

**Gus Scanlon**

**Grade 8**

**The Child's Primary School**

**Balboa Library**

### Caleb's Crossing

Like Bethia and Caleb from the book *Caleb's Crossing* women and Native Americans have been underestimated by men in power. Bethia Mayfield, a girl living on colonial Martha's Vineyard, is not given the opportunity for a formal education but absorbs one overheard through nearby lecture halls. Caleb, a young Native American, thought to have a dull mind, becomes the first Native American graduate of Harvard College. This historical fiction book depicts those two characters that form an unbreakable friendship in Colonial America of the 1600's a time when women were limited to household jobs and could make few decisions of their own. Likewise Native Americans were thought incapable of mastering the subjects of the classic English Education. Over the centuries both groups fought discrimination and gained their well-deserved rights.

The women's rights movement in England was sparked in 1792 with the publication of Mary Wollstonecraft's *A Vindication of the Rights of Women*. It informed its readers of the horrible oppression faced by women who, if allowed, could be more useful to society. Over one hundred years after Mary Wollstonecraft wrote her book, the drive for women's rights in England gained momentum. In 1903 the Women's Social and Political Union (WSPU) was founded for the primary purpose of amending discriminatory English voting rights. Women across England united and protested against their oppression by men. As a great scientist once said, "With every action, there is an equal and opposite reaction." Soon the WSPU faced public resistance; it was common to see the members of the WSPU arrested, beaten, and their meetings banned. After the start of World War I, the WPSU sent its members to aid the war effort, and their actions were received jubilantly by the public as well as Parliament that subsequently reevaluated their objections to

women's rights. In 1918 Parliament expanded voting to women aged thirty and older. Ten years later the women's voting age was reduced to 21.

The year after Parliament passed the women's voting law. America followed a similar path. Soon women's rights became a topic of serious debate and reached beyond the borders of England and America. Starting in 1945 the United Nations began to hold meetings concerning equal rights for women. In 1966 in the United States the National Organization for Women (NOW) was founded for the sole purpose of eradication of women's equality. Since the 1980's much of the debate in women's rights has been related to reproductive rights, sexual harassment in the workplace, and the "glass ceiling," an obstacle preventing women from obtaining high ranking positions equivalent to those held by men.

Native American discrimination began with the first European invasion of the New World. When Christopher Columbus came ashore, Europeans considered Native Americans inferior. They were deprived of their rights, enslaved, and forced from their lands. The Indian Removal Act of 1830 gave the President of the United States (Andrew Jackson) the power "to take part in treaties that exchanged lands east of the Mississippi for land west of the Mississippi." The Native Americans, living on the lands, had no rights under United States law and were given no say in their exodus. Over 100,000 Native Americans were forced off their land with this Act. One such tribe, the Cherokees, lost 4000 people during their grueling tragic journey. Their journey would be forever known as the "Trail of Tears." Fast forwarding to the 20<sup>th</sup> century we find Native Americans serving side by side with the American forces against Germany in World War I. At the war's conclusion, the United States government acknowledged the unfair treatment of native Americans. In 1924 as a reward for their honorable service in the war, the Native American Citizenship Act was passed. This Act granted all Native Americans United States citizenship with all its rights and benefits. Despite this it wasn't until 1948 that every Native American could vote in every state. In 1934 the Indian Reorganization Act was passed which permitted the Native Americans to form their own government. Over 30 years passed, and in 1968, the Indian Civil Rights Act was approved which essentially applied the Bill of Rights to Native Americans. The

rights granted to Native Americans included freedom of the press, freedom of speech, the right to an attorney, to name a few. Lastly in 1968 the National Indian Education Association was founded to improve the education of Native Americans.

My thoughts are best summarized by two words – admiration and incomplete. Admiration, because women and Native Americans alike helped their oppressors in times of need and proved to them that they deserved equal rights; that they were a good and as hard working as others. Incomplete because the fight against discrimination is not yet over; discrimination still exists in this world. There is still work to be done, still bridges to be built; it's the last mile of the marathon that is the hardest Mankind has come in for eradicating discrimination. In 1993 Ben Nighthorse Campbell became the first Native American to be elected to the United States Senate. In 2008 Hilary Clinton became the first woman to run for United States President and afterwards became Secretary of State.

Furthermore other groups face discrimination as well. If all the groups who face discrimination unite together, equality for all can be achieved sooner.

**Jeffrey Jones**

**Grade 8**

**Nazareth Catholic School**

**Benjamin Library**

A Book That Inspired Me to Save the World I Will Inherit

I didn't purposely set out to save the earth by reading the book *Introduction to Marine Biology* by George Karleskint. I was fascinated with fish, and I thought I could learn something from the book to benefit the fish in my aquarium.

At first glance I loved looking at the pages of beautiful pictures of the Caribbean coral reefs and Southern California kelp forests. The vivid colors of marine animals were breathtaking.

However as I delved deeper, my nerdy scientific side became fascinated. Marine biology is the study of marine organisms and their interaction with each other and their environment. That may not sound very exciting, but the fascinating thing is that the earth is comprised of 70% ocean which is full of marine life that provides food, commercial products, chemicals for medicinal purposes, and tourist attractions. Whatever happens to the ocean directly impacts our own survival. Additionally, the ocean is so vast that we have not even discovered all the species that exist that could potentially be used to cure diseases such as cancer.

The food chains and ecosystems interplay, interact, and are interdependent on each other. The Caribbean coral reefs need Emerald Crabs to eat a type of invasive algae. If the Emerald Crab population decreases, the algae will kill the precious coral. If the corals die, the fish that feed off the coral reefs will perish which affects the human food supply, source of medicine, and economic system.

