

Simplified Speech #080 – The most interesting woman in the world

Episode description

A few months ago, the Culips team did an episode on the world's most interesting man. Now is the time for the world's most interesting woman! Hosts Andrew and Jeremy speak in-depth about the one and only Greta Thunberg.

Fun fact

To avoid flying, Greta sailed from Europe to North America on a racing yacht over the course of 15 days. The yacht was equipped with solar panels and underwater wind turbines. Is that a journey you would take?

Expressions included in the study guide

- To crown [someone]
- In the not too distant future
- To go green
- To practice what you preach
- A light bulb moment
- To sit on the sidelines



Transcript

Note: The words and expressions that appear in **bold text** within the transcript are discussed in more detail in the Detailed Explanations section that follows the transcript.

Suzanne: Hey, everyone, it's Suzanne. And coming soon to Culips, I'll be starting a brand-new series called Suzanne's Quick Tips. In this series, I'll share some great tips and tricks that will help you become a better English speaker. I'll cover lots of different topics, like pronunciation and clear speaking, my specialty, as well as presentation skills and some interview skills. Sometimes I may even share an interview with a friend. This series will be perfect for intermediate and advanced learners who want to improve their English for everyday business and academic situations. So keep your ears open for Suzanne's Quick Tips by the Culips English Podcast, and we'll see you very soon.

Andrew: You're listening to the Culips English Podcast. To download the study guide for this episode, which includes the transcript, detailed vocabulary explanations, real-world examples, and a quiz, visit our website, Culips.com. C-U-L-I-P-S.com.

Andrew: Hello, everybody. My name is Andrew.

Jeremy: And I'm Jeremy.

Andrew: And you're listening to Culips.

Andrew: Welcome back to Culips, everyone. Today, we have a Simplified Speech episode for you. And if you're not familiar with Simplified Speech, it's the Culips series where we have totally natural English conversations, but we speak a little bit slower than we do in our everyday lives. And today, I'm joined by my cohost Jeremy. Hello, Jeremy.

Jeremy: Hello, Andrew.

Andrew: Jeremy, recently you and I recorded a Simplified Speech episode about Elon Musk. Do you remember that?

Jeremy: Yes, I remember.

Andrew: And we titled that episode "The most interesting man in the world," Elon Musk. And, listeners, you really liked this episode. We got a lot of positive feedback, a lot of compliments and good emails and comments on social media about this episode. So I thought, well, we have to record an episode about the most interesting woman in the world. And this was a hard decision to make. There's so many interesting women out there and, of course, it's kind of a silly exercise to limit.

Jeremy: One person out of the entire ...

Andrew: Out of, how many women are there in the world? Billions, of course, right? But there is one young lady in particular, her name is Greta Thunberg. She's getting a lot of attention recently over the last couple of years, and she was actually named Person of the Year by Time Magazine for 2019. So I thought, why don't we **crown Greta Thunberg** as the most interesting woman in the world and talk about her today?

Jeremy: By Culips.

Andrew: Yeah, the Culips crown.

Jeremy: The Culips crown. It is invisible.

Andrew: Invisible, yeah. So, we're gonna talk about young Greta here today, Jeremy. But, before we do that, I should remind all of our listeners that there's a study guide for this episode that can be downloaded on our website, Culips.com. It is, in our opinion, the best way to study with us. And there's lots of awesome study content in the study guide, and if you're interested to learn more about it, just visit our website and you can check it out

Andrew: So, everyone, I think what we'll do here today is break this episode down into three parts. I think in part one, we'll talk a little bit about why Greta is worthy of discussion.

Jeremy: Why is she so famous?

Andrew: Why is she so famous? Why is she so interesting? And in the second part, we'll talk a little bit about her background, where she comes from and what kind of influences in her life led her to become the person she is today. And then we'll wrap it up by talking about some of the controversy that is surrounding her, because she is a controversial figure, which is a little bit hard for me to believe, but there's a lot of controversy around her. So we'll talk about that in the third part of the episode here today.

Andrew: So, Jeremy, maybe I will ask you a question to kick things off.

Jeremy: All right.

Andrew: And the question is: Why is Greta Thunberg worthy of discussion? What is she famous for? Why is she so interesting?

