

### Learning Objectives

For pages 764–767

In studying this text, you will focus on the following objectives:

#### Reading:

Using text features.  
Analyzing informational text.  
Activating prior knowledge.

### Set a Purpose for Reading

Read “Ah, Wilderness!” to discover how one family lives without the sources of energy on which most people depend.

### Preview the Article

1. What does the **title** suggest about the article’s subject?
2. The last page of the article contains a **sidebar**, or a brief news story or graphic. What is its purpose?

### Reading Strategy

#### Activate Prior Knowledge

When you activate prior knowledge, you use what you already know to understand new information. Think about what you already know about how energy is used in homes. Use a graphic organizer to record what you know.

Topic	What I Know
Energy	
alternating power to my home	
Solar and wind power	

# TIME

# Ah, Wilderness!

Living in the middle of nowhere with solar panels and a few snowmobiles is not a choice many people would make. But the Bailis family did—and they’ve never looked back.

By AMANDA HINNANT

**O**n this sunny day, the Bailis home has a breathtaking view of aspen forests and majestic, snowcapped mountains. The Bailises live on a mesa, a raised area of land with a flat top and steep cliffs on all sides, about twenty miles outside of Telluride, Colorado. Later, as twilight approaches, shadows outline the black trees and the San Juan Mountains.<sup>1</sup> Then, with surprising quickness, the sun sets, and the mesa plunges<sup>2</sup> into a deep, silent, solitary<sup>3</sup> darkness.

In contrast to the dark, hushed outdoors, the Bailis living room is bathed in light and positively hums with activity. Light from the fireplace, the center of

1 The **San Juan Mountains** in Colorado are some of the highest and most rugged mountains in the United States.

2 **Plunges** means “dips” or “moves downward suddenly.”

3 Here, **solitary** is another word for *lonely*.

the family's house, casts a warm, buttery glow over Ray and Beth Bailis and their boys, Max, 8, and Finn, 3. Beth and Max are working at the computer while Ray and Finn are happily playing a board game.

Besides living in the middle of nowhere, the Bailis family lives "off the grid," which means that they generate<sup>4</sup> their own energy instead of relying on the area's power company. But being independent of the power company doesn't mean that it's the Dark Ages at the Bailis residence. Their home has all the modern conveniences that any 21st-century family could hope to have: microwave, Internet, washer and dryer, television. A big difference, however, is that the Bailises must plan the use of these appliances carefully. They know exactly how much or how little energy they can use. Running too many appliances at once will shut down the inverter,<sup>5</sup> which is roughly the same as blowing a fuse in your home.

For this family, rationing<sup>6</sup> energy has practically become second nature and is also a way to be closer to nature. Solar panels on the roof soak up the sun's energy, and a wind generator uses the wind to generate most of the house's power. For sunless days with

<sup>4</sup> To **generate** energy is to produce or create energy.

<sup>5</sup> An **inverter** is a device that converts electricity into a form that can be used in a home.

<sup>6</sup> **Rationing** means "the controlled use of something."

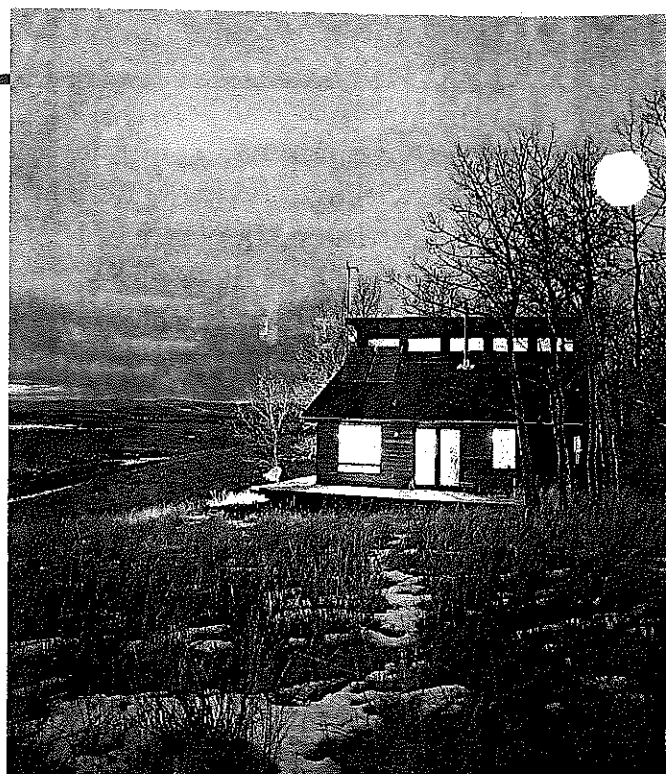


Photo: Allison Gowdy

The Bailises' Colorado home in the San Juan Mountains generates its own power—day and night.

little wind, when neither solar panels nor a wind generator can do any good, there's a propane generator in the back.

Most of the time, Beth says, remote living makes you feel like you can do anything. And the Bailises know from experience that they can handle just about anything. When they moved into their house, it was heated by a woodstove that needed to be fed at 3 A.M., the propane generator didn't work very well, the roof didn't have any solar panels, and the old windows let the cold air leak in. Life in this remote spot was a lot like camping indoors. They burned lots and lots of candles and learned how to survive on very little energy without letting it affect them too much.

