

It is better to light a
candle than curse the
darkness essay
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The Chinese proverb above was used by Adlai E. Stevenson, US ambassador to the United Nations to praise Eleanor Roosevelt after her death in 1962. Since then, many have been using this phrase to describe one's positive actions taken when faced with difficulties or enigmas. "Don't curse the darkness, light a candle." To me, this phrase means 'when one finds himself in a difficult situation, he should not blame the circumstances or sulk over his misfortune. Instead, he should take positive actions to overcome or improve his current situation. The first reactions by people to this famous proverb would be to agree with it. If man had been cursing rather than 'lighting candles', we would very likely still be at the primeval age. Needless to say, change is much more useful to complaining. However, is change always better than remaining in one's current situation and sulking over it once in a while? Is lighting a candle always better than cursing the darkness?

Men have been taking positive actions ever since they came to the Earth around two hundred thousand years ago by coming up with countless useful innovations from the beginning of the Stone Age. Using stones, they invented the first hand axe. By about 30,000 B. C., arrowheads, spearheads and even delicate sewing needles were made. Soon after, they looked for ways to improve their primitive lifestyles. After inventing language to allow better communication, mankind built boats to discover vast areas of land and learnt how to use fire. Following that was a series of amazing inventions and discoveries.

Reading glasses were invented in the 14th century, the first steam engine was made in 1698, the light bulb in 1879 and the telephone in 1876. The 20th century was known as the 'Electronic Age', during which the first all-

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transistor television and the first portable computer were invented in 1979 and 1981 respectively. This whole series of ingenious inventions eventually made our world a technologically advanced one. It is precisely this forte of ours - the power to change-that has made mankind the most powerful animal on Earth. If men had done nothing but complain about the harsh living conditions they were in when they first came onto the Earth, we would have been extinct long ago.

Another significant advantage of taking actions rather than whining would be to improve men's way of thinking and remove prejudices and trite traditions as we progress. Women in the 1950s were treated in an inferior way to men. They were not allowed to study, leave the house and were often abused by their husbands. Fortunately, many women did not succumb to the circumstances and protested strongly against the unfair treatments against them by starting the women's liberation. Thanks to our ancestors being brave enough to take positive actions, women today in most parts of the world share equal opportunities with men. Another vast change we have made is the fight for equality of all races. In the nineteenth century, the white were superior to the blacks who were then treated as slaves. As time passed, many realised that this was unfair and fought for equal rights among all races, regardless of race or skin colour. These two examples are prominent changes we have made as our world becomes more advanced. It is only with these changes that fewer wars will be fought and everyone would live harmoniously.

Positive actions taken to overcome difficult situations not only bring about benefits and progress for the world, but also for an individual. When one is <https://assignbuster.com/it-is-better-to-light-a-candle-than-curse-the-darkness-essay-sample/>

faced with hardship and eventually manages to overcome it, he will emerge a stronger person. By searching for ways to improve his difficult situation, he will get a strong sense of satisfaction for what he has accomplished. Thomas Edison, born during a period when there were no lights, tried over a hundred times before he found the perfect material for the filament — tungsten. Not only did he gain recognition and fame for his many ingenious inventions, he also lived his life fruitfully and definitely felt a sense of accomplishment for the immense benefit he has brought to mankind. If he had just whined about the inability to work at night, he would have led a meaningless life and accomplished nothing. Indeed, lighting a candle to light up the surroundings and people around us will also illuminate our lives in the process.

However, there may be situations during which ‘cursing the darkness’ is better than ‘lighting a candle’. These are usually situations in which the fight for better lives might lead to other disastrous consequences. If a scientist wanted to test a newly invented drug to extend people’s lives and the drug had possible negative side effects that may jeopardise people’s lives, he might have to give up testing the drug. If he were to insist, many people’s lives and health might be adversely affected. In this case, there is probably not much we can do to extend our lives besides leading healthy lifestyles ourselves. As seen, in situations during which the process might bring harm to many and there is no guaranteed positive result, it might be best to do nothing to change the current situation.

Change is, very often, the better alternative to complaining about the unfavourable situation one faces. It not only brings a sense of satisfaction and accomplishment to us, but more importantly, it is because of this <https://assignbuster.com/it-is-better-to-light-a-candle-than-curse-the-darkness-essay-sample/>

constant change that mankind has seen such vast improvements to their lives in such a short period of time. It is change that has made our world a technologically advanced one, as well as removed the prejudices that we once had. Yet, there may be some exceptions in which the process of change might bring about too many sacrifices for the final accomplishment to be rewarding. We must realize, however, that lighting a candle is almost always better than cursing the darkness, for it will brighten our lives as well as those around us.