

Module 9**LETTER TO THE YOUNG WOMEN OF MALOLOS AND THE INDOLENCE OF THE FILIPINOS**

This module presents the two selected political articles by Jose Rizal. The articles served as an outlet for Rizal to express his thoughts on the problems encountered by his countrymen which eventually turned into his ideals and legacies that are still relevant up to this time.

At the end of this module, the students should be able to:

1. assess the writings of Jose Rizal;
2. appraise the value of understanding the past; and
3. frame arguments based on evidence.

Pre-Test Activity:

Among the many letters and essays of Jose Rizal, identify one which you think is relevant to you as a Filipino youth. Explain your answer.

Letter to the Young Women of Malolos

Rizal wrote this letter on February 22, 1889 as per request of Marcelo H. del Pilar. It was written in Tagalog while he was staying in London.

The story behind the writing of this letter centered on the 20 young women from Malolos who were denied permission to open a night school for them to study Spanish. The young women raised their petition to Governor General Weyler who gave them his permission. Teodoro Sandiko organized the school near the Sto. Nino Chapel and taught by Guadalupe Reyes.

To the Young Women of Malolos (Full Text)

by José Rizal

When I wrote Noli Me Tangere, I asked myself whether bravery was a common thing in the young women of our people. I brought back to my recollection and reviewed those I had known since my infancy, but there were only few who seem to come up to my ideal. There was, it is true, an abundance of girls with agreeable manners, beautiful ways, and modest demeanor, but there was in all an admixture of servitude and deference to the words or whims of their so-called "spiritual fathers" (as if the spirit or soul had any father other than God), due to excessive kindness, modesty, or perhaps ignorance. They seemed faced plants sown and reared in darkness, having flowers without perfume and fruits without sap.

However, when the news of what happened at Malolos reached us, I saw my error, and great was my rejoicing. After all, who is to blame me? I did not know Malolos nor its young women, except one called Emila [Emilia Tiongson, whom Rizal met in 1887], and her I knew by name only.

Now that you have responded to our first appeal in the interest of the welfare of the people; now that you have set an example to those who, like you, long to have their eyes opened and be delivered from servitude, new hopes are awakened in us and we now even dare to face adversity, because we have you for our allies and are confident of victory. No longer does the Filipina stand with her head bowed nor does she spend her time on her knees, because she is quickened by hope in the future; no longer will the mother contribute to keeping her daughter in darkness and bring her up in contempt and moral annihilation. And

no longer will the science of all sciences consist in blind submission to any unjust order, or in extreme complacency, nor will a courteous smile be deemed the only weapon against insult or humble tears the ineffable panacea for all tribulations. You know that the will of God is different from that of the priest; that religiousness does not consist of long periods spent on your knees, nor in endless prayers, big rosarios, and grimy scapularies [religious garment showing devotion], but in a spotless conduct, firm intention and upright judgment. You also know that prudence does not consist in blindly obeying any whim of the little tin god, but in obeying only that which is reasonable and just, because blind obedience is itself the cause and origin of those whims, and those guilty of it are really to be blamed. The official or friar can no longer assert that they alone are responsible for their unjust orders, because God gave each individual reason and a will of his or her own to distinguish the just from the unjust; all were born without shackles and free, and nobody has a right to subjugate the will and the spirit of another your thoughts. And, why should you submit to another your thoughts, seeing that thought is noble and free?

It is cowardice and erroneous to believe that saintliness consists in blind obedience and that prudence and the habit of thinking are presumptuous. Ignorance has ever been ignorance, and never prudence and honor. God, the primal source of all wisdom, does not demand that man, created in his image and likeness, allow himself to be deceived and hoodwinked, but wants us to use and let shine the light of reason with which He has so mercifully endowed us. He may be compared to the father who gave each of his sons a torch to light their way in the darkness bidding them keep its light bright and take care of it, and not put it out and trust to the light of the others, but to help and advise each other to find the right path. They would be madman were they to follow the light of another, only to come to a fall, and the father could unbraid them and say to them: "Did I not give each of you his own torch," but he could not say so if the fall were due to the light of the torch of him who fell, as the light might have been dim and the road very bad.

