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# Overpopulation

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## **Videos:**

“Overpopulation facts – the problem no one will discuss: Alexandra Paul at TEDxTopanga”  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fNxctzyNxC0> (8:37 minutes)

“The Scaremongers Are Wrong”  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TBJ2JiRosY> (6:29 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. Alexandra Paul said she thinks that, as a species, we’ve decided not to talk about overpopulation. Have you found this to be the case? Do you hear much talk about overpopulation?
3. John Stossel said, despite the fact that Paul Ehrlich’s past predictions were inaccurate, Ehrlich is still interviewed as an expert. Why do you think that is?
4. Alexandra Paul said that while it took 200,000 years to reach a population of 1 billion people, it only took another 100 years to reach 2 billion. Does this impact your perspective on the population? If so, how?
5. In the Stossel video, Marian Tupy said: “If you sell the apocalypse, people feel like you are deep and that you care. But if you are selling rational optimization, you sound uncaring.” What did he mean by this?
6. Alexandra Paul said that after a hurricane killed 139,000 people in Bangladesh, Bangladesh’s population returned to pre-hurricane numbers in two and a half weeks. Is this a bad thing? Why/Why not?
7. Marian Tupy said: “Paul Ehrlich always sees human beings as a problem, destroyers rather than creators.” In what ways are human beings destroyers? In what ways are human beings creators?

8. Alexandra Paul said: “In fact, the fastest and most efficient way to stabilize the world population is to send girls to school and to empower women.” How does this help stabilize the population?
9. John Stossel said: “[I]nnovation in farming, transportation, [and] genetic engineering is why our growing population won’t destroy nature.” What did he mean by this? How does innovation prevent the destruction of nature?
10. Alexandra Paul said that for thousands of years, culture has reinforced the idea that having children is a good thing, and that not having children is selfish. Do you think this is true? Do you think culture encourages people to have children? Should culture encourage this? Why/Why not?
11. John Stossel said: “Many young people have been so misled they’re afraid to have kids.” Have you experienced this?
12. Alexandra Paul said that capitalism is based on eternal growth. What did she mean by this?
13. Marian Tupy said: “If you let human beings be free, they are going to create more value for everyone.” What did he mean by this?
14. Alexandra Paul said we shouldn’t count on “some invention or technology...that doesn’t even exist yet and we’re not even sure works” to help sustain our future population. Is it wrong to expect future innovations to improve our quality of life? Why/Why not? What are some examples of technology we have now that no one would have expected 20 years ago?
15. Did these two videos share any common ground? Were there any points on which they agreed? If so, what were they?
16. Should one of the arguments we heard carry more weight than the other? If so, which one? Why?
17. Did you have an opinion on this topic before watching these videos? If so, what was it? Has your opinion changed? If so, how? What did you learn from these videos that affects your views on this topic?
18. For related videos, check out the Both Sides of the Issue pairing “Are We Running Out of Resources?” <https://stosselintheclassroom.org/both-sides-are-we-running-out-of-resources/>
19. What else would you like to learn about this topic?