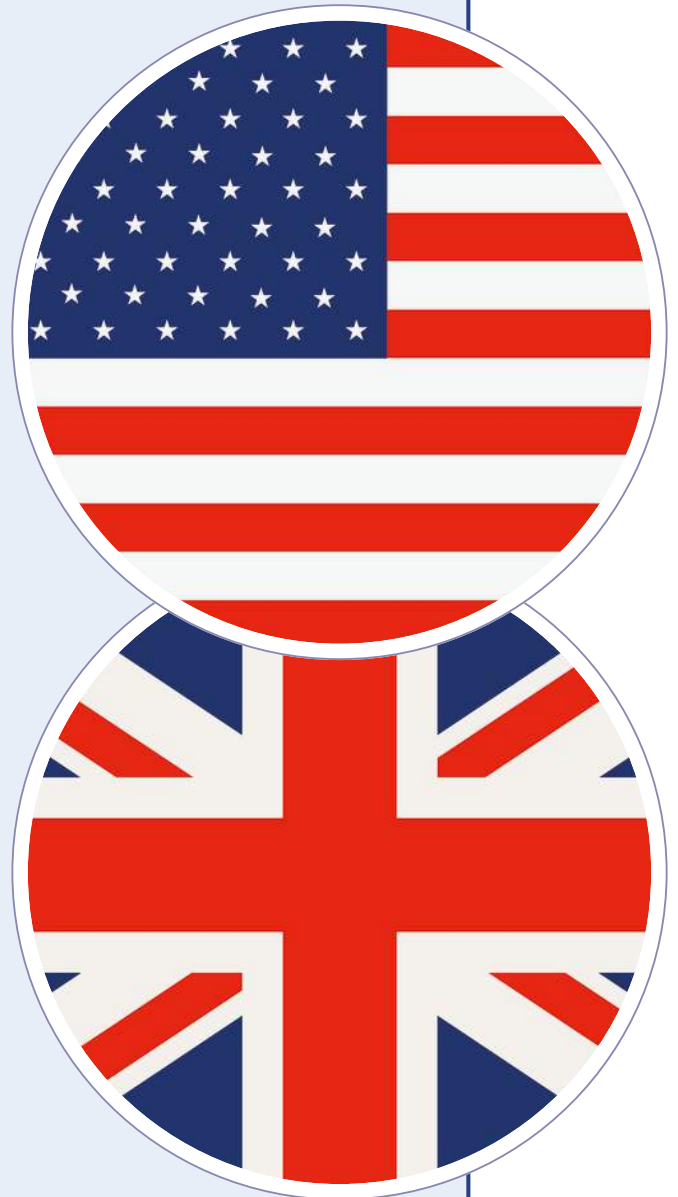


Englisch betrifft uns

EBU on the Web 2019/1

Topical texts
in English lessons

- *Comprehension*
- *Analysis*
- *Creative writing*
- *Background Information*



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The Topic

Climate change

"The collapse of our civilisations and the extinction of much of the natural world is on the horizon", Sir David Attenborough told the UN climate change conference in Poland. (2–14 December 2018).

According to the *Global Carbon Project*, which was launched at the UN climate summit in Katowice, Poland (2–14 Dec 2018), CO₂ emissions will rise by 2.7% in 2018, i.e. the use of fossil fuels is increasing carbon emissions when they need to be coming down.

The Guardian editorial (cf. link presented below) comments on the current state of climate change in general and of carbon emissions in particular. The editor points out that, unless drastic measures are taken, our civilization will move to "the brink of catastrophe".

Ties to obligatory topics

Global issues, environmental awareness, global warming, climate change, sustainable energy, saving the planet, the future of energy

Background information – further links

<http://cop24.gov.pl/>

(Website of COP24 in Katowice (Dec 2–14, 2018): COP24 is the informal name for the 24th Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change

<http://www.globalcarbonproject.org/carbonbudget/>

The Global Carbon Project is a Global Research Project of Future Earth. It was formed to work with the international science community to establish a common and mutually agreed knowledge base to support policy debate and action to slow down and ultimately stop the increase of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere.

The Text

"The Guardian view on climate change: too much, too soon" (Editorial)

5 December 2018

The Link (URL)

<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2018/dec/05/the-guardian-view-on-climate-change-too-much-too-soon>

Annotations

to accelerate – when something accelerates, it happens faster than usual or sooner than you expect

astonishing – so surprising that it is difficult to believe

Sir David Attenborough – (1926 –) a British naturalist, who has made many popular television programmes about nature and animals all around the world

Bolsonaro – Jair Bolsonaro, President of Brazil since January 1, 2019

brink – (*literary*) the edge of a very high place such as a cliff

carbon – *Kohlenstoff*

Communist era – the period of time from 1945 to 1989 spans the period of Soviet dominance and Communist rule imposed after the end of World War II over Poland

deforestation – the cutting or burning down of all the trees in an area

to delude – to make someone believe something that is not true

to derive – to get something from something

to diminish – to become or make something become smaller or less

to disrupt – to prevent something from continuing in its usual way by causing problems

drunkard – someone who is drunk or often gets drunk, an alcoholic

emission – a gas or other substance that is sent into the air

to exacerbate – to make a bad situation worse

extinction – *Aussterben*

to figure – to be an important part of a process, event, or situation, or to be included in something

fossil fuel – a fuel such as coal or oil that is produced by the very gradual decaying of animals or plants over millions of years

greedy – always wanting more food, money, power, possessions etc than you need

grossly – excessively

insufficient – not enough or not great enough

loop – a shape like a curve or a circle made by a line curving back towards itself

to mitigate – to make a situation or the effects of something less unpleasant, harmful, or serious

net – the net amount is the final amount that remains after all the other amounts have been taken away

to outpace – to go faster, do better, or develop more quickly than someone or something else

to outweigh – to be more important or stronger than something else

Paris Agreement – the Paris Agreement is an agreement within the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, dealing with greenhouse-gas emissions mitigation, adaptation, and finance, starting in the year 2020. The agreement's language was negotiated by representatives of 196 state parties at the 21st Conference of the Parties of the UNFCCC in Le Bourget, near Paris.

