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# Green New Deal: Fact versus Fiction

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Segment Length: 8:23 minutes

## **Lesson Description:**

The proposed Green New Deal aims to eliminate fossil fuels and put a stop to carbon emissions in the United States. But is that really feasible? How dependable are renewable energies at this stage in their development? Just how “green” is the development of renewable energy sources? What will be the costs of eliminating fossil fuels? Is the Green New Deal *really* the answer we’re looking for?

## **Concepts & Key Terms:**

*Renewable energy* – Energy from a source that is not depleted when used, such as wind or solar power

*Subsidy* – Money granted by the government to assist an industry or business.

*Carbon emissions* – Usually refers to carbon dioxide produced by humans through automobiles, planes, factories, and power plants.

## **Objectives:**

Students will be able to:

- explain the goals of the Green New Deal proponents
- discuss the pros and cons of the Green New Deal
- explain arguments used by the proponents and opponents of fossil fuels
- evaluate the arguments for and against the Green New Deal

## **Preview Activity:**

Distribute the K-W-L charts and have students complete the first two columns to the best of their ability. (Have them fill in the last column after viewing the video.)

## **Viewing Guide:**

We recommend that teachers show the video twice: once to allow students to view it and focus on the issues presented, and once to allow them time to complete the viewing guide. After they complete the viewing guide, allow students a few minutes to work in pairs sharing and verifying answers.

## **Answers to Viewing Guide**

1. inconsistent
2. environmentally hazardous
3. clean
4. coal
5. seventy percent
6. Poor people
7. work

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## Viewing Guide

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Class \_\_\_\_\_

Teacher \_\_\_\_\_

**Directions:** As you watch the video, fill in the blanks with the correct words.

1. Renewable is especially hard, because it's so \_\_\_\_\_.
2. You have to mine all these materials for the batteries and those mines are \_\_\_\_\_.
3. Billions in subsidies, but solar still makes up less than one percent of America's energy, and wind just two percent. And none of that energy is really \_\_\_\_\_.
4. Many electric car buyers don't realize that most of America's electricity comes from \_\_\_\_\_ and natural gas.
5. Germany foolishly shut down a lot of their nuclear plants. So what did they wind up doing instead? They wound up burning more coal. France, on the other hand, gets more than \_\_\_\_\_ of its power from nuclear energy, they pay some of the lowest electricity rates in Europe, and their emissions are excellent.
6. If the Green New Dealers win, who's hurt the most? \_\_\_\_\_.  
Having energy and food cost more means it's a higher percentage of the household budget, that's who we hurt.
7. Whatever policies we put in place to protect the planet, your first responsibility is to make sure they \_\_\_\_\_.

**Now, take a few moments to reflect on the video and answer the questions below:**

What are some examples of renewable energy? \_\_\_\_\_

Before watching this video, what was your opinion of the Green New Deal and renewable energy? \_\_\_\_\_

Did this video change your opinion on the Green New Deal and renewable energy? \_\_\_\_\_

Please explain. \_\_\_\_\_

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## **Discussion and Analysis:**

1. James Meigs of *City Journal* says that wind and solar energy have their place, but won't get the job done by themselves. What did he mean by this?
2. Mark Mills of the Manhattan Institute explains that even renewable energies have a significant environmental cost. What are some of those costs? Did you know this before watching the video? How does it affect your opinion of renewable energy?
3. Some renewable energy companies receive billions of dollars in subsidies. Should the government be spending taxpayer dollars to help these companies or should the companies use investor money to experiment and develop new sources of power? What difference does it make?
4. James Meigs says that we should "make sure we're spending money on stuff that really works." Why do you think the Green New Deal focuses on wind and solar power if they're not the best solutions?
5. Electric cars are often touted as clean alternatives to traditional automobiles, but they still cause carbon emissions. How so? Does the fact that most electricity in the U.S. comes from coal and natural gas change your opinion of electric cars? Why / Why not?
6. Why is nuclear energy touted as an option? How can it be an improvement to burning fossil fuels?
7. France, which gets more than 70% of its power from nuclear energy, has affordable energy and low carbon emissions. Should more countries be focused on nuclear energy as an alternative to fossil fuels? Why / Why not?
8. The Green New Deal could significantly raise the cost of energy, which would disproportionately hurt the poor. Are the Green New Deal's goals worth it? Why / Why not?
9. Is it the government's place to decide what kind of energy Americans should or should not be using? Why / Why not?
10. Now that you've watched the video, which of the following energy sources do you think is the best option: renewable, nuclear, or fossil fuels? Why? Would your answer have been different before watching the video?

## **Discuss These Lines from the Video**

1. [Zero carbon emissions] is a goal you could only imagine possible if you have no idea how the energy economy works or how energy is produced in this country.
2. You have to mine all these materials for the batteries and those mines are environmentally hazardous. Disposing of batteries is hazardous.
3. You have to consume a hundred barrels of oil's worth of energy in China to make that battery pack. They have to dig up a thousand pounds of stuff to process it. Digging up is done with oil, by the way, big machines. So we're consuming energy to "save energy." It's not a good path to go.

