

THE YOUNG HUMAN'S GUIDE
TO PROTECTING THE PLANET
AND EACH OTHER

HOW TO
CHANGE
EVERYTHING

NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLING AUTHOR

NAOMI KLEIN

with Rebecca Stefoff

Discussion Guide



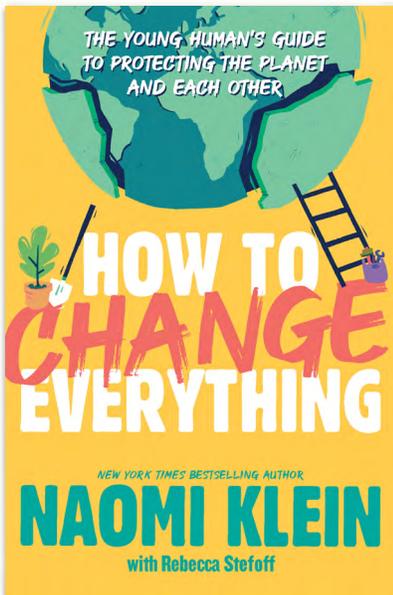
NAOMI KLEIN

is an award-winning journalist, columnist, and author of eight books including the *New York Times* and international bestsellers *No Logo*, *The Shock Doctrine*, *This Changes Everything*, *No Is Not Enough*, and *On Fire*, which have been translated into over 35 languages. She is Senior Correspondent for *The Intercept*, Puffin Writing Fellow at Type Media Center, and the inaugural Gloria Steinem Endowed Chair in Media, Culture and Feminist Studies at Rutgers University. She is co-founder of the climate justice organization The Leap.



REBECCA STEFFOFF

published her first books when she was in college and has been writing ever since. She has written many nonfiction books for children and young adults, with an emphasis on science and history. Through her books, teenage readers can explore topics as varied as ghosts, robots, bacteria, evolution, women pioneers, the ruins of Great Zimbabwe, forensic crime solving, and more. She lives in Portland, Oregon.



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ABOUT THE BOOK

In her first book written for young readers, internationally acclaimed bestselling author and social activist Naomi Klein, with Rebecca Steffoff, lays out the facts and challenges of climate change and the movement for climate justice. Using examples of change and protest from around the world, including profiles of young activists from a wide range of backgrounds, Klein shows that young people are not just part of the climate change movement, they are leading the way. *How to Change Everything* will provide readers with clear information about how our planet is changing, but also, more importantly, with inspiration, ideas, and tools for action. Because young people can help build a better future. Young people can help decide what happens next. Young people can help change everything.

Guide written by Deirdre Sheets, Education Director at the WonderLab Museum of Science, Health and Technology, and Kirstin Milks, who learns with and from high school science students in Bloomington, Indiana. This guide has been provided by Simon & Schuster and Puffin Canada for classroom, library, and reading group use. It may be reproduced in its entirety or excerpted for these purposes.

Discussion Questions

The following discussion questions may be used for individual writing prompts or to guide robust classroom discussion, and are broken down into sections following the book's structure.

In order to deepen understanding and facilitate critical thinking, questions are balanced among four types: convergent (or closed), divergent (or open), evaluative (or application/synthesis), and rhetorical. These common question types are long established as effective in classroom learning, and balancing among them offers varied entry points for students so as to welcome everyone into the conversation.

Introduction

1 *How To Change Everything* begins underwater, which is meaningful metaphorically as well as with regard to climate change and rising sea levels. What three metaphors best capture the climate you live in and your experiences of climate change or climate injustice?

Part I: Where We Are

“You’ll see some of the steps that kids like you are taking against climate change and for social justice, including racial, gender, and economic justice” —Klein, introduction to *How to Change Everything*

2 During the first global School Strike for Climate, more than a million and a half students walked out of school, some with permission and some without. Do you think protests and actions for climate justice complement formal learning, or are they a disruption?

3 Just as you have a point when you are leaning over at which you can no longer stay in an upright position and you “tip” over, so do systems have tipping points. Once a tipping point is reached, change can be swift and recovery impossible. With regard to our climate, however, we have the power to slow the course of extreme events. Consider the West Antarctic Ice Sheet, which is melting and will raise sea levels. We probably cannot stop the melting, as we are past the tipping point. We can, however, slow it by cutting greenhouse gas emissions that are contributing to global warming. What is the advantage to slowing the melting?

4 In 2013, fifteen million Americans lived within one mile of a fracking well. This puts places such as residences and schools close to the potential source of an oil leak or gas fire. Do you think oil extraction by this method is worth the risk to this many Americans? Do you think this puts only some at risk, or are we all at risk? Explain your answers.

