

# **Recycle This Book: 100 Top Children's Book Authors Tell You How to Go Green**

## *Foreword*

I was thinking — what's the biggest problem facing the world. Terrorism? Poverty? Drugs? Crime?

No. In my opinion, the biggest problem facing the world is the world itself. Because if we mess up this planet, none of those other problems is going to matter.

Well, I hate to tell you this, but we are messing up this planet.

You've heard a lot about global warming, the energy crisis, oil dependency, melting ice caps, stranded polar bears, rain forests being burned, species becoming extinct, droughts, floods, forest fires, and hurricanes. This is scary stuff. We've got to do something.

You've got to do something.

Maybe you're thinking, *I didn't cause these problems. Why do I have to solve them?*

I'll tell you why. In a decade, more or less, you're going to be a young adult. You'll have plenty of responsibilities because it will be your world. The people who brought on all these problems (that would be my generation and my parents' generation) might not be around to fix them.

Have you ever gone camping? If you haven't, you need to know that you're supposed to leave the campsite in better condition than it was when you arrived. Earth is our campsite. Sorry to say, but your grandparents and parents have not taken very good care of Earth. Your generation needs to clean up the mess, because there's no other campsite.

You are going to be part of the group that changes the world.

*Me? What can I do?* is probably what you're thinking. I know. When you're a kid, you sometimes feel powerless in a world run by grown-ups. But kids can change the world.

Years ago, kids organized on college campuses and helped focus attention on ending the Vietnam War. And college kids were also involved with the invention of the personal computer and started Microsoft and Google. Young people fight our wars. Teenagers create our music. Kids determine what kinds of television shows get popular, and which movies, too. Kids *make* a difference.

Believe it or not, politicians do listen to citizens. Business leaders do listen to customers. And parents do listen to children.

You need to talk to your parents and discuss how to conserve gas, save energy, and reduce waste. Kids often teach their parents how to use computers, cell phones, DVD players, and other technologies so many adults find baffling. Parents need to be taught about the environment the same way.

You need to tell your representative in Congress to pass laws that reward cities and companies for switching to renewable sources of energy. You need to punish companies and governments that cut down rain forests, pollute air and water, drive animals and plants to extinction, and threaten the very existence of the human race.

*Don't say It's impossible! The job is just too big!* Think again. When I was five years old, President John F. Kennedy gave a speech in which he challenged America *to* send a person to the moon within ten years. It sounded impossible at the time. We hadn't even been into space yet. But Kennedy's words captured the imagination of the country. A massive national effort was undertaken, and eight years later, Neil Armstrong put his foot on the moon and said, "That's one small step for a man, one giant leap for mankind".

Now we need to undertake another massive effort. We need to switch from fossil fuels to renewable sources of energy. That would be an even bigger leap for humanity than stepping on the moon was. And it can be done.

*How?*

First by changing attitudes, and then by changing laws.

Attitudes can change. When I was a kid, there were still places in America where black and white people were not allowed to drink from the same water fountain. There were separate hotels, restaurants, and bathrooms for different races.

Our country isn't perfect today, but we've made some progress. Attitudes about prejudice and discrimination have dramatically changed, and laws have changed along with them. Attitudes and laws about the environment can change too, and kids can lead the way.

*What can I do?*

Educate your parents. Most grown-ups don't realize how serious our environmental problems are. They're busy with their jobs, trying to put food on the table for you every day. They may be caring for your grandparents, too. It's not as easy as it looks being a parent.

But you know how serious the world's problems are, because you're reading this book. Your parents care deeply about you and your future. If you tell them that something is important to you, they will listen.

Talk to them about the ideas in these pages. Insist that taking action is vital. The next time your mother tells you to clean your room, tell her you will when she helps clean up the atmosphere.

We all need to change our attitude. When we turn on the TV, we're bombarded by commercials that give the impression our lives will be better if we buy new toys, cars, sham-poos, DVDs, pimple creams, and all kinds of other stuff.

Wrong.

What will truly make our lives better? Clean air to breathe, clean water to drink, and people around the world who aren't homeless, starving, and dying. In fact, scientists have found that once our basic needs (food, shelter, water, clothing) are met, buying things does not make us much happier.

Change is hard. Human beings are going to have to change, whether we want to or not.

If you saw the movie *Titanic*, you know that the ship slummed into the iceberg because the lookouts didn't see it until they were almost upon it. If they had seen the iceberg in the distance, the captain could have steered the ship around it. We are on a collision course with environmental disaster, and we are running out of time to steer around it. We need to begin a program to switch to alternative sources of energy now. Each day we delay will make the switch more difficult.

*What's it going to take!*

It's going to take you and your generation to change the world.

As you leaf through this book, some of these suggestions might seem like a drop in a bucket. It's true that you're not going to save the world by giving up plastic bags and carpooling to school. But if 350 million people give up plastic bags and start carpooling to school, it will make a real difference. <...>

All your life, grown-ups have been saying that you can accomplish anything you put your mind to. Here's your chance to prove it.

— Dan Gutman

Текст для перевода — это предисловие к сборнику эссе *Recycle This Book: 100 Top Children's Book Authors Tell You How to Go Green* (2009), написанных известными детскими авторами — о том, как юные читатели могут помочь в решении глобальных экологических проблем.

Автор предисловия — Дэн Гатмен (род. 19 октября 1955, Нью-Йорк) — американский детский писатель. Написал более 109 книг, опубликованных в таких крупных издательствах, как Penguin Books, Macmillan, Scholastic Press и Harper Collins.

