

## **The Environment: a hot issue!**

Please do work seriously on the following points. I want you to make the effort to look up the words you do not know the meaning of. Then I expect you to work on each point with care, since it took me a long time to prepare this file. If you happen to think in Italian and you do not know a term to express a certain concept, please use your dictionary.

**Choose your favourite quotation from those below and support your choice.**

"You must be the change you wish to see in the world." (Mahatma Gandhi)

"Climate change is for real. We have just a small window of opportunity and it is closing rather rapidly. There is not a moment to lose." (Rajendra Pachauri, Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change)

"When the earth is sick and polluted, human health is impossible. To heal ourselves we must heal our planet, and to heal our planet we must heal ourselves." (Bobby McLeod, aboriginal activist)

"The insufferable arrogance of human beings to think that Nature was made solely for their benefit, as if it was conceivable that the sun had been set afire merely to ripen men's apples and head their cabbages." (Cyrano de Bergerac)

**The following are some possible solutions to environmental problems:**

- re-use plastic bags, if possible use canvas shopping bags;
- recycle paper, glass and cans;
- use energy-saving light bulbs which consume less electricity, the more electricity we use, the more industrial emissions we generate, contributing to problems like the greenhouse effect and acid rain;
- save water, don't leave the water running while brushing your teeth, shaving or washing the dishes;
- put cigarette butts into ashtrays, they take years to biodegrade;
- use public transport whenever possible, the air we breathe could be cleaner if people used private cars less often;
- recycle alkaline batteries which contain heavy metals that release toxic substances into the soil;
- use low-phosphate or phosphate-free detergents, phosphate products pollute rivers and oceans;
- keep public places (beaches, parks) clean; think green and learn more about the environment to keep updated so that you can be ready to take action.

**Which of the above-mentioned points do you or your family already adopt?**

**Why do you think people find it so difficult to follow the above-mentioned guidelines?**

**If you were a famous star how would you use your "image" to promote the safeguard of the environment? What would you do to become the spokesperson of this vital issue?**

Famous British actor **Orlando Bloom** is committed to the ecological cause. In his house in London he uses solar panels and energy efficient light-bulbs. He claims: "The environment is such a massive issue that we all kind of think it's doom and gloom, but I don't think that's the case. You can be somebody who drives an SUV. That's fine, but there's a balance, so if you do that, then maybe use energy-efficient light bulbs at home, or just be conscious of switching off lights, or, if you can afford to drive an SUV, maybe you can afford to make a donation to a wind farm or plant some trees. It's all about balance". (Speak Up, August 2007).

**Leonardo DiCaprio's** *The 11th Hour* is a feature length documentary concerning the environmental crises caused by human actions and their impact on the planet. *The 11th Hour* documents the cumulative impact of these actions upon the planet's life systems and calls for restorative action through a reshaping of human activity. With the help of over fifty of the world's most prominent thinkers and activists, including reformer Mikhail Gorbachev, physicist Stephen Hawking, and Nobel Prize winner Wangari Maathai, *The 11<sup>th</sup> Hour* documents the grave problems facing the planet's life systems. The most powerful element of *The 11th Hour* is not the portrait of a planet in crisis, but the hope and solutions the films offers. Scientists and environmental advocates paint a portrait of a radically new and exciting future in which humanity seeks not to dominate the earth's life systems, but to imitate them and coexist. *The 11th Hour* calls for a future that is both sustainable and healthier. 2007 was the year when environmental issues (species depletion, air and water pollution, climate change) forced their way into debates. The heroes who have tried and are still trying to take a lead in addressing pressing questions of sustainability are many: from the Nobel Peace Prize winner Al Gore to a Zambian anti poaching activist, from the President of tiny Palau, to the Chancellor of Germany. To learn more about these heroes you can visit [www.time.com/heroes2007](http://www.time.com/heroes2007). You will find information about Prince Charles, for example: he was once mocked for his green beliefs, now the Prince of Wales is lauded as a pioneering eco-farmer. Or Robert Redford, who has been fighting on behalf of the wilderness since the early 1970s thus setting a celebrity trend (Bono and Africa; Diana and landmines; Geldof and world poverty).

**Find out more about these famous people's involvement in the "green" cause and report your findings to the class. Do a PowerPoint presentation, with images, music and videos. You can work in group or**

**individually. You are free to choose. You have two weeks to carry out your project. Your projects will be posted on the school webpage.**

A booklet entitled *Global Change and the Earth System: A planet Under Pressure* published as an summary of the book of the same name (2004) can be found at <http://www.igbp.kva.se>. You can visit this website and if you are interested in carrying out research into certain aspects of the study. For example, the psychological effects of global change upon human well-being. Small changes to daily routine can add up to big differences in helping to stop global warming. People can take action by joining the global warming virtual march ([www.stopglobalwarming.org](http://www.stopglobalwarming.org)) and they can find useful tips on how to reduce their impact on global warming.

Al Gore suggests that the media try to confuse public opinion. They publish articles that give the impression that humans are not responsible for global warming. Some people think he is a fighter for the climate cause. Others think he is campaigning for the "green issue" just as a political tactic to promote his role in future political elections.

**What is your view? Do you share Al Gore's suggestion? Do you think he is exploiting the environmental issue just for political reasons?**

The following websites may help you:

<http://www.planetark.org> Planet Ark works to show people the many ways they can reduce their day to day impact on the environment - at home, at work and in the community.

[www.worldwatch.org](http://www.worldwatch.org) Worldwatch Institute

<http://www.unep.org> United Nations Environmental Programme

<http://www.enn.com> Environmental News Network

<http://www.foe.co.uk/> Friends of the Earth: Making life better for people by inspiring solutions to environmental problems

<http://www.thebigask.com> The Big Ask March

<http://www.theecologist.org> Ecologist on line

<http://www.liveearth.org/> Live Earth: The Concerts for a Climate in Crisis

[http://ec.europa.eu/environment/youth/index\\_en.html](http://ec.europa.eu/environment/youth/index_en.html) Environment for Young Europeans

<http://www.wasteonline.org.uk> About waste facts