

Chapter 1, Greta's story

One August morning in Stockholm, Sweden, Greta Thunberg decided she could no longer ignore the problems facing the planet. Changes to the climate were more and more worrying and it seemed as if no one was taking the problem seriously.

In parliaments all over the world, tens of thousands of serious-looking and stern sounding politicians sat and talked about an endless range of issues. But they never addressed the problem of the health of the planet. It was time for someone to remind them to step in to protect the environment – and the future of children all over the world. It was an emergency. Everything else could wait.

So, on that day, Greta tied her long hair into two plaits, put on a checked shirt and a blue coat, and walked out of the house where she lived with her parents. Under her arm she carried a wooden placard. Handwritten at the top were the words "SKOLSTREJK FÖR KLIMATET" ("School Strike for the Climate"). She had also made some leaflets to distribute, with some very important information about climate change that she thought everyone should know about.

That day, Greta, like all Swedish children her age, should have gone to school. In Sweden the holidays end in August and classes start again. Instead, she climbed on her bike and rode to the parliament building in the city centre.

The Swedish Parliament meets in a beautiful, serious-looking building that is large and imposing, on a small island with a long, complicated name in the middle of the city: Helgeandsholmen. It's not at all surprising that it's on an island, because Stockholm is built on thousands of islands, some of them tiny and others so big that if you were flying over them you would think they were the mainland.

The Riksdag, which is what the Swedes call it, is the place where politicians elected by the people sit and discuss the country's problems and pass laws to address and fix them. These are the people who can really make a difference. If they hadn't noticed that global warming had become an emergency, Greta would remind them.