

For my English class, Climate Fiction, each student was required to do an Everyday-Life project. In this project, the student was to select one environmentally oriented lifestyle change from a list, implement it in their life, and write a report about it each day. For mine, I chose to take an environmentally focused picture each day. I took pictures of a variety of nature-oriented things, such as the woods in my backyard, my indoor potted plants, and other objects that were not nature themselves, but had a direct tie to the environment. I then uploaded the photo I took for that day to a Google-Doc shared with my teacher and wrote about several things about the photo. First, I wrote about how taking the nature in the photo made me feel and how it impacted my life. Then, I wrote about how the object of the photo can be used so that others can find fulfillment from nature, thus feeling responsibility for protecting the earth.

In addition to creating this project, the students were also required to read climate-fiction books. Climate fiction is a genre of books that uses climate change in the background, or as part of the plot, to creatively bring more awareness to climate change and educate the reader about its effects. I found that these books affected my mindset more than I was expecting. I noticed a change in my perception of nature as I took the photos as I read the books. The short story *Sacred Space* by Kim Stanley Robinson had detailed imagery about both the beauty and the ugly death of nature. The mountains the story is set in are first described as gorgeous: “one of the ranges’ characteristic lenticular clouds formed like a spaceship over the crest and turned pale orange and pink as the evening lengthened” (Robinson 65). However, as the story progresses, the damage of climate change is seen and the descriptions change to those of death: “ponds were often pans of cracked dirt. Grass was brown. Plants were dead...” (Robinson 76). I took this story very personally, because it was about a group of friends hiking in the mountains, which is something I enjoy doing regularly. Robinson’s imagery forced me to think broader than the story

and imagine the same destruction in my favorite hiking places. After reading that, I found myself more appreciative of the nature I photographed. I spent more time taking each photo and viewed the nature outside of the lens for my own benefit, as well.

Another book we read, *Salvage the Bones*, by Jesmyn Ward, vividly depicted the horrendous damage of natural disasters. I also read online articles about hurricanes that correlated to the book. These articles stated that if climate change is not dealt with, disastrous storms, like the hurricane in the book, will become more frequent. After better understanding the numerous consequences of hurricanes, I realized how vital it is to spread climate change awareness and encourage people to take action. The level of urgency I received from the book caused me to think more creatively about real ways people can be inspired to make a change. I found that my new knowledge made me feel more responsible for finding solutions to climate change while I discussed my photos.

The final book we read was *Memory of Water* by Emmi Itäranta. This book depicts a futuristic world that has a completely altered society and way of living due to a severe lack of water. In the story, there has not been snowfall for so long that the main character can only imagine what it is like. It snowed the day after I read the book and I felt much more appreciative and thoughtful about it than I ever have before. I took my photo of the snow, but then silently watched it fall and sparkle for a while, so that I could feel like I have not taken our beautiful and resourceful earth for granted. I ended up taking several photos for myself. Again, I felt a greater sense of responsibility for ensuring that future snows occur. I took this sense of responsibility to my project where I thought of more ways to spread this responsibility across the globe. The book also describes what has happened in the future to all of the plastic people use now. There is a

grave for all of the nonbiodegradable plastic described as a “large, craggy, pulpy landscape where sharp corners and coarse surfaces, straight edges and jagged splinters rose steep and unpredictable” (Itäranta 23). Many people know that they throw out too much plastic and that, since it takes thousands of years to decompose, it will simply pile up in what used to be nature. However, not many people imagine what this will cause for future generations. This book used dark imagery and a sad tone to create an image in the reader’s head of how greatly this will affect the landscape and lives of future people. I recognized my own waste of plastic and sought to change. While photographing nature, I thought of ways that people could incorporate more plants into their lives and less nature. A solution I created that I thought could be particularly useful was giving plants as gifts, instead of plastic dolls or video game controllers.

As a result, these books helped me become more inspired in my project and take it more seriously. The books made me appreciate the images I captured more and expand that appreciation to the real object of the photo itself. They also made me more aware of the need to find genuine solutions to climate change within these photos. I created ideas for others to implement to find more personal benefit from nature that, hopefully, would cause them to recognize the dire consequences of climate change. While coming up with these ideas, I found that they were benefitting me as well.

This project resulted in great self-discovery. I recognized a profound love of nature in myself and a deep sorrow that it will someday be taken away. By following my own solutions, I found my opinions of certain things were changing. Walking my dog no longer felt like a burden, but a great opportunity to be amongst the forest and the woodland animals and, from it, find a sense of peace and harmony. Instead of just walking past my potted plants, I would stop in front

of them and think about all the benefits they provide that I used to overlook. My father and I share the hobby of indoor plants, and I spread my newfound appreciation to him through conversations about the plants. I felt sick one day and the first thing that came to mind to help me feel better was to spend time outside and sit quietly, taking in the view and breathing in the fresh air. After the project was done, I realized that the benefits of nature I was describing really do work, and my mental and physical health were improving as I spent more time being environmentally focused. In addition, I became more appreciative of nature and recognized all that it does for people. This caused me to realize how devastating it would be to lose nature. I felt urgency to share my knowledge with others and do all that I can to protect the earth.

This sense of urgency to make real change led to another discovery, this time not about myself, but about the world. This project was so simple, yet created such profound results. My discovery was that the world might care about the earth and climate change, but are too lazy to take action. This can be very frustrating. Many people do care about nature, but they simply do not want to put in the effort to change their lifestyles. I found that it was easy for me to make the small changes in order to do my project and I will continue to make these changes. I just needed a little push in the right direction from my teacher. It seems, however, that much of the world needs more than a slight push.

One way to create a bigger push is by implementing the Everyday-Life project that I completed. I found great benefits and created numerous solutions to fighting the ignorance towards climate change and climate change itself. If people were to do this project for themselves, taking an environmental photo and write about their feelings towards it, they would likely also find personal benefits and become much more appreciative of nature, thus, wanting to

protect the earth from the damage of climate change. If more people did this, it could result in widespread environmental activism that would greatly reduce the effects of climate change.

Works Cited

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