

SUNSHADE CONTEST ESSAY 2009

By Isabel Babel

"Here comes the sun, here comes the sun, and I say, 'It's all right.'" -George Harrison

These words were written and sung in 1969. They are words of optimism and hope. That is because George Harrison grew up in the north of England in the 1940's and 1950's. I am a 9-year-old girl attending Audubon Park Elementary School in Central Florida in 2009, and, for me, when the sun comes; it is definitely *not* all right.

More and more, evidence of the effects of increasing sun exposure on kids my age points to the likelihood that we will develop skin cancer when we are older. Each time a kid gets severe sunburn, those chances increase exponentially. For us kids, living lives free from melanoma starts now.

I live smack in the center of Florida, the Sunshine State. I get a lot more direct sun exposure than George Harrison ever did in England. Don't get me wrong. I am a proud Floridian, but I face challenges just by walking out my front door that Mr. Harrison never dreamed of. The sun is much more intense where I live.

The sun is also more intense *when* I live. Because of modern ozone depletion, the Environmental Protection Agency says around 60 million Americans born by the year 2075 will get skin cancer. Around one million of these Americans will die. That is serious news, friends. One thing we kids can do to avoid being part of that statistic is to avoid prolonged exposure to the sun.

But I *love* to play outside! Especially if I have been cramming my head with knowledge for hours at Audubon Park Elementary. Nothing helps a kid concentrate more in class than a chance to go outside, go nuts, and blow off some steam playing on the playground- usually.

Today is the first day of spring. It's been a hot week. It'll only get hotter. As my friends and I come off the playground I am noticing certain things- pink cheeks and sweaty faces. When I returned to class after a blissful thirty-minute recess one day this week, I actually had mild *sunburn!* My dad says it's because I am his delicate flower. I say it is because there is no shade outside!

Two years ago we moved into a new school. It is a beautiful facility. But one thing our old school had way better than our new school is shade. We had hundred-year-old oak trees on our playground that kept us out of the sun's harmful rays. We are now on an open field. The surrounding field is not even owned by the school so our principal cannot plant trees that will help future kids coming to Audubon.

We need your help! Instead of the trees that we cannot have, I am asking you to please plant one of your sunshades. Then I can sing:

"Here comes the sunshade, and I say, 'It's all right!'"

Thank you,

Isabel Babel