

The background of the entire cover is a vibrant illustration of a diverse group of children. In the center, a girl with long brown braids and a blue jacket looks directly at the viewer with a serious expression. Surrounding her are other children of various ethnicities, all holding up white protest signs with handwritten messages. The signs include: 'HELP ME!', 'A POLICY', 'IN THE GROUND', 'CLEAN AIR', 'LOVE YOUR MOTHER' (with a small globe), 'IT'S MY FUTURE', 'SCHOOL STRIKE', 'our future is in your HANDS', 'SAVE OUR', 'NO MORE EXCUSES', and a sign with a drawing of a globe on fire. The children are dressed in colorful clothing like sweaters and jackets. The overall tone is one of urgent activism.

A COMMON CORE CURRICULUM GUIDE TO

OUR HOUSE IS ON FIRE: GRETA THUNBERG'S CALL TO SAVE THE PLANET

BY JEANETTE WINTER

OUR HOUSE IS ON FIRE

Greta Thunberg's Call to Save the Planet

Jeanette Winter



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ABOUT THE BOOK

Greta Thunberg is a sixteen-year-old Swedish activist who speaks passionately about the dangers of climate change. She has spoken at the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland, and sparked a worldwide children's march. She recently arrived in New York, where she is scheduled to speak at the United Nations Climate Action Summit.

Greta wasn't always this visible, and Jeanette Winter's book *Our House Is on Fire* shows how she changed from a girl who considered herself invisible to an outspoken advocate for action. What caused this quiet girl to change?

When her teacher discussed the problem of climate change in class, Greta decided to learn more—a lot more. By reading many books and watching films, she learned about things like sea ice melting in the Arctic, coral reefs being destroyed by warming waters, animals becoming endangered, floodwaters covering houses, and forest fires raging. The girl who had been invisible became a strong voice for change. Beginning with strikes each Friday at the Swedish Parliament building, she spoke out about climate change. Other strikers eventually joined her, and not just in Sweden. She caught the attention of people around the world, showing that a young girl can speak up and make a difference. This is an inspiring story of one girl's passion for change and her influence on people around the world.

Jeanette Winter's well-crafted prose and her detailed illustrations show how Greta Thunberg developed her strong convictions and her need to speak up and act. Quotes from Thunberg and an important question raised by the author add to the note of urgency.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS AND ACTIVITIES

KEY IDEAS & DETAILS

The discussion questions and activities below draw on Common Core State Standards for reading informational text (RI) that ask children to ask and answer questions about key details in a text (RI.K–3.1), identify the main topic and key details that support it (RI.K–3.2), and describe the relationship between a series of events, ideas, or steps in a process (RI.K–3.3).

1. What does Greta think about climate change? What did you think about it before reading the book, and how do you feel now?
2. What caused Greta to change from feeling invisible at school to speaking up about climate change? Discuss the impact of the following:
 - Her teacher
 - What she read
 - What she saw when she watched films
3. Explain what Greta means when she says, “Our house is on fire.” Do you agree with her? What kinds of feelings or actions does this statement provoke?
4. Do you think it was a good idea to start a school strike to bring awareness to climate change? Do you think it was successful? How do you know?
5. Activity 1: Responding to Quotes. See page 4.



ACTIVITY 1: RESPONDING TO QUOTES

The author includes quotes from Greta so that she can speak for herself.

Share your thoughts and feelings about each quote on the lines below.



"You are never too small
to make a difference."

MY THOUGHTS:

"You say you love your children above
all else, and yet you are stealing their
future in front of their very eyes."

MY THOUGHTS:

"We need to keep the fossil fuels
in the ground."

MY THOUGHTS:

"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 as if
the house was on fire. Because it is."

MY THOUGHTS:

CRAFT AND STRUCTURE

To learn about craft and structure, the Common Core State Standards ask us to help students learn and understand vocabulary words and phrases (RI.K–3.4), think about the features of nonfiction text (RI.K–3.5), and assess the author’s point of view (RI.K–3.6). The questions and activities below emphasize these understandings.

1. Looking Closely at the Features of Nonfiction.

- Looking at the Words: The author repeats the words *she saw* and *Greta saw* to emphasize the number of things Greta learns about climate change. Read the sentences below to see how the author does this, and then answer the question that follows:

“*She saw* ice melting into the sea, disappearing.

She saw mighty winds and torrential rains
howling across the land.

She saw coral reefs, deep down in the sea, pale as ghosts,
bleached by the warming waters.

Greta saw living creatures everywhere,
struggling to stay alive.

Greta saw floodwaters covering houses
and people and animals.

She saw cities swallowed under rising oceans.

She saw the smoldering sun scorch the earth,
leaving it bone-dry.

She saw blazing wildfires racing through the forests.”

- Discuss the Following Question: How does the repetition of *she saw* and *Greta saw* help you understand why Greta decided she had to do something?

2. Activity 2: Looking at Illustrations. See page 6.

3. Using Large Print to Pose Questions. Very large print is used to raise questions for readers to think about. Greta asks, “CAN YOU HEAR US?” The author asks, “WHAT WILL YOU DO?” Discuss your answers to these two questions.

