

Essay on How Do You Propose to Spend the Long Vacation?

For the last few months, I had been passing through a nightmare. The spectra of the examination haunted my days. Now it is over, I have returned to my village home, with a heavy load off my mind, and with the intense relief that it has brought me, there has come to be something else, – not a nightmare, but a problem. How indeed am I going to pass this long, long vacation?

For the first few days, of course, I propose to do nothing; I will drink the cup of idleness to the less. I will do nothing but laze and loiter and lounge. For life suddenly seems to have come to a standstill with me. I am now nobody's slave. I am duty-free. I can get up when I like and go to bed when I please. I can spend the time in careless gossip or profitless game. I enjoy the luxury of laziness like a pampered prince. I waste my hours like an extravagant king.

But I know that this idle life can be delightful only a short period. For a healthy man, it is demoralizing if it is indulged to an excess. A short spell of idleness after a month of labor is, I feel, an allowable indulgence. But after that, I must do something. And here is the problem. Sometimes I think of going out on travel with one or two enthusiastic, friends. But it is summer: the very idea of traveling in the scorching tropical heat is forbidding. The hills would be too costly; the plains too uncomfortable. Someone suggested the sea. For an inland man the temptation to behold the "multitudinous laughter of the waves" and to "hear the sound of breakers rolling evermore" has an irresistible fascination, and it is possible that I may spend two or three weeks at some seaside resort.

Thereafter, I hope to return to some useful work like a giant refreshed. My plan is to organize the social and intellectual life of

my neighborhood on some practical lines. I would like to begin with a small committee of workers – a sort of punchiest in a small locality, where everyone knows everyone else; it is not difficult to have a committee of workers in whom people have confidence. As a matter of fact, we have been discussing things among ourselves for a pretty long time, and there is a great deal of agreement among us and not a little support from those of our elders who think about these things.

The first step I propose to take is to put our small public library on a sound basis. Our income is small, and we must make a little go a long way, so long, too much attention had been given to fiction and drama. Certainly, these are not to be neglected. But greater attention must be paid to economics and politics of our country, to the knowledge of the new civilizations that are growing up in Russia and China, to the popular sciences, and above all to books that tell us about ourselves, our problems and our achievements. We mean to make the library the center of a vital intellectual life which will make us all think intelligently of problems of the day.

Next, we mean to organize a campaign against illiteracy. We will begin with night schools for men and afternoon schools for women. Everywhere there is a keen desire for learning. All classes of people, young and old, wish to learn, to know things that are happening in this world. We will not only teach our illiterate comrades how to read and write; we will give them talks, first on things that are happening in our own country and then about conditions of life abroad. We will make them intelligent citizens of a great democracy.

Then we have a mind to apply ourselves to the task of educating the people on the principle of sanitation and cleanliness. Here we have to take the initiative ourselves. There is a great deal of lack of cleanliness and social neglect all around. Clearing jungles,

reclaiming waste lands, improving sanitation-all these will involve herculean labor. But I believe that once we can convince the people of the influence of environment on physical and moral health, we will have many active supporters.

These are some of the serious things that I propose to do. A friend suggests some lighter items, and I do not oppose him. He suggests that we offer the community healthy entertainment each week. Let us have these by all means. They will not only entertain the people, they will also bring out new talents. Those who can act or sing or who excel in recitation or mimicry of pantomime-let them make their contributions. I am temperamentally unfitted to be one of them, but I will always be with them.

It seems ambitious, doesn't it? Well, no great work was ever done without ambition. As words worth said:

*Yet was there surely then no vulgar power
Working within us, nothing less in truth
Than that most noble attribute of man
That wish for something loftier more adorned
Then in the common aspect daily garb of human life.*