The deceiver is fond of using the saying that "It is presumptuous to rely on one's own judgment," but, in my opinion, it is more presumptuous for a person to put his judgment above that of the others and try to make it prevail over theirs. It is more presumptuous for a man to constitute himself into an idol and pretend to be in communication of thought with God; and it is more than presumptuous and even blasphemous for a person to attribute every movement of his lips to God, to represent every whim of his as the will of God, and to brand his own enemy as an enemy of God. Of course, we should not consult our own judgment alone, but hear the opinion of others before doing what may seem most reasonable to us. The wild man from the hills, if clad in a priest's robe, remains a hillman and can only deceive the weak and ignorant. And, to make my argument more conclusive, just buy a priest's robe as the Franciscans wear it and put it on a carabao [domestic water buffalo], and you will be lucky if the carabao does not become lazy on account of the robe. But I will leave this subject to speak of something else.

Youth is a flower-bed that is to bear rich fruit and must accumulate wealth for its descendants. What offspring will be that of a woman whose kindness of character is expressed by mumbled prayers; who knows nothing by heart but awits [hymns], novenas, and the alleged miracles; whose amusement consists in playingpanguingue [a card game] or in the frequentconfession of the same sins? What sons will she have but acolytes, priest's servants, or cockfighters? It is the mothers who are responsible for the present servitude of our compatriots, owing to the unlimited trustfulness of their loving hearts, to their ardent desire to elevate their sons. Maturity is the fruit of infancy and the infant is formed on the lap of its mother. The mother who can only teach her child how to kneel and kiss hands must not expect sons with blood other than that of vile slaves. A tree that grows in the mud is unsubstantial and good only for firewood. If her son should have a bold mind, his boldness will be deceitful and will be like the bat that cannot show itself until the ringing of vespers. They say that prudence is sanctity. But, what sanctity have they

shown us? To pray and kneel a lot, kiss the hand of the priests, throw money away on churches, and believe all the friar sees fit to tell us; gossip, callous rubbing of noses. . . .

As to the mites and gifts of God, is there anything in the world that does not belong to God? What would you say of a servant making his master a present of a cloth borrowed from that very master? Who is so vain, so insane that he will give alms to God and believe that the miserable thing he has given will serve to clothe the Creator of all things? Blessed be they who succor their fellow men, aid the poor and feed the hungry; but cursed be they who turn a dead ear to supplications of the poor, who only give to him who has plenty and spend their money lavishly on silver altar hangings for the thanksgiving, or in serenades and fireworks. The money ground out of the poor is bequeathed to the master so that he can provide for chains to subjugate, and hire thugs and executioners. Oh, what blindness, what lack of understanding.

Saintliness consists in the first place in obeying the dictates of reason, happen what may. "It is acts and not words that I want of you," said Christ. "Not everyone that sayeth unto me, Lord, Lord shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in Heaven." Saintliness does not consist in abjectness, nor is the successor of Christ to be recognized by the fact that he gives his hand to be kissed. Christ did not give the kiss of peace to the Pharisees and never gave his hand to be kissed. He did not cater to the rich and vain; He did not mention scapularies, nor did He make rosaries, or solicit offerings for the sacrifice of the Mass or exact payments for His prayers. Saint John did not demand a fee on the River Jordan, nor did Christ teach for gain. Why, then, do the friars now refuse to stir a foot unless paid in advance? And, as if they were starving, they sell scapularies, rosaries, bits, and other things which are nothing but schemes for making money and a detriment to the soul; because even if all the rags on earth were converted into scapularies and all the trees in the forest into rosaries, and if the skins of all the beasts were made into belts, and if all the priests of the earth mumbled prayers over all this and sprinkled oceans of holy water over it, this would not purify a rogue or condone sin where there is no repentance. Thus, also, through cupidity and love of money, they will, for a price, revoke the numerous prohibitions such as those against eating meat, marrying close relatives, etc. You can do almost anything if you but grease their palms. Why that? Can God be bribed and bought off, and blinded by money, nothing more nor less than a friar? The brigand who has obtained a bull of compromise can live calmly on the proceeds of his robbery, because he will be forgiven. God, then, will sit at a table where theft provides the viands? Has the Omnipotent become a pauper that He must assume the role of the excise man or gendarme? If that is the God whom the friar adores, then I turn my back upon that God.

