

Youth Voices

During the writing of *Urgent Message for a Hot Planet*, I thought it would be great to include climate-inspired creative work for and by youth. We invited youth to submit their personal stories, poems and art. Many of the submissions are included in the Youth Voice sections within the book, which can be purchased at orcabook.com or through your favourite bookseller. In this post, we are pleased to present a number of the remaining submissions, by permission, as well as three pieces where only excerpts were used within the book. Note that the ages listed are at the time the piece was submitted in 2020. Thank you to all the talented youth working diligently for climate action!

Poem: Katia Bannister, 16, Thetis Island, British Columbia , Canada

extinction

some days i am little more than tears and despair,
shaking hands grasping at straws.
i am looking down the barrel of a gun named "extinction,"
in a land where all paths lead to ecological devastation;
it can be hard to wake up in the morning
when the air feels too heavy to breath, and my lungs feel full of stones.
i feel the choking, the chopping, the oil slick,
the burning, the theft, the melting.
you are holding the broken pieces of this world
and what are you doing?
you are killing,
and i am mourning.

Personal story: Emma Boucher, 14, Montreal, Quebec, Canada

Winter Carnaval

Water circles through our systems. It flows around the globe, and comes back down as rain. And then comes winter- the most magical time of year, when the Christmas lights are strung and the snow-laden tree branches weave lace through the sky.

I haven't had a white Christmas in at least four years.

Montréal isn't a warm place. It isn't the place where rich vacationers flock to get out of the cold. It's always *freezing* in the winter. At least it's supposed to be.

My elementary school used to hold a winter carnival the day before school let out. Just a fun opportunity for the little kids to work with the big kids, to celebrate, to have fun together. Six teams of different colours competing in different activities, for no prize at all. The carnival was a time that everyone looked forward to- especially the sixth graders, because they were always the ones leading it.

Having enough snow had never been a problem for us.

Until it was.

How do you have a winter carnival without snow?

The year I was in fifth grade, we held the carnival inside. And though dodgeball is fun, it could never compare to a *real* snowball fight. But we all thought it was a one-time thing... Until the day before the carnival the next year. The year I was in sixth grade.

My carnival year.

There was no snow on the ground.

Water circles through our world. It's everywhere- and on some winters, in some places, for some lucky kids, it comes down as snow. But as our planet gets hotter, that joy goes away. And when we do nothing, more and more gets taken away from us. And not just snow: maybe a carnival, that manages to bring everyone together

Personal story: Indigo Bowick, 17, Nelson, British Columbia, Canada

Unaware

When you step beyond the urban barriers of industrialized concrete, it is impossible not to admire the elegance and quintessence of nature. The unpredictable formulas of frost configuring spidery veins on budding trees, the endless collage of emeralds and olive, coniferous, and deciduous, bordered by the harsh faces of snow capped mountains, the reflection of white, luminescent clouds on the glistening surface of electrifying glacier water, and the rich, vast, diversity of species and organisms coexisting seamlessly in perfect harmony. There is so much simplicity to be discovered in the delightment of the earth.

As humans we do not always see the beauty of nature, we are blind and unaware of the magnificence and delight of earth's creations. The complexion of foliage in our eyes is just the foundations for a grey metropolitan museum. The treeline uniting forest and sky transformed into the dark, looming, rectangles of glass and brick. The reflection in our eyes shows what was once slender reeds dripping with sundews, and what is now, a concrete jungle lined with street lamps and curbside trash bins.

There comes a point when the line between tolerance and submission is crossed. The capacity to endure continued subjection to environmental poisons is limited. Planet Earth has reached a tipping point. The soils have been soaked with toxins, the air thickened with pollution and a broiling, fever burning within. As the earth becomes sick the sands from the bottom of the ocean leak with black glistening tar creating oily, rainbow, phenomenons on the discarded plastic surface. The Icebergs topple and liquify like the piles of overflowing waste as our hopes and possibilities decay along with the future of planet earth.

Or will we recognize the beauty and rise.