Jeremy: Well, I think probably the most notable detail about her is that she's very young, currently she is 16 years old. But I believe she was, of course, a bit younger than that when she first started doing what she's doing now. So the first fact is that she's 16 years old, currently, and the second thing that people should know is that she is a climate change activist, we could say.

Andrew: Exactly, that is why she is well known, is because she is a climate change activist. And she talks a lot about humans' impact on the environment, about our carbon footprint and about how climate change is really an existential threat.

Jeremy: Existential threat. That's a tough one.

Andrew: So existential is related to existence, right? So, you know, she's talking here in very serious words that if we don't fix some of the climate issues that people all over the world are facing, that this could be the end of humanity or the end of life on earth as we know it.

Jeremy: Climate change is a threat to our existence, right? We might not be here anymore in, **in the not too distant future**, if we don't change the way we are doing things.

Jeremy: She also talks a lot about our carbon footprint. This is a good term to know if, if our listeners don't know it. Carbon is an element that is present in most of the things that we use in our daily life, plastics and, you know, most of these products that we use, including gasoline and oil, all of these things are carbon based, we can say. So our carbon footprint, the footprint is like the record or the thing that you leave behind. So a business that does not use any plastic or paper at all and produces no trash has a very small carbon footprint, or no carbon footprint, you can say—although no carbon footprint is almost impossible, these days.

Andrew: Almost impossible. And you're absolutely right, Jeremy, that we can talk about a carbon footprint in terms of a business or an industry or we can talk about it on a personal level, too. You hear individuals talk about reducing their carbon footprint. For example, if someone starts to commute by bicycle instead of driving a car every day, they could say that they've reduced their carbon footprint by **going green** and riding a bike.

Jeremy: Or for my family, at least, we don't use paper towels at all. We use reusable napkins that, made from material that we made ourselves and we wash that. We also use cloth diapers most of the time with my son and we try to minimize the amount of carbon that we use in our daily life by not getting extra spoons and forks, plastic spoons and forks from the restaurants when we get food. We try to go to places that don't use disposable plates and things like that. But it's definitely not easy in this day and age.

Andrew: Absolutely. Now, one of the things that Greta is famous for—and some people have even called this the “Greta effect”—is flight shaming. Flight shaming. So, as everyone knows, when you fly on an airplane from one place to another place, there is a lot of carbon emission that is given off by the airplane, a lot, a lot, a lot. And this is, of course, bad for the environment and contributes to climate change. And so Greta advocates that we should stop flying. And, as a result, people are starting to feel perhaps a little ashamed of flying or guilty about flying, because of the negative effect to the environment. And Greta, she **practices what she preaches**. She travels around, when she's giving speeches and meeting with world leaders, she doesn't fly from one place to another place, she travels in a more eco-friendly way. And recently, she just travelled to and from North America. So we should say that she is Swedish, she's from Europe, in Sweden, but she travelled to and from North America in a sailboat, across the Atlantic Ocean.

Jeremy: A sailboat, really?

Andrew: Yeah, yeah.

Jeremy: My goodness.

Andrew: Yeah, she sailed across the sea.

Jeremy: Brave girl.

Andrew: Brave girl. I don't think she was alone. I think she had a team with her.

Jeremy: I hope not.

Andrew: But this is pretty extreme. Jeremy, you talked about reducing your carbon footprint through using, you know, reusable diapers and cloth towels. Would you ever think about sailing to Korea instead of flying to Korea? Could you be shamed into doing this?

Jeremy: At this point, no, but if there was ever an option that did not produce such waste, I would do my best to get on that option, for example, an electric plane or a solar-powered plane or something like that. I would try to, to go the other route.

Andrew: There is the option of carbon offset. Have you heard of this, carbon offset?

Jeremy: No, I haven't.

Andrew: So if you want to pay significantly more for your plane ticket, the airline—I'm not sure if every airline does this or maybe there's some charities that do it, too—they will try to do something beneficial for the environment, like maybe plant, I don't know, 100 trees in your name or something to offset the carbon emission. So because you're doing something negative to the environment by flying, the airline or the charity, whoever you choose to do this, will do something positive for the environment so that you're kind of equalizing your impact on the climate.

Jeremy: I like that.

Andrew: So, I haven't tried this myself, but I think it's a good idea and something that I might look into in the future because I do travel frequently, several times a year, and I'm starting to feel ashamed of it. I'm starting to feel guilty.

