



# Our Shared Problem

## By Mia Ferguson, Grade 4

In the same way that kids know that candy is bad for them but still do not stop eating it, humans also want a lot of stuff even though they know it is bad for the environment. Or do they? I learned that candy and sugar were bad for me when I was around five. I was at the park with my father and I saw a blind dog. I asked the owner why the dog was blind and she told me that the dog has diabetes. On the walk home, I asked my dad what diabetes was and he told me it is a disease you can get from eating too much sugar. This seemed scary to me. Something as good and normal as sugar could do something really bad to me. People do not realize that so many of the normal things they do are causing so much harm to the Earth. I try to resist my sweet tooth craving even when my dad is not there to tell me "no". We should look at climate change the same way.

Greta Thunberg is an important person in the fight against climate change. Greta has been shaming governments into making sure we fight climate change. This is important but it is just as important to get everyone to understand how they have to change their behaviours in order to help the Earth. We are killing the Earth; all of us. Governments need to change and we need to change. Greta focuses on changing government which is important but it is not enough; we all have to learn about how each of us can help the earth and prevent climate change.

Greta crossed the Atlantic twice visiting North America and Europe in order to spread the word about the need for governments to fight climate change. During this trip she said, "We must see that climate change is happening and fight against it, and spread awareness to people and the people in power. And the USA has an election and we should vote for a president who will help us fight climate change." In this quote she is saying that voters must be responsible by voting for a president who will make climate change a priority. President Trump has not prioritized climate change. Instead, he has favoured money for himself and big businesses who actually make climate change worse by polluting and cutting down forests and other natural habitats. In her speech, Greta says, "The US is officially withdrawing from the Paris agreement, the international deal to curb emissions of heat-trapping gases which raise temperatures and exacerbate dangerous extreme weather and are projected to intensify poverty worldwide. Donald Trump has rejected climate science, backing the expansion of the fossil fuel industry in the US and abroad." Greta feels the best way to fight climate change is to vote for a candidate who makes the environment an important issue. She calls everyone to action when she says, "Save the planet no matter how hard it is."

Greta is inspirational and makes some good points but it is not enough. Just like I cannot rely on my father to always stop me from eating too much candy, we cannot rely on our governments to lead us. I had to learn how unhealthy candy can be so that I can decide for myself and stop myself from eating too much of it and each one of us must also understand how much we contribute to the climate crisis. For example, there is an article I read about Christmas that said that our behaviour during Christmas is bad for the environment. We buy too many new things which need to be produced, we put up Christmas lights which wastes energy, we get toys delivered from the internet, we eat too much food, and so on. Many people



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I love Christmas but it is just one example of how much damage we can do. In so many ways, our normal habits and behaviours cause problems for the environment. Governments and companies just give us what we want. They are not any more evil than we are. If we change our habits, they will have to change the way they do business.

It is always easy to blame 'others'. We are 'others' so we must accept the blame because we do not think about how we are destroying our own home. We can blame governments, we can blame our parents' or grandparents' generation but this will not solve the problem. If I get sick from eating too much candy I should not blame my father anymore because now I know better. We have to make sure everyone knows better when it comes to the environment. This is why education is important. Greta is doing her part and I must do mine. We have to change our habits to make the environment the most important thing.