

More than the movies

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Have you ever seen the *Pirates of the Caribbean* movies? I saw all four of them and loved them a lot. I especially like Jack Sparrow and Will Turner, the pirates played by Johnny Depp and Orlando Bloom. Because of these two famous and handsome actors, fighting with swords and searching for treasure, pirates have become cool and many people even feel admiration for them.

Hollywood creates glamorous and romantic worlds for us, but Hollywood images often prevent us from knowing the world's real situation. As I've grown I have come to notice that serious problems often lie behind the gloss and glitter of the movies. Pirates are just one example. Allow me to give you a look behind the screen, into their real world.

I got my first glimpse of real pirates when I saw a special report about them on TV. It talked about pirates from Somalia. Picture this, four skinny men gripping rusted machine guns. They are wearing old T-shirts that have many holes, and you can see only sadness in their eyes. This TV program made me become aware of how lucky I was to be born where I was. It also frightened me to think that due to a twist of fate the pirate on the TV screen could have been me. I wondered how they became like this and decided to do a little research. Somalia is a country which has been at war for over 20 years, and 364,000 refugees are struggling to survive. According to Rasmus Cross, a journalist who has actually interviewed the Somali pirates, many pirates in Somalia used to be fishermen. However, because of European countries overfishing the fish and polluting the ocean, eventually there were no more fish and they lost their jobs and their income. This situation led them towards the black flags and dark deeds of piracy.

Recently three Somali pirates attacked a Japanese ship. One of them was a 15 year old boy. They were arrested. I couldn't believe a teenager like me was arrested just because he was struggling to live, while I take it for granted that I can live the comfortable life of a student here in Japan. Although a lot of people including me are lazy and dislike studying, I am sure that this Somali boy would love to be in our situation.

As I realized more about pirates, the way I see things has changed. The situation in Somalia helped me realize that we live in very rich circumstances and that we should use our position to help people who are in poor situations. This made me want to start a campaign to help solve the problem of the pirates in Somalia. I handed out over 200 flyers at my school with an address to a website that people could access to help Somali people. It was a very small thing but it made more people know about this problem and I believe that the hearts of many people were moved. I was helping people to bridge the gap between real pirates and make-believe pirates. This one bright deed made me want to help to do even more.

The problem of the pirates is just one example of many that exist in the world, caused by poverty, war, natural disasters, and so on. None of these problems are as thrilling, fantastic or

fascinating as Hollywood makes them look. But they are important. It cost 300 million dollars to make the 3rd Pirates of the Caribbean movie. Can you imagine what this money could have done for the people of Somalia? My dream is to be a news reporter. I want to inform people about what is happening in the world, behind the fairy tale and special effects. By knowing more about why people try to harm others, we can help to promote peace. Knowing is the first step to helping.