No One Is Too Small to Make a Difference

By Greta Thunberg

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Penguin

Paperback | 9780143133568 | 160 pp | \$12.00

Reading Level: Grades 6-12 + AP/IB

INTRODUCTION -

In 2019, *Time Magazine* named sixteen year old Greta Thunberg their "Person of the Year." Dubbing the Swedish teen a "Climate Warrior," the magazine heralded Greta's "Fridays for Future" school strikes that initiated a global climate advocacy movement. The phenomenal press already surrounding Greta increased exponentially. To climate scientists, Greta has become an impressive and effective spokesperson. To conservative politicians, she is at least a nuisance, and at best, a threat. But to youth across the globe, Greta is the ultimate social media influencer. And it is this massive, global popularity that presents a compelling hook for today's students and teachers.

Greta's engaging speeches, most of which are recorded on Youtube, can be used as scaffolds to build scientific knowledge and provide access to other, more complex texts in science, social studies, and language arts. Educators can assign her collection of speeches in their entirety, or they might ask students to read selected texts that align with course goals. Likewise, teachers can assign any combination of this guide's classroom activities, which ask students to read critically, write persuasively, speak civically, and publish ethically.

Whether teachers use her writing to explain the carbon cycle, illustrate civil disobedience, or model argumentative rhetoric, Thunberg's texts address global issues and essential truths while inspiring students to listen, to speak, and to advocate. Though her stature is small, Greta's impact is huge, and her speeches teach students and adults alike that no one is too small to make a difference.

Teacher's Guide

INCLUDES:

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS, CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES, AND LINKS TO RESOURCES

CRETA
THUNBERG

UPDATED
WITH
NEW
SPEECHES

NO ONE
IS TOO SMALL
TO MAKE
A DIFFERENCE

PREPARING TO READ THE TEXT

BUILD KNOWLEDGE

Before reading Thunberg's speeches, provide equitable access for all students by building their knowledge around politics, science, and current events. This includes a deliberate focus on vocabulary.

Film Trailer Analysis

As a class, watch the trailer to "I Am Greta," a documentary of Greta's life and climate work. Ask students to look for and record any striking images, words, or phrases while watching the video clip. For example, students might notice the visual of a sailboat in stormy seas, a solitary strike outside Swedish Parliament or a speech in front of numerous politicians. They might also note the urgency of the soundtrack or compelling one-liners such as "I want you to panic." Afterwards, students can turn and talk to a classmate, sharing their observations. One engaging and effective routine for this collaboration is called *Cyber Sandwich*. In this partner protocol, students use a three column note taker to compare and contrast their observations. The outside columns are for each partner to silently jot down individual notes. When the pairs are ready to talk, they record their common observations in the middle column. This collaborative routine builds interest and facilitates thinking through active speaking and listening.

- Cyber Sandwich template https://www.eduprotocols.com/cyber-sandwichtemplate.
- "I Am Greta" film trailer: http://tiny.cc/IAmGretaTrailer

Station Rotation

Introduce students to climate change science and politics by creating a "stations" learning experience. Explain that by the end of the period, students will be able to answer the following question: How have specific concepts, organizations, and events led Thunberg to her campaign for climate justice? Split students into small groups at various points around the room, designated by labeled chart paper on the wall or tables. In online and hybrid environments, students can meet in breakout room stations and collaborate using Padlet.com or Google Jamboard. Each station represents a topic significant to No One Is Too Small to Make a Difference. Stations are set up with an image, audio clip, video, infographic, or short text that groups quickly research and discuss before writing a summary on the chart paper. When groups have had sufficient time at a station, they can move to the next one where they will examine the resources and add to what has already been noted. Though not every station must be visited by each group, students will eventually return to their original station, read their classmates' notes, and synthesize them into a clearly written summary statement that demonstrates the significance of this concept or event to Thunberg's text or to the current climate change landscape. Stations (with possible resources) might include:

- Asperger Syndrome https://www.cnn.com/videos/health/2012/12/21/exp-gupta-eitm-aspergers.cnn (video)
- Fridays for Future Student Protests
 http://tiny.cc/NPRFridaysforFuture (image and article)

