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NEWS IN REVIEW

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**GRETA
THUNBERG:**
Climate Activism
and the Youth
Movement

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GRETA THUNBERG: Climate Activism and the Youth Movement

Video duration – 18:41

Climate change is on everybody's mind but a teen from Sweden has taken it to a new level of awareness. Greta Thunberg, 16, has taken her activism around the world as she brings her unfaltering message that we must stop damaging our planet now. From school walkouts to global marches and strikes, she fearlessly faces off against politicians, pundits and critics. And her bravery is hitting a chord with youth around the world as they step up to fight climate change, emboldened by Greta.

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- News in Review, December 2002 – Kyoto: The Battle Lines Are Drawn
- Canada warming at twice the global rate, leaked report finds (The National)
- Canadian Indigenous girl makes safe water plea to UN in New York (The National)
- How will we fix climate change? (Tai Asks Why / CBC Podcast)
- The teen fighting to protect Canada's water — meet Autumn Peltier (The National)

A dark blue background with a network diagram of interconnected nodes and lines on the left side. The text "VIDEO REVIEW" is centered in white.

VIDEO REVIEW

BEFORE VIEWING

A strike is a labour action that involves workers withdrawing their services as a way to highlight their grievances against their employer. However, a strike can also be a form of protest. Is there an issue or cause that would compel you to stop attending school and withdraw your participation in the school community in order to draw attention to what you perceive as an injustice? Work with a partner and list potential issues that you think might warrant a strike.

WHILE VIEWING

1. At the age of 21, Greta Thunberg spent her school days outside the Swedish parliament to protest climate inaction by her government. TRUE or FALSE
2. Greta Thunberg:
 - a) Took a train to the U.N. Climate Action Summit in New York.
 - b) Took a plane to the U.N. Climate Action Summit in New York.
 - c) Took her parent's car to the U.N. Climate Action Summit in New York.
 - d) Took a racing yacht to the U.N. Climate Action Summit in New York.



3. No one has been critical of Greta Thunberg since her meteoric rise to fame as a climate activist.
 TRUE or FALSE
4. Donald Trump attended the U.N. Climate Action Summit:
 a) For less than 15 minutes. c) To hear the message of Greta Thunberg.
 b) As a courtesy to his allies. d) To state U.S. plans to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.
5. Four days after the U.N. Climate Action Summit in New York, hundreds of thousands of people attended a rally in:
 a) Toronto b) Paris c) Montreal d) London
6. Who was inspired to organize protests in their cities as a result of Greta Thunberg's actions?
 a) Alienor Rougeot of Toronto. c) Emma Lim of Montreal.
 b) Rebecca Hamilton of Vancouver. d) All of the above.
7. Malala Yousafzai won the Nobel Peace Prize for her activism after the Taliban attempted to kill her. TRUE or FALSE



8. The activism of students from Parkland, Florida, helped raise the legal age to buy a rifle and to ban bump stocks. TRUE or FALSE
9. Autumn Peltier has earned the title of Chief Water Commissioner for her efforts to bring clean drinking water to Indigenous people. TRUE or FALSE
10. Who used his television program to criticize Greta Thunberg for being “unstable”?
- a) Michael Knowles b) Piers Morgan c) Donald Trump d) Michael Moore



TALK PROMPTS



TALK PROMPT #1

Consider pausing the video and giving students the opportunity to talk to an elbow partner for a few minutes or use these questions as part of a class discussion.



Play the video until the end of Steven D'Souza's story, @ 05:29 –

1. What do you think of Greta Thunberg's choice of transportation to get to the United Nations Climate Action Summit in New York? Did she make her point with this choice?
2. What do you think of the criticisms levied against Thunberg? Why do you think people are so willing to attack the climate activist? How has she managed to handle the verbal attacks?
3. How did you feel when you heard portions of Greta Thunberg's speech? Be specific.
4. Why did U.S. President Donald Trump only spend 15 minutes at the summit? Why does Montreal Mayor Valérie Plante think this is an example of poor leadership?



Steven D'Souza / CBC



TALK PROMPT #2



Play the video until climate activist Alienor Rougeot says, “I hope you don’t, because you shouldn’t be in government otherwise, yeah, @ 10:34 –

1. Why did Montreal Mayor Valérie Plante feel the need to give Greta Thunberg the key to the city?
2. Why was it important for world leaders to see the huge crowds at the climate protest in Montreal? What message were the protesters sharing with the world?
3. How did Greta Thunberg inspire Alienor Rougeot, Rebecca Hamilton and Emma Lim?