The text "WHAT WILL YOU DO?" is displayed in a large, bold, blue font with a rough, textured appearance, resembling hand-painted or weathered letters. The words are arranged in two lines: "WHAT WILL" on the top line and "YOU DO?" on the bottom line.

4. Activity 3: Interesting Sentences. See page 7.

5. What does the author think about Greta’s call to save the planet? How do you know? At the very end of the book, the author writes, “When I heard her speeches, I felt Greta was speaking for me. And I’m eighty years old.” Do you feel that Greta is speaking for you? Explain your answer.

Look at the words and illustrations below, and then answer the question that follows.

A colorful illustration of a young girl with red hair in a braid, looking up at a large screen. The screen displays a collage of various animals from different habitats: a polar bear on an ice floe, two penguins on another ice floe, a white cat on a rock, a bee, a monarch butterfly, a dolphin, a koala on a tree branch, a mouse, and a sea turtle. The background of the screen is a mix of blue, purple, and pink. The girl is holding a black stuffed animal.

What additional information is included in the illustrations but not in the words showing what Greta saw?

How does the illustrator use color to show us that Greta went from feeling invisible to being visible?

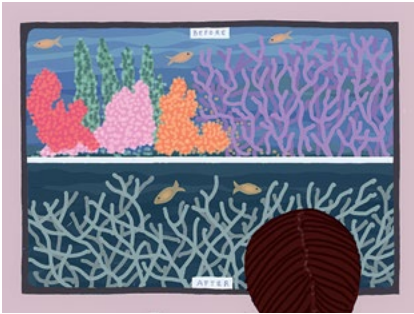
What do you notice about where Greta is placed in the illustration?

Are children in front of her or behind her? What does that tell you?

ACTIVITY 3: INTERESTING SENTENCES

In each of the sentences below, the author uses interesting word choices to discuss climate change.

Examine each sentence carefully and then write down what you notice about the author's word choices.



“She saw coral reefs, deep down in the sea, pale as ghosts...”

WHAT I NOTICE:



“She saw cities swallowed under rising oceans.”

WHAT I NOTICE:



“She saw the smoldering sun scorch the earth, leaving it bone-dry.”

WHAT I NOTICE:



“She saw blazing wildfires racing through the forests.”

WHAT I NOTICE:



“Her quiet voice, joined by thousands of voices, became a roar.”

WHAT I NOTICE:

WRITING

The Common Core State Standards emphasize writing informative and explanatory text in the early grades. The writing activities below provide experience writing to give an opinion (W.K-3.1), to inform (W.K-3.2), and to explain a sequence of events (W.K-3.3).

