

# GRETA'S STORY

A stylized illustration of a young girl with two braids, wearing a yellow raincoat with a grey hood and blue lining. She has rosy cheeks and is holding a large white rectangular sign with both hands. The background is white and filled with various stylized leaves in shades of teal, green, and yellow. The title 'GRETA'S STORY' is written in large, bold, teal capital letters at the top.

THE SCHOOLGIRL WHO  
WENT ON STRIKE TO  
SAVE THE PLANET

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SAMPLE  
TEXT

## CHAPTER 1

One summer morning, in Stockholm, Greta Thunberg decided she could no longer ignore the planet's predicament. Changes to the climate were more and more worrying and no-one seemed to be taking the problem seriously.

In parliaments all over the world hundreds of stern, serious politicians sat and discussed an endless list of issues. But they never addressed the question of the health of the planet. Greta felt that someone needed to remind them that they needed to step in to protect the environment – and the future of children all over the world, before it was too late. It was an emergency. Everything else could wait.

So on that day Greta tied her long hair into two plaits, put on a checked shirt and a blue coat, and walked out of the house where she lived with her parents. Under her arm she carried a wooden placard. Handwritten at the top were the words SKOLSTREJK FÖR KLIMATET ('School Strike for Climate'). She had also made some leaflets to distribute, with very important information about climate change that she thought everyone should know.

That day, Greta, like all the Swedish children her age, should have gone to school. In Sweden in August the holidays are over and classes start again. Instead, she climbed on her bike and rode to the parliament building in the city centre.

The Swedish parliament sits in a beautiful, serious-looking building which is large and imposing and occupies a small islet with

a complicated name in the middle of the city: Helgeandsholmen. That it's on an island is not at all surprising, because Stockholm is a city built on thousands of islands, some of them tiny and others so big that if you were flying over them you would think you were on the mainland.

The Riksdag, which is what the Swedes call it, is the place where politicians elected by the people sit and discuss the country's problems and pass the laws needed to address them and fix them. These are the people who can really make a difference. If they hadn't noticed that the need to stop global warming had become an emergency Greta would remind them.

Of course every single one of us, through our daily choices, can commit to fighting pollution and waste by reducing our impact on the health of the planet as much as possible. But unfortunately this is not enough. The actions of individual people are not enough. Faced with an issue as complex as this you have to change the rules and make new laws to protect the environment. Who else can do this if not the men and women sitting in the parliament? This is why Greta went there that morning.

On that morning – the 20th of August 2018 – Greta launched her school strike.

This is how she explained her reasoning: “Children don't do what you tell them to, but they will do what you do.” Because the adults didn't seem to be at all concerned about the future, she was prepared to take action. She would stop going to school. She would go on strike, like grown-ups do when they are protesting for their own reasons. Instead of going to work, they agree to meet in town squares and in the streets carrying placards and banners. The difference was that Greta was on her own and was protesting for everyone's benefit.

Passers-by looked at the girl with the placard and were curious, perhaps asking themselves who she was and what she was doing. She sat there for the time she would normally have been in class, from 8.30 in the morning until 3 in the afternoon. On the first day

she spent all that time by herself and none of the politicians took any notice. But Greta wasn't discouraged.

The next morning she got up early, dressed, climbed on her bike and went back to the parliament, again carrying her sign. The strike was continuing.

On the second day of her protest however, something incredible happened: a few passers-by, instead of glancing at her and wondering what she was doing there, and then walking straight past, decided to stop. Greta was no longer alone. There were other boys and girls beside her.

By the third day there was a nice little group of people sitting on the ground with her. They were mostly young but there was also a mother with a little boy in a stroller, a woman with white hair, and a student who had brought along a book to read. The protesters chatted among themselves. The last few days of that Swedish summer were still sunny.

On the sixth day of the strike, Greta started suggesting to everyone that they should talk about the protest on their social networks, sharing photos and information. That way, even people who couldn't join the protesters would be able to show their support with a message, a like or a share. The news about what was going on began to spread. Of course Greta played her part. Every day she took photos of the skolstrejk, the school strike, keeping a diary on Instagram. Friends, schoolmates and acquaintances started asking for information: can we come too? what time will we meet you? To Greta, everyone was welcome.

More and more people sat with her in front of the parliament building. They were on strike and had decided they would be late for work or school, would skip breakfast at their local café or not do their shopping. Day after day, the group of concerned citizens who had decided to follow her example and do what she suggested, confident that she was absolutely right, got bigger and bigger. They had to act to save the planet, as soon as possible and without delay.

The politicians walked past Greta on their way to their offices in the Riksdag. Although most of them continued to ignore her, occasionally someone would stop to congratulate her and tell her she was doing a great job.

Around the city, people started telling the story of Greta, the 15-year-old with plaits. The first newspaper reporters turned up, as well as some people who were just curious, and others who wanted to show their support. More and more mothers came with their children. There were grandparents and lots of young people. Someone brought Greta something to eat and drink.