Alienor Rougeot



TALK PROMPT #3



Play the video until the end, @ 10:35 to 18:41 –

1. How does Greta Thunberg’s efforts compare with the efforts of Malala Yousafzai, the students from Parkdale, Florida, and Autumn Peltier?
2. Why does Thunberg consider her autism to be her superpower?
3. What do you think of the criticism levied at Thunberg by Michael Knowles, Piers Morgan and Donald Trump?
4. Writer Steve Silberman says, “The level at which she’s being attacked is really disturbing, but it’s also just kind of immature and childish, really, the attacks levelled against her. And so she comes off as the only adult in the room, while the president of the United States comes off like a petulant child who won’t admit that science is true.” Do you agree with this perspective? Do you think Silberman is being fair in his assessment of the behaviour of the president of the U.S.?
5. Why does Silberman think that Greta Thunberg’s choice to take her message to the media and the public is incredibly courageous given her autism?



AFTER VIEWING

Greta Thunberg has always been open about her autism. She says, “I have Asperger’s. I’m on the autism spectrum. In some circumstances it can definitely be an advantage. And especially in such a big crisis like this, when we need to think outside the box, we need to think outside our current system and we need people who think outside the box and who aren’t like everyone else.”

1. How is Greta Thunberg thinking outside the box when it comes to the climate crisis?
2. What has she said and what has she done to demonstrate her commitment to addressing the issue of climate change?



Baxter Borden King, 9, and his mom, Anne travelled from Toronto to Montreal in September 2019 to march in the country’s largest climate strike. Both autistic, they find Thunberg’s perspective on autism empowering.



“You have stolen my dreams and my childhood with your empty words. And yet I’m one of the lucky ones. People are suffering. People are dying. Entire ecosystems are collapsing. We are in the beginning of a mass extinction, and all you can talk about is money and fairy tales of eternal economic growth. How dare you!”

– Greta Thunberg at the United Nations Climate Action Summit

THE STORY

Minds On

Get to know more about Greta Thunberg by listening to her TED Talk where she talks, among other things, about her reaction when she first learned of climate change and the importance of taking action:

www.ted.com/talks/greta_thunberg_school_strike_for_climate_save_the_world_by_changing_the_rules/transcript?language=en

Solo protest

It started as a one-person protest outside the Swedish parliament. At 15, Greta Thunberg told her parents that she was going “on strike” and refused to go to school until the Swedish government decided to take action in the battle against global warming. So she went to the parliament and held a sign that said:



“School Strike for Climate.” Her efforts drew the attention of other students who shared her concern and a network of school strikes was founded called Fridays for Future.



Within a year of Thunberg's solo effort, climate strikes were happening around the world — with a huge rally of 500 000 climate strikers gathering in Montreal in September 2019.

Personal crisis about climate

Greta Thunberg became aware of the climate crisis while attending school at the age of eight. The information she gleaned, and the corresponding lack of action she witnessed in addressing the problem,

contributed to a debilitating depression — one that had likely been growing for some time and involved other issues in Greta's life — during which Thunberg stopped eating and speaking. Eventually she was diagnosed with Asperger's syndrome, obsessive-compulsive disorder and selective mutism.

Seven years later, Thunberg staged her climate strike outside of parliament. Her family backed her up the

whole way. They modified their behaviour to live a more carbon-neutral life, with her mother giving up her international opera-singing career because of her daughter's concerns about the damage air travel poses to the environment. Clearly Thunberg's family was willing

For a look at how Canadians have embraced Greta Thunberg's message, go to Fridays for Future Canada at <https://fridaysforfuture.ca/>



to acknowledge that Greta's concerns were real and that her activism was constructive.

Not alone

And they weren't alone. Images of Thunberg holding her strike sign in front of the Swedish parliament inspired others to take up the cause. After the initial strike phase leading up to the Swedish general election in September 2018, Thunberg isolated her striking to Fridays. By December more than 20 000

students in almost 300 cities worldwide were staging strikes of their own.

By the fall of 2019, Greta Thunberg and youth climate activism had become a global phenomenon that reached a feverish peak when she crossed the Atlantic in a racing yacht — again, air travel was too toxic to the environment — to address the United Nations (UN) Climate Action Summit in New York City.

Thunberg delivered an impassioned address to summit attendees where she said, “My message is that we’ll be watching you. This is all wrong. I shouldn’t be up here. I should be back in school on the other side of the ocean.”



Yet you all come to us young people for hope. How dare you!” She continued, “You have stolen my dreams and my childhood with your empty words. And yet I’m one of the lucky ones. People are suffering. People are dying. Entire ecosystems are collapsing. We are in the beginning of a mass extinction, and all you can talk about is money and fairy tales of eternal economic growth. How dare you!”

Criticism

Thunberg’s direct and unapologetic delivery of her message has been the subject of criticism. Thunberg calls her autism (Asperger’s syndrome is on the autism spectrum) her “superpower.” As she readily admits, her autism brings with it certain delivery options that some people don’t care for. She only speaks when it is absolutely necessary and makes

sure her ideas are communicated in a concise manner. She sometimes sounds very abrupt. This is not unusual for someone with Asperger’s syndrome.

