
Why Are Wildfires Getting Worse?

Segment Length: 6:26 minutes; 4:51 minutes

Videos:

“Climate change is making wildfires more extreme. Here’s how”

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=a0heBE3luOw>

“Government Fueled Fires”

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NpLIBY9nReU>

Guide:

The questions below will help students achieve a better understanding of the arguments made on either side of a contentious topic. Because these questions often touch upon statements made briefly in the videos, we recommend reading the questions before watching each video.

Students are encouraged to take notes during the videos, and it may be helpful for students to break into groups, each taking responsibility for only a few questions, before coming together for discussion.

Analysis Questions:

1. California Governor Jerry Brown says that these extreme wildfires are “the new normal” due to climate change. How would John Stossel and Michael Shellenberger respond?
2. Michael Shellenberger explains that Native Americans routinely burned land to manage the ecosystem in California. Did you know this before watching this video? What do you think about it?
3. Dr. Michael Mann says that we should move away from fossil fuels to reduce climate change. Do you agree? Why/Why not?
4. John Stossel argues that putting out too many fires has actually caused wildfires to get worse, because it leads to overgrowth. This is an example of unintended consequences. Can you think of any other examples?
5. Both videos agree that climate change has contributed to wildfires. Can you think of a compromise between the two sides that would benefit everyone?
6. The media often says that there’s a consensus on catastrophic climate change, but Michael Shellenberger and Michael Mann do not agree on the extremity of the situation. Do you think we need a more open debate on climate change? Why/Why not?