

## Vinyl 2010 Essay Competition Submission Template

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### Summary:

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The author takes a complex view of the contemporary food and energy crises, identifying its causes across a number of segments of current lifestyles. He, as one of the culprits recognizes poor husbandry with local resources. The crises stem from individualization of our ways of life shaped by modern technologies. The author sees the solution to the crises not only in saving and economizing ever insufficient natural resources; he claims that humanity ought to be educated towards higher ecological consciousness. In this light, the author calls upon a new ethics of relations with nature and higher levels of solidarity between people.

### Essay:

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A while ago, I came across an article in *New York Times*, carrying the headline "Poor in India Starve as Surplus Wheat Rots". Few months later, it had a follow-up entitled "Dwindling Energy Resources Demand Continually Rises". Absurdity of both headlines illuminates the uncomfortable truth about the serious plight humanity have nowadays found themselves in. That allows to venture an unequivocal conclusion: to save and cleverly manage energy resources as well as make food production more effective worldwide, we, cannot help but raise the level of our ecological consciousness. To put it plain, one just has to feel guilty and responsible when they fail to behave "green".

What is ecological consciousness then ? Among other things, it is not, for instance, transporting food from one corner of the world to another, or ordering a luxury blend of caviar to stun your friends at a party. Besides, it is not owning an individual car by each and every member of your family, or lightening opulent Christmas decoration just to show „the Jones“ that you have beaten them. Without a doubt, ecological consciousness is not about committing \$2500 for luxurious ascetism in a form of deluxe deprivation holiday, slashing calories to refugee-camp proportions.

The outrageous facts and figures available make it apparent that we badly need a new framework for new relations with nature. It is there for us not to be raped or

dominated, but to be asked questions whether and how much of it we can really touch and use up to pursue a sustainable development.

Current economics, including crises, is to a great extent, the result of huge progress made by contemporary technologies. Due to these, world markets have become largely interconnected: a minor looking fluctuation in a remote nook of the world is capable of triggering sweeping consequences (not just intended) quite far away. Price increase of crude oil, for instance, will immediately affect a farmer's expenses on harvesting and transportation. What I have in mind, then, is the theory of butterfly effect.

Yet, what has a butterfly to do with the crises in hand ? Well, the architects of globalization comfortably seated in their air-conditioned opulent offices, seem to have overestimated the power of so called invisible hand. Alas, the famous limb could not really help developing countries: the latter have lost to technologies, to international trade and expensive fertilizers, as staying organic is too expensive for less advanced countries.

Further, cutting-edge technologies are also responsible for the extreme individualization of contemporary life (everyone sitting in front of their own PC, in their own room, which exacts individual heating and lighting at the very least). Hence, it is no longer one household with one „hearth“. Instead, we are imprisoned in individual cells and selves, happily and innocently aggravating the crises. This innocence/ ignorance is a comfortable prey for the media, which earn fat money in their effort to push the frontier of excesses of current wasteful lifestyles.

Taking the above into consideration, one could suggest quite a number of steps and measures to remedy the plight. My hope lies in adopting ecology as a new ethics. So, to start controlling the crises, contemporary societies are to re-think their approach to nature and corresponding values. Those, are best accommodated not so much by preaching as teaching. It seems, then, it is exactly in the realm of education where the remedy to the crises ought to be sought.

Who could then be entrusted with such a formidable task? The ongoing globalization places it in the hands of governments and national education systems. The point is that quite early in their lifetime, children are currently being shaped for the needs of already authenticated industrialized society. Understandably, they are being trained to meet the goals of the past, which are not those of sustainable development. Just one example, there is so much ado about IT technologies and how they have contributed to higher ecology of present life. Yet, almost each electronic message of some importance is still stored in printed (paper) form, creating incalculable damage to forests.

To make this long and sad story short, as a consequence, children tend to lose sensitivity to common sense values and solutions. Worse, any responsibility for local matters, including use and abuse of natural treasures. The solution which is always ready at hand is importing from elsewhere, which makes us increasingly dependent on forces and losses remote from our actual interests and concerns.

Coming back to the hopes I place in upbringing, education and training. As the title of the essay suggests, we are challenged by the necessity to identify the factors capable of fighting the ongoing crises. Some believe that recognizing alternative sources of energy and food is the prime solution. To my mind, however, if the international community continues demonstrating insufficient levels of ecological consciousness, there will never be enough anything to make up for the pervasive waste, neglect or misuse.

Back to education, people ought to be taught that humankind is just one of species entitled to their place on the planet, therefore, children have to be instructed to behave appropriately, that is modestly and with humility.

Consideration for other species and clever husbandry with natural resources should become part and parcel of national curricula and post-modern folklore.

In other words, big things and goals start small. The challenge for schools is teaching children to pursue greatness through joining in sense, simplicity and deeper sensibility to the processes around us. Accordingly, children have to be confronted with the experiences of everyday life, they have to be educated by their own "trials and errors". To put in otherwise, the trick is to teach children to embrace new ecological standards of sharing and caring, of a new solidarity of the human species- a solidarity for survival and sustainable future.

To conclude, if the food and energy crises are to be successfully combatted, the international community may be well advised to see politics and policies as moral questions, while viewing morality and ecology as highly political questions. For, in fact, we are all in the same boat, indeed.