* **Find out what the words highlighted in red mean.**
* **Think about why the words and sections highlighted in green reflect outdated or old fashioned values from 150 years ago**.
* **Find examples that illustrate the informative purpose of the letter.**
* **Find examples that illustrate the way the letter ties to engage the reader.**
* **Find examples of the ways in which the letter includes elements that a 19thC woman would write to her sister (audience).**
* **Find examples that suggest that Bird was aware that her letters might be published and show that she also wants to inform and engage a wider readership (audience).**
* **Find examples that illustrate how the text is obviously in the written mode.**
* **Find examples of where Bird has incorporated elements from the spoken mode and think about why.**

LETTER II

CHEYENNE, WYOMING, September 7.

As night came on the cold intensified, and the stove in the parlor attracted every one. A San Francisco lady, much “got up” in paint, emerald green velvet, Brussels lace, and diamonds, rattled continuously for the amusement of the company, giving descriptions of persons and scenes in a racy Western twang, without the slightest scruple as to what she said. In a few years Tahoe will be inundated in summer with similar vulgarity, owing to its easiness of access. I sustained the reputation which our country-women bear in America by looking a “perfect guy”; and feeling that I was a salient point for the speaker’s next sally, I was relieved when the landlady, a ladylike Englishwoman, asked me to join herself and her family in the bar-room, where we had much talk about the neighborhood and its wild beasts, especially bears. The forest is full of them, but they seem never to attack people unless when wounded, or much aggravated by dogs, or a shebear thinks you are going to molest her young.

I dreamt of bears so vividly that I woke with a furry death hug at my throat, but feeling quite refreshed. When I mounted my horse after breakfast the sun was high and the air so keen and intoxicating that, giving the animal his head, I galloped up and down hill, feeling completely tireless. Truly, that air is the elixir of life. I had a glorious ride back to Truckee. The road was not as solitary as the day before. In a deep part of the forest the horse snorted and reared, and I saw a cinnamon-colored bear with two cubs cross the track ahead of me. I tried to keep the horse quiet that the mother might acquit me of any designs upon her lolloping children, but I was glad when the ungainly, long-haired party crossed the river. Then I met a team, the driver of which stopped and said he was glad that I had not gone to Cornelian Bay, it was such a bad trail, and hoped I had enjoyed Tahoe. The driver of another team stopped and asked if I had seen any bears. Then a man heavily armed, a hunter probably, asked me if I were the English tourist who had “happened on” a “Grizzly” yesterday. Then I saw a lumberer taking his dinner on a rock in the river, who “touched his hat” and brought me a draught of ice-cold water, which I could hardly drink owing to the fractiousness of the horse, and gathered me some mountain pinks, which I admired. I mention these little incidents to indicate the habit of respectful courtesy to women which prevails in that region. These men might have been excused for speaking in a somewhat free-and-easy tone to a lady riding alone, and in an unwonted fashion. Womanly dignity and manly respect for women are the salt of society in this wild West.

My horse was so excitable that I avoided the center of Truckee, and skulked through a collection of Chinamen’s shanties to the stable, where a prodigious roan horse, standing seventeen hands high, was produced for my ride to the Donner Lake. I asked the owner, who was as interested in my enjoying myself as a West Highlander might have been, if there were not ruffians about who might make an evening ride dangerous. A story was current of a man having ridden through Truckee two evenings before with a chopped-up human body in a sack behind the saddle, and hosts of stories of ruffianism are located there, rightly or wrongly. This man said, “There’s a bad breed of ruffians, but the ugliest among them all won’t touch you. There’s nothing Western folk admire so much as pluck in a woman.” I had to get on a barrel before I could reach the stirrup, and when I was mounted my feet only came half-way down the horse’s sides. I felt like a fly on him. The road at first lay through a valley without a river, but some swampishness nourished some rank swamp grass, the first GREEN grass I have seen in America; and the pines, with their red stems, looked beautiful rising out of it. I hurried along, and came upon the Donner Lake quite suddenly, to be completely smitten by its beauty. It is only about three miles long by one and a half broad, and lies hidden away among mountains, with no dwellings on its shores but some deserted lumberers’ cabins.[1] Its loneliness pleased me well. I did not see man, beast, or bird from the time I left Truckee till I returned.

I. L. B.

[1] Visitors can now be accommodated at a tolerable mountain hotel.