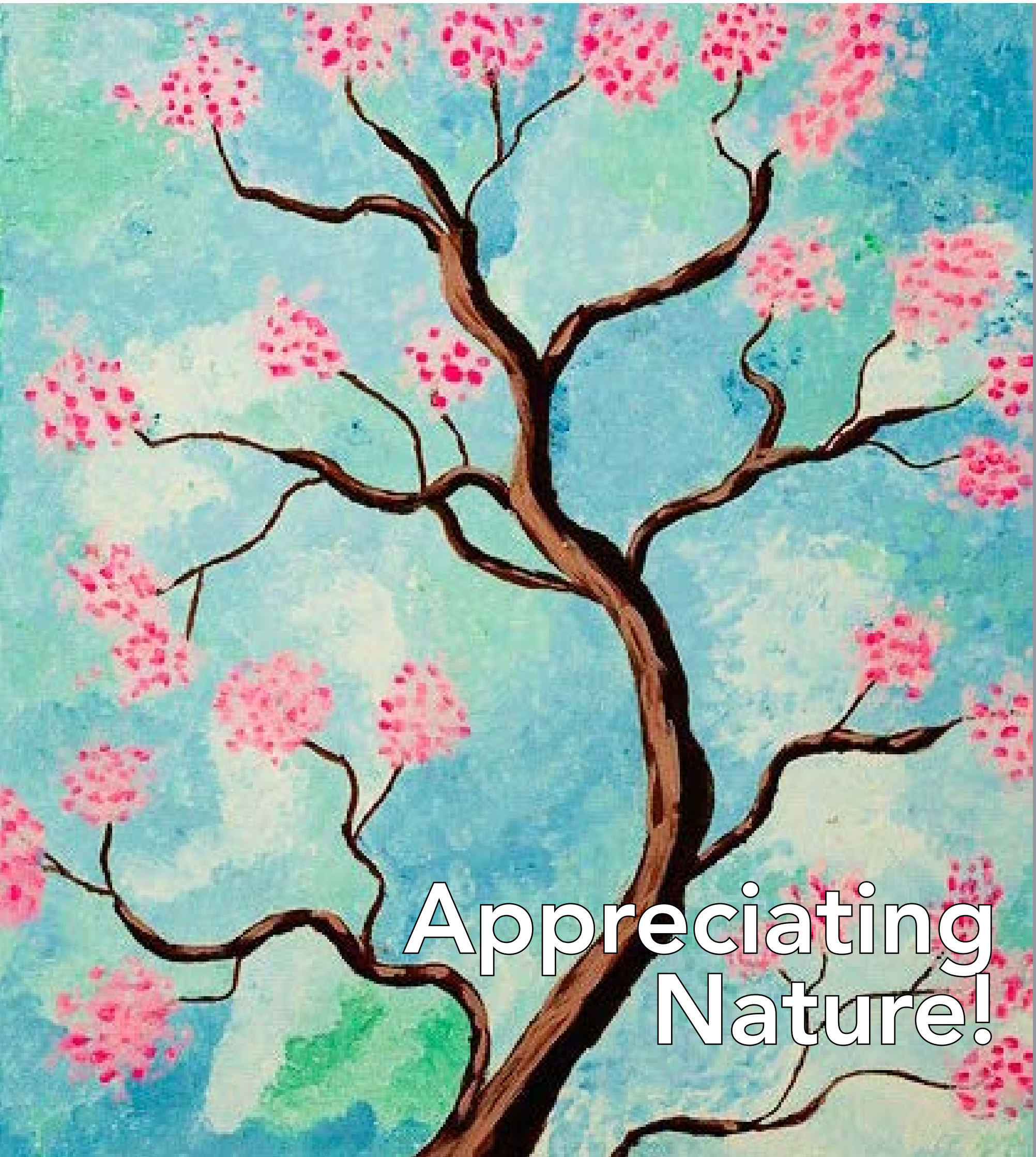


iWRITER

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By Kids For Kids Magazine



Appreciating
Nature!

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Letter from the Editor

Dear Readers,

The sun is shining, the flowers are blooming, and the earth is singing. With nature's seasonal unfolding comes a time of appreciation. Ever since the beginning, humanity has constantly intertwined with nature; nature has and is an eternal source of nourishment and inspiration.