Let us be reasonable and open our eyes, especially you women, because you are the first to influence the consciousness of man. Remember that a good mother does not resemble the mother that the friar has created; she must bring up her child to be the image of the true God, not of a blackmailing, a grasping God, but of a God who is the father of us all, who is just; who does not suck the life-blood of the poor like a vampire, nor scoffs at the agony of the sorely beset, nor makes a crooked path of the path of justice. Awaken and prepare the will of our children towards all that is honorable, judged by proper standards, to all that is sincere and firm of purpose, clear judgment, clear procedure, honesty in act and deed, love for the fellowman and respect for God; this is what you must teach your children. And, seeing that life is full of thorns and thistles, you must fortify their minds against any stroke of adversity and accustom them to danger. The people cannot expect honor nor prosperity so long as they will educate their children in a wrong way, so long as the woman who guides the child in his steps is slavish and ignorant. No good water comes from a turbid, bitter spring; no savory fruit comes from acrid seed.

The duties that woman has to perform in order to deliver the people from suffering are of no little importance, but be they as they may, they will not be beyond the strength and

stamina of the Filipino people. The power and good judgment of the women of the Philippines are well known, and it is because of this that she has been hoodwinked, and tied, and rendered pusillanimous, and now her enslavers rest at ease, because so long as they can keep the Filipina mother a slave, so long will they be able to make slaves of her children. The cause of the backwardness of Asia lies in the fact that there the women are ignorant, are slaves; while Europe and America are powerful because there the women are free and well-educated and endowed with lucid intellect and a strong will.

We know that you lack instructive books; we know that nothing is added to your intellect, day by day, save that which is intended to dim its natural brightness; all this we know, hence our desire to bring you the light that illuminates your equals here in Europe. If that which I tell you does not provoke your anger, and if you will pay a little attention to it then, however dense the mist may be that befores our people, I will make the utmost efforts to have it dissipated by the bright rays of the sun, which will give light, thought they be dimmed. We shall not feel any fatigue if you help us: God, too, will help to scatter the mist, because He is the God of truth: He will restore to its pristine condition the fame of the Filipina in whom we now miss only a criterion of her own, because good qualities she has enough and to spare. This is our dream; this is the desire we cherish in our hearts; to restore the honor of woman, who is half of our heart, our companion in the joys and tribulations of life. If she is a maiden, the young man should love her not only because of her beauty and her amiable character, but also on account of her fortitude of mind and loftiness of purpose, which quicken and elevate the feeble and timid and ward off all vain thoughts. Let the maiden be the pride of her country and command respect, because it is a common practice on the part of Spaniards and friars here who have returned from the Islands to speak of the Filipina as complaisant and ignorant, as if all should be thrown into the same class because of the missteps of a few, and as if women of weak character did not exist in other lands. As to purity what could the Filipina not hold up to others!

Nevertheless, the returning Spaniards and friars, talkative and fond of gossip, can hardly find time enough to brag and bawl, amidst guffaws and insulting remarks, that a certain woman was thus; that she behaved thus at the convent and conducted herself thus with the Spaniards who on the occasion was her guest, and other things that set your teeth on edge when you think of them which, in the majority of cases, were faults due to candor, excessive kindness, meekness, or perhaps ignorance and were all the work of the defamer himself. There is a Spaniard now in high office, who has set at our table and enjoyed our hospitality in his wanderings through the Philippines and who, upon his return to Spain, rushed forthwith into print and related that on one occasion in Pampanga he demanded hospitality and ate, and slept at a house and the lady of the house conducted herself in such and such a manner with him; this is how he repaid the lady for her supreme hospitality! Similar insinuations are made by the friars to the chance visitor from Spain concerning their very obedientconfesandas, hand-kissers, etc., accompanied by smiles and very significant winkings of the eye. In a book published by D. Sinibaldo de Mas and in other friar sketches sins are related of which women accused themselves in the confessional and of which the friars made no secret in talking to their Spanish visitors seasoning them, at the best, with idiotic and shameless tales not worthy of credence. I cannot repeat here the shameless stories that a friar told Mas and to which Mas attributed no value whatever. Every time we hear or read anything of this kind, we ask each other: Are the Spanish women all cut after the pattern of the Holy Virgin Mary and the Filipinas all reprobates? I believe that if we are to balance accounts in this delicate question, perhaps, . . . But I must drop the subject because I am neither a confessor nor a Spanish traveler and have no business to take away anybody's good name. I shall let this go and speak of the duties of women instead.