Today snow is landing all around the house, swirling past the windows as if in a just-shaken snow globe. The snow determines how the Bailises dress as well as how they drive. Early on this snowy morning, the family members bundle into snow clothes. Each individual has two sets of gloves, goggles, and scarves (because one set is always wet). There aren't any snowplows rumbling by to clear the road so, from about November to May each year, the Bailis family must ride on snowmobiles from their house to their cars, parked 2½ miles away on the main road. Everything they carry, including briefcases, groceries, mail, and garbage, has to fit onto their snowmobiles or the sleds behind them. Beth and Ray commute to Telluride, where she is a landscape designer and he is in sales, and the boys make the trek<sup>7</sup> into town to go to school.

The chilly weather doesn't daunt<sup>8</sup> Max and Finn, who love the snow. "My boys are true polar bears," Beth says. When they are not busy with schoolwork or chores, they enjoy romping around outside. The boys may have inherited their love of the outdoors from their mother, who grew up on a large cattle ranch in Missouri and spent most of her childhood outside. "I was a child of nature," Beth says. "I would leave the house in the



Thayer Allyson Gowdy

Beth and Briar Rose, a neighbor's dog, go for a joyride in early winter.

morning and not come back until the afternoon. Fishing, walking the creek—I never felt afraid."

Beth hopes her boys will be connected with nature in the same way. Already she sees evidence of this connection dawning. She loves how Max, in all his self-portraits and family sketches, includes the mountain range behind their house. "He really has a sense of where he is from and who he is," she says. She expects that her boys' upbringing will help them feel unique,<sup>9</sup> the way she felt when she left the ranch and went to college. "It just gives them an identity," she explains.

<sup>7</sup> A *trek* is a slow or difficult journey.

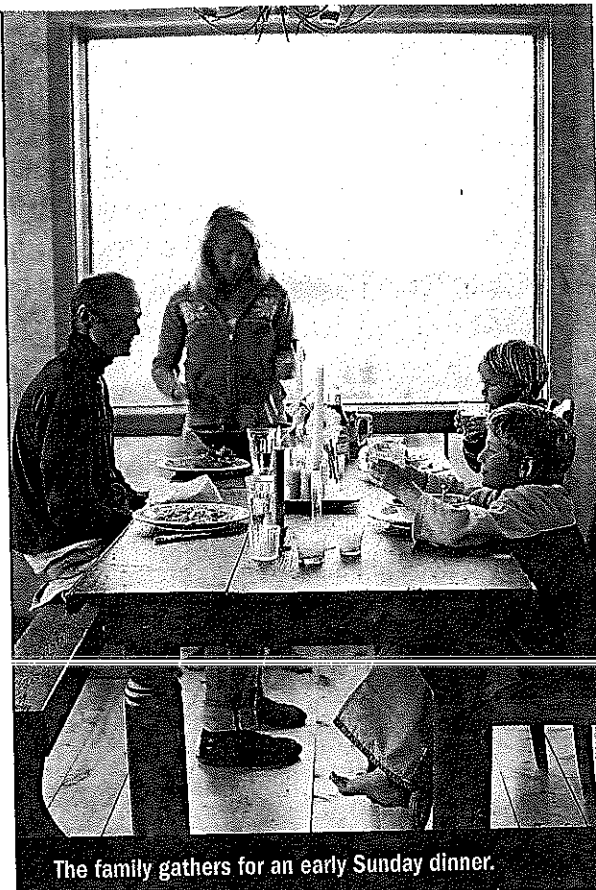
<sup>8</sup> To *daunt* someone is to scare him or her.

<sup>9</sup> A *unique* person is one of a kind, special because he or she is different from others.

## Home Off the Range

The Bailises are just like any other American family—except . . .

- “Traffic” sounds they sometimes hear outside the house often come from a “bugling” herd of elk.
- Beth celebrates a sunny, windy day by running the vacuum cleaner and the dishwasher at the same time.
- The family snowmobiles have names: the Pig, Phazer, Wildcat, and Kitty Cat (the child-size one).
- They know the exact longitude and latitude of their house in case they have to be rescued by helicopter.
- The family is so accustomed to the 9,900-foot altitude that, when they visit Ray’s sisters in California, they get giddy from the higher level of oxygen.
- Beth worries about mountain lions when the boys play out back.



The family gathers for an early Sunday dinner.

## Respond and Think Critically

1. Write a brief summary of the main ideas in this article before you answer the following questions. For help on writing a summary, see page 219. [Summarize]
2. **Text-to-World** What could people such as the Bailises teach other people about the conservation of resources? [Connect]
3. In what way is Mrs. Bailis’s life today similar to that of her childhood? [Compare]
4. How does the writer show that the Bailis family doesn’t live as differently from other people as one might think? [Analyze]
5. **Reading Strategy** **Activate Prior Knowledge** Look at the chart you made about your prior knowledge. How did completing this chart help you as you read the article?
6. **BQ** **BIG Question** Why do you think the writer wanted to share the Bailis family’s story?