

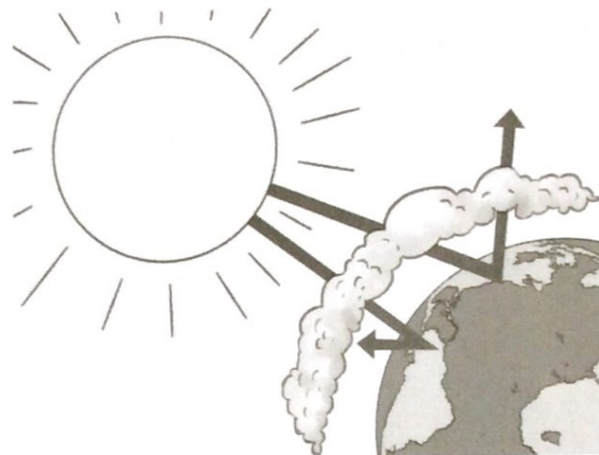
# Global Warming

The following passage looks at the issue of global warming.

The most serious environmental problem we face today is global warming. This is the slow and steady rise in the Earth's temperature that is caused by a build-up of carbon dioxide and other gases in the air. These gases are often called 'greenhouse gases' because of the impact they are having on the Earth.

## Living in a greenhouse

In towns and cities all over the world, power stations, factories, homes and cars all run on oil and coal, which are known as fossil fuels. As these fuels are burnt they release a gas called carbon dioxide, which is building up in the atmosphere. The carbon dioxide, along with other gases, traps the Sun's heat in the atmosphere (just as a greenhouse traps heat), instead of allowing it to escape into space. As a result our world is growing warmer.



A simple diagram showing how the Earth is becoming warmer.

## What are the effects?

Global warming is felt most keenly at the North and South Poles, where temperatures are rising faster than elsewhere. Here, the ice caps are slowly melting. In other cold regions around the world, glaciers – vast rivers of ice – are melting too. All the extra water is causing sea levels to rise, threatening to flood coasts and low-lying islands. Meanwhile, the weather is becoming more extreme. There are more storms and heavy downpours, which cause flooding and other damage. There are more heatwaves and periods of drought, which dry up lakes and turn land into desert.



melting ice caps

## Solving the problem

There are no simple solutions to global warming but, around the world, people are taking steps to cut down the amount of carbon dioxide that is pumped into the air. Scientists are inventing cleaner machines. Natural energy sources, such as sunlight and the wind, are being more widely used. We can all play our part. If we save energy whenever we can, for example by switching off lights and using public transport, each of us can help to improve the situation. That way, slowly but surely, we can repair the damage we've done to the Earth.