Editor**

Peyton Britt is a junior philosophy major with a double minor in English and political science. This is her first year on the Campus staff, where she serves...

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