

Ramona Leanna Watson (1st Prize)

Flint, MI

Age: 11

National Parks, the Icing on the Cake

National Parks are important because they help us remember who we were, who we are, and who we will be. These beautiful places help us remember what we've already done, and what we need to accomplish to make life better for our future generations. These wonderful historic places help us to understand the diversity of our country and how it came to be. Based on popular sovereignty, we, the people, have the power of government. It is our duty to support important causes. Eight-five percent of people polled by a Harris Survey support the cause of protecting National Parks. What if there were no National Parks? A total of 273,488,751 people would have gone elsewhere taking their money with them. Another reason for supporting National Parks is that 20,000 professional employees would lose their jobs as well as 140,000 volunteers. This would hurt the economy greatly. Imagine if the Grand Canyon was filled in and President Ulysses S. Grant hadn't signed an act that established Yellowstone as the first National Park. The wildlife found there would have been driven away or even become extinct due to the destruction of habitat. National Parks are like pages of a scrapbook that give us good and bad memories of our land, our culture, our diversity and our being. It is our job as a nation and as citizens to help protect these parks for future generations, so our children can look back at our Nation and say, "Wow!" To protect these places and fight for them so we can spread this knowledge to other citizens throughout our country. We can tell our parents to vote because we are the government! We can send letters to Congressmen and also to National Park Service officials. We can hang posters and fight to show our patriotic devotion to our country because without National Parks we don't remember that we are a diverse nation. National Parks are the icing on the cake, the chocolate chips in the cookies, the pepperoni on the pizza. We must fight for what we are most truly devoted to and show what being a country truly is. National Parks are important and we must show that they are. We are a Nation and we must show it through our National Parks. Only then can we really know who we were, are, and will become.

Liz Austin (2nd Prize)

San Diego, CA

Age: 10

National Parks

National Parks, I think, are one of the greatest things the world could do. National Parks are so important because some of them are like a key to the past. These parks allow us to see how people before us lived, how and what they ate, and where they lived. Give Fort Raleigh for example, I got to learn all about the Civil War. I got to learn about the people who lived during it and how they suffered. The Civil War was caused because people made mistakes and wrong decisions. Because of that the Civil War was started and many people got shot and killed. I got to learn about not making the same mistakes and now I can make a difference.

Lots of National Parks are also preserved for their natural beauty. Take the Grand Canyon National Park. The Grand Canyon was nothing man could have ever made. It was preserved because of its beauty and fabulous views. Or Yellowstone National Park, same thing. All the parks preserved for their beauty may not be historic sites, but people visit them anyway. People a hundred years from now will want to visit all these national parks too. That's why it's important to preserve them.

To keep national parks alive and running, many people have to pitch in and help. It takes a lot of money to keep national parks nice enough for people to visit. I, or all of my friends and I could ho some sort of fundraiser to raise money. What if my class was split into groups and each group was given a national park to raise money for. If a goal was set for each group to raise \$200 my class could raise a lot of money for the National Park Service. I think everyone would learn something from working together as a team to raise money. I'm sure we would learn about teamwork, and helping out something that could last for hundreds of years.

Jonathan Petrosino (3rd Prize)

Albany, NY

Age: 11

National Parks Are for Everyone

National Parks are important to all people because they preserve the land where special things are. Because these special things are protected, people from all over the world can visit them every day. I have visited Estes National Park, Mesa Verde National park, and Great Sand Dune National Park in Colorado. I have also visited Arches National Park in Utah, and Acadia National Park in Maine. In these parks, I saw elk, big horn sheep, rock formations, ruins from Native American dwellings, and lots of mountains and rocky beaches. If these special places had not been saved for the public to enjoy, I would not have been able to enjoy them and learn from them. There are many things that people can do to help preserve our National Parks. One thing that we can do is volunteer. Volunteers can be useful in many ways and can be any age. Even a young child can help by picking up trash from the ground. Older people can work on trails, take care of plants, help repair buildings, and take visitors on tours. Another thing that people can do is contribute money. Money can be used for all different kinds of projects that one person can't do alone. National Parks are an important part of our country. I think that the more people know about the cool things in our country, the more interested they will become in preserving them.