

LEARNING NOTES FOR AGES 8+

Themes: CONSERVATION | CARBON FOOTPRINT | ENDANGERED ANIMALS | THE FUTURE OF OUR PLANET

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Objectives: reflect on the idea of the 'Mega Human'; discuss important stats and key issues from the book.
- **ACTIVITIES: 'THE SMOOSHING MACHINE'** Pages 5–7
Objectives: understand the theory behind the 'Smooching Machine'; create two displays to scale identifying the impact of *Homo sapiens* on our planet.
- **SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER ACTIVITIES** Page 8
Objectives: find ways to reduce your carbon footprint and protect the environment; encourage others to help reverse the problems caused by the 'Mega Human'.

Share your projects with us @canongatebooks and use the hashtag #TheBiggestFootprint



ABOUT THE BOOK

Meet the mega human: colossal, clueless . . . and the biggest hope for life on earth.

There are eight billion of us humans.

All breathing, eating, fidgeting and thinking deep thoughts.

It's an unimaginably large number. Or is it?

The mega human is the result of smooshing all the people in the world together into one spectacular giant (don't try this at home). Even though the mega human is not the smartest of creatures, it is slowly beginning to understand the problems it has created for Planet Earth's future . . . and how it might be able to fix them.

Making use of brain-bending stats and smooch theory, *The Biggest Footprint* is a journey of self-discovery suitable for anyone and everyone identifying as human.

A fun, wildly original, fact-packed and beautifully illustrated book by the Sears brothers, revealing our giant species as we've never seen ourselves before and showing us how – together – we can do a better job of looking after the planet.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Rob and Tom's creative partnership began in the 1980s when Tom (the younger brother) was born. Now, Rob is a bestselling writer and Tom is an illustrator. They've created everything from zoo exhibitions and ice cream van designs to books, sitcoms, newspaper cartoons and movie scripts.

They made this book as an experiment to try to understand the species that they are a part of, and that you're most likely a part of too.

Despite everything they learned, they're still hopeful about what's next for humans and the planet.





REFLECTION AND DISCUSSION

Despite the number of humans or *Homo sapiens* on Earth increasing exponentially over time, *The Biggest Footprint* states that:

'The trouble is, our brains haven't changed much since we lived in small groups of cavepeople . . . We just aren't cut out to make sense of giant numbers, which makes it hard for us to truly understand the species we're part of.'

Look over the stats from the book below; then have a chat over the discussion questions together:

**'THERE ARE NEARLY
EIGHT BILLION OF
US HUMANS'**

**'THE FOOD WASTE MOUNTAIN.
ONE THIRD OF THE FOOD WE
WORK SO HARD TO MAKE
EACH YEAR ENDS UP HERE,
MAKING A PILE OF WASTE
OVER 2KM HIGH'**

