

# Holiday House Readers' Guide

## Take Your Eco-Knowledge Further

**United States Environmental Protection Agency**  
[www.epa.gov/epahome/learn.htm](http://www.epa.gov/epahome/learn.htm)

The official site discusses important environmental issues and suggests ways in which citizens may become involved with protecting the environment.

**Environmental Defense Fund**  
[www.edf.org](http://www.edf.org)

This site explores issues related to global warming and asks individuals for contributions to fund research and educational opportunities.

**World Health Organization**  
[www.who.int/en/](http://www.who.int/en/)

The official website of the WHO draws the connection between the environment and health and focuses on specific programs sponsored by this organization.

**Sustainable Energy Coalition**  
[www.sustainableenergycoalition.org](http://www.sustainableenergycoalition.org)

The official site of this coalition of more than sixty organizations promotes increased federal support for energy efficiency and renewable energy technologies.



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## About the Author

**Saci Lloyd's** first novel, *The Carbon Diaries 2015*, received critical acclaim, three starred reviews, and the Grand Prize of the 2009 Green Book Festival Award. Saci has written a screenplay and worked as a script editor in the film industry. She also enjoys graphic design. She is the head of media studies at a sixth form college in London, where she lives. *The Carbon Diaries 2017* is her second novel.

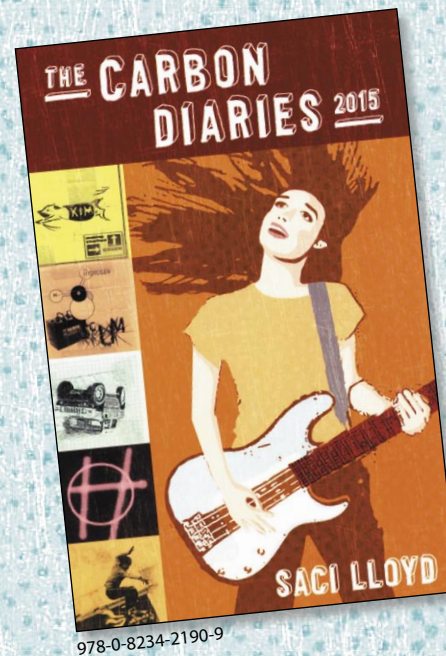
THE CARBON DIARIES 2015 and THE CARBON DIARIES 2017 are printed on environmentally responsible paper, 30% post-consumer waste. In addition, the printing process and ink reduce VOC (Volatile Organic Compounds) emissions and use less energy.

Guide prepared by Pat Scales, retired school librarian and independent consultant, Greenville, South Carolina.

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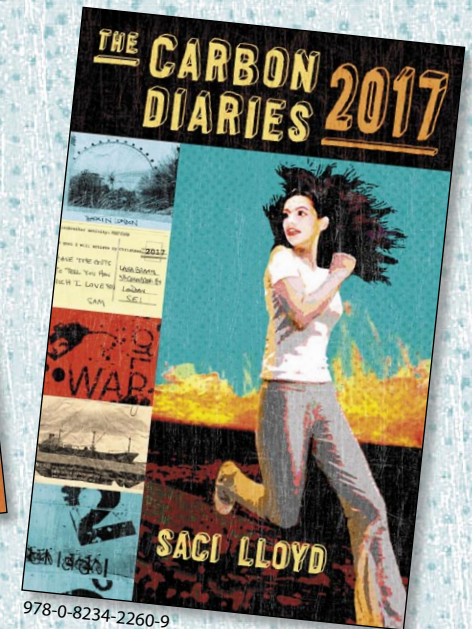
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## THE CARBON DIARIES Saci Lloyd



### THE CARBON DIARIES 2015

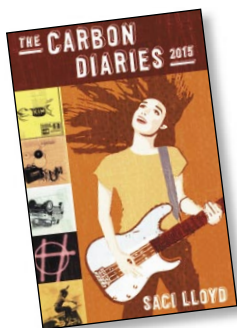
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### THE CARBON DIARIES 2017

Told in diary entries filled with scrapbook clippings, these riveting ecothrillers are one girl's attempt to stay grounded in a world where disaster has become the norm.





