

from **Silent Spring**

RACHEL CARSON

I. A Fable for Tomorrow

There was once a town in the heart of America where all life seemed to live in harmony with its surroundings. The town lay in the midst of a checkerboard of prosperous farms, with fields of grain and hillsides of orchards where, in spring, white clouds of bloom drifted above the green fields. In autumn, oak and maple and birch set up a blaze of color that flamed and flickered across a backdrop of pines. Then foxes barked in the hills and deer silently crossed the fields, half hidden in the mists of the fall mornings.

Along the roads, laurel, viburnum and alder, great ferns and wildflowers delighted the traveler's eye through much of the year. Even in winter the roadsides were places of beauty, where countless birds came to feed on the berries and on the seed heads of the dried weeds rising above the snow. The countryside was, in fact, famous for the abundance and variety of its bird life, and when the flood of migrants was pouring through in spring and fall people traveled from great distances to observe them. Others came to fish the streams, which flowed clear and cold out of the hills and contained shady pools where trout lay. So it had been from the days many years ago when the first settlers raised their houses, sank their wells, and built their barns.

Then a strange blight crept over the area and everything began to change. Some evil spell had settled on the community: mysterious maladies swept the flocks of chickens; the cattle and sheep sickened and died. Everywhere was a shadow of death. The farmers spoke of much illness among their families. In the town the doctors had become more and more puzzled by new kinds of sickness appearing among their patients. There had been several sudden and unexplained deaths, not only among adults but even among

children, who would be stricken suddenly while at play and die within a few hours.

There was a strange stillness. The birds, for example — where had they gone? Many people spoke of them, puzzled and disturbed. The feeding stations in the backyards were deserted. The few birds seen anywhere were moribund; they trembled violently and could not fly. It was a spring without voices. On the mornings that had once throbbed with the dawn chorus of robins, catbirds, doves, jays, wrens, and scores of other bird voices there was now no sound; only silence lay over the fields and woods and marsh.

On the farms the hens brooded, but no chicks ⁵ hatched. The farmers complained that they were unable to raise any pigs — the litters were small and the young survived only a few days. The apple trees were coming into bloom but no bees droned among the blossoms, so there was no pollination and there would be no fruit.

The roadsides, once so attractive, were now lined with browned and withered vegetation as though swept by fire. These, too, were silent, deserted by all living things. Even the streams were now lifeless. Anglers no longer visited them, for all the fish had died.

In the gutters under the eaves and between the shingles of the roofs, white granular powder still showed a few patches; some weeks before it had fallen like snow upon the roofs and the lawns, the fields and streams.

No witchcraft, no enemy action had silenced the rebirth of new life in this stricken world. The people had done it themselves.



This town does not actually exist, but it might easily have a thousand counterparts in America or elsewhere in the world. I know of

no community that has experienced all the misfortunes I describe. Yet every one of these disasters has actually happened somewhere, and many real communities have already suffered a

substantial number of them. A grim specter has crept upon us almost unnoticed, and this imagined tragedy may easily become a stark reality we all shall know.

1. What is the primary purpose of the section title, "A Fable for Tomorrow," and the opening sentence, "There was once a town in the heart of America where all life seemed to live in harmony with its surroundings"?
 - a. to establish the fairy-tale quality of the description that follows
 - b. to suggest that the first part of the writer's argument has mythical aspects
 - c. to draw the reader into feeling comfortable with the simple, childlike story
 - d. to set up the tone and tradition of a fable, indicating that there is a lesson to be learned
 - e. to provide a false beginning that the writer can contradict as she builds her argument
2. The organizational pattern can best be described as
 - a. cause and effect
 - b. comparison and contrast
 - c. problem and solution
 - d. classification
 - e. narration
3. The "flood of migrants" in the second paragraph refers to
 - a. birds
 - b. visitors
 - c. fish
 - d. foxes
 - e. deer
4. Carson's reference to "the first settlers" at the end of paragraph 2 functions to
 - a. illustrate the human interference with the natural order previously described
 - b. contradict the argument about harmony established in the first sentence of the passage
 - c. establish a long and prosperous history of human interaction with the area
 - d. signify a shift from the discussion of nature to the discussion of people
 - e. expand the argument to include human structures, such as "houses," "wells," and "barns"
5. The word "moribund" in paragraph 4 most likely means
 - a. quiet
 - b. infertile
 - c. small
 - d. afraid
 - e. dying
6. The writer's use of first person in paragraph 9, beginning with "I know of no community," serves to
 - a. shift from an impersonal tone to a confessional tone
 - b. undermine the prior discussion by admitting lack of expertise
 - c. establish an urgent, honest persona
 - d. assert authority that cannot be questioned
 - e. strengthen the argument by providing personal examples
7. What is the primary purpose of paragraph 9?
 - a. to move the argument from hypothetical situation to reality
 - b. to shift from the original argument to a counterargument
 - c. to challenge the authority of those who might disagree
 - d. to contradict the point established in the first paragraph
 - e. to expand the argument from general discussion to specific examples

