
Are We Running Out of Resources?

Videos:

“Natural Resources – Are We Running Out?”

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EWTqAwXWy6k> (5:11 minutes)

“Are We Running Out of Resources?”

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AcWkN4ngR2Y> (4:07 minutes)

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. What are the opposing ideas in these two videos?
2. Should one of the arguments we heard carry more weight than the other? If so, which one? Why?
3. Steve Horwitz said, “In fact, we’re not running out of resources. What we’re doing over time is learning to use resources more efficiently....” What did he mean by this?
4. According to the swrm video, in 2019, humans “consumed 1.75 Earths.” What did they mean by this?
5. According to Steve Horwitz, how did people solve the problem of copper prices rising in response to expanding telephone use?
6. What were the examples of non-renewable resources that Lexi Rabadi gave in the swrm video?
7. Steve Horwitz went through the history of people underestimating the amount of oil remaining on Earth. Why do you think people keep making these underestimations?
8. What reason did Lexi Rabadi give for nuclear energy being an unviable replacement for fossil fuels?
9. According to Steve Horwitz, what do oil producers do when oil prices rise?
10. Lexi Rabadi said that swrm’s mission is “the avoidance of the depletion of natural resources in order to maintain an ecological balance that supports all life on Earth.” What did she mean by this?

11. Steve Horwitz said, “Prices are an incentive wrapped in knowledge.” What did he mean by this?
12. Lexi Rabadi mentioned “upcycling.” What is upcycling?
13. Steve Horwitz used copper as an example of a resource that seemed dangerously scarce, but was replaced by a better alternative. Can you think of any other examples?
14. Lexi Rabadi used solar, wind, and geothermal power as examples of renewable energy sources. Can you think of any other examples?
15. Have you been concerned about humanity running out of natural resources? Have you taken any measure in your own life to reduce consumption? If so, what measures have you taken?
16. A key point in Steve Horwitz’s argument is that humans can’t always predict what new innovations are around the corner. What innovations have occurred in your own lifetime that have changed the way we live our lives?
17. Did you have an opinion of the state of natural resources before watching these videos? If so, what was it? Has your opinion changed? If so, how? What did you learn from either video that affects your views on this topic?
18. What could you learn about natural resources that might affect your view of this debate?
19. What else would you like to learn about natural resources?