

## Understanding Pollution: Why Global Warming is Not a Myth

Global Warming. Two very simple words that have started a debate that is consuming the world. Many people will argue that global warming is a myth, and that there is no way that man could so completely alter the balance of the entire planet's ecology. We have the power to level mountains, dam rivers, destroy miles of forests and other wilderness to fuel our population, construct marvels that will last for centuries if not millennia, and split the atom, but altering the world in which we live is too farfetched an idea to contemplate. Even as the United Nations is releasing a report claiming that they are 95% certain that climate change is caused by man,<sup>i</sup> still there are people who argue it. People are entitled to their opinion, and here's mine: Climate change is a man-made problem, has dangerous effects on the world and human health, and no simple solutions.



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Climate change is caused by the trapping of gases, with the biggest being carbon dioxide, in the earth's atmosphere which ensnare the heat from the sun rays on earth, and as a result cause the world to heat up.<sup>ii</sup> In fact, the world has been heating up faster over the last 50 years than in all of recorded history.<sup>iii</sup> One of the biggest causes of global warming is the release of so much carbon dioxide into the atmosphere. Carbon dioxide has many sources such as electricity. Over 75% of all electricity produced worldwide is created through the burning of fossil fuels which release carbon dioxide and other heat trapping gases.<sup>iv</sup> In fact, roughly 87% of all human created carbon dioxide is from the burning of fossil fuels, and other sources of carbon dioxide include any industry

that uses fossil fuels and account for 4% of carbon dioxide, and the destruction of forests which accounts for 9%.<sup>v</sup> Fossil fuel use in 2011 released 33.2 billion tons of CO<sub>2</sub> worldwide, with coal accounting for 43% of that number, 36% coming from oil, and 20% from natural gas.<sup>vi</sup> To provide some perspective, the moon is estimated to weigh 81 billion tons.<sup>vii</sup> So, the amount of CO<sub>2</sub> that was released in 2011 was equal to over 1/3 the weight of the moon. That's a lot of gas.



The effects of global warming are many and varied, but many of them have something to do with water, or the lack there of. Water which makes up 65% of the human body<sup>viii</sup>, and is essential for life is one of the most affected by almost all of Global Warming's effects. It is estimated that by 2050 over 1/3 of all counties in the United States will face water shortages.<sup>ix</sup> Think about that for a moment. One third of all counties in the United States won't have access to water in less than 40 years. Global warming is also having a dramatic effect on the polar ice caps, where temperatures are increasing twice as rapidly as in the rest of the world.<sup>x</sup> Images from NASA satellites show that the ice caps are shrinking 9% every 10 years.<sup>xi</sup> This means that in less than a century the polar ice caps could be gone. Which leads us into the next effect of global warming: rising sea levels. Over the past twenty years global sea levels have been rising twice as quickly as they did over the past century.<sup>xii</sup> What does that mean? It means that wetlands are more likely to flood, beaches to be eroded, inland water supplies to be contaminated by saltwater, more powerful waves when storms hit coastal areas, and of course, an increased chance of coastal cities flooding.<sup>xiii</sup> Think back to 2012, and the damage that Hurricane Sandy inflicted on New York City

alone. Certain parts of the city were flooded by over 17 feet of water.<sup>xiv</sup> Sandy caused the death of 117 United States citizens, 53 of whom were in New York.<sup>xv</sup> That's just one storm. In 2004 a tsunami that is considered one of the deadliest in human history hit Thailand and permanently submerged several small islands, as well as wreaking havoc on thousands of miles of coastline.<sup>xvi</sup> As the ocean level rises, there is legitimate fear that these storms will get worse. These are just some of the effects that global warming is having on our world, and if scientists are right as to the dangers of global warming things will only get worse. Do we really want to wait until whole islands are disappearing beneath the waves and entire cities are starved of water before we'll stop arguing over whether it's real?



There are things that you can do to help diminish, if not stop, the effects of global warming. As mentioned earlier, electricity production accounts for a large percentage of greenhouse gas emissions, so conserve energy. Turn off your lights when you're not using them. It helps the world, and it saves you money which sounds like a win/win. Also, drive less, use energy efficient products, and use your heater and air conditioner less often.<sup>xvii</sup> You can also recycle which helps reduce waste, and allows recyclable products to be reused thus reducing some of the need for fossil fuels in manufacturing.<sup>xviii</sup> You can also reevaluate your food choices, and choose to shop at farmers' markets instead of supermarkets. You'll not only get healthier and cleaner produce but also limit the amount of plastic packaging and wrapping waste. Take a shopping bag and use less plastic bags. Reuse containers or use some for crafts with your children. If you really want to help,

lobby your state representatives, and tell them you want to see real action taken to help ensure that you have a home that you are happy to call such in 50 years. Global warming is a global problem, and so that means every man, woman, and child has a responsibility to help.

Ultimately, I can't force you to do anything. I can't force you to believe in global warming and its effects. I can't force you to do anything to help avert it, and I can't force you to want to help. But, I can try. That's what I am doing. I am trying to make people see that we stand on the edge of a cliff. We can continue to blindly walk along the edge and deal with the consequences. What will happen when people don't have enough water to quench their thirst? I can think of a few things are most of them are bloody. I don't want to live in that world, and I don't think you do either. So, let's not. Let's do what we can now to try and save the world we're in before it morphs into something unrecognizable.

### About the Author



**Dominick Principe** is a graduate of Rowan University with dual Bachelor Degrees in Elementary Education and Writing Arts. He is a prolific reader who devours any book put before him, and feels that life is one great long book without an end. He fills his hours constantly exploring new information, and seeking to educate himself in the ways of the world. He puts all of that knowledge and his passion for learning to good use teaching English as a second

language to students of all ages. When his nose isn't buried in a book, or in class teaching, then he can generally be found typing away at his computer working on some random piece of writing that he was inspired to do.

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<sup>i</sup> "Human Cause of Global Warming Is near Certainty, UN Reports." *UN News Center*. UN, 30 Jan. 2014. Web. 18 Nov. 2014.

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