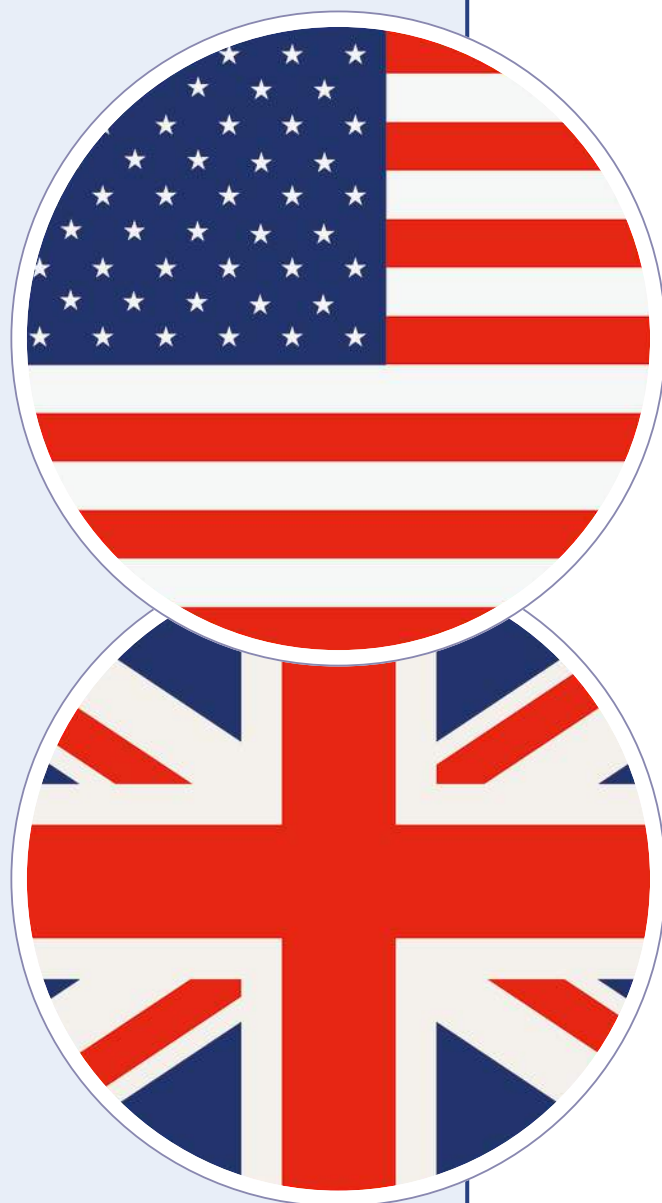


Englisch betrifft uns

EBU on the Web 2020/2

Topical texts in
English lessons

- *Comprehension*
- *Analysis*
- *Creative writing*
- *Background information*



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The Topic

Climate change

Greta Thunberg: „The disarming case to act right now on climate change“

When 15-year-old Greta Thunberg started her school strike for climate change outside Sweden's parliament in August 2018, she told reporters: "It felt like I was the only one who cared about the climate and the ecological crisis." Within a year she had inspired millions of young people all over the world to take to the streets and demand action on climate change. The number of supporters for her cause grew fast and the message spread on social media with the hashtag #FridaysForFuture. In September 2019 Greta Thunberg travelled to New York on a zero-emissions boat to address the UN Climate Conference. In her speech she blamed politicians for relying on young people for answers to climate change: "How dare you," she said. "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?" At the end of 2019 she was named Time Magazine's Person of the Year. But her message has not been well received by everyone, e.g. President Trump called her "a very happy young girl looking forward to a bright and wonderful future" and Russian President Vladimir Putin characterized her as a "kind but poorly informed teenager". At the World Economic Forum in Davos in January 2020 she called on world leaders to abandon fossil fuels.

Ties to obligatory topics

Environmental issues, climate change, protest movements, getting involved

Background information – further links

<https://www.bbc.com/news/science-environment-24021772>

"What is climate change? A really simple guide"

An introduction to the climate crisis presented on the BBC website, including video clips, charts and links to other useful websites.

<https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2019/sep/26/greta-thunberg-teenager-on-a-global-mission-to-make-a-difference>

Greta Thunberg: teenager on a global mission to 'make a difference'

The environment section of the *Guardian* website offers an introduction to the young Swedish environment activist and her campaigns, including two video clips and links to other topical articles about Greta Thunberg.