PREPARING TO READ THE TEXT (CONTINUED)

- The Green New Deal http://tiny.cc/GreenNewDeal (infographic)
- The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC)
 https://www.carbonbrief.org/in-depth-qa-ipccs-special-report-on-climate-change-at-one-point-five-c (panel report)
- The Paris Agreement
 http://tiny.cc/UNParisAgreement (website)
 https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2021/01/20/paris-climate-agreement/ (news release)
- Sixth Mass Extinction https://www.britannica.com/explore/savingearth/postcards-from-the-6th-mass-extinction (podcast)

Word Bank

Thunberg's speeches are characterized by complex science terminology. To ensure equity and access, students may need intentional vocabulary instruction essential for comprehending specific speeches. Rather than assigning the entire list, preteach the words that will be important in that day's lesson. Ask students to stop and note when these words are used in the speech. After reading, have students rephrase meanings with partners or in writing. Science vocabulary that appears throughout Thunberg's speeches includes:

biosphere global warming
carbon budget greenhouse gases
carbon emissions carbon dioxide
climate change feedback loops
climate neutrality fossil fuels

global equity zero carbon solutions

READING THE TEXT

Thunberg delivered the speeches in *No One Is Too Small to Make a Difference* over the course of two years, September 2018 to June 2020. While the topic of each speech is similar, Greta's focus and tone depend on her audience and event. The main points can be categorized into three big ideas: advocacy, urgency, and accountability. Depending on purpose and goals, teachers from multiple content areas can select activities from any of these categories. For many of the activities, teachers can select a different one of Greta's speeches.

BIG IDEA #1: ADVOCACY

Greta repeatedly wonders why no one is talking about climate change when clearly, we all need to be. She asserts the need for all of us to find our voice and use it. The following classroom activities focus on studying rhetoric, analyzing arguments, and using our individual and collective voices.

Conversation Starters

- What does it mean to be an advocate?
- How do we speak truth to power?

See, Think, Wonder

In December 2019, Time magazine named Greta Thunberg Time's "Person of the Year." As a class, use the thinking routine "See, Think, Wonder" to discuss Time's article detailing Greta's accomplishments. Begin by asking students to peruse the many photos accompanying the text. Ask, "what do you see?" Students should notice that in most of the photos, Greta stands either alone or in stark contrast to those around her. Pose the question "what do you think about that?" Here, students should pose possible reasons Greta has been depicted this way. Reasoning will most likely center on Greta's solitary role as an activist, or as the article suggests, a climate "warrior." Finally, as students read the article, ask them to annotate the text with inferences, questions, or "wonderings." Students' seeing, thinking, and wondering provide a framework of inquiry as they read about Greta's climate activism. After reading, encourage students to share their thinking. Next, project images of the political cartoons that appeared after Greta's award was made public. Ask students to apply the "See, Think, Wonder" routine again, this time to the images. Discuss: What patterns do we see in these various cartoons? How do the artists depict Thunberg and her activism? Students should notice how Greta is depicted as "large" despite her stature, how she stands on the precipice of change while adults stick their heads in the sand or refuse to notice rising sea levels. Ask students: What can we learn about the definition of "advocate" after reading this article and analyzing the associated images?

- Time magazine article: http://tiny.cc/GretaTimeMag
- Political cartoons: http://tiny.cc/GretaPoliticalCartoon

Rhetorical Analysis

Using Greta's "Unpopular" speech, delivered at the U.N. Climate Change Conference in December 2018, ask students to conduct a close read using the SPACECAT rhetorical analysis protocol. With this protocol, students think critically and discuss meaningfully the argument and craft Greta employs, ultimately determining her purpose and how it is supported by authorial choice. Ask students to identify and analyze specific words, phrases, and sentences aligned to speaker, purpose, audience, context, exigence (rhetorical situation), choices, appeals, and tone. Partners can compare their thinking before discussing as a whole class. In "Unpopular," students might identify Greta's emotional appeal to politicians who are grandparents, her logical argument about children doing the work adults should be doing, and her ethical appeal concerning countries that live in luxury. After partners complete their analysis, ask the class: How might we define Greta's specific purpose(s)? How do the choices made in "Unpopular" support that purpose? Through their analysis, students should see how Thunberg's rhetorical choices result in a chiding, ironic tone that reveals her ultimate purpose, to warn those in power that "the real power belongs to the people" (14). As an extension, show students the video recording of Greta's "Unpopular" address. Ask, how does watching the video add to or change your interpretation of Thunberg's text?

