

## **EARTH DAY WRITING CONTEST 2012**

Họ và tên: Trương Quang Hùng

Trường: Đại học Ngoại Thương CS2

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Topic: Tell us about a pressing environmental issue in your city. How would you go about addressing it?

### **Bài viết**

Every day, on my way to school, I have to cross a small bridge. Below the bridge is a small canal. The strange thing about this canal is that you can hardly see the water, because the surface of this canal is covered by an awful lot of trash. Plastic bags, plastic boxes, fruit's peels, left-over food, all floating on the black water, annoy me every time I pass by, not only by the hideous sight, but also by the horrible rotten-egg smell. This sight is not unusual in our city; on the contrary, it has become so common that people treat it like nothing special. Obviously, one major environmental problem that our city has been dealing with is trash; and one important aspect of this problem, which I want to discuss, is trash on canals.

The trash problem has been really complicated. Trash can be spotted everywhere, on the streets, in the parks, even in school yards. However, it is painful to see trash fill many canals, contaminate the water, turn it into horribly black and affect the health of many people living in the neighborhood. It is not exaggerated to say that most canals in Ho Chi Minh City have become the home for trash. Since we are promoting the beauty of

our city to tourists, these ugly scenes adversely affect not only how foreigners view our city, but also how they view Vietnamese.

The negative influences of this problem are both environmentally and socially. The majority of trash on canals is made up of plastic bags, which are warned against using by environmentalists because of their destructive impact to the environment. Plastic bags take hundreds of years to decompose, and because we do not have proper ways to collect them all, they can be everywhere and usually end up in canals, lingering and accumulating for years; eventually they become impossible to eliminate. They block the water flow and literally kill the canal. It is an unpleasant fact that most canals in the city share the same fate: plastic bags floating instead of water flowing. Besides, they are posing a threat directly to the health of the people living nearby. Mosquitoes and bacteria thrive in dirty conditions, and those contaminated canals are perfect for them to multiply. People who live near the canals are likely to catch malaria or diarrhea; in fact, there are many cases of those two diseases found in the polluted area. Moreover, the nasty smell of those canals is unbearable, which can cause discomfort and some diseases relating to the respiratory system. Finally, those ugly canals can ruin the image of our beautiful city. What will visitors think of our city, and more importantly, of us, if they accidentally walk through a black, bad-smelling, full of trash canal?

We can blame the environmental department for not taking any actions to clean up the trash. Nevertheless, I believe that we should blame ourselves for being the root of this problem. Frankly, our awareness of environmental problems is not strong enough to recognize the negative effects of our daily activities on Mother Nature. We have the habit of overusing plastic bags because of their low price and convenience. Anything when

sold, no matter how big, like a chicken, or small, like a little ground meat, is usually wrapped in plastic bags, which makes the number of plastic bags consumed every day in our city enormous. After using the bags, we dispose of them. Some do that the right way; on the contrary, others just throw them out on the streets. They may be collected by the trash collectors, but some of them will possibly end up on the canals. Some people even dump the plastic bags right onto the canal just because they cannot find the trash can, or because it is more convenient. Years after years, the plastic bags pile up, which results in water contamination and horrible conditions of the canals.

People may ask what we can do to save the canals. One possible solution, which has been conducted on one or two canals in the city, is to completely bury them. However, it is the environmentalists' job to decide what to do with the polluted canals. In my opinion, the question we should be asking is what we can do to prevent this situation from happening again. Although there are few clean canals left in our city, we can apply the lesson in other aspects of the trash problem, such as stop littering or saving the Sai Gon River, which is on the verge of being polluted the same way. First, we need to raise the awareness of our people about the problem, as well as the harmful effects of plastic bags. We can tell our parents, relatives, friends to stop using plastic bags and switch to paper bags for replacement. We can also tell them to dispose of the trash correctly, or to categorize the trash so that the collectors can deal with them more easily. Next, we can enhance good habits, like putting the trash into trash cans, by actually do them and tell others to do the same. The power of spreading is really great. If everybody contributes a part of their energy to save the environment, I believe that our city will become a beautiful place to live in.

In a nutshell, most of the canals in our city have been filled with trash, which makes them polluted and dirty. Not only does it affect the environment, but also harm people's health and the image of our city. It is mainly caused by our lack of awareness about the problem, and the most practical thing we should do is to stop using plastic bags and persuade others to do the same. I hope that someday, when my kids are on their way to school, they can enjoy the beautiful sight and fresh air of the city, not the terrible view and smell of the black canals like me.