4. We should also make sure we're spending money on stuff that really works, and right now we're doubling down on technologies like wind and solar that have their place, but they're not going to get the job done by themselves.
5. Every energy source...uses land, uses materials to make the technology, and always uses hydrocarbon along the way.
6. More people have died falling off roofs installing solar panels than in the entire history of nuclear power in the U.S.
7. People aren't stupid, but they are vulnerable to fear.
8. They want to impoverish all of humanity today to solve a punitive problem in the future. I think that's immoral.
9. We're charging more for people who can't afford it, and we give money to wealthy people in the form of subsidies to buy \$100,000 cars, to put expensive solar arrays on their roofs, or to be investors in wind farms.
10. Whatever policies we put in place to protect the planet, your first responsibility is to make sure they work.

### **Quotes for Discussion:**

We need to make sure our solution doesn't cost more than the problem. If we look at the science and stop believing the end of the world is nigh, our decisions will be much smarter.  
– Bjorn Lomborg

Change takes courage.  
– Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez

Because we can expect future generations to be richer than we are, no matter what we do about resources, asking us to refrain from using resources now so that future generations can have them later is like asking the poor to make gifts to the rich.  
– Julian Simon

As the nation at last confronts global warming, it is no time for denial, greed, cynicism, or pessimism.  
– Bernie Sanders

Let's put some of that burgeoning wealth in nuclear, fission and fusion, so that it can take over from gas in the second half of this century. That is an engineerable, clean future. Everything else is a political displacement activity, one that is actually counterproductive as a climate policy and, worst of all, shamefully robs the poor to make the rich even richer.  
– Matt Ridley

I think so long as fossil fuels are cheap, people will use them and it will postpone a movement towards new technologies.  
– Paul Krugman

The popular notion is that Americans are addicted to fossil fuels, but I find that's not true; most people would be happy to power their lives with anything else.  
– Bill McKibben

Many anti-energy groups display little appreciation of the extent to which modern economies depend pervasively on the use of fossil fuels and petrochemical products.  
– Robert Higgs

We should not just consume hydrocarbon fuel but use it to develop nuclear energy, hydro power and renewable energy sources. – Vladimir Putin

I think so long as fossil fuels are cheap, people will use them and it will postpone a movement towards new technologies. – Paul Krugman

I think the cost of energy will come down when we make this transition to renewable energy. – Al Gore

If a power station were to be built down the road, I'd prefer a nuclear plant over an oil burner, and definitely over a coal burner. We simply have to lessen our consumption of fossil fuels. – James Lovelock

### **Activities:**

1. Have students complete the K-W-L chart that they began prior to watching the video.
2. Distribute copies of the Venn diagram and have students complete in pairs or for homework.
3. Show the class Michael Shellenberger's TED Talk "Why Renewables Can't Save the Planet."  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=N-yALPEpV4w>
4. Show the class izzit.org's Energy Solutions: Who Chooses? video about an 800-year old German town being demolished to access the coal under it after Germany shut down nuclear power plants.  
[https://www.izzit.org/products/detail.php?video=energy\\_solutions](https://www.izzit.org/products/detail.php?video=energy_solutions)
5. What are the negative effects of using fossil fuels? Research this and present your findings on a poster board or in a slideshow.
6. Conduct a classroom debate on the Green New Deal. To get students to look at the proposal from a different perspective, consider having them argue from a position with which they disagree. Students should be given time to research their position prior to debating.
7. Write and produce a public service announcement (PSA) in which you support or oppose either the Green New Deal or the use of fossil fuels. Be sure to advocate strongly for the side you take, using evidence to support your position. The PSA may be presented as a video (TV spot), audio (radio spot), PowerPoint presentation, or on a storyboard. The PSA may be a group or individual project.
8. In a five-paragraph persuasive essay, argue in favor of or against the Green New Deal. Make sure to include your thesis statement in your introduction, and in one of your body paragraphs, explore the opposition's argument and the reasons you think they are wrong.
9. Produce a "man-on-the-street" video in which you ask people if they know what the Green New Deal is, whether or not they support it, and what details they know about it.
10. Write a persuasive essay in which you explain the arguments for and against the Green New Deal and take a position on whether it should be passed or rejected.
11. Show the class John Stossel's video: A Green Car's Dirty Secret?  
[https://stosselintheclassroom.org/videos/a\\_green\\_cars\\_dirty\\_secret/](https://stosselintheclassroom.org/videos/a_green_cars_dirty_secret/)

12. Solyndra was an American company that received federal funds to produce American-made solar panels. Research and write a report on Solyndra.
13. Research and prepare a slideshow comparing life in a country with little fossil fuel-based energy with life in a country with an abundance of fossil fuel-based energy.
14. Throughout a 24-hour period, list each time you use a fossil fuel-related energy. Then write an essay in which you discuss how much you depend on fossil fuels. In your conclusion, you might want to discuss what you could do to reduce your dependence on fossil fuels.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

