

WHAT ABOUT OUR FUTURE?

Discussion Guide & Lesson Plan



Overview & Objectives

This educational guide offers a variety of activities and discussion questions for teachers to use with students to accompany a screening of the film *What About Our Future?* There is also an index of terms that may arise during these discussions and activities. This lesson plan was written and compiled by Heather Kelley, Assistant Director of Social Justice Professional and Social Issues Division at the BC Teachers' Federation.

Students will be able to :

- Understand the connection between human activity and climate change
- Understand the influence and power that young people can and do have
- Express their learning through various creative modalities
- Understand the importance of developing emotional and mental strength and resilience in relation to the realities of climate change.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

You can click on a specific entry to navigate directly to that page.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS	2
ACTIVITIES	3
1. Collective Poetry	3
2. Climate Change and Spoken Word	4
3. Political Efficacy as Hope	5
4. Climate Change and Social Movement Music	5
5. Climate Change Supplemental Film Resources	7
6. Climate Science Exploration	7
7. Climate Change from a non Human Perspective	7
TERMS	8

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Have you ever heard of eco anxiety before? Have you ever felt it?
2. Do you feel that you have the power to help shape your future? If yes, what helps you feel empowered. If not, what would help you feel empowered?
3. The film was filled with both despair and hope. What do you think the connection between these two feelings are and how do they connect to climate change? Fill in the chart below with the despair that you feel and the hope that you have.

(make a T chart with Despair and Hope on either side)

Hope	Despair
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Opportunity to reimagine all aspects of our society, like economic systems, education, government, etc. · Collective action can bring people together · A chance to work towards meaningful reconciliation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Destruction of the natural world · Climate refugees · Death because of heat waves, floods, climate disasters · Local climate disasters (fires in the summer, heatwaves, rising ocean levels, floods, atmospheric rivers)

4. Did you hear about the climate strike in 2019? Did you participate? What did you hear? What did you experience? How do you think the pandemic and all the lockdowns impacted the climate movement?
5. Depending on the media and news sources you follow, your understanding of Greta Thunberg and the climate strikes could be very different. Do a quick search on your phone and have a look at how many intense reactions she inspires, both positively, as a beacon of hope and negatively as target of climate change deniers. Why do you think that is? Do you think it is reasonable for adults to attack the position and credibility of a child, or teenager? Why or why not?

6. What can adults learn from youth activists? What do you wish the adults in your life would take seriously? What do you wish they would do or change?
7. When you read this quote, what comes up for you? How do you want to reframe your story of this time?

"I have been thinking a lot about how the foundational story of the youth climate movement is that we shouldn't need to be doing this. We shouldn't need to be spending our adolescence cleaning up the mess of previous generations. And this is true we shouldn't. But I realized that fear and anxiety are not a sustainable resource of motivation. And what is though, is love and a compelling vision of a more just and beautiful world. And so I am trying to reframe my story of this movement. Instead of desperately trying to fight off this catastrophe that is barreling full speed at us, instead working towards the more just world that is living on the other side of this catastrophe."

- Rebecca Hamilton- Vancouver Sustainabiliteens

8. What does the term gaslighting mean to you? Can you think of examples of how gaslighting is used specifically when it comes to youth climate activists?

ACTIVITIES

1. Collective Poetry

- a) Have students watch the film. Once the film is finished, ask them to not speak to anyone, these next few steps will be a solo experience. Have them write down everything they are thinking and feeling from the film. This doesn't need to have good spelling, punctuation or even make sense. Just write. Let the ideas and feelings flow from your head down your arm into your hand and onto the paper.
- b) Once students have spent 3-5 minutes writing, ask them to reread what they have written. Get them to choose 5 of the most powerful, important, interesting or special phrases or sentences and have them underline them.
- c) Once they have chosen 5 sections of their writing, have them choose 3 or those 5 and write them down on strips of paper that you have provided.

- d) Get the students into groups of 4. Now they can discuss the film and what they wrote. After 5 minutes (or when the conversation dies down) have them share their strips of paper with each other and have them put them into a poem by arranging them.
- e) Each group will get to glue their strips of paper to another paper in their order.

