

I was born and raised in a small seaside town called Kakizaki in Niigata Prefecture. I was raised with the sea. What does this mean? Well, I often went to the beach with my family and learned to love swimming. I have been swimming on a team for 10 years now. I can also see the sea every day from my school. However the most interesting thing is the story of my elementary school, "The Whale School." In the Meiji Period, at a time when people in my area were struggling to keep the school, a whale washed up on the beach nearby. With the money they raised by selling parts of the whale, they were able to sustain our school. This story has been told to us and we celebrate the whale as a part of our school life. In this way the sea has given us many gifts, and yet, humans return the ocean's kindness with harm.

When you think of the beach, what do you imagine? Beautiful nature? Swimmers? Fish? One thing you might not think about is trash. But I think it is a big problem now.

Recently I joined my classmates in a volunteer beach clean-up. Before we left, I imagined a beautiful beach, but the view I saw there made me very sad. There was so much trash! Plastic, PET bottles, fishing tools, and even some trash with Hangeul written on it! I love swimming, but can you imagine swimming from Korea to Japan? It seems impossible! Yet we found trash from both near and far on my hometown's beach.

I was shocked by this problem so decided to find out more about it. I looked up more information on the Internet and found out that ocean trash is a problem all over the world, not just in Japan. I discovered that trash carried by the ocean has a big effect on the fishing industry and sightseeing businesses. Human beings are not the only ones being hurt, but also animals and plants. Fish, dolphins, and other sea creatures eat trash because they think it is prey. They may get sick or even die from eating the plastic!

So, is there anything we can do to solve this matter? Firstly, we can join other volunteers and clean the beach. Recently, the government has tried to encourage this movement. You can easily join that activity. Secondly, we can use the 5Rs, which I learned about in English class; Reduce, Reuse, Recycle, Repair and Refuse. Finally we can also try to talk with people around us in order to change their ideas about pollution in the ocean and stop the destruction of the environment. Through such discussion, more and more people may become aware and interested in creating a solution. Even with small changes, we can work towards solving this problem. If many people can do a little, we can make a big change.

I want to join together with people around the world to make sure that we leave a good planet to our children. I hope that many generations will be able to treasure the sea.

