

# SANCTUARIES OF SILENCE

An immersive listening journey into one of the quietest places in North America

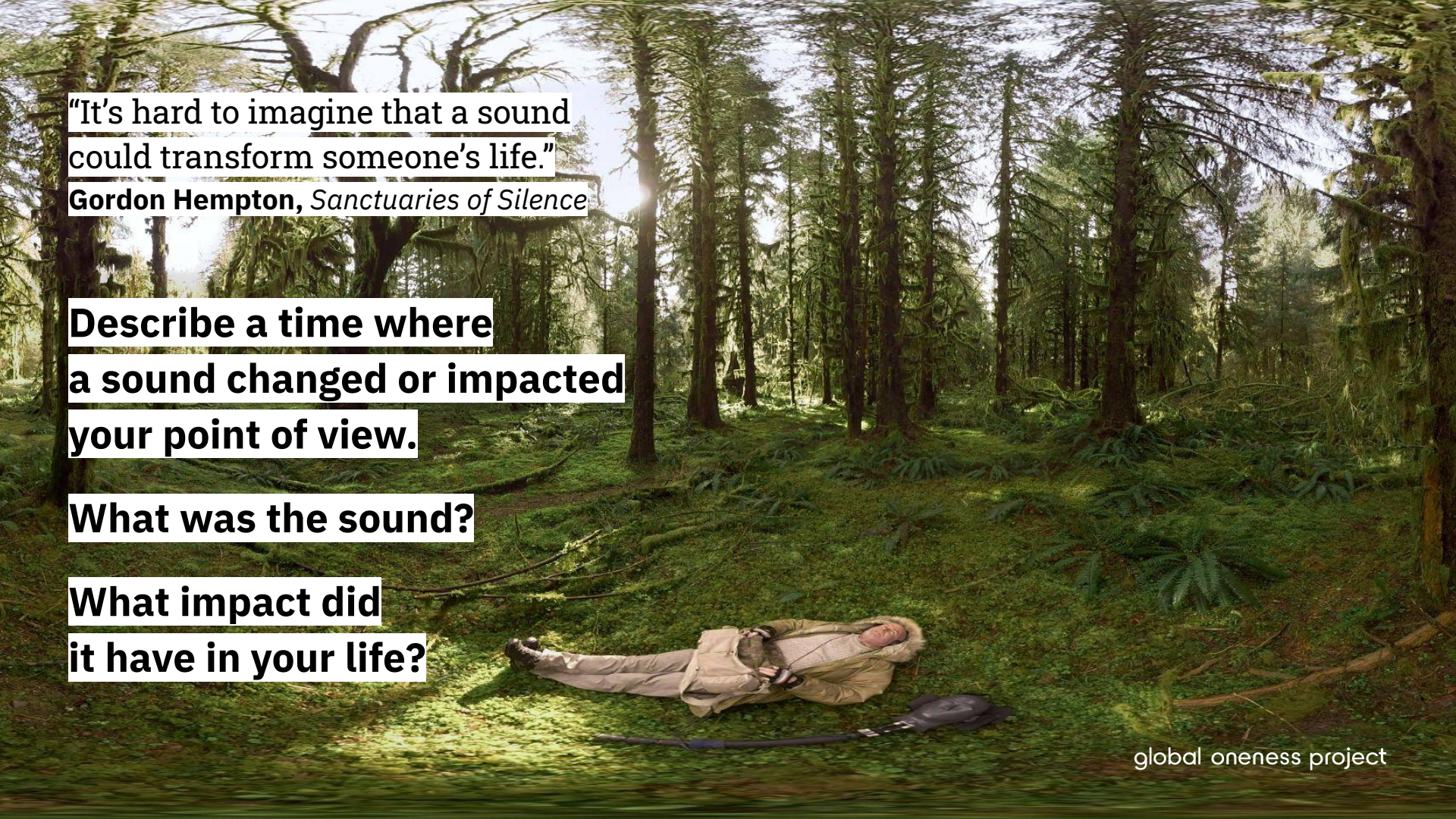
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## Conversation Cards

The *Sanctuaries of Silence* conversation cards are organized around the following themes—connection to place, effects of modernization, human connection to the environment, and listening. These themes provide ways for students to engage with the film's content.