2. Climate Change and Spoken Word

- a) Have a discussion about the film. You can use some of the discussion questions if you'd like.
- b) Use youtube to look up some of the following spoken word poems.
 - [Dear Future Generations: Sorry by Prince EA](#)
 - [Dear Matafele Peinem by Kathy Jetnil-Kijiner](#)
 - [24 Hours of Reality: 'Earthrise' – Amanda Gorman](#)
 - [Rise by Kathy Jetnil-Kiliner](#)
 - [A Poet's Plea to Save Our Planet by IN-Q in a Ted Institute Talk](#)
 - [Man vs Earth by Prince EA](#)
- c) Have a discussion about how the realities of the climate crisis are intense, but that looking into those realities are required in order to make changes. We cannot hope to have the future we all want if you are not able to see the true reality of today and what impact, positive or negative our choices now will have. These frightening realities require emotional and mental support so that we don't get stuck in or frozen in feeling helpless. These slam poets have taken their grief, their fear and have turned it into something beautiful. It is important to take time to feel your grief and fear, but to take that energy and turn it into something else. Whether it be the conviction to do something or the expression of these feelings through art, like these poems, or a painting or a piece of music. For me the opposite of fear is not naïve hope, it is action based hope.
- d) Use this article to help students connect back to finding a place of hope and seeing these challenging times as an opportunity. 7 Youth Climate Activists Share Their Hopes For the Future.
<https://www.globalcitizen.org/en/content/youth-climate-activist-voices-earth-day/>
- e) Ask the students to find a way to express what they have learned and their feelings about climate change, and the film and the supplementary poems in whatever artistic way feels most natural to them.

3. Political Efficacy as Hope

- a) Many of the youth climate activists were inspired by the activism of Greta Thunberg. Let's watch a few of her speeches and her Ted Talk.
- b) Look up on youtube some of the following speeches
 - [The Disarming Case To Act On Climate Change Ted Talk](#)
 - [30 Years of Bla, Bla, Bla – Speech UN Climate Change Pre-Conference September 2021](#)
 - [COP24 Conference Speech 2018](#)
 - [Climate Action Summit Speech to world Leaders 2019](#)
- c) Debrief the speeches. Discuss if you find them inspiring, if you think they have been effective.
- d) It is important for youth to believe that they can have an impact. Ask your students to search for a politician from where they live. It can be municipal, provincial or federal. Ask them to write a letter to them asking for climate action. Ask them to hold their political representatives accountable. The political party they represent doesn't matter; all politicians need to be held accountable. Ask them for a response, or better yet a meeting.
- e) Once students have written to their politicians, ask them to start thinking about their own school. Do you have a climate policy? Are there things you can change at your local school level? Is the cafeteria food served on biodegradable plates? Do you recycle? Are the windows single or double pane? Where do you get your electricity from? Is there a climate action committee? Are students involved? Do you participate in climate strikes? Figure out what your school needs and get to work.
- f) It is also important to think about why Greta has been the face of climate activism for youth, when we know that there have been many other youth who have been doing this work as well. Do you think this is an example of whitewashing? Have you heard of Takaya Blaney? Autumn Peltier? These are Canadian Indigenous activists who have been doing climate activism for many years.

4. Climate Change and Social Movement Music

- a) Climate change is often spoken of as the greatest challenge of our time. Historically other great times of challenge have music that is written about that time and the struggles that people faced and how they did or hoped to overcome those challenges.

b) Have a listen to these songs, print out the lyrics and do a close read and see if students can guess where the music came from and what the songs are about. These are just suggestions but there is much more to choose from.

- Strange Fruit- Billie Holiday from 1939
- Solidarity Forever – Pete Seager (written in 1915 by Ralph Chaplin, made very popular by Seager in the 60s)
- Which Side Are You On – Florence Reece 1930s
- What’s Going On – Marvin Gaye 1971
- Woody Guthry – This Land is Your Land 1944
- The Wailers, Get Up Stand Up 1973
- No Doubt, I’m Just a Girl in the World 1995
- Milck- Quiet 2016
- Public Enemy- Fight the Power - 1989
- Imagine – John Lennon 1971
- Bob Dylan- Masters of War 1963
- Kendrick Lamar- Alright 2015
- Sam Cooke - A Change is Going to Come 1964
- Childish Gambino- This is America 2018
- Crosby, Stills, Nash and Young, Ohio 1970
- Tracy Chapman, Talking About a Revolution 1988

c) Ask students why they think there isn’t more expression or discussion about climate change in music. Have a listen to some of these environmental/climate change songs. Ask students if they think they are as effective as the others? Do you think that music is an effective way to mobilize a climate movement? Why or why not?

