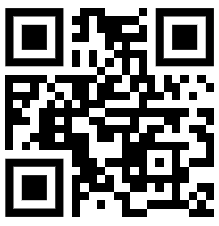
***Please read and complete the worksheet to prepare for the lesson. While you are reading the article, underline all the strategies and activities that young climate activists are using to fight climate change.***

**Climate Change or Climate Crisis?**

We can learn a lot about people’s opinions by the words they use to discuss an issue. For example, some people talk about the issue of “climate change” and some people argue that we are in a “climate crisis”. For four young climate activists who are taking steps to end the climate crisis, both words and actions are important. For these young warriors, we are not trying to slow down climate change. Instead, we are in a serious fight to stop a climate crisis. Why do they feel like the climate crisis is so dangerous? How are they fighting to stop the climate crisis? And what can we learn from them to help protect our future?

**Youth climate strikes**

One of the most important ways in which teenagers are taking the lead in the fight against climate change is through youth climate strikes. This movement is often identified as having been started by Greta Thunberg, a Swedish environmental activist. At the age of 15, Great began to miss school every Friday to protest outside of the Swedish Parliament. But Greta was not alone. Many other young people in countries around the world made Fridays for Future groups to promote awareness of the climate crisis and to get other young people to join the Friday school strikes. There is even a Fridays for Future group active in Japan.

Fridays for Future Japan webpage link.

In Germany, Luisa Neubauer is one of the most active and well-known members of Fridays for Future. Not only did she refuse to go to school on Fridays and use the time for climate activisim, she also started many other projects. With other young activists, she created a campaign to force universities to stop investing in companies that make money with coal, oil, or gas. Working to get institutions like universities and government pension funds to stop investing in fossil fuel companies is a new strategy. Luisa believes that if large institutions stop investing money in fossil fuel companies, it will deprive these companies of money and send a strong message that fossil fuel companies are damaging society.

**Sustainable living as daily life: avoiding plastics, reducing food waste, using less energy**

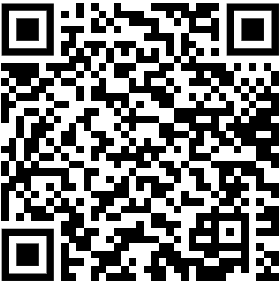
However, these teenagers’ commitment to the environment doesn't end with protests. Many young individuals are making sustainable living a part of their daily routine. They've stopped using single-use plastics. They also avoid buying products which damage the environment, such as soaps which contain micro-plastics. Activists like Lauren Singer have even pledged themselves to adopting a zero-waste lifestyle. Can you image living your daily life without ever throwing one thing away in a garbage can? Lauren believes that we all have to take more personal responsibility for fighting climate change. Since the year 2012, all of the trash that Lauren has created has fit into one 16-ounce jar! She is a zero-waste warrior. However, a zero-waste lifestyle requires teenagers to careful plan their meals to prevent food waste and even carry bags, mugs and eating utensils with themselves at all times so that they never have to use a plastic spoon or paper napkin.





Use this QR code to visit Lauren’s Instigram page.

Use this QR code to read more about a zero-waste lifestyle and to sign the Zero Waste Pledge



A true commitment to the environment also includes being a knowledgeable consumer. More and more teenagers are making their beliefs know with their shopping dollars. These teenagers are looking for companies that have eco-friendly practices and products. They believe that buying products only from environmental friendly companies will encourage companies in general to adopt more environmentally sustainable practices. For example, fast fashion companies such as Zara, H&M and even Uniqlo, have been identified as causing 20% of global water pollution and 10% of all human carbon emissions. When teenagers research where and how the clothing they wear is made, they are not only trying to reduce CO2 emissions and waste in general, but to change the way fashion companies do business. Perhaps $20 spent on a sweater seems like a small amount of money, but these dollars can have a significant collective impact when embraced by millions of teenagers.





Use this QR code to read more about a zero-waste lifestyle and environmentally aware shopping practices.

**Education and Awareness: notice more, learn more, do more**

Effective action starts first with awareness. We have to notice something is wrong before we can take steps to fix the problem. And if we want to fix the problem in the best way possible, education and understanding are two important tools to do the job right. So it is not surprising that environmental education is a key aspect of the teenage climate movement. Activists like Mitzi Jonelle Tan educate themselves about climate change, its consequences, and potential solutions. Mitzi is a member of Fridays for Future and also a leader of the Youth Climate Justice Fund. She uses social media platforms to reach a large audience so that young people around the world can understand the dangers of the climate crisis. For Mitzi, the climate crisis is not something that will happen in the future. Her home is in the Phillippines. Since 2012, the number of typhoons hitting this island country in December to February has increased by 210%. And every year there are an increasing number of super typhoons with wind speeds over 185 kph. For Mitzi, the climate cisis is already destroying the lives of the people she loves. So it is not surprising that she is always educating, encouraging, and promoting actions and events to fight the climate crisis.



