

What is carbon, really?

Name _____ Date _____

Source: <https://blog.whogivesacrap.org/home/goodnews/what-the-crap-is-carbon-really> *



What is carbon, really?

For everyone who kiiiiiiinda knows.

Let's begin with a conversation that we wish was made up, but is just two real people from our office who are trying their best. Let's call them Amber and Jonathan.

Amber: Hey, what's carbon?

Jonathan: Amber! Come on, we talk about it all the time!

Amber: I know, can you just remind me?

Jonathan: Sure. It's like a, um... gas? Hold on, I used to know this.

Amber: ...

Jonathan: It's bad, I know that. Ugh, let me think.

Amber: So you don't know either.

Jonathan: Listen, I know it has a footprint!

If our office is home to a couple of Ambers and Jonathans, we figured that there might be a few more out there. We get it! This stuff is complicated and science-y and often involves maths. But don't worry, this is everything you need to know about that stuff everyone is talking about.

Carbon who?

First of all, you've been lied to. Carbon is not the problem. Carbon is just an element on the periodic table, named after the Latin word for "coal." When people throw around words like "carbon footprint," they're actually using "carbon" as a shorthand for carbon dioxide (CO₂), the most common greenhouse gas. No wonder Amber was so confused.

So get rid of the CO₂!

We appreciate your thinking, but we need carbon dioxide to keep our planet warm. It blocks in the sun's heat so that it doesn't escape into the ether. Without CO₂, our oceans would freeze and we'd be very cold. Freezing! Literally! We'd be dead, if you didn't catch that. But right now, the blanket of carbon dioxide covering the earth has gone a little past cosy. Think itchy and suffocating – like the worst wool jumper.

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If you can't handle the heat, get out of the greenhouse!

Greenhouse gas? What's that about? We're talking about gases like carbon dioxide that trap the sun's rays in our atmosphere, making it like a greenhouse. Get it? Pretty clever name, eh? As we mentioned, we need some greenhouse gases to keep our planet warm. Too many greenhouse gases, however, is too freaking hot.

Ok, but how does CO₂ get released?

By burning fossil fuels.

What are those? This seems like it should be its own blog post!

Hold on tight, this might blow your mind. Plants and animals are partially made of carbon. When marine life (and nearby flora and fauna) died millions of years ago, their remains accumulated at the bottom of the ocean. Over time, they were buried under mud, sediment and sand. The immense heat and pressure from being buried under A LOT (like a whole lot) of sand turned the organic matter into oil and gas. Today, when we drill for the oil that powers our world, we're touching life from hundreds of millions of years ago.

So you're trying to tell me that I'm driving around in a dinosaur?

Sort of! Everything that requires fuel (cars, airplanes, power plants, barbeques, etc) uses these carbon-rich materials from the past. When we burn them, they release heat, energy and, most pertinently, carbon dioxide.

And that's why people talk about carbon footprint in relation to travel and such?

Yep. A carbon footprint is how much carbon dioxide is released because of a particular person's or group's habits. In other words, it's how much fossil fuel is burnt to support your decisions – which can encompass everything from flying a plane to eating a bagel.

But it has nothing to do with feet?

No, nothing to do with feet.

* <https://blog.whogivesacrap.org/> is the blog of an Australian company that sells toilet roll online and donate 50% of their profits to improving sanitation in developing countries

What is carbon, really? L1 reading tasks

Name _____ Date _____



1) What is the main point of the blog?

a	To describe a “carbon footprint”	
b	To tell you what you can do to prevent climate change	
c	To explain the much-used term “carbon”	
d	To rebuke office employees for wasting company time	

Tick (✓) the correct answer. (L1.9, 1 mark)

2) The blog starts with a conversation. The writers do this because they:

a	are worried about the lack of understanding in their office	
b	want to illustrate that there are many people who are confused about carbon	
c	think that Amber and Jonathan are misinformed	
d	want to explain about greenhouse gases	

Tick (✓) the correct answer. (L1.9, 1 mark)

3) According to the writers, why might people find carbon difficult to understand?