- Karine Polwart - Rivers Run
- Joni Mitchell- Big Yellow Taxi
- Danny Michel - Feather, Fin and Fur
- Tracy Chapman- The Rape of The World
- Corb Lund- the Truth Comes Out
- Dave Carter and Tracy Grammar - Gentle Arms of Eden
- Corrine Keeling- Hollow Wooden Box
- Baba Brinkman - Make it Hot
- New Model Army- Ballad
- King Gizzard & The Lizard Wizard - 2.02 Killer Year

5. Climate Change Supplemental Film Resources

- a) There are many wonderful films out that discuss climate change and climate justice. Why don't you have a climate change film festival? You could invite other classes or the public to do some learning around climate change and climate justice.
- b) Climate Change Film Suggestions:
 - Before the Flood – Fisher Stevens, 2019
 - Revolution – Rob Steward 2012
 - Chasing Ice – Jeff Orlowsky 2012
 - Chasing Coral – Jeff Orlowsky 2020
 - The Magnitude of All Things- Jennifer Abbot 2020
 - This Changes Everything – Avi Lewis 2015
 - An Inconvenient Truth Davis – Guggenheim 2006
 - An Inconvenient Sequel Bonnie – Cohen 2017
 - David Attenborough: A Life on our Planet – Jonathan Hughes, Keith Scholey, Alastair Forthergill 2020
 - I am Greta – Nathan Grossman 2020
 - Lowland Kids – Sandra Winther 2019
 - Anthropocene: The Human Epoch – Jennifer Biachwal, Nicolas de Pencier and Edward Burtynsky 2019

6. Climate Science Exploration

- a) Take some time to explore the data that proves the climate is changing and it is caused by humans. Have a look at the following excellent data resources.
 - Go to the the NASA Climate Time Machine
<https://climate.nasa.gov/interactives/climate-time-machine/>
 - NOAA has some great data resources and videos
<https://www.noaa.gov/education/resource-collections/climate/climate-change-impact>

7. Climate Change from a non Human Perspective

- a) We often think about climate change, and climate catastrophe as if it is only going to impact humans. It is also important to think about and acknowledge the fact that our actions or lack of actions will impact all living creatures on this planet.

- b) Have your students choose another living creature, it can be an animal, or a plant, whatever they are interested in or want to learn more about.
- c) Have the student's research how climate change will impact the species they chose.
- d) Once students have an idea about their species, have them think about what they think the species or an individual creature would want to communicate to humans.
- e) Students can choose how they would like to convey the message that they think their species would want to share with humans.
- f) Some possible ideas are making a protest sign, writing a poem, painting a picture, writing a song, doing a interview,

TERMS

Climate Change: Refers to the long-term shifts in temperatures and weather patterns. These shifts may be natural but since the 1800s, human activities have been the main driver of climate change, primarily due to the burning of fossil fuels, like coal, oil and gas, which produces heat-trapping gasses and causes the greenhouse effect. This is often called anthropogenic climate change, meaning climate change caused by people.

Climate Justice: A term and a movement that acknowledges climate change does have different social, economic, public health and other adverse impacts on different populations. Advocates for climate justice work to have these inequities acknowledged and addressed. It is regions of the world that have contributed to the problem the least, which are dealing with the impact the most.

Climate Crisis: Climate crisis is a term describing climate change and global warming and the impacts. The term has been used to describe the threat to the planet and is meant to urge aggressive climate change.

Climate Emergency: A climate emergency declaration or declaring a climate emergency is an action taken by governments and scientists to acknowledge humanity is in a climate emergency and that we need to act like it is an emergency on the personal and political level.

White Washing: When the contributions, accomplishments and leadership in climate action of BIPOC folks are ignored or not included and the focus is on white activists, academics and leadership.

Climate Strike: A global movement led by youth climate activists that organize and facilitate global climate strikes, where students and all people are encouraged to walk out of school or work and march for the future. This was started by Greta Thunberg as Fridays for Future.

Fridays for Future: #FridaysForFuture is a youth-led and organized movement that began in August 2018, after 15-year-old Greta Thunberg and other young activists sat in front of the Swedish parliament every school day for three weeks, to protest against the lack of action on the climate crisis. She posted what she was doing on Instagram and Twitter and it soon went viral and started a global movement.

