

2017 International Essay Contest for Young People

[Youth Category – Honorable Mention]

Metropolis Mentors

(Original)

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Many poets around the world, including Basho, Robert Frost, and William Wordsworth, contemplate on nature and the stark contrast to humanity. According to their works, human lives are fleeting; they do not compare to the eternal beauty of nature. All of them share a common message: we have given ourselves away to a life of obsession and detached ourselves from the infinite beauty that surrounds our world. This infinite beauty is a cycle that has lasted for millions of years. If we listen to the our elders in our communities, perhaps we should also listen to the voices of nature.

In the heart of Tokyo, I notice a small sprout peeking through a crack in the pavement. These small pieces of nature are the few glimpses of green in the bustling city; a breath of fresh air compared to the the metallic contraptions zooming through the streets, oozing carbon dioxide. Yet, every day, the plants still persist. The small, two leaved sprouts gradually lengthen into thick stalks. The small leaves, which seemed large in the beginning, now seems to shrink as the magnificence of flowers start to bloom. Somehow, other flora and fauna creep up next to it, coexisting and thriving in the warmth of early summer. Butterflies hover, seeking the sweet nectar of the bright colored petals. The scene is idyllic yet ironic- just a few minutes away is a main road, bustling with people and the roar of a highway overhead.

We can learn about peaceful coexistence through nature. The different plants in the divergence of the sidewalk intertwine. Our first instinct is to pull out the offending weeds, disrupting the natural coexistence of these plants. It's similar to how, around the world, people discriminate and segregate, separating themselves from other people because of their differences in culture, looks, or beliefs. It is tragic that we cannot truly accept the differences that coexist between us, and cannot change it from divergence to convergence. Nature teaches us to disregard our prejudices and sense of superiority, and to open our doors to those seeking a better life.

Cooling showers suddenly patter against my umbrella, foreshadowed by the tumultuous clouds overcasting the sky. It is music to my ears, and dampens the leaves, giving them the nourishment they need. From the rain, we can learn to give, and to give without rewards. The plants perk up, reaching their leaves to the sky, blissfully absorbing the rain. When they have had their fill, they close off their leaves. From them we can learn to appreciate what we have. Like the receding rain, resources are only abundant if we use them in moderation. Nature teaches us that we cannot be possessive of the material things or greedily consume our limited resources. Instead, we must donate and give to those in need, and implement ways to reduce our rapid consumption of energy.

However, acceptance and unselfishness is not enough. Nature teaches us to appreciate and celebrate the differences between us. As the rain recedes to a light sprinkle, a rainbow arches above my head. People ooh-la-la! and take out their devices to snap pictures. Before, they ignored each other, each absorbed in their own world; now they unite, savoring the radiant beauty before them. Like the colors of the rainbow, humans are made of a gradient of variance. Science tells us that rainbows are mere rays of light diffracted by water molecules. From a different perspective, they are wonders that teach us to revel in the colors of unique beauty we have around us, and to spur magical moments of happiness for everyone.

Nature contrasts with the inherent superiority, greed, and segregation that exists in our human society. In this way, nature is a wise mentor that assures us that there is hope, and that we can create a world full of care, equality, and appreciation. For even in a metallic metropolis, there are always flowers that peek up between the sidewalks.