**'WE ALSO LIKE TO CHOP DOWN
TREES. AROUND FIFTEEN BILLION
OF THEM A YEAR, IN FACT'**





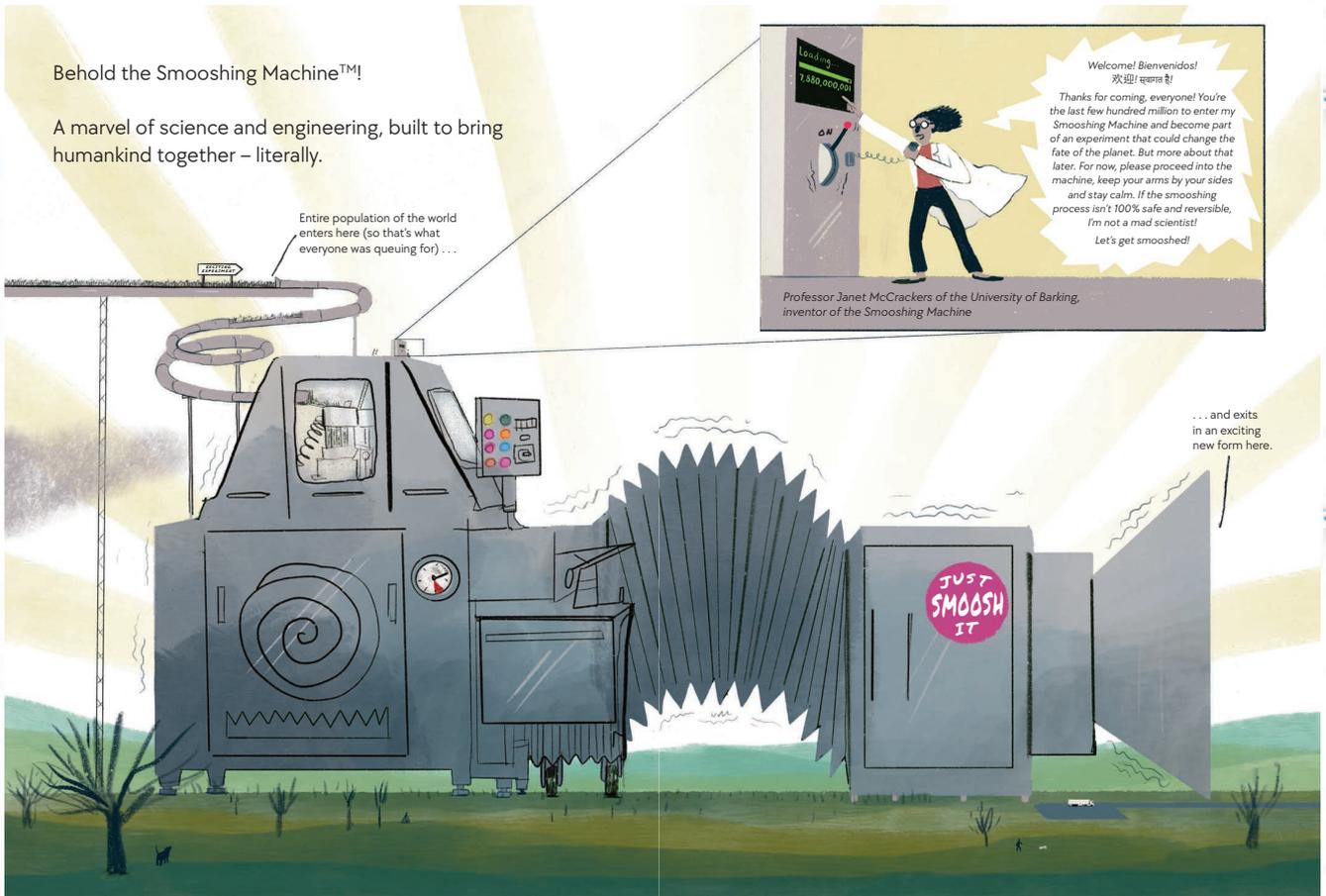
REFLECTION QUESTIONS:

- How many people are in your class? What about your year group and school?
- How many people populate your city? What about your country?
- Do you agree that the bigger numbers get, the harder they are to understand? Explain your ideas.
- Which of the stats from the book do you find the most shocking, and why?
- What threats to our planet do eight billion humans bring? Give examples.
- Who and what are affected by these threats? Can you give examples?
- What changes need to happen in order to protect the future of our planet?
- How might your class and school help? What about things you can do at home?
- What does 'activism' mean? Write a definition or create an acrostic poem for the word. Can you think of any examples of activists or movements that have created change for our world? Consider what you are passionate about and how you might be able to inspire change on a bigger scale.





ACTIVITY 1: 'THE SMOOSHING MACHINE'



- In order to 'get a feel for the true size of our species', the book introduces us to THE SMOOSHING MACHINE!
- Visualise eight billion people going through one end of the machine and coming out the other all smooshed together to make a mega human. Reflect on how this helps to grasp the kind of footprint this human leaves on our planet.
- Then, sketch different creatures, elements, foods and other things from the book to scale next to the mega human on the next page. For example: dogs, gold and burgers, to name a few!
- **Discuss together: which of your sketches made the greatest impact on you, and why? Does this activity change your perception of our species? How and why?**







ACTIVITY 2:

- It's the moment you've all been waiting for: it's time to SMOOSH YOUR CLASS!
- First, work together to gather your own stats using the questions below to get you started. You can also add in any other stats of your own:
 - What would be the height of your class mega human? What about the weight?
 - How much food does your class mega human get through in a week? What about waste?
 - How many car journeys do you get through?
 - How big would your smooshed classroom mega pet be?
- Just like the 'glorious specimen' from Activity 1, create your own large display of your smooshed class. On your tables, sketch and add the different creatures, elements, foods and other things to your display, making sure they are to scale! This will ensure you get a real sense of the mega human footprint of your class.
- To conclude, sketch your own footprint and, in it, summarise what you have learned from the book and these activities.





FURTHER ACTIVITIES

Research endangered species and what you can do to help protect them and their habitat.

Participate in a Litter Patrol group, to clear waste from your local area and nearby natural spaces.

Create a poster about ways to save energy and reduce carbon emissions.

Attempt to grow your own plants, herbs or vegetables at school or at home.

Agree upon and write a set of Conservation Promises as a class, then add your signatures.

Visit **The Biggest Footprint** website www.thebiggestfootprint.com to find out more facts, figures and theory behind the Smooshing Machine!

Share your projects with us @canongatebooks and use the hashtag #TheBiggestFootprint