## THE CARBON DIARIES 2015

**The biggest storm in history is headed straight for London, and a powerless Laura and her family face the unimaginable.**

★ **“Deeply compulsive and urgently compulsory reading.”—  
*Booklist* (starred review)**

★ ***School Library Journal* (starred review)**

★ ***The Horn Book* (starred review)**

**A *School Library Journal* Best Book of the Year**

**A *Booklist* Top 10 First Novel for Youth**

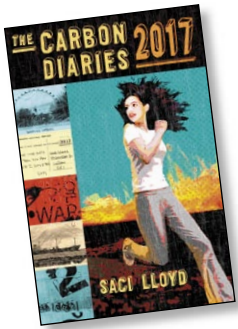
**A *Booklist* Top 10 SF/Fantasy for Youth**

**A *Horn Book* Fanfare Selection**

**Grand Prize Winner of the 2009 Green Book Festival**

### Questions for Discussion

- Check out the “Brown Family New Year’s Luxury Item List” (p. 2) and discuss what the list reveals about each character. Julia Brown says that she didn’t realize the family was so polarized. How does the family become more polarized as the living conditions in London get worse? Why does Laura feel that her parents are in denial about their family’s problems? Apply the words that Laura writes on the “Conflict Tree” (p. 206) to her family. What advice would you give to the Brown family as they attempt to fix their broken relationships?
- There is a lot of friction between Laura and her sister, Kim. Contrast their personalities. Kim says, “You don’t know anything about me. At least I live in the real world, instead of some moral fantasy” (p. 131). Describe Kim’s real world. How is her real world almost her demise? Why does Kim think that Laura’s life is a moral fantasy? Laura does admit that she sometimes admires Kim. How does this admiration evoke jealousy? Discuss Laura’s reaction when Kim tells her that she is afraid of Tracey Leader. What is the irony in this revelation? Explain the metaphor and the symbolism of Laura’s dream about a “messed-up bird” (p. 286). Who is the bird? What is the glass?
- Describe Laura’s relationship with Kieran, the Carbon-D8ing entrepreneur who lives next door. He tells Laura, “Life is what you make it” (p. 96). How does Kieran model this advice? Kim helps Kieran work out the plans for his Carbon Dating business. Why is this a safer and more positive path for Kim?
- Laura says, “We’re addicted to oil and gas. . . . And the drug’s running out” (p. 20). How is Kim’s involvement with Tracey Leader and the sale of carbon ration cards on the black market similar to illegal drug dealing? Discuss our nation’s addiction to oil and gas. How might this foreshadow more environmental issues and problems facing our nation?
- Why does Laura say the energy crisis is about greed? How does panic buying create a greater crisis? Explain the connection between the energy crisis and the need for stricter antiterrorism laws.
- Kim refuses to open her ration card. Explain why she feels that the card is a symbol of lost youth. How might American teenagers have similar feelings should they be forced to ration energy?
- Julia Brown says that her generation messed it all up for the kids. How might this be a warning for the current generation? Teens of the 1970s were caught up in social causes. They thought that they were serving the good of society. How do you think these causes might actually have contributed to selfishness?
- How do the hardships created by carbon rationing affect the way Laura and her friends view education? What is the purpose of the Environmental Energy Saver A-level exam? Debate Laura’s view that there is no point in “studying something you’ll never do” (p. 40). Gwen Parry-Jones says, “Education is freedom” (p. 115). Discuss how Laura might see irony in GPJ’s statement. Why is knowledge the key to understanding global issues?
- Laura experiences the emotional ups and downs common to most adolescents. How is this especially revealed in her relationship with Ravi Datta? What other typical adolescent emotions does Laura experience? Why might she feel that she has been robbed of her teenage years? At what point does Laura begin to discover inner power?
- Carbon is the fourth most abundant element in the universe and the chemical basis of all life. Explain why the British government volunteered to impose carbon rationing after the Great Storm. Debate whether this was a political decision. After a cholera epidemic breaks out, Gwen Parry-Jones says that they are now living in a Third World country. What constitutes a Third World country? Discuss how natural disasters such as hurricanes, tornadoes, tsunamis, earthquakes, and others may cause a global, ecological, economic, and health crisis. How did Hurricane Katrina create a Third World feeling on the Gulf Coast?



