



We don't need Taylor Swift to "fall in love with a climate scientist," we just wish she'd write a song about the climate crisis.

When the breathless coverage of her relationship with Travis Kelce first boosted ratings for NFL football, [some suggested](#) Swift should use her star power for good by "[dating a climate scientist](#)." Though they probably meant well, it's offensive—misogynist even— to suggest that Taylor Swift has nothing more to contribute to the climate movement than a date. Let's be real: her talents as a poet, songwriter, performer, and inspiration to millions could be a game changer for messaging around climate actions, like phasing out fossil fuels and holding corporations accountable for planet-heating emissions.

How? Movements need anthems. Just look at how protest songs helped fuel [the Civil Rights Movement](#), [anti-war demonstrations in the Sixties](#), [anti-police brutality activism in the early 2000's](#), and the [Black Lives Matter marches of 2020](#). There's a history of environmentalism in American music, from Joni Mitchell and Neil Young to newer artists like the Yeah Yeah Yeahs. Perhaps the closest to a climate anthem is the [2019 Fatboy Slim mash-up](#) of Greta Thunberg's U.N. climate speech. But good luck trying to sing along. Now, imagine a climate protest song that could spur the kind of online memes we saw of Swifties screaming along to "Cruel Summer." Then imagine hundreds of entirely sold-out stadiums singing that protest song together.

It's not surprising that the Fridays for Future youth strikes never struck on one unifying

anthem. The global movement from Sweden to the Global South includes people who speak many languages. What's needed is an *international* star.

Enter T. Swift who has perhaps the world's largest audience, extending from Red States in the U.S. to nearly every country on the planet. She boasts 273 million followers on Instagram alone—more than the populations of the United Kingdom, France, Italy, and the Netherlands combined. Add Tiktok and Twitter and she has direct access to more than 400 million followers, which is orders of magnitude larger than the readership of the New York Times. No wonder she doesn't bother doing media interviews, which is how celebrities used to weigh in on social issues of great importance. She *is* her own media company.

Then there's her songwriting. Though many of her lyrics are seemingly about personal relationships, those are often metaphors to explore universal themes. You could argue that writing about climate change would be a departure from Swift's usual topics of relationships and romance, which frankly is a sexist and untrue take. Her songs certainly rely on personal narratives, but often those are vehicles to tell stories about much larger dynamics and issues. Take "[Miss Americana & the Heartbreak Prince](#)" from her 2019 *Lover* album for example. The song paints a narrative of a high school couple and metaphorical high school to comment on disillusionment in contemporary American politics. Swift's songs also manage to be both introspective and relatable when it comes to self-criticism. One recent notable example is her hit single "[Anti-Hero](#)" which features lyrics like "I'm the problem, it's me" and "Did you hear my covert narcissism I disguise as altruism."

It's not out of line to suggest Swift delve into social justice issues through her songwriting either. For her 2019 Netflix documentary *Miss Americana*, Swift wrote "[Only the Young](#)" as part of the soundtrack—an anthem encouraging youth voters to participate in elections in order to enact change. She's been extremely successful in affecting political change in the past too. Swift recently posted an Instagram story encouraging voter registration. The response: [35,000 new voter registrations](#) following her call to action. "I've been so lucky to see so many of you guys at my U.S. shows recently. I've heard you raise your voices, and I know how powerful they are," she wrote on Instagram Stories. "Make sure you're ready to use them in our elections this year!" Her talent for storytelling through music makes her the perfect figure to unite this movement.

Pop culture is how many of us process what's going on in the world. And the climate crisis is the biggest story of our time. Recently, climate advocates have devoted a lot of energy to [educating Hollywood writers and producers](#) so that film and television tells stories that involve climate change. The idea is that the entertainment industry's storytelling is a crucial way to inform and influence popular opinion. About 3% of some 37,000 scripts contained a

climate storyline according to a [USC analysis](#) last year.

There's been much less focus on the music industry even though the arts are a more emotional catalyst than TV. Social science shows that emotions like sadness and despair are poor motivators for social change. On the other hand, rage and anger—feeling wronged, manipulated, and sabotaged—are powerful motivators because they can light a fire for collective action as long as there is also hope. One of the only projects specifically encouraging musicians to use compositions to address climate change is focused on classical music. [Tempo: Music for Climate Action](#) connects musicians with scientists. It's a model for a bigger and broader collaboration with a pop star who can transcend genres. Why not Beyoncé you might ask? For one, she's already spoken out a bit, as during a 2017 ['Hand in Hand' Telethon](#), a fundraiser organized to raise money for the relief efforts taking place across the Gulf Coast and Caribbean Islands affected by recent hurricanes. The effects of climate change are playing out around the world everyday," she said. "We have to be prepared for what comes next." The event raised over \$44 million.

The laws of Taylornomics hold that Taylor Swift can sway both human behavior and corporate interests. Her list of past endorsements include Target, Apple, Coca-Cola, Sony, AT&T, DirecTV. If she included environmental sustainability in her conditions for endorsement, companies might try to meet them. Not only has her Eras Tour infused millions of dollars to local economies, she's managed to convince cities to change up their public transit systems. When she touched down in Los Angeles for 6 nights, [LA Metro literally changed its service to add more buses and trains](#).

Now, we realize that T Swift might seem like an anti-hero compared to Greta Thunberg (who famously sailed across the Atlantic rather than take a plane to the UN). But that's part of the point. Swift does indeed have an undeniably out-sized carbon footprint. Her [own emissions from all that travel by private jet](#) won't be wiped away by carbon offsets. More importantly, her fans are flying near and far to see her in concert, giving the Eras Tour a massive carbon footprint. She's even encouraged fans to fly in her [Capital One commercial](#). Rather than just name and shame, this is a perfect opportunity for her to give back in a real way to perhaps the most important cause at a crucial time. We just lived through the hottest July on record, followed by the hottest August, followed by the hottest September. Cruel summer, indeed.

Many of us come to a realization about the climate crisis and our role in it during college or later in life—as an adult, a parent, a grandparent. Many of us regret not doing something sooner. One of the most powerful things about the Eras Tour is the recognition that we change; we grow. Acknowledging our own "eras" grants permission to accept, and love, our

past selves without shame or judgment. There is redemption not just for T. Swift, but all of us.