

Mono Lake Committee Scholarship

What begins as a town in June Lake with houses and paved roads, eventually becomes dirt roads with hardly a building in sight. Before long, moving by foot along trails is the only way to reach Mono Lake—and soon, even the trails vanish. The closer I get to Mono Lake, the further I am from the rest of the modern world.

When I finally reach the shore, I perch myself on a rock and begin to take in my surroundings. Blended with the warmth of the sun, I feel a cool sea breeze pass over me, whispering in my ear. With it comes the aroma of sage that has traveled to me from across the marshy plains. A waft of salty air draws my attention to the lake, where I hear the soft motion of the tide as it rolls in and out, gently pawing at the tufa. Above it, seagulls float on gusts of wind, singing to one another. Some stop to bathe in the glistening turquoise water, whose brilliant color contrasts beautifully with the white tufa that protrude from its depths. Everything around me is so alive and natural. It appears to be static in time, untouched by the ever-evolving world around it.

As modern civilization continues to consume the earth, there are fewer and fewer natural places to go. Mono Lake is a refreshing look back to a simpler time—a time without the distractions of city-life. It is a constant reminder of life before the dawn of man, and for that reason it must be maintained. So many natural places are being lost in our contemporary age, and Mono Lake is one of the surviving few. It's a place to visit and feel the weight of the world shed itself from one's shoulders. In the fast-paced hustle of everyday life, Mono Lake is a sanctuary where people can stop and think without distraction. I believe it is important for people to reflect—to think about what is truly valuable in life. It's easy to get caught up in all the excitement of the modern world, but every once in a while it is beneficial to take a moment and drop everything for a chance to reflect.

With the stress of schoolwork, college preparations, and being a teenager in general, visiting Mono Lake gives me a temporary release and provides me a chance to stop and breathe. It verifies something for me—that I *need* a place like it. A place where I can go to escape the rest of the world and experience silence and peace. In the fifteen minutes I spend alone by the shore of Mono Lake, I discover tranquility.