Personal story: Bridget Gutteridge-Hingston, 13, Edmonton, Alberta, Canada

The Orange Sky

On the day that Alberta's Premier, Jason Kenney, announced the removal of the provincial carbon tax, so much smoke was in the air, that the entire sky turned orange. It was like looking through tinted sunglasses. This was a result of extensive forest fires in the boreal forests. I remember some of my classmates who had asthma did not go outside for recess. My friends and I were playing a game that involved running, but we stopped because the air felt really weird to breathe. I remember thinking how crazy it was that Jason Kenney was removing the carbon tax on a day that literally proved how important it was to have one. When the smoke went away, most kids were relieved, but I know that it will only be worse next summer if nothing is done.

Poem: Sanjana Karthik, 16, Surrey, BC

A Mother I Can Not Recognize

The only white in the sky
Does not belong to the clouds
For they are created

Placed

From hovering planes
Around

Streaking the somber blue skies
With toxicity and lies

As if its sight
Omits its darkness
With new light

Poem: Faith Kingsley, 17, Boalsburg, Pennsylvania, United States

More Than Gold

Long ago in times of old
There lay a land now long untold;
A place that does within us hide
A world worth far much more than gold.

The trees they blossomed in the spring,
The birds they flew on wind and wing,
And all about you felt a stir
As if the very earth could sing.

In summertime the ground smelled sweet,
And all about was fruit to eat.
The water glistened in the sun
And it cared to cool the heat.

When the seasons rolled to fall
Living things both great and small
All hurried over crimson leaves
For in their hearts they heard a call.

When winter came the air was still
Echoing a silent chill,
And every living thing did sleep
As snow it fell on dell and hill.

Yet in this peace a greed we knew
We let it take us and it grew.
We turned away from change and truth
And named the fools the wise ones too.

Our homes were shattered into dust,
Our faces stained with tears and rust
The closing time for change we missed
And lost our children's dreams and trust.

Long ago in times of old
There lay a land now long untold;
A place that does within us hide
A world worth far much more than gold

Poem: Hadarah Krupp, 16, Sorrento, British Columbia, Canada

Concerning Events

It's a sunny day,
Wind blowing every which way.
The grass can be seen,
Though I'm not so keen.
It's a winter's day, in a winter's moon,
Yet it feels to be summer soon.
A child, I've been told,
Should watch the world unfold.
Yet I'm young and free,
But not from anxiety.
I truly do not want to know,
How, to my grandchildren, to explain snow.

Poem: Maia Lindsay, 14, Pennsylvania, United States

The Earth is Melting

Twenty, fifty
years ago
There was
a lot more snow
But now
the earth is melting

My eyes
they fill with tears
When I think
of all the years
We knew
and didn't change
And now
the earth is melting

If you listen
they will say
That everything
is okay
But they know
the earth is melting

We should all
be filled with fear
For danger
is coming near
Because
the earth is m

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Slam poetry: Grace Sinats, 14, Victoria, British Columbia, Canada

If Only

Nostalgia, we all experience it, we all feel that pining for better times. For just one more day of summer. One more day hanging with friends. Not having to worry about Exams, or making the sports team. Just one more day of childhood, one more day of being a kid. It's funny because when we were younger all we wanted was to grow up, to go to middle school, then high school, be able to stay home alone, or go to the mall with friends. Wishing to be older. Wishing for the future. But that was then, and this is now, and soon it will be too late. But what about in 300 years? 300 years when sawdust fills the lungs and tuna is now a rare delicacy. When the earth has heated to point when there's no turning back. When the clock has run out, our time has run out. You have been long dead, but what you and your generation left behind still lives on. Your great great great grandchild looks up at his father and asks. What is a polar bear, how did coral look? And what about bees, I would really like to see a bee? Mommy always talks about those green things, what were they called? Leaves, I wish I could see a leaf. What do stars look like, daddy, I can't see through all the smog? I can't see through the puff of poison, the corruption, all of the grey that generations before us hungry for money left us. Did they know? Did they know what they were doing, what they were leaving us behind? Did they know that money isn't the only thing that mattered and that soon money would lead to their demise? Did they know that their actions would cause this, this horrible future? You start to tear up suddenly that nostalgia, that pining for better times is painful, like a dagger to your heart all you wish for is to be back in time. One last summer, one last day of innocence, not knowing what to say but all that comes out of your mouth is yes, they did know. There were warnings, many times. But they never cared. Because their present is more important than ours. If only, if only we had prevented this. They told us what we had to do, what we had to change. But we didn't, because right now, this moment is more important than the hundreds of years we could have saved. If only we made the right choice. If only.

