

DO NOT WASTE WATER: OUR MOST PRECIOUS RESOURCE

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Annotation. This article, written from the perspective of a 6th grade student from Uzbekistan, explores one of the most urgent environmental challenges of our time — the wasteful use of water. The author examines why water is considered our most precious resource, how human habits are causing its depletion, and what every individual can do to conserve it. Drawing on examples from Uzbekistan and comparing them to water-scarce regions such as Africa, the article encourages young readers to reflect on their daily water use and take meaningful steps to protect this vital resource for future generations.

Key words: water conservation, water scarcity, precious resource, environment, daily water use, Uzbekistan, Africa, youth awareness, sustainability, responsibility.

Water is the foundation of all life on Earth. Without it, no human, animal, or plant could survive even a single day. Yet despite its extraordinary importance, water is among the most carelessly wasted resources in the modern world. Every day, millions of litres of clean, drinkable water are lost through leaking pipes, open taps, unnecessary irrigation, and thoughtless habits. As a student living in Uzbekistan — a country rich in rivers and reservoirs by the standards of Central Asia — I have begun to ask myself a deeply important question: are we truly grateful for the water we have, and are we using it wisely? The honest answer, I believe, is no. And it is time we changed that.

Why Water Is Our Most Precious Resource

Water makes up approximately 60 to 70 percent of the human body. Our blood, our muscles, our organs — all of them depend on water to function properly. When we drink water, our cells come alive. When we are deprived of it, our bodies begin to fail within days. I know from personal experience how important it is: if I do not drink at least one litre of water a day, I begin to suffer from headaches and fatigue. This is not merely a personal inconvenience — it is my body sending a clear signal about what it needs to survive.

Beyond the human body, water is essential for nearly every activity in our daily lives. We use it to wash our clothes, to clean our dishes, to bathe, to cook our food, to grow the crops that feed our families, and to keep our communities clean and healthy.

Remove water from any one of these activities, and life as we know it becomes difficult or impossible. In this sense, water is not simply a resource — it is the invisible foundation upon which our entire civilisation is built.

How Much Water Do We Actually Use?

Let me ask you a question: how much water do you use in a single day? Most people, if they stop and think carefully, are surprised by the answer. A single shower can use between 60 and 80 litres of water. Washing a full load of laundry can require up to 100 litres. Flushing a toilet uses approximately 6 to 10 litres per flush. Brushing teeth with the tap running wastes around 6 litres per minute. Add all of this together, and the average person in a developed country uses between 150 and 300 litres of water every single day — much of it without a second thought.

When I reflect on my own habits, I realise that I, too, have been guilty of waste. I have left the tap running while soaping my hands. I have used more water than necessary when washing vegetables. I have seen my classmates leave school taps open after using them, with water flowing freely down the drain. These may seem like small acts, but they add up to enormous waste when repeated by millions of people every day.

A Tale of Two Worlds: Uzbekistan and Africa

To truly understand the value of water, it is helpful to compare our situation with that of people who do not have what we so easily take for granted. In many parts of Africa, access to clean water is not a simple matter of turning on a tap — it is a daily struggle that consumes hours of time and enormous physical effort. Women and children in some African communities walk for several kilometres every day, carrying heavy containers, just to collect water from distant wells or rivers. That water is often not even clean; it may carry bacteria, parasites, and diseases that cause serious illness or death.

The wildlife of Africa, too, has adapted to extreme water scarcity in ways that are both remarkable and sobering. Camels can survive without water for weeks. Elephants travel enormous distances to find waterholes. Many desert animals have evolved to obtain all the moisture they need from their food. In contrast, the animals of Uzbekistan — and we ourselves — live in a region where water is relatively accessible. We have rivers, irrigation channels, and functioning water systems. We are extraordinarily fortunate, and we must act accordingly.

According to the United Nations, approximately 2.2 billion people around the world currently lack access to safely managed drinking water. By 2050, if current trends of waste and climate change continue, experts predict that up to half of the world's population could face severe water shortages at some point during the year. These are not distant, abstract statistics. They are warnings that demand action — and that action begins with each of us, in our homes, schools, and communities.

What Happens When Water Runs Out?

The consequences of water scarcity are severe and wide-ranging. When communities run short of water, agriculture collapses and food becomes scarce. Livestock die. Diseases spread more easily because people cannot wash properly or access clean water for drinking. Conflict can arise between communities and even between nations competing for access to shared rivers and lakes. The Aral Sea disaster, which took place partly within Uzbekistan, serves as a painful local reminder of what happens when water resources are mismanaged on a large scale. Once one of the four largest lakes in the world, the Aral Sea lost more than 90 percent of its volume over just a few decades due to the diversion of its feeder rivers for irrigation. The effects on local communities — unemployment, health problems, dust storms carrying toxic salts — have been devastating and are still felt today.

What Can We Do? Practical Steps for Every Person

The good news is that water conservation does not require expensive technology or government programmes alone — it begins with simple, daily choices that every person can make. Here are the most important habits we should all develop:

- Always turn off the tap when brushing teeth, soaping hands, or doing dishes — do not let water run unnecessarily;
- Take shorter showers and avoid filling bathtubs unless necessary;
- Report leaking taps and pipes at home and at school to adults who can fix them;
- Water plants in the morning or evening, when evaporation is slower, and use only as much water as the plants need;
- Reuse water where possible — for example, the water used to rinse fruit or vegetables can be used to water indoor plants;
- Educate younger siblings and friends about the importance of water conservation;
- Never leave outdoor taps or garden hoses running unattended.

These steps may appear small, but when adopted by an entire community, their effect is transformative. If every student at my school saved just 10 litres of water per day, that would amount to thousands of litres saved each week — enough to make a real difference.

Conclusion

Water is not simply a convenience — it is life itself. Every drop we waste is a drop denied to someone, somewhere, who desperately needs it. As young people growing up in Uzbekistan, we are privileged to live in a country where water is still available. But that privilege comes with responsibility. We must not wait until our rivers run dry or our taps run empty before we begin to act. The time to change our habits is now, while we still have the opportunity to make a difference.

I sincerely urge every reader — student, parent, teacher, and community member alike — to treat water with the respect it deserves. Do not waste it. Do not take it for granted. And please, whenever you see a tap left open unnecessarily, turn it off. That simple act is a small gesture of gratitude for one of the greatest gifts our planet has given us.

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