

A pair of hands, one from the left and one from the right, are shown holding a small, realistic globe of the Earth. The hands are cupped together, supporting the globe from below. The globe shows continents in green and yellow, and oceans in blue. The background is dark and out of focus.

**Greta Thunberg**

Life and Work

# Who is Greta Thunberg

Greta Tintin Eleonora Ernman Thunberg is a Swedish environmental activist known for provoking world leaders to take immediate action for climate change moderation. She works to combat global warming and climate change. She has been described as a model of global youth activism and a symbol of ecological consciousness.



# Early life

Greta Thunberg was born on 3 January 2003, in Stockholm, Sweden. Her mother is Swedish opera singer Malena Ernman and her father is actor Svante Thunberg. Greta heard about climate change for the first time when she was eight years old and she could not understand why people were not concerned about the environment. At the age of eleven, she became depressed and stopped talking and eating much. Afterwards, she was diagnosed with Asperger syndrome, an obsessive-compulsive disorder and selective mutism.



# The beginning of climate activism



Greta Thunberg's climate activism began when she urged her parents to adopt lifestyle choices that would minimize her family's carbon footprint. At age 15, she started skipping school on 20 August 2018, promising to remain out of school until after the national Swedish election, in order to affect the result. She protested outside the Swedish parliament, demanding mighty climate change action, by holding up a School Strike for Climate sign and handing out informational flyers.



# Conference speech

On 21 February 2019, Greta spoke at a conference of the Economic and Social Committee and the Commission headed by Jean-Claude Juncker, where she encouraged the EU to keep on fighting for the environment. Furthermore, she demanded to reduce carbon dioxide emissions by at least 80% by 2030. Later, she participated in climate protests in Brussels.

“My message is that we will be watching you. This is all wrong. I should not 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!”

# Flight shame

Greta has grown the anti-flying movement, by promoting train travel over flying for environmental reasons. The buzzword associated with this movement is "*flygskam*" or "flight shame".

It is a situation in which people feel social pressure not to fly, due to the increasing greenhouse gas emissions of the airline industry. She supported the campaign to fly less and made it part of her 2019 "awareness tour" in Europe. As a result, in June 2019, Swedish Railways mentioned that the number of Swedes taking the train had risen by 8% from the previous year.

# Journey to New York

On 14 August 2019, Greta left Plymouth, a port city in South West England, for New York City 3,500 miles away. She arrived in New York on 28 August aboard a boat rather than a plane, to highlight the need to diminish carbon emissions damage to the planet. The ship had innovative equipment, since it did not contain a bathroom. Both crew and passengers were fed from cans, while a diet of vegetarian food was prepared for Greta. While sailing, the sailboat's sail featured slogans such as "United for Science" and "Fridays For Future", so as to promote climate protection.



# "The Greta effect"

Numerous politicians have recognised the need to pay attention to climate change. Britain's environmental secretary, Michael Gove, stated: "When I listened to you, I felt great admiration, but also responsibility and guilt. I am of your parents' generation, and I recognise that we have not done nearly enough to address climate change and the broader environmental crisis that we helped to create." Labour politician, Ed Miliband, said: "You have woken us up. Thank you. All the young people who have gone on strike have held up a mirror to our society. You have taught us a really important lesson. You have stood out from the crowd."





# Climate strike in Geneva *-September 2019*



The September 2019 climate strikes, also known as the Global Week for Future, were a series of worldwide strikes and protests, so as to call for action on climate change, which held from 20 to 27 September 2019. The protests took place across 4,500 locations in 150 countries.

# Honours and awards

Greta Thunberg has been nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize annually between 2019 and 2023. In 2019, she became the youngest-ever Time Person of the Year. She also won the Right Livelihood Award (known as the Alternative Nobel Prize) and Amnesty International's Ambassador of Conscience Award. She was listed by Forbes as one of the world's 100 most powerful women. In 2022, she brought out The Climate Book, which contains essays from 100 scientists, writers and activists about how to combat the climate crisis.





Project Pressure, *Voices for the Future*, projected a quote by Thunberg onto the United Nations building in New York in the lead up to the UN Climate Action Summit, 2019



A multi-story mural of Thunberg in Istanbul, Turkey

# Bibliography

- ▶ <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-49918719>
- ▶ <https://earth.org/greta-thunberg-quotes-speeches-to-inspire-climate-action/>
- ▶ [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Greta\\_Thunberg#Position\\_on\\_climate\\_change](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Greta_Thunberg#Position_on_climate_change)
- ▶ [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Transatlantic\\_voyages\\_of\\_Greta\\_Thunberg#Plymouth\\_to\\_New\\_York](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Transatlantic_voyages_of_Greta_Thunberg#Plymouth_to_New_York)
- ▶ <https://www.npr.org/2019/08/28/754818342/teen-climate-activist-greta-thunberg-arrives-in-new-york-after-sailing-the-atlan>