

Greta Thunberg

Greta Thunberg is a Swedish student and climate **activist**. She tries to raise awareness about **climate change** around the world.

Family Life

Greta Thunberg was born to parents Malena Ernman and Svante Thunberg in 2003. When Greta was born, her mother was an opera singer and she travelled globally from their home in Sweden to perform in musicals and theatre shows. Greta's father worked as an actor – just as his father had before him. Greta also has a younger sister named Beata.

Beginning of Awareness

As a child, Greta was taught to save electricity, not to waste water and not to throw away good food. When she asked why, Greta first heard the words 'climate change'. At first, Greta did not believe what she had heard; surely, if humans know that they can change the climate, they should simply stop doing harmful things. Yet, nobody seemed to be doing anything about it.

Greta began to research climate change during her teenage years. She began to make small changes in her own life to reduce her **carbon footprint**. She became vegan – cutting out all animal products from her diet – and stopped buying things unless they were truly necessary. In 2015, Greta also decided to stop flying in aeroplanes because of the impact it has on the environment.



Greta shared what she had found out with her family and they agreed to do the same. Greta's mother gave up all air travel and ended her international career. When Greta saw that her family had all made small changes too, this gave her hope that she could spread the word further and have a greater impact on the planet.

Fridays For Future

In 2018, when Greta was 15 years old, Sweden experienced heatwaves and wildfires; Greta knew that she needed to act.

At the start of the new school year, Greta decided to strike. She said that she would not attend school for three weeks. Instead, she began to protest by sitting outside the Swedish government building and handing out leaflets about what she called 'the climate crisis'. Greta was furious that governments around the world – including her own – were not doing everything that they could to stop climate change. News of her protest quickly spread and attracted attention both online and on TV. Children around the world agreed with Greta and joined in with her protest.

On 8th September 2018, Greta said that she would strike every Friday until her government began to act. She started a movement known as 'Fridays For Future'.

There have now been over 5,200 strikes by young people around the world who share Greta's concern for the future of their planet.

Support for Greta

In February 2019, 224 scientists and **academics** gave Greta's protests their full support. As Greta's popularity and influence grew, she was invited to speak at important events around the world to share her concerns about climate change. Greta's speeches cover four main themes:

- global warming is so serious that it will lead to the end of the world as we know it;
- adults are stealing the future of young people by not acting;
- we must act now if we want to change the future;
- decision makers must listen to scientists if the world is to undo its mistakes before it is too late.

Greta continues to travel the world using eco-friendly transport in order to spread the word about climate change.

Glossary

academics – A teacher or scholar.

activist – A person who campaigns to bring about a change.

carbon footprint – The amount of carbon dioxide released into the atmosphere as a result of the activities of a person, organisation or community.

climate change – The change in the temperature and climate of an area or planet which is caused by carbon dioxide. It is also known as global warming.



Questions

1. Which of these was Greta **not** taught as a child? Tick **two**.

- to save electricity
- to conserve water
- to throw food away good
- to sing

2. **She became vegan...**

What does the word **vegan** mean, as defined in the text? Tick one.

- to give up air travel
- to cut out all animal products
- to stop buying things
- to decide to strike

3. Look at the section called **Beginning of Awareness**.

Find and copy one word which means 'to make smaller'.

4. What is the name of Greta's sister?

5. In which year did Sweden experience heatwaves and wildfires?

6. Summarise why Greta was confused when she first heard about climate change.

7. Which of the main themes of Greta's speeches do you most agree with? Explain your answer.

8. Discuss how Greta has influenced young people worldwide.

9. What do you think that Greta hopes will be the result of her activism? Give a reason for your answer.

Answers

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reduce

4. What is the name of Greta's sister?

Greta's sister is called Beata.

5. In which year did Sweden experience heatwaves and wildfires?

Sweden experienced heatwaves and wildfires in 2018.

6. Summarise why Greta was confused when she first heard about climate change.

When Greta first heard the words 'climate change', she was confused because humans could simply stop doing harmful things yet Greta thought that nobody seemed to be doing anything about it.

7. Which of the main themes of Greta's speeches do you most agree with? Explain your answer.

Pupils' own responses, such as: I agree that we must act now if we want to change the future. I agree with this because every day that passes means that we are adding more carbon dioxide to the planet and making climate change worse. If we act now, we will help the planet more quickly.

8. Discuss how Greta has influenced young people worldwide.

Pupils' own responses, such as: Greta has influenced young people worldwide by showing them that it is okay to stand up for what you believe in. Many young people strike to share their concern about the planet and that is because of Greta.

9. What do you think that Greta hopes will be the result of her activism? Give a reason for your answer.

Pupils' own responses, such as: I think that Greta hopes her activism will lead lots of people to make better choices and will lead governments around the world to listen to young people (and their concerns about climate change) before it is too late.