See Greta Thunberg’s address to the UN Climate Action Summit at www.youtube.com/watch?v=TMrtLsQbaok. Follow it up by watching her speech in Montreal in front of an estimated half million people at www.youtube.com/watch?v=n0bqG1GzIHU.



Unfortunately, critics have been ruthless when it comes to their assessment of her mannerisms as well as her activism. In Canada, Maxime Bernier called Thunberg “mentally unstable” in a tweet. U.S. President Donald Trump sarcastically responded to Thunberg’s U.N. summit speech by tweeting, “She seems like a very happy young girl looking forward to a bright and wonderful future. So nice to see!” To her credit, Thunberg responded to

Trump’s comment by changing her Twitter profile title to read: “Greta Thunberg – A very happy young girl looking forward to a bright and wonderful future.” To her critics she says, “When haters go after your looks and your differences... you know you’re winning.”

Montreal

After New York, Thunberg made her way to Montreal where she marched with climate protesters and

addressed a crowd of close to a half million people. She also had a private meeting with Prime Minister Justin Trudeau where she told him that he was not doing enough in the battle against global warming. Later the same day, Montreal Mayor Valérie Plante gave her the key to the city.

Concern, focus, vocation

While receiving a hero’s welcome in Canada, Greta Thunberg seems unaffected by the accolades thrown her way.



Her only concern, her central focus and her primary vocation is to get people to recognize the peril of climate change in a bid to save the planet.

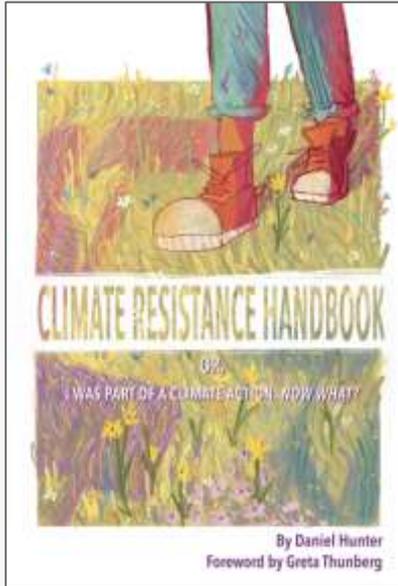
TO CONSIDER

1. What personal crisis motivated Greta Thunberg to begin her crusade for climate change action?
2. How did Thunberg's one-person protest morph into a huge international movement?

3. a) Why were criticisms against Thunberg largely unfair?
b) How did Thunberg respond to these criticisms?
4. What do you think will happen next? Do you think that the climate change activism movement will continue to gain momentum?



ACTIVITY #1: Youth Activism



In the foreword to Daniel Hunter’s *Climate Resistance Handbook*, Greta Thunberg lays out her reason for resorting to activism and protest to get people to pay attention to the climate crisis. She says, “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. And then I want you to act.” From there she

lays out the crisis in no uncertain terms, establishing that every decision we make as consumers should be guided by concerns for the fate of the planet.

YOUR TASK

1. Go to the online edition of Hunter’s book at: <https://trainings.350.org/climate-resistance-handbook/#order>. Click on the version of the book that best suits your smartphone, tablet or computer.
2. Read Greta Thunberg’s foreword. How did you feel after reading the foreword? What actions will you take to address the issue of climate change?



3. Go to the section called The Upside-Down Triangle on p.12. What is the old form of leadership? What is the upside-down triangle approach to leadership? Describe this new form of leadership in 75-100 words.
4. Scan the book. What are the main themes that Hunter is addressing? How can young people like you become activists for the causes that are most important to them?

Followup

Research one of the following youth activists or movements.

- What are the activists or movements trying to achieve?
- How successful have the activists or movements been at achieving their goals?

1. Autumn Peltier
2. Malala Yousafzai
3. #NeverAgain
4. Fridays for Future



ACTIVITY #2: Confronting Carbon Directly Ourselves

Step 1

- Go to the CBC.ca website and view the interactive called “Confronting Carbon: How does Canada meet its climate targets?” at:

www.cbc.ca/news2/interactives/confronting-carbon/



- Briefly navigate the page in an effort to grasp the main theme and message.

Step 2

- Under the “Policies Compared” heading of this CBC Interactive, review the policies and determine what Canada needs to do to meet the targets established at the Paris Climate Conference in 2015.

Step 3

- Go to “The 109-megatonne Challenge” section of the interactive. Use the map to either find your city or the city nearest to where you live. What does 109 megatonnes of carbon dioxide look like?



- Write a letter to your MP and tell her or him that you expect Canada to meet the targets set at the Paris Climate Conference.

Length of letter: 200-400 words

Step 4

- What can you do to reduce your carbon footprint and help Canada meet its climate targets? Make a list of eight things you can do. Use a search engine like Google to help you compile your list.



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VIDEO REVIEW – WHILE VIEWING (RESPONSES)

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