## THE CARBON DIARIES 2017

**A crackdown on rioting students forces Laura to flee the city—is it time for her to practice the resistance that her band preaches?**

### Questions for Discussion

- In the Author's Note, Saci Lloyd says, "As a teenager, I was always drawn to books that asked big questions about the world." What are Laura's "big questions" at the beginning of the novel? Debate whether her "big questions" change as the year progresses. "Big questions" rarely have easy answers. Discuss whether Laura finds the answers to her questions. How is Laura's diary a cautionary tale for our current society?
- Laura's diary entry on January 6 refers to life as a "roller coaster" (p. 5). How does her life remain a roller coaster throughout the novel? Discuss how much her emotional highs and lows are related to the state of the world in which she lives. How do peer and family relationships contribute to the peaks and valleys in her life? What are her highest and lowest moments?
- Conflict within the Brown family was at the center of *The Carbon Diaries 2015*. How have the Browns fared in the past two years? Throughout Laura's first diary, she reveals that she is sometimes jealous of her sister. Discuss whether two years have changed her feelings toward Kim.
- Sat., Jan. 7. "Seems to me there's always a *but* in everyone's life" (p. 6). What is the "*but*" in Laura's mom's life? Describe the "*but*" in Laura and Adi's relationship. How does their relationship come full circle by the end of the novel?
- Laura returns to London to study at the university and discovers that she has been kicked out of her house. She feels that her only option is to live at the Docks. Why is she freaked out about living there? How does this type of communal living make sense given the living conditions in London after the flood? How does Kieran help Laura see the positive side of living at the Docks?
- Explain what Gwen means when she tells Laura, "On the plus side it's good to have someone vaguely normal around—I mean at least you've got your own accent" (p. 19). What does this statement say about Gwen's attitude toward her fellow residents? Discuss the prejudices and profiling that Laura observes and writes about in her diary. Why does Laura compare the people at the Docks to "Born again Christians"?
- Laura suffers several episodes of loneliness. She refuses to ask for help from her parents or Adi. Why does she insist on dealing with such despair alone? What does she do to pull herself out of gloom? How has Kieran always been a voice of reason and comfort to Laura?
- The government threatens to slash student loans by 50 percent, and university students lodge organized protests. Why is Laura so reluctant to get involved? Explain why she isn't honest with Claire and Adi about her feelings toward protests. Laura's mother is always involved in a cause. Debate whether Laura's reluctance to get involved in protests is a way of rebelling against her mother's social causes. The government ultimately backs down. Why does Laura feel guilty that she didn't get involved?
- The students had a specific goal in mind when they staged their protest against the government. What is the motive of the UF group's protest? Why is Laura so frightened of them? Explain what goes wrong with their protests. How does the UF group's protest cause unfair profiling of university students?
- Laura doesn't understand why Adi goes to work for the Red Cross in the Sudan. Is she upset because he left the band, or that he has left her? Laura goes to Adi when she learns that he is ill and in the hospital. Before she reaches him, she learns that he has been unfaithful to her. Explain why she continues her journey in order to help him. How does Adi explain his actions? At the beginning of the novel, Laura clearly sends Adi mixed messages about what she wants from their relationship. How does Adi's absence make her heart grow fonder?
- At times Laura is very self-centered. Her dad advises her to quit judging people who do things differently than she. Cite evidence that Laura is judgmental of others. Debate whether she ever takes her father's advice.
- Fri., May 19. Julia Brown tells Laura and Claire, "This is your band. This is your dream. Get on that European tour and LIVE IT." What prompts this command from Laura's mom? When Laura learns that her parents may face bankruptcy, she wants to postpone her band tour in Europe. Explain her dad's remark: "I want, I *need* for you to be living your own life" (p. 136).
- Why does Laura say that writing about politics is making her "old" before her time (p. 212)?
- Discuss how Laura changes from the beginning of the novel to the end. How does her new approach to life symbolize maturity? Discuss how maturity has given her more confidence. How might this affect her relationship with her family and friends? Discuss how her experiences have affected her views toward her country, and her role as a citizen.