Jeremy: You've been hit by the Greta effect.

Andrew: I'm a victim of the Greta effect, yeah.

Andrew: OK, Jeremy, well, this is kind of who Greta is today and what she's doing, OK? But maybe we should look back on her upbringing and see how she became famous and how she became the person she is now. And that's what we'll talk about in part two of this

episode is her background. So we mentioned that she's from Stockholm, Sweden. For our listeners who are unfamiliar with her, what kind of personality does she have? What kind of person is she?

Jeremy: I would say she's very precocious.

Andrew: Precocious.

Jeremy: Precocious, that's not a very commonly used word. In other words, she is wise beyond her years. So someone who is precocious, the pre in there, P-R-E, the Latin root there, relates to before, usually. So this word is kind of saying that she is wise before she should be, because she's only currently 16, and yet she is speaking with world leaders, speaking at conferences and going all over the place, trying to make major change on a global scale.

Andrew: Exactly. And when you hear her talk, she has a very strong resolve. She's very serious and people listen to her, right? She's very effective as a speaker. She garners the attention of an audience.

Jeremy: Now, we should mention that this may be inherited, this may be an inherited trait for her, because her mother is an opera singer and her father is an actor. So both of them are using their voice in front of large numbers of people. So perhaps that contributed to her current personality, her precociousness, maybe?

Andrew: I think that's fair to assume, absolutely. Because, you know, she has a performance background in her family, right? So maybe she's more comfortable speaking in front of other people. Of course, this is just conjecture, this is just a guess, but I think, yeah, that's safe to assume.

Andrew: And so, Jeremy, Greta when she was younger, she learned about climate change at school and she just couldn't really understand why nobody seemed to be working on solving the problem. She just couldn't comprehend why nobody seemed to be tackling the issue of fighting climate change. And so, as a result of this, she tried and actually was successful at convincing her parents to adapt to a vegan diet. Now, a vegan diet is a diet that we've actually talked about on Culips before, because Morag, one of our cohosts, is vegan, so she explained what this diet is about. But essentially vegans don't eat or really consume in any way any animal products, right? And this can have a real positive impact on the environment, because, you know, factory farming is unfortunately a real terrible thing in, in a lot of ways, but one of the negative results of factory farming is a lot of carbon emission.

Jeremy: And for those who don't know, factory farming is the term for very, very, very large farms with hundreds or even thousands of animals in one place, and these are essentially very big farms. But in the past, traditionally, a farm is usually a smaller operation. So when people say factory farms, they mean a very large operation and

usually it means that the animals are not treated very well at all. They are usually treated like product and not living creatures.

Andrew: Exactly. So she convinced her family to go vegan and this kind of sparked a revolution in her, because she realized at this moment that she can make an impact in the lives of other people. She could convince other people to change their minds and, as a result, make a difference in the world. And I guess this was her **light bulb moment**, you could say. It's that moment where she realized what she needed to do, and so she sees all the adults around her not doing anything about climate change, she feels a very strong conviction that something needs to be done about climate change, and she also realizes that she can have a positive impact on the world. And I guess all of these elements kind of combined and made her to start protesting the Swedish parliament and to try and get politicians in her country to pay attention and to do something about climate change. So she started to become a person of action, right? A person who doesn't just **sit on the sidelines** and complain about problems like many of us do.

Jeremy: Like we all do.

Andrew: Yeah, like I do for the most part, yeah ...

Jeremy: Like we do.

Andrew: But somebody who actually gets out there and tries to make the world a better place, tries to make a difference.

Jeremy: So she started protesting inaction, inaction meaning not taking action. She started protesting inaction in front of the Swedish parliament with her own handmade sign that said "School strike for the climate." And these were called the Friday protests, because she protested, at first on her own and then later other people joined, but she protested every Friday. So every Friday she would skip school and go there with her protesting sign and stand in front of Swedish parliament and say, hey why aren't you doing anything about these climate changes?

Jeremy: So this was sort of the beginning of her environmental activism and, as a result, all over the world youth movements have popped up. And a lot of young people are standing up and talking about this issue at their schools and to their local governments, as a result of Greta's actions. Through social media and Instagram and Facebook and Twitter and things like this, people are able to find out about what she's doing and they are inspired to do the same in their communities.

