main points

- Air pollution is a global issue meaning it affects nearly everyone on Earth.
- Air pollution has a larger impact in urban than rural areas.
- The atmosphere has changed over millions of years from one lacking oxygen to one that is oxygen-rich, due to the presence of life.
- Ozone is an important constituent of the stratosphere where it shields us from harmful amounts of UV radiation.
- CFCs and nitrogen oxides act to destroy ozone in the stratosphere.
- Nitrogen oxides, largely a result of automobile emissions, can lead to the formation of ozone at the Earth's surface. This can be harmful to the human respiratory system.
- Greenhouse gases are those that transmit visible radiation while absorbing IR radiation. This results in heat building up in the atmosphere like in a gardener's greenhouse.
- Carbon dioxide is the most important greenhouse gas. It is produced naturally by respiration and consumed by photosynthesis, among other processes. Nature's balance of carbon dioxide concentration has apparently been altered by the industrial revolution.
- Particulate matter is composed of tiny solid or liquid particles that result from a number of natural and industrial processes.
- Although there is some doubt among scientists about the specific mechanisms that give rise to various kinds of pollution, it is generally agreed that human technological activities have adversely affected the quality of the atmosphere.