

Essay on Describe A Landscape as It Appeared Before and After A Modern Highway Had Been Built Across It?

Half a mile from my house was one of the most beautiful places I had ever known. It consisted of a large mining pool surrounded by green vegetation, a small farmhouse where farmer Ching and his family lived and the eternal sounds of birds chirping and animals calling.

I spent many happy occasions on the banks of this mining pool. On quiet afternoons I used to sit a couple of feet from the cool clear water watching the float on my fishing line wobble expectantly. It was rare that I went home without a fish or two. The whole pool brimmed with fish just waiting to be caught. I have seen circular patterns rippled all over the surface of the pool where the fishes splashed playfully. Ching always welcomed me to fish in the pool. He was an amiable man with a ready smile and all sorts of fruits for me every time I visited him, which was often.

Surrounding this old mining pool were fruit trees of all kinds. During fruit seasons I ate my fill of durians, rambutans, mangosteens, guavas, and others without having to pay for it.

Ching earned his living from these trees but for his friends, the fruits were free.

Ching, his wife, and two children kept their modest farm in good condition. It was always a pleasure just to watch the farm from a distance. It looked just like one of those paintings that people used to decorate their living room walls. Peaceful and serene, those were the words that fitted Ching's farm well.

Right next to where Ching eked out his living as a rubber estate with

rows and rows of rubber trees. Ching's neighbors tapped these trees every day when the weather permitted. One could see the well-trodden path that led from the main road and wound its way into the estate, to vanish into the trees. The rubber tappers were simple hard-working folks who knew the estate and its vicinity like the back of their hands. Their daily trip to the estate constituted a familiar feature of the environment. Their presence gave life and spirit to nature's bounty.

Then progress caught up with us.

Without warning or a hint of respect, the bulldozers came and in a week they summarily reduced the lovely land I knew into a wasteland of fallen trees and churned-up soil. In two weeks the hill that once held thousands of rubber trees was flattened. in a month the mining pool was no more. Only isolated patches of water remained.

For the most part of a year, the whole place was a hive of activity. Giant cranes, lorries and trucks crawled all over the once serene farm. The whole neighborhood was shrouded in the dust kicked up by this activity. Steel girders and huge concrete slabs were hoisted and hammered into place. Stark grey pillars contrasted sharply with red trampled earth and distant green jungles.

Gradually the activity slowed down. The confusion of intense building now gave way to a majestic flyover that carried a dual-lane superhighway. The highway ran right through the heart of Ching's farm and the rubber estate. instead of the chirping of birds, the roar of powerful engines could be heard as lorries and cars sped their way along the highway.

Greenery has returned to the foot of the pillars that support the fly-over. However, there is no more mining pool nor sweet fruits.

Gone too are the rubber tappers and the foot-path that snaked into the trees. On wet days one can see tadpoles and toads trying to make a living out of the isolated patches of water that once was a huge pool. Turbo-charged cars whizz past the old gnarled rubber trees.

In between the roars of these cars, there are short moments of silence and peace. In those rare moments, all I have to do is to close my eyes and I could feel all over again the serenity and loveliness that I once knew.

I wonder if anyone hangs the painting of a flyover on his living room wall. In fact, I wonder if there are paintings of fly-overs and superhighways.