Andrew: I think there's two reasons why this movement is particularly unique. The first is that we can see the impact of social media, right?

Jeremy: Yeah.

Andrew: Greta was able to get her word out from Sweden, which is a pretty small, isolated country, and it spread like wildfire across the globe, right? And this was due to the power of social media. The second thing that's really interesting about this movement is that it's a youth movement and it's not just college students. It's, like, elementary school students, middle school students, high school students. It's youngsters, right?

Jeremy: I think the really impactful thing here about children becoming environmental activists is, in school, children are always told about their future. They're told that you're here in school so that you can have a better future. You're studying math today so that you can get into a better college and get a good job. And so what I'm saying is that school is future oriented. They are always telling kids to focus on their future, but if the planet isn't around to support them in that future, if that future does not exist, then what's the point in going to school? This, I think, is what makes her message so powerful.

Andrew: I agree with you, and it is really powerful to see children protesting. I think this is the first time in my life that I've seen children protesting in mass, right? Many, many, many thousands of them together.

Jeremy: Wow, that's inspiring. I get chills just thinking about that right now.

Andrew: Jeremy, I think we're both on the same page here and that we agree with Greta's message and we respect her for trying to make the world a better place, right?

Jeremy: Yes, definitely.

Andrew: From my point of view, her intentions are good and her goal is admirable. But there are a lot of people who would disagree with me. And, actually, she's become quite a controversial figure as of late. And so I thought here, in the last part of this episode, we could talk about some of the controversy that is surrounding her. So have you heard about any of this controversy, Jeremy? Or have, you know, you picked up on any of the negativity that's surrounding Greta at all?

Jeremy: Not really, but I can understand why some people would feel resistance to hearing these things. Personally, when I hear that I shouldn't fly anymore, that limits my freedom to move around and to go see friends in other countries, like yourself, or things like that. And my only other option is likely going to involve some sort of fuel, as well. Boats use fuel, cars use fuel. A sailboat is wind powered, of course, but that is a dangerous trek across the Atlantic Ocean that I can't say I'm willing to do right now. So I can see why there would be some resistance.

Andrew: Yeah, absolutely. So I think there's a couple different ways that people take this message. The first way they can take it is to become angry and lash out at her because of this. Like to take the example of flying, right? We could hear this message and we could say, "What, how dare you try to limit me and say that I can't do this," you know? Like, "Not everybody has the luxury of being able to take 2 months out of their life to sail across the Atlantic."

Jeremy: Exactly.

Andrew: You could respond this way. Or you could respond by saying, "Huh, that's interesting, OK. Maybe there's some other ways I can reduce my carbon footprint in my life to offset this flight I need to take." Or you can start just thinking more about your personal impact on the climate and, you know, small steps can lead to some big results if everybody does a little bit, right? We could take it this way.

Andrew: But there's lots of people who take it the first way, who take the message the first way. And one of them is the president of, of the United States, and he's tweeted a lot about Greta. Have you, have you noticed any of his tweets, Jeremy?

Jeremy: No, I haven't. I don't, I don't go on Twitter very much.

Andrew: We talked about Greta's age as being part of her superpower, right? She's a young woman, speaking her mind and really advocating strongly for what she believes in and for climate reform. But this is also something that has hurt her cause a little bit. Because of her age, she is perhaps not as respected as much as she should be. People say, oh, she's too young, what does she know about anything? What does she know about life? She has no real life experience. And she's been mocked quite a bit about this.

Jeremy: So the fact that she is young, to some people gives her credibility. Like we were saying, because she is a young person, the future of this planet is much more important to her than the 97-year-old person.

Andrew: Mmhmm.

Jeremy: But, on the other hand, her age also makes her seem like a child in some people's eyes. And, for that reason, they look down on her or they don't really respect her like they would respect another adult. However, like we said earlier, a 19-year-old or someone who is 21 and in college doing this very same thing would likely not get very much publicity.

Andrew: Jeremy, I think there is a lot that we could say about Greta and we've only really scratched the surface here today. But I think she's a really interesting person and that's why we **have crowned her** the most interesting woman in the world.

