

Zelda Vatobesi Mebupe
Age 14
Majuro Baptist Christian Academy.
Contact: 4558280/markcharlene261@gmail.com

Competition Category:
Literature: Essay Writing

Theme: Sustaining Tuna, Sustaining Nation

Topic: If Tuna Disappeared Tomorrow!

Across the Pacific Ocean, tuna is not just a fish—it is a lifeline for people like me and many other islanders. Tuna swim very fast, which makes them hard to catch, but for generations we have learned how to fish them using both traditional and modern methods. For many of us, fishing is not just an activity; it is a way of life that connects us to our families, our communities, and our history. Tuna makes up a large part of what is caught in the Pacific Ocean and is one of the most important resources we depend on every day. But what would happen if tuna suddenly disappeared? This is not just a random question—it is something that could seriously affect our future. If tuna were gone, we would not only lose a common food, but we would also face serious problems in our daily lives, including struggles with food, loss of jobs, and damage to our cultural traditions.

Firstly, tuna is very important for food security in the Pacific. Growing up, tuna has always been part of my meals at home. Whether it is fresh tuna that has just been caught or canned tuna bought from the store, it is something we eat regularly. One reason tuna is so important is because it is affordable and easy to find compared to other types of protein like chicken or beef, which are often imported and more expensive. Many families depend on tuna because it is one of the few reliable food sources available to us. If tuna disappeared, it would be much harder for families to find enough food to eat every day. People would have to rely more on imported foods, which can be costly and sometimes unhealthy. This could lead to poor nutrition, especially for children who need balanced diets to grow strong and healthy. In the long term, this could increase health problems in our communities, such as malnutrition or diet-related diseases. For island nations that are already dealing with limited resources, losing tuna would make food insecurity an even bigger issue.

Secondly, tuna provides jobs and supports the economy in many Pacific Island countries. The tuna industry is not just about fishing; it includes many different types of work, such as processing, packaging, transporting, and selling fish. For example, companies like SolTuna in the Solomon Islands, employ thousands of workers to clean, prepare, and can tuna for export. These workers depend on their jobs to support their families and pay for basic needs like food, water, electricity, and school fees. In many cases, one person's job supports an entire household. If tuna were to disappear, there would be no fish to process, and many people would lose their jobs almost immediately. This would not only affect individual families but also the entire economy of Solomon Islands. Businesses would close, income would decrease, and governments would struggle to provide services. Unemployment would rise, and more people could fall into poverty. For small island countries with limited job opportunities, the loss of the tuna industry would be a major economic crisis that would be very difficult to recover from.

Lastly, tuna is deeply connected to our culture and identity as Pacific Islanders. In places like the Marshall Islands, Nauru, and the Solomon Islands, fishing is not just about catching food—it is a tradition that has been passed down from generation to generation. From a young age, many of us learn how to fish from our parents or elders. We learn when to go fishing, how to read the ocean, and how to respect nature. I have seen how fishing brings people together in my community. When men go out to fish and return with their catch, they often share it with others in the village. This act of sharing is not just about food; it shows kindness, respect, and unity. It strengthens relationships and builds a sense of community. Tuna, in this way, is more than just a resource—it is part of our identity. If tuna disappeared, these traditions could slowly fade away. Younger generations might not learn the same skills or values, and an important part of our culture could be lost forever. Losing tuna would mean losing a piece of who we are as Pacific people.

In addition to food, jobs, and culture, the disappearance of tuna would also affect the balance of the ocean ecosystem. Tuna are an important part of the marine food chain. They help keep the population of smaller fish under control and are also a food source for larger predators. If tuna were removed from the ocean, it could disrupt this balance and cause other species to increase or decrease in ways that could harm the environment. This could make it even harder for people to rely on the ocean for food in the future. For island communities that are closely connected to the sea, any disruption to the marine ecosystem can have serious consequences for both nature and human life.

In conclusion, if tuna disappeared tomorrow, it would have a huge and lasting impact on people like me and many others across the Pacific. It would affect our food security, making it harder for families to access affordable and healthy meals. It would destroy jobs and weaken our economies, leaving many people struggling to survive. It would also damage our cultural traditions and take away an important part of our identity as islanders. On top of that, it could harm the balance of the ocean environment that we depend on. Tuna is not just something we eat—it is part of our everyday lives, our culture, and our future. That is why it is so important for us to protect tuna and manage it responsibly, so that future generations can continue to benefit from this vital resource just as we do today.