



Central Coast Climate Science Education

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"The Climate Book:" a collection of essays compiled and commented on by Greta Thunberg

I want to bring to the attention of readers of this website an unusual book by Greta Thunberg entitled "The Climate Book." (Penguin Press.) I doubt that there are few, if any, readers who do not know who Greta Thunberg is. In case there are, however, Thunberg is a young Swedish woman, recently turned 20, who is now very well known because of directly and bluntly urging world leaders and politicians to take serious action in addressing the climate crisis and, in inspiring other young people to join her. She first rose to prominence by single handedly staging a weekly school strike and picketing the Swedish parliament on behalf of climate action.

You can read about her here by glancing over this description: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Greta_Thunberg, which is one of the longest Wikipedia biographies I can recall seeing. Because of her youth and outspoken bluntness, she has also been subject to attack (some of it quite vicious) and mockery by adults, most prominently by Donald Trump. ("She has an anger management problem and should watch a movie and chill out.") The wiki article shows she can give as good as she gets to this and other bits of mockery.

I myself received a comment calling her “an hysterical teenager.” She has been told that she should shut up and let adults handle such matters (look where that has gotten us!), that she is mentally unbalanced (she is on the Asperger end of the autism spectrum) and, most frequently, that she doesn’t know what she is talking about and exaggerates the seriousness of the situation. And much else, all of which is detailed in the Wiki link given above.

The irony of these last criticisms is that she *does indeed* know what she is talking about, for she is simply summarizing exactly what the overwhelming majority of professional climate scientists have been saying for many years. That this is so is manifested by the esteem in which she is held by these scientists and others active in this area.

Which brings me to the book, which I have called “unusual” because it is not a book “by” Thunberg in the usual sense but rather a book described as “created” by Thunberg. It is actually a collection of very short essays, typically 3-5 pages in length, which she has solicited from many prominent authors, experts in their fields.

The book is divided into five major sections, each of which are divided into subsections. Introducing each of these sections and subsections are short introductory essays by Thunberg herself. All told, there are 102 such essays and then closing commentary by Thunberg including remarks on “what we can do”.

The five major sections are:

“How climate works”, “How our planet is changing”,
“How it affects us”, “What we’ve done about it”, and
“What we must do now”

It is about far more than just climate science *per se* but touches on, for example: biological extinction, plastic waste, water resources,

soil, health impacts of climate change, climate refugees, climate denialism, dealing with climate apathy and climate equity, among many other issues. Many authors are well known in these areas: Elizabeth Kolbert, who writes for the New Yorker, Naomi Oreskes well known as a co-author of “Merchants of Doubt”, climate scientists and excellent climate science communicators Katharine Hayhoe and Michael Mann, and Tedros Ghebreyesus, Director General of the World Health Organization.

I myself have just begun dipping into this book so I will not try to comment on any of these essays. But the book is so comprehensive that it is going to be a valuable resource for all of us who care about this vast topic, especially for teachers at all levels.

A final comment: Another frequent criticism of Thunberg is that she would be more effective “if she weren’t so angry”. I have no sympathy for this criticism. I myself am frustrated at the timidity of the actions world leaders have taken to date, but I am nearly 90 and will not live to see things get much than they are already are. But if I were twenty years old and had seven or so decades to live, at the end of which the world may very well be a very unpleasant place, I would be very angry too.