

WATER STORIES SUPPLEMENT: WHAT IS YOUR STORY?

Name: _____ Grade: _____ Age: _____

School Name: _____

School District: _____

City: _____ State/Province: _____ Country: _____

Water is essential to life—every living creature on Earth, from the smallest microbe to the largest mammal, depends on water. Humans rely on water for far more than just physical survival and the proper functioning of our bodies, we use water to fill everything from essential needs to extravagant wants.

Although water covers 71 percent of the planet, 98 percent of it is salty, leaving only two percent as freshwater available for human use. Most of the planet's freshwater is frozen in polar ice caps or glaciers, or trapped deep underground in water tables. Freshwater is not evenly distributed geographically; some continents and countries are considered arid, while others have abundant supply. However, water scarcity is an issue facing the entire world. Millions of families around the world live in homes without running water, household wells, or even a nearby clean water source. In the United States, even while some communities are facing flooding, major water sources such as the Colorado River and Sierra Nevada snowpack are reducing. Why? Increasing temperatures, population numbers and pollution are all contributing to a situation where humans are demanding more freshwater than the earth can regenerate. More and more available freshwater is becoming polluted, due to our ever-burgeoning

population, the waste we create, and the space we require. Improper use of land may result in deforestation, erosion and runoff, which increase drainage problems and flooding.

The good news? There are solutions, lots of them. And the first step is awareness of the problem. While some solutions are simple — don't litter, use less water and teach others to do so — many are more complex, requiring dedicated attention. But first, recognize the role water plays in YOUR life. The tiny molecule that is often taken for granted, is precious to our planet. How is it precious to you?

Read Luis' and Ajja's stories. Answer the questions to help you compile **your** own water story. We encourage you to expand on any topics that resonate with your experience. Please share your answers as we build a diverse online library of water stories from around the world. You may include your full name, or simply your first name and last initial, as well as your hometown. Photos are welcome!

Some stories may be published online, but full names will not be included (only first names or pseudonyms if preferred).

1. Where does your water come from? When you turn on the faucet in your kitchen, if you have one, what is the source of that water? If you don't know, check out this link <http://water.epa.gov/drink/local/>.
2. What is the name of your watershed? (Hint: <http://water.epa.gov/type/watersheds/index.cfm>)
3. How is your water treated (filtered? decontaminated?) before it arrives at your house? http://www.epa.gov/ogwdw/wot/pdfs/book_waterontap_full.pdf
4. Have you ever worried your water wasn't safe to drink? [Please check one] ___ Yes ___ No Please explain:
5. Have you ever received a warning to boil the water or not to drink the water in your community? Please explain.
6. Indicate what best describes your access to safe drinking water: (please circle one)
 - a. Faucet is always safe to drink;
 - b. Water sometimes or occasionally needs boiling (like after storms or during droughts);
 - c. We have to purchase our drinking water;
 - d. We have to walk to retrieve safe water. Please explain your response.

7. Describe any water shortages or droughts, in your lifetime, which affected the amount of water your household could use. Identify any restrictions or regulations that may have been put in place regarding your household or community water use, such as the timing of watering lawns or gardens, washing of cars, opening hydrants for water play, or the filling of swimming pools?

8. Identify the bodies of water within 10 miles of your home and provide a brief description (e.g. Atlantic Ocean, the Bronx River, Croton Reservoir, Silver Creek, or an unnamed local water source, including stream or swamp). Specify if these are freshwater or salt, manmade or natural, generally safe or polluted, etc.

9. Indicate ANY of the following regarding your use of those local bodies of water. We: [circle any that apply]
a. drink it; b. swim or play in it; c. fish in it; d. boat in it.
10. Do you have a garden that requires watering? [Please check one] ___ Yes ___ No
11. Do you have any native or drought-resistant plantings? [Please check one] ___ Yes ___ No
12. Do you have an underground sprinkler system? [Please check one] ___ Yes ___ No
13. Do you have a swimming pool? [Please check one] ___ Yes ___ No
14. Have you ever experienced flooding in your home or community? Explain.

15. Do you live near a designated wetland? [Please check one] ___ Yes ___ No
16. List and describe any family members that currently make or have previously made their living on the water. For example, perhaps you have an uncle who was a fisherman, your father operates boats, your sister teaches sailing etc.

17. List and describe any family members who make their living by doing jobs related to water use. For example, your father works at a water treatment plant, your brother works at a mill, an uncle is a farmer, or your mother works at a bottling company, swimming pool business, aquarium, plumbing supply store, etc.

18. Recall a negative experience that involved water. For example, a flood, a devastating drought, a capsized sailboat.

19. Recall a happy experience that involved a body of water. For example, a trip to a lake house, a walk along a stream, catching frogs in a marsh.