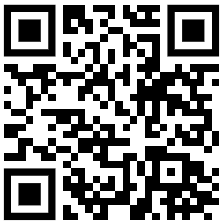
Use this QR code to read more about UNICEF’s Youth for Climate Action.

Use this QR code to visit Mitzi’s Instagram page

**Direct Action: planting, cleaning, building, inspiring**

Some teenagers go a step further by participating in local projects that protect the environment or promote renewable energy sources, like solar or wind power. Some volunteer with groups which install solar panel systems in impoverished communities. By providing renewable energy to poorer communities, these environmental activists are not only fighting global warming, but poverty as well. One example is Lesein Mutunkei, a soccer player and environmental activist who is dedicated to taking action to improve the environment. When he was around 11 years old, Lesein started hearing about deforestation, climate change and plastic pollution. In January 2018, Lesein decided he needed to do something and so he combined his love for football and his love for nature and committed to plant a tree for every goal he scored.

Leslie named this project, “Trees for Goals.” Since he started the project, Leslie has planted over 2000 trees and now sports teams all over the world have joined Leslie’s project, Trees For Goals. Trees for Goals members have planted over 5,500 trees around the world! But Leslie is doing even more. Leslie is working to help other young people create new ways to fight climate change. In 2022 he was selected as a board member of The Earth Prize, the most respected and famous environmental youth prize in the world. As a member of the Earth Prize, he can support other young people to start new projects to help stop the climate crisis.

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Use this QR code to learn more about the Earth Prize

Use this QR code to Leslie’s Instagram page.

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**What happens next?**

Looking to the future, the determination of young people to combat the climate crisis shows no sign of fading away. The four activists highlighted in this article, and the thousands of other young activists also fighting the climate crisis understand that the path to a sustainable planet is a long and challenging one. These environmentalists are planning to continue their activism and many of them hold long-term goals to become environmental scientists, green entrepreneurs, and global policymakers. They believe they have the passion, strength, and knowledge to drive the innovation, research, and policymaking needed bring about lasting change. They also intend to maintain their commitment to sustainable living and hope to inspire others to do the same. The actions of these environmental protectors, big and small, collectively form a formidable force working to ensure a more sustainable and environmentally friendly future. Their actions prove that teenagers are not just the problem solvers of the future; they are the problem solvers that we need right now.

***Class Review and Homework: Think of all the strategies and activities that young climate activists are using to fight climate change. Write the activities in the space below.***

***Give each of the strategies/activities a difficulty score between 1 to 10 (1=very easy for me to do and 10=extremely difficult for me to do).***

***Activities/Strategies for fighting climate change mentioned in the article and their difficulty score (there maybe be less than 10 activities/strategies in the article):***

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**Examples of activities/strategies mentioned in the article:**

1. Youth Climate Strikes: Teenagers are participating in climate strikes and protests to demand action from their governments. These strikes have gained significant attention and put pressure on leaders to take meaningful steps toward reducing carbon emissions.
2. Pressuring governments and universities to stop investing in fossil fuel companies: activists are making campaigns, getting signatures on petitions, and even working with lawmakers to stop public money from being invested in companies that make a profit off of gas, oil, or coal.
3. Sustainable Practices: Many teenagers are adopting sustainable practices in their daily lives, such as reducing single-use plastics, conserving energy, and using public transportation or carpooling.
4. Environmental Education: Young people are educating themselves about climate change and its effects on the planet. They are also spreading awareness among their peers, teachers, and communities.
5. Advocacy and Outreach: Teenagers are using social media platforms and other means to raise awareness about climate change and advocate for environmentally friendly policies. They engage with politicians and participate in climate-focused campaigns.
6. Reforestation Efforts: Many young people are actively participating in tree-planting initiatives to help reduce carbon dioxide levels in the atmosphere.
7. Zero-Waste Lifestyle: Some teenagers are striving to live a zero-waste lifestyle by minimizing waste and promoting recycling and composting. Food production has been estimated to result in 20% of greenhouse gases produced over a 5 year period, so reducing the food waste could lead to a large reduction in greenhouse gases.
8. Supporting Green Businesses: Teens are making informed consumer choices by supporting companies that prioritize eco-friendly practices and products.