

Picture books for children take a long time to go from idea to object. When I wrote "[Why Are the Ice Caps Melting? The Dangers of Global Warming](#)" five or six years ago being "Green" was not the big subject it is today. But by the time the book came out former Vice-President Al Gore had written "An Inconvenient Truth," and won an Oscar for the documentary film of the subject. Leonardo di Caprio had (I believe) 6 Prius cars in his garage. Hollywood had spoken. Green was good.



I was surprised that this modest little book, published by [HarperCollins](#) as part of its LET'S READ AND FIND OUT science series, and cheerfully illustrated by [Paul Meisel](#), gathered the attention it did, although I guess I shouldn't have been. A reporter from The Washington Post interviewed me and asked if I didn't feel concerned about how I was frightening children by writing a book about global warming. The Wall Street Journal (which rarely reviews children's books) wrote a long and vitriolic review of the book, with a similar caveat.

For me, who was a child the age this book is intended for during World War II, this reaction was puzzling. I recall how my generation was bombarded daily with the threat of bombs dropping on our homes and schools, Nazi or Japanese soldiers marching our way, boxcars full of people being taken off to concentration camps.

No one asked us if we were frightened, for our parents were scared stiff. We didn't have counselors coming to our classrooms to lessen our terrors in those days. I believe my generation was comforted by the scrap metal and scrap rubber we collected, certain that our contribution would help us win the war. If nothing else, our actions gave us a cause and focus. Our awareness kept us from feeling like victims of forces beyond our control.

I believe the same is true of whatever we can do to combat global warming. For this will be an increasingly urgent problem for those who come after us.

So global warming, which is not the immediate threat attack from abroad was then, struck me as something we all, children included, need to think about, learn all we can about, in order to try and come up with solutions to the problem.

The up side is that green thinking is suddenly exploding all around us.

Let's hope it brings some policy changes to large corporations and government. The [Santa Monica Public Library](#)

has made a step in acknowledging the problem by launching a new annual award, the Green Prize for Sustainable Literature.

It is given to 5 books, in adult non-fiction, adult reference, youth non-fiction, youth fiction, and youth picture book.

I'm pleased that "

[Why Are the Ice Caps Melting?](#)

" was awarded the prize in the Youth Picture Book category for 2007.

So thanks to the city of Santa Monica, and the state of California! I understand that even Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger is working on a way to turn one of his Hummers hybrid. Paul and I have just finished "What's So Bad About Gasoline?" which HarperCollins will publish in 2009. I doubt that anyone will accuse us of setting out to terrify small children by this one.

So that's progress—I guess...