

Who is...

Greta Thunberg?

Reading Comprehension

Y5 Y6

At just 16 years old, Greta Thunberg has been catapulted into world fame and has become a global figure for starting an international youth movement against climate change.

The Swedish teenager from Stockholm first staged a "School Strike for Climate" in front of the Swedish Parliament in August 2018. She started to gain international attention after speaking at the U.N. Climate Talks in Poland in December 2018.

Greta says she first learned about climate change aged 8 and was dismayed by the fact not enough was being done in order to halt it. Greta was inspired by teenage activists in Florida, USA, who protested to end gun violence after a mass shooting at their school. At first, she pestered her parents to change their lifestyle habits. Eventually they relented, and gave up air travel and meat. Being able to have an impact on their decision, Greta realised she might be able to inspire others to make lifestyle changes for the benefit of the world. Instead of going to school in

September 2018, Greta made a large sign that read

‘SCHOOL STRIKE FOR CLIMATE’, and calmly sat down outside the Swedish parliament. She wanted to make politicians take notice and act to stop global warming. Greta has been missing lessons every Friday since as she uses Fridays to protest.

Since Thunberg addressed the 2018 United Nations Climate Change Conference, she has inspired many young people from around the world. This has led to tens of thousands



of students from several countries including Japan, the UK and Australia taking part in #FridaysforFuture demonstrations. In March 2019, climate campaigners co-ordinated the first Global Strike for Climate. It was a monumental success with over 1.6 million people from 125 countries taking part. Many media organisations attribute this entirely to Greta and call this “The Greta Thunberg” effect.

Her very sudden rise to fame has surprised many. She has gained a lot of positive media attention for her campaigning, including interviews and articles in the hugely influential Time magazine, who have named her ‘Person of the year’ for 2019. In August 2019, publication and sales of children's books about the climate crisis reportedly doubled – again this being attributed to Greta’s message being widespread and on all main news channels. However, she has faced some criticism from some very senior politicians, such as President Putin of Russia, who has said he thinks she is “poorly informed” about climate change and she is naïve about the challenges and complexities of the modern world.

Her message is strong and one calling for immediate action. “Adults keep saying we owe it to the young people, to give them hope, but I don’t want your hope. **I don’t want you to be hopeful. I want you to panic. I want you to feel the fear I feel every day. I want you to act. I want you to act as you would in a crisis. I want you to act as if the house is on fire, because it is.**” Greta’s speeches have four common threads:

- Not enough is being done about climate change
- Humanity is facing an existential crisis due to climate change
- The current generation of adults are responsible for it
- Climate change will have a disproportionate effect on young people

Four years ago, she was diagnosed with Asperger's syndrome, which is a form of autism. Despite her disability, Greta has found her straight talking manner effective in speaking to politicians from all over the world. Greta prefers to see her disability as her 'superpower' and not as a limitation. "I don't really like being in the centre of attention. I'm not used to that. **All my life I have been like the invisible girl at the back** that no one sees or listens to." Greta has also been diagnosed as having selective mutism, which is an anxiety disorder, which prevents a person from speaking. Greta says that this means she "only speaks when necessary". "Being different is a gift," she told the BBC, "It makes me see things from outside the box. I don't easily fall for lies, I can see through things. If I would've been like everyone else, I wouldn't have started this school strike for instance."

What can you do? You can get active too!

Here are some ways Greta Thunberg is personally helping to stop climate change:

- Campaigning against climate change
- Given up air travel (She famously sailed from the UK to America in August 2019 to take part in a UN climate action conference in New York.)
- Has a plant based diet
- Upcycling

Have you been inspired by Greta?

What could you do to help climate change?