My Responses: Reading A Text Closely

moon. I didn't know whether to brace the progress of the turtle. I was sure of
risking tickling my face in one of the bridge's spider webs made invisible by the
gathering dark, or take a chance on seeing the camp, or scan the mud bank in
hope of seeing a muskrat. I follow the last of the swallows who dart at my
heart and trail it after them like streamers as they appeared from directly
below, under the log, lying upstream with their tails forked so fast.

But shadows spread, and deepened, and stayed. After thousands of years
we're still strangers to darkness. Fearful tigers in an enemy camp with our arms
crossed over our chests. I stirred. A land turtle on the bank, startled, hissed
the air from its lungs, and withdrew into its shell. A nervous pink here, an
unforbearable blue there, gave great suggestion of lurking beings. Things were
going on. I couldn't see whether that serene rustle I heard was a distant rattle
snake, skittered, or a nearby sparrow kicking in the dry mud debris slung
at the foot of a wallow. Tremendous action roiled the water everywhere I looked,
big action, inexplicable. A tremor welled up beside a gaping muskrat burrow
in the bank, and I caught my breath, but no muskrat appeared. The ripples
continued to fan upstream with a steady, powerful thrust. Night was knitting

\[
\hat{A} \hat{C} = \begin{bmatrix} 1 & \frac{1}{2} \\ 0 & 1 \end{bmatrix} \begin{bmatrix} 1 & \frac{1}{2} \\ 0 & 1 \end{bmatrix}
\]

Anne Dillard | 415

My Questions:

What is she trying to do here? What does she mean by seeing? What can seeing accomplish? How do we
"see"? How does this spiritual practice compare with others? What does nature mean here? What are the
key metaphors she uses? What are the key tensions in the text? Key images? Is this a spirituality of
struggle or relaxation, activity or passivity, discipline or surrender? What is the role of language and
discourse? Is she trying to escape them? Why?

Possible Answers to My Questions:

• Dillard is trying to see nature and the self clearly.
• Dillard tries to get outside of language and discourse by using a couple of perception techniques.
• Dillard is trying to see clearly the bedrock truths of the universe, and she finds them in nature.
• Dillard is trying to still the mind in some ways and activate it in others.
• Both Dillard and Emerson see divine forces pulsing in nature.
• In Dillard's account, the muddy stream at Tinker Creek is a metaphor for the mind.
• Dillard tries to collapse subject and object and experience things directly.
• Dillard believes that by stilling the mind you can grasp the deep truths of reality itself.