The beauty of nature never fails to strike us with awe; from the jaw-droppingly rugged mountains to the powerful ocean waves, the world is filled with marvels. Even the seemingly mundane parts of nature- like the flowers on the streets or the cloudy sky- kindle a sense of wonder in us every day.

Throughout the course of history, nature's resiliency has strengthened us. As the world turns, the one thing that stays constant is the strength of nature; no matter the circumstances, we are always able to look back to nature for support.

It's in our nature- no pun intended- to find inspiration in what surrounds us. That extends to reading and writing as well; harnessing the influence nature has on us, can empower us in our creative expressions.

In this issue, our youth writers explore the theme of nature and our interactions with it. From chronicling sustainability efforts to reflecting on current global events, we share our personal reflections on nature's influence.

With that, here's to always cherishing and appreciating the earth, and all that it gifts us!

All the best,

Kate-Yeonjae Jeong

I WRITE because I have a passion for being able to share my reflections and thoughts with others. I write so I can share the spark of joy that writing gives with many other interested students.



contents

4 APPRECIATING NATURE

How the nature around us reflects the intricacies of human nature

6 CONNECTING WITH NATURE THROUGH ART

How cardiovascular surgeon Dr. Jay K. Raman uses painting and gardening to connect with nature

8 LESSONS FROM CRAIG FERGUSON

Teachings about human nature from one of America's most beloved comedians

9 CLIMATE CHANGE

What is it? Why is it important? And what can we do about it?

10 A PLACE FOR POETRY

Featured poems from the iWRITER staff all about nature

12 UKRAINE UNDER ATTACK

A reflection on the ongoing Ukraine-Russia conflict

14 BOOK TALK

A review of the thought-provoking book *The Midnight Library*

15 NATURE-RELATED PROMPTS FOR OUTDOOR WRITING

Prompts about the beautiful nature around us to get you thinking



Appreciating Nature

and how it reflects humanity



Nature envelops our world in its embrace. Whether in the form of leaves tinged with warm reds and oranges during the fall or bright greens in spring; insects happily buzzing about; or of our pets, animals we love and cherish, nature is all around us. It provides us with what we need to live: food, water, vitamins, and minerals.

Unfortunately, a study by Nature of Americans found that “more than half of adults report spending five hours or less in nature each week, and most are satisfied with this minimal amount of time. Parents say their 8 to 12-year-old children spend three times as many hours with computers and TVs each week as they do playing outside.”

We’re more disconnected from the world around us than ever. It’s time we give nature the respect and appreciation it deserves and look to nature for some unique insight into our nature.

Nature can heal and soothe, restore and connect us. It’s been scientifically proven!

Spending time outside can reduce emotions like anger, fear, or stress and assuage high blood pressure, high heart rate, and tense muscles. Simply having a plant in your room can have a significant impact on stress and anxiety. On the other hand, “nature deprivation,” a lack of time in the natural world, largely due to hours spent in front of TV or computer screens, has been associated with depression and a loss of empathy and altruism.

Additionally, we’ve been genetically programmed to engross ourselves in the beauty of trees, plants, water, and other natural elements; we are absorbed by nature scenes and distracted from any pain we feel; physician Robert Ulrich proved in a study of gallbladder surgery patients that nature can help you tolerate pain better.

Nature cannot only improve our mood but also our attention span. Focusing on what we’re experiencing out in nature provides a respite for our overactive minds, refreshing us for new tasks. For creatives,

immersing yourself in the outdoors can boost your creativity by helping you refocus. Next time you’re in the mood to write that award-winning novella or screenplay, try turning to the outdoors or even sitting by a window.

Nature can connect us to each other and the world as a whole. Residents in Chicago, who had green spaces around their buildings, reported feeling more tied to their community and being more concerned with helping others.

On another note, the nature around us can serve as a motivating mirror for human nature.

When you’re feeling like you’ll never be able to conquer the next big assessment or deadline, try thinking of the resilient fire ants in Houston who were able to weather unforeseen winds and damage. Ants use “swarm intelligence” to solve complex problems. It’s truly remarkable what they achieve with this collaborative mindset. This teaches us all that we have the power within us — the collective us — to overcome any hurdles.