8. Each of the following pairs of images contributes to the author's argument EXCEPT

- a. "white clouds of bloom" (para. 1) and "no bees droned among the blossoms" (para. 5)
- b. "wildflowers delighted the traveler's eye" (para. 2) and "browned and withered vegetation" (para. 6)
- c. "blaze of color that flamed" (para. 1) and "shadow of death" (para. 3)
- d. "shady pools where trout lay" (para. 2) and "streams were now lifeless" (para. 6)

e. "deer silently crossed the fields" (para. 1) and "seed heads of the dried weeds" (para. 2)

9. The speaker's attitude toward her subject may best be described as

- a. angry and argumentative
- b. concerned and logical
- c. formal and distant
- d. nostalgic and outraged
- e. formal and authoritative

from *Nature*

RALPH WALDO EMERSON

I. Nature

To go into solitude, a man needs to retire as much from his chamber as from society. I am not solitary whilst I read and write, though nobody is with me. But if a man would be alone, let him look at the stars. The rays that come from those heavenly worlds, will separate between him and what he touches. One might think the atmosphere was made transparent with this design, to give man, in the heavenly bodies, the perpetual presence of the sublime. Seen in the streets of cities, how great they are! If the stars should appear one night in a thousand years, how would men believe and adore; and preserve for many generations the remembrance of the city of God which had been shown! But every night come out these envoys of beauty, and light the universe with their admonishing smile.

The stars awaken a certain reverence, because though always present, they are inaccessible; but all natural objects make a kindred impression, when the mind is open to their influence. Nature never wears a mean appearance. Neither does the wisest man extort her secret, and lose his curiosity by finding out all her perfection. Nature never

became a toy to a wise spirit. The flowers, the animals, the mountains, reflected the wisdom of his best hour, as much as they had delighted the simplicity of his childhood.

When we speak of nature in this manner, we have a distinct but most poetical sense in the mind. We mean the integrity of impression made by manifold natural objects. It is this which distinguishes the stick of timber of the wood-cutter, from the tree of the poet. The charming landscape which I saw this morning, is indubitably made up of some twenty or thirty farms. Miller owns this field, Locke that, and Manning the woodland beyond. But none of them owns the landscape. There is a property in the horizon which no man has but he whose eye can integrate all the parts, that is, the poet. This is the best part of these men's farms, yet to this their warranty-deeds give no title.

To speak truly, few adult persons can see nature. Most persons do not see the sun. At least they have a very superficial seeing. The sun illuminates only the eye of the man, but shines into the eye and the heart of the child. The lover of nature is he whose inward and

outward senses are still truly adjusted to each other; who has retained the spirit of infancy even into the era of manhood. His intercourse with heaven and earth, becomes part of his daily food. In the presence of nature, a wild delight runs through the man, in spite of real sorrows. Nature says, — he is my creature, and *maugre*¹ all his impertinent griefs, he shall be glad with me. Not the sun or the summer alone, but every hour and season yields its tribute of delight; for every hour and change corresponds to and authorizes a different state of the mind, from breathless noon to grimmest midnight. Nature is a setting that fits equally well a comic or a mourning piece. In good health, the air is a cordial of incredible virtue. Crossing a bare common, in snow puddles, at twilight, under a clouded sky, without having in my thoughts any occurrence of special good fortune, I have enjoyed a perfect exhilaration. I am glad to the brink of fear. In the woods too, a man casts off his years, as the snake his slough, and at what period soever of life, is always a child. In the woods, is perpetual youth. Within these plantations of God, a decorum and sanctity reign, a perennial festival is dressed, and the guest sees not how he should tire of them in a thousand years. In the woods, we return to reason and faith. There I feel that nothing can befall me in life, — no disgrace, no calamity, (leaving me my eyes,) which nature cannot repair. Standing on the bare ground, — my head bathed by the blithe air, and uplifted into infinite space, — all mean egotism vanishes. I become a transparent eye-ball; I am nothing; I see all; the currents of the Universal Being

¹Despite. —Eds.

circulate through me; I am part or particle of God. The name of the nearest friend sounds then foreign and accidental: to be brothers, to be acquaintances, — master or servant, is then a trifle and a disturbance. I am the lover of uncontained and immortal beauty. In the wilderness, I find something more dear and connate² than in streets or villages. In the tranquil landscape, and especially in the distant line of the horizon, man beholds somewhat as beautiful as his own nature.

