

Annie Moffitt

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First Period

Dr. Ekambaram Elumalai

## TREMENDOUS TREES

When someone asks you why trees are important to conserve, the mindless response is always they provide oxygen and make paper and without them we wouldn't have clean air. However, I challenge you to think in a different direction. Picture this. Today is a day you have fantasized about for decades: the day you finally visit your childhood tree with your children. As you draw closer and closer to its location, you can't help but close your eyes and smile as you recall all the moments you have spent at the tree. You can still vividly picture the days your father pushed you on the swing hanging from its strong branches as the breeze sifted through your unruly pig tails and you squealed with delight. You can still remember all the nights you and your friends laid under it, staring up at the branches thick with leaves, and laughed uncontrollably at something ridiculous one of you had said. You are even able to recall your first kiss and all the awkward moments in between that occurred under its crisp, concealing shade. Because of all these moments, you have had the unquenchable desire to bring your own children to visit this special tree and now it is the moment. However, when you excitedly arrive at where the mighty oak once stood, you are met with an expanse of empty soil leaving a just as empty gap in your heart. While this may be a jarring example, it represents the importance of trees extends far past the paper and clean air blanket statements.

Trees are a necessary component of our lives in ways we don't even realise and, therefore, their wellbeing is not an option but an obligation.

Of course, trees do contribute resources for our lives but in more ways than aiding in our paper production. Picture your morning routine, waking up, washing your face, enjoying a hot cup of coffee, taking any medications, brushing your teeth, etc, and nearly every component of your routine involves trees. Lotions and beauty products contain vitamins such as A and E which are derived from wood extracts. Coffee is extracted from berries plucked from Arabic coffee trees. Many medications are held together with lignin, a naturally occurring glue found in trees. Even toothpaste gains its creamy texture from cellulose gum, a product taken from trees (Conservation writing and Jim Claypool Art tabloid). Trees contribute to numerable practical aspects of our daily lives as components in the products on our shelves.

Trees also can have a personal role in our lives. As depicted in the initial story, trees are a place where memories are formed. With their tall strong branches, trees are the ideal place for swings, hammocks, or tree houses and these places are perfect for building memories. Who doesn't enjoy laying in a hammock with their family and friends or being pushed on the swing under the open sky? Treehouses are the perfect place to make numerous, found childhood memories to share with your friends and family for years to come. Trees also provide an escape from the sun with their cool, inviting shade. Everyone has escaped a scorching day to relax under the shade of a tree whether it be during a lawn party, a day of yard work, or an exhausting afternoon. We hang our children's hand painted birdhouses in

their branches. We climb to the very top of trunks and feel the breeze from all around us. We decorate them with streams of lights, candy canes, and iridescent orbs. We rake their leaves into mountainous piles and then excitedly plunge into them, then do it all over again. We carve our initials into them or the initials and dates that we treasure. Therefore, in a variety of ways, trees are more than just a resource for our products or air purifying filters if we truly take the time to stop and think about it.

Let us finish our story where we left off. You were met with an expanse of empty soil leaving a just as empty gap in your heart. However, you do not allow this disappointment to dominate you. Instead, you are moved to action. You plaster an enthusiastic smile on your face, regroup your family, and drive to the nearest plant nursery. There, your children happily select a healthy sapling to plant where your tree once stood. You tell them that one day, this small plant will grow to be another strong oak for them to form their own memories, beginning with the fact they planted that tree in the ground when they were young.

At the close of our hypothetical story, it is now time for you to author your own tree conservation story and their innumerable ways to pick up the pen and start writing. All stories begin with a sentence, so take that first step and write that first sentence. Similar to our example, you may choose to educate your children or the youth around you on the importance of trees to our daily lives. It is also important to educate those around you on the necessary role trees play in our lives. You can do this by advocating for recycling in your community, starting an envirothon team, or by simply telling people how necessary trees are to our lives. Use your voice and stand up for our trees! You may also choose to plant your own tree as a future spot for you and others to love and appreciate one day. If these tasks seem too daunting, tasks as simple as using less paper products and recycling also help

conserve our precious trees. Try using reusable products rather than paper ones, borrow books rather than buying new ones, and use scrap paper rather than constantly purchasing new sheets of paper. Trees play an important role in our lives and it's time we play an important role in theirs.