

Greta Thunberg is not an ordinary 16-year-old. And it scares her bullies senseless.

<https://www.mamamia.com.au/greta-thunberg-andrew-bolt/>

She's "freakish".

She's "deeply disturbed".

She's a "schoolgirl puppet" with "many mental disorders".

Now, according to Sam Newman, she's an "annoying little brat".

These are not kind words to fling at a child. But they are just some of the things that 16-year-old [Greta Thunberg](#) has been called in the last few months – but particularly after her rousing speech at the UN on Monday.

Why would grown men insult a school student who doesn't yet have the right to cast a vote?

Because she's one of the most influential people in the world, and she scares them silly.

If you aren't familiar with Greta's name, it's likely you've seen the Swedish teenager's face. Before her appearance at the UN, you would have seen her in a windbreaker and waterproofs, pulling ropes at the helm of a trans-Atlantic yacht.

HOLLY WAINWRIGHT

HEAD OF CONTENT

SEPTEMBER 24, 2019

No, it's not the kind of yacht Miley Cyrus has been spending the northern summer on. There are no waitstaff or a ship-to-shore tender to ferry you out to the club, nor a bottomless fruit platter or an Insta-worthy sun-baking deck.

No, Greta's yacht is a small racing boat with a tiny professional crew, full-bore seasickness and the facilities for sleeping in shifts. And Greta was on it because it was the only form of transport she could use to get from Europe to New York that didn't burn copious amounts of fossil fuel.

When you are the environmental spokesperson for a generation, that matters.

Then, she arrived in New York, and stared down Donald Trump, before taking a taunting tweet from the President and responding with utter class.

Hey, President Pennywise... this is a young girl laughing at you and telling the whole world that you're just a clown.

There is nothing ordinary about Greta Thunberg. Not the story about how, as an eight-year-old, she became so depressed about the state of the planet that she stopped eating, or talking. Nor about how activism pulled her out of that state, starting, as she did, a now global environmental movement at 15. Back in Sweden, she decided one day that refusing to go to school on Fridays might be a good way to get a bit of attention for a cause she was passionate about. Now, every Friday, somewhere in the world from Uganda to Sydney to Seoul, there's a climate strike, with school and university students staying away from the classroom to go and lobby outside their local parliaments for action on global warming.

It's not easy being Greta. Or Greta's family. She convinced them to go vegan because eating plants is better for the environment. Then she lobbied them to stop flying, effectively ending her mother's career as an international opera singer. A young Greta chose not to speak for years at a time until she found something she really wanted to use her voice for – changing the world.

"I don't care about being popular," she famously said, as a 15-year-old addressing the United Nations Climate Change Summit in Poland. "I care about climate justice and the living planet. Our civilisation is being sacrificed for the opportunity of a very small number of people to continue making a large amount of money."

Saying things like that pisses a lot of people off. Our own Andrew Bolt is only one of the climate science-deniers who suggest that admiration for Greta is misplaced, because she is a young girl with "many mental disorders".

"Green extremists are hiding behind these children," Bolt said on *Sky News* just weeks ago. "They want children to state their case so that adults will feel embarrassed or reluctant or ashamed to say they're wrong."

"And with Thunberg, they get double protection," Bolt went on. "Because she... suffers from all sorts of mental problems. Depression, they say. Anxiety, they say. Selective mutism, they say. I haven't seen much evidence of that. Autism. Aspergers. Conditions that Thunberg says she believes help her see more clearly. I believe these disabilities do not make her see better, but make her see things in a dangerously black and white view."

Bolt is alighting, in quite the grotesque way, on another reason Greta Thunberg is not ordinary. She is neuro-diverse. The teenager self-identifies as having Aspergers Syndrome, which in 2013 was folded in under the umbrella of Autism Spectrum Disorder.

And when Greta wrote about the criticism she gets for being different, she spoke for many who come to realise – often much, much later in life than she – that it can be the very things that make you different that make you anything at all.

Her caption reads in part, “When haters go after your looks and your differences, it means they have nowhere left to go. And then you know you’re winning! I have Asperger’s syndrome and that means I’m sometimes a bit different from the norm. And – given the right circumstances – being different is a superpower.”

Perhaps, as Bolt says, there is a “cult” growing up around Thunberg and her crew of school-striking climate change activists. But maybe her influence and popularity is actually a symptom of the learned helplessness we’re experiencing daily, splashing around in our hyper-crowded news cycle and a climate of fear and division. Thunberg’s is a clear and confident voice, backed by striking science, calling us all out to be better.

“You have stolen my dreams and my childhood with your empty words,” Thunberg said on Monday. “And yet I’m one of the lucky ones. People are suffering. People are dying. Entire ecosystems are collapsing. We are in the beginning of a mass extinction, and all you can talk about is money and fairy tales of eternal economic growth. How dare you!

Towards the end of her speech, she said, “Right here, right now is where we draw the line. The world is waking up. And change is coming, whether you like it or not.”

Tough words, Greta. No wonder you’re scaring the dinosaurs silly.