Another example is nurse shrubs. In Mediterranean mountain ranges, these shrubs promote regeneration of their ecosystem (after deforestation or forest fires) by increasing potassium in the soil and shade above ground. These shrubs exemplify a significant part of the human spirit — selflessly helping others in the wake of tragedy.

It’s poetically beautiful how nature can so closely parallel such important elements of the human spirit (especially in the time of the pandemic): resilience and altruism.

BY Eshaan Mani

I WRITE for the rush of adrenaline I feel when my pen touches the paper. It is that experience and the opportunity to not only get my voice out to the public but also be able to be the voice of inspiring people and organizations that inspires me to write.



Connecting with Nature through Art



What do doctors, writers, and grandfathers all have in common? They have a uniquely endearing perspective on the world around them. The person I am spotlighting in this article happens to fulfill all three of these roles — my maternal grandfather, Dr. Jay K. Raman.

Dr. Raman was born in Kerala, a state in southwest India, at the end of the Second World War in 1945. He served in the Indian army and the army of the Sultan of Oman (a fact I wish I had known earlier!). With his wife and little girl, he immigrated to the United States and then moved to Houston in 1980 to do a fellowship in cardiovascular surgery at the Texas Heart Institute, under the renowned Dr. Denton Cooley. He has run a successful private practice since 1981. Presently, he is retired and spends most of his time on charitable activities. Dr. Raman has witnessed historic events throughout his life, including the independence and partition of the Indian subcontinent, the Cold War, global warming, and the COVID-19 pandemic.

To the rest of the community, Dr. Raman is considered one of the best physicians in the country. But to me, he's my laid-back, goofy grandfather who loves spending time with his kids and grandkids. I see his gentle demeanor as he tends to his array of plants every evening. His gardening served as his time of relaxation after a long day of surgery. "As a physician, I took care of human beings. Now that I am retired, my attention has shifted even more to plants, which require just as much care," says Dr. Raman.

My grandfather has always loved nature; spending time outside provides him with many a gift, whether it's feeling

the light rainfall coat his face or being greeted by the burst of colors that make up his backyard. He's proud of the organic vegetables that he grows for himself and his family, especially those originating from his homeland. "Oriental beans, *vendaka* (okra), a certain type of red spinach. These are vegetables that one cannot usually get in our city markets," he said. Something that helps elaborate this love of nature is painting. Dr. Raman has many pieces under his name and enjoys creating various landscapes and animals. "Birds, flowers, beaches. When I paint these things, I have the chance to identify myself with the most beautiful aspects of nature."

His favorite of his paintings, "Coconut Palms," is a tribute to Kerala, where coconut trees tower over the glistening beaches. He is currently painting the macaw bird, demonstrating his reverence for one of nature's most elegant creatures. "In my opinion, birds and butterflies are the most beautiful things in the world. Just look at the colors on a hummingbird's neck. Whether you attribute that to nature, God, or whatever it is, no human being can emulate those colors. Man can try to imitate nature, but man cannot eclipse nature."

When asked about future generations and the legacy he will leave behind, Dr. Raman had some important insight. "I know you may not like to say it, but I am an old man now," he said with a smile. "Though I am getting older, I've enjoyed my life, I've seen the world. From my experiences, the most important thing I can say is to leave the world a better place than how you found it. That is a good principle; it's one that I hope to live up to."

Turning the tables to our generation, Dr. Raman offers some advice: "What I find a little bothersome is the overindulgence in

today's society, more so than when I was young. It's simple things that make a difference, like conserving electricity and water. If you walk into a room and a lightbulb is burning unnecessarily, switch it off. Make sure you don't keep the water running while brushing your teeth." Indeed, the next global challenge we may face, one that is already affecting certain parts of the world, is water shortage. My grandfather stressed the importance of the new and upcoming generations' awareness of water scarcity.

Preserving nature in an era of constant change seems like a daunting task, but all it takes is an open heart, a willingness to do the little things which you know make a difference. Reducing plastic waste, using a certain amount of water for the dishes, riding a bike instead of a car — it's seemingly trivial actions like these that actually have the greatest impact on the environment.

We can and must make the necessary changes to conserve what

nature has given us.

"Those are the thoughts of an old man, so I don't know how many people will listen," my grandfather closed off with a laugh. "But I want to wish the coming generations the best: may your world be an even better place than the one I lived through."

