



---

Fall 2019

FYS 101 Women Writing the World

---

Fall 2019

## Polluted Air Leading to Health Problems: Call to be Ecofriendly

Anna Bannister  
*Butler University*

Follow this and additional works at: [https://digitalcommons.butler.edu/fys\\_ww\\_f2019](https://digitalcommons.butler.edu/fys_ww_f2019)

---

### Recommended Citation

Bannister, Anna, "Polluted Air Leading to Health Problems: Call to be Ecofriendly" (2019). *Fall 2019*. 31.  
[https://digitalcommons.butler.edu/fys\\_ww\\_f2019/31](https://digitalcommons.butler.edu/fys_ww_f2019/31)

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the FYS 101 Women Writing the World at Digital Commons @ Butler University. It has been accepted for inclusion in Fall 2019 by an authorized administrator of Digital Commons @ Butler University. For more information, please contact [digitalscholarship@butler.edu](mailto:digitalscholarship@butler.edu).

Anna Bannister

### Polluted Air Leading to Health Problems: Call to be Ecofriendly

Pollution, a harmful substance released into the environment, is a major issue that our world is facing today. Air pollution is one example of a major environmental issue that affects the Annawadians in the novel *Behind the Beautiful Forevers* by Katherine Boo. Living next to the airport in Mumbai, a city located on the western coast of India, Annawadians are exposed to high concentrations of pollution. While one may think the United States would not suffer the same environmental issues as Mumbai, that is not the case. CNN reporter Nadia Kounang wrote “Diabetes, Cancer, and Death: These Are the Effects of Polluted Air” which reviews pollution’s damaging side effects, as well as mentioning what has been put in place by the United States to try and curtail furthering air pollution. Through reading *Behind the Beautiful Forevers* by Katherine Boo and “Diabetes, Cancer and Death: These Are the Effects of Polluted Air” by Naida Kounang, the audience learns that the world is struggling with the effects of pollution. Its potentially deadly side effects that pollute the world’s water, food, and wildlife emphasize the need to clean air.

While pollution may not always be visible to the human eye, there are key identifiers marking the presence of pollution. While the physical environment is not emphasized as much as other topics in *Behind the Beautiful Forevers*, air pollution is noted and evident within the walls of this slum. Abdul, one of the main characters, notes the sky seemed “as brown as flywings” (Boo 7) as he watched the sun attempting to shine through “the haze of pollution” (Boo 7). The amount of pollution evidently worsens over time, as later “black clouds hunched over the hill” (Boo 77) were noted west of the city. It is hard to identify pollution until it is at its worst because

pollution has a gradual change that seemingly goes unnoticed. Here, pollution has gone unnoticed to the point where high amounts of pollution has created large, dark clouds in Annawadi. In fact, pollution gradually accumulating has led to the observation: “the United States as a whole recorded more days with hazardous air quality than ever from 2015 to 2017” (Kounang). Pollution’s gradual change can fool many citizens into thinking it is non-existent. However, there are few exceptions, like Annawadi, where pollution is emitted in greater quantities. Visible or not, polluted air is still flowing in and out of everyone’s lungs effecting their health.

Due to industrial areas offering trade jobs, more trade skill workers will be attracted to those places. Workers follow the jobs, essentially following pollution, as most jobs are located in industrial areas with high pollution levels. The problem with that is there are getting large groups of people living in heavily polluted areas, which in turn decreases people’s health due to living in poor living qualities. Trade workers, who need “to live near progress” (Boo 14) in order to have a job, sacrifice having health lungs.

The concern with pollution is more than simply global warming and filthy environments, but also the health issues polluted air causes. When one is breathing in air that has been contaminated by pollution, there is a possibility that particles can get “stuck in your lungs” (Kounang). These particles can build up, leading to respiratory problems and long-term issues, such as cancer, stroke, and heart attacks (Kounang). Pollution leading to respiratory problems is what the reader sees Abdul’s father struggling with as he is seen “hacking away in their hut” (Boo 14) and going to the hospital in order to breathe clean air instead of “foul slum air” (Boo 78). Particles of pollution have also been known to trigger inflammations within the body.

Certain inflammations, like the inflammation of the pancreas can negatively impact its ability to function, causing diabetes. This made up a portion of the 3.2 million new diabetes cases worldwide in 2016 (Kougang).

Going beyond bad lungs, CNN reporter Kougang investigates studies commenting on certain health issues steaming from pollution. Increasingly, adults are exhibiting health problems due to the pollution wearing down the body over time. In fact, children are the most susceptible to the harmful side effects of polluted air because by breathing a bit faster than adults they are taking in larger quantities of impure air (Kougang). This impure air can lead to multiple health problems. For example, a study in 2016 claimed pollution was one leading cause for “acute lower respiratory infections” (Kougang), which then lead to around 600,000 children dying (Kougang). Pollution circulating through people’s lungs changes the quality of oxygen that circulates through the body. As oxygen is food for the brain, that means pollution can lead to “cognitive decline and impairment” (Kougang), which is especially detrimental for children whose brains are still developing.

Polluted air does not just affect adults and children; it also has the ability to affect babies in the womb. Kougang mentions a study from 2017 published in the US National Library of Medicine National Institutes of Health noted exposure to air pollution can affect a baby’s DNA in womb (Kougang). When DNA is damaged, there are countless side effects, but one of them includes cardiovascular disease. Overall, symptoms can be as bad as to cause death. In the worst cases, death may be a result of air pollution effecting one’s body over a prolonged period of time. Focusing specifically at the effects of pollution in the United States, Proceedings of the

National Academy of Science published a study finding “more than 107,000 premature deaths” (Kougang) due to pollution.

Health conditions caused by polluted air has impacted many communities around the world. These conditions at some point usually require medical attention, which is not free. When looking at the demographics, citizens see that communities similar to Annawadi are greatly affected by pollution, meaning they are most likely experiencing many side effects that warrant medical attention. Unfortunately, that attention is restricted by their social and economic status within the community. Remembering that the poor and homeless barely have enough money to put food in their mouth, they most likely are going to be hit hard. Think about they might not have that access so medical care is going to be a no go. With all that in mind, the world must consider that the poor’s health is going to be effect at much greater risks.

Overall, pollution does not have to be observable to have adverse effects on the world and the human population. Side effects can be as little as respiratory issues or as detrimental as death. Because of pollution can lead to diabetes, heart problem, neurological deficits, and even death, citizens need to make a change. Making a change is not new, for the United States has implemented the Affordable Clean Air Act. Because of programs instituted by the United States government, premature deaths are being prevented. However, the level of work happening to decrease pollutions being released into the air is not enough. There is a possibility for a greater amount of change. Make a change to help oneself, help those suffering, help those who do not have a voice like the Annawadians, and to help future generation because quality of life matters.

Works Cited

Boo, Katherine. *Behind the Beautiful Forevers: Life, Death, and Hope in a Mumbai Undercity*.

Random House Trade, 2012.

Kounang, Nadia. "Diabetes, Cancer and Death: These Are the Effects of Polluted Air." *CNN*,

Cable News Network, 19 June 2019, [https://www.cnn.com/2019/06/19/health/air-](https://www.cnn.com/2019/06/19/health/air-pollution-health-impacts/index.html)

[pollution-health-impacts/index.html](https://www.cnn.com/2019/06/19/health/air-pollution-health-impacts/index.html).