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Opening extract from

Planet in Peril

Written by

Anita Ganeri

Illustrated by

Mike Philips

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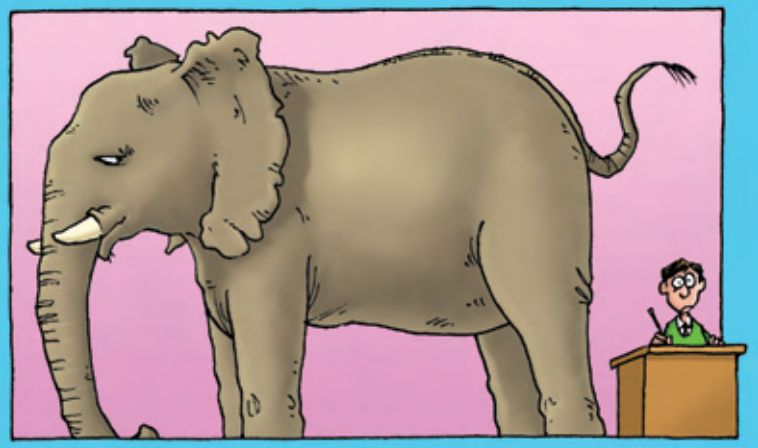
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INTRODUCTION

To you, Planet Earth is home, sweet home. The centre of your universe. There's nowhere else quite like it, you'd reckon. And you'd be right. Dead right. Forget boring old Mercury or Jupiter. Never mind dull-as-ditchwater Venus or Mars. It's official! Our very own Earth's the only place we know of where it's possible for horrible humans to live. There's just one teeny problem. Horrible humans have been living on the Earth for centuries and the exhausted Earth's starting to feel the strain. Yep, horrible humans are making the Earth seriously sick. Cars and factories are belching ghastly gases into the atmosphere, making the Earth worryingly warm. And that's not all. We're also wasting vital resources like fuel and water, chopping down forest-loads of trees, and generally making a mind-boggling mess of things. And with more people being born every minute, the planet is under pressure like never before. But before you think, 'Hm, perhaps Mercury doesn't sound so bad after all', and hop on the first spaceship outta here, DON'T PANIC! This horribly useful handbook contains everything you'll need to save the planet … before it's too late.

So, read on to find out…
- the size of your carbon footprint
- how to run your car on chocolate
- how to turn elephant poo into paper
- why giving up baths is good news for the planet
- why eating crisps is bad news for orang-utans



Yep, this handy book is packed with hundreds of earth-shattering hints and tips for going green. But we're not talking green with envy when you see your friend's new trainers. Or green around the chops after scoffing down too much of your granny's double chocolate-chip trifle with cream. Going green means living in a way that doesn't do the planet so much harm. Don't worry. You don't suddenly have to start munching on lentils (or even give up crisps completely). Though you might need to get used to turning the tap off when you're cleaning your teeth. Still keen to give green living a go? Well, you'd better get your skates on. Things are warming up … fast.



TOO HOT TO HANDLE!

Reckon you know what's the biggest threat facing the planet? Go on, have a guess. No, it isn't your little sister, even when she's pinching your stuff. Getting any warmer? Well, you soon might be. The answer's called global warming and you could soon be feeling the heat. OK, so this might not seem likely if you're reading this on a freezing cold day. But horribly clued-up scientists say the evidence is everywhere. Across the globe, glaciers are melting, and the ice at the North Pole is shrinking fast. And that's just for starters. (You can read about other sweltering side effects of global warming later on in this chapter.) Most of these brainy boffins agree that global warming's here to stay. What's more, it's horrible humans who are largely to blame. They just don't know how quickly it'll happen or how much warmer the Earth will get. So will the Earth eventually get too hot to handle? Or is there anything you can do before it's too late? You'd better keep reading. This chapter's packed with horribly green and helpful tips on how to cool things down a bit.

EARTH ALERT FILE

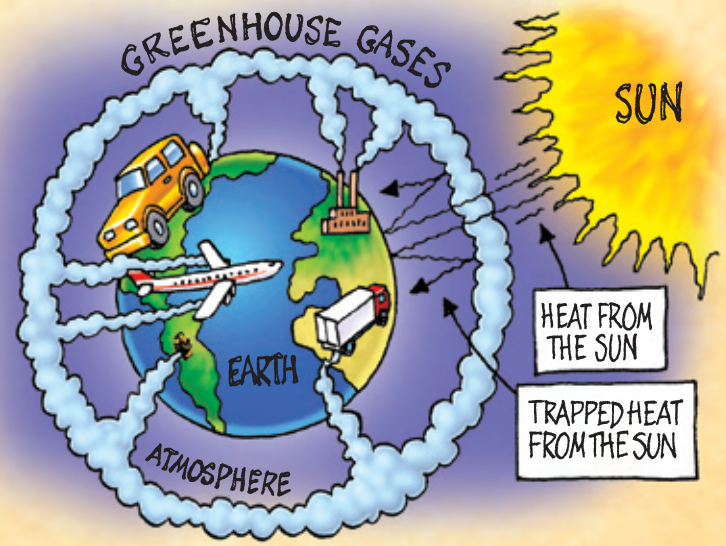
Name: GLOBAL WARMING
What it is: THE WAY THE EARTH'S TEMPERATURE IS WARMING UP

HOW IT HAPPENS:

1 Greenhouse gases in the atmosphere trap heat coming from the Sun. They work a bit like the glass in a greenhouse, that's how they got their name.

2 Humans are pumping tonnes more of these ghastly gases into the atmosphere. They mostly come from factories, cars, planes and lorries, and burning down rainforests.

3 Problem is, the amount of gases is growing too fast because of horrible human activities. And too much heat is being trapped, putting the planet at risk of roasting.



Global warming facts:

- Some global warming's good for you. If there weren't any greenhouse gases, the Earth would be far too f–f–f–freezing cold for anything to live on.
- Fossil fuels* – coal, oil and gas – are mainly to blame for greenhouse gases. They're burned in power stations and factories, and in our cars and planes.
- By the year 2050, scientists reckon, there'll be twice as much of the ghastly greenhouse gas carbon dioxide in the atmosphere as now.
- All these gases might warm up the Earth by about 5°C in the next 100 years. Which might not sound much to you but it could be curtains for the planet.



*They're called 'fossil' fuels because they're mainly made from plants that bloomed around the time of the dinosaurs, millions of years ago.