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Opening extract from

Why Should I Bother About The Planet?

Written by

Susan Meredith

Published by

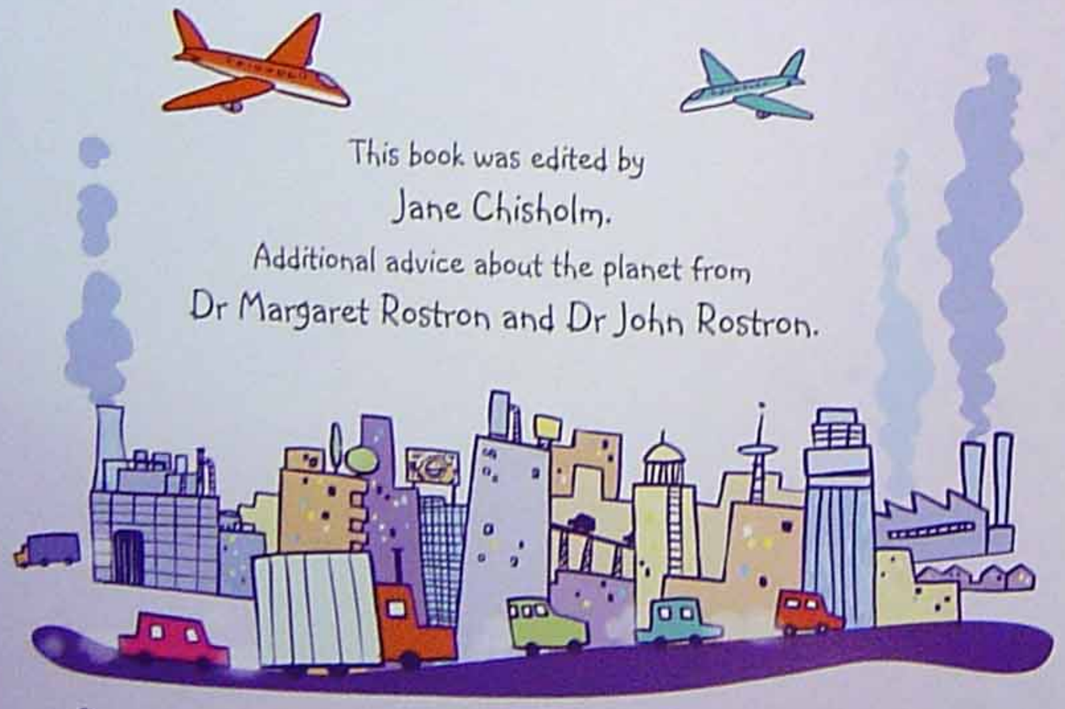
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This book was edited by
Jane Chisholm.
Additional advice about the planet from
Dr Margaret Rostron and Dr John Rostron.

What's the problem?



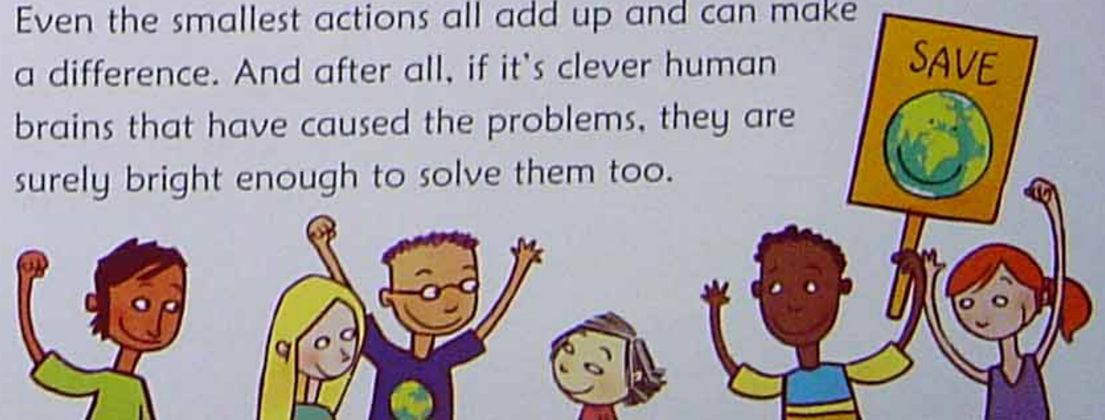
Planet Earth has been around for billions of years. That proves it's pretty tough, so what's the problem?

The trouble is that there are some changes taking place – and they aren't happening naturally and slowly as they did in the past. Most of them are caused by people and the things people do, and they are happening fast.

People have the cleverest brains of any living creature. We've learned how to farm, build cities, create industries and invent aeroplanes. But all this activity is having some unhealthy side effects for the planet and its inhabitants.

So isn't it for governments to sort out the mess? Well, it's governments that have the power to make big changes, it's true, but there's a lot that individuals can do too. In this book, you'll find out what has caused the planet's problems and what needs to be done about them. You'll also get lots of practical ideas for how you can 'go green' and help to save the planet.

Even the smallest actions all add up and can make a difference. And after all, if it's clever human brains that have caused the problems, they are surely bright enough to solve them too.





Trashing the planet

Today's problems really started about 200 years ago, at a time known as the Industrial Revolution. People invented machines that could do all kinds of useful jobs, provided they had power to make them work. The inventions were so brilliant that hardly anyone realized there might be a downside.

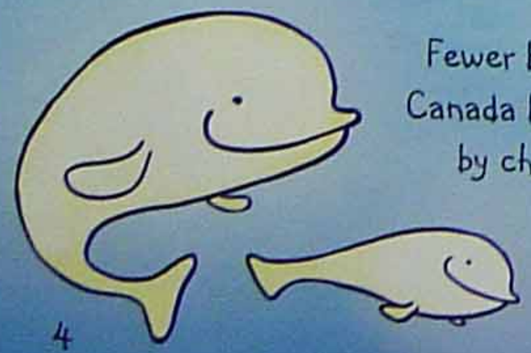
Energy crisis

To power these new machines, people burned coal, gas and oil. At the time there seemed to be endless supplies of these fuels. But such huge amounts have been used that it's going to get harder and harder to find enough to keep everything going. And burning fuels makes the planet dirty. So we need some new ways of powering our machines.



Litter louts

Modern living creates a lot of different kinds of dirty waste. It comes from power stations, factories, farms, transport, offices, shops and homes. The waste is polluting the air, land and water, and even changing the weather – with dangerous results for living things, including people. We need to clean up our act.



Fewer beluga whales are being born in Canada because their water is poisoned by chemicals from nearby industries.

The clean-up cost

Some people say it will cost too much to make the planet healthy again. It's true it won't be cheap, but tackling the problems now could even save money in the long run. For example, far fewer people would need treatment for asthma if air pollution in the world's cities was cleaned up.



In some cities, air pollution can be so bad that people go out wearing masks.

It's a small world

People in rich, developed countries, such as the USA, UK and Australia, use the most coal, gas and oil, and cause the most pollution. But the damaging effects are felt all over the world, in less developed countries too. Governments need to work together to try to find worldwide solutions.

New lifestyle?

People are starting to rethink the way they live, and the buzz word is sustainability. In a nutshell, a sustainable lifestyle means meeting our own needs without messing up the planet for our children and grandchildren. For instance, plants provide all the oxygen we need to breathe. It makes sense to look after them – not just for their own sake but for future generations.