Strike: The refusal to work organized by a body of workers as a form of protest, typically in an attempt to gain a concession or concessions (like better wages or safety equipment or sick time) from their employer. Strikes can also be a refusal to go to school, or work as a more broad form of social protest to draw attention to something. The Climate Strikes are trying to draw global attention to the lack of action on climate change with the hopes that politicians and governments will do something.

Civil Disobedience: The active, professed refusal of a citizen to obey certain laws, demands, orders or commands of a government. It is sometimes called passive resistance, its usual purpose is to force concessions or change in policy from the government. It often causes disruption and focuses attention and debate around certain topics with the aim of bringing progressive changes within our societies and the world.

Capitalism: An economic and political system. It is sometimes called the free market economy or free enterprise economy. It is based on the ideals of private ownership and the motivation of profit and the potential for growth. A criticism of this economic system when it comes to climate change is the idea of unlimited growth, we live on a finite planet with limited resources and we cannot act as if this isn't the case.

Consumerism: The preoccupation of society with the acquisition of consumer goods in ever increasing amounts. This is very much connected to capitalism and materialism and the cultural notion that we need to have the newest and latest version of everything from clothing to phones. We get a new phone when our old one works just fine so that we can say we have the newest version. This is connected to planned obsolescence.

Materialism: A value system that is preoccupied with possessions and the social image they project. Basically the idea that what you have is more important than who you are.

Activism: The practice and participation in direct action to achieve political or social goals. This can include supporting a particular cause. It often includes protests, rallies and demonstrations.

Protest: An organized event where people come together to express strong disapproval about something.

Empathy: The ability and capacity to understand or feel what another person is experiencing from within their frame of reference.

Collective Wellbeing: The idea that our and wellbeing is connected to each other, that if some of us are struggling we all will struggle. This is important in terms of climate justice work because it shows us as a global community and recognizes that climate disasters don't take into account national borders. That we are all part of one world and we all need to work together to ensure we are all healthy.

Eco-Anxiety: Anxiety that is specifically connected to the fear of ecological collapse because of a lack of action on climate change. This is especially challenging because we have the skills, knowledge and technology to mitigate climate disaster, political leaders are choosing not to act.

Revolution: Within climate justice activism revolution is meant to be a dramatic shift away from our current economic system and dependency on fossil fuels and a shift towards a more just and equitable life for everyone. This could include a more inclusive democracy, a more holistic relationship with nature, and the work to combat economic inequality, racism and other forms of oppression. For many people within the climate movement, this is an opportunity to make the world a better place for everyone.

Democracy: A way to organize decision making, it is a form of government in which citizens of a state are given the power to vote for elected officials to represent them and their interest. In the film many of the Sustainabiliteens question whether their elected officials are really there to represent the people or to represent the economic interests of corporations.

Incrementalism: With connection to Climate Change policy, incrementalism is the policy approach of slow, small steps instead of wide sweeping climate policy that makes a difference. For example, speaking about LNG as a transition fuel is incrementalism, because it is a small

chance, but it doesn't actually reduce our dependence on fossil fuels. Often this results in politicians doing enough to look like they are doing something, but not enough to actually avoid catastrophic climate change.

Denialism: This is the practice of denying the fact that climate change is even real or questioning if climate change is caused by humans. (it is real and it is caused by humans) this was and still is an approach and opinion that many far-right organizations take. Usually in an attempt to increase production of fossil fuels for profit.

Colonization: The action and process of settling among, and establishing control over, and eventual displacement of the indigenous peoples of an area. This results in significant privileges for the settlers through the creation of legal and cultural structures that disadvantage the indigenous peoples.

Colonialism: The practice and or policy of taking land from one group of people for the economic and cultural advantage of another group of people. This is usually done through setting up colonies, with the explicit purpose of benefiting the 'mother country'. Canada is a colonial state, indigenous people were and continue to be displaced for the economic benefit of settlers. It is also about power, the colonial state often imposes language, religion, cultural practices and worldviews upon the original peoples.

Solidarity: Unity that produces or is based on a community's interests, objectives and standards. An awareness of shared interest, objectives, standards, and sympathies creating a sense of unity of groups.