• "Unpopular" video: http://tiny.cc/UnpopularVid

Instagram Influencers

In "Our Lives Are in Your Hands," Greta Thunberg challenges "all the influencers who stand up for everything except the climate and the environment" (3). She tells them, "This is a cry for help." Ask students to turn and talk with a partner: What does it mean to be an "influencer" in today's society? Who are some well-known influencers and what causes, products, or practices do they promote? As a class, share answers and then return to Greta's speech. Ask, what does Greta ask of and imply about these famous social media personalities? Do you agree? To inform the class discussion, peruse with the class the link "Nine Inspiring Instagram Accounts for Teens to Follow." In this post, Greta Thunberg's Instagram account is rated number one. As a class, analyze Greta's Instagram posts, which are linked on the website and can be found at @gretathunberg. Ask students to discuss the big ideas from Greta's account. Next, invite students to read about other teen activists in this article and in Unicef's "Teen. Girl. Activist." Students might select one teen advocate to read about and share out to the class. Finally, challenge students to consider their own values, beliefs, and self-efficacy. Ask them to complete a quick-write about a cause they support or would like to learn more about. In the guick-write, students should brainstorm ways they might advocate for this cause, no matter how small. As an extension, students might use these quick-writes as drafts for a more formal informational or argumentative essay, or for the advocacy speech assignment in the last section of this guide.

- Nine Inspiring Instagram Accounts for Teens to Follow: https://powerfulyouth.com/inspiring-instagram-accounts-for-teens/
- "Teen, Girl, Activist": http://tiny.cc/TeenGirlActivist

BIG IDEA #2: URGENCY

Thunberg wants her listeners to "act like we are in a crisis." Greta says that we have the facts—now we must act on them. She asserts that what we know about climate change is not political and not opinion. It is science, and we must unite behind it. The following classroom activities focus on information analysis and the science of climate change.

Conversation Starters

- What do we already know about climate change?
- What is our responsibility towards the planet?

Thin Slides

In "You're Acting Like Spoiled, Irresponsible Children," Greta says, "We know that most politicians don't want to talk to us. Good, we don't want to talk to them either. We want them to talk to the scientists instead" (33). Ask students to generate a list of specific scientific issues Greta references in this speech, such as tipping points, feedback loops, methane gas, and Arctic permafrost. Let students choose a topic, conduct a quick read of a reputable online or classroom resource, and create a "thin slide" to share on a class slide deck or Jamboard. Because students rather than

teachers find the source evidence, thin slides differ from the station rotation activity listed earlier. With thin slides, students claim a slide and post an image and one phrase or summary sentence on it before sharing with their classmates. Images can be copied from the internet or hand-drawn and uploaded using the computer camera. Explanations can be presented aloud or recorded on the slides using Mote or another recording tool. As an extension, ask students to hyperlink their slides with websites, infographics, video clips, or podcasts. Classmates can listen and take notes together or peruse slides online. Possible resources include:

- http://tiny.cc/WaPoBK
- http://tiny.cc/NASAClimate
- http://tiny.cc/ScientificAmericanArctic