(L1.9, L1.11, 3 marks)

4) In the paragraph headed **Carbon Who?**, why are there speech marks around the words *carbon footprint*?

_____ (L1.18, 1 mark)

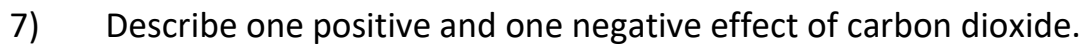
5) Name two layout features that make the text easier to read.

(L1.14, 2 marks)

6) What is the name given to the gases that trap the sun’s rays in our atmosphere?

(L1.9, 1 mark)

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(L1.9, L1.11, 2 ma)

	Fact	Opinion
a) Carbon is just an element on the periodic table		
b) No wonder Amber was so confused.		
c) this is everything you need to know		
d) Without CO2, our oceans would freeze		
e) Plants and animals are partially made of carbon.		
f) This seems like it should be its own blog post!		

9) Describe briefly the process by which oil and gas are formed.

(L1.9, L1.11, L2.11, 2 m)

a) perfectly
b) significantly

c) recently
d) often

11) The writers use humour to make their explanation more interesting. Find two examples of this.

(L1.12, 2 marks)

What is carbon, really? L2 extension reading questions

Name _____ Date _____



- 12) What impression is the word **kiiiiiiiinda** in the first subheading intended to convey?

(L2.13, 1 mark)

- 13) Which two of the following words best describe the writers' tone?

- | | | | |
|-------------|--------------------------|--------------|--------------------------|
| a) Humorous | <input type="checkbox"/> | d) Urgent | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| b) Friendly | <input type="checkbox"/> | e) Formal | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| c) Critical | <input type="checkbox"/> | f) Emotional | <input type="checkbox"/> |

Tick (✓) two answers. (L2.19, 2 marks)

- 14) Find one example of a sarcastic phrase.

(L2.19, 1 mark)

- 15) Give two language techniques that the writers use to help to interest the reader.

Feature 1 _____

Example from the text _____

Feature 2 _____

Example from the text _____

(L2.14, 4 marks)

- 16) Explain the source of the text and what the company behind it does.

(L2.15, 2 marks)

Curriculum links

Covers many aspects of Levels 1 and 2 reading including:

Level 1 (maximum of 23 marks)

- L1.9 Identify and understand the main points, ideas and details in texts
- L1.11 Identify meanings in texts and distinguish between fact and opinion
- L1.12 Recognise that language and other textual features can be varied to suit different audiences and purposes
- L1.13 Use reference materials and appropriate strategies (e.g., using knowledge of different word types) for a range of purposes, including to find the meaning of words
- L1.14 Understand organisational and structural features and use them to locate relevant information (e.g., index, menus, subheadings, paragraphs) in a range of straightforward texts
- L1.16 Recognise vocabulary typically associated with specific types and purposes of texts (e.g., formal, informal, instructional, descriptive, explanatory and persuasive)

Level 2 (maximum of 10 marks)

- L2.11 Identify the different situations when the main points are sufficient and when it is important to have specific details
- L2.13 Identify implicit and inferred meaning in texts
- L2.14 Understand the relationship between textual features and devices, and how they can be used to shape meaning for different audiences and purposes
- L2.15 Use a range of reference materials and appropriate resources (e.g., glossaries, legends/keys) for different purposes, including to find the meanings of words in straightforward and complex sources
- L2.19 Identify different styles of writing and writer's voice

For full details of curriculum content refer to DfE (Feb 2018), Subject content functional skills English (pages 12-16): <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/functional-skills-subject-content-english>

An editable Word version of this document is available, on a one-to-one exchange basis for your own resource contribution.

A free answer sheet is also available – for resource contributors only. If you would like to become a registered resource contributor, please contact Maggie using the www.skillsworkshop.org site contact link.