For those curious to learn more about Dr. Raman's life and his times, check out his autobiography, "From the Land of Spice to the Land of Oil."

BY Sanjna Pandit

I WRITE because writing cultivates my ability to be eloquent and express my feelings and ideas. I learn more and more about myself with every new thought that I put on paper. My mind forces me to enter a whole new realm of imagination and discoveries that I never knew I could reach.



Lessons from Craig Ferguson



A simple secret held by a fifty-something Scottish talk-show host can help us solve climate change. At first glance, Craig Ferguson, with his skeleton robot sidekick and dancing horse, looks like he has nothing to do with reality, much less climate change. However, Craig Ferguson, through his persistent kindness and diligent attention to the small “how are you’s”, showed me how the smaller strokes in life are important on the larger canvas.

Craig Ferguson begins every show with the two trademarks that he’s known for: ripping his scripted interviewing cards and complimenting the interviewee’s appearance. With no scripted questions, the off-the-cuff dialogue avoids overly-complex and sensational questions and instead opts for simple questions spiced with Craig’s wit, evoking more intimacy between the interviewee, Craig, and the audience.

Still, the impromptu interviews would be nothing without Craig’s wit and charisma. No line is just a throw-away line. Every compliment and comment feels genuine and adds to the environment of the show. Craig never underestimates the value of adding sensationalism and energy to his every word. “You look absolutely electrifying!” replaces the mundane and average compliment that would pass in any other setting. The small, extra effort put in by Craig is reciprocated by the interviewee, making the interviews more energetic and exciting.

These small efforts create unique and authentic reactions from people who have been interviewed more than a handful of times. Among all the talk-show hosts, Craig Ferguson breaks the monotony of scripted and methodical interviews by introducing seemingly obvious and daily elements into the late night genre.

More often than not, we forget in the helter-skelter of daily life about these small mannerisms that contribute in a big way. Going out of your way to make someone feel better by complimenting them is something that seems self-evident enough to be ubiquitous but is growing increasingly rare.

There is no cost to kindness. A smile, a word of thanks, a good deed, a friendly gesture -- there is no cost to these things, and yet the benefits are priceless. We influence others with positivity. We become a blessing to each other’s life. You only have something to gain by being positive and sharing your positivity with others. These small actions change the whole climate in our classroom, school life and family life. Going back to hot climate issues facing our nations, our small mindful actions will make a difference too.

The average American produces 1,704 pounds of garbage per year according to the GlobalCitizen. Cutting down one-hundred pounds on garbage has a huge impact on the environment by preventing the build-up of garbage in “super-dumps.” Ending the disruption of ecosystems that affect the lack of fish in the Bay of Bengal can begin with you. We can start with using reusable water bottles instead of disposable water bottles, replacing plastic shopping bags with reusable tote bags, and so on. Being at the other end of the climate stick, any small action to prevent the impacts of climate change would be astronomical.

It may seem like the issue of climate change is insurmountable, but every action has the potential to be a game changer in preventing climate change. What is the cost of being kind to the environment? Nothing.

BY David Liu

I WRITE to help others escape to worlds full of color with characters of energy and nuance. To create a place where someone can find refuge, if only just for a few seconds, is something I love to do.

Climate Change: Causes, Consequences, and What We Can Do to Mitigate This Problem



Climate change is one of the most pressing global concerns that we face today. How do we create a sustainable future in which both people and nature can thrive?

Recent impacts of climate change include hurricanes in the Gulf of Mexico, heatwaves in the Arctic, flooding in Germany, droughts in South Africa, and wildfires in the western United States. Land, homes, and lives are lost in these extreme climate events. These events are becoming more severe globally. Warmer temperatures are changing weather patterns and disrupting the usual balance of nature. Scientists have been monitoring the atmospheric temperatures worldwide since the 1880s, and the global average temperature has changed by about 1-degree Celsius since then.

According to Science and Policy Climate Change Journal, “The world will likely exceed 1.5°C between 2026 and 2042 in scenarios where emissions are not rapidly reduced, with a central estimate of between 2030 and 2032.”

The questions you might ask: why do global temperatures matter, and what does this mean for humans, the environment, and nature?