Carbon Cycle Compare/Contrast

Thunberg introduces her "Cathedral Thinking" speech with the now famous "My name is Greta Thunberg . . . And I want you to panic" (43). She explains that a person who sees their house is on fire and wants to keep it from burning to the ground should feel some level of panic. After reading, show students the video clip from April 16, 2019, where Greta delivers this speech to the European Parliament. Discuss: How does watching Greta deliver this speech add to your understanding of her purpose? How does her depiction of our planet as "a house on fire" support this purpose? Ask students to re-read the section where Greta says, "Erosion of fertile top soil. Deforestation of our great forests. Toxic air pollution. Loss of insects and wildlife. The acidification of our oceans" (46). Discuss how Greta uses purposeful fragments here to create an urgent tone. Point out that by purposely listing these events in a particular order, Greta is explaining the impact of fossil fuels on the Earth's carbon cycle. Show students the Smithsonian's short video "How Carbon Affects Nearly Everything on Earth, Including Our Future," posted in their article on ocean acidification. Ask students to compare the carbon cycle explained in the video to Greta's fragmented list. Students should note that Greta's description is accurate and based on science. Now direct students further into the speech, where Greta insists, "That is why I keep telling you to unite behind the science. Make the best available science the heart of politics and democracy" (50). Ask students: Consider the speech's initial analogy. What does Greta mean when she says our house is on fire? Is she right? Should we panic?

• Smithsonian video: http://tiny.cc/SmithsonianOcean

Mapping New Technology

In her October 2019 speech "We Are a Wave of Change," Thunberg admonishes her audience to "stop leaving your mess for someone else to clean up" (115). Greta details the problem in "We Are Fighting for Everyone's Future," where she warns her audience that the current CO2 budgeting projections "rely on our generation removing astronomical amounts of previous generations' CO2 out of the atmosphere with technologies that haven't yet been invented at scale, and maybe never will" (110). The very next month, *Forbes* published an article about a team of MIT engineers who have developed a battery type device designed to remove

carbon dioxide from the air in almost any concentration. This green technology, known as electroswing adsorption, is a carbon capture game changer due to its ability to address smaller amounts of CO2. Ask students to partner-read the Forbes article, "Electroswing Tech: Batteries that Absorb Carbon?" Using the process of distributed summarizing, direct students to annotate big ideas in the article margins, either digitally or by hand. Once pairs have completed their annotations, tell them to create a simple flow map that sequences these ideas in steps understandable to a younger reader. Students might post their maps in gallery walk fashion on a class Jamboard, responding to their classmates' work. Together as a class, discuss: How does the electroswing system compare to other carbon capture technologies? In what ways might Greta Thunberg's detractors appreciate the potential profit? Point out the last two sentences of the Forbes article: "The technology is potentially revolutionary if it can scale economically. That remains a big if, however." Ask students, how does this echo Greta's "Wave of Change" speech? As an extension, students might research other carbon capture technologies as well as the practice of carbon trading.

• Forbes article: http://tiny.cc/ForbesBatteries

BIG IDEA #3: ACCOUNTABILITY

Thunberg believes that every one of us, from powerful politicians to individual school children, has an innate social responsibility to think to the future, educate ourselves and others, and hold ourselves accountable for our actions. Even when this means civil disobedience, it is the right thing to do. The following classroom activities focus on civics, transparency, and equity.

Conversation Starters

- What is equity and how does it apply to the climate crisis?
- Whose job is it to save the planet?
- What is the relationship between politics and science?

Civil Disobedience Deep-Dive

In "Almost Everything Is Black and White," Greta addresses the arguments surrounding school strikes. She asserts, "We can't save the world by playing by the rules. Because the rules have to be changed . . . It is now time for civil disobedience. It is time to rebel" (11). As a class, discuss the concept of civil disobedience. Explain how the concept harkens back to Henry David Thoreaus's "On the Duty of Civil Disobedience." On the white board, post Thoreau's famous assertion: "I ask for, not at once no government, but at once a better government." Ask students to respond to the quotation with a quick-write before opening up class discussion. Talking points might include: How might we define "a better government?" Is Thoreau justifying anarchy or does he mean something else? What are effective methods of showing "disobedience" to powerful people or organizations? Next, assign small groups a famous social dissenter such as Mahatma Gandhi, Cesar Chavez, Henry David Thoreau, or Rosa Parks. Ask groups to research their particular social issues,

means of protest, and societal impact. Using Google Slides, Padlet, or Jamboard, groups can share their findings. Then, ask students to read "Almost Everything Is Black in White" and compare Greta's civil disobedience with these famous predecessors. How would Greta define "a better government" when it comes to climate change action? Cite specific evidence from her speech.

