

Personal Research Essay  
Good Examples

**Connecting Paragraph Example**

Psychologists have long studied the behavior of humans, including the motivations for big changes in their lives. Many look at people like Chris McCandless and wonder why he chooses to live off the grid and in the wild. According to Jeffrey A. Kottler, for people like Chris, many decisions are made after "recovering from a challenging or even traumatic event," which can lead to self-awareness (Kottler). For Chris, the discovery of his father's messy past challenges Chris, making Chris question his relationships and beliefs. Besides experience a traumatic event, people also make life-changing decisions through their connections with people and information (Kottler). Chris feels a deep connection with transcendentalist authors such as Ralph Waldo Emerson and naturalist Jack London, who describe the beauty and power of nature. Chris admires their values, making the idea of using the wild to escape his problems appealing. Also, people who make big decisions often feel "a level of apprehension [and] fear, sometimes accompanied by anxiety" (Kottler). After becoming frustrated with his life, Chris feels fearful of where his life appears to be going, and he desperately makes the change to leave and seek a fresh start. So, fear resulting from Chris's traumatic experience with his father causes him to follow the words of his favorite authors and seek a big change by heading into the wild.

**\*\*\*Note citation format, internal transitions, active voice, and literary present tense\*\*\***

## **Good Intro**

Can you really be happy by yourself? I know I can't. I've never been more certain about something than this. This statement goes for everyone. Picture a nameless, faceless teenager. He is lying in bed staring at his dull cream-colored ceiling at one am just like every Thursday night for the past year. His glazed emotionless face is hard at work trying to keep the hailstorm of teenage anxiety at bay. He only acts this way late at night, when everyone he knows is sleeping. He feels as if his head is going to pop; his heart is going to beat straight out of their chest. It's a safe bet to say that a vast majority of teenagers have experienced one of these nights. Teenagers feel this way because no one is there to take their minds off what keeps them up. Nobody is able to listen to the emotionally delirious teen vent, but the second one places a friend, a lover, or someone decent enough to sit and listen for a few minutes in that room, it all changes. The mind needs love. It needs to be stimulated by social action with others. Love is a drug. It's an overused cliché, but it rings truer than any other old, beaten down cliché I've cared to hear. When a loved one leaves you in any way, shape, or form, it cripples the mind, and some never learn to get over it, and one won't ever get over it without the help of and exposure to friends and other loved ones.

**\*\*\*Note the sensory details and concrete imagery – Note the introspection and philosophy\*\*\***

## **Good Outro**

Would I drop everything to chase my dreams, the answer is a definite yes. I may not have Chris's raw determination or Casey's unrelenting stubbornness, but I have maintained that spark of a particular insanity that makes me, me. Dr. Seuss said, "You have to be odd to be number one." Chris definitely is odd, and Casey has not gotten to where he is by trying to please everyone. In fact, if you do not drop everything and do what you want, then you don't want it enough. There is a philosophy in Cross Country running: everyone is feeling the same pain, the person who wins is who wants it the most. Schooling tends to beat the dreams out of kids. Creativity and critical thinking are not often awarded, and the entire process blends into sameness. People dislike Chris McCandless because they think that he fails, that surviving in the wilderness is the focal point of his efforts. But, in reality, he succeeds by going on the journey in the first place. Despite everything he is told about being normal and achieving average goals, he throws it away and writes a new chapter no matter the cost and without apology. The only thing stopping me, and others, is how much we care about what other people think. Reality is our own; we do with it what we want.

**\*\*\*Note the recap of two sources and the extension to other sources – Note the introspection and philosophy – A clear statement of belief\*\*\***