With a 1.5°C increase in global average temperature, scientists predict that sea levels will rise greater than 0.7 feet, which could cause increased coastal flooding, beach erosion, and other negative impacts on humans and ecological systems. Scientists unanimously agreed that climate change is man-made. Human activities have increased the number of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere and are causing the earth to become warmer in ways that can't be sustained.

This increase is primarily due to burning fossil fuels such as coal, oil, and natural gas. The increased carbon dioxide levels

in the atmosphere that humans have caused in the last 60 years would have taken around 5,000 to 2,000 years in the past.

According to a new study based on NASA data, by 2050, the pollution may be so harmful that there might not be fresh air to breathe. This is just one substantial problem out of many other difficulties the world will face due to climate change.

Our generation onwards will face the devastating effects of climate change. Our planet is the one thing that all of Humankind shares in common. We are contributing to the destruction of Earth, and it is our responsibility to save our planet and Mother Nature.

Although cutting carbon usage is the only long-term solution for fighting climate change, in the short term, we can all do our part for a sustainable future. Here are 10 ways you can help mitigate climate change.

1. Whenever you can, take public transportation or carpool.
2. Unplug computers, TVs, and other electronics, and turn the lights off when not in use.
3. To reduce your food’s carbon footprint, buy local and seasonal foods.
4. Lower your water use - turn the sink off when you’re not using it!
5. Compost food waste. You can use it as fertilizer for your plants.
6. Follow the 3 Rs - Reduce, Reuse, Recycle.
7. Plant more trees - if you don’t have a community garden, consider starting one!
8. Install solar panels.
9. Invest in renewables.
10. Raise climate change awareness.

BY Shaivi Moparthy

I WRITE because writing is a way for me to express myself and it helps me connect to my artistic side. I enjoy writing because it allows me to reflect on experiences that I have encountered. Writing is something that I truly enjoy, and it has always been one of my greatest passions.

A Place for Poetry

Featured poems from the iWRITER staff

THE PROTECTOR

At the crack of dawn
I wake, I rise from my peaceful slumber
The pressure of the world lays upon me
To light up the skies
One by one my single rays
Shine throughout the world
To fill humanity with the colors of today

My life, a never-ending journey of labor
The expectations continue to chip me away
But I must never give up, for I am the Sun
Each moment, I must burn
with all passion in my soul

For I feed the fire that is Earth,
and watch over fragile mortal beings

The clouds cover me, giving me a moment to rest
As the rain starts to fall, I'm ready to create wonder
Combined with the rain, I glow synonymously with the rainbow
Even though my work is tiresome, it's worth it
To put beauty in the air

As the darkness starts to fall
The night slowly creeps in
Time to shine bright for the world again
My job is never done, for there is always magic to be created
My name is Sun, and I will keep shining until the end



BY Nia Shetty
I WRITE because of the joy I feel when I put a new idea down on paper. To be able to bring feelings and emotions to the reader, through ideas that I get to express.

GROWING GREEN

Beautiful blue skies
Deep, never ending, blue sky
Royal blue expanse

Huge, wonderful clouds
Majestic and puffy whites
Billow about

Dark, graying black clouds
Water particles building
For a warm pouring



BY Austin Lopez
I WRITE because I have words to say and a passion with which to say them. I love the old Star Wars, Percy Jackson, and AJR. I'm also a firm believer that everything isn't as it seems.

A GLANCE AT MY YARD

A subtle look, a wayward stare
Reminds me of the beauty in the air

Squall and storm, rain and shine
I've sat through all and all are mine

And when this life gets to be too much
I cast my eyes outside at such

Beauty which lies all around
The endless sky, the rolling hills, the ground

Of great green waves that swallow sorrow
No hollow hope, no false tomorrows

No future job, no endless grind
And I can leave my woes behind

So when times are tough and when joy wanes
I turn to earth to ease my pains

When my everyday life gets too hard,
I need look only at my flowering yard.

BY Alex Zhang
I WRITE because it's a way to bring my wildest dreams to life and share them with others. I really love iWRITE because of the family that I've found within the organization.



THE WOODS OF CONROE

On this morning I hear dry pine needles
crunch underneath
The weight of my two feet
As I walk the woods of Conroe.

I watch brown moths flutter -
They chase and escape my steps
As if it were a game of tag
And they were daring me to catch them.