Opposing Viewpoints

In Thunberg's speech "Wherever I Go, I Seem to be Surrounded by Fairy Tales," the activist chides Congress about "creative accounting" (88) designed to "soothe" and "make us go back to sleep" (86). She demands transparency in climate legislation, cites scientific research, and insists that "these numbers . . . aren't anyone's opinions or political views" (90-91). She explains that these are global issues that require a stance of equity, meaning "richer countries need to do their fair share and get down to zero emissions much faster, so that people in poorer countries can heighten their standard of living" (91). Discuss The Green New Deal, the controversial congressional resolution introduced by Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez and Edward J. Markey. Ask students to read the New York Times article "What is the Green New Deal? A Climate Proposal, Explained." After reading, ask students to analyze the pros and cons of green energy as seen through a political lens. As a class, create two multi-flow maps. One represents the impacts of The Green New Deal from the supporters' point of view, and the second represents impacts from the opposing point of view. Evidence can be drawn from the *Times* article and from any of Greta's speeches. Discuss: How might we summarize these different points of view? How do politics and the economy inform these perspectives? Now ask the class to apply an equity lens. Ask student pairs to read and discuss Climate One's article on climate equity, which poses the green energy concerns of low income, immigrant, and minority Americans. Students should watch the linked video, detailing data on the level of concern surrounding climate, green energy, and people of color. Partners should then create a third multi-flow map illustrating this group's perspective on the possible impacts of green energy. The map should include both positive and cautionary impacts. Finally, show students the short 2019 New York Times video "How Politicians Are Reacting to the Green New Deal." Ask: How are opposing sides depicted in this video? In what ways do politicians (such as Kamala Harris and Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez) echo Greta Thunberg? As an extension, ask students to read Greta's "There Is Hope" speech, where she says, "The real danger is when politicians and CEOs are making it look like real action is happening, when in fact almost nothing is being done, apart from clever accounting and creative PR" (127). Discuss: How does this speech, given three months later, expand on the transparency issues introduced in Thunberg's "Fairytale" speech?

- Climate One's Climate Equity article: https://www.climateone.org/events/ climate-equity
- New York Times article: http://tiny.cc/NYTGreenNewDeal
- New York Times video: http://tiny.cc/NYTGreenNewDealVid

Connect, Extend, Challenge

Deepen students' understanding of the Paris Climate Accord and America's role in its potential impact. Show the class the United Nations' "What Is the Paris Agreement" video and ask students to make note of this international treaty's main goal: to lower global warming to pre-industrial levels, meaning lower than 2 degrees Celsius, and preferably 1.5 Celsius. After watching, ask: what type of economic and social transformation does it include? What are Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs)? Now ask students to read "A Guide to the Biden Administration's All-in-Government to Environmental Justice," from the Earth Institute at Columbia University. While reading, students should take notes on the article using the "connect, extend, challenge" protocol. Annotations include "connections" to Thunberg's speeches, new information and ideas that "extend" their thinking, and "challenges" or confusing areas. After reading, discuss as a class: How did changes in national leadership and the coronavirus pandemic impact the goals and plans for the Paris Agreement's first five year cycle in 2020? What is the All-in-Government approach? How will politicians and scientists work together to carry out the plan? Students can work in groups to look back at the article and focus on one of the ten U.S. government agencies and their proposed plans for incorporating environmental justice in their policies. Using flipgrid.com, partners can record a quick summary of each plan and post it to the class grid.

- UN's Paris Agreement video: http://tiny.cc/UNParisAgreementVid
- Earth Institute Article: http://tiny.cc/EarthInstituteArticle

SYNTHESIZING THE TEXT

These activities provide opportunity to reflect on the big ideas in Greta's speeches and to engage in public forums connecting students to the world in which they live.

