

## Hot for Hybrids

### Can Cool Cars Help Save the World?



morguefile.com

*A Hybrid Car*

One day in the early 2000s, dozens of students spilled outside Sterling Middle School in Quincy, Massachusetts. Chatting excitedly, they hurried to the parking lot to get a glimpse of one of the country's most sought-after cars.

No, it wasn't a Porsche or a Ferrari. It was a Toyota Prius. The Prius is a hybrid—a car that uses two types of power. Like most hybrids, the Prius relies on gasoline and electricity. That combination allows hybrids to go farther using less gas. It's also put them on the fast track to popularity. Thousands of Americans have clamored for the cars.

Auto dealers were hardly able to keep up with the demand in 2004. "Seventy percent of our [hybrid] cars are sold before they reach the store," Pete Moe, a Wisconsin salesperson, told reporters.

Hybrids accounted for just 0.5 percent of new car sales in the United States in 2004. By 2014, however, hybrids made up about 3 percent of new car sales in the U.S.

## Shifting Gears

Hybrids have been popular because they conserve gasoline. The cars use their gas-powered engines on highways, where less fuel is required to move. Their electric motors kick in on hills or in stop-and-go traffic, when regular cars would burn up extra gas.

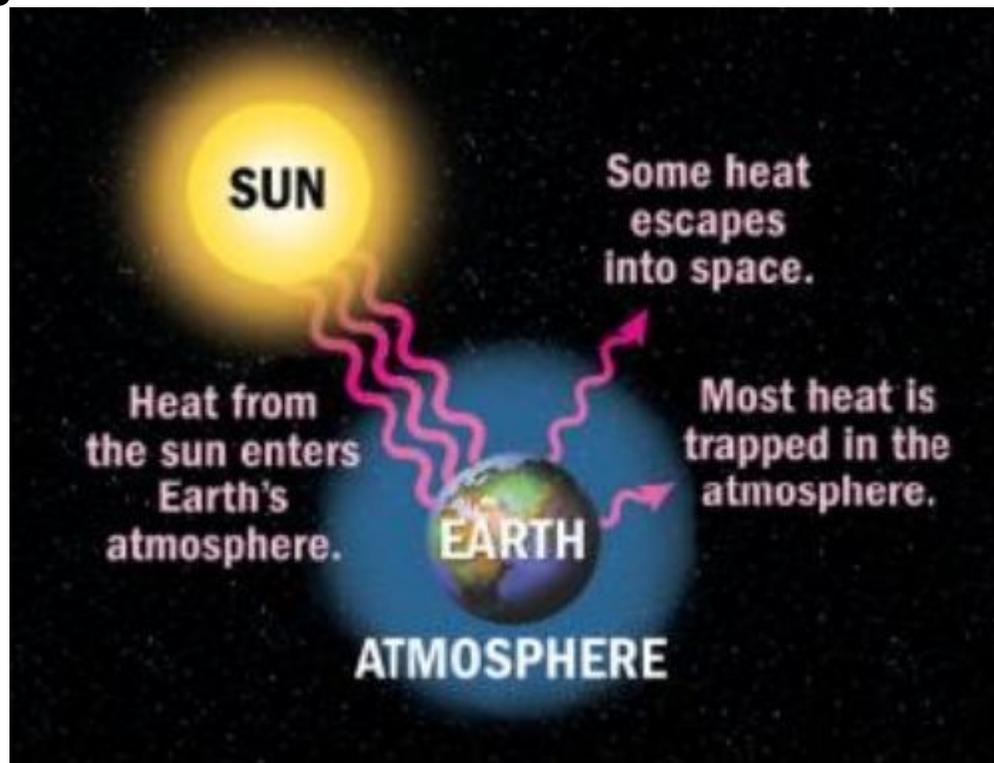
Hybrids' gas engines also shut off while the cars are stopped. "The car goes silent when

waiting at lights, while the other cars around it continue rumbling and rattling," hybrid driver May Kuroiwa of Havre de Grace, Maryland, told *Senior Edition*.

The system lets hybrids travel farther on less fuel. Some hybrids can go about 500 to 600 miles on a single tank of gas. That's about twice as far as a regular gas-powered car.

Hybrid cars also maximize non-gas power by capturing energy that regular cars lose when slowing down or braking. That energy helps recharge the cars' batteries.

## The Right Direction



Leigh Haeger

*The Greenhouse Effect*

Environmentalists say the cars are exactly what the (Earth) doctor ordered. Hybrids' advanced technology uses less fossil fuel than regular gas-powered vehicles. Fossil fuels are coal, oil, and natural gases that were created millions of years ago. Fossil fuels are not a renewable energy source; once they are used up, they are gone forever.

Former Minnesota Governor Tim Pawlenty traded in his sport-utility vehicle for a more environmentally friendly car. "It's a recipe for continued crisis if we don't start changing our ways," he said.

Hybrids also help the environment by cutting back on dangerous emissions, such as carbon dioxide. Those emissions, called greenhouse gases, build up in the atmosphere over time. They create a greenhouse effect, trapping heat from the sun and causing Earth's temperature to rise, according to many scientists. Experts say hybrid cars can cut greenhouse gas emissions in half.

## Hard Sell?

Despite all the benefits, some people say hybrids aren't worth the hype. Hybrids often cost thousands of dollars more than gas-powered cars. Critics say people would have to drive hundreds of miles a week to recoup those costs in gas savings.

"All the technology is great," says David Cole of the Center for Automotive Research in Ann Arbor, Michigan. But "that extra \$4,000 to \$5,000...as a driver, you may never recover that."

Government officials have tried to make hybrids appealing despite the higher price tags. Local governments have offered incentives, such as tax breaks and free parking, for people who drive hybrids.

Donna Cay Tharpe, a hybrid driver from Tallahassee, Florida, hopes more and more people purchase hybrid cars. "I feel a huge responsibility to do my infinitesimal part to contribute to cleaner air," she told reporters. "It's going to take more than one car. But one car multiplied by many can make a difference."

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

1. In the sentence, "They hurried to the parking lot to get a glimpse of one of the country's most sought-after cars," *sought-after* means

- A. sporty.
- B. in high demand.
- C. hybrid.
- D. unpopular.

2. In the sentence, "Hybrid cars also *maximize* non-gas power....," *maximize* means

- A. cost a lot of money.
- B. overuse to the point of damaging.
- C. make the greatest use of.
- D. to go very fast.

3. Since hybrid engines become silent while waiting at traffic lights,

- A. the cars are not burning gas without getting mileage.
- B. drivers must be sure people who can't see are aware the cars are there.
- C. drivers have to remember not to turn on the ignition again.
- D. all of the above.

4. In the sentence, "Critics say people would have to drive hundreds of miles a week to *recoup* those costs in gas savings," *recoup* means

- A. splurge.
- B. save.
- C. spend.
- D. get back.

5. How do hybrid cars affect the environment?