
PROPAGANDA: ENVIRONMENTAL FEAR MONGERING

Segment Length: 5:02 minutes

Lesson Description:

Why do some movies seem to go beyond entertainment and include scary messages for children? Can there be a rational environmental debate or does it need to be filled with propaganda and hype? This segment looks at the tactics some use to convince others of impending environmental doom.

Concepts & Key Terms:

Indigenous People – People who live traditionally on ancestral lands and are often referred to as “tribal” or “native.”

Propaganda – Information that is considered to be biased in support or opposition of a person, cause, or point of view.

Objectives:

Students will be able to:

- discuss the efforts to convince people of impending environmental crisis.
- analyze the positions of environmental activists and environmental skeptics.
- assess the use of scare tactics in the environmental debate.

Preview Activity and Questions:

Distribute the K-W-L chart (page 60). Have students complete the first two columns to the best of their ability. (Have them fill in the last column after viewing the video.)

OR

What are your five top concerns? Why?

Use Think, Pair, Share to have students answer the preview question. After a few minutes, poll the students. Ask the students to explain their answers. Where do environmental issues rank in their list of concerns? Why?

Viewing Guide:

It is recommended that teachers show the video segment twice: once to allow students to view the video 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. life | 4. political |
| 2. progress | 5. exploiting |
| 3. climate | 6. must |

Name _____ Date _____

Class _____ Period _____ Teacher _____

Propaganda: Environmental Fear Mongering Viewing Guide

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

1. Mark Morano, a journalist who tries to fight the fear-mongering, calls this “propaganda from people who want government to control _____.”
2. He went down with Sigourney Weaver to Brazil to protest hydroelectric dams, which would have brought running water and electricity to hundreds of thousands of people, and then flew back home to Hollywood where he had mansions; he had private planes. He’s living a high-carbon lifestyle, yet he is willing to deny that _____ to the poor people.
3. The *New York Times* _____ reporting reads like a Greenpeace newsletter.
4. There’s a blurring between fiction and reality, because they have a _____ agenda.
5. This is basically telling kids, everything you buy, we’re _____ other people.
6. No dissent allowed when you’re teaching your children about global warming. They’re going to be told that there’s one view, and the view is that we face a climate danger and that we _____ act.

Now, take a few moments to reflect on the video and complete the K-W-L chart by yourself or with a partner. When you have finished, answer the questions below:

Why do environmental activists try to scare people? _____

Why do they try to use movies to accomplish this? _____

Discussion and Analysis:

1. What's the best way to win an argument?
2. Why does it seem that so many Hollywood movies push an environmentalist agenda?
3. Do you think using movies to convince people that environmental crises loom is appropriate? Is it propaganda? Explain.
4. What about evidence? If there is overwhelming evidence that these environmental issues will bring about the end of life as we know it, why are people such as Mark Morano from Climate Depot criticizing the tactics used to convince people?
5. You might have heard of global warming and climate change, but have you heard of global cooling? According to Wikipedia, it was a conjecture that, because the earth's surface between the 1940s and the 1970s had cooled, we would enter another ice age. Does that change your views of the current debate over impending environmental catastrophe? Why/Why not?
6. What did Mark Morano mean when he said that Leonardo DiCaprio didn't get the disconnect between fighting global warming and flying all over the world?
7. What about hydroelectric dams in Brazil... do you think the indigenous people living there wanted running water and electricity? Do you think all indigenous people want the same things? Do we?
8. Is it possible that we make indigenous lifestyles seem more idyllic than they are? Explain.
9. If people don't want land being developed, what can they do about it? What can they do that takes into account people's property rights?
10. Why might the media trumpet fears of climate change and other environmental concerns?