5 Henry Red Cloud of the Lakota people brought solar heaters to the Northern Cheyenne Indian Reservation in southeastern Montana. Red Cloud discovered that he could build interest in solar power by showing people what they can do rather than telling them what they should do. What prompts you to take action? Do you want to be inspired, instructed, or both?

6 Sacrifice zones are enlarging, meaning a greater number of people are being forced, not asked, to make sacrifices based on climate. According to Klein, “We are all in the sacrifice zone now, unless we join together and raise our voices in opposition.” Should you wait until you are personally affected by a sacrifice zone to take action? Can we predict whether or not we will ever be included in a zone? Do you think the entire Earth can be considered one zone?

7 Compare locations of sacrifice zones with areas of highest resource consumption. Reflecting on what you read, do you think a climate change movement can be separated from an economic and social justice movement? What is the reasoning for your answer?

Part II: How We Got Here

“You’ll dive into what we have learned about the state of the climate now, and how we got here” —Klein, introduction to *How to Change Everything*

8 The invention of the steam engine in the late 1700s accelerated and contributed to the rapid growth of industry and the use of, and eventual reliance on, fossil fuels. This progression has directly contributed to our climate crisis. Could James Watt have considered the long-term implications of his work, or is it reasonable that he focused only on ingenuity and advancement? Since scientific advancement can lead to problems as well as progress, should ethics be considered during invention, during application, or both? Explain your answers.

9 According to the book, “We all live inside the story written by coal, oil, and extractivism.” What is the future narrative of what we live inside, and how do we write that narrative? Do we own the story, or does the story own us?

10 When Aldo Leopold wrote *Sand County Almanac*, he suggested that humans should shift their role from “conqueror of the land-community to plain member and citizen of it.” Is our responsibility to the planet due to our ownership of the planet or our participation with the planet’s natural systems? Are we rulers or community members of planet Earth? Give some examples from the book or that you see in your own life to support your answers.

11 As of 2019, agreement among climate scientists that climate change is real and affected by humans exceeded 97 percent. Despite this strong foundation of agreement in the scientific community, there are climate change deniers. What do you think motivates people to contradict what science and their own lived experiences are telling them?

- 12 Can an effective environmental movement have people and organizations with conflicting goals and ideals? Explain your answer.
- 13 Do you think it's more important to act individually or collectively? Will we have more success fighting smaller battles or large ones? Is it possible to do all these things simultaneously?
- 14 The text gives examples of different approaches to climate crisis, some softer and friendlier than others. What is the difference between a nonsolution and a real solution?
- 15 What can we learn from the abolitionist and civil rights movements, and how does this learning apply to turning the tide of climate change now?

Part III: What Happens Next

“You can help decide what happens next”

—Klein, introduction to *How to Change Everything*

- 16 Some scientists advocate geoengineering as a way to solve our climate crisis. Since human tinkering with the planet created the climate crisis, do you think human tinkering is the solution? Explain your answer.
- 17 We know that geoengineering poses risks. Do the advantages outweigh the risks? How does that question get answered, and by whom?
- 18 Klein suggests that shifting from an economy based on fossil fuels to one without carbon emissions would create jobs in certain sectors. We know that COVID-19 has created an economic downturn and that people need jobs. Should we work toward creating new jobs even if it is expensive for our federal government to do so? Are new jobs a good idea in the short term, the long term, both, or neither?
- 19 Klein argues that one of the biggest challenges humans have faced is not finding alternative energy sources, but rather using less energy. This will require changing how we live, what we consume, and the ways we travel. Imagine your future. What does your resource use look like, and is it different from your resource use habits now? Does it include climate considerations?
- 20 Do our obligations to family, community, and country extend to climate? Explain your answer.
- 21 Chapter Nine is titled “A Toolkit for Young Activists” and has practical suggestions for actions that will affect the climate that is already shaping your life. What sort of actions will you take? What kind of activist are you?

Conclusion and Afterword

“Now is the time to rethink how we live, eat, travel, do business, and earn our livelihoods” —Klein, conclusion to *How to Change Everything*

22 You are living through a turning point. How is a turning point different from a tipping point?

23 Throughout this book, you are confronted with the idea of “away”: how near or how far people are from one another, climatic events, sacrifice zones, and resources. With regard to our planet, however, we are living in a closed system of matter transfer. Matter changes form but is not created or destroyed. Goods move from one place to another, then break down or get turned into new goods, but do not disappear. There really is no “away.” How does recognizing this fact help us decide how we deal with our climate crisis?

