

A Plan to Plant a Trillion Trees (1080L)

Step 1: Before Reading Poll (Write Your Answer)

One organization is working to slow climate change by planting trees. The group's leader says people should stop debating climate change and start doing something about it. What do you think about the group's slogan?

"Stop talking. Start planting."

- Do you agree or disagree?

Step 2: Article (Read the Article)



Photo credit: Plant-for-the-Planet

Felix Finkbeiner founded Plant-for-the-Planet when he was just 9 years old. Since then, the organization has planted billions of trees.

TUTZING, Germany (Achieve3000, April 30, 2019). Felix Finkbeiner is on a mission to plant a trillion trees. That's a tall order, but this 21-year-old has never been afraid to tackle big challenges. When he was just 9 years old, he had an idea that sparked a worldwide movement to slow climate change and help save our planet's environment.

It all started in 2007, when Finkbeiner was a fourth grader in Germany and he was assigned to write a report about climate change.

While doing research for his report, Finkbeiner learned that planting trees can help combat climate change. The connection between climate change and trees has to do with the gas carbon dioxide (CO₂). One cause of climate change is that there is too much CO₂ in Earth's atmosphere. Combustion of fossil fuels, like coal, oil, and natural gas, releases enormous amounts of CO₂ into the air. Because trees and other green plants absorb and store CO₂, planting more trees can help reduce the amount of CO₂ in the atmosphere, slowing the advance of climate change.

Finkbeiner's research, in addition to teaching him about the importance of trees, introduced him to a new hero: Wangari Maathai, a Kenyan activist who led a project that helped reforest an area in Africa where many trees had been cut down. Thanks to her leadership, more than 30 million trees were planted there. Maathai won the Nobel Peace Prize in 2004, becoming the first African woman to earn that honor. The United Nations, inspired by her accomplishments, established the Billion Tree Campaign in 2006.

Finkbeiner was so impressed by Maathai's story that he concluded his class presentation by challenging his classmates to join him in planting a million trees in every country in the world. That idea was the seed that grew into an international environmental youth movement.

Just two months after Finkbeiner presented his report, he founded the organization Plant-for-the-Planet and started making his dream a reality. Too many adults, he thought, were all talk and no action. Instead of

spending time discussing climate change, he wanted to get busy doing something about it. His take-charge philosophy is summarized by the group's slogan, "Stop talking. Start planting."

Finkbeiner traveled to other schools and spoke to students about his mission. Kids all over the country started getting involved, and in three years, they planted a million trees in Germany. News stories spread Finkbeiner's message beyond Germany's borders, and soon children around the world took up the challenge.

Plant-for-the-Planet was so successful and esteemed that in 2011, the United Nations asked the organization to take over the leadership of its Billion Tree Campaign. The partnership was a win-win for the organization and the planet. By 2017, the two groups had planted over 14 billion trees in more than 130 countries.

Plant-for-the-Planet knew its efforts were benefiting the environment, but it was hard to calculate the extent of the impact because no one knew the total number of trees on Earth or how many were cut down each year. Were the billions of new trees planted significant in comparison to the existing number? Were they enough to offset those lost to deforestation?

To find out, some scientists undertook an ambitious international tree count. After collecting and analyzing a huge amount of data, they estimated the number of trees on Earth is 3 trillion (a number much higher than previous estimates) and found that about 10 billion are lost to deforestation each year.

What did that mean for Plant-for-the-Planet? Finkbeiner realized that the organization would have to work harder than ever. To make a big enough impact to slow climate change, the group needed to set much higher goals. That's how the Billion Tree Campaign became the Trillion Tree Campaign. Just how much is a trillion? It's a thousand times larger than a billion.

So as you can see, even as an adult, Finkbeiner has not stopped dreaming big. And he's getting a lot of help in reaching his goal. As of today, over 70,000 kids in more than 67 countries have joined the cause and become "Climate Justice Ambassadors."

*Video credit: Alexis Garcia/Plant-for-the-Planet
Edited for length*

Dictionary

<p>combustion (<i>noun</i>) the process of burning</p> <p>esteem (<i>verb</i>) to value or hold in high regard</p> <p>offset (<i>verb</i>) to make up for something or balance something out</p> <p>philosophy (<i>noun</i>) a set of ideas about how something should be done</p>
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Step 3: Activity (Answer the Questions)

Question 1

What is this Article mainly about?

- (A) Planting trees can help curb climate change since they reduce the amount of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere by absorbing and storing it.
- (B) Wangari Maathai is a Kenyan activist who headed up an effort to plant more than 30 million trees in a part of Africa that had been largely deforested.
- (C) 21-year-old German man has set the ambitious goal of planting 1 trillion trees around the world in an effort to slow the advance of climate change.
- (D) When Felix Finkbeiner was a fourth-grade student in Germany, he wrote a report on climate change and learned that planting trees can combat climate change.

