



Taking Action

Before Reading Poll

From protesting to planting trees, young environmental activists are taking action to help the planet. What do you think about this quote from Lesein Mutunkei?

"You are never too small or too young to make an impact in the world."

Agree

Disagree

Explain why you voted the way you did.

Article

RED BANK, New Jersey (Achieve3000, March 10, 2021). Youth activists aren't waiting around for older generations to do something about the issues affecting the planet. From protesting to planting trees, young environmental advocates are taking action. Keep reading to see how three students are inspiring others to join forces and find solutions to such critical issues as deforestation, water pollution, and climate change.

Lesein Mutunkei, Kenya

Lesein Mutunkei lives in the city of Nairobi, but he and his family love camping in Kenya's wilderness. Lesein also loves playing soccer. At age 12, he came up with a way to combine his two passions to help heal the planet.

After learning that Kenya was losing more than 123,000 acres (50,000 hectares) of forest each year to deforestation, Lesein did the math: That was equal to about 164 soccer fields a day. The young athlete was shocked, but then, an idea took *root*—for every goal he scored, he could plant a tree.

He called his project "Trees for Goals." And his activism *grew*.

Since every goal is a team effort, Lesein decided to plant 11 trees each time he scored, one for each member of his soccer team. His school adopted the program for its rugby and basketball teams, too. Before long, the athletes had planted about 1,000 trees around Nairobi.

In 2019, Lesein attended the inaugural United Nations Youth Climate Summit in New York where, at age 15, he was among the youngest conference attendees.

"You are never too small or too young to make an impact in the world," Lesein said. "Remember that everything you do, however small, counts."

Autumn Peltier, Canada

At age 8, Autumn Peltier, who is from the Wiikwemkoong First Nation, was attending a ceremony on Ontario Indigenous lands when she saw a sign she would never forget: "Toxic Water."

Inspired by her aunt, an activist for water conservation and Indigenous water rights, Autumn began speaking at community events about the importance of protecting Canada's water. Four years later, she was chosen to present Canada's Prime Minister Justin Trudeau with a ceremonial copper water bowl symbolizing his responsibility to protect the country's water.

She took the opportunity to confront Trudeau on his support of controversial oil and gas pipeline projects. These pipelines could adversely affect the water supply in a country where First Nations communities were already living with toxic water advisories.

"I am very unhappy with the choices you've made," she told the prime minister, who in turn promised to address the issue.



Photo credit: Graeme Sloan/Sipa via AP Images

Environmental activist Jerome Foster II chants at the Fridays For Our Future school strike protest. From protesting to planting trees, young activists are taking action.



Photo credit: (Photo left) UN Photo/Manuel Elías. (Photo right) Courtesy Action For Nature Video: Courtesy Jerome Foster II

Autumn Peltier, a water advocate from the Wiikwemkoong First Nation, speaks to the United Nations. Lesein Mutunkei, from Nairobi, Kenya, is an environmental activist honored for his work to reforest the areas around Nairobi.

Since then, 99 toxic water advisories in Canada have been lifted, while 57 remain. Despite this progress, Autumn continues to spread her message, becoming known internationally as a "water warrior." In 2019, she spoke at the United Nations headquarters in New York, urging global leaders to make clean water a priority for Indigenous communities: "All across these lands, we know somewhere where someone can't drink the water."

Jerome Foster II, United States

Jerome Foster II stood outside the White House, holding a sign calling for the United States government to take more aggressive action to combat climate change. It was a typical Friday for the teen—he'd done it every week for more than a year.

"I remember being 5 years old, watching a documentary about climate change with my family," Jerome told *The Washington Post*. "I'd look around at them and say, 'Hey, are you guys hearing this? Shouldn't we be doing something?'"

Hope comes from action, Jerome says. So, he got down to work and has been taking action ever since.

In addition to his weekly protests, Jerome helped organize the 2019 Global Climate Strikes. This protest brought roughly six million people into the streets worldwide. He continues to unite others through OneMillionOfUs, an international organization he created to encourage youth activism and civic engagement.

"People keep saying our children's children will see the consequences of climate change, but that was 50 years ago," Jerome told CBS News. "We're the children."

Dictionary

advisory (*noun*) a statement issued to warn or encourage people to act in a certain way

controversial (*adjective*) causing disagreement or debate

deforestation (*noun*) the act of clearing a forest or wide area of trees

Indigenous (*adjective*) native to a particular country, region, or other place

Activity

PART 1

Question 1

The best alternate headline for this Article would be _____.

- (A) Youth Activists Take Action to Help Heal the Planet
- (B) Do Something! Global Climate Protests Inspire Youth Activism
- (C) G-o-o-o-al! Youth Soccer Player Scores for Trees
- (D) Water Warrior Demands Action From World Leaders

Question 2

Which question is **not** answered by the Article?

- (A) Who inspired Autumn Peltier to begin speaking out about water conservation?
- (B) Why was Justin Trudeau presented with a ceremonial copper water bowl?
- (C) Why does Lesein Mutunkei plant 11 trees around Nairobi every time he scores a goal?
- (D) What was the name of the documentary that Jerome Foster II watched when he was 5?

Question 3

Which is the closest **synonym** for the word *controversial*?

- (A) contagious
- (B) disputable
- (C) continuous
- (D) dishonest

Question 4

Think about the following statement made by Jerome Foster II:

"People keep saying our children's children will see the consequences of climate change, but that was 50 years ago," Jerome told CBS News. "We're the children."

