

PLEASE SWITCH OFF YOUR ENGINE I AM TRYING TO BREATHE

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I'M GIVING UP CARS TO SAVE OUR WORLD!



Hope Jones' Blog

Hello.

Welcome to my blog.

My name is Hope Jones.

I am ten years old.

I am going to save the world.





'A man on foot, on horseback or on a bicycle will see more, feel more, enjoy more in one mile than the motorised tourists can in a hundred miles'

Edward Abbey

'There are no passengers on the Spaceship Earth. We are all crew'

Marshall McLuhan

'NO ONE CAN SING WHO HAS SMOG IN HIS THROAT'

DR SEUSS

'The bicycle is the most civilised conveyance known to man. Other forms of transport grow daily more nightmarish. Only the bicycle remains pure in heart'

IRIS MURDOCH

'Progress is impossible without change, and those who cannot change their minds cannot change anything'

George Bernard Shaw

'IF YOU WISH YOUR CHILDREN TO THINK DEEP THINGS, TO KNOW THE HOLIEST EMOTIONS, TAKE THEM TO THE WOODS AND HILLS, AND GIVE THEM THE FREEDOM OF THE MEADOWS'

RICHARD JEFFERIES

'THE PEOPLE HAVE A RIGHT TO CLEAN AIR'

PENNSYLVANIA CONSTITUTION



Hope Jones' Blog

FRIDAY 30 MAY

Today I realised something very important. I have to stop pollution.



Why?

Because the air around here is so polluted that it almost killed one of my friends.

She couldn't breathe. I really thought she was going to die. It was so scary!

This week is half term, but we're not doing anything interesting because Mum and Dad both have to work, plus they're saving up for a holiday in the summer. I've been at Sports Camp every morning.

Some people love Sports Camp. My little brother Finn, for instance, can't think of a better way to spend a week than playing football, tennis, hockey, basketball, badminton and ping pong. I'd rather be at home reading a book, but unfortunately that wasn't an option. The only good thing about Sports Camp is my friend Selma being there too.

Today we had rounders, followed by a competition to see who could be the first to do fifty star-jumps. I had got to thirty-seven when I heard this weird wheezing crackling noise. I couldn't work out what it was. An animal? A bird? Something in the air?



Then I realised the noise was coming from Selma. She had stopped star-jumping and was standing very still, holding her chest.

I asked if she was ok. Selma managed to tell me not to worry, she just needed her inhaler. She put it to her mouth and took a puff, then another, but her breathing got even worse. I could hear her lungs croaking and hissing with every breath.

'It's the pollution,' Selma managed to say between gasps.

I wanted to know how to help.

'You don't have to do anything,' Selma said. 'Don't worry, I'm fine.'



She didn't look fine. Her lips had turned blue.

She took more puffs from her inhaler, but they didn't make any difference.

I ran over to the coach as fast as I could and shouted, 'You need to help Selma! She's having an asthma attack.'

Selma still said she felt fine, but the coach asked me to get Callum, the first aider.

Callum was brilliant and knew exactly what to do. He rang 999, asked for an ambulance to come immediately, and said I could stay with Selma till the medics arrived.





I wanted to go with Selma to hospital, but the paramedics said no, and sent me back to the group. I couldn't concentrate though because I was too worried about her.

Callum came over to reassure me that Selma was in good hands now and would be ok. He told me that asthma sufferers in the city have to be particularly careful in the summer as the pollution gets even worse. The local council has issued a high alert, which is why Selma has been told to carry her inhaler wherever she goes.

Sports Camp is only in the mornings, so Mum fetched me at lunchtime. We drove home, although I would have preferred to walk. I felt bad about being in a car, because our engine was pumping pollution into the air, poisoning other people's lungs and giving them asthma.



‘Don’t be silly,’ Mum said. ‘Selma didn’t get asthma from *our* car. She got it from the thousands of cars and lorries around here, and the factories, and the boilers, and all the different things making pollution. You can’t blame yourself.’

I told her that I don’t blame myself; I blame pollution.