Poem: Teän Warren, 13, Cornwall, United Kingdom

35 to 150 species go extinct everyday and the way that we talk about them sounds like **we have no shame**

We have no shame that species are **dying** our superiority infesting our human minds, buying the lies. Whilst the rainforests are **MURDERED** and burnt to a crisp, glaciers **smash** and ice floes shrink

Their view of the world so different from ours but because they can't hold us to account **we ignore them**

We don't realize we are one and the same we're in this together and we always have been. This is not a **blame game** an **endless chain** through generations we are the last who can make a **change** to escape this **self inflicted cage**

We make them numbers on a PowerPoint not living, thriving beings who lost their lives to the **richest 1%**

"Indigenous people care and protect 80% of the planet's biodiversity" but they are already facing the worst effects of climate change

In the western society we are driven by **GREED**, by **MONEY**, by our thirst to buy more **STUFF** than we need killing our planet our future in a constant pursuit of stuff we **JUST DON'T NEED**

Global capitalism the **religion of the individual** smashing through the vision of a **united society**. **THE CORRUPTION OF THE CURRENT SYSTEM HAS LED TO THE DESTRUCTION OF THE ECO SYSTEM**

But **they** don't agree

When will they listen? When will they act? When will they stop selling our future off to fossil fuel companies who don't give a crap?

We shouldn't be here; we should be in school dreaming up our careers **our beautiful future we watch disappear.**

Instead we take to the streets. We stand strong together. We fight the deniers, the ignorant, the shameless. We make our demands and we educate for the nameless.

WE ARE THE FUTURE. AND THEY WILL LISTEN.

Poem: Eden Rickson, 19, UK

Deep Breath

Take a deep breath - and then - forget
You mustn't miss school or fail your test
But the planet is burning! The planet is fine!
Someone will fix it - there's plenty of time!
But the scientists say it's already too late
We need to act - we can't just wait!
Oh aren't you inspiring, you wonderful youth
I'm not inspiring, I'm telling the truth!
There's a constant twist in the depth of my heart
Like I can't just exist when I know where we are
There's already water up to our knees, just in
Parts of the world that we don't see. We're shouting
And shouting till our throats run dry
Can't you hear the world's cry?
But despite the alarm
Descends a terrifying calm
We're walking blind into fire
Denial is our desire.
It's a crime. But it seems fine
To exploit millions of lives for no jail time
But block a road for the planet and a sentence is mine?
Oh relax! The world will survive!
Humanity is in its prime! Business is big and
Its growth not decline! FOR WHAT? The fuck does growth mean?
On a planet we're killing where we'll be obsolete.
Investment in what? Bespoke flats for cash?
Your superyacht won't be there when Earth turns to ash.
Take a deep breath! And then - take a rest.
Love Island's on TV - this season's the best.
Look at their bodies! So fit and so lithe. Is that
What I should look like? Isn't that contrived?
The seas are rising, the animals are dying, yet
I should drop 10 pounds as a way of surviving?
Since when was my body a commodity?
Since when did mirrors replace the face of the Earth-
Isn't THAT what we're worth? Our thoughts and our truths

The ideas in our brains, our call for a future where nature is safe.
Safety for us maybe, but the crisis is rife
right in front of our eyes
On the frontlines of countries we forget are alive.

Take a deep breath-

We've got no breath left. Poem: Lucy Sutton (XR Youth), 18 (now 20), London Haringey, United Kingdom

Untitled

The cries of scientists fill the thick air
But nout we hear transfixed by the glare
Of the boxes in which we store so much of
our time
By filling our eyes with the lies of our
#bestlives
we can pretend
That
It's
All
Fine

But we know that it's not
Democracy has been left to rot
All around us what we held sacred is
breaking
Why is no one looking up to acknowledge
what we're facing
The end of what we've built to be
society

And I know it's not only me
The people who have dedicated their lives