

Letter to a Young Friend

Among all the people I know, there is one very special friend. She is young, beautiful and intelligent¹⁾. Her name is Caroline, she lives in Hongkong and she is 7 years old. She goes to a school meant mainly for expatriate²⁾ children. Her mother, Australian by birth, has lived in Hongkong all her life. Her father is Swiss³⁾ and owns a small trading company. Recently when I was at their home, Caroline picked up a copy of Asiaweek and, spotting my picture, asked me what I write about. I told her that it's mainly about people. "Oh, why don't you write about me sometime?" she asked in her usual imperious⁴⁾ manner. I told her that when she grows up and becomes famous, many people will write about her. "Okay, then, just write me a letter, like Uncle Charles from Sydney," she commanded. I promised her that, and here it is:

Dear Caroline,

I am glad that you asked me to write to you. I have wanted to talk to you about a lot of things, but you are always so busy. There's school and piano or ballet⁵⁾ lessons, then homework or a birthday party to go to. Once a week you have to write to Granny in Zurich and Uncle Charles in Sydney. You are almost as busy as big-business people in Hongkong. It's a pity that you can't keep a pet and have nowhere to ride a bike. That's why, I think, your mother gives you other things to keep you busy. Though you don't like ballet class, she wants you to grow up to be a lady. You see, most parents want for their children what they admired in their own childhood. When your mother was young it was considered a treat for girls to learn music and dance. But if you would like to study other things, too, never think you can't or shouldn't just because someone says they are only for boys. Women today are astronauts⁶⁾, engineers, doctors, pilots⁷⁾ and politicians. Don't limit your choices to what girls did in the past.

You remember the day when your father and I took you to the tennis tournament⁸⁾? You were waiting with friends at school and there was another girl standing alone. I think she was from Sri Lanka and one of the few Asian students in your school. Why don't you talk to her sometimes and find out more about her beautiful country? I am sure you also have some Chinese schoolmates. Hongkong is their home, you know, and they will be here when your other friends have gone. Don't forget that Hongkong is really your home, too — not Zurich or Sydney. Even if you leave, you will always remember it. So why not make some good friends who will still be here in case you decide to come back for a visit?

I know you don't get a chance to make too many local friends. The club where you swim has few Asian children, and I thought it sad that the schoolbooks of yours that I saw don't teach anything about China or anywhere else in Asia. Students in Australia today are learning more about Asia than your classmates are. By the time you grow up, Australia is likely to consider itself a member of the family of Asian countries. You may be proud of calling yourself an Asian. But by then people like you would be sons and daughters of many countries. And you would be important in helping everyone understand the world we all share.

I'll never forget the evening when you saw the man with a basket full of newborn kittens. He said that if nobody bought them, they would have to be drowned. You couldn't stop crying when you were not allowed to take one home. Sad to say, the world is filled with things a lot crueller⁹⁾ than that. Too many people, too little space. Too much fear and greed and too little love and mercy. We pretend that other people's problems are not ours and get angry when they affect us. Remember the day you got a rash from swimming in the dirty ocean? Think about the poor fish who have to live in that water. The air we breathe all the time is getting dirtier, too. We'll all be proud if you become a great ballerina or pianist. But don't forget there are so many other things to do. My hope is that you grow up to be not only a lady but a woman who knows enough about the wider world to help improve it. Then, Caroline, there really would be hundreds of people interested in writing about you.

Uncle Hari

□by Hari Bed

给一位小朋友的信

在我熟悉的人中，有一位特别的朋友：年幼、皎美、聪慧。她名叫卡罗琳，7岁，家住香港，正在一所主要为移民孩子开设的学校里读书。她母亲虽出生在澳大利亚，后来却一直住在香港。她的父亲是瑞士人，在香港拥有一家小小的贸易公司。不久前，我到她家做客。她拿起一本《亚洲周刊》，认出了我在上面的一张照片，于是问我究竟写些什么。我告诉她我主要是写人。“哦，为什么不找点时间写写我呢？”她问道，带着常有的那种急迫的样子。我告诉她，等她长大成名，会有不少人写她的。“好的。那么现在就以悉尼的哈里伯伯的名义给我写信吧。”对她的要求，我作了承诺。这不就是：

