

Youth on every continent united in strikes to demand climate action

Required Annotations		Student-Created Annotations		Summary / Questions / Reflection	
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Young people from more than 150 countries skipped school in solidarity on Friday, September 20, as part of another series of global climate protests urging world leaders to act more aggressively to combat climate change.

Friday's protests began to unfold in Australia, where an estimated 300,000 young people in Melbourne, Sydney and elsewhere took to the streets. Similar scenes soon began to unfold in towns and cities across the globe, from small island nations such as Kiribati to teeming cities such as Mumbai. Protesters gathered in small groups in parts of Africa and in swelling masses in European capitals.

In London, thousands marched passed **10 Downing Street** and the Houses of Parliament, some holding aloft signs that read "Winter is NOT coming" and "I'm taking time out of my lessons to teach you."

Martha Lickman, a 13-year-old Londoner, clutched a sign that read "Oceans are rising and so are we." "We're doing our bit, eating less meat, using less plastic," she said, "but it's still on the government to do something."

Outside Washington D.C., students at Montgomery Blair High School in Silver Spring, Maryland, walked out of class Friday morning, prepared to link up with other protesters near the Capitol later in the day. [...]

Despite a monumental turnout that stretched across every continent, it remains unclear whether the high-profile demonstrations can fundamentally alter the global forces contributing to climate change and **compel** elected leaders to make the difficult choices necessary to halt the world's warming. But transformative change is precisely what those behind Friday's marches have demanded — including a swift shift away from fossil fuels toward clean energy, halting deforestation, protecting the world's oceans and embracing more sustainable agriculture.

The strikes came three days before world leaders were set to gather at the United Nations on September 23 for a much-anticipated climate summit. U.N. Secretary General António Guterres has insisted that countries bring with them promises of real action such as vowing to reach net zero emissions by 2050, scaling back fossil fuel **subsidies** and halting construction of coal-fired power plants. "I told leaders not to come with fancy speeches, but with concrete commitments," Guterres told reporters last week.

The summit will offer a key test of whether the world's nations, which came together to sign the Paris climate accord in 2015, can actually muster the resolve to slash carbon emissions as rapidly as scientists say is needed to avoid the worst effects of climate change.

Looming over the proceedings will be the increasing pressure from a generation of youth who are demanding that leaders take the problem more seriously — and act more swiftly. The Friday demonstrations came more than six months after hundreds of thousands of students staged a similar coordinated effort to demand urgent action on climate change.

Among the largest of the protests was likely the one in New York that was led by 16-year-old Swedish climate activist Greta Thunberg, who testified before Congress last week that nations must take "**unprecedented**" actions to cut their carbon emissions in the next 10 years.

"I am submitting this testimony because I don't want you to listen to me," she

said. "I want you to listen to the scientists. And I want you to unite behind the science. And then I want you to take real action."

Protesters in **climate-conscious** Germany planned more than 500 events to mark the global climate strike on Friday, including a large demonstration at Berlin's Brandenburg Gate. The demonstrations in Germany come as Chancellor Angela Merkel's government faces increasing public pressure to take bold climate action following heat waves and protests dubbed Fridays for Future throughout the country.

Germany's governing parties were holding a special meeting on Friday to finalize and unveil a new climate protection package.

In Moscow, Arshak Makichyan, a 24-year-old violinist who says he was inspired by Greta, staged a one-man protest after the government rejected his application to hold a group demonstration, the BBC reported. "I thought climate change was just science, but Greta had the right words to explain why it should worry all of us," he said. Russia, which has been hit hard by climate change, ranks as the world's fourth-largest **emitter** of greenhouse gases after China, the United States and India.

In Copenhagen, several thousand people, most of them high-school-age, gathered on a drizzly Friday in front of the city's grand copper-towered city hall before marching through the medieval old city. People flew Danish flags that were green and white instead of red and white.

Danish leaders pride themselves on adopting some of the world's most ambitious climate goals. The country has been seized by climate discussions, and the **center-left** Social Democrats won national elections in a campaign in which environmental issues were central. But for many of the people at the protest, the go-green effort isn't nearly enough. "I hope the politicians hear us. They don't really seem to be doing anything," said Albe Gils, age 18, who skipped high school and came with two friends to the protest. "It's important that we talk about it now. In a few years we won't be able to do anything."

In the United States, strike organizers expected events in more than 1,100 locations in all 50 states. In San Francisco, protesters planned to rally in front of the offices of Bank of America, Amazon and House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, a Democrat from California. In San Juan, Puerto Rico, they were marking the second anniversary of Hurricane Maria — a storm that scientists say was made more destructive by climate change. All of the strikers have expressed support for the Green New Deal, a **sweeping** Democratic proposal to combat global warming.

The strikes were planned largely by teenagers, in between soccer practices and studying for math exams, but a growing number of adults have begun to offer their support. New York and Boston public schools granted students permission to skip school for the strikes. For students in other districts, more than 600 physicians signed a "doctor's note" that reads, "Their absence is necessary because of the climate crisis." Several businesses, including Ben & Jerry's, Patagonia and the cosmetic company Lush, are closing their doors in solidarity.

In New York, organizer Olivia Wohlgemuth took to the subways in a last-minute effort to recruit protesters Thursday night, handing out fliers on a Brooklyn-bound train and urging people to attend Friday's rally near City Hall.

"This is the most important issue of our time," said Olivia, a high school senior and activist. "We need you to join us." Most of the passengers looked away, but a boy with a large backpack took off his headphones to listen and accepted a flier when she handed it to him. New York City Public Schools announced this week that students who skipped school to attend the strike would be granted an excused absence.

(Personal Reaction on separate paper)