A people that respect women, like the Filipino people, must know the truth of the situation in order to be able to do what is expected of it. It seems an established fact that when a young student falls in love, he throws everything to the dogs -- knowledge, honor, and

money, as if a girl could not do anything but sow misfortune. The bravest youth becomes a coward when he married, and the born coward becomes shameless, as if he had been waiting to get married in order to show his cowardice. The son, in order to hide his pusillanimity, remembers his mother, swallows his wrath, suffers his ears to be boxed, obeys the most foolish order, and becomes an accomplice to his own dishonor. It should be remembered that where nobody flees there is no pursuer; when there is no little fish, there can not be a big one. Why does the girl not require of her lover a noble and honored name, a manly heart offering protection to her weakness, and a high spirit incapable of being satisfied with engendering slaves? Let her discard all fear, let her behave nobly and not deliver her youth to the weak and faint-hearted. When she is married, she must aid her husband, inspire him with courage, share his perils, refrain from causing him worry and sweeten his moments of affection, always remembering that there is no grief that a brave heart can not bear and there is no bitterer inheritance than that of infamy and slavery. Open your children's eyes so that they may jealously guard their honor, love their fellowmen and their native land, and do their duty. Always impress upon them they must prefer dying with honor to living in dishonor. The women of Sparta should serve you as an example should serve you as an example in this; I shall give some of their characteristics.

When a mother handed the shield to her son as he was marching to battle, she said nothing to him but this: "Return with it, or on it," which mean, come back victorious or dead, because it was customary with the routed warrior to throw away his shield, while the dead warrior was carried home on his shield. A mother received word that her son had been killed in battle and the army routed. She did not say a word, but expressed her thankfulness that her son had been saved from disgrace. However, when her son returned alive, the mother put on mourning. One of the mothers who went out to meet the warriors returning from battle was told by one that her three sons had fallen. I do not ask you that, said the mother, but whether we have been victorious or not. We have been victorious -- answered the warrior. If that is so, then let us thank God, and she went to the temple.

Once upon a time a king of theirs, who had been defeated, hid in the temple, because he feared their popular wrath. The Spartans resolved to shut him up there and starve him to death. When they were blocking the door, the mother was the first to bring stones. These things were in accordance with the custom there, and all Greece admired the Spartan woman. Of all women -- a woman said jestingly -- only your Spartans have power over the men. Quite natural -- they replied -- of all women only we give birth to men. Man, the Spartan women said, was not born to life for himself alone but for his native land. So long as this way of thinking prevailed and they had that kind of women in Sparta, no enemy was able to put his foot upon her soil, nor was there a woman in Sparta who ever saw a hostile army.

I do not expect to be believed simply because it is I who am saying this; there are many people who do not listen to reason, but will listen only to those who wear the cassock or have gray hair or no teeth; but while it is true that the aged should be venerated, because of their travails and experience, yet the life I have lived, consecrated to the happiness of the people, adds some years, though not many of my age. I do not pretend to be looked upon as an idol or fetish and to be believed and listened to with the eyes closed, the head bowed, and the arms crossed over the breast; what I ask of all is to reflect on what I tell him, think it over and shift it carefully through the sieve of reasons.

First of all. That the tyranny of some is possible only through cowardice and negligence on the part of others.

Second. What makes one contemptible is lack of dignity and abject fear of him who holds one in contempt.

Third. Ignorance is servitude, because as a man thinks, so he is; a man who does not think for himself and allowed himself to be guided by the thought of another is like the beast led by a halter.

Fourth. He who loves his independence must first aid his fellowman, because he who refuses protection to others will find himself without it; the isolated rib in the buri is easily broken, but not so the broom made of the ribs of the palm bound together.

Fifth. If the Filipina will not change her mode of being, let her rear no more children, let her merely give birth to them. She must cease to be the mistress of the home, otherwise she will unconsciously betray husband, child, native land, and all.