## How To Use

- As pre-film warm-ups to introduce the topics and themes
- As catalysts for post-film discussions
- As writing prompts for personal reflections or essays
- To spark ideas for action or class projects

A person wearing a tan jacket and pants is lying on their back on a dark tarp on the forest floor. The forest is dense with tall, thin trees and a thick carpet of green ferns. Sunlight filters through the canopy, creating dappled light on the ground. The person's head is resting on the ground, and their hands are tucked near their chest. The overall atmosphere is peaceful and quiet.

**“It’s hard to imagine that a sound  
could transform someone’s life.”**

**Gordon Hempton, *Sanctuaries of Silence***

**Describe a time where  
a sound changed or impacted  
your point of view.**

**What was the sound?**

**What impact did  
it have in your life?**



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“Too often the sounds people make are just waste products of their activity, discarded like trash with no regard for the environment.”

**Gordon Hempton,**  
*The Sun Magazine*

**What might distinguish a valuable sound versus one that is not valuable?**



“There are many definitions of listening, but no one that is generally agreed upon.”

**Belle Ruth Witkin,**  
*International Journal of Listening*

**Write down your definition of *listening*.**

**In a small group, compare your definition to two others.**

**What are the key similarities and differences?**



"Silence is the moonlit song of the coyote."

**Gordon Hempton, *One Square Inch of Silence:***

*One Man's Search for Natural Silence in a Noisy World*

**Describe an image that captures  
silence from your perspective.**



**"Noise detaches us—not only from our surroundings but from each other."**

**Gordon Hempton, *The Sun Magazine***

**What might be the dangers of not listening to each other? To nature?**



“Unless we listen with attention, there is a danger that some of the more delicate and quiet sounds may pass unnoticed by numbed ears among the many mechanized voices of modern soundscapes.”

**Hildegard Westerkamp**, Composer & Musicologist

**Go on a “sound walk.”**

**Make a list of what you hear, from human sounds, mechanized sounds, to nature sounds.**

**Compare and contrast your findings with others.**

Find the quietest place you can, and sit in silence for 3 minutes. What do you notice? How might silence have a presence? Use your own words to describe “presence.”