Discuss These Lines from the Video:

1. Environmentalism and Hollywood have gone hand in hand.
2. What you call propaganda, they say we're just informing people.
3. They're not informing people. They're using science and environmental scares to achieve these political ends that they've been trying to do essentially since the 1960s.
4. Leonardo DiCaprio is probably the chief celebrity spokesman. He actually famously said one time, "I'll fly all over the world in order fight global warming."
5. He [movie director James Cameron] went down with Sigourney Weaver to Brazil to protest hydroelectric dams, which would have brought running water and electricity to hundreds of thousands of people, and then flew back home to Hollywood where he had mansions; he had private planes. He's living a high-carbon lifestyle, yet he is willing to deny that progress to the poor people.
6. The *New York Times* climate reporting reads like a Greenpeace newsletter.
7. CNN actually asked: Was this asteroid caused by global warming?
8. There's a blurring between fiction and reality, because they have a political agenda.
9. This [The Story of Stuff video] is basically telling kids, everything you buy, we're exploiting other people.
10. No dissent allowed when you're teaching your children about global warming. They're going to be told that there's one view, and the view is that we face a climate danger and that we must act.

Quotes for Discussion:

The threat posed by humans to the natural environment is nothing compared to the threat to humans posed by global environmental policy.

– Fred L. Smith

Our world faces a true planetary emergency. I know the phrase sounds shrill, and I know it's a challenge to the moral imagination.

– Al Gore

It's obvious nonsense, but it makes nice people feel good about themselves to do their bit for the planet. It's vanity of a grotesque kind to believe that mankind, and our "carbon footprint," has more impact on the future of Earth than Nature, which bends our planet to its will, as it sees fit.

– Charles Saatchi

Fracking has been used for more than 60 years to successfully drill over a million oil and gas wells in the U.S. Nonetheless, the prevailing mythology on the radical left is that the technology is "poisoning our children" by polluting the water we drink and the air we breathe.

– Bob Beauprez

Take air quality in the United States today: It's about 30 percent better than it was 25 years ago, even though there are now more people driving more cars.

– Jared Diamond

I have a private plane. But I fly commercial when I go to environmental conferences.

– Arnold Schwarzenegger

Environmentalism isn't a discipline or specialty. It's a way of seeing our place in the world. And we need everybody to see the world that way. Don't think "In order to make a difference I have to become an environmentalist."

– David Suzuki

There are more effective ways of tackling environmental problems including global warming, proliferation of plastics, urban sprawl, and the loss of biodiversity than by treaties, top-down regulations, and other approaches offered by big governments and their dependents.

– Preston Manning

I have a very positive attitude to anyone who is protecting the environment, but it's inadmissible when people are using it as a means of promoting themselves, using it as a source of self-enrichment. I don't want to name any specific examples... but often, environmentalism is used to blackmail companies.

– Vladimir Putin

Why has it seemed that the only way to protect the environment is with heavy-handed government regulation?

– Gale Norton

A majority of American citizens are now becoming skeptical of the claim that our carbon footprints, resulting from our use of fossil fuels, are going to lead to climatic calamities. But governments are not yet listening to the citizens.

– John Coleman

In the rich world, the environmental situation has improved dramatically. In the United States, the most important environmental indicator, particulate air pollution, has been cut by more than half since 1955, rivers and coastal waters have dramatically improved, and forests are increasing.

– Bjorn Lomborg

Environmentalism is a way of seeing our place within the biosphere.

– David Suzuki

Liberals in Congress have spent the past three decades pandering to environmental extremists. The policies they have put in place are in large part responsible for the energy crunch we are seeing today. We have not built a refinery in this country for 30 years.

– Marsha Blackburn

Mankind is considered (by the radical environmentalists) the lowest and the meanest of all species and is blamed for everything.

– Dixie Lee Ray

Raising awareness on the most pressing environmental issues of our time is more important than ever.

– Leonardo DiCaprio

The warnings about global warming have been extremely clear for a long time. We are facing a global climate crisis. It is deepening. We are entering a period of consequences.

