

Essay on You Belong to A Rural Area: Describe the Condition of That Area Due to A Failure of Rainfall for A Period

I live in a kampung situated many miles from the nearest town. Most of the villagers are paid planters. Besides this main occupation, the villagers keep poultry, cows and other domestic animals. There are also many fruit trees grown in and around the kampung. We live a simple and quiet life, following the cycles of rain that allow our crops to grow and provide us with sustenance.

A few years ago, I remember, we experienced a severe drought throughout the country. My kampung was not spared. The life-giving rains did not come as expected and we had to endure what seemed to be an eternity of heat and poverty.

The vast area that once was covered with rolling waves of green paddy stalks became dry and parched like a huge brown desert. The ground was as hard as stone. Only the hardiest grass survived. The water buffaloes had to wallow in the almost dry stream. Once in a while, the dry stalks would be set alight, probably due to a carelessly thrown cigarette butt and the result would be a black patch of burnt stalks and the eye-watering whiffs of smoke hovering where the fire raged. It was not wise to venture into the dried-out padi fields. Other than the danger of fire, the intense heat was enough to make one ill. No visible sign of animal life could be observed in the paddy fields. Even the sparrows preferred to gather in the trees. There was nothing for them to eat in the paddy fields.

Life in the village slowed down almost to a standstill for many of us. Without rain, there could be no paddy crop. Without the paddy crop, we were flat broke. All we could rely on was whatever we might have saved when times were better and whatever we could grow in the

dusty ground.

Drinking water became a huge problem. There was only one well in the entire village that was still providing enough water for our use. We had to queue up to get the water. It was no fun either to lug the precious water all the way to one's house especially if it was far from the well. Anyway, we learned the meaning of care and thrift. When water was scarce, it seemed more precious than anything else in the world.

To take a decent bath, we had to walk a mile upstream to where the water was deep enough: For safety: we always went in a group, taking care not to stray into the jungle nearby.

As the drought persisted, dust became a nuisance. There was dust everywhere in the air, on the table, on our hair: on our skin and even in the cupboard. Every time a breeze sprang up, we had to hold our noses and wink our eyes to get rid of the dust that made us sneeze and our eyes smart. The dust in the air made visibility poor. The hills took on a strange bluish hue, one that I had never seen before. It added to the already gloomy feeling in the village.

For close to five months we had to endure the terrible heat and dryness. The thirst and hunger we felt did not seem much when compared with the intolerable heat that made us spend most of our time doing nothing. Actually there was not much that we could do, except to hope that the next black clouds would bring us rain, and relief from the misery. There were a few false starts, but when the rain finally did come I could see the whole village jumping and dancing with joy in the downpour. Young and old alike threw away their inhibitions and simply joined in the dance of life a life that once again was renewed by the coming of the rain.