

Thoreau essay

Government, Military



Henry David Thoreau's point of view on the elderly, based on a passage from Walden, is almost completely false. To say that the elderly have no worthy advice to give the young is absurd. While younger generations will always advance themselves further in technology and life, they cannot do this without the help of their seniors. Thoreau begins this passage by saying that what someone says is true today may not turn out to be true tomorrow; while this is sometimes true, it doesn't mean that one shouldn't listen because what was said is believed to be true for a reason. The people that give the advice say what they say because they have been through what they're talking about and that's the only way to have knowledge about something, to live through it.

For example, if a young man who just graduated from high school wants to join the military, he might talk to a Vietnam vet. He will most likely tell the young man of all the horrors and tragedies of war and what they can do to a person. The only way he knows this is because he has been to war and has witnessed firsthand the damage war can do to people. The young man will not know about these consequences unless he talks to someone like the Vietnam vet who has been to war. Thoreau also shows how little he respects the elderly advice by saying, " Old people did not know once, perchance, to fetch fresh fuel to keep the fire a-going...".

Even though advancements will always occur from young people as generations progress, they cannot be made without knowing what has been done in the past by people before them. Imagine where Stephen Hawking would be without the works of Albert Einstein, and where Einstein would be without the works of Socrates, Euclid, and Plato. The advancements each

made in life would not have been possible without the past hard work of older generations. Another thing we can learn from our seniors is what not to do. How else can someone know what the repercussions of their actions are if they haven't already been experienced by someone else? If someone thinks that they can breathe underwater and wishes to try out their theory, they can ask someone else who has already tried this and learn that is not possible without drowning and in doing so saves himself the risk of death and embarrassment.

There is no way someone can know what they're doing or what they will do if they don't know what's been done. Thoreau's view on the elderly and their importance in society shows his ignorance in matters that require the help of someone who knows better than him. If someone does not take the advice of the elderly, then that person will be at a great disadvantage because they will be naive about many things.

Like the old adage by George Santayana says, " Those who are unaware of history are destined to repeat it".