The Text

Greta Thunberg: „The disarming case to act right now on climate change“ – a video clip (TED Talks) This speech was held in November 2018.

The Link (URL)

https://www.ted.com/talks/greta_thunberg_the_disarming_case_to_act_right_now_on_climate_change

Annotations

Asperger's syndrome – a mental condition that makes it difficult for a person to form relationships, and which can make them very interested in one particular thing

autistic – *autism*: a mental disorder (= problem) that makes people unable to communicate properly, or to form relationships

equity – a situation in which all people are treated equally and no one has an unfair advantage

IPPC – Integrated Pollution Prevention and Control; it is Directive 2008/1/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 15 January 2008

OCD – (*obsessive-compulsive disorder*) a form of mental illness in which a person does the same thing again and again and cannot stop doing it, for example washing their hands many times a day

Paris Agreement – an agreement within the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), dealing with greenhouse-gas-emissions, signed in 2016

pep talk – (*informal*) a short speech intended to encourage someone to work harder, win a game etc.

selective mutism – an anxiety disorder in which a person normally capable of speech cannot speak in specific situations or to specific people

sustainability – sustainable: able to continue without causing damage to the environment

Assignments

Pre-watching activity

What do you associate with the name of Greta Thunberg? What have you heard or read about her and her activities?

While-watching activities

1. How did Greta Thunberg become aware of the climate change? What effect did this have on her?
2. What, in Greta Thunberg's view, has to be done to fight the sustainability crisis?
3. Which fields of climate change are, according to the speaker, neglected by the media and the political leaders?
4. Why do we, in Greta Thunberg's opinion, not reduce our emissions?
5. How does Greta Thunberg see the future of our civilization?
6. Explain the speaker's final appeal.
7. This speech was held in November 2018. To what extent do you think Greta's commitment has influenced our world since that date? Has it had any effect on our politicians/industry/our everyday lives?

Post-watching activity (mediation)

Imagine you work for a German school magazine. You have watched the video clip about Greta Thunberg's speech. Write a review and consider Greta's main ideas as well as the way she presents herself.

Suggested Solutions

1. At the age of eight she perceived the climate change as something that human beings had created by their way of life. The problem dominated all kinds of media, but people did not talk about it in their everyday lives. She could not understand how human beings could be able to change the climate of the earth and why they did not change their way of life, e.g. by making the burning of fossil fuels illegal. She perceived climate change as unreal, became ill and was finally diagnosed with various diseases.
2. In Greta Thunberg's eyes our civilization has to change as the climate crisis is an existential threat. For her there is only "black or white", i.e. emissions have to be stopped "when it comes to survival".
3. The speaker cannot understand that the media and the political leaders do not „mention“ the problems related to climate change at all. To her the following aspects are not considered and should be dealt with more effectively: the warming of the earth as a consequence of air pollution; the problem of mass extinction with up to 200 species going extinct every day; the aspect of equity and climate justice, i.e. poorer countries should be in a position to raise their standard of living and to care about the climate crisis.
4. Greta Thunberg maintains that the vast majority of our society has no idea about the consequences of the way we live and the about the urgency of the problem. Most people do not really see a climate crisis because they are not directly affected by it. In her eyes, neither the media nor politicians take the problem seriously. What is more, she blames climate scientists and green politicians for keeping on flying around the world or eating meat.
5. Greta Thunberg points out that everything we do or do not do today cannot be undone in the future and will have consequences for the next generations. Scientists have dealt with all the facts of the climate crisis and made suggestions how to solve it. In the speaker's opinion it is now time to act. The speaker is optimistic that much can be achieved, as a few children could get headlines all over the world just by not coming to school for a few weeks.
6. Greta Thunberg is convinced that there has been too much 'pep talking' in the last few years but that emissions have not been reduced. Therefore she calls for immediate action, which will bring hope: "So instead of looking for hope, look for action. Then, and only then, hope will come."

Post-watching activity (mediation)

If necessary, the teacher can help the students write the review with the following ideas:

- Start with an introductory paragraph that includes the following aspects: catching the reader's attention, name the speaker and the topic she has presented
- Write some paragraphs about the most important aspects the speaker has pointed out; you can use quotations from the speech, if you consider them impressive
- Characterize the way the speaker has presented herself. What are your impressions?
- End with a concluding paragraph evaluating the speaker's presentation. You should point out your personal opinion.