‘You couldn’t possibly stop pollution,’ Mum said. ‘It’s everywhere!’

‘I can try,’ I said.

I’ve been saving the world for five months now. I gave up plastic for my New Year’s resolution and started a protest outside our local supermarket. I became a flexitarian because I was concerned about the environmental impact of eating too much meat. I have been recycling and re-using as much as possible, and trying to persuade my family, friends and neighbours to do the same. From all this, I have learned one thing: doing something is always better than doing nothing.



Hope Jones' Blog

SATURDAY 31 MAY

I've got some good news and some bad news.

The good news: Selma is feeling much better today. Mrs Papagiannis (her mum) sent a message to my mum (Mrs Jones), saying she'll be back at school on Monday.



The bad news: pollution is a much bigger problem than I thought.

My friend Harry helped me do some research on the internet. I went round to his house for lunch.

His mum made wraps (hummus for me and chicken for Harry). They were dee-lish. Thanks, Mrs Murakami!

After lunch, Harry's parents wanted us to go in the garden, and enjoy the sunshine and fresh air, but Harry doesn't really like fresh air or sunshine. He prefers to stay indoors and use his computers.

He has six and three-quarters. The three-quarters is a computer that he's building from parts that he found on a skip and bought from eBay. It just looks like a pile of old rubbish to me, but Harry says once it's up and running, it will be powerful enough to search the universe for new planets. Don't ask me how.





Harry made a list of the main causes of air pollution:

Factories

Farms

Air travel

Burning fuel for heating or cooking

Pollen, volcanoes, dust blown from the desert and other natural phenomena

Road transport – cars, lorries, etc – which cause air pollution not only by burning fossil fuels in their engines, but also from the friction of their brakes and their tyres on the road.

Of those six, according to Harry's research, road transport is by far the biggest cause of air pollution. If only we could remove vehicles from the roads in our towns and cities, the pollution would immediately get much better – and everyone would be able to breathe more easily.





Harry is brilliant with computers, so he can discover whatever you want to know. And things you'd rather not.

Like for instance: living in a city is the same as smoking an entire packet of cigarettes every day. YUCK!

Harry also discovered: around the world, air pollution kills seven million people every year; air pollution is linked not only to asthma, but also lung cancer, heart disease and diabetes.

Children are particularly vulnerable to air pollution because we breathe faster than adults, and our lungs are still growing. Pollution causes permanent damage to our bodies. If we breathe dirty air when we're kids, we will suffer the consequences for the rest of our lives.

Unfortunately, we can't *not* breathe dirty air, because humans have polluted our entire planet.

Only five per cent of the world's population now breathes clean air. Five per cent! In other words, one out of every twenty humans breathes clean air, while the rest of us – the other nineteen out of every twenty – breathe dirty air.



The only people who are breathing clean air are the ones lucky enough to live on top of a mountain or in the middle of nowhere, hundreds of miles from the nearest city.



I felt overwhelmed by all Harry's research, and quite depressed, but I did feel optimistic about one thing: I know we aren't breathing clean air, but we could be! If only we could get rid of all the factories, farms, planes, heaters, cookers, cars and trucks.

'How are you going to do all that?' Harry asked.

Good question! I wish I knew the answer.

'You'll find a way,' Harry said.

He's very nice. He always believes in me.

I hope he's right.



Hope Jones' Blog

SUNDAY 1 JUNE

I wanted to spend today on the internet, researching ways to stop pollution, but Mum wouldn't let me.

'It's the weekend,' she said, 'so we're going to have some quality time with the whole family.' Which meant going to the park.

I didn't want to go to the park or have quality time with my family. I wanted to think about ways to save the world and make the air cleaner for Selma to breathe. But I'm just a kid, so I didn't get to choose.

On the way to the park, we were passed by an old car with great clouds of black smoke billowing from its exhaust.

'This is what I'm talking about,' I said.





‘We all agree with you,’ Dad said. ‘We’d love the air to be cleaner round here. We just don’t know what to do about it.’

