

## Water is Life

Loren Eiseley's saying, "If there is magic on this planet, it is contained in water" embodies water's near-omnipotent properties well. Water is a fundamental part of human existence, both literally and figuratively; according to Lao Tzu, it "nourishes all things without trying to" and is also considered a purifying substance in religion and society. However, even in the modern world, water is still a precious commodity. Some countries, such as Hungary and Czechoslovakia, have had political disputes over access to sources of water, and many countries must import water because they are not self-sufficient in water production. Moreover, many living in third-world nations do not have enough clean water to maintain basic hygiene or survive. Now, with globalization, we must secure water for our brethren and mitigate the ongoing global water crisis.

Water has been indispensable throughout human civilization. The first civilizations emerged near large sources of fresh water: the Chinese on the Yellow River, the Egyptians on the Nile River, and the Mesopotamians on the Euphrates and Tigris Rivers. All of these early civilizations depended on their regional bodies of water for transportation, irrigation, and hydration. Moreover, the Roman Empire depended on water to maintain its population and territories. For example, large stone aqueducts built by the Romans (which, incidentally, are still in use in Segovia, Spain) supplied cities with constant running water. Also, the Mediterranean Sea provided the Romans a giant highway to their own territories and neighboring countries; Rome could send its forces by sea to impose order in the Empire. Today, modern society is more dependent on water than it has ever been before. Water and gravitational potential energy power hydroelectric dams, one of the most efficient generators of electricity, being at

least 90% efficient. Also, water is utilized in many industries to prevent machinery from overheating and in modern sewage systems to maintain cleanliness in communities.

Besides being an intrinsic part of life, water is also hailed by many as sacred or pure. In Christianity, water is used in baptism; immersion in water symbolizes a spiritual resurrection in which the baptized is cleansed of his sins and can lead a life with Jesus. In addition, water is considered pure in literature. Foster, in *How to Read Literature Like a Professor*, explicitly states that water is often used to symbolize a purification and a “washing away” of the past. However, water’s literary characteristics are not restricted to fiction. Henry David Thoreau, for example, lived by Walden Pond for some time and became a physical manifestation of the transcendentalist ideas he espoused. In this manner, Thoreau, an idealist thinker, was reborn as the very embodiment of transcendentalist ideals.

Despite our dependence on water, a water crisis still looms over humanity. Less than two billion out of six billion people on Earth have constant access to safe water. With Earth’s population expected to increase for at least a few decades, we must act with celerity to offer our precious commodity to the world.