Sixth. All men are born equal, naked, without bonds. God did not create man to be a slave; nor did he endow him with intelligence to have him hoodwinked, or adorn him with reason to have him deceived by others. It is not fatuous to refuse to worship one's equal, to cultivate one's intellect, and to make use of reason in all things. Fatuous is he who makes a god of him, who makes brutes of others, and who strives to submit to his whims all that is reasonable and just.

Seventh. Consider well what kind of religion they are teaching you. See whether it is the will of God or according to the teachings of Christ that the poor be succored and those who suffer alleviated. Consider what they preaching to you, the object of the sermon, what is behind the masses, novenas, rosaries, scapularies, images, miracles, candles, belts, etc. etc; which they daily keep before your minds; ears and eyes; jostling, shouting, and coaxing; investigate whence they came and whither they go and then compare that religion with the pure religion of Christ and see whether the pretended observance of the life of Christ does not remind you of the fat milch cow or the fattened pig, which is encouraged to grow fat nor through love of the animal, but for grossly mercenary motives.

Let us, therefore, reflect; let us consider our situation and see how we stand. May these poorly written lines aid you in your good purpose and help you to pursue the plan you have initiated. "May your profit be greater than the capital invested;" and I shall gladly accept the usual reward of all who dare tell your people the truth. May your desire to educate yourself be crowned with success; may you in the garden of learning gather not bitter, but choice fruit, looking well before you eat because on the surface of the globe all is deceit, and the enemy sows weeds in your seedling plot.

All this is the ardent desire of your compatriot.

JOSÉ RIZAL

Zaide and Zaide (1999) summarized the letter arriving at five major points as follows:

1. Filipino mothers should teach their children love of God, country, and fellowmen;
2. Filipino mothers should be glad and honored, like the Spartan mothers, to offer their sons in defense of their country;
3. Filipino women should know to protect their dignity and honor;
4. Filipino women should retain their good racial values, but should also educate themselves; and
5. Faith does not consist merely in reciting prayers and wearing religious pictures but also in living as a true Christian should, with good morals and manners.

Post-Test Activity:

After reading the full text of The Letter to the Young Women of Malolos, enumerate five points that you have learned and five points that you are going to advise to the next generation.

Original Text/Message	Your learnings from the letter	Advices to the next generation
	1.	1.
	2.	2.
	3.	3.
	4.	4.
	5.	5.

The Indolence of the Filipinos

The Indolence of the Filipinos is the longest of Rizal's essays. It was first published in five installments in La Solidaridad, from July 15 to September 15, 1890. The essay was an insight into and a stimulating analysis of the Filipino people's indolence, a symptom of the country's indifference to its ills. Also, it was a continuation of Rizal's campaign of education in which he sought by blunt truths to awaken his countrymen to their own faults at the same time that he was arousing the Spaniards to the defects in Spain's colonial system that caused and continued such shortcomings (Craig, 1913).

Rizal cited the following as the causes of the indolence of the Filipino during the Spanish period:

1. The foreign wars and sporadic insurrections provoked by Spanish imperialism and oppression, which paralyzed the work in the farms and the wheels of industry;

2. The wars waged by the Spaniards against the Moros when the former invaded Mindanao and Sulu, which led to the burning of Christian towns, the depletion of the Moro population, and the destruction of fields and industries;
3. The uncertainty of enjoying the fruits of one's toil due to Spanish rapacity ('man works for an object,' said Rizal, "remove that object and man is reduced to inaction. How can the Filipino then go on with his work when he knows that his work will be the very cause of his misfortune, perhaps, even his imprisonment or death?... could anybody blame if he stops working altogether) and
4. The Spanish masters' regard for labor as undignified and degrading ("No wonder the Filipinos came to look on manual work as disgraceful. Why work if laboring hard you will be classed with the beasts of burden?" -Rizal)

Post-Test Activity:

On the Indolence of the Filipinos, Rizal admits the existence of indolence among the Filipinos and were attributed to certain number of reasons. Using the char below, list three facts and opinions that support the main ideas of Rizal.

Facts	Opinions
1.	
2.	
3.	

References:

Duka, C. & Pila, R. (2010). *Rizal: His legacy to Philippine society*. Pasig City: Anvil Publishing, Inc.

<https://kwentongebabuhayrizal.blogspot.com/2013/07/to-young-women-of-malolos-full-copy.html>

<https://archive.org/stream/theindolenceofth06885gut/8indf10.txt>