Andrew: I'm really curious about our listeners, what they think about Greta. And I would love it, guys, if you would send us an email and let us know your thoughts. Do you agree with the message and her movement, or do you disagree. And also, what is the impact of her movement in your community? Have there been any Greta-inspired protests or demonstrations where you live, or is she new to you? Is this the first time that you're learning about her? We would also be really interested to know about this, as well. So if you would like to send us a message, just shoot us an email. Our address is contact@Culips.com.

Andrew: We are also all over the place on social media, on YouTube, on Instagram, on Facebook, on Twitter. So if you would like to get in touch with us that way, you can do it or if you are a fan of these social media services, please be sure to follow us so that you can stay up to date with all the news that's happening here at Culips.

Andrew: Once again, the study guide for this episode is available on our website, Culips.com, and that's also the place where you can listen to our entire back catalogue of English lessons. There's over 500 available on our website, so please check that out, as well.

Andrew: All right, Jeremy, we'll leave it at here for today. Thanks for listening, everyone, and we'll talk to you next time. Bye.

Jeremy: Bye, everyone.

Detailed Explanations

To crown [someone]

Verb

In this episode, Andrew and Jeremy decide **to crown Greta Thunberg** the most interesting woman in the world. Usually, **to crown someone** is to make that person a king or queen. But, in this situation, our hosts want to award Greta with the title of the most interesting woman in the world.

Here are a couple more examples with **to crown [someone]**:

Danesh: Have you seen John today? He's acting strangely.

Cynthia: Strangely, like how?

Danesh: He was a little rude to me, and he didn't want to help me with my report like he usually does.

Cynthia: Oh. That might be because we **crowned him** "Best New Employee" last week. It might have gone to his head.

Danesh: That explains a lot. I always thought those awards were silly.

Terry: Did you like being in high school?

Alice: No, not really.

Terry: Were you unpopular?

Alice: Not really. Just average, I guess. How about you? I bet you had loads of friends.

Terry: Actually, I did. **I was crowned** most popular student of my grade every year.

Alice: That must have been nice.

Terry: No, it wasn't. A lot of people liked me, but I didn't have many true friends.

In the not too distant future Phrase

When talking about humans no longer being on the planet, Jeremy says that might happen **in the not too distant future**. That means sooner rather than later. When people discuss the planet and the universe, we often think of long periods of time and talk about the distant future. Saying **in the not too distant future** is reminding ourselves that something might not be too far away in time.

Here are a couple more examples with **in the not too distant future**:

Hayley: What kind of movies do you like?

Milo: I absolutely love futuristic movies.

Hayley: Are there any good ones you can recommend?

Milo: You might like Blade Runner 2049 or even Mad Max. They're set **in the not too distant future**.

Hayley: Yeah, I've heard of them. I'll give them a look.

Celine: They say a lot of the east coast of the United States will be under water because of climate change.

Reilly: Who says that?

Celine: Basically every scientist that studies this kind of thing.

Reilly: Do they know when it will happen?

Celine: There isn't one exact date. Some say in 30 years. Some say in 50 years. But they pretty much all agree that it will occur **in the not too distant future**.

To go green

Phrasal verb

Andrew talks about measures people take to reduce the pollution they create. Those measures are part of **going green**. Green is the colour that has come to symbolize the environment. As a result, the word green is often associated with being good for nature. **To go green** is to take steps to live in a way that is better for the environment. Companies, governments, and individuals can all **go green**.

Here are a couple more examples with **to go green**:

Roger: I noticed a big container in your backyard. What is that?

Fay: It's a composter. We put in scraps and leftovers to make fertilizer.

Roger: Oh, that's right. Your house has been **going green** for some time now. What else do you do?

Fay: We don't do nearly enough. We have an electric car, and we recycle, but I find there is always more we can do.

Roger: How much was that composter? I'm thinking we could start taking the same measures.

Olga: Oh, and one more thing. If you want to know the new guidelines for submitting your taxes, they're all online.

Macy: Online? They used to always give us the guidelines on paper.

Olga: I know, but the company is really trying to limit the amount of paper it uses.

Macy: I see. They're **going green**, right?

Olga: That's right. Again, if you want to know all the steps they've taken **to go green**, you can read about it on our homepage.

