

2020 International Essay Contest for Young People

[Youth Category – Honorable Mention]

Silence is golden...but not all gold is worth the same

(Original)

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Silence. I know as you read this in 2020, that you think it is a terrible thing. To you, silence is deprivation, with bustling highways, vibrant workplaces, and festive gatherings confiscated seemingly overnight. To you, silence is both a menacing weapon used to take your rights away as well as a cowardly response to someone else's being taken. To you, silence is loneliness, indifference, and dread for worse to come.

But I am here to tell you that we have found beauty in silence. As I write to you from 2030, I am preparing to telecommute to an international consortium on peace. The entire world will be in attendance. Before our new technologies, each country was restricted to a limited number of appointed delegates. With these emerging tools, we can now express ourselves individually while simultaneously coming together as a global community to examine the roots of our problems.

I still remember the difficulty we had with communication back then. It used to be customary for only one person to represent everyone; then, it was a singular organization and eventually, select members of society. Even in 2020, not everyone was allowed to be heard. They caused too much noise. We thought the key was to silence their input so others could speak for them.

How silly we were! In 2030, we, research scientists, have realized that our obstacle was not the amount or loudness of voices; it was our ability to discern, analyze, and generate insight from them. As with any investigation, more data requires, but also, enables better solutions. The answer was never to eliminate our sources of learning; it was always to improve our interaction with them—developing effective ways of processing and mobilizing important information that all of these voices presented to us.

Today, we have successfully rid humanity of echo chambers, technological barriers, and fake news. We are listening to and understanding each other more clearly than ever before.

And through our progress, we have discovered the blessings of silence.

Silence has diminished trivial noise and facilitated meaningful conversation. By removing

the valueless waste from our society, we have created so much space for ourselves. You can be anyone. There is room for all identities, viewpoints, and quirks.

The silence has enabled us not only to enjoy our own spaces but also to share them. With communication technology at its peak, we are constantly exploring and evolving in novel ways. We live in a society now where growth is not constrained by material desires. It is no longer defined by the size of our wallets or how many cars we own. Growth is so individualized yet so communal that we fully accept and cherish the distinct forms of one another.

I anticipate that we will emerge as a more inwardly reflective society this decade. As our innovations have secured nearly everything that we could want from the physical world, it has caused us to change culturally. Instead of looking for external sources for happiness or blame, we seem to focus on our internal selves. I believe that it is this introspection that yields our reverence for silence.

I wish you could see how beautiful silence really is. Even as I sit here, I can still remember how demoralizing and never-ending it felt in 2020. But I am writing to tell you that what you thought was silence was only a grotesquely distorted version of itself. It was the lack of life, suppression of voice, and fear for what horrors may occur next.

But I want to tell you, that the future is not to be feared. Yes, there is still silence. But it is this silence that births life, voice, and hope. Do not hate silence for it is only a channel of communication that has been tainted by how we have used it. If we are to move forward, we must embrace and leverage its potency as a catalyst for change. Rather than take away voices, we must use silence to amplify our statements.

As I write to you from 2030, the world is certainly quiet. Yet the silence does not deafen anyone. It empowers us all.