Advocacy Speech

Help students see themselves as writers and advocates. Point out that Greta establishes her voice as an advocate by first writing, then speaking. Invite students to choose an advocacy topic of personal interest, possibly from the "Instagram" Influencers" activity earlier in this guide. Using one of Greta's speeches as a mentor text, challenge students to write and deliver their own speeches. First, students should analyze the effective strategies Greta uses by selecting one of her speeches, sectioning it into smaller components, and annotating in between those sections. While annotating, students should explain the effectiveness of the words, tone, and techniques Greta employs. Through this process, students identify those strategies they wish to emulate. Next, ask students to write their own advocacy speech, integrating one or more of the rhetorical techniques they identified in their chosen Thunberg speech. Finally, ask students to annotate their own speech by breaking it into sections and analyzing their writer's choices, just as they did for the mentor text. As an extension, students might film themselves delivering the speech and overlay the delivery with video clips or text explaining their strategies. For more information on using mentor texts to develop writer's voice, visit the New York Times "Annotated by the Author Series" at http://tiny.cc/NYTMentorTexts.

SYNTHESIZING THE TEXT (CONTINUED)

Socratic Seminar

To promote civic discourse, conduct a Socratic Seminar based on a close read of Greta's speech "The Easiest Solution Is Right in Front of You." Prior to the seminar, discuss with students what an ideal seminar looks and sounds like, including participation, active listening, and respect of multiple viewpoints. Ask students to set a class goal, such as "I will contribute to the discussion at least one time," as well as a personal goal, such as, "I will mention a classmate's name and extend on or disagree with his thinking." Students should record their goals on paper or stickynotes which are visible during the seminar. During the discussion, take a facilitator's role. Ask a low-risk opening question to encourage total class participation in a round-robin response, such as "What is the single most important word or phrase in this speech?" This question might be provided the night before. Its purpose is to identify the text's main ideas. Then, move to a core question for the purpose of analyzing text details, such as: "In her 'Easiest Solution' speech, Greta proclaims climate change to be 'the biggest crisis humanity has ever faced" (70). To what extent does she support her claim? End the discussion with a closing question that promotes personalization, such as "How might the big ideas in this speech impact you, your family, or our community?" Ask students to evaluate their own and their classmates' speaking, thinking, and listening. Did they meet their class and personal goals? What should the class do differently in the next seminar discussion? How did the seminar deepen their understanding of the speech and Greta's work?

Multimedia Product

Challenge students to produce an in-depth multimedia response to one of the "conversation starter" questions posed throughout this guide. Then, ask students to create their own multimedia response to the question, integrating ideas from Greta's speeches with outside research and their own thinking. For example, students might choose Whose job is it to save the planet? Their product could include sections on the roles of scientists, environmentalists, and youth. Or the product might have a more narrow focus, such as Congress and The Green New Deal. On this product, students may post an excerpt from Greta's "Hope" speech, where she responds to the idea that the coronavirus pandemic is an opportunity to "restart the economy" with a "green recovery plan" (144). Or, students might choose a different compelling question, such as, How do we speak truth to power? They might post a quote from Greta's "The People Are the Hope" speech, where she says, "While we young people may not be able to vote . . . we have something just as powerful. Our voices." Their product could inform an audience of a specific advocacy movement such as the Stoneman Douglas High School tragedy, or it could elevate an individual such as Stacey Abrams and her voting rights work. Students should research online resources that bridge Greta's speeches with science, culture, or politics (either historic or contemporary). Responses reflect individual student choice and interests, and might include:

- A podcast using free audio recording and editing software such as Audacity http://tiny.cc/AudacityTool.
- A "Ted Talk" type video speech complete with scripted narration aided by cue cards. Students can use cell phones or tablets to record their talks.

SYNTHESIZING THE TEXT (CONTINUED)

- A digital story using iMovie or Windows Movie Maker. Digital stories combine narration and still images and are easily created on student laptops.
- An interactive webpage that combines multiple digital features to tell a story.
 With Google Sites or Adobe Spark http://tiny.cc/AdobeSpark, students can combine text, social graphics, video, and audio.

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