The author's purpose for including this quote was to _____.

- (A) describe how Jerome organized millions of people to join in the 2019 Global Climate Strikes
- (B) analyze the impact Jerome's work has had on combating climate change
- (C) prove that Jerome's organization is changing the way many people think about climate change
- (D) emphasize why Jerome encourages youth activism regarding climate change

Question 5

Based on information in the Article, in what way are Lesein Mutunkei and Autumn Peltier similar?

- A They are both committed to getting their prime ministers to care for the environment.
- B They were both among the youngest attendees at the United Nations Youth Climate Summit.
- C They are both committed to fighting climate change in their environment.
- D They were both children when they first became concerned with environmental activism.

Question 6

The Article states:

These pipelines could *adversely* affect the water supply in a country where First Nations communities were already living with toxic water advisories.

"I am very unhappy with the choices you've made," she told the prime minister, who in turn promised to address the issue.

Which is the closest **synonym** for the word *adversely*?

- A periodically
- B sensibly
- C negatively
- D barely

Question 7

Based on the Article, the reader can predict that _____.

- A Autumn will pick a cause other than water pollution to advocate for
- B Jerome will continue to organize protests to combat climate change
- C Jerome will make a documentary film about the 2019 Global Climate Strikes
- D Autumn will ask Prime Minister Trudeau to return the ceremonial water bowl

Question 8

Which of these is a statement of opinion?

- A Autumn's activism for Indigenous water rights has earned her the nickname "water warrior."
- B Lesein's "Trees for Goals" program was adopted by his school's rugby and basketball teams.
- C Autumn's activism was inspired by a sign on Ontario Indigenous lands that said "Toxic Water."
- D Lesein's "Trees for Goals" program is a practical and inventive solution to a significant problem.

After Reading Poll

Now that you have read the article, indicate whether you agree or disagree with this statement.

"You are never too small or too young to make an impact in the world."

Agree

Disagree

Explain why you voted the way you did. Then read and respond to what others have to say.

Sorry, comments are not available at this time. Please try again later.

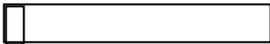
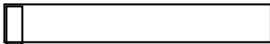
Thought Question

Imagine that you wanted to become an environmental activist. Write about an issue that you feel is important and describe the actions you would take to find solutions and inspire others. Explain your thinking using details from the Article as well as your own ideas.

Poll Results

OPINION STATEMENT: "You are never too small or too young to make an impact in the world."

BEFORE READING	AFTER READING
HOW YOU VOTED	
Agree	Agree
Disagree	Disagree

WORLDWIDE RESULTS					
Agree		94%	Agree		95%
Disagree		6%	Disagree		5%

4% changed their opinion after reading the article.

Stretch Article

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Lesein Mutunkei, Kenya

Lesein Mutunkei lives in the city of Nairobi, but he and his family love camping in Kenya's wilderness. Lesein also loves playing soccer. At age 12, he came up with a way to combine his two passions to help heal the planet.

After learning that Kenya was losing more than 123,000 acres (50,000 hectares) of forest each year to deforestation, Lesein did the math: That was tantamount to about 164 soccer fields a day. The young athlete was shocked, but then, an idea took *root*: For every goal he scored, he could plant a tree.

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Autumn Peltier, Canada

At age 8, Autumn Peltier, who is from the Wiikwemkoong First Nation, was attending a ceremony on Ontario Indigenous lands when she saw a sign she would never forget: "Toxic Water."

Inspired by her aunt, who walked the shores of all five Great Lakes to raise awareness for water conservation and Indigenous water rights, Autumn began speaking at community events about the importance of protecting Canada's water. Four years later, at the Assembly of First Nations' annual winter meeting, she was chosen to present Canada's Prime Minister Justin Trudeau with a ceremonial copper water bowl symbolizing his responsibility to protect the country's water.

She took the opportunity to confront Trudeau on his support for controversial oil and gas pipeline projects that could adversely affect the water supply in a country where 100 First Nations communities were living with toxic water advisories.

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Stretch Activity

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- (D) Youth Activists Take Action to Help Heal the Planet

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Which question is **not** answered by the Article?

- (A) Why was Justin Trudeau presented with a ceremonial copper water bowl?
- (B) What was the name of the documentary that Jerome Foster II watched when he was 5?
- (C) Why does Lesein Mutunkei plant 11 trees around Nairobi every time he scores a goal?
- (D) Who inspired Autumn Peltier to begin speaking out about water conservation?

Question 3

Which two words are the closest **synonyms**?

Only some of these words are used in the Article.

- (A) consequence and concession
- (B) advisory and agenda
- (C) aggressive and assertive
- (D) controversial and coincidental

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Think about the following statement made by Jerome Foster II:

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- (C) They are both committed to getting their prime ministers to care for the environment.
- (D) They were both children when they first became concerned with environmental activism.

Question 6

Read this passage from the Article:

After learning that Kenya was losing more than 123,000 acres (50,000 hectares) of forest each year to deforestation, Lesein did the math: That was *tantamount* to about 164 soccer fields a day.

In this passage, the word *tantamount* means _____.

- (A) substantially less than
- (B) nonidentical to
- (C) excessively more than
- (D) equivalent to

Question 7

Based on the Article, the reader can predict that _____.

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- (B) Autumn will pick a cause other than water pollution to advocate for
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