The greatest delight which the fields and woods minister, is the suggestion of an occult relation between man and the vegetable. I am not alone and unacknowledged. They nod to me, and I to them. The waving of the boughs in the storm, is new to me and old. It takes me by surprise, and yet is not unknown. Its effect is like that of a higher thought or a better emotion coming over me, when I deemed I was thinking justly or doing right.

Yet it is certain that the power to produce this delight, does not reside in nature, but in man, or in a harmony of both. It is necessary to use these pleasures with great temperance. For, nature is not always tricked in holiday attire, but the same scene which yesterday breathed perfume and glittered as for the frolic of the nymphs, is overspread with melancholy today. Nature always wears the colors of the spirit. To a man laboring under calamity, the heat of his own fire hath sadness in it. Then, there is a kind of contempt of the landscape felt by him who has just lost by death a dear friend. The sky is less grand as it shuts down over less worth in the population.

²Sympathetic. —Eds.

1. Throughout the passage, the author's attitude toward nature is one of
 - a. objective practicality
 - b. veiled disdain
 - c. respectful awe
 - d. childlike curiosity
 - e. restrained ambivalence
2. What is the primary rhetorical function of the sentence "If the stars should appear one night in a thousand years, how would men believe and adore; and preserve for many generations the remembrance of the city of God which had been shown!" (end of para. 1)?
 - a. to draw a comparison between God and the heavens to persuade the audience to practice religion
 - b. to express the author's passion for stars and other phenomena of the night sky
 - c. to suggest that without stars, humanity would have more faith in God
 - d. to compare human-built structures such as cities to the grandeur and beauty of natural objects
 - e. to illustrate the sublime aspects of nature, which the author believes most humans take for granted
3. The author's references to childhood in paragraph 4 serve to
 - a. underscore his argument that only a pure, innocent spirit can truly understand nature
 - b. illustrate the argument that those who love nature are simple and naive
 - c. provide evidence of the youthful surface appearance of nature
 - d. contrast with the imagery of wise adults who have abandoned childish thinking
 - e. assert the idea that loss of innocence is the natural progression through life
4. Near the end of paragraph 4, the author's statement "I become a transparent eye-ball" functions as
 - a. hyperbole, to marginalize the experience of being in the woods
 - b. an illustration of the danger of being consumed by nature
 - c. an image, to reinforce the significance of the author's eyesight
 - d. metaphor for the clarity of perception in one who abandons oneself to nature
 - e. a symbol for the loneliness of one who is solitary in nature
5. Which of the following explains the author's purpose for writing "The name of the nearest friend sounds then foreign and accidental" (end of para. 4)?
 - a. to indicate his enjoyment of friends and their unique interests
 - b. to expand the discussion of farmers Miller, Locke, and Manning in paragraph 3
 - c. to juxtapose the trivial distinctions among people with the divine unity of nature
 - d. to clarify the connection between the diversity of humans and the holiness of nature
 - e. to provide an anecdote showing the difficulty of remembering human details while in nature
6. Throughout the passage, the author uses the following techniques to illustrate nature EXCEPT
 - a. personification
 - b. scientific detail
 - c. metaphor
 - d. imagery
 - e. personal anecdote
7. The writer characterizes himself as someone who is
 - a. factual and objective
 - b. emotional and open-minded
 - c. self-centered and condescending
 - d. critical and blunt
 - e. observant and contemplative
8. The speaker refers to the smile as "admonishing" (para. 1) to suggest
 - a. the universe looks down imperiously on the insignificance of humanity
 - b. humankind looks to the stars more as objects of conquest than of contemplation
 - c. the stars symbolize the indifferent attitude of nature toward humanity
 - d. the stars provide a benign and necessary reminder of the value of nature
 - e. the stars scold humanity for neglecting nature in the streets of cities