**“The land is speaking.”**

**Gordon Hempton,**  
*Sanctuaries of Silence*

**What do you think  
Hempton means by this?**

**Describe how the land speaks.**

**What might the land be saying?**



**“Silence isn’t the absence of something, but the presence of everything.”**

**Gordon Hempton, *Sanctuaries of Silence***

**Find the quietest place you can, and sit in silence for 3 minutes.**

**What do you notice?**

**How might silence have a presence?**

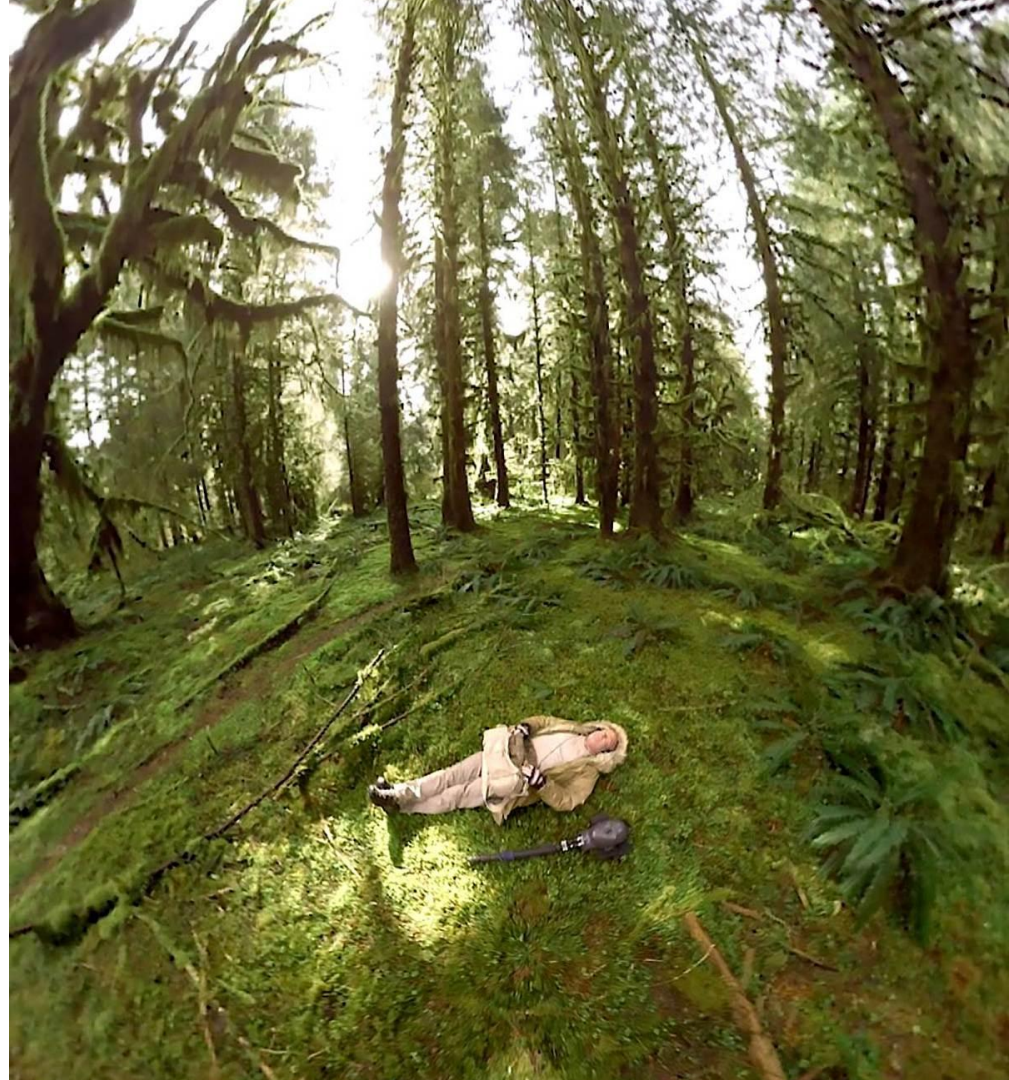
**Use your own words to describe “presence.”**

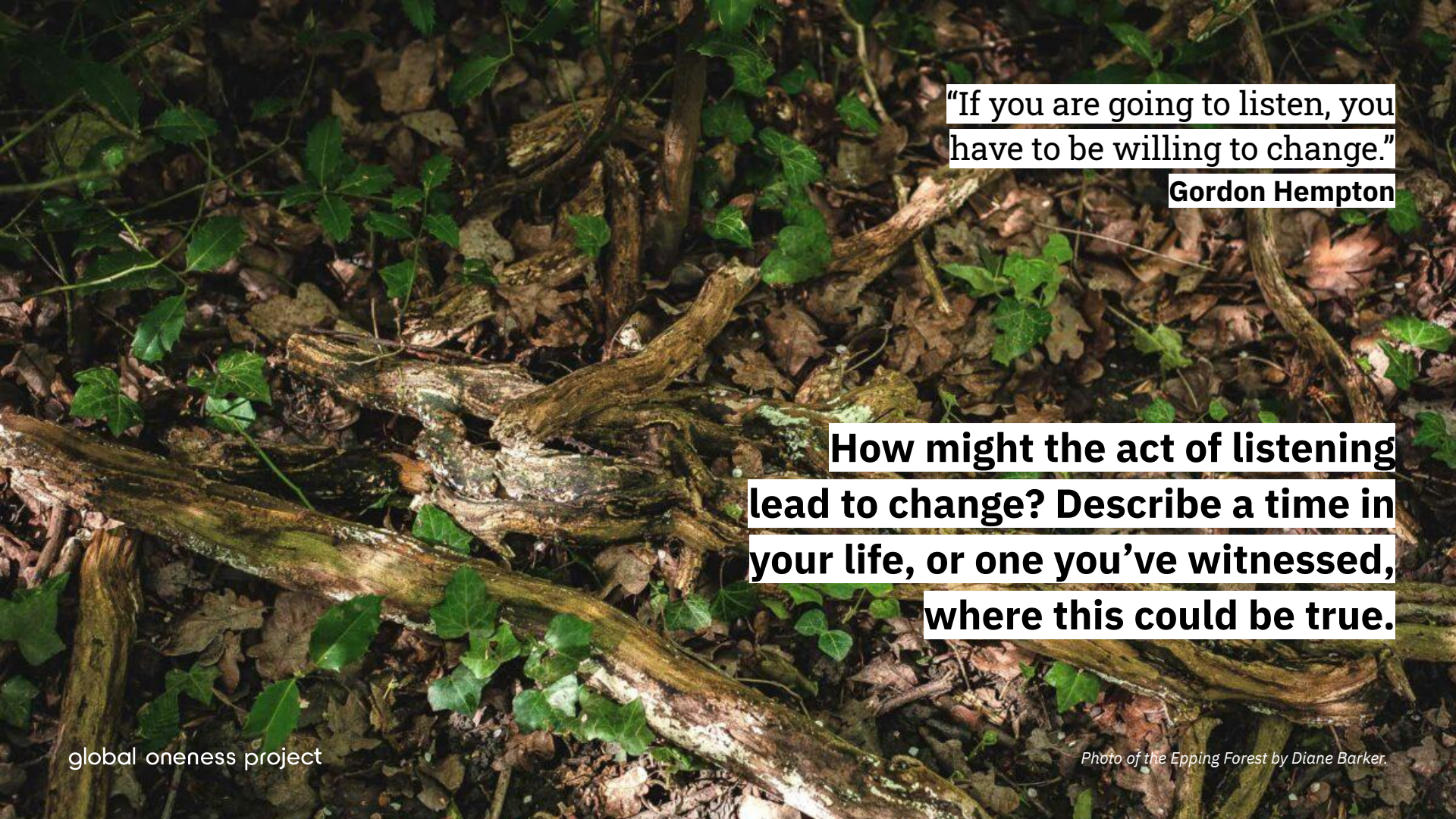
“A quiet place is the think tank of the soul, the spawning ground of truth and beauty.”

