

Kansas! Say It Above a Whisper

I looked out over the rugged landscape in front of me. I feel peaceful and contented, taking a break with my horse, from a long trail ride and enjoying the view of cliffs, steep drop-offs, and deep faults in the dry earth. Sounds like Kansas, right? Not exactly, yet I am in the northwest corner of Kansas in an area called the Arikaree Breaks. Not far from here is my home, a small rural community. Growing up in this area has certainly shaped my values and viewpoints, and I appreciate how my environment has changed me for the better.

Kansas's landscape is often written off as flat and emotionless, and such generalization irritates me. The Breaks (and many other areas of Kansas) provide breathtaking views of the untouched world; why, then, is Kansas seen as a dull, drab prairie? I have come to see Kansas's landscape as a metaphor for the people of Kansas—both seen as flat and boring, but just under the surface there is diversity and interest. People view the citizens of Kansas as all dirt farmers and uneducated hillbillies. Even if one has no prejudices, there is always the slight impression that Kansans are, well, *boring*, and as with all states, sometimes that is true. But to write off all Kansans as dull or mediocre is to overlook some of our nation's most intelligent, caring, and hardworking citizens.

In conclusion, Kansas is a lot more exciting than people give it credit for. On the whole, its citizens are well-informed and charismatic, and while most of its panorama lacks grandeur compared with the neighboring Rockies, it is beautiful just the same. Kansas is unique and appealing, and I am proud to be called a Kansan.

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