pastime – something that you do because you think it is enjoyable or interesting

peak – the time when something or someone is best, greatest, highest, most successful etc.

resolution – *here:* a promise to yourself to do something

sane – *here:* reasonable

unimaginably – not possible to imagine

Assignments

Introduction to the topic

1. What do you know about climate change? Do you know anything about its causes and its consequences?
2. In case you are not well-informed about climate change, go to the BBC website <https://www.bbc.com/news/science-environment-24021772> and select the important information about the climate change in recent years.
3. With your partner, discuss what measures can / should be taken to fight the consequences of climate change.
4. Read the headline of the *Guardian* editorial. What do the words "too much, too soon" suggest about the editor's view on climate change?

Comprehension

5. Explain the *Guardian's* view on climate change. What important aspects does the editor put forward to support this position?

Analysis

6. Examine how the editor tries to convince the readers of the *Guardian's* attitude towards climate change. Consider the editor's line of argumentation as well as the linguistic, stylistic and rhetorical devices that are used.

Evaluation

7. What do you think about the *Guardian's* view on climate change? Do you agree with the editor? Discuss the main ideas with your partner or in groups.
8. Sir David Attenborough told the UN climate change conference in Poland that "the collapse of our civilisations and the extinction of much of the natural world is on the horizon". Do you agree with this 'gloomy' perspective or do you think it is an exaggerated evaluation?

Creative writing

9. Imagine you are a British or Irish teenager. In the editorial you can read that the European Union is now the third biggest emitter of carbon in the world. You are shocked by this piece of information and decide to do something about it. Write a letter to the Member of the EU Parliament that represents your constituency, in which you explain that it is high time something is done to stop carbon emissions.

Suggested Solutions

4. The parallel construction “too much, too soon” in connection with climate change could suggest that air pollution has enormously increased (‘too much’) so that, as a consequence, the climate will change very quickly (‘too soon’). The headline can be taken as a warning and appeal to finally do something against this development.
 - Further background information (4th paragraph): the growing use of oil by big industrial countries and the disastrous consequences for the environment
 - Conclusion and final appeal (5th paragraph): the editor’s view that “a sane policy on climate change” is hardly possible; explanation: positive developments in reducing carbon emissions in the period 2014 – 2016 were the result of an economic slowdown > politicians such as Donald Trump and the Brazilian president have boosted the economy at the cost of the environment; final appeal: it is not enough just to understand the causes of climate change, drastic measures also have to be taken to avoid “driving our civilization to the brink of catastrophe”
5. The editor’s view is clearly expressed already in the first paragraph of the article: although “we” know that our environment is in danger as a result of climate change and “we” know what measures should be taken, nothing is being done to limit the effects of climate change. The following aspects are put forward by the editor to support the Guardian’s view:
 - the increased use of coal has intensified global carbon emissions
 - the growing use of oil and the process of deforestation are destroying the environment and are having negative political and economic consequences
 - the use of renewable resources has made progress but does not meet the serious consequences of climate change
 - although the effects of climate change are widely understood, some political leaders, e.g. Donald Trump and the Brazilian president, prevent a “sane” policy on climate change because they associate the reduction of carbon emissions with an economic slowdown
6. **Line of argumentation**
 - Introduction to the basic problem (1st paragraph): although there is widespread awareness that something has to be done about climate change, almost nothing is being done; this problem is introduced by means of a quotation from Sir David Attenborough (a renowned expert) in order to make the appeal more urgent.
 - Presentation of facts and figures (2nd paragraph): background information about the extent of global carbon emissions, which shows that emissions have decreased but that “far more must be done” to limit global warming according to the goals of the Paris Agreement
 - Evaluation of renewable resources (3rd paragraph): the use of renewable energy has not made much progress in recent years > another explanation why hardly anything has changed in the field of global warming
 - **Language**
 - *Parataxis*: short sentences, e.g. “But far more must be done.”, “It’s not just coal.”, “Oil use continues to grow.” > clear, precise statements supporting the facts and the editor’s view
 - *Use of emphatic adjectives and adverbs*: “catastrophic”, “with scrupulous care”, “astonishing”, “terrifying”, “urgent”, “rapidly”, “grossly”, “destructive”, “wholly insufficient”, “characteristically greedy”, “unimaginably grim”, “gravely” >>> shows that the editor is emotionally involved in this subject matter
 - **Stylistic devices**
 - *Imagery*: (*Simile*) “like a drunkard’s resolution” > shows that the goal of the Paris Agreement cannot be taken seriously because it was set up without the strong will to change things
 - *Parallelism*: e.g.: “too much, too soon” (see no. 4); parallelism + contrast: “driving higher” (reference to the use of fossil fuels) = fact <> “need to be coming down” (reference to carbon emissions) = warning/advice; parallelism + contrast: “We know what to do. We can see how to do it. [...] We do almost nothing.” > emphasizing the basic problem, i.e. although climate change can be fought, society does not really react to it
 - *Alliteration*: e.g.: “the desperate and the deluded” > reference to those who ignore climate change; “previous peak level” > emphasizing the extent of the use of coal
 - *Personal pronouns* “we”, “us”: at the beginning of the editorial and in other passages of the text > the editor speaks for the whole society/civilization