– Al Gore

The whole aim of practical politics is to keep the populace alarmed – and hence clamorous to be led to safety – by menacing it with an endless series of hobgoblins, all of them imaginary.

– H. L. Mencken

I'd say the chances are about 50-50 that humanity will be extinct or nearly extinct within 50 years. Weapons of mass destruction, disease, I mean this global warming is scaring the living daylights out of me.

– Ted Turner

The urge to save humanity is almost always a false front for the urge to rule.

– H. L. Mencken

As someone who lived under communism for most of his life, I feel obliged to say that I see the biggest threat to freedom, democracy, the market economy and prosperity now in ambitious environmentalism, not in communism. This ideology wants to replace the free and spontaneous evolution of mankind by a sort of central (now global) planning.

– Vaclav Klaus

We live in a world bathed in 5,000 times more energy than we consume as a species in the year, in the form of solar energy. It's just not in usable form yet.

– Peter Diamandis

The hydrogen powered car, with its high fuel mileage and zero emission rate, is just one example of the products under development that will help increase our energy independence.

– Dan Lipinski

Activities:

1. Have students complete the T-Chart graphic organizer (page 61).
2. Research the history of climate change from the ice age until now. Develop a timeline on poster board. What conclusions can you draw based on that research? How does that affect your view about global warming? (See links to Informational Websites in the Resources section.)
3. Use the internet to look up this headline: "31,000 scientists reject 'global warming' agenda." Research this issue and make an oral report or write an essay explaining its significance.

4. In his book, *Vision of the Anointed*, Thomas Sowell observed that there are several key elements that “ideological crusaders” have in common:
 - A. Assertion of a great danger to the whole society, a danger to which the masses of people are oblivious.
 - B. An urgent need for action to avert impending catastrophe.
 - C. A need for government to drastically curtail the dangerous behavior of the many, in response to the prescient conclusions of the few.
 - D. A disdainful dismissal of arguments to the contrary as either uninformed, irresponsible, or motivated by unworthy purposes.

Apply Sowell’s observations to environmentalism and the way environmentalists pursue their agenda. This can be a group project, in which each student in a group of four researches and reports on one of the elements. Be sure to look at several of the environmental concerns these crusaders warned us about.
5. In an article on the internet, Al Gore says “Nobody is interested in solutions if they don’t think there’s a problem. Given that starting point, I believe it is appropriate to have an over-representation of factual presentations on how dangerous it is, as a predicate for opening up the audience to listen to what the solutions are, and how hopeful it is that we are going to solve this crisis.” Review the interview (link below) and explain what he means by “it is appropriate to have an over-representation of factual presentations on how dangerous it is.”

<http://grist.org/article/roberts2/>
6. Which recent movies have had environmental themes or messages? What have those messages been? Research this and report back with either an essay or a talk to the class.
7. Conduct a classroom debate about the use of scare tactics in the environmental debate. To get students to look at the debate from a different perspective, consider having them argue from a view with which they disagree. Students should be given time to research their position prior to debating. (See link in the Resources section for a guide to conducting classroom debates.)
8. Research the environmental work of either James Cameron or Leonardo DiCaprio and write a report about their efforts.
9. Al Gore’s video, *An Inconvenient Truth*, is considered the leading global warming video. The National Wildlife Federation has developed curriculum, *An Inconvenient Truth in the Classroom*, for teachers to use with the video. Review the curriculum and report to the class about the inclusion or absence of scare tactics. If scare tactics are used, be sure to include examples.

https://www.nwf.org/pdf/Eco-schools/AITInTheClassroom7_08.pdf
10. Secretary of State John Kerry asked that if all the worst environmental predictions never materialized, what harm would be done from having made the decision to respond to it? Research this very issue and answer his question in an essay or report.
11. In 2007, a judge in Britain limited the showing of Al Gore’s video, *An Inconvenient Truth*, in public schools. Research and write a report about this ruling and the reasons for the judge’s decision.
12. Produce a “man-on-the-street” video in which you ask people what they know about carbon emissions, climate change, rising sea levels, or other environmental concerns. (See links in the Resources section for help in producing man-on-the-street videos.)