Question 2

Which is the closest **synonym** for the word *offset*, as it is used in the Article?

- (A) Counterbalance
- (B) Disconnect
- (C) Unite
- (D) Document

Question 3

According to the Article, what caused Felix Finkbeiner to want to plant a million trees in every country in the world?

- (A) He was asked to assume leadership of the United Nations' Billion Tree Campaign, which is attempting to plant trees around the world.
- (B) He realized that around 10 billion trees are lost each year due to deforestation and wanted to do something to offset the losses.
- (C) He was inspired by an African woman named Wangari Maathai, who led an effort to plant more than 30 million trees in Africa.
- (D) He learned while writing a report in the fourth grade that trees are able to release carbon dioxide into the air and store oxygen as well.

Question 4

Look at the events below. Based on information in the Article, which of these must have happened *third*? *This question asks about when events happened. It does not ask where in the Article the events appear. Look back at the Article for clues, such as dates.*

- (A) Wangari Maathai, a Kenyan activist, led an effort to plant more than 30 million trees in a part of Africa that had been deforested.
- (B) Felix Finkbeiner challenged his classmates to join him in an effort to plant a million trees in every country in the world.
- (C) The United Nations asked an organization called Plant-for-the-Planet to assume the leadership of its Billion Tree Campaign.
- (D) Felix Finkbeiner did research for a report and learned that planting trees can help combat climate change.

Question 5

The Article states:

While doing research for his report, Finkbeiner learned that planting trees can help combat climate change. The *connection* between climate change and trees has to do with the gas carbon dioxide (CO₂). One cause of climate change is that there is too much CO₂ in Earth's atmosphere. Combustion of fossil fuels, like coal, oil, and natural gas, releases enormous amounts of CO₂ into the air. Because trees and other green plants absorb and store CO₂, planting more trees can help reduce the amount of CO₂ in the atmosphere, slowing the advance of climate change.

Which would be the closest **synonym** for the word *connection*, as it is used above?

- (A) Distinction
- (B) Association
- (C) Confusion
- (D) Discussion

Question 6

Which of these is a statement of opinion?

- Ⓐ Felix Finkbeiner started an organization called Plant-for-the-Planet whose goal is to plant trees around the world in order to slow the advance of climate change.
- Ⓑ Wangari Maathai is a Kenyan activist who led a project that planted 30 million trees in a deforested part of Africa.
- Ⓒ Felix Finkbeiner deserves to win a Nobel Peace Prize for devoting so much of his time to the admirable effort to plant trees around the world.
- Ⓓ One cause of climate change is the burning of fossil fuels such as coal, oil, and natural gas, which releases carbon dioxide into the air.

Question 7

Which passage from the Article best supports the idea that Felix Finkbeiner inspired others to fight against climate change?

- Ⓐ [His] research, in addition to teaching him about the importance of trees, introduced him to a new hero: Wangari Maathai, a Kenyan activist who led a project that helped reforest an area in Africa where many trees had been cut down.
- Ⓑ Just two months after Finkbeiner presented his report, he founded the organization Plant-for-the-Planet and started making his dream a reality. Too many adults, he thought, were all talk and no action. Instead of spending time discussing climate change, he wanted to get busy doing something about it.
- Ⓒ Felix Finkbeiner is on a mission to plant a trillion trees. That's a tall order, but this 21-year-old has never been afraid to tackle big challenges.
- Ⓓ Finkbeiner traveled to other schools and spoke to students about his mission. Kids all over the country started getting involved, and in three years, they planted a million trees in Germany. News stories spread Finkbeiner's message beyond Germany's borders, and soon children around the world took up the challenge.

Question 8

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

- Ⓐ A large number of young people think that planting trees in countries around the world is a good way to slow the effects of climate change.
- Ⓑ Planting a trillion trees will completely reverse the effects of climate change because trees will take in more carbon dioxide than is released through the burning of fossil fuels.
- Ⓒ Wangari Maathai met with Felix Finkbeiner to discuss the most efficient way of conducting a tree-planting campaign in Germany.
- Ⓓ Felix Finkbeiner realizes that planting several million trees will be enough to offset the effects of climate change.

Step 4: After Reading Poll (Did you change your mind?)

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

"Stop talking. Start planting."

- Agree
- Disagree

Step 5: Thought Question (Write Your Response)

Describe Felix Finkbeiner and his plan to help slow climate change. Then, state whether you think more people should plant trees and explain your reasoning. Include facts and details from the Article in your response.