

What will be left when you're gone?

Business



Most children have had a time in their lives when they recall building sand castles or blanket forts. Something that they may not recall, is the castles in the sky that they had constructed. Thoreau describes these castles saying “ Do not worry if you have built your castles in the air. They are where they should be.

Now put the foundations under them,” (Thoreau). These “ castles” were the lofty dreams and ambitions that they had when they saw the whole world opened up before them. The children constructed these castles without knowing or understanding. Thoreau is saying that no matter how lofty these ambitions may seem, you can always work up to them. Unfortunately, many people abandon these dreams, but these ‘ castles’ never fell.

They never crumbled. They never died. They were simply forgotten, overshadowed, lost. As these children grow to adulthood they feel as though something is missing, even those that have stable jobs and are making money. They feel empty. This is these ‘ castles’ calling them to return to these dreams they once had.

These dreams, now clouded over by everything that has been bought or experienced, still wait for their creator to climb up and take his/her place on the throne. People will spend so much of their lives just doing what others expect, but not what they want, not what makes them feel alive. “ I’m so stressed about this test coming up. I spent all night studying. I didn’t get any sleep”.

Why are these sentences so common around school? It seems like everyone is stressing about one thing or another. Some upcoming test. Some big

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project. Some long essay. Every day the deadline closes in on them the stress increases and increases. But why? If they get a C on a test is it going to be the end of the world? If they get less than they wanted as a semester grade would they not be able to go on and do anything in life? No, of course not.

One grade isn't the end of the world, and yet so many students will worry their lives away. Their minds will be a constant countdown clock from one test to the next. I know that I have these same problems. Every test is like a weight put on my chest and with each coming day the deadline presses down, but it shouldn't. While students worry their lives away they miss so much.

They will lose sight of what they want to do. Every event in their life comes like hard fast punches. From test to test, from High school to applying to colleges, from one potential major to another, every decision comes so quickly and it seems there is no time to slow down. That is what students need to do, to slow down. Enjoy life. Take walks in the park.

Call up their friends. Do what makes them happy. One test isn't the end of the world. One test shouldn't make you neglect paying attention to what you want to do. In the end, the students will do the best they can on the test and if they do the best they can-even if they get a lower grade than they wanted-they will know that they did their best and tried their hardest.

“ A single footstep will not make a path on the earth, so a single thought will not make a pathway in the mind. To make a deep physical path we walk again and again. To make a deep mental path we must think over and over
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again the kind of thought we wish to dominate our lives,” (Thoreau). In this quote, Thoreau examines how people who do the same thing over and over begin to make a habit of it. Throughout life most people fall into a routine.

Get up. Get ready for the day. Eat breakfast. Go to work. Come home.

Eat. Go to sleep. Every day this cycle repeats, over and over again. It becomes habit and eventually this routine becomes second nature. You walk this path so many times on so many days that you run a rut into the ground. After so long of walking this path the rut gets deep enough that it is almost impossible to crawl out.

You figure it would be too difficult to try. It would be much easier to just keep following this path. So you keep walking this path, never changing your course. In society you begin to conform. You do what everyone else is doing. Following the flow because it is so much simpler than fighting it.

So you continue walking on this path. You may decorate it, buying things you don't need. Doing jobs simply to fund these superfluous possessions. While this rut you have fallen into may lead you to fame and fortune, you begin to overshadow what your heart truly desires. These things that you buy to try to make you happy, they pile higher and higher.

They cast shadows over the path you follow and you begin to lose sight of the castles in the sky. Even if you can no longer see these dreams, you can still feel them in your heart, a beacon calling out to you in the night. Thoreau is quoted as saying “ What old people say you cannot do, you try and find that you can. Old deeds for old people, and new deeds for new,” showing

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how he felt that the knowledge of elders is irrelevant. I disagree with this statement. I believe that at the end of one's life their vision begins to clear.

Once again they can see the ' castles' they constructed as children. The oldest people will have the clearest vision. Everyone hears about all of the retired people who have been making bucket lists. They list everything they want to do. Why is it that only as one grows old and is at the end of their life that they follow these dreams? Why would people not simply follow their heart as they live? So many people you find are stuck in dead end jobs, doing what they have to simply to earn a living. They always are saying " When I retire I am going to do all of these things".

When they finally do retire many people don't have the same ambition or sense of adventure that was to be nurtured through their life. They simply choose to live out the rest of their life the same way they lived the first part of it. They simply follow this path. They follow the path, day, after day, after day. Every day this path remains the same, becoming more deeply run into the ground.

Eventually this path becomes their final resting place and as they lie down they realize the walls of the path they are walking hides them so that " when [they] came to die, [they discovered] that [they] had not lived," (Thoreau). My Uncle chose to fight this path, he chose his own way. Throughout the whole of his life he would travel where the wind took him. He lived in many parts of the US and even into South America where he lives now. He finds what makes him happy and does that for as long as he enjoys it. He follows through on his ambitions and never is afraid to make his own path.

In Emerson's *Walden*, he writes " If a plant cannot live according to its nature, it dies; and so a man". People should always follow their dreams, no matter how ambitious. If a person doesn't follow their dream they are already dead. They may not die in the literal sense of the word. However, whatever life they may be living- following the same path every day, going through the same routine- isn't any sort of life.

Their heart may be beating but they are not living, not truly. What is the point of life if not to live as much as you can while you still can?