13. In the video, there was a reference to building hydroelectric dams in Brazil. Research this and write a persuasive essay in favor or against building dams. Or research this in groups and conduct a classroom debate. (See links in the Resources section for help in writing persuasive essays and for a guide to conducting classroom debates.)
14. Like James Cameron and Leonardo DiCaprio, Al Gore is another activist who lives a “high-carbon lifestyle.” Research a well-known environmental activist who lives a high-carbon lifestyle and report back to the class about his or her lifestyle in a slideshow. (See links in the Resources section for help in producing effective slideshows.)
15. Draw a poster about the environment or environmental activism.
16. Write a letter to the head of a cinema company that has produced one or more movies that directly or indirectly advocate environmental activism. Express your support or opposition to such advocacy.
17. In a persuasive essay, present the two sides presented in the video and your view of the issue. Be sure to address the opposing side of the argument in your essay. (See links in the Resources section for help in writing persuasive essays.)
18. Read one of the articles in the Resources section and either write a summary or take Cornell Notes. (See links in the Resources section for help in taking Cornell Notes.)
19. Write a tweet, poem, or song about an environmental issue or environmental activism.
20. Research one of the organizations listed in the Resources section and report about the organization’s goals and activities.

Resources:

A good explanation of K-W-L, with a sample chart, and a chart for downloading:

<http://www.readingquest.org/strat/kwl.html>

Also helpful for K-W-L:

<https://www.teachingchannel.org/videos/think-pair-share-lesson-idea>

Think, Pair, Share

A brief explanation of the Think, Pair, Share instructional strategy, with examples:

<http://www.readingquest.org/strat/tps.html>

A video explanation of Think, Pair, Share:

<https://www.teachingchannel.org/videos/think-pair-share-lesson-idea>

Conducting classroom debates:

<http://712educators.about.com/cs/lessonsss/ht/htdebate.htm>

http://www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/cur/socstud/frame_found_sr2/tns/tn-13.pdf

<http://busyteacher.org/7245-conducting-class-debate-essential-tips.html>

How to produce a man-on-the-street interview:

<http://onemarketmedia.com/2009/02/16/seven-ideas-to-help-get-the-most-out-of-a-man-on-the-street-interview/>

<http://watchdogwire.com/blog/2014/08/25/man-on-the-street-interview-tipsheet/>

How to write a biography:

<http://www.infoplease.com/homework/wsbiography.html>

<http://homeworktips.about.com/od/biography/a/bio.htm>

How to write a book report:

<http://www.infoplease.com/homework/wsbookreporths.html>

How to write a persuasive essay:

https://www.scribendi.com/advice/how_to_write_a_persuasive_essay.en.html

<http://www.infoplease.com/homework/writingskills7.html>

How to conduct a survey:

http://www.ehow.com/how_16596_write-survey-questionnaire.html

<http://www.mathsisfun.com/data/survey-conducting.html>

For a clear, simple explanation of the Cornell note-taking system:

<http://coe.jmu.edu/learningtoolbox/cornellnotes.html>

<http://www.bucks.edu/~specpop/Cornl-ex.htm>

For help in speaking to a class:

<https://www.hamilton.edu/oralcommunication/tips-for-effective-delivery>

Preparing effective slideshow presentations:

http://www.slideshare.net/satyajeet_02/how-to-make-effective-presentation

<https://support.office.com/en-us/article/Tips-for-creating-and-delivering-an-effective-presentation-f43156b0-20d2-4c51-8345-0c337cefb88b>

<http://smallbiztrends.com/2016/07/effective-powerpoint-presentations.html>

Articles

“Endangered Species Listing May Backfire”

<https://www.heartland.org/news-opinion/news/endangered-species-listings-may-backfire>

“Environmental Alarmism: The Children’s Crusade” by Stephen Huebner and Kenneth Chilton

<http://issues.org/15-2/huebnerchilton-2/>

“Environmental Alarmism, Then and Now” by Bjorn Lomborg.

