

“shine perishing  
republic”



**ASSIGN  
BUSTER**

Prompt: In 1925, Robinson Jeffers published the following words in his poem “ Shine Perishing Republic”: “ But for my children, I would have them keep their distance from the thickening center; corruption / Never has been compulsory, when the cities lie at the monster’s feet there are left the mountains. ” To what degree do you agree or disagree with his sentiment? In a well-reasoned essay, challenge, defend, or qualify the validity of his advice for children today. Use appropriate evidence to defend your assumption.

\*\*\*\*\* The world began as an untouched, purely rural community. With time, urbanization has spread and taken over. Villages became cities, and cities became bustling metropolises that both inspire and intimidate. Robinson Jeffers, one of many who fear the expansion of cities and all that they bring with them, expresses his concerns in his poem “ Shine Perishing Republic”. Jeffers urges Americans to keep their distance from the cities and their corruption. While people should be wary of the corruption and selfishness that drives cities, they should not let that sentiment deprive themselves of the diversity and unique character found in cities. Many Americans voiced their doubts and fears about industrialization and urbanization when it first began in earnest around the mid-1800’s. A century later, in 1925, Robinson Jeffers echoes those feelings in his poem. It’s no surprise that these concerns are not unfounded. Cities are the breeding ground for powerful business and political leaders who are interested primarily in their own profit and benefit. However, as Jefferson puts it, “ corruption never has been compulsory”. It is not that there is corruption because there is a city, but that there is a city because there is corruption. The cities “ thickening center” is fueled by corruption and in turn drives the growth of the entire city. The seemingly uninhibited expansion and growth of

the city is what frightens Jeffers the most and what he warns his fellow people against. For if a city were to expand, it can only mean that its influence has already touched upon the land there. Cities are indeed filled with sources of corruption, greed and sin. Granted, these attributes are found everywhere, but we can not deny that they flourish in the cities where they are abundant. However, cities also house a character found nowhere else, and each city is unique from the other. We cannot dismiss the whole in fear of the parts. The children of America would do well to “ keep their distance from thickening center”, but not to the extent that they interfere with the possibility of learning from the diverse nature of cities. Jeffers remains relevant in reference to staying away from the corrupt center, the dying center. But people must remember to thrust themselves into the cultural center, the living center. Immigrants flock to cities, and thus cities have a cornucopia of diverse heritages and cultures that we all can learn from. The city may house the politician and businessman, but it also provides residence to the artist, the professor, and the writer. People have just as much to gain from cities as they have to lose to them.