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WRITING

Save the Penguins, Save Ourselves

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TYPE

INFORMATIONAL

GENRE

GRADE 6

Why should kids care about global warming? How will global warming affect us? How does what we do affect global warming? And how do we fix it?

Over the past 200 years, the earth has been getting warmer because of pollution. Greenhouse gases have caused the temperature near the surface of the earth to increase.

“As the earth warms, more of the ocean’s water goes into the atmosphere and disrupts the normal weather patterns,” says Tracy Zhu, a former environmental fellow at the San Francisco Foundation and an analyst at the Public Utilities Commission. “Places that normally experience rain storms would get more severe storms, or perhaps get no storms at all. Places that are normally dry may get even drier…The balance of the earth is thrown off with climate change.”

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Global warming is bad for the earth. When the earth gets warmer, it starts making severe weather on land and the sea. As global warming gets worse, the polar ice caps melt more and more with each passing day. The melting of the polar ice caps affects life in the poles, which could eventually mean no more penguins, polar bears, and walruses. This month, scientists discovered that a crack in the Antarctic ice shelf grew by seventeen miles in two months. Antarctica holds nearly ninety percent of the word's ice mass.

But how does it affect people? According to the National Oceanic and Aeronautic Association, about ninety-seven percent of the earth's water is saltwater. The other three percent is stored in lakes and rivers underground—and in our glaciers, which are disappearing. We can try removing the salt from the ocean water, but according to the Texas Water Development Board, desalination costs "approximately 658 million dollars to build a seawater desalination plant." It's not worth it!

How do humans contribute to global warming? All the gases and fumes from processing plants and vehicles get stuck in the atmosphere. The sun rays go through the earth's atmosphere but not out, and that heats up the earth. Cows also make the earth heat up. In fact, according to the United Nations, raising cattle puts more greenhouse gases into the atmosphere than cars—almost eighteen percent of global releases.

So how do we fix it? According to Zhu, the damage done so far is irreversible. But we can make changes for the future. "Changes we make now, such as burning fewer fossil

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fuels, will have impacts thirty to forty years from now," Zhu says. To do your part, the Environmental Protection Agency suggests you can use your water more efficiently, conserve power, be green in your yards, and reduce, reuse, and recycle.

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