亲爱的卡罗琳：

真高兴给你写信。我有好多好多事要告诉你，可你总是忙。你要读书，上钢琴课、芭蕾舞课，还有作业呀，参加生日舞会什么的。每周，你要给苏黎世的奶奶和悉尼的伯伯写信，真像香港的大老板那样忙碌。我真同情你，既没养小动物，也没地方骑小车。我想，你妈妈安排了那么多的事要你去做，就是不让你闲着吧。虽然你不太喜欢学芭蕾，妈妈却希望这能帮助你成为一个标准的好姑娘。要知道，大多数父母，都期待着自己童年的梦想在他们的孩子们身上实现。当你妈妈年轻时，那时姑娘们的风尚就是习歌学舞。可是，如果你想学些其他知识，别只因有些人说只有男孩才能做，就认为自己不行或不该做。今天的女性中有宇航员、工程师、医生，也有飞行员和政治家。别把自己的选择限制在过去女孩所做的事情中。记得有一天我与你爸爸带你去看网球赛吗？你和你的朋友聚在校门口等着，旁边却孤零零地站着一位小姑娘。我想她一定来自斯里兰卡，是你们学校中为数不多的亚洲学生中的一位。干吗不与她聊聊呢，多了解些她那个美丽国家的事情。我敢肯定你还有华人同学。你知道，香港是他们的家。当你的那些朋友离开以后，他们还会留在这儿。别忘了香港也是你的家——不是苏黎世也不是悉尼。即使你今后走了，你也会常常怀念这个地方。试想，有一天你打算回香港观光，干吗现在不多交些仍将留在本地的好朋友呢？

我知道你没有机会去交很多当地的朋友。在你游泳的俱乐部中没几个亚洲的小朋友。更叫我伤感的是，我所看到的你们的教科书中都没有讲到中国或亚洲其他一些地方的情况。今天的澳大利亚学生比你的同学们知道的亚洲的事情要多得多。当你长大的时候，澳大利亚说

不一定会把自己看成是亚洲的一员。你也许会因称自己为亚洲人而感到骄傲呢。到那时，你们都是众多国家的儿女，每一个人都会理解我们共同分享的世界，你也会因为乐于帮助每一个人而显得重要。

我永远忘不了一个傍晚的情形。你碰见一个人提着一篮子刚出窝的猫仔。那人说，如果没人买，就只能将这些小猫儿溺死。你哭得好伤心哟，就因为不准你带一只回家。可令人悲伤的是，世界上比这惨的事多着呢。人太多，空间却太少；太多的恐惧和贪婪，太少的爱意与怜悯。我们装着对别人的困难视而不见；一旦影响到自己还怒发冲冠。还记得那天你在脏海里游泳后起了皮疹吗？再想想那些可怜的鱼儿，却不得不在水里忍受长年。我们呼吸的空气也变得越来越臭。当然，如果你今后成为舞蹈家或钢琴家，我们会引为自豪。但别忘了，要做的事还远不止这些。我希望你长大后不仅是一位贤德的淑女，同时是一位深知这个广博世界而又献身为她造福的女士。那样的话，卡罗琳，成千上万的人都会追着写你。

哈里伯伯

NOTE 注释：

1. intelligent [in'telidʒənt] adj. 聪明的，伶俐的
2. expatriate [eks'pætriət; (US) -pert-] adj. 移居国外的
3. Swiss [swis] n. 瑞士人
4. imperious [im'piəriəs] adj. 急迫的
5. ballet ['bæleɪ, bæ'leɪ] n. 芭蕾舞
6. astronaut ['æstrɒnɔ:t] n. 宇航员
7. pilot ['pailət] n. 飞行员
8. tournament ['tuənəmənt] n. 比赛，锦标赛，联赛
9. cruel ['kruəl] adj. 悲伤的