**Gordon Hempton**, *One Square Inch of Silence: One Man's Search for Natural Silence in a Noisy World*

**Describe a situation where silence provided a gateway to inspiration and reflection, including truth and beauty.**

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A photograph of a forest floor. The ground is covered with brown, fallen leaves and several large, gnarled, and weathered tree trunks that have fallen. Green ivy leaves are scattered throughout the scene, some growing in small clusters. The lighting is natural, suggesting a shaded forest environment.

**“If you are going to listen, you  
have to be willing to change.”**

**Gordon Hempton**

**How might the act of listening  
lead to change? Describe a time in  
your life, or one you’ve witnessed,  
where this could be true.**



“Listening is unique!... We all listen through a set of filters and these filters are not the same for any two people because they are shaped by our life experience and by our character. ” **Julian Treasure**

**Describe your own unique “listening” skill.**

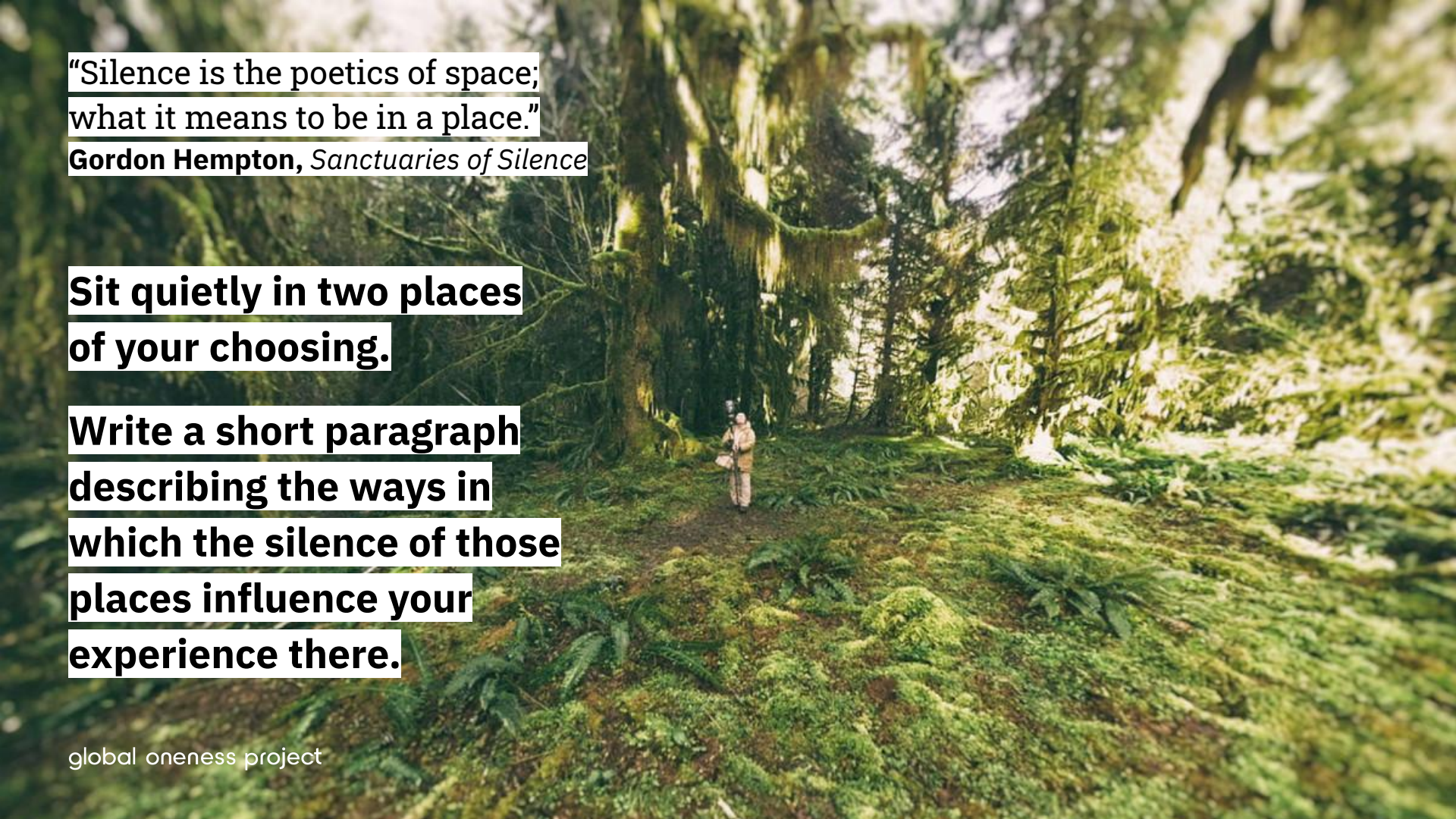
**What aspects of your character or life experiences might determine your ability to listen?**

**“Silence is the poetics of space;  
what it means to be in a place.”**

**Gordon Hempton, *Sanctuaries of Silence***

**Sit quietly in two places  
of your choosing.**

**Write a short paragraph  
describing the ways in  
which the silence of those  
places influence your  
experience there.**



## Resources

(Interview) Leslee Goodman, “Quiet, Please: Gordon Hempton On The Search For Silence In A Noisy World.”

*The Sun*, September 2010. <https://www.thesunmagazine.org/issues/417/quiet-please>

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[https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1207/s1932586xijl0401\\_3?journalCode=hijl19](https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1207/s1932586xijl0401_3?journalCode=hijl19)

Gordon Hempton and John Grossmann, *One Square Inch of Silence: One Man’s Search for Natural Silence in a Noisy World* (New York: Free Press, 2009).

(Interview) Guy Raz, “How Can We All Listen Better.” *TED Radio Hour*, March 7, 2014.

<https://www.npr.org/templates/transcript/transcript.php?storyId=283464243>

Hildegard, Westerkamp. “Soundwalking.” Originally published in *Sound Heritage* 3, no.4, 1974. (Revised 2001).

<https://www.sfu.ca/~westerka/writings%20page/articles%20pages/soundwalking.html>

Julian Treasure, *How to be Heard: Secrets for Powerful Speaking and Listening* (Florida: Mango Media, 2017).

Dr. Frank Lipman, “What is Entrainment,” *Daily Dose Blog*, Be Well, May 10, 2010.

<https://www.bewell.com/blog/what-is-entrainment/>

Cheryl, Dybas, “Soundscape Ecology: Studying Nature’s Rhythms.” The Ecology Global Network, August 24, 2012.

<http://www.ecology.com/2012/08/24/soundscape-ecology/>

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## We want to hear from you

Share your experiences with us on how you used the conversation cards as well as your thoughts and impressions.

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<https://www.globalonenessproject.org/library/virtual-reality/sanctuaries-silence>



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