<http://www.lomborg.com/news/environmental-alarmism-then-and-now>

Downloadable PDF version:

<https://docs.google.com/file/d/0B47tUyKk3fNueUpXRGVpNmhTVEE/edit>

“Environmental Alarmism in Context” by Amy Kaleita and Gregory R. Forbes

<http://historynewsnetwork.org/article/42998>

“In Their Own Words: Climate Alarmists Debunk Their ‘Science’” by Larry Bell

<http://www.forbes.com/sites/larrybell/2013/02/05/in-their-own-words-climate-alarmists-debunk-their-science/#75537f7576fb>

“Straw Man Environmental Alarmism 101, California Style” by Chuck Roger

http://www.americanthinker.com/blog/2011/04/straw_man_environmental_alarm.html

“The New Environmentalism Will Lead Us to Disaster” by Clive Hamilton

<http://www.scientificamerican.com/article/the-new-environmentalism-will-lead-us-to-disaster/>

“Your Biggest Carbon Sin May Be Air Travel” by Elisabeth Rosenthal

http://www.nytimes.com/2013/01/27/sunday-review/the-biggest-carbon-sin-air-travel.html?_r=0

Informational Websites

“1970s Global Cooling Alarmism” [A compendium of global cooling headlines and “facts”]

<http://www.populartechnology.net/2013/02/the-1970s-global-cooling-alarmism.html>

“A brief history of climate panic and crisis... both warming and cooling” by Anthony Watts

<https://wattsupwiththat.com/2014/07/29/a-brief-history-of-climate-panic-and-crisis-both-warming-and-cooling/>

An Inconvenient Truth in the Classroom

https://www.nwf.org/pdf/Eco-schools/AITInTheClassroom7_08.pdf

Bringing Climate to the Classroom: Years of Living Dangerously
by The National Wildlife Federation

<http://www.climateclassroom.org/>

Climate Change Timeline – 1895-2009

<https://butnowyouknow.net/those-who-fail-to-learn-from-history/climate-change-timeline/>

Earth’s Endangered Creatures: A comprehensive list, as well as listed by region

http://earthsendangered.com/index_s.asp

Endangered Species Consultation Handbook

http://www.fws.gov/endangered/esa-library/pdf/esa_section7_handbook.pdf

Real Science

<https://stevengoddard.wordpress.com/>

Organizations

Center for Biological Diversity

<http://www.biologicaldiversity.org/>

Climate Depot

<http://www.climatedepot.com/>

Conservation International

<http://www.conservation.org/>

The Heartland Institute

<https://www.heartland.org/>

Institute for Justice

<http://www.ij.org/>

National Wildlife Federation

<https://www.nwf.org/>

Property & Environment Research Center:

<http://www.perc.org/>

Videos

An Inconvenient Truth

Not Evil Just Wrong

Name _____ Date _____

Class _____ Period _____ Teacher _____

Propaganda: Environmental Fear Mongering 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.

K	W	L
What I think I know about current environmental concerns and how they will affect me:	What I want to know about current environmental concerns and how they will affect me:	What I've learned about current environmental concerns and how they will affect me:

What is one potentially positive result of using scare tactics to encourage environmental action?

What is one potentially negative result of using scare tactics to encourage environmental action?

Name _____ Date _____

Class _____ Period _____ Teacher _____

Propaganda: Environmental Fear Mongering T-Chart

Directions: After reviewing the video and discussing it in class, complete the chart below.

To Use Scare Tactics in the Environmental Debate	Not to Use Scare Tactics in the Environmental Debate
Arguments: 	Arguments:
Which is the strongest argument from the two boxes above? Why? 	
Which position are you more likely to support? Why? 	