



Handout 1 - Greta Thunberg's 2019 U.N. Speech

Greta Thunberg is an influential Swedish climate activist who was named Time magazine's "Person of the Year" in 2019. At 16 years old, Thunberg began leaving school every Friday to protest in front of Swedish Parliament building over their lack of initiative in curbing greenhouse gases, which cause global warming. Her protests set off similar actions, culminating in 2019 in the Global Climate Strike, when an estimated 400 million students and supporters left school and work to demand world governments address the climate crisis.

Since she began her protest, Thunberg has gained a large international following, has spoken before multiple governments, and has met the Pope. The following transcript is from a speech she gave before the United Nations, which some have claimed will become as historically significant as Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s famous "I Have a Dream" speech.

¹My message is that we'll be watching you.

²This is all wrong. I shouldn't be up here. I should be back in school on the other side of the ocean. Yet you all come to us young people for hope. How dare you!

³You have stolen my dreams and my childhood with your empty words. And yet I'm one of the lucky ones. People are suffering. People are dying. Entire ecosystems are collapsing. We are in the beginning of a mass extinction, and all you can talk about is money and fairy tales of eternal economic growth. How dare you!

⁴For more than 30 years, the science has been crystal clear. How dare you continue to look away and come here saying that you're doing enough, when the politics and solutions needed are still nowhere in sight.

⁵You say you hear us and that you understand the urgency. But no matter how sad and angry I am, I do not want to believe that. Because if you really understood the situation and still kept on failing to act, then you would be evil. And that I refuse to believe.

⁶The popular idea of cutting our emissions in half in 10 years only gives us a 50% chance of staying below 1.5 degrees [Celsius], and the risk of setting off irreversible chain reactions beyond human control.

⁷Fifty percent may be acceptable to you. But those numbers do not include tipping points, most feedback loops, additional warming hidden by toxic air pollution or the aspects of equity and climate justice. They also rely on my generation sucking hundreds of billions of tons of your CO₂ out of the air with technologies that barely exist.

⁸So a 50% risk is simply not acceptable to us—we who have to live with the consequences.

⁹To have a 67% chance of staying below a 1.5 degrees global temperature rise—the best odds given by the [Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change]—the world had 420 gigatons of CO₂ left to emit back on Jan. 1st, 2018. Today that figure is already down to less than 350 gigatons.



¹⁰How dare you pretend that this can be solved with just 'business as usual' and some technical solutions? With today's emissions levels, that remaining CO2 budget will be entirely gone within less than 8 1/2 years.

¹¹There will not be any solutions or plans presented in line with these figures here today, because these numbers are too uncomfortable. And you are still not mature enough to tell it like it is.

¹²You are failing us. But the young people are starting to understand your betrayal. The eyes of all future generations are upon you. And if you choose to fail us, I say: We will never forgive you.

¹³We will not let you get away with this. Right here, right now is where we draw the line. The world is waking up. And change is coming, whether you like it or not.

¹⁴Thank you.