
Counting

Today, I walked to school. I went a longer way than usual, I'm counting up my steps. I stopped at the newsagent and bought a bottle of water. My teacher says it's important to drink a lot to stay healthy. By the time I'd got to the front gate, I'd already done 5000 steps. What a big number, I thought to myself. But then I remembered what I'd heard on the news the day before. Apparently, there are only 5000 black rhinos left in the wild. Immediately, 5000 seemed insignificant.

Our first lesson was English; we wrote a story. Mine was all about an astronaut blasting off into space to explore the universe. He was looking for another planet for humans to live on. Afterwards, I counted up my words. 800! I told my friend who said it was loads. Way more than they'd written. But then I remembered that there are roughly 800 mountain gorillas left in Africa. After that, the number seemed minuscule.

I dreaded maths after break. We had a fractions test, and I hate fractions. I'd drunk a lot of water to make sure my brain was working well - I'd lost the bottle I bought before school, but luckily we had a pile of plastic cups for us to use at the water fountain. Our maths teacher was cold and had forgotten his coat, so we had the radiators on full. It was sweltering! In the end, the test wasn't too bad. We had 55 minutes, but I finished after half an hour. It felt like such a long time, so many minutes to waste. While I waited, I thought back to an advert on the television: 55 elephants are killed each day for their ivory. How awful! Now, 55 felt enormous. Far bigger than before.

At lunch, my friend reminded me that tomorrow was her birthday. As if I could forget! She always makes such a big deal of being one whole year older. It's only 365 days, I always tell her. 365 get-ups, it's not that big a number to get through. Then, I caught sight of a poster on the wall. It was battered and unloved, but I could just make out the message. Every hour, we dump 365 tonnes of plastic into our oceans. That's five times as heavy as a space shuttle! Or three-and-a-half blue whales! Every hour! Definitely not insignificant. In an instant, I looked down at the plastic cup in my hand - the fourth I'd used today - and thought back to the plastic bottle I'd bought from the shop. Where would they all end up? Would they be part of the 365?

Finally, it was time to go home. As I climbed into my mum's car to drive the half a mile to our

house, I thought back to how I'd started the day. I looked at my watch, I'd only hit another 2000 extra steps. Not as many as I'd wanted. As if by magic, the man on the radio chimed in with the news. Scientists have worked out that around 2000 species of animal are becoming extinct each year. Suddenly, 2000 seemed vast.

"That's 5 species a day!" my mother exclaimed.

I swallowed hard and thought back over all the things I'd done today that weren't helping the planet. I don't think I can live with losing 5 species a day, can you?

SUMMARY FOCUS

Summarise all of the things that she has done during the day that have an impact on the planet and climate.

VIPERS QUESTIONS

- V** Find three examples of vocabulary that tell you the size of a number.
- R** How many plastic cups did she use over the day?
- R** When is her friend's birthday?
- E** Explain how the author makes it easier for the reader to understand the scale of the problem.
- I** When she thinks about her day, how does the author feel? What tells you this?

Answers:

Bought a bottle of water. Used a plastic cup. Radiators on full. Driven a short distance.

V: Insignificant, loads, miniscule, enormous, insignificant, vast

R: 4

R: Tomorrow / the next day

E: By linking the number of animals and waste to things that happen in her day that seem small at the time

I: Shocked, worried, sad and angry. She swallowed hard and talks about how she can't live with losing 5 species a day