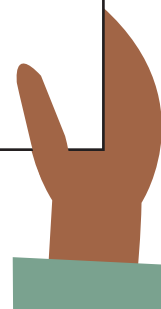
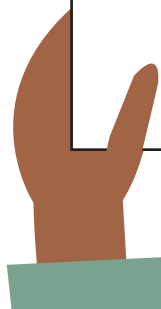
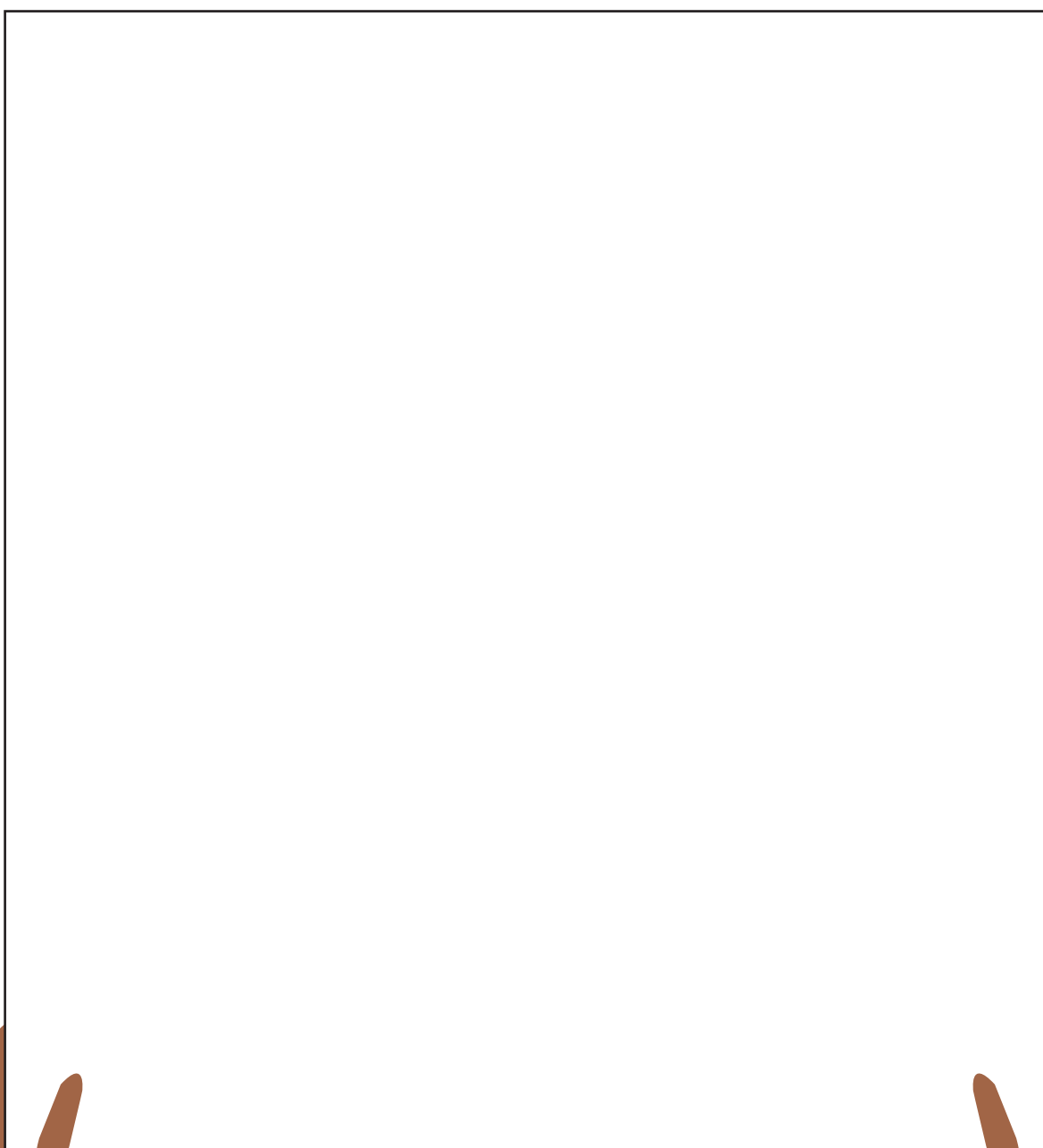
1. Activity 4: Make your own sign. See page 9.
2. What do you think about Greta's urgent message? Is she right to say older generations are "stealing" children's futures, and that people should feel panic and fear? Write a paragraph or two with your thoughts.
3. Imagine you could spend a day with Greta. What would you see, hear, and do? Describe and illustrate the day's events. What would come first, second, and third?
4. Answer the BIG question in the book, "WHAT WILL YOU DO?" in more detail. How can you make others aware of the problem of climate change? What steps can you take in your own life?
5. Look carefully at the illustration below, which shows children protesting. Then write about the photo. Here are some ideas for writing:
 - What do you think the kids would say if they were asked why they were protesting?
 - What do you think Greta would say to the protestors?
 - Write a description of the scene. Think about the group's energy and how long kids may have been standing there. What are they trying to accomplish?
 - Imagine that you are in the illustration. Tell what is happening.



ACTIVITY 4: MAKE YOUR OWN SIGN

Make your own sign. Imagine that you could join the children shown in the illustration on the front and back cover of the book and inside the book. Design a sign you would like to hold up. Follow these steps:

- First, read the signs on the book cover and inside the book. What do you notice about them? List your findings. Here are some examples to get you started:
 - Signs have limited text, usually between two and five words.
 - Some signs tell what people should do. Others tell what not to do.
- Second, decide what you want to say about climate change.
- Third, make an original sign. Use color to emphasize important words.



1. Watch videos of Greta Thunberg:

- [Greta Thunberg: The Disarming Case to Act Right Now on Climate Change](#). Watch Greta's TED talk in which she explains why it is important to act right now.
- [Greta Thunberg's Speech at the UN Climate Change Conference](#). Watch Greta at the 2018 UN Climate Change Conference.
- [Greta Thunberg's Emotional Speech to EU Leaders](#). Listen to Greta's emotional speech in which she explains that "our house is on fire."
- [Hundreds of Young People Join Greta Thunberg in Climate Change Protest](#). Watch the crowd of young people outside the UN.
- [Greta and Svante Thunberg—Straight Talk](#). Watch Greta and her father discuss climate change.

2. Read other books by Jeanette Winter:

- *Nasreen's Secret School: A True Story from Afghanistan*
- *Biblioburro: A True Story from Colombia*
- *Henri's Scissors*
- *Malala: A Brave Girl From Pakistan* and *Iqbal: A Brave Boy from Pakistan*
- *Mr. Cornell's Dream Boxes*
- *Nanuk the Ice Bear*
- *The World Is Not a Rectangle: A Portrait of Architect Zaha Hadid*
- *The Secret Project* (written by Jonah Winter, illustrated by Jeanette Winter)
- *Oil* (written by Jonah Winter, illustrated by Jeanette Winter)
- *Sisters: Venus and Serena Williams*

3. Read other books about climate change

- *Hopping Ahead of Climate Change: Showshoe Hares, Science, and Survival* by Sneed B. Collard III
- *Out of the Ice: How Climate Change Is Revealing the Past* by Claire Eamer
- *The Brilliant Deep: Rebuilding the World's Coral Reefs* by Kate Messner
- *Spring After Spring: How Rachel Carson Inspired the Environmental Movement* by Stephanie Roth Sisson
- *How Can We Reduce Fossil Fuel Pollution?* by Andrea Wang
- *If Polar Bears Disappeared* by Lily Williams

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