To practice what you preach Idiom

In this episode, Andrew says Greta **practices what she preaches**. That means she puts into action the things she talks about. To preach is to give moral advice and teachings. Many people can tell other people what to do and not do it themselves. It is a lot more admirable when someone has good moral advice and acts on it. That is **practicing what you preach**.

Here are a couple more examples with **to practice what you preach**:

Isaac: You look a little stressed out. Are you OK?

Margot: I didn't get much sleep last night.

Isaac: How come?

Margot: I was up last night playing a game on my phone. The next thing I knew, it was 3:00 in the morning and I couldn't sleep.

Isaac: What? You're always telling me the importance of getting quality sleep and how to do it.

Margot: I guess I don't exactly **practice what I preach**. Sorry.

Deacon: Are there any celebrities you follow on Instagram?

Aiden: Only one, actually. I love Dwayne "The Rock" Johnson. His Instagram feed is really uplifting.

Deacon: I know. He's always positive and talking about the importance of being nice to people.

Aiden: Apparently he's the nicest guy. He really **practices what he preaches**.

Deacon: Yeah, I like that about him. And he has epic workout videos, too.

A light bulb moment

Phrase

In this episode, Andrew talks about Greta Thunberg's **light bulb moment**. This is the moment when Greta realized she could make an impact on the world. **A light bulb moment** is when you come to a sudden realization of something important. If you walk into a darkened room, you can't see anything. Once you turn on the light bulb, suddenly you can see everything. The visual form of this phrase is common in cartoons, when a character has a sudden idea and a light bulb appears over their head.

Here are a couple more examples with **a light bulb moment**:

Primrose: I see you got your old motorcycle working again.

Sahib: I did. I'm really happy about that.

Primrose: You've been working on it for months. What happened?

Sahib: Well, after a long session of failure, I stopped everything I was doing and took a bath. In the bath, alone with my thoughts, I had **a light bulb moment**.

Primrose: What was it?

Sahib: That I should not be fixing my motorcycle! I took it to a garage to get it fixed.

Henrietta: Did you say your mother made this sandwich?

Dawn: It's pretty good, right?

Henrietta: It's amazing. No offense, but your mom never used to make good sandwiches.

Dawn: Yeah. But she told me she had **a light bulb moment** walking around the grocery store. She figured she should substitute her regular cheese with goat's milk cheese. That makes the whole difference!

To sit on the sidelines

Idiom

In this episode, Andrew calls Greta a person of action and not just someone who **sits on the sidelines**. **To sit on the sidelines** is to not participate or to not do something. Think of a sports game. The players on the field are participating and those on the sidelines are not. A similar expression is **to sit on the bench** or **to be on the sidelines**.

Here are a couple more examples with **to sit on the sidelines**:

Gyeongmin: The office is doing a fundraiser on the weekend. Are you coming?

Mickey: You know I hate that kind of thing.

Gyeongmin: I know, but you're also looking for a promotion.

Mickey: What's your point?

Gyeongmin: If you're always **sitting on the sidelines**, the boss won't do you any favours. You have to get out there!

Noor: I'm sick and tired of the municipal services in this city.

Patrick: What's wrong?

Noor: They haven't picked up our garbage or our recycling for 2 weeks. Someone should do something about this.

Patrick: Why don't you? Don't just **sit on the sidelines** waiting for something to happen. You should run for mayor!

Quiz

1. Which of the following does NOT describe Greta Thunberg?

- a) Swedish
- b) environmental activist
- c) university student
- d) famous

2. True or false? To crown someone is always to make them a king or queen.

- a) true
- b) false

3. Why is it considered a good thing to go green?

- a) it's a really popular colour
- b) it's nice to go to the countryside
- c) it's taking care of nature
- d) it's a colour often associated with money

4. Which of the following is a good example of being in the not too distant future?

- a) in 60 seconds
- b) in 25 years
- c) in 200 years
- d) in 4000 years

5. What does it mean to sit on the sidelines?

- a) to sit beside a pool
- b) to not participate
- c) to tell other people what to do
- d) to watch a sports game

Writing and Discussion Questions

1. What are your opinions on Greta Thunberg?
2. Do you think one person can change the world? Why or why not?
3. What kind of steps do you take to help the environment?
4. Can you be shamed into not flying or using your car as much as you do?
5. In which ways are you someone who practices what they preach?

Quiz Answers

1.c 2.b 3.c 4.b 5.b

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