I listen to the songs of winter wrens
Singing melodies so sweet,
Their notes bouncing down the
branches of towering pines
And hitting me from above
without hesitation or fear
Because they know the beauty of their sound.

BY Audrey Piczak
I WRITE because it's one of the few spaces in which I can process my thoughts and feelings. It's how I can bring myself peace by putting my feelings onto paper. With writing, you paint people with words.

I feel the winds around me blow the
cool air of March against my cheek,
Whispering through branches and
rustling their leaves in the act,

Though, the trunks remain still,
Unshaken,
Their roots holding tight to the soil
they stand on for years to come.

Looking down at my feet,
I know that my limbs are not yet
half as strong as
The roots of these pines,
But on this morning,
I myself wishing to one day be like
The woods of Conroe.



A PALACE IN THE SKY

Pristine — the walls sheen softly in the sunlight
Perfect — the mordant smell of manufactured air
Faultless — smooth, meticulously carved texture of the immaculate plastic
Beautiful, clawing, yearning for complacency
But merely itching the emptiness

The lonely planet down below
Now must be covered, grace drained away
Seas of blue lost
Forests of green squashed
The past turned to char and ash, beauty forgotten.

Distracting us with their false promises, they said.
It had served its purpose, they said.
Mounds of tin across the ground
Steaming under the parched ozone
Accent the mountains of endless gray blocks.
Rusted tin cans, scalding piles of waste,
Encapsulating our future. Reaching the horizon.

Then
A lone reed, unwavering, hidden on the cusp of the skyline.

A plant, simple green
No grandiose architecture, merely a stem with two leaves
Pristine — every imperfection adding to its beauty
Perfect — every leaf effortlessly sculpted
Faultless — innocent to the core
Beautiful, completely, and in totality
A home on the soil

BY David Liu
I WRITE to help others escape to worlds full of color with characters of energy and nuance. To create a place where someone can find refuge, if only just for a few seconds, is something I love to do.



Ukraine Under Attack

On February 24th, 2022, at 4:50 AM, Russian President Vladimir Putin declared in a speech that Russia would be conducting a special military operation in Ukraine. Then, at approximately 5:07 AM, the missile strikes began, and Russian troops crossed the border into Ukraine. And throughout the last two months, Russian forces have encroached on Kyiv, Ukraine’s capital, clashing with the Ukrainian military and armed Ukrainian citizens alike.

This conflict, while heart-wrenching, has even greater implications for the world as a whole. Russia and China are the western countries’ greatest adversaries on the global stage. The Ukraine-Russia conflict serves only to inflame tensions. With the advent of the United States and countless other European, NATO countries lending their support to Ukraine, the threat of nuclear war is all too ominous.

Putin went so far as to say, “Whoever tries to interfere with us should know that Russia’s response will be immediate and will lead you to such consequences as you have never experienced in your history. (Russia) is today one of the most powerful nuclear states.”

Furthermore, the Russian president ordered Russia’s nuclear forces to be put on a special regime of combat duty alert. Estimates of the Russian nuclear arsenal range from 4,477 nuclear warheads to Russia’s claimed 6,257 nuclear warheads. This makes Russia the owner of nearly half the world’s 13,000 nuclear warheads.

To fully understand the threat’s potential in terms of environmental and humanitarian impact, the consequences of a single warhead need be examined. The detonation of one such modern weapon produces an enormous blast wave, intense levels of radiation, and mass destruction capable of leveling most cities. The area of effect of a nuclear weapon to varying degrees of destruction is between a .5-mile radius and a 10-mile radius.

Additionally, even if one survives the blast wave and the subsequent burns, the nuclear radiation is all but certain to be fatal or, at the very least, severely damaging to long term health. The documentation of these symptoms is extensive in such instances as the atomic bombs dropped on Nagasaki and Hiroshima. Horrifying as these conditions may be, they are the reality of what it means to have developed nuclear weapons. It is in this perspective that the Ukraine-Russia conflict must be considered. With the United States, the owner of the world’s second largest

nuclear arsenal providing arms and support for a country to fight against Russia, the owner of the world’s largest nuclear arsenal, the threat of nuclear warfare is paramount. In tandem with the growing political divide between the western NATO countries and the newly arising Warsaw Pact-esque alliance between principally Russia and China, the risk of nuclear fallout eerily shadows that of the Cold War.

