

## Essay - Reina Childs

It is dusk when I park my car in the visitor lot by Mono Lake. The sun has already set and reflects beautiful pink and orange across the water. The air is a comfortable warmth and mosquitos buzz nearby, reminding me of summer. There are other people on the shore, but everyone is silent as they take in the natural beauty of the lake and surrounding hills. I walk a short ways away from the other people and perch on a rock surrounded by water. At first it does not smell good, but after a while I grow accustomed to it all and slowly sink into a state of tranquility.

Everything is silent, except for the slight breeze and distant traffic which allows me to leave the outside world and focus only on the lake in front of me. I find that I am able to let go of everything I have been feeling that day, stress, sadness, and the nervous anticipation for my future. I am able to clear my mind and I relish this rare moment where I am completely alone, and surrounded entirely by nature. It strikes me that this spot is special because it can give everyone, not just myself, the chance to also take a break from the demand of everyday life. Places like Mono Lake allow people to open up their senses that are so often closed in life, and to finally let go of the weight they bear, if only for a moment.

Baby ducklings and their mothers slowly swim by me, fearless of my presence even though I am only inches away. It is only on few occasions that animals in nature can be found that are not terrified of humans, and this is something unique to Mono Lake. I realize that places such as this one are not as common anymore because they have all been covered over by highways, cities, and other man-made contraptions. What people do not realize is that places

like this are still a necessity to human life, and that sometimes the benefit of preserving them far outway the costs. Before I leave, I dip my hands into the water in silent thanks to Mother Earth.