When we got to the playground, Becca sat on a bench and played with her phone, Finn went on the zip wire, and Mum and Dad discussed how they might be able to cut down on our utility bills because we’re spending too much at the moment.

I had some good suggestions. We could put solar panels on the roof and recycle our wastewater and replace our car with an electric one.

Dad said I wasn’t being realistic, so I left them to their discussions and sat on the swings instead. The swings are a good place to have a serious think – and I had a lot to think about.

I was lost in my thoughts when Mum came and sat beside me.

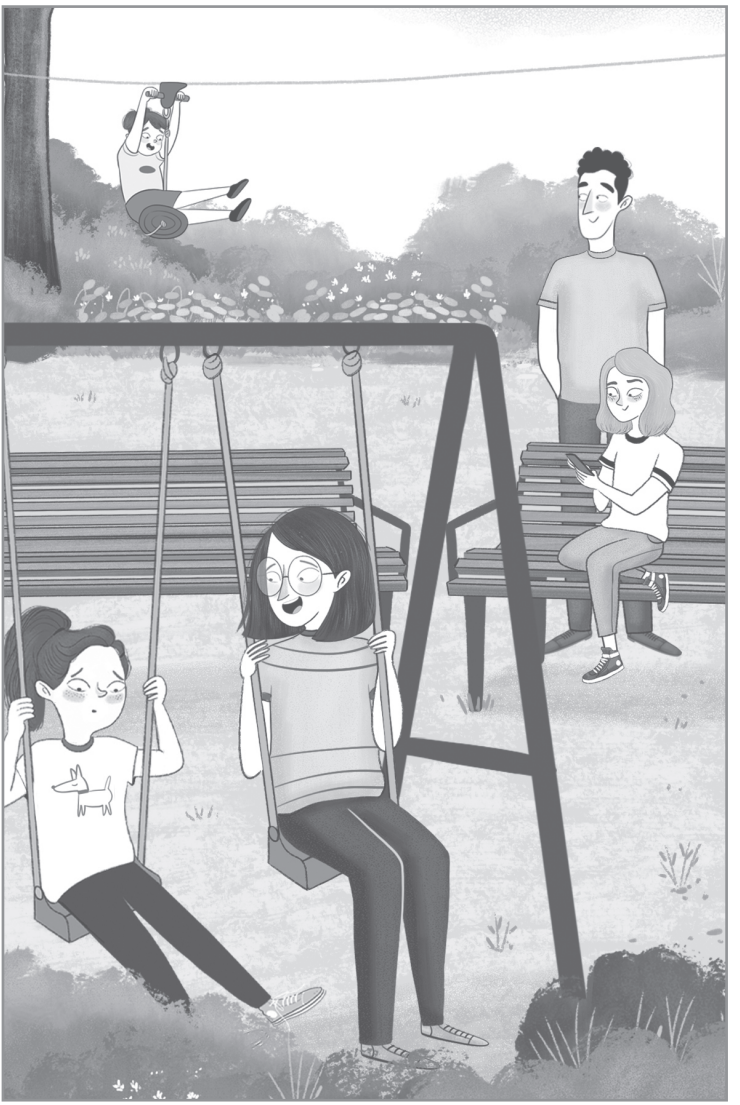
‘It’s the weekend,’ she said. ‘Try to have some fun. You need to enjoy yourself.’

How can I enjoy myself when the world is such a mess?

Mum thinks I shouldn’t spend so much time worrying about climate change and pollution and all the world’s problems.

‘I know you care about the future, Hope, and that’s wonderful. It really is. Your father and I are so impressed by everything that you’ve achieved. But you can’t tackle a huge issue like pollution, you simply can’t, even politicians and scientists don’t know what to do. You’re brave and determined, but you’re only ten, and you know what ten-year-olds should be doing on a lovely sunny day?





They should be messing around on the swings and the zip wire, not worrying so much about the state of the world.'

Mum's wrong about pollution. I can do something about it! I know I can. I just don't know what.

But she was right about one thing: I do love the zip wire.