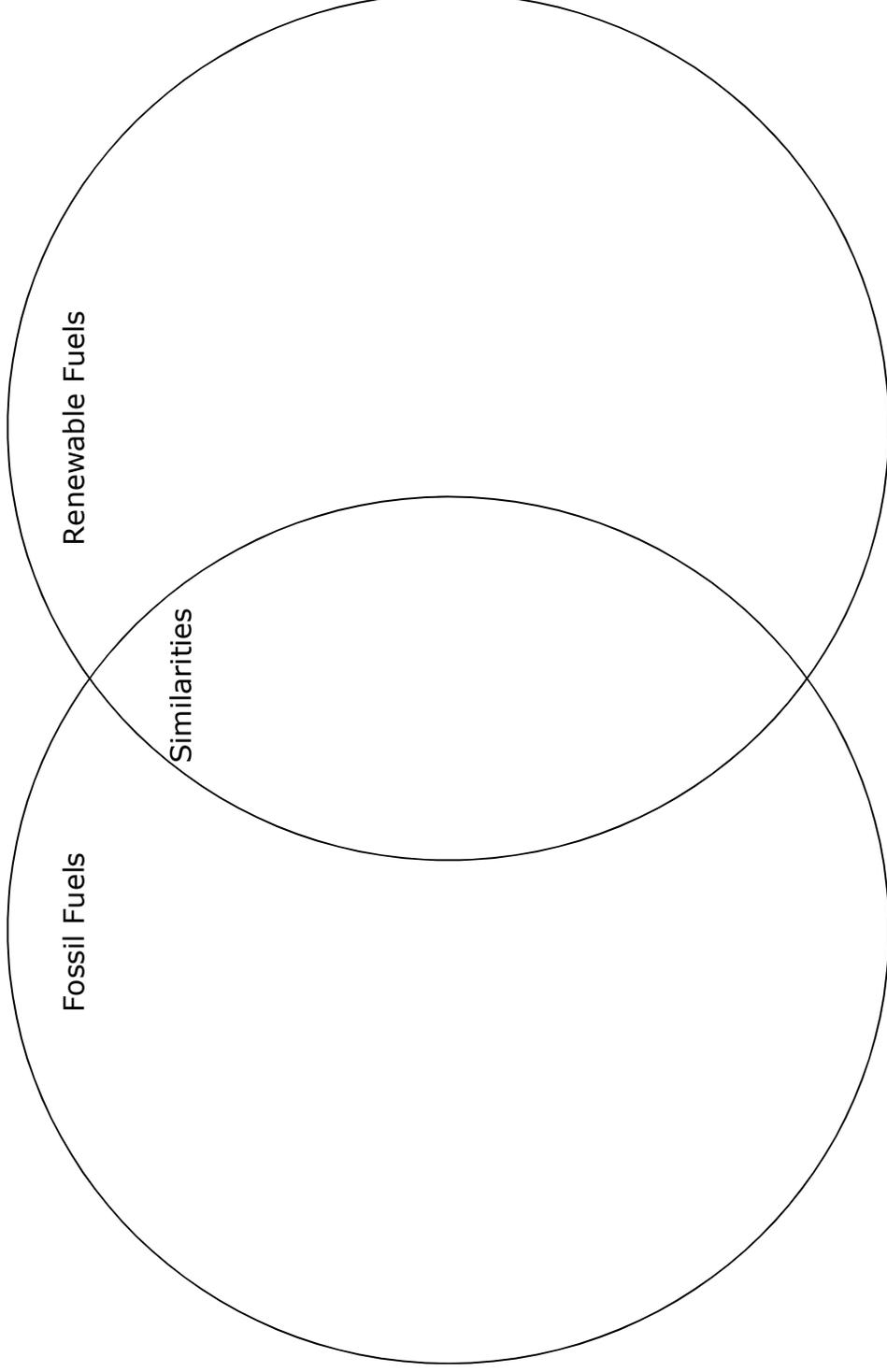
Date \_\_\_\_\_

Class \_\_\_\_\_ Per \_\_\_\_\_

Teacher \_\_\_\_\_

### **Green New Deal: Fact versus Fiction Venn Diagram**

**Directions:** Complete the Venn Diagram to compare and contrast fossil fuels and renewable energy resources.



Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Class \_\_\_\_\_ Per \_\_\_\_\_

Teacher \_\_\_\_\_

## Green New Deal: Fact versus Fiction K-W-L Chart

**Directions:** Complete the **K** and **W** sections prior to watching the video. After you have seen the video, complete the **L** section and answer the two questions below the K-W-L chart.

<b>K</b>	<b>W</b>	<b>L</b>
What I know about the Green New Deal:	What I want to know about the Green New Deal:	What I've learned about the Green New Deal:

Based on what I have learned about the Green New Deal, I think \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_