It is because of this that the United States and many other European powers have remained directly uninvolved. Ukraine is supplied with arms and ammunition by these countries, yet receive no direct military contributions in the form of soldiers. Proponents of this geopolitical approach to the conflict understand that for the NATO countries to become any more involved, they already would be risking utter nuclear annihilation to the unconscionable detriment of peoples’ lives and environment.

So, as the conflict rages on in Ukraine, it is important that we remember the weight of its outcome on the world at large. Despite our political divisions, the risk of nuclear warfare is far greater. That is not to say we shouldn’t support the people of Ukraine in their struggle, but it is to say that should we misstep, the consequences will be dire. In this vein, it must be said that our leaders should approach the circumstances with extreme caution and ensure that their actions are deliberate, calculated, and precise as to resolve the situation with as little bloodshed and destruction as possible.

BY Austin Lopez
I WRITE because I have words to say and a passion with which to say them. I love the old Star Wars, Percy Jackson, and AJR. I’m also a firm believer that everything isn’t as it seems.



BOOK TALK



What does it mean to be between life and death? What is our version of a “perfect” life, and will we ever get to live it? We are all burdened by our regrets, our past choices, and the things we could’ve done better, but there are endless possibilities and decisions that are to come. Maybe tomorrow, you’ll meet the love of your life, live on Mars, or fly halfway across the world. *The Midnight Library*, written by Matt Haig, makes us question reality and the countless possibilities of life. We get to live in the mind and soul of Nora Seed, a thirty-five year old who overdoses, carrying the weight of all her past regrets and broken bonds. However, she doesn’t die, and instead finds herself stuck in a library, one she used to go to in her elementary school years. She is greeted by her old librarian and is given a choice now to live a different life, the perfect life, one where she can finally find happiness. The book makes us question reality, ponder our future, and reflect on our past choices.



BY *Sophie Yu*

I WRITE to let my thoughts, feelings, and ideas spread across the paper. To form and create a story that can be told in any perspective, described with any words. Writing can create a whole new world.



Nature-Related Writing Prompts

As we approach the warm weather, the blooming nature can encourage our writing. On a sunny day, consider grabbing your favorite notebook and writing outside to further your inspiration. Try one of the ten nature-related writing prompts listed below:

Write a poem about the best travel destination you have ever been to. Where did you go? What did it look, smell, and taste like? How did the trip make you feel? What memories do you have associated with the place?

Write a fictional story about a boy who goes on a beach trip. There, he finds a gigantic seashell buried in the sand. When the boy brings the shell to his ear, the seashell emits a mysterious sound. What happens next?

Boom! Crash! Imagine that you are on a road trip to somewhere distant when you are suddenly trapped in a thunderstorm. Rain is pouring and flashes of lightning strike every minute. What do you do next?

Write an essay about a place of nature near your home- such as a creek, a grassy park, or even your backyard garden. Now, turn that writing into a new form of structure, such as a quiz, a table of contents, or a map.

Imagine that you are camping deep in the forest. The full moon is out, and you hear a distant howl from the mountains. Gradually, the howls get closer and louder to where you are. You hear a rustling noise from outside your tent. What do you do next?

Write a fictional story about an explorer who discovers a new species of animal. The catch? The animal can mimic anything, including human voices and language.

Write a poem about a time you felt a strong sense of emotion in nature. Were you sad, happy, or surprised? How did nature have an effect on how you felt?

Picture this: you are a small creature living in the sea, happily swimming about. When an ocean current sweeps you out into a different part of the world, you must find a way to get back home. How does your adventure unfold?

What is a nature-related activity that you want to try? Do you ever want to go zip-lining through a jungle, or snorkel amongst intimidating sharks? Have you ever wished to go water skiing in the ocean or bungee-jump off of a waterfall?

Talk about the world in an abstract way. For example, the world is an oyster, the world is a hug, or the world is a secret. What is the world to you, and what about its contents?

BY *Kate-Yeonjae Jeong*

I WRITE because I have a passion for being able to share my reflections and thoughts with others. I write so I can share the spark of joy that writing gives with many other interested students.



IWRITER ISSUE 8 TEAM



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Madison Burba, Alex Zhang, Audrey Piczak

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