More importantly I learned that many negative impacts on the ocean are caused by a specific species, that is the "human species." Besides throwing garbage in the ocean, even humans who don't live near the ocean can adversely impact the ocean's ecosystem. The simple action of releasing carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) by running a car can alter the chemistry of the ocean. When carbon dioxide reacts with salt

water, the pH of the salt water is reduced which is called ocean acidification. Ocean acidification makes it difficult for organisms such as lobsters, shrimp, and corals dependent upon calcium carbonate to maintain healthy cells. Those shells become thinner and make the organism more susceptible to disease.

Realizing the vital role of the ocean to our existence, I participated in the science fair projects, demonstrating the damage caused by ocean acidification using Emerald Crabs and Brine Shrimp (a type of plankton). My experiments validated that ocean acidification kills marine organisms. Ocean food chains are indeed being disrupted since plankton is almost always at the base.

I could present more examples, but the bottom line is that the book made me realize that we are all connected and interdependent. An action of one individual can have a dramatic impact on all ecosystems. I was no longer a tiny shrimp in the ocean, but a human being who had the potential to make a significant contribution to saving the earth by spreading awareness, planting trees, and recycling plants.

**Sofia Poindexter**

**Grade 8**

**Saint Didacus School**

**Kensington Library**

If All the Books in the World Were to Disappear, I Would  
Choose. . .

Sometimes we have to make difficult choices. For some of us it is mundane as selecting a brand of paper towel. For others it is a life or death situation. Even if we do not want to make these choices, we may have to at least once in our lives. This week, however, I had to make a difficult choice, choosing a book that I would keep if all the other books in the world were to disappear. I chose *Anne Frank: The Diary of a Young Girl*. Out of all the magical books that I have utterly loved, I chose this book because Anne had a story to tell, not like one in a history book, but one of love, hope, and courage.

Annelies Marie Frank had an extremely difficult choice to make. When she went into hiding at the blossoming age of 13, she had to decide to open herself up to others and love her family or close herself up like an armadillo and speak only to herself and her diary. Anne was often described as a sweet and loving person so her decision was both – keep some of her thoughts to herself and write them in her diary and respect or love everyone else who was with her in the annex. Anne’s personality was also described as a funny, smart, independent, and talented person. She would play with her friends after school and made up stories with her dad. When her family moved to Amsterdam, she learned Dutch with her friend Hanneli. Life for Anne was good until Adolf Hitler rose to power.

At that time the German government was in a major crisis. The United States stock market had crashed, and the impact on Germany was beyond repair. They needed someone to blame so Adolf Hitler blamed the Jews for “stealing the bread out of people’s mouths and taking all the jobs from poor Germans.” Almost all of Germany agreed with Hitler, and conditions for the Jews were horrible. They had

certain restrictions such as not being able to go to public places such as pools, cinemas, or plays. All of the Jews had to wear a yellow star on whatever they wore so others could identify them. Anne was devastated, and her parents worried about their safety and future. Then one day they received a form notifying the family that Anne's sister Margot had to go to work in a concentration camp.

The very next day the family went into hiding, and Anne traveled to the annex, wearing layers of her clothes so they wouldn't have to make a second trip. Anne's mother, Edith, had scribbled down a fake address to confuse the police. As soon as they settled in along with the Van Pels family and Fritz Pfeffer they kept quiet all day long. Anne often wrote in her diary, writing stories, plays, poems, and letters to her friend Kitty. She often conversed with the others in the annex including the Van Pels' son Peter with whom she fell in love. Anne frequently quarreled with her mother and her sister, telling her diary that her father was the only family member she loved. Later in her life, though, she realized that her mother was only trying to help her. Anne told her diary that if she had not had a diary, she would have absolutely lost her mind.

While she was hiding in the annex, she had dark thoughts, wondering if she would ever be able to ride a bike or go outside or smell fresh air again. On the day they were captured it had been a quiet, regular morning. Then they heard a loud bang and a series of crashes. They had been found. Anne's last words in her diary had been "I still believe that people are truly good at heart. . ." she could not finish the last sentence. Anne and her family were transported to a concentration camp where she was separated from Edith and Otto. Anne died from typhus in March 1945. She was 15 years old.

In conclusion I would say that this book has changed my view of the world. This book has shown me how fortunate I am when I did not realize it before. Anne's life had changed mine by showing me the sadness, love, joy, and pain she had gone through. This book was uplifting, and it changed my thoughts forever.

**Ethan Shek**

**Grade 8**

**Marshall Middle School**

**Scripps Ranch Library**

### Sparing the Oxford

Under the highly unlikely circumstances of every single book in the world disappearing, *cringe*, I would consider saving the *Oxford English Dictionary*. But before I elaborate more about my choice, I cannot help but notice a loophole in this classic essay question. Assuming that I am expected to believe that all physical books were to disappear, what would happen to the electronic ones? What if I memorized a passel of stories and could write them again? These are undoubtedly some of the few questions that have probably been asked by the many class clowns who have written this essay before me. I, too, question the disappearance of electronic books, but first, (staying true to my assumption) here are the reasons why out of the hundreds of millions of books in the world, I would choose to save the *Oxford*.

Literature is an important part of history, and history can be discovered when studying literature. The reason why I have chosen a dictionary is that the dictionary, while serving as a key asset for a writer, can also function as a history textbook. How can a dictionary be related to a textbook? Many dictionaries not only provide words and their definitions, but also much background information about when a word was first used and which languages the word was derived from. This would be extremely critical information if writers and historians were to gather using only their existing knowledge and my dictionary to try to recall important historical events to create new textbooks. By using the dictionary they would be able to possibly refresh their memory by searching through word explanations. Then they could literally rewrite history. Writers